

How to write a review? | C2 Proficient (CPE)

Level: C2 Exam: C2 Proficient

Writing

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A review may be about a **book, magazine, film, play, or concert**, but it may also be about, for example, **an exhibition**.

The target reader is specified in the question, so the candidate knows not only what register is appropriate, but also has an idea about the kind of information to include

A review does not merely require a general description of, for example, an event or publication, but it specifies the **particular aspects** to be **considered**. For example, the review may employ narrative, as well as descriptive and evaluative language, and a **range of vocabulary relating**, for example, to **literature** and the **media** such as **cinema** or **TV**.

The language appropriate to a review will include, for example, **language for describing, narrating and evaluating**.

How to write a CPE review?

1. Read task, underline content points.

Brainstorm an appropriate title and introduction.

2. Divide content points into paragraphs

-What do you want to say? Add your notes to each paragraph in a simple form.

-How are you going to say that? Brainstorm advanced grammar and vocabulary for each note.

3. In your conclusions, give your overall critical assessment

You should evaluate the work as a whole, determining whether the author/producer achieves the intended goal and whether the book/movie makes a significant contribution to the existing knowledge.

CPE Review: Structure

An attractive title Drawing the attention of readers
A catchy introduction Clarifying the topic and attracting the reader's attention.
The body paragraph (1) A short summary of the reviewed material
The body paragraph (2) Description of positive aspects and/or weaker points
The body paragraph (3) Name things that could be changed to improve the quality of the product.
Recommendation Final opinion, recommendation or comment.

The CPE review may be **neutral or informal**, depending on the target group. Use a descriptive vocabulary and language relevant to the topic.

CPE Review: Introduction

The introduction focuses on the **identification** of the **author**, the **title**, the **main topic** or issue presented in the question as well as the author's purpose.

One of my favourite childhood books is the 'Six Bullerby Children' written by Astrid Lindergren, a famous Swedish author. The story is set in a three-farm remote village of Bullerby in Sweden.

If your task requires to review a book or article concerning particular issues or topic, your introduction must also meet these expectations. In other words, the **more complex** your task is, the **more** you have to **implement** in your introduction.

Ultimately, to make your introduction more engaging **you** can **determine** your position as a **reviewer** and briefly state your general impression on it.

CPE Review: The Body

Order the body of your review according to a logical plan.

Your **first** body paragraph can give a short summary of the reviewed material. Give a brief overview – **plot, setting, actors, general idea**.

Second and/or third body paragraphs can be used to **describe good and bad points** respectively. Unlike essay your paragraphs don't have to be of the same length – if you liked the described thing then your paragraph with good points will be naturally bigger than the other one.

In the **negative** points **paragraph**, you can name things that could be changed to improve the quality of the product.

Again, for each paragraph, it's efficient to use the **topic sentence** to identify the point from the book or the article you intend to summarise or evaluate using one or the other pattern

CPE Review: Recommendation

You should **now evaluate the work** as a whole, determining whether the **author achieves the intended or implied goal** and whether the work makes a significant contribution to the existing knowledge.

Use this paragraph to sum up the good and bad points to make an objective assessment of the reviewed material. You may then recommend or dissuade your readers from seeing/attending it.

You can consider the following questions:

- How well has the author achieved the overall purpose of the book or article?
- Is the work appropriately subjective or objective according to the author's purpose?
- Does the author exclude or ignore relevant information?
- What is the most important final comment you wish to make about the book or article?
- Do you have any suggestions for the direction of future research in the area?
- What has reading this work done for you or demonstrated to you?

CPE Review: Examples

CPE Review Sample 1



Review subject:

A TV listings magazine has invited readers to contribute a review of a television series that is particularly popular at the moment. Write a review, explaining why this programme is so popular in your opinion and commenting on whether you believe it deserves such popularity.

Student's CPE Review Answer:

Nowadays, when TV is pouring out so many 'thoughtful and entertaining' programmes at poor TV consumers, it is not an easy task to distinguish and choose which of the meaningless soaps, which is mainly the only choice, is worth seeing. Thank God, there is still one great programme that makes me turn on my goggle box – 'Friends'.

I bet a couple of years ago, the producers wouldn't have expected and dreamt that their new 'attempt to amuse' bored viewers- and with totally unknown actors 'from nowhere' – would earn such a great success. After many years of living a daily life with characters from Dallas, Baywatch, Dynasty, a new wave of funny, clever and witty entertainment struck people in. And obviously, people welcomed the change very warmly.

'Friends' is full of diversity. Each of the main five characters is completely different and brings to the series something new. Despite their differences, they create a perfect working jigsaw. They live, laugh, cry and share their tip [txt="Good use of sophisticated vocabulary and structure"]fate[/tip] together. You can feel some kind of oneness there; and that is a vital thing in every friendship. Chandler – a sexist who can't live without women –with his ironic and sharp, witty humour, contrasts with naive, a little bit dumb but cute Joey, who has a vanity and irresistible smile in the role of an unsuccessful actor. Monica is a nagging perfectionist who often quarrels with frivolous and untidy Rachel. Ross is a worried palaeontologist who tries to come to terms that his wife left him. Poor guy! And at last weird Pheobe, who refreshes almost every episode with her 'fabulous' music which nobody can get. Oh yeah, she's quite odd but everybody loves her.

