

# DESN493 Critique Guidelines

A critique allows a small group of people to review and discuss many ideas quickly and informally. It gives the one critiqued the advantage of different points of view, and almost certainly results in the design appealing to a wider audience. It can uncover new directions the design could go.

A critique is not judgmental. It answers the question, "How can we make it even better?"

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## The process

1. Most critiques will be done in small groups with up to six people. Groups will be assigned.
2. Each student, in turn, will present a design piece, and will *be in charge of guiding the discussion of that piece*. The presentation can include the goals of the project, what communication was intended, who the audience is, the style that was intended, and more.
3. Critics should *take a moment* to consider their questions or suggestions, writing them down first and then speaking. The first order of comment would usually be how the elements of the design (layout, typography, images, messages, etc.) support or do not support the intended communication/audience.
4. The person being critiqued should answer questions or ask clarifying questions, often writing down suggestions. It is generally not appropriate to defend the design, or argue with a critiquer. Counter questions are often more advantageous.

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## The one critiquing

Put your comments in perspective. State whether you are speaking from your point of view, or from the audience's point of view, or from the stated goals of the project piece.

not good: "This sucks and it's ugly"

better: "Well, if the goal is to make this feel friendly, black and flaming red doesn't convey that to me."

Always respect the efforts and the point of view of the owner of the design. Remember that a lot of work has been done to get the design piece to this point, and reflect that in your comments.

Always remember how difficult it is to receive a critique on a project you have completed to some

degree. Be more than ordinarily polite and friendly. Never sound disrespectful.

Questions and counter-questions are usually a great way to politely avoid sounding like you are attacking. You might ask, "What alternatives did you consider for the number of columns?" "What other fonts did you consider?" This also serves to encourage other group members contribute ideas.

Always point out what you do like about the design. This is not just for politeness, but an important part of finding out what should not be changed.

Some complimentary statements sound like you don't really mean them, such as "I like this, but..." Take time to be specific about elements that you like, and about how those elements support the goals of the design or speak to the intended audience. Writing them down helps with this.

## Questions to ask yourself before you critique

What did I enjoy about this design and why?  
What impression did I get from the design?  
What message did I get from the design?  
What concerns me about this design and why?  
What does this design remind me of and why?

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## The one being critiqued

Speak in context of the point of view. It's fine to have a personal opinion, expressing your own preferences. But don't confuse this with your perception of what the customers or audience need or want. So make sure to specify which kind of opinion you're offering.

Take notes during the meeting of key questions that were raised, or new issues or ideas that came up that you hadn't thought about before.

Receive suggestions graciously. *Try hard to really understand what the critic is trying to say. This is your main job.* Remember you are not being judged, but finding out how well what you thought would work actually works!

If a student states that s/he likes your piece and isn't sure why, ask if his/her opinion relates to the color, composition, use of space, etc.

Bottom line: Try to get that great advice that will make the design appeal to more people.