Get it Write
For Your Readers

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Oh no! I never even had time to read the cover reviews.

I can't wait to hear what you both have to say about the new book by Jack Smith?

Ha ha if only they knew Jack Smith was my pen name : )
Purpose for writing reviews

Why write reviews? Is there a specific purpose for writing reviews?

Is it …

- For enjoyment?
- For enhancing personal skills?
- For professional improvement?
- For providing information to customers?
- To make it easier for customers (and staff) to find that next great read?
- To improve circulation of the library’s collection?
Material types

Reviews are not limited to just books. They can and should be written about any type of material, in any format:

- Book (print or electronic)
- Audiobook (physical CD/MP3 or downloadable)
- Movie/documentary (in theater, on television, or on VCR/DVD/Blu-ray)
- Music (physical CD or downloadable)
- Podcast (streaming or downloaded)
- Etc ...
Points to keep in mind

When writing a review it is useful to follow the basic information gathering guidelines used by journalists. Ask and answer the questions:
Getting everything ready

As you go through the title, take notes to answer the basic questions and record reactions to what you read/see/hear:

- Fill in a prepared worksheet
  - Readers’ Advisory Handbook
    - Annotation Worksheet - Chapter 6 (pg 47)
    - Create your own template
- Write in a journal/notebook
- Use a piece of paper as a bookmark
- Whatever works best for the individual reviewer
Record notes on a piece of paper

- Use as a bookmark while reading
- Stays with title!

Very handy for taking ‘elements’ from notes

- Characters, phrasing, quotes, etc.
- Can use as write review

And turn it ...
Admiral by Sean Danker

In Danker’s non-stop debut, the terrifying, suspenseful action of James Cameron’s Aliens mixes with snarky Miles Vorkosigan’s alter-ego Admiral Naismith from The Warrior’s Apprentice. A fragile truce exists between the Evagardian Empire and the Ganraen Commonwealth prior to the beginning of peace talks. Civilians and military personnel employ sleep pods to travel the long distances through space. En route to their first assignment, three prime Imperial recruits and a passenger whose pod identifies him as an Admiral, wake up aboard the wrong ship with no power or crew on a treacherous, supposedly abandoned colony world. The trio of uniquely skilled academy graduates are baffled by and suspicious of their fellow survivor. While obviously not a real Admiral, their unnamed enigmatic companion is definitely more than he seems, which is a good thing. To escape the deadly planet on which they are stranded, they are all going to have to work together. Fans of fast-paced, military science fiction series will be eager to discover what thrilling action-packed adventures are awaiting the Admiral and his new confederates.
Appealing compositions

Fact: We live in an age of short attention spans and whether we like it or not, this has an impact on review writing. In most cases, reviews should ...

- Capture the reader’s attention right away
  - Try starting with a quote or descriptive phrase
  - Put the important information at the top (another journalism tip)
- Be natural
  - Write using own voice
- Don’t give away the ending!
  - No spoilers or information about major plot twists
- Emphasize what is unique to the format
  - Book vs Audiobook vs Movie vs Music vs etc ...
● Check sentence structure, spelling, and grammar
  ○ Keep a dictionary and/or thesaurus on hand
  ○ GrammarCheck - http://www.grammarcheck.net/editor/
  ○ Grammarly - https://www.grammarly.com/
● Be appealing and concise
  ○ Be positive even if didn’t like the title
  ○ Use a few modifiers to spice things up
  ○ Try employing a word count limit to practice concise writing
Roses and Rot by Kat Howard

Howard’s fantasy debut is a fable wherein human ambition and family ties become entwined with the magical power of faerie. Two loving sisters, both independently successful and once estranged, have worked long and hard to escape an abusive childhood. Imogen, a writer and Marin, a professional dancer, have both been offered fellowships at Melete, an exclusive artists’ colony. The retreat is a wondrous haven of artistic devotion and creative pursuit with personal mentors assigned to each resident and a mysterious connection to the enchanted realm of the Fae. The sanctuary has a reputation for boosting the careers of those who attend although at a price some might find daunting. The siblings find themselves in direct competition and will have to decide if the prize is worth what the other may lose. Lyrical writing complements the setting’s mystical imagery, further conveying the fairy tale quality of the story. Those with a fondness for the expressive language of tales from times past will enjoy this story where fairyfolk mingle for good or ill with the real world.
Once you have finished writing ...

- If available, read other reviews for the same title
  - Compare how others have crafted their review
- Read the review aloud!
  - Use natural voice and speed
  - Watch for grammatical and spelling errors
- Have someone else edit the review
  - Be open to suggestions or criticism
  - Asking for editing help allows for taking advantage of another’s point of view
- Use color &/or imagery if appropriate and when possible
  - Especially if posting on social media
PRES technique

A simple method to assist in plotting out a book talk.


Adapted at St Charles City-County Library District to help create Book Annotations using four short sentences:

- **Point** (title) - a sentence with specific information about the title, author, genre, subgenre, or series (if there is one)
- **Reason** (appeal factor) - a sentence stating why someone might enjoy the title
- **Example** (plot description) - a sentence giving a bit about the story but NO SPOILERS with specific plot points
- **Similarities** (read-alikes) - a sentence listing a similar read or a connection to another title
Resources

For writing reviews ...

- **Writing Reviews for Readers’ Advisory.** Brad Hooper. ALA Editions, 2010.
  - Includes chapter by Joyce Saricks on writing audiobook reviews
  - Part 2: Chapter 6 through 9 - Reviewing and Evaluating Materials (pg 38-69)
  - More than 300 audiobook annotations revealing the appeal of the narrator
  - Includes link to YouTube video of full webcast that expands on tips in blog post
For reading reviews …

- Booklist - http://www.booklistonline.com/home
- The Horn Book: Reviews: http://www.hbook.com/category/choosing-books/reviews/
- AudioFile - http://www.audiofilemagazine.com/
- BookPage - https://bookpage.com/
- Foreword Reviews - https://www.forewordreviews.com/
- IndiePicks - https://indiepicksmag.com/
- Kirkus - https://www.kirkusreviews.com
Practice (makes perfect)

Keep ‘practicing’ your art by …

- Reading, listening to, and viewing a wider variety of titles
- Reading outside your comfort zone - keep stretching your limits
- Reading reviews from a broad range of sources: learn how others do it
- Sharing your work with co-workers, taking comments and critiques in stride
- Continuing to write reviews - keep perfecting your skills and personal style
- Assigning yourself a word count limiter to make your writing concise
- Posting on social media so your efforts are more accessible
- Most of all … having fun!! :-}
THANK YOU for listening!

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Slide presentation available at: https://goo.gl/4GBm77