**How to Write a Book Review**

***Your opinion is important—don*'*t be afraid to voice it in a book review***

Writing a book review is not the same as writing a [book report](http://www.scribendi.com/advice/how_to_write_a_book_report_part_one.en.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) or a summary. A book review is a critical analysis of a published work that assesses the work's strengths and weaknesses. As mentioned, a book review is *not a book report*. Resist the temptation to summarize the character, [plot](http://www.scribendi.com/advice/fleshingoutyourplot.en.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), theme, and setting. Your readers are not interested in having the book re-told to them, and are certainly not interested in having the ending spoiled.

### Preparing to write a review

Before writing a book review, you must, of course, read the book. Reading the first page, last page, and dust jacket won't cut it—you must read the book in its entirety, making quick notes about your impressions as you read. We also recommend that you ask yourself questions as you read. If the book is non-fiction, ask yourself, "Does the author have a clear argument that he or she is trying to prove? Is it original? Does he or she prove the argument successfully? Are the arguments sound? Is it well-researched and well-written? Does the author omit any information that would have been relevant?" For a work of fiction, ask yourself, "Is this work original? Are the [characters](http://www.scribendi.com/advice/creating_believable_characters.en.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) well-rounded and believable? Does the plot twist, turn, and thicken, or does it plod along? Does the book address universal themes? Is the dialogue realistic?"

Make notes about the author's writing style: Is it irreverent or dry? Fast-paced or excruciatingly detailed? These are all things that potential readers will want to know. As a reviewer, you must tell them.

### Get to the point

When you begin writing the review, think about what your [thesis](http://www.scribendi.com/advice/thesis_statement.en.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is. Will your review be favorable, or do you plan to advise your readers to spend their money elsewhere? Just like in an academic paper, remember to make your thesis known in the first few lines of your review. This will help your reader focus and will provide you with an argument for your review.

### Don't forget the details

Briefly include some biographical information about the author at the beginning of your review. Is this his or her first book? If not, what types of books has he or she written before? How has his or her background qualified him or her to write about this particular subject?

Before launching into your analysis, briefly tell the reader what the book is about, its genre, and who its intended audience is. Is the book designed for mass commercial appeal or for a select group of academic specialists? Providing this information at the beginning will let readers know if they're interested in reading the entire review.

### Support your argument with direct quotations

Just as you would in [academic writing](http://www.scribendi.com/advice/five_habits_to_avoid_in_academic_writing.en.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), carefully select quotations from the book you are reviewing to support your argument. These quotations will help readers understand your impressions and analysis of the book.

Try to use a natural, informal tone. A book review is not rocket science; you are simply communicating your impressions and opinions of an author's work. What's more, always remember to edit and proofread your review multiple times before publishing it.