

Preparing For Your One-on-One Critique

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Congratulations! Your manuscript will be critiqued at the next writer's conference. So, how do you prepare for this exciting event to get the most out of your short time with a professional?

1. Perfect your manuscript.

There are several ways to get your manuscript in order before a conference submission. After you've revised, tightened, and corrected grammar, it's time to ask your fellow authors for help. Run it past your critique group(s), post it on a writer discussion board, or collect a critique favor from other authors whom you've helped in the past. Give your conference manuscript the same consideration you would a submission to a publisher—polish it to perfection.

2. Research Your Critiquer.

Find out beforehand *who* will be giving your critique. Search that name on an Internet search engine such as Google. Research everything the critiquer has edited. Pay close attention to his/her style and interests. Formulate a list of questions to bring with you to your critique. Check your favorite children's writers message boards and ask other authors if they've had any experience working with this individual. If you do your homework to ascertain how your critiquer operates, not only will you be more relaxed at this session, but he/she will also be pleased that you took the time to go the extra mile in your critique preparation.

3. Keep an Open Mind.

No one has ever written the *perfect* manuscript, so be prepared to hear the good *and* the bad about your writing. You're not there to soak up praise—you're there to learn how to become a better writer. Maintain a sincere desire to consider any changes your critiquer suggests. Don't worry about taking notes during your session since many critiquers will hand you a sheet highlighting their comments. Concentrate on the face-to-face aspect so that you can enjoy this personal meeting. Stay relaxed and focused.

4. Leave Your Temper Behind.

Believe it or not, your critiquer is merely human, just like you. You may or may not agree with his/her points. Your critiquer is only one person, giving you his/her valuable opinion. Remain as professional as possible, which means being a courteous listener, no matter how you may be feeling inside. Remember that a critique session is *not* a personal attack, but a powerful tool to help you move ahead as a writer.

5. Get Into The Proper Mindset.

The purpose of your critique is *not* to meet an important editor or successful author; rather, it's to receive valuable feedback on your writing skills. Don't enter the session thinking this is your "big chance" to get your foot in the door. Your critiquer is meeting with you for one reason: To help you become

a better writer. So, listen, absorb, and learn.

After a successful one-on-one critique, you'll have gained a unique, professional perspective on your writing skills; you'll have developed a personal rapport with your critiquer because you were relaxed and well prepared; and, you'll have taken another step toward becoming a successful writing professional.

The best way to guarantee a successful one-on-one critique is to make sure you're well prepared. Now that you know *how* to prepare, go for it. Good luck!

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