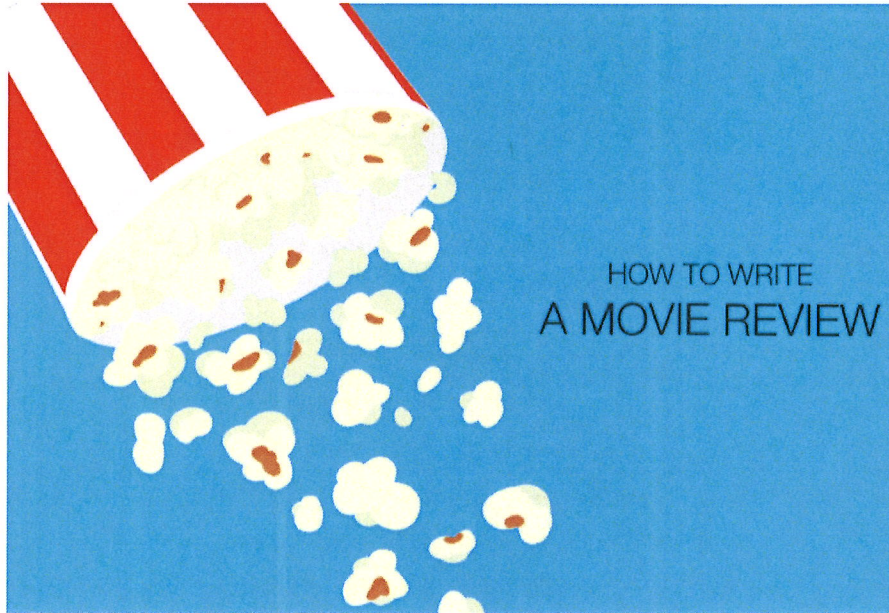


# Writing a Movie Review: Your Step-by-Step Guide



Viewers often try to find what they need in a movie: humor, adrenaline, drama, love, a journey back through time, or an alternative reality. So, writing a movie review seems to be one of the most interesting school assignments. However, enjoying a good film in the evening and watching it for the purpose of writing a review are not the same. This document is aimed to teach you how to avoid common mistakes and how to write an excellent movie review.

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# What Is a Movie Review?

Generally, a movie review is a genre of art criticism and journalism. It is a complex overview, usually made by a professional critic, on films that have just been released, to help decide what film to watch.

Professional reviews differ from those made by amateurs; they are more structured, sharper, more detailed, but at the same time more compact in wording. In a professional movie review you will always find awareness of the film's director(s), their previous works and previous filmmaker's pictures, as well as a deep understanding of different film genres and classics for each of them, and filming techniques and modern trends.

Though, you can find a lot of reviews that are made by ordinary movie fans – and sometimes they can end up being more informative and useful than a professional one.

## Movie Review Purpose

The key to writing an outstanding movie review is understanding its purpose. So, keep your goals in mind while writing:

- Discuss the film plot briefly. Share some information about characters, relations and events, but don't tell the whole story. Reading the review shouldn't replace watching the film. Yet, you are free to mention the most important moments or turning points that make the film worth watching. **NO SPOILERS.**
- Analyze the film in general and in certain aspects, such as the acting, the work of the director, theme, music, and special effects. Make a conclusion if the main idea of the film was duly implemented. Try to be objective and detailed in your evaluations.
- Share your opinion. Describe your feelings during, and after watching the movie and specify what you liked, and what you didn't like. Provide your general impression about the film based on examples, descriptions, and comparisons to enable readers to make their own decisions.
- Give a recommendation. Try not to be categorical, but let your readers know what they can expect from the film, and who might find it interesting. Say if it matches an official film description and declared genre, why it might be worth watching, and what its weaknesses are.
- Entertain the reader. Reading movie reviews is actually kind of fun in itself. We've, as a society, gotten used to using this option before choosing a film to watch. Try to make an easy-to-read review, and write in an interesting manner.

# Step-by-Step Guide to Write a Movie Review

Writing a movie review may not be as challenging as it first appears. This type of academic assignment is not the most complicated one by far. However, it still has its own peculiarities – and if you can get these right, you will succeed.

To get started with your paper, you need to know and understand the main characteristics of a good movie review:

- It provides bibliographic information
- It shares a clear but concise characterization of the movie in question
- It includes a description of the plot but does not give away any spoilers
- It identifies the key characters and actors
- It identifies the setting, themes, and conflicts in the movie and evaluates them
- It compares the film to similar movies
- It identifies key strong and weak points of the film;
- It gives an overall evaluation of the movie.

*Also, another important thing to be aware of in order to understand how to start a movie review is the proper formatting of such an assignment. The key to success in handling your movie review is decent organization. Just like every other academic paper, a good film review essay should follow a specific structure, style, and, most importantly, formatting.*

Here are the key takeaways for how to format your paper:

- Use 1-inch margins on all sides
- Pick a clear and readable font (the preferred fonts are Times New Roman, Courier, and Bookman)
- Set the font size to 12 pt.
- Center the title of the paper along with your name.

Finally, to succeed in writing a movie review, all you need to do is follow the right sequence of actions that will gradually bring you to your desired result. In this section of our article, we are going to share a detailed step-by-step guide for how to write a film review.

### **1. Choose a Film**

If you have a choice, think carefully about what film you would like to analyze. Surely most of us would choose one of our favorites. Though, it's not obligatory to write a review on one of the films you like, you may write about one you don't like, and explain why. Such an approach could be different and refreshing.

