



Critiques & Discussion Posts

Giving a Critique

Critiquing someone else's artwork can seem like you are walking on eggshells! However, it is a crucial part of being an art student since it will train your eye to analyze and articulate strengths and weaknesses in artwork. It will also provide your fellow students with fresh eyes and constructive comments.

Throughout the critiquing process, the critiquer will want to balance both positive and constructive feedback. **Tip: Think of your feedback as a sandwich – start on a positive note, follow with a constructive comment and end with another positive. Just make sure both the positive and constructive comments are substantive!*

When offering a constructive comment or criticism, give your opinion and the reason for it, then offer a suggestion for improvement. (Ex. The hair feels flat to me mainly because everything else is so contoured. Adding more directional lines would help to give it volume). Finally, rather than giving hypotheticals, give advice that incorporates existing work. So for example, instead of saying, "What if the bike was travelling under the bridge rather than over it?" you might instead say "I suggest adding another bike or some other element beneath the bridge to balance out the composition, which feels top heavy."



If You Are Uncertain of How to Start

Think back to the elements and principles of design. Here are just a few of the many questions to think about when viewing a fellow student's work:

- **Composition** – Are the objects thoughtfully placed on the page/canvas? (Ex. The centralized composition makes for a static image. It may have more movement if you shifted things over to the left side.)
- **Value/Contrast** – Is there enough contrast? Is there an appropriate value range within the main subject? (Ex. The value contrast successfully draws the eye toward the main subject matter.)
- **Color/Hue** – Do the color combinations balance within the piece? Are the colors choices harmonizing? (Ex. While the contrasting colors are very striking, you might experiment with different color combinations to emphasize the composition.)

Finish on a Positive Note - Has the artist improved? What are you excited about in their work? Encourage them to experiment and keep pushing themselves. Remember to always reread your comments before posting to insure they are professional, tactful, and constructive!

Other Topics to Critique - Depending on the type of project you are critiquing, you may want to focus on things other than the formal elements of design. For example: the character acting in an animation, the identity politics of a fashion garment, the readability of a logo, etc. **Tip: Regardless of the type of project, a great topic for feedback is always the specifications of the assignment: Which parts of the assignment are well fulfilled? What might be missing or lacking in order to meet the requirements?*

Receiving a Critique - Posting Your Work - Pay attention to any instructions for what to say about your work when turning it in. If no instructions are given, some topics to discuss might be: What went well? What was your thinking behind the piece? What's your favorite part? What surprised you about the process?



Students may feel the need to preface their work by saying something like ‘it’s unfinished’ or ‘not good enough.’ This, however, can be disparaging and provides a negative introduction or presentation to your work. It’s okay and sometimes necessary to acknowledge where you struggled or want help, just be careful to not put your work down.

Receiving Feedback

Receiving a critique is a common occurrence within the professional, creative world so experiencing them in school is great practice for later! If it’s new to you, it may feel a little awkward at first, and that’s okay, but it’s important to not take any part of a critique personally.

Though sometimes difficult, staying open to the interpretations of others and to the process of revision will only serve to strengthen your work. Know that critiques are meant to help the artist improve and they become easier and more natural with experience.

Discussion Posts

Reading and responding to discussion posts is an important part of taking online classes! They allow you to engage with your classmates while exploring your own ideas about the material.



Initial Post

Don’t sweat it! Writing discussion posts can feel intimidating. Instead of seeing it as an assessment of your knowledge, though, think of it as a way for you to work through and develop your thoughts with the help of your peers. Your classmates’ posts and responses can help you see the same material in a new light or push your ideas even further!

Make sure you understand the assignment. What exactly are you being asked to do? Should you be drawing analysis from the readings or presentation, or does your professor want you to synthesize the class material with your own experiences? Discussion post prompts often ask multiple questions, so it’s important to pay attention to every aspect of the assignment. One way to double-check this is underlining every verb in the prompt; that way, you’ll be able to see exactly which actions you’re being asked to complete.



Frame it with a topic sentence. It’s a good idea to begin your response with a topic sentence, or a statement that outlines what you’ll be talking about in the following paragraph. Think of this as a mini thesis; you’re answering the prompt in a clear, direct sentence and then using the rest of the response to explain it further. If you’re asked to describe and analyze differences between Paleolithic and Neolithic art, for example, you could begin by saying: *Neolithic art had a more aesthetic purpose than in Paleolithic times, as homosapiens developed more symbolic minds and permanent communities.*

Be specific! Discussion posts are typically only one to two paragraphs long, so it’s important to make all of your words count! Avoid generalizations by backing up your main points with examples. *Ex: We can see the differences between Paleolithic and Neolithic art when comparing the decorative Human- Fish Sculpture from Neolithic times with the Paleolithic Woman from Willendorf, which likely had a communicative function rather than an ornamental one.*



Responding to Other Posts

Get more information! This is your opportunity to ask questions about something you don’t understand or that you’re genuinely curious about, so take advantage of it! One approach is to look for a response that differs from your own and ask about it at greater depth. *Ex: I’m really interested in your point about the Neolithic economy influencing their art, since I’ve never made that connection before. Do you think their art would have stayed purely functional if their economy was based on hunting and gathering like in the Paleolithic era?*

Make a connection. If you can’t think of a question or point to raise, don’t panic! Another option is to relate a post to something you’ve seen or read in the past. Does a student’s idea remind you of a piece of art or an article you’ve encountered before, either in another class or on your own? How so? Or, if you think someone’s discussion post is interesting, tell them that—but be sure to explain why!