

# Design Studio- the Guide to a Good Critique

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A good critique doesn't have to be a positive one. Some of the best critiques a creative person can get are merely comprised of constructive criticism. Which leads me to:

## Please, explain why

When something isn't working, when you instinctively react negatively to a design, take a moment to analyze specifically what is bothering you so you can BE SPECIFIC. Some basic design elements to focus on:

- Font choice
- Use of color
- Balance, use of negative space (quite simply, look at where objects are on the page.)
- Unity (what connects the objects to each other? Do they look too different? What do they have in common?)
- Consistency (does the aesthetic match the message, if it's supposed to?)
- Craftsmanship
- Presence of design cliches (obvious Photoshop filters, amateur tricks etc.) :This may or may not be important to you as a potential negative.

## Remember the parameters of an assignment

It helps to keep the project sheet nearby so you can refer to the criteria when evaluating a classmate. This can help you to support an instinctive negative or positive reaction. It might also shed some light on when you are expecting too much from a peer.

## Keep in mind why we critique

Why do you put your work out in a place where the world can view it? If applicable, reflect on a time when you uploaded work to a website (such as deviantart.com). What were you hoping for? If someone disliked your work, what would the ideal response be? Try to offer this to whomever you are assigned to critique in our class.

## Speak up!

This may seem silly and obvious, but mumbling is one of the biggest problems in class critiques. Many people are shy about offering their honest opinion of something they know another person worked on. Do NOT be afraid to offer your honest opinion in a loud voice. In our class, you're working for part of your grade during critique time. Along the same lines, don't keep quiet solely because your comments fall under the "criticism" heading.

## Don't take it personally

Easier said than done, right? A critique of your work is not an attack on you. Try to listen and perhaps even take notes on what others are saying. Don't dismiss the opinion of anyone, even if you dislike their work. (Many prominent art critics have had a great eye for successful design, and no innate artistic talent of their own.)

## Really care about another person's project for a minute

A good critique frequently comes from a place of wanting to see another person's work improved. Bad critiques are often highly egotistical, intended to make the critiquer look good in front of others, or to knock the other artist down a peg. (Many professors actually do this.) If you see something good about a classmate's work, tell them!

## Get inspired

Take notes for yourself! Even if you're not the assigned critiquer, if you see something you like, that inspires you or makes you dream of design projects of your own, jot down those ideas. Consider adding to your sketchbook a section on what other people do right and wrong. Learn from everyone around you. That's why we have classes and not merely independent studies.

## Don't be rude

Stick to addressing flaws in the project, and offering any potential solutions you can come up with. As soon as you are speaking to a classmate's ability or potential, you're in no-man's land. (This is much more of a problem in our written critiques. If you wouldn't say it out loud, don't write it either.)

Never say things like "Nice try" "Good effort" etc. They sound condescending.

## Temper the bad with the good

Even if you secretly think one of your classmates is going to end up doing cheesecake tin quality control, don't discourage them. For one, their design may not be your taste, but it could be someone else's. For another, being too critical can easily cause another person to give up on improving. Use a little basic human psychology and try to find something good about the project, to offset whatever negative criticism you have.