

## Rules for Giving Feedback in the Creative Writing Workshop

EGL 325: Dr. Chisholm

Feedback is a delicate art. Good critique can improve a piece of writing without damaging the writer. As much as we see our work as separate from ourselves—and often as a lie—it can still hurt to get negative feedback. Please keep this in mind both as a reader and a writer.

When you are giving feedback:

1. Think of yourself as a mirror, rather than a judge. What does the piece seem to be doing, and how can you help to bring it out more? How does the writing weaken—or sabotage—itsself, and what can be removed?
2. Listen to what the writer has to say about the phase of the draft: is it rough, revised, or polished? Weigh your responses given the state of the work. If the writer has specific questions about the work, try to answer them as specifically as possible.
3. Comments like, “weak” or “vague” may feel right, but if you don’t point to the offending words, the writer will just have to take you on your word. Concrete comments are much more helpful.
4. Chart your own reading process: “The writing really picks up here,” or “This section seems to drag a bit,” to let the writer know how the process of reading the work in order goes for you.
5. Use your comments to learn more about your own writing! Listen to the types of comments offered in the workshop, and strive to apply them to your own work.
6. Always sign your comments! That way, if the writer has further questions, they can ask you.

When you are being workshopped:

1. Read your work aloud to the group first. Hearing it can be instructive to everyone.
2. Then, have someone else read it aloud. This way, you can hear it without looking at it.
3. Have three very specific questions ready for the group to kick things off. For example, “I was thinking of cutting the first stanza. Is it needed?” or “I feel that I’m ‘telling’ too much in the first paragraph. Do you think so?”
4. After you ask your questions, make every attempt to stay silent. You must let your work speak for itself. Verbally defending your work is not the same thing.
5. Take notes on your copy of your work. Write down the most accurate criticism you hear. Ignore the rest. These notes will help you when you revise your work.