

# Writing an Article Critique

Writing an article critique is often confused with an article summary where the article's contents are summarized and paraphrased into an essay. Although some summarizing of the article is needed in the introduction, an article critique focuses on the author's writing in such areas as claim (how well it is supported) and appeal (how effectively the author presents the material). Think of it this way: you are a movie critic, reviewing a director's choice of script, actors, and graphics so that the audience will know whether the movie is good or not. The critic does not simply tell you what the movie is about but lets you know how the director made it great. In the same way, the writer of an article critique will talk about what the author did to make the article effective or ineffective and gives advice on how it could have been better.

What you gain from the article is only as effective as what you bring to it. Therefore, before reading the article, be sure to have a highlighter and a pen or pencil close by so that when you read something relevant or have a sudden idea, you can write it down or mark it. Always read the article twice. On the second time, make highlights and notes of the following circumstances:

***What is the author claiming through the article? Is there more than one claim? Does the author support or contradict his or her own claim? A body paragraph could look like this one below:***

- In the article, Spetalnick's main claim seems to be **clearly** stated in the title "Obama and Syria: The Education of a Reluctant President." This claim, although stated as the title, is **not** the only claim the author makes in the article. As a matter of fact, it is quite the opposite. As one reads past the first few lines, it is clear that being "reluctant" is not the author's main argument at all. For **example**, the article states, "Since the war in Syria began, Obama has repeatedly denounced the killing of innocent civilians - more than 100,000 people have already died in the 2-1/2-year conflict - while declaring his determination to avoid getting the United States sucked in." How is this claim supporting the topic of "Education of a Reluctant President?" It does not; that is why the title is **misleading**.

***Why should you believe what the author has to say? Is the author credible? Are the outside sources credible? Did the author provide information about his/herself as well as information about the outside sources?***

- The critique's introduction can show why the author is or is not credible by examining his/her background or notoriety. Sometimes, added research about the author is needed to find this information. There are other ways, however, that an author is believable through the use of **credible outside source** such as using a website to support your claim. **Following is an example of how to construct a body paragraph around this issue:**

The author builds her **reputation** by first talking about her **experience** as a teacher. She shares, "Twenty years I've served as a teacher in the Oklahoma School district and have seen enough problems to last a lifetime, but the most damaging is the student to teacher ratio." Since her argument is that "Oklahoma should do something soon," she uses her position of expertise to **establish credibility** with the audience. This makes it easier **to believe** what the author is saying. In addition, she utilizes a credible outside source to further validate the matter of solving classroom crowding when she discusses the 2002 change to Florida's constitution, which set limits on the amount of students that could be in core classes. Because this source is based on fact, it is even more **impactful** as it lends a hand to the author's use of personal experience, mixing **ethos** with **logos**. However, maybe **adding** comments from other

teachers of the district would have given the reader a **more diverse** perspective. Not mentioning alternate opinions makes the author seem **biased**.

***Does the author support the topic by implementing real stories or other ways of evoking an emotional response (pathos) from the reader? Is this use of pathos (emotion) effective? Notice the body paragraph below:***

- In the article, the author uses true **stories** of young girls who were raped to emphasize the importance of teaching children self-defense. Each story begins with a young girl walking alone when, all of a sudden, a man comes from behind and drags her off. The **purpose** of these stories is to appeal to the reader's **emotions** in order to sway parents that "this could happen to your child." Although this illustration is very **graphic** and **persuasive** at getting the author's point across of "don't wait until it's too late," including both boys and girls in the stories may have been a little more effective use of **pathos** since girls are not the only targets of abduction. Also, instead of using stories of girls being victimized, maybe the author could have used real stories of how children were **victorious** over their attacker by using self-defense. What's most **valuable** about this emotional appeal is that it makes the reader start thinking about the risks of a defenseless child.

***Other ways of utilizing emotion (pathos) in writing:*** words with a deeply rooted emotion such as suffering, torture, starving/hunger, love, passion, encouragement, hope, or freedom; objects of profound importance include God, America, money, women, children, animals, food, community and health; talking about the benefits of something is also connected to our emotions.

***Does the author use statistics? What type of facts or reasoning (logos) does the author offer in the article? If so, how are they implemented, and how do they support the claim? Below is an example of a body paragraph that resembles this topic:***

- The author introduces his topic by providing **startling statistics** from the Center for Disease Control. The health effects of childhood obesity are shown when the article states, "In a population-based sample, 5 to 17 year olds, 70% of obese youth had at least one risk factor for cardio vascular disease. This stat is **relevant** in establishing the severity of the issue as well as **informing** the reader that his/her child could be at risk. The author also uses percentages to show how childhood obesity has become even more of an issue today: "The percentage of children aged 6-11 years in the U.S who were obese increased from 7% in 1980 to nearly 18% in 2010." The author is **effective** in using these facts to support his topic as it prompts the reader to take action because the situation is just getting worse. A main **goal** for using these numbers is to get the audience convinced enough to assert his next claim, which is "Prevention."
- The author's main disagreement with Obamacare is based on a set of **alleged** events that will result in harm to many Americans. Essentially, the author claims that because of Obamacare smaller companies will make all of their workers part-time. He **reasons** that if the forty hour workday is diminished, then, "the impact is two-fold: fewer hours means less pay while also losing our current benefits." Although this argument appears **compelling**, there are a couple problems. First, it ignores that people who lose employer-based insurance will be able to purchase it on a health insurance exchange, with the poorest receiving government assistance. Next, it's **not** realistic to believe every full-time employee will be reduced to part-time, for business will still need full-time employees. If the author would have addressed these issues, his use of reasoning may have been more successful and less of a **slippery slope**.

## The Introduction: Examples for Getting Started

1. **Give the author's name and publishing information.**
2. **Present a summary of the article.**
3. **Present the author's claim:** The author tries to get the reader to agree that Obama's new healthcare plan is flawed.
4. **Thesis:** He effectively supports his claim through his implementation of emotion, credibility, and statistics.

## The Conclusion: Ideas for finishing

1. **Paraphrase your thesis.**
2. **Summarize main points.**
3. **End with closing thoughts:** this is the writer's last opportunity to provide an evaluation of the article's text or suggestions on how the author could have improved his/her article.

*Following are some questions you can answer that can be used in the conclusion:*

- *How does this article compare to others over the same topic?*
- *Do you recommend this article to anyone else? For what reasons?*