

MODULE 2**REVIEW WRITING****KEY OBJECTIVES**

1. To understand what a review is.
2. To use your opinion to write a review.
3. To identify the key elements of a review.
4. To plan and pitch a review for your publication.
5. To write your review.

KEY FEATURES

1. To be detailed, specific and honest.
2. To be constructive – don't be nasty.
3. To point out the good and the bad and back up with evidence.
4. To be confident with your personal opinions.
5. To recognise that your conclusion will potentially determine the reader's action.

This is a great topic to encourage even the most reluctant of writers to pick up a pen and start their writing journey. Reviewing something they have an interest in enables them to focus and use their opinion to create a piece of work that they can be proud of.

Having knowledge on the subject they are writing about brings out confidence in your team and encourages positive results. Review writing would be our go-to favourite for kicking the Write2 programme, as you want your group to feel confident and at ease throughout. And writing a review is a great way to start.

OPINIONS – POPULAR OR NOT

Personal experience drives the writing of a review. Whether it was something they may have liked or disliked, the key thing is your writers are knowledgeable of what they are writing about.

It is important to have finished the book or watched the movie in its entirety if that is what they are reviewing. Having read or watched something halfway through does not give them a full understanding.

It is also worth pointing out when talking to your writers that their opinions do matter, as many we have worked with, seem to think they don't. Discussing how they recommend things to their friends, such as a video game or the latest blockbuster or even the latest mobile phone is a way of showing how they are informally reviewing something.

Therefore, what you are asking them to do by writing a review is basically just formalising their opinion for a wider audience.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF REVIEWS?

Many of your writers will easily identify what a review is – it is something to either encourage or discourage you to watch/read/listen to/play with/visit/buy whatever it is the review is for. Our sessions tend to focus on positive reviews because younger writers tend to be more confident around things they have enjoyed. However, you may find the older or more experienced writers you work with, the more confident they become in sharing a negative or neutral opinion on something.

It is also a great way for writers to channel their opinions on what could be better about their selection. We have found that allowing the group time to reflect on exactly what it is that they like about this product/thing by talking it through encourages them to think both subjectively and objectively.

The same with what they wish could have been better.

WHAT CAN BE REVIEWED?

The joy of starting your program with review writing is the fact that absolutely anything can be reviewed. Obviously, top choices tend to be movies, books, music and video games, but with technology being at our fingertips, pretty much all of the time, phones, gadgets and computers can also be suggested by your team of young writers. Restaurants, shops, holidays are all things which can be offered to those who might struggle with ideas.

There are templates provided in the resource section for the following to give your young writers a helping hand in penning their first review: movies, books, concerts, video games, music (albums), restaurants and mobile phones. The obvious differences for these will be in the key info section, which you will read about more next, but through group discussion and their own experience, your writers will be able to identify this info with ease.

Opening your session up for discussion will encourage your team to think about what really matters to them about the thing they have decided to review. As always, communicating what we like or don't like about something is fundamental to writing a dynamic review, so why not have some of your young writers share their thoughts with the group first of all. Not only will this make things clearer to them as the reviewer but perhaps encourage those that might be struggling.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD REVIEW?

As consumers, we are looking for honesty when it comes to a review. Obviously, what matters to one person might not matter to another, so

ensuring you cover absolutely everything is pretty impossible the time frame you are working with. So encourage your writers to focus on the things that really stood out to them to ensure their honesty and opinion is clear to the reader.

Getting the key info across about whatever your writers are reviewing in the early part of the review will be of huge benefit, as that is what will encourage a reader to read on. Key info tends to include price, who makes the product or who stars in the movie. It is the information shared in this section that will resonate with your audience. If the review captures their interest in the opening paragraph, it will keep them reading.

Making a list of the things they like about the reviewed item in the planning stage and what could be better about it will ensure the pros and cons/could be better will be there for the reader to consider. Our plans allow your writers to list three factors that impress and then one that could be better. There is also an additional sheet for older/more experienced writers who may have additional things to point out to the reader as to why this product/place/event is worthy of their time or money.

**TOP
TIP**

Writing articles in a notebook gives the team the opportunity to edit their own work as they type it up for the final publication

BIAS

One of the key takeaways from this session is always encouraging your young writers to share something that could have been better with the thing they are reviewing or something that they hated. You want them to identify from a young age how constructive feedback is helpful and this is a great way of showing them that.

We have often talked about favouritism with young writers to get the point of bias across. Using, for example, how it feels when you think your teacher has a favourite in their class. It potentially brings into play a lack of trust for the teacher and the 'pet' which is basically what bias can result in when it comes to reviews.

Granted, this may be something worth spending more time on with the older writers, but ensuring your young writers are clear on what writing an impartial review is, is a good way of addressing bias.

This is often good module to let the team think about what they may want to talk about in the reviews. Allowing them to refresh their memories and possibly listen to the album again or watch the movie once more is often enough of a refresher. So if time permits you could ask them to do this over a week to give them time to consider their choice.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Understand what a review is and what they achieve
- Identify that almost anything can be reviewed
- The writer identifies something they have extensive knowledge of to review
- Show an understanding of bias **
- Plan and write a review based on personal knowledge for publication using the 3 good 1 bad/could be better format
- Write a review to include 5 good and 2 bad/could be better **
- Support other young writers in their review writing **

*** advanced learning*