**Tips for Giving a Critique**

* **Maintain a helpful, positive mindset:** We are all here to help each other get to the next level in our writing.
* **Use the sandwich method:** When critiquing, start with something you liked, then provide constructive criticism, and end with something you liked. Depending on the format of the critique group, you may prefer to provide critique comments in chronological order, but it is always a benefit to sum things up at the end with an overall positive.
* **Use “I” statements:** Say “I found this part boring” rather than “This part *was* boring.” Remember, you bring your opinion, and you should always own it … keeping in mind that the writer does not have to agree with you.
* **Be specific:** Taking the above a step further, if you “found this part boring,” be sure to explain why. Was it too slow? Not descriptive enough? Not active enough? Why? Why? Why?
* **Offer suggestions:** If you “found this part boring,” offer ways to improve it, being careful not to change the fabric of the writer’s tone, point of view, voice, perspective, etc.
* **Don’t rewrite in your voice:** Although offering suggestions for a word change or, perhaps, rephrasing to clarify a sentence may be helpful, this is not your piece. Do *not* rewrite paragraphs, entire stanzas, or pages in your own voice.
* **Stay in your own corner:** The writer makes the ultimate decision whether to accept or reject your criticisms. Even if you really feel strongly that a change needs to be made (and quite possibly it does), recognize that the writer has final say over his or her own work. You’ve given your opinion. That’s what you’ve been asked to do. You’ve done it. The rest is up to the writer.
* **Never criticize the writer:** Discuss the writing, not the writer. Enough said.
* **Be kind:** Even if you hate a piece of writing, respect that the writer has invested his or her time and effort, AND willingly given you the chance to critique his or her work (a brave and sometimes scary act) regardless of the outcome. Be polite. Phrase your critique in a way that wouldn’t offend you if it were a critique of your own writing.

“Writing is a lonely job. Having someone believe in you makes a lot of difference.” —Stephen King