

The Critical Forum, otherwise known as the critique.

It's important to remember that critiques are meant to improve output rather than hinder process. Steven Johnson, author of *Where Good Ideas Come From* says, "Often times the thing that turns a hunch into a real breakthrough is another hunch that's lurking in somebody else's mind."

The critique is an opportunity for students to have an informed discussion about creative projects and concepts they have created and explored. It is a chance to consider work thoughtfully and to evaluate it fairly.

By participating in discussions, students will increase their knowledge and appreciation of their own work, the work of peers and creative work in general. The critique is an excellent opportunity to discuss the processes, both creative and technical. Additionally, informed feedback gives students different, fresh, perspectives on their own work. Often people get so involved with the process of making the work that they might not be able to consider their work objectively. Fortunately, a good discussion usually brings to light multiple interpretations on one project. In this way, a critique can help one see their work from as many viewpoints as are represented in the classroom.

The critical forum is a dynamic exchange of thought and opinion. When speaking about someone's work, some guidelines to follow:

1. Diplomacy must be practiced at all times. Whether expressing a positive or negative opinion or idea, students are always obliged to explain themselves, and to express those remarks with consideration, which does not attack the person, but rather comments on the work.
2. In turn, the student being critiqued should also understand that the feedback is not personal and intended to help improve their creative works. Avoid becoming defensive.
3. Discuss the issues/ideas/concepts presented in this work. Is it possible to summarize the student's intent, as it pertains to the assignment, in one sentence?
4. Address the technical aspects.
5. Feedback is most useful when specific and accompanied by suggestion(s). Statements such as "I don't like it," or "I really love it!" are ambiguous and feel safer, but they don't benefit the conversation or the student.

Critiques can help us navigate both complex processes and projects, therefore it is important not to give up as a default, but gather as much information as you can about why a project has fallen short/failed.

In sum, students contribute thoughtful and valuable insight into the work of others and offer suggestions that enable other students to improve their work.