

Section III

Worksheet 1: Critiquing Nonfiction

This worksheet is organized around the nonfiction categories we talked about critiquing in this section. Within each category, you'll see questions you can ask yourself that will help you recognize and comment on any weaknesses you find while you are critiquing. If you have trouble finding the answers to these questions, first push yourself to look more deeply, and then, if you still aren't clear, make sure to note this difficulty in your feedback to the author.

For practice, use this worksheet to do your own critique of our sample scene. Or you can use it to start the critique process on actual projects submitted by the writers in your group.



Organization and Structure

- Can you identify a consistent pattern in each chapter and a logical path through the manuscript? Are there places the author should tighten or rethink this organization?

- How does the author bring important information to the front? Would to-do lists or a bulleted structure be helpful?

- If the author is writing a memoir, what elements of story does she use to engage the reader? Are there ways the author could strengthen the plot or characterization of the project?

- Other organization and structure comments and suggestions can you give the author?

Voice

- How does the author use voice to convey expertise? Are there ways better project a sense of authority?

- How does the author hook the reader? How can the author improve the voice to connect more strongly with the reader?

- What other voice comments and suggestions can you give the author?

Level of Information/Details

- Consider the author's balance of personal stories and useful information about the project's topic. What can he do to shift that balance in a way that would most help the reader?

- Where could the author trim, add, or highlight details that would improve the manuscript?

- Additional comments and suggestions for using details:

Understanding of/Focus on Audience

- How does the author show that she understands her audience? Describe any areas you see for improvement.

- Can you identify the specific perspective the author brings to this project?
What new information does she provide?

- How does the author share the project's purpose or theme?

- Other comments and suggestions concerning audience:

Opening of Article/Book

- Are there ways to strengthen the project's hook?

- Is there a place at the opening where the writer could “show” a scene, rather than “tell” or describe an event or process?

- Are there ways the author tighten the opening and pick up the pace so the reader doesn't lose interest?

- Additional comments and suggestions for openings:

Tools for Readers

- What tools and exercises does the author provide?
