

Guidelines for California Writers Club, High Desert Branch (CWC/HD)  
Critique Groups

1. Critique groups are for members of the CWC/HD who write regularly. Non members may observe a session or two as a guest, but not participate.
2. The goal of critiquing is to improve writing abilities and, in most cases, ultimately publish.
3. Membership is limited to eight members per group.
4. Each group will decide when, where and how often to meet. The meeting place will rotate as the group agrees. Meetings will last approximately two to three hours. Members are to bring their own water or drink. Hosts are not expected to furnish refreshments.
5. Before committing to join a critique group, members are advised to attend and observe for one or two sessions to see the critique process at work. If groups are full, members will be placed on a waiting list until there are three new members ready to form a new group.
6. At least one week before the critique meeting, each member is to e-mail their work for review. Recipients should e-mail back when they receive the member's work with a quick "Got it".
7. The work submitted should be 2200 words in length or less. If a member submits work that is longer, the excess is not expected to be critiqued. If a group wants to increase or decrease the length of work to be submitted, it may do so by agreement within the group.
8. Members will read and analyze and come prepared for each session. Members are only expected to review the work of members in their own group.
9. Feedback will be given to others *in writing*, either directly on the manuscript or, typed or hand-written on separate paper.
10. Areas to review and critique include, but are not limited to: character or plot development, story structure, pacing, repetitiousness, clarity, dialogue, descriptions, or obvious errors in grammar and punctuation. Criticisms should be constructive.
11. Someone will be chosen to lead the session. The leader will choose one of the member's work for critique. The leader will verbally give their review and afterwards give their hardcopy review to the author. Then, the next person will give their review of the same

person's work until everyone has had a turn. This process will continue until each person has had their work reviewed by every other person in the group.

12. When a manuscript is being critiqued, the author is expected to be a good listener, to not interrupt or become defensive. In general, the author should not respond until the critique is finished or unless he/she is asked a direct question. Members should keep in mind that critiques are suggestions for improving a writer's work from the viewpoint of the reader.
13. Suggestions are just that, suggestions. They should be considered, but do not have to be implemented. In fact, some suggestions may be in direct conflict with each other. It will be up to the author to decide what works.
14. When giving a critique, if possible, begin and end with a positive comment with constructive criticism in the middle. Be as specific as possible, keeping comments directed at the work itself.
15. When reviewing someone's work, do not try to rewrite that work as you would have written it. Another person may have a different style and a different voice. Offer suggestions as opinion.
16. If the subject or genre is not your favorite, remember each writer deserves your attention to the best of your ability.
17. Strive to give each member of the group equal time. The leader may bring a discussion to a close if too much time is being taken.
18. If you miss a critique, e-mail your comments to the other members ASAP, even if you need to snail mail or hand the person a critique at a regular CWC meeting.
19. If a group finds a member is absent a lot or is not doing the work for whatever reason (sometime life intervenes!), members are within their rights to point this out, discuss it and gently ask the member to step up their game or drop out.
20. If a member drops out of a group for a time, that person is not guaranteed a spot in his or her original group upon return.