

Writing a Review Essay

Are you having trouble writing a critical response to a text or performing art? If so, here are a few helpful hints that can guide you through the sometimes difficult process of writing a review essay.

Know Your Criteria

It is important to know what you plan on talking about before you read, watch, or listen to it. For example, are you reviewing a play? You should consider paying close attention to criteria such as scenery, costumes, acting ability, and crowd enjoyment. Paying attention to specifics that are appropriate for your subject will make drafting the paper significantly easier.

Have Expectations

It is important to develop some expectations of whatever criteria you develop before you begin. You should state your expectations in the essay, explain why you have them, and whether you were disappointed or satisfied with the piece based on those expectations. If, for example, you hate Shakespeare, but walk away from a play impressed with the performance, your response should reflect the way your expectations were surpassed.

Take Notes

While watching, listening, or reading whatever you are evaluating, be sure to take notes based on your criteria. By the time you draft and revise your essay, a lot of time may have passed. If you take notes, you will be more able to remember specific examples and exactly how you felt at the time of the review.

Don't Write a Summary Paper

Be careful not to write a summary essay when attempting to write a review. Although it is helpful to make your reader aware of what it is you are reviewing, a lengthy summary may distract your audience from what you are trying to accomplish. If you write a thorough summary, you may reach a length requirement without saying anything about your opinions on whatever it is that you chose to review.

For more information, see:

<http://unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/review.html>