

Tips on giving constructive feedback to writers

Take time to reflect on your feedback and take notes, it must be clear and well-argued. Don't just say it's "good" or "bad".

Criticize the writing, not the writer

No matter what your feedback contains, you must give your opinion on the story, its construction or syntax, and never on the author. You judge the work, not the individual who produced it.

First highlight the positive

Start by talking about what you liked in the writing. Always use the strengths of a story first to get the process started. Think of the writer who, like you, will appreciate a balanced perspective. It's also helpful to know what to keep.

Take a neutral look at the work

Each reader has their own tastes, and the text your reading might not reflect this. It does not mean that it is bad. Be aware of your literary preferences and keep them at bay when giving feedback. If you can't find a balance between your personal tastes, say how you feel about it instead. It's never inaccurate to say, "I was confused", but it might be inaccurate to say, "It doesn't make any sense".

For the writer

If there's anything you'd particularly like your readers to focus on, mention it. If it's essential, give a short introduction to what you have written, but try to only reveal information that your actual readers would know (e.g. introducing a scene in the middle of a chapter).

When listening

It is generally better to say nothing, do not try to defend or explain your decisions, just take notes. You decide whether to use the comments later or to ignore them, so you don't need to convince anyone of anything.