

The Writing Centre

Room SN-2053
Science Building
Tel: 737-3168
Email: writing@mun.ca



Hours: Mon. - Fri.
10:00am - 4:00pm
Further hours to be posted
on a term-by-term basis

www.mun.ca/writingcentre

CRITIQUING AN ARTICLE

There is no single format to follow in critiquing journal articles, and your first step, as a student, should be to determine your professor's specific guidelines and expectations. What follow, however, are some general guidelines that you may find helpful in developing an effective critique.

The introduction

Your introduction should give your reader an overview of the article you are critiquing, so that he or she can both make sense of your evaluation and access the article independently. Here is some of the information you should therefore include:

- all pertinent publication details (author(s), article and journal title, issue number, etc.)
- a brief explanation of the author's purpose in writing the article
- an indication of the article's scope (i.e., how much "ground" it attempts to cover/how much it attempts to address)
- a brief description of the kinds of resources/research techniques the author used in conducting his or her research

You might also want to address some of these issues in your introduction:

- the author's profession/background/reputation; other research for which he or

- she is noted
- the relevance/currency/importance of the topic to current-day concerns in your field
- how this article relates to other articles dealing with the same topic (i.e., does it agree or disagree with their findings? Is it revolutionary? Is it the first published attempt to address the topic at hand?)
- whether the circumstances in which the article was researched or written were in any way unusual

The body

You may wish to begin the body of your critique by briefly summarizing the highlights of the article, if you did not do so in your introduction. Alternatively, you may choose to analyse/ evaluate the article's content as you summarize it. The key thing to remember, though, is that your job in the body of your critique is intended to analyse/evaluate the article in question, rather than merely to report what it contained. These are some of the points* you may wish to consider in performing your analysis/evaluation:

- whether or not the article achieves its purpose
- whether the author remains consistent in his or her argument — and, if not, whether any attempt is made to resolve the seeming-contradictions
- whether or not the evidence used to support claims in the article is ample and reliable
- whether any of the presented information seems to be deliberately or unintentionally distorted/misinterpreted by the author
- whether the author investigates all necessary areas of the issue being addressed, or whether some areas are overlooked
- whether procedures used in the research, or conclusions reached by the author, coincide with or differ from those of other researchers who have dealt with this topic
- whether or not the style in which the article is written is “reader friendly”
- whether the article paves the way for further research/whether its findings are in some way useful or significant — and for whom.

*Please note: ideas here have been adapted from Making Sense in the Social Sciences, Margot Northey & Lorne Tepperman, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986.