

Guide to Writing a Book Review

When writing a book review the most important thing is to interact with the book. Your task is to examine the book critically. In order to do this, you must summarize the main point of the book and its outline. This is not a book report, it is a critical evaluation. The summary portion should be no more than half of the length of the paper. Consider that you are answering the following questions as you summarize: What is the book's central theme or thesis? What is the major argument? What are the major conclusions? How does the author arrive at these conclusions? The summary should contain a sentence very similar to this: The main idea of the book is ____.

The review should begin with a brief biography of the author. A paragraph is sufficient in this regard. The purpose of this is simply to inform the reader why the author has the authority to contribute to the topic at hand.

After the biography, move on to the summary.

After summarizing, it is time to truly interact with the text. Give strengths and weaknesses as you see them. All books have both strengths and weaknesses; the book you are reviewing is no different. "Good" is not a strength. "Boring" is not a weakness. You want to consider whether the book is actually convincing then tell specifically why it is convincing or not. Does the author's evidence support his argument and conclusions? Has he examined all the relevant evidence? Is the argument logically sound? Does the author employ a novel methodology? If so, is this appropriate to his task? Does the organization and prose style lend clarity and force to the work or does poor writing damage its clarity and credibility? Does the author reveal a bias that may have affected his judgments?

If you feel the need to wrap everything up with a conclusion feel free. But keep it short.

Stylistic issues

- The title should be - A Review of *Some Book*
- Between the title and the review insert the bibliographical entry for the book in proper turabian format. (An excellent guide to turabian is found here <http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/turabiangd.php>)
- You are using a computer. There is no need for underscore, *use italics*
- This is a book review, space is precious. There is no need for block quotes or footnotes.
- Use of first person singular or plural (i.e. I, me, we, us) is unacceptable
- Use of second person is strongly discouraged
- Double space (except the bibliographical entry) and make margins 1" all around.
- 12 point font only (Times New Roman, or Garamond only)
- 2 pages + 1 line ≠ 3 pages (shoot for 850-1000 words)
- Refer to the author by either full name or last name only. No titles are necessary.
- Try not to overuse either the author's name or the title of the book.
- There is no need for bold to emphasize a point. Be clear in your writing and readers will know what is important.
- Avoid the passive voice. Writing is muddy and confusing when passive voice has been used.
☺ (Passive voice makes writing muddy and confusing.)