'Friends' is a great refreshment after a long, exhausting day at work. It is no wonder that it is so popular. People just love it – from children to adults and older people as well. We need to laugh and relax. The actors, producers and creators deserve appreciation and admiration for making such a great show. People are waiting eagerly for new episodes all the time. And that's a sign of success. Otherwise, they would cease producing it, wouldn't they?Not to mention that 'friends' is popular in every continent of the world. And that proves something.

I find myself waiting for Friday night impatiently to turn on my TV and enjoy my favourite programme. And I do believe I'm not the only one. It's just hilarious, you know.

CPE Review Sample 2



Review subject:

A literary magazine is running a series of reviews of books that people enjoyed reading as a child and would recommend for children today. You decide to send in a review in which you describe a book you enjoyed and the attractions it had for you as a child. You should also explain why you feel it remains relevant for children today.

Student's CPE Review Answer:

Childhood Book

One of my favourite childhood books is the 'Six Bullerby Children' written by Astrid Lindergren, a famous Swedish author. The story is set in a three-farm remote village of Bullerby in Sweden.

The narrator is a seven-year-old girl, Lisa who, with her parents and two older brothers – Lasse and Bosse, lives in one of the houses. Lisa describes the daily life of the children in Bullerby which – contrary to what one might think when imagining life in a small, remote village – is far from boring. The children have plenty of funny ideas, which often lead to amusing adventures.

Although the book was included in the compulsory school literature when I was a child (which often meant long, boring reads), I have truly enjoyed the adventures of Lisa and her friends. Despite very limited resources (the story is set in 1930s when children did not have many toys, not to mention a TV or video games!) the children always come up with exciting games or things to play with. This is something I admired and wished I could do when reading the book.

Another thing which appealed to me as a child was the natural childlike way in which Lisa (or Astrid Lindgren, the author) could tell the story connecting effortlessly with the young readers.

Despite the environment in which the children live nowadays has changed considerably since 1930s, children will always be children and if the book has appealed to so many young generations since it was published, I believe it will retain its impact. It can be more, even more relevant today, when children are presented with things to play, instead of inventing games themselves. Reading the book could definitely wake up their innate creativity.

'Six Bullerby Children' could, however, also be more relevant to adults who would like to either 'return' to their childhood for a little while, or be able to connect with their own children a bit better.

CPE Review: Mark scheme

Language

It is necessary to properly and precisely use a **wide array of words** and expressions, including rarely used ones. The text should include both simple and complex [grammar](#) expressions.

The **vocabulary** also has to be **rich and diverse**.

Organization

The text should be consistent and very well organized using a wide array of copulas and internal references.

Communication

It is necessary to maintain the convention, such as **clear division into paragraphs**.

The text should be easy to understand for the target reader.

Content

Every sentence in the text should refer to the **topic** of the assignment, and all the tasks specified in it should be **fulfilled**.

CPE Review: Useful phrases and vocabulary

We will finish it with some useful vocabulary. Although it is taking a shortcut, if you learn several expressions for each paragraph in each type of text that could be on your exam, you will certainly be able to create a very consistent text.

Book reviews:

Vocab to describe the book in general:

*a page-turner / a white-knuckle ride / a tearjerker / a laugh
a minute / I couldn't put it down.*

Vocab to describe specific parts:

*a slow start / a gentle introduction / gripping climax / nail-
biting conclusion / cliff-hanger ending / a shocking twist in the tail*

Setting:

*The book is set in (place/time)
The action takes place in (place/time)
the present day (now)
an alternate reality where vampires/wizards walk the earth
a sleepy village in the USA
the bustling city of New York*

Plot:

*The plot centres around / focuses on (the adventures/lives of)
The plot follows the adventures of(character name)*

Characters:

*Villain / hero / heroine / anti-hero / main character / protagonist
The characters are believable / well-crafted / a bit 2 dimensional.*

Film/TV reviews:

General:

*An all-star cast
heavily influenced by the films of..
glowing reviews
startling originality
suspense builds up
a polished performance
a bold experiment
an accomplished actor
an unmitigated disaster (bad film)
a dazzling display of his/her talents
made a lasting impression on me.
Brought a tear to my eye
Like watching paint dry (boring)
I was on the edge of my seat (exciting)
A blockbuster (big commercial film eg Superman)
... sets off an amazing chain of events*

Gripping film (exciting)

The director/author evoked a magical atmosphere

... awakened my interest in...

Hold my attention

Capture the audience's imagination.

Spectacular set-pieces (main action scenes)

... is cast in the role of...

... is miscast in the role of...

...gives a(n) (un)convincing performance as...

The film is let down by a clichéd script.

Restaurant review:

Hearty meal

Wholesome food

Piping-hot

Succulent/juicy (meat)

Creamy

With a kick (spicy)

Crunchy/crispy

Well-seasoned

Packed with flavour

A steaming plate of...

Hungry/starving/ravenous/famished

Bustling eatery(restaurant)

Lively atmosphere

Service with a smile