HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW

Whenever you’re asked to decide whether something is good or bad—and then explain why on paper—you’re being asked to write a *review* or *evaluation*. Reviews are usually written for magazines, newspapers or websites. The language you should use is formal or neutral. The adjectives are the most important words in reviews because you will be explaining and describing.

**Step One:**

You may be asked to write a review of a film, a book, a restaurant, a programme, etc. You will be asked to give your opinion, positive or negative and make a recommendation. The first thing you need to do before you start your review is decide what aspects of the item you are going to evaluate. An example: when you’re watching a movie, you can look at the acting, the special effects, the camera work, or the story, among other things. Those are all items you can examine and decide if they are well or poorly done. With a book, you can look at the plot, the characters, and the way that the author puts words together. With a restaurant, you can look at the food, the service, and the setting. In fact, everything has qualities you can analyse and evaluate.

**Step Two:**

It is now time to start putting your essay together. Here’s a pretty simple format you can follow:

- Open with an introduction paragraph that does the following things: catches the reader’s attention and identifies the thing you’ll be reviewing (e.g., the title of the book or movie, genre, the author, star, or director, if appropriate).
- Paragraph 2: describes the plot and the action, while informing the reader which actor plays which role. In a restaurant review, describe the setting and the type of food or service.
- Paragraph 3: analyses the film, talking about the director and then the actors, looking at good things as well as bad things. In a book if the characters are well described or if the writing is good enough. In a restaurant it analyses the service and the quality of the food.
• Recommendation: makes a judgment about the book or movie or whatever, saying whether it is good or bad (some reviewers give ratings, like four stars or two thumbs up) and it recommends that the reader go to the movie or read the book or buy a meal at the restaurant (or not)

Useful language for reviews

Introduction

• This work is based on the script..
• This film is based on the novel....
• This is the first novel written by....
• It is set in the countryside....
• This is a romantic musical set in .....
• This is dramatic thriller starring Nicole Kidman as X and Tom Cruise playing the role of.... X

Main points of plot and other comments

• The plot concerns...
• The tale begins...
• The film reaches its climax when ...
• The plot has an unexpected twist when...
• The plot is rather unconvincing ..
• I was quite impressed/ rather disappointed by ..
• The description of .... was particularly graphic.
• There is spectacular scenery and spectacular action.
• The casting is excellent, but it lacks...
• The story captures the spirit of...
• What I liked most was...
• I was highly impressed by....
• The special effects were breath-taking
• It succeeds brilliantly in ....
• I seemed rather long,/ confusing/ unbelievable
Conclusion and recommendation

• This film is a must for anybody interested in good cinema
• Don’t miss it
• It is well worth seeing
• I would have no hesitation in recommending...
• I would therefore recommend it

ADJECTIVES

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<tr>
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<td>Captivating</td>
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<th>Adverbs of intensity</th>
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An example review: The Dark Knight Rises (2012)

Christopher Nolan brings another adrenaline-filled, comic-inspired movie to the big screen. Christian Bale stars as both the classic caped crusader and his billionaire alter-ego, Bruce Wayne in this third Batman film. We see all sorts of familiar faces this time around, but the audience is introduced to a few new characters as well.

When crisis threatens Gotham City, Bruce Wayne jumps back into the Batmobile to fight crime. Batman is joined on his adventure by an eager orphaned cop (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), a seductive cat burglar (Anne Hathaway), and a violent masked villain (Tom Hardy).

All actors, new and old, shone and were superb in their respective roles. True to Nolan’s style, at 164 minutes, this film is fairly long, but the gorgeous action scenes and impressive dialogue really held the audience’s attention and kept them on the edge of their seats. However, the timeline was a bit unclear at times. For a number of scenes, it was hard to tell whether it had been days or months or years that had passed since the last time a given character had been on screen.
This film serves as great entertainment with its colourful cast and numerous plot twists. Despite the film’s minor shortcomings, The Dark Knight Rises is exciting, creative, and dark, so it is well worth spending a few hours of your time.

Sample Movie Review: Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Last weekend, I saw the movie Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. As part of the popular Harry Potter book and movie series, it was definitely one to remember.

This movie is mainly about a large-scale competition between wizards that takes place at Hogwarts over the course of the school year. Harry has been entered into the contest, which is known as The Triwizard Tournament, and many twists and turns happen in this adventurous competition. True to Harry Potter form, the characters encounter problems, tragedies, challenges, and mysterious behaviour that they are forced to solve.

New characters were introduced in this film, which was an enjoyable aspect and added a new element of intrigue that the previous Harry Potter films did not possess. Furthermore, this film seemed to follow the book the most closely and accurately. It also was a good length: not excessively long but long enough to tell the story. Another great aspect of the film was the special effects, particularly with regard to all of the scenes featuring the dragons.

This movie was also different from the rest because it had more stories concerning the characters’ love lives. In one particular scene, there was a dance that all of the tournament contestants were going to attend. The characters went to the ball, and it was so much fun to watch. First of all, the scenery of the ball was exquisite, and it was so cool to actually feel like you were there! This was definitely one of the highlights of the movie.

Overall, this was, in my opinion, the best Harry Potter film yet and portrays the fantastical story of wizards and the world of Hogwarts extremely well. With the addition of new characters and romantic aspects, this movie was truly a great one. I would therefore recommend watching it.

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