



HOW TO BE A GOOD CRITIQUE GROUP PARTNER

Here are some general rules to being a good critique group partner. You will get out of this experience what you put in, so do your best to follow the rules below.

1. BE HONEST

Now is *not* the time to lie. Be gentle, but tell the truth. If the submitter's story doesn't have a thought out plot or the characterization needs work, tell them so! Editors don't have time to tell you what they think--critique partners do.

2. BE THICK-SKINNED

The first time you have a story critiqued by a group of writers might be difficult for you. If some critiques are somewhat negative to your material, it doesn't mean you're a bad writer. It's sometimes hard to separate our writing from ourselves, but it is *absolutely* necessary that you learn to do so. Nothing is personal in a group such as ours, comments are made on the words that are submitted only. Even *after* you're published, editors will want to change things. And you may well gather a heap of rejections before that time. Buck up and get used to it.

3. CONSIDER COMMENTS CAREFULLY

Not every comment a critique partner makes will apply to your story. It could be just a personal preference. *You* are the final judge of what to change and what to keep. *However*, don't blow off a comment because it hurts your feelings. If possible, let it be for a while, and look at it again later. Often you'll find at least a shred of wisdom in the critique.

4. BE KIND

This is important. Treat others as you have them treat unto you. Honesty doesn't mean brutality. A writer's story is his/her baby--and you don't want to tell someone their baby is ugly!!! Word your critiques carefully, as you would have others critique your work.

5. BE ENCOURAGING

One of the biggest benefits to having critique partners is having others who understand what you are going through as you sweat blood trying to get work published. Encourage one another to your best writing, and help one another when you face a nasty case of writer's block or rejection. Hang in there together!

6. BE FRIENDLY

Get to know each other. Become friends. Writing a story in today's market is a harrowing experience, best shared with others. The more you know about each other, the more you'll be able to help.

7. BE PROMPT

When you send something out to be critiqued, you are probably on pins and needles to know what others think. Remember, your partners feel the same way about *their* material!!! Do your best to get back to them within a reasonable amount of time.

8. LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE

Often the first thing you'll be tempted to do as a critique partner (especially if you have strong grammar skills) is to start nit-picking commas, etc. While this is helpful on a FINAL DRAFT, what you should be looking for in the early stages is the overall picture. Is the plot sound? Do the characters do and say things that are out of character for them? Do they depend too much on adverbs, rather than choosing strong verbs?

On the final draft, of course, you'll want to make sure what they are sending to the publishers is picture perfect. *Now* you get to edit out all those commas!

9. YOU'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

More than likely, your critique partners will be the ones who laugh with you when you get the go-ahead to send a manuscript, cry with you when you face rejection, and rejoice with you when you sell that story. Best of luck!!!

