

Deadwood Writers Group Writers' Guidelines

www.deadwoodwriters.org

Mission Statement:

We are a learning community who support all writers of all skills and interests based on their personal writing goals.

Process for Giving Feedback to an Author

1. The author introduces the writing and supplies one to three goals for which he is seeking feedback.
 - a. Goals let the group know what is the writer's focus for feedback.
 - b. This allows for targeted constructive conversation around the writing.
 - c. Without goals, the floodgates are opened to disconnected, unfocused feedback.
2. The submission is read by the group using one of the following formats:
 - a. Read prior to the meeting by four participants or 50% of the attendees (which ever number is higher). See "Reading Queue" for more details.
 - b. Read aloud at the meeting by the author or a volunteered participant.
3. A discussion of the work and the author's goals then ensues.
 - a. Participants should write feedback comments on their copy of the submission and include their name at the top of the first page. This allows the author to follow up with questions once she/he has reviewed the feedback.
 - b. The group talks about the writing from the perspective of where the author wants to go with her/his work.
 - c. All feedback should be constructive, specific, and phrased in a positive manner. Participants must first comment on a positive element regarding the submission, using the starter stem "I like..." Only then may a participant raise concerns about potential needs, using a starter stem "I wonder..." or "What if..."
 - d. Reviewers are challenged to avoid feedback revolving around how "they" might rewrite parts if "they" were the author. This can be best avoided by posing such ideas as a question, beginning with: "I wonder...", "How might...", or "How could..."
 - e. The word "Why" is banned from the feedback process by all except the author.
 - f. It is the responsibility of all participants, along with the facilitator, to protect this supportive environment, and assist those who may not recognize their actions as counter-productive.

Sharing Your Writing

There are several ways an author can share his work in order to get feedback (constructive critique).

Option #1: The Author's Chair

Prior to the meeting —author submissions will be accepted no earlier than 9 days prior to a meeting (currently Sunday) through the listserv deadwoodwriters@yahoogroups.com. The queue is prioritized by email time stamp via the listserv. The facilitator maintains the schedule, reserving up to five pieces, depending on page length.

Protocols to follow include:

- Emailing the deadwoodwriters@yahoogroups.com and attaching the document(s) to be read/critiqued.
- The work is reviewed and comments are noted on the work *prior* to the upcoming meeting. The piece is then discussed at the scheduled meeting.

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- The author must bring 3-5 copies of the submission for participants who are unable to access the listserv or did not bring their copy of the draft.
- If time runs out before reviewing any submissions, those authors have the opportunity to be reserved first at the next scheduled meeting.

Option #2: The Reading Queue

An author can also bring 10-15 hard copies (10 pages 1.5 or doubled spaced maximum or 5 pages single spaced maximum) of his/her work to a meeting for feedback/critique. Up to 30 minutes is allotted for reading and feedback. At the beginning of a meeting, the facilitator asks if anyone has something to be read. After the Author Chair reserved readings/discussions are finished, those in the reading queue go next, and have the option to have their work read silently, read their work aloud, or ask for a volunteer to read their work. Each person with writing to share will get a turn until the meeting ends. Anyone who did not have a chance to have her work read/critiqued at that time may opt to be first in the Author's Chair, or first in the Reading Queue, at the next meeting.

At any time, members may give copies of their work to another member(s) to read and provide feedback. This arrangement is made individually, and must be agreed upon by all participants. It is important that when one volunteers to review another's writing, feedback is given by the mutually agreed upon date.

Preparation for Sharing Writing

The author brings a minimum of ten copies of the work (plus one for herself) to pass out to those attending the meeting. If the author previously passed out copies to the group (for the Author's Chair), a minimum of five copies should be provided for those who did not get one, or who came without their copy.

While exceptions will occur, the following format is preferred for hard copies:

- Author's name at the top of the first page.
- Typed (1.5 or double-spaced is suggested)
This allows for in-line feedback.
- Font is 10-12 pt. or larger
- Number pages depends on line spacing:
 - 10 pages: 1.5 or double-spaced
 - 5 pages: single spaced

Prior to submitting for feedback, work should be reviewed by the author and/or with support for grammar and mechanics to the best of one's ability. The group is always willing to give feedback on grammar, especially when that is a requested focus from the author. However, since meeting time is limited, **feedback on grammar should be provided with written notes only (on the manuscript).**

The group facilitator reserves the right to adjust guidelines during a meeting that best meets the focus of quality feedback. This includes, but not limited to, rescheduling submissions for a later meeting if guidelines are not followed and shortening feedback time based on the flow of feedback. In these and other instances, any group member can seek an exception for approval by the attending members.