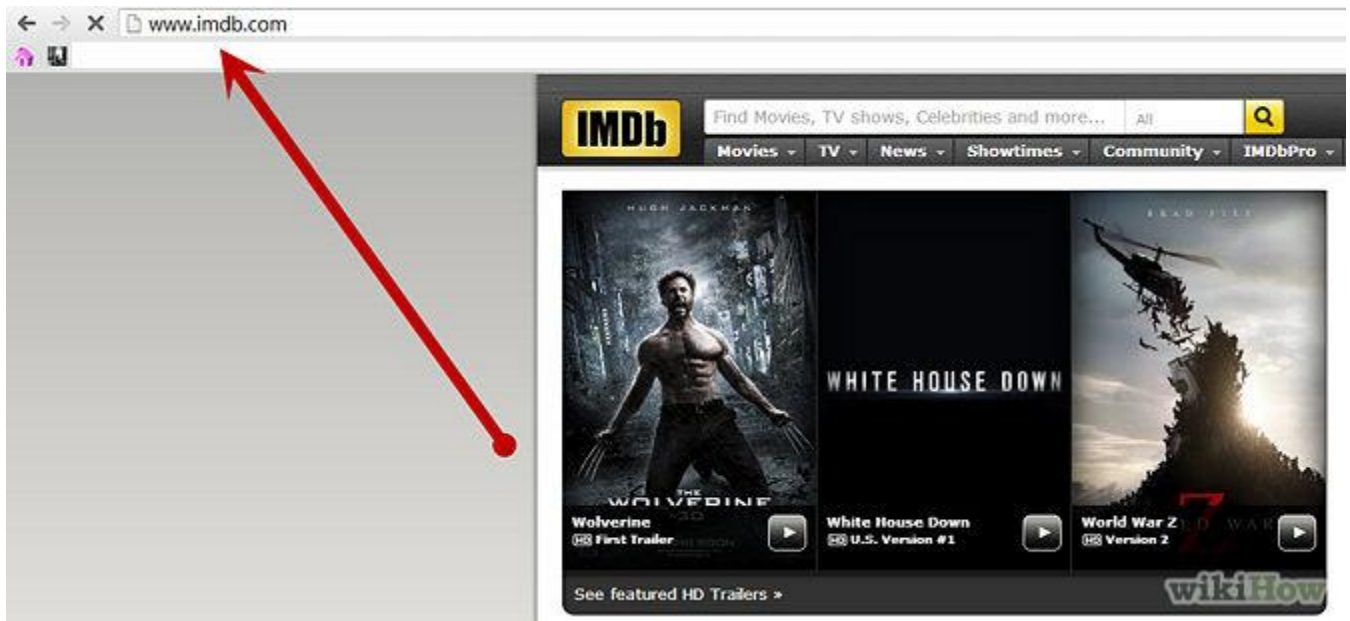


How to Write a Movie Review

<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Movie-Review>

Whether a movie is a rotten tomato or a brilliant work of art, if people are watching it, it's worth critiquing. A good movie review should entertain, persuade and inform, providing an original opinion without giving away too much of the plot. A *great* movie review can be a work of art in its own right. Read on to learn how to analyze a movie, come up with an interesting thesis and write a review as entertaining as your source material.

Method 1 of 3: Studying Your Source Material



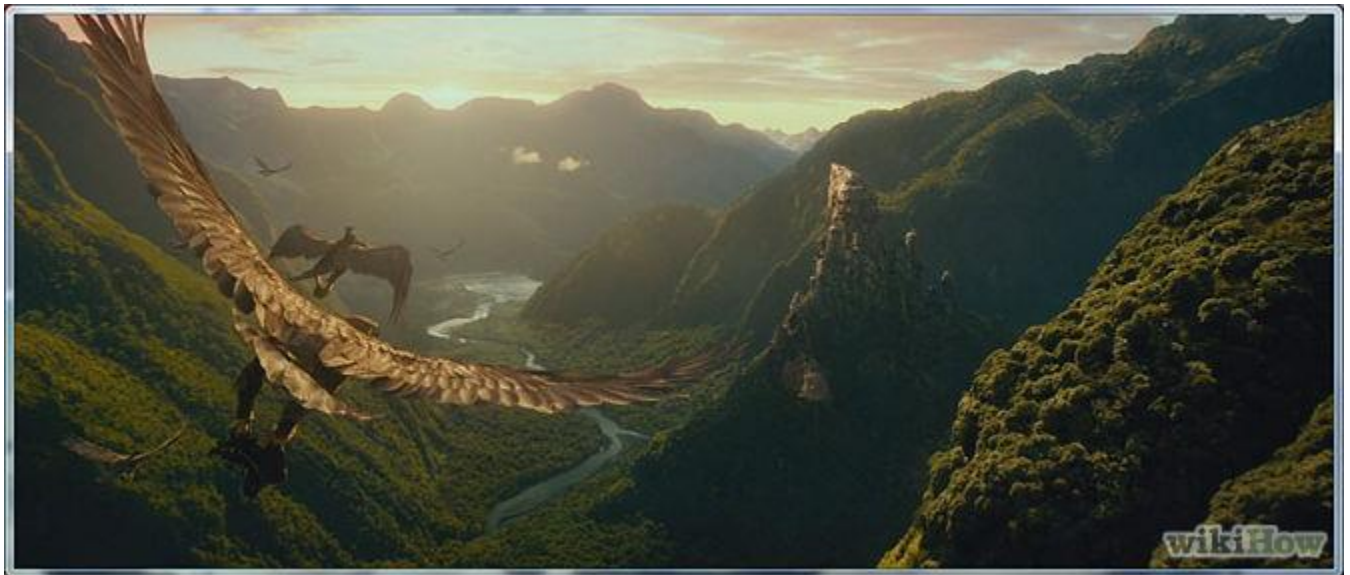
1) **Gather basic facts about the movie.** You can do this before or after you watch the movie, but you should definitely do it before you write the review, because you'll need to weave the facts into your review as you write. Here's what you need to know:

- The title of the film, and the year it came out.
- The director's name.
- The names of the lead actors.
- The genre.



2) **Take notes on the movie as you watch it.** Before you sit down to watch a film, get out a notepad or a laptop to take notes. Movies are long, and you can easily forget details or major plot points. Taking notes allows you to jot down little things you can return to later.

- Make a note every time something sticks out to you, whether it's good or bad. This could be costuming, makeup, set design, music, etc. Think about how this detail relates to the rest of the movie and what it means in the context of your review.
- Take note of patterns you begin to notice as the movie unfolds.
- Use the pause button frequently so you make sure not to miss anything, and rewind as necessary.



3) **Analyze the mechanics of the movie.** Analyze the different components that came together in the movie as you watch. During or after your viewing, ask yourself what impression the movie left with you in these areas:

- Direction. Consider the director and how he or she choose to portray/explain the events in the story. If the movie was slow, or didn't include things you thought were necessary, you

can attribute this to the director. If you've seen other movies directed by the same person, compare them and determine which you like the most.

- Cinematography. What techniques were used to film the movie? What setting and background elements helped to create a certain tone?
- Writing. Evaluate the script, including dialogue and characterization. Did you feel like the plot was inventive and unpredictable or boring and weak? Did the characters' words seem credible to you?
- Editing. Was the movie choppy or did it flow smoothly from scene to scene? Take note of the use of lighting and other ambient effects. If the movie has computer-generated graphics, think about whether or not they looked realistic/fit in with the rest of the film.
- Costume design. Did the clothing choices fit the style of the movie? Did they contribute to the overall tone, rather than digressing from it?
- Set design. Consider how the setting of the film influenced its other elements. Did it add or subtract from the experience for you? If the movie was filmed in a real place, was this location well-chosen?
- Score or soundtrack. Did it work with the scenes? Was it over/under-used? Was it suspenseful? Amusing? Irritating? A soundtrack can make or break a movie, especially if the songs have a particular message or meaning to them.

4) **Watch it one more time.** It's impossible to fully understand a movie you've only seen one time, especially if you're pausing it often to take notes. Watch it at least once more before you compose your review. Pay attention to details you might have missed the first time around. Pick new points of focus this time; if you took a lot of notes on the acting the first time you watched the movie, focus on the cinematography the second time around.

Method 2 of 3: Composing Your Review

- 1) **Create an original thesis based on your analysis.** Now that you've thoroughly studied the movie, what unique insights can you bring to the table? Come up with a thesis, a central idea to discuss and back up with your observations on the various elements of the film. Your thesis should be discussed in the first paragraph of your review. Having a thesis will take your review beyond the plot summary stage and into the realm of film criticism, which is rightfully its own art form. Ask yourself the following questions to come up with a compelling thesis for your review:
 - Does the film reflect on a current event or contemporary issue? It could be the director's way of engaging in a bigger conversation. Look for ways to relate the content of the film to the "real" world.
 - Does the film seem to have a message, or does it attempt to elicit a specific response or emotion from the audience? You could discuss whether or not it achieves its own goals.
 - Does the film connect with you on a personal level? You could write a review stemming from your own feelings and weave in some personal stories to make it interesting for your readers.

2) Follow your thesis paragraph with a short plot summary. It's good to give readers an idea of what they'll be in for if they decide to see the movie you're reviewing. Give a brief summary of the plot in which you identify the main characters, describe the setting, and give a sense of the central conflict or point of the movie. Never break the number one rule of movie reviews: don't give too much away. Don't ruin the movie for your readers!

- When you name characters in your plot summary, list the actors' names directly afterward in parenthesis.
- Find a place to mention the director's name and the full movie title.
- If you feel you must discuss information that might "spoil" things for readers, warn them first.

3) Move into your analysis of the movie. Write several paragraphs discussing interesting elements of the movie that support your thesis. Discuss the acting, the direction, the cinematography, the setting, and so on, using clear, entertaining prose that keeps your readers engaged.

- Keep your writing clear and easy to understand. Don't use too much technical filmmaking jargon, and make your language crisp and accessible.
- Present both the facts and your opinion. For example, you might state something such as, "The Baroque background music was a jarring contrast to the 20th century setting." This is a lot more informative than simply saying, "The music was a strange choice for the movie."