### **2. Watch the Movie**

Even if you've seen it a hundred times, watch it again in order to discover new details, and to understand the characters and their motives better. We recommend watching a film at least two, or better yet, three times. While watching it for the first time, we usually concentrate on the main heroes, their storyline and emotions. The second time around usually helps you to notice the details of minor characters and their stories, such as music, timelines, costumes, decorations and locations. All these things contribute to how you perceive the movie and your critique.

### **3. Make Notes**

Keep a paper and pen or laptop near you to write down things you notice in the film, or to note your ideas while watching, or right after it. Write your notes immediately once an idea comes to mind.

### **4. Research the Movie**

Filming is a long and complicated process that involves many people, which usually makes the shooting process an interesting story in itself. Find out as much as possible about it. Is it an original scenario, a re-telling or a remake? Is the plot based on a book? What was the available budget? How has the cast changed in the process? Pick up two or three of the most impressive facts about production and share them in your work.

### **5. Analyze the Movie**

Think about everything you saw in the movie and determine your impressions of the film. Does the picture involve any social context? What was the original idea for the film and how successful were the producers at implementing them? Pay attention to how it was filmed and what techniques were used. For example, in *Psycho*, produced and directed by Alfred Hitchcock, we can definitely notice an unusual zoom effect called vertigo. Think of which actor impressed you the most and why. Compare this role with his or her previous works. Discuss the movie you've chosen with your friends or family to get fresh ideas to support your opinion, or for another point of view.

## 6. Draft a Review Outline

A plan is always a good idea, and could lead to half of your success. Before writing the actual movie review, make an outline of your work to structure all your thoughts and arguments. Read further to get an example of a movie review outline.

## 7. Come up with a Catchy Title

“My Review for Titanic” sounds boring. Think of intriguing or impressive titles, like “Icebergs Aren’t for Everyone.” Make your readers want to read further.

## 8. Write Your Review

Now after you’ve done your research and prepared your work, it’s time to compose a review. Put all your thoughts and arguments together and stick to the outline you wrote before. Make a general overview of the film so that readers are able to understand what problems might arise from it, but don’t spoil the outcome, as they might not have seen the movie yet. Write main points that you liked, and ones that you didn’t. *Reinforce your thoughts with evidence and examples.* Comment on the originality of the movie and compare it with other films of the same genre, films with the same topic, or films directed by the same person.

## 9. Edit Your Final Draft

Once you’ve written your review, take a rest. A little pause before a final reading and editing will help you to look at it with a fresh outlook. Read your work several times. Check for spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, the sequence of presentation, compliance with the outline and professor’s demands, and the format and style.

# Movie Review Outline

Structuring is extremely useful in any type of paper, and a movie review isn’t an exception. A written outline will help you organize your thoughts properly, not to forget anything and to actually end up writing it faster. Here is an example outline you may use:

1. **Introduction.** In this part you need to provide some general information about the picture: title, release date, main actors, filmmakers, film company and filming budget.
2. **Summary of the story.** This is a short exposition of movie plot, characters and their interaction.
3. **Analysis of the movie,** that includes:
  - **Analysis of the plot elements:** starting point, rising action, and climax.

- **Analysis of creative elements:** dialogues, characters, use of colors, camera techniques, mood, tone, symbols, costumes or anything that contributes or takes away from the overall plot.
  - **Analysis of the topic and its implementation:** viewers' understanding of the topic, relevance of the topic, and comparison with other resembling works.
4. **Opinion.** Your point of view supported with examples and facts from the story.
  5. **Conclusion.** Announce whether the filmmaker was successful in his/her purpose. Explain how the motion picture was helpful in providing a deeper understanding of the course topic.

## Mistakes to Avoid

Here are some common mistakes among students that we recommend you avoid.

- ⇒ Retelling the film plot in detail. As we mentioned above, the idea of a movie review is not to put the film on paper—nobody likes spoilers. Share the general plot to make your reader curious about seeing the film in order to get their personal opinion.
- ⇒ Giving a too general opinion of the film. Remember that things are rarely unequivocal. Even if you don't like the content and quality of the film, don't forget to mention if the music was actually pretty good, or if one of the actors managed to portray a believable character.
- ⇒ Lack of evidence. Presenting your opinion without any explanation why you think that way won't be considered reliable. The unfounded statement isn't a good resource for a decision, even if we are talking about a choice of which movie to watch.
- ⇒ Lack of film research. Don't force your readers to conduct their own research, or to look for another review to find out the background information of a movie.
- ⇒ Absence of structure. If your work is not structured properly, it will be really difficult to follow your thoughts and understand your points. Reviews should be helpful to readers, and good structure helps get your message across correctly.
- ⇒ No conclusions and recommendations. As we mentioned above, providing recommendations regarding the film is one of the main purposes of writing a movie review. Do not deprive readers from your findings and thoughts.

# Movie Review FAQ

## **Can I Copy a Movie Review from the Internet and Submit It as My Own?**

No – if you simply copy an existing review and submit it as your own, your teacher will detect plagiarism in your paper and will penalize you for it. However, you still can search for examples of movie reviews on the Web to get ideas for how to write your own. Instead of taking the risk, entrust your movie review to one of our professional academic writers. This way you will save your time, without giving up on your success!

## **What Are Good Movies to Write About?**

Basically, you can write a movie review on pretty much any film. However, we advise to be very careful with these choices. It is important that you pick a movie that you will be able to analyze and evaluate. Typically for a movie review, students choose films they either like or don't like.

## **What Makes a Movie Great?**

There are several key things that define whether a film is good or not, these are: the plot, the visual aesthetics, the quality of directing and acting, the impression it makes on the audience, etc. Generally, you can tell a specific movie is great when it keeps the audience engaged and able to follow the story, and then leaves them with a powerful impression and then something to think about once the credits roll.