



How to Write a Book Review in 5 Steps

By Hannaha Yang

If you love to read books, you might be looking for ways to share your opinions about your recent reads.

Writing book reviews is a great way to engage with the book-loving community. If your reviews gain a large enough following, you might even get paid to read books—every reader's dream come true!

So how exactly do you write book reviews?

This article will explain what a book review is and give you a step-by-step guide for writing a good one.

Book reviews, on the other hand, should offer a unique perspective on a book. They're often assigned to undergraduate or graduate students.

Professional book reviews can be published in academic journals, on the reviewer's personal blog, or on platforms like Goodreads.

How to Review a Book in 5 Steps

Here are five steps you can follow to write your own book review.

1. Briefly Summarize the Book

If you're wondering how to start a book review, the answer is simple—start by summarizing the story!

A quick and objective summary, similar to the one you might find on the book jacket, gives your readers a sense of what the book is about. That way, they have enough context to understand the rest of your review.

If the book is nonfiction, you should include the major questions the book examines, the ways the book tries to answer those questions, and any relevant details about the author's credentials.

If the book is a novel, you should include the genre, the main character, and the events that launch the main character into the story.

However, it's important not to spoil the story for people who haven't read it yet. A good rule is not to mention anything that happens after the midpoint of the story. Leave the rest for the readers to discover on their own.

5 Steps to Write a Book Review

1. Briefly summarize the book
2. Evaluate the book's qualities
3. Include quotes from the book
4. Rate the book
5. Give your recommendation



2. Evaluate the Book's Qualities

Once you've explained the premise of the book, it's time to provide a more subjective evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. What do you want other readers to know about this book?

Here are some different aspects of a nonfiction book you can evaluate:

- Key takeaways (e.g. What did you learn? What's the book's argument?)
- Readability (e.g. What background knowledge do readers need to understand this?)
- Prose (e.g. How are the points communicated? What's the author's writing style?)

Here are some different aspects of a novel you can evaluate:

- Characters (e.g. How well-developed is the protagonist? The villain? The love interest?)
- Plot (e.g. Are there surprising twists? Subverted tropes? Plot holes?)

- **Worldbuilding** (e.g. Is the world of the story immersive? Unique? Original?)
- **Theme** (e.g. What questions does the story examine? How does it answer those questions?)
- **Prose** (e.g. Is the writing lyrical or plain? Funny or serious? Dense or digestible?)

Many reviewers focus on one aspect for each of the paragraphs in their review.

As much as possible, try to balance the good with the bad. If the entire review is glowing, or if the entire review is critical, it won't feel as objective as one that mentions both positive and negative qualities.

Also, make sure you include spoiler warnings if you're going to mention anything that happens after the midpoint of the story. Some book review platforms let you hide those passages of your review until readers click on them.

3. Include Quotes from the Book

Quotes from the book can serve as useful supporting evidence for your key points. If you say the book includes lyrical prose, make sure to include a passage that represents the lyrical style of the book, so your readers can see what you mean.

You can include well-written passages that showcase the author's talent. If you disliked the book, you can also choose quotes that showcase what you disliked most.

4. Rate the Book

Many book review platforms, such as Goodreads, let you give a star rating to each book you review.

You can develop your own rating system if you'd like. For example, you could rate books on a scale of 1–5, 1–10, or even 1–100.

Some reviewers break down their ratings into multiple categories. For example, you might give a book five stars for its characters, but only two stars for its plot.

5. Give Your Recommendation

Finish your book review by stating whether or not you would recommend this book to others. That's the main purpose of a book review, after all—to convince readers either to read the book or to skip it.

It can be helpful to say exactly what kinds of readers you'd recommend it to.

For example, you might write, “This book is perfect for anyone who loves swing dancing and slow-burn romance,” or “Don’t read this if you don’t like slow, atmospheric books that focus more on vibes than on plot.”

You can also recommend other books in the same genre that you think fellow readers will enjoy if they liked this one. “If you liked [A Song of Ice and Fire](#) by George R.R. Martin, we recommend [The Name of the Wind](#) by Patrick Rothfuss and [The Way of Kings](#) by Brandon Sanderson.”

IB English HL Summer Reading Assignment

Welcome to IB English SL!

Your summer reading assignment is as follows:

1. Read the novella “The Body” by Stephen King. Try to “enjoy” the story! Feel free to engage the story with annotations, but keep in mind you are not assessed on this.
2. Write a 800-1000 word review of the novella. The attached article will help guide you through this process. Your review is due the first day of class. Plan accordingly!
3. Get your creative side activated this summer and create a book cover for the novella. You may use any medium to do this. Drawing, painting, mixed media, photoshop etc. We will use them to decorate our classroom in the Fall!

Email me with any questions: jmulligan@theproutschool.org