4) Use plenty of examples to back up your points. If you make a statement about the movie, back it up with a descriptive example. Describe the way scenes look, the way a certain person acted, camera angles, and so on. You can quote dialogue to help you make your points as well. In this way you are giving your readers a feel for the movie and continuing to express your critique of the film at the same time.

5) Give it some personality. You could treat your review like a formal college essay, but it's more interesting if you make it your own. If your writing style is usually witty and funny, your review should be no exception. If you're serious and dramatic, that works, too. Let your language and writing style reflect your unique perspective and personality - it's much more entertaining for the reader.

6) Wrap up your review with a conclusion. It should tie back to your original thesis and provide some guidance as to whether the audience should go see the movie. Your conclusion should also be compelling or entertaining on its own, since it's the end of your piece of writing.

Method 3 of 3: Polishing Your Piece

1) Edit your review. Once you've finished the first draft, read it through and decide whether it flows well and has the right structure. You may need to shift paragraphs around, delete sentences, or add more material here and there to fill out parts that are stunted. Give your

review at least one editorial pass, and maybe two or three, before you consider it to be editorially sound.

- Ask yourself whether your review stayed true to your thesis. Did your conclusion tie back in with the initial ideas you proposed?
- Decide whether your review contains enough details about the movie. You may need to go back and add more description here and there to give readers a better sense of what the movie's about.
- Decide whether your review is interesting enough as a stand-alone piece of writing. Did you contribute something original to this discussion? What will readers gain from reading your review that they couldn't from simply watching the movie?

2) **Proofread your review.** Make sure you've spelled all the actors' names correctly and that you got all the dates right. Clean up typos, grammatical errors, and other spelling errors as well. A clean, proofread review will seem much more professional than one that's full of silly mistakes.

3) **Publish or share your review.** Post it on your blog, share it in a movie discussion forum, put it up on Facebook, or email it to your friends and family. Movies are the quintessential art form of our time, and like all art, they spark controversy, provide a venue for self-reflection, and greatly influence our culture. All this means they're worth discussing, whether they're flops or works of pure genius. Congratulations for contributing your valuable opinion to the discussion.

Tips

- Understand that just because the movie isn't to your taste, that doesn't mean you should give it a bad review. A good reviewer helps people find movie's *they'll* like, and since you don't have the same taste in movies as everyone else, you need to be able to tell people if *they* will enjoy the movie, even if you didn't.
 - Read a lot of movie reviews, and think about what makes some of them more helpful than others. Again, the value of a review is not always in its accuracy (how much the reader agrees with the reviewer) but in usefulness (how well the reviewer can predict whether the reader will enjoy the movie).
 - If you don't like the movie, don't be abusive and mean. If possible, avoid watching the movies that you would surely hate.
-

For examples of reviews go to:

<http://academichelp.net/samples/reviews/movie/>

Sample Movie Review

The Dark Knight Rises (2012)

Cast: Christian Bale, Tom Hardy, Anne Hathaway, and Joseph Gordon-Levitt

Director: Christopher Nolan

Synopsis: Christian Bale stars as both the classic caped crusader and his billionaire alter-ego, Bruce Wayne. In this third installment of Christopher Nolan's Batman films, Bruce Wayne no longer feels that the City of Gotham needs a hero and goes on a secluded hiatus. However, when a new villain, Bane (Tom Hardy), threatens Gotham City, Wayne dons his cape and mask once more.

Review:

Christopher Nolan brings yet another adrenaline-filled, comic-inspired movie to the big screen. We see all sorts of familiar faces this time around, but the audience is introduced to a few new characters as well.

When crisis threatens Gotham City, Bruce Wayne jumps back into the Batmobile to fight crime. Batman is joined on his quest by an eager orphaned cop (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), a seductive cat burglar (Anne Hathaway), and a violent masked villain (Tom Hardy).

This film served as great entertainment with its colorful cast and numerous plot twists. Nolan used actors that had either appeared in previous Batman films or in his blockbuster hit Inception, and all of them shone in their respective roles: Tom Hardy was almost unrecognizable in his Bane costume, while Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Marion Cotillard were both excellent—and obviously comfortable with Nolan's directing style and the film's dramatic tone.

The one actor that gave this reviewer pause was Anne Hathaway as Selina Kyle. She has historically been typecast as the girl next door, so it was a shock to watch her steal and fight her way through the City of Gotham. After a few scenes, however, we were convinced that the casting decisions was a good one, as Hathaway portrayed the darker Catwoman role brilliantly.

True to Nolan's style, at 164 minutes, this film is fairly long. There were a few times when the movie felt a bit drawn out, but the gorgeous action scenes and impressive dialogue really held the audience's attention and kept them on the edge of their seats. However, the timeline was a bit unclear at times. For a number of scenes, it was hard to tell whether it had been days or months or years that had passed since the last time a given character had been on screen.

Despite the film's minor shortcomings, The Dark Knight Rises is exciting, creative, and dark—and well worth a few hours of your time.

Downloaded from <http://www.wikihow.com>
