

## Suggestions for Writing Critical Reviews of Journal Articles

A critical review of a journal article is an evaluation of the article's strengths, weaknesses and validity. It is used to inform readers of an article's value through explanation, interpretation and analysis. The reviewer must present information that will allow the reader to make a value judgement about the article.

The guidelines and questions listed below are suggestions that should be considered when writing a critical review of an article. Not all of the questions or guidelines will be appropriate for every article, depending upon the purpose of the review.

### ***Guidelines and questions to be considered***

- Reviews should begin with a full bibliographic citation (author, title of journal article, name of journal, volume, issue, date of publication, pages).
- Is there any biographical information provided about the author? What are the author's qualifications and authority?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the objective or purpose of the research? Is it clearly stated?
- Does the author try to build on past research?
- Does the author define any terms? Are the definitions specific, useful, circular?
- What is the effect of the author's language? Are the vocabulary and sentence structure appropriate? Does the author maintain neutrality in his/her choice of words and terms or are they emotionally charged or biased?
- Are references given (footnotes or bibliography)? What is the size of the reference section? Are the references recent, important? How are the references used: for support, rebuttal, etc.?
- If the article is a report of a research study, does the author clearly state what was expected to happen? What was the sample for the study and how was it selected? Does the author discuss factors or variables that may have affected the research? Are the methods for measuring results clearly explained and appropriate? Did the expected result occur?
- Are illustrations, tables or graphs used? Do they complement the text? Are they the best method to present data, or are they unnecessary?
- What are the author's major findings and conclusions? Have these been supported by the author's analyses, arguments, findings or evidence? Has the author overlooked anything?

- Is the article referred to by anyone else? (Check the *Social Sciences Citation Index* for this information.) How is the article used by other authors: background, support, rebuttal, etc.?
- Does the author accomplish the objective?
- Does the author give suggestions for further research or discussion?

## Style

Use your own words. If you use those of the author, show the page number in parentheses. Use a footnote if the quotation is from another source. Consult a style manual (<http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/dafoe/citing.html>) for more precise details on style.

Do not try to write your review by answering all the above-mentioned questions one by one. Some will not be relevant to your particular book.

At the top of the review, write the title of the book, name of the author, place of publication, name of publisher, date of publication, and number of pages in the book.

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For more detailed information on reviewing journal articles check the following publications:

Katzer, Jeffrey; Kenneth H. Cook and Wayne W. Crouch. **Evaluating Information: A Guide for Users of Social Science Research**. 3rd ed. New York; Toronto: McGraw-Hill, c1991.  
UML Dafoe Library Second Floor -- CALL NUMBER: H 62 K378 1991

Millman, Jason and D. Bob Gowin. **Appraising Educational Research: A Case Study Approach**. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall [1974].  
UML Dafoe Library Mezzanine -- CALL NUMBER: LB 1028 M49 1974

Stern, Paul C. **Evaluating Social Science Research**. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.  
UML Dafoe Library Second Floor -- CALL NUMBER: H 62 S7545  
UML Law Main Floor -- CALL NUMBER: H 62 S7545

Tripodi, Tony. **The Assessment of Social Research: Guidelines for Use of Research in Social Work and Social Science**. 2nd ed. Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, c1983.  
UML Dafoe Library Second Floor -- CALL NUMBER: HV 11 T74 1983

For additional publications check our library catalogue at: <http://bison.umanitoba.ca>

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Information based on the  
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