

## GUIDELINES FOR CRITIQUING

by Elaine Creasman

1. Listen without interruption while the writer reads his work.
2. You may want to jot down notes while listening.
3. Give positive comments first, if possible. Give general impression of the work, but also give concrete things you liked about it; i.e. "I liked the verb you chose in the first sentence. It brought the whole scene to life."
4. Next give comments about how to improve the piece of writing. Avoid saying, "I didn't like it." or "It's just not right." Be specific. "The first two paragraphs are unclear." Then give suggestions for improvement. "Could you shorten the sentences some and take out some of the adjectives?"
5. Keep in mind the writing capabilities of each writer, and critique accordingly. Expect more from seasoned writers, who can usually take more criticism than beginners.
6. To help in your evaluation of each piece, imagine you are the editor from a magazine and have just received the piece that has been read. Will you accept it for publication? Why or why not? How will you help the writer improve it so it meets the standards of your publication?
7. Like the editor, keep the reader in mind when listening to the other writer's work. Does the piece have universal appeal or would it appeal to only a small segment of the reading public?
8. Help the writer think of suitable markets for her writing.
9. Remember, the final decision as to whether to change anything in a piece of writing is left to the author.
10. Don't forget--"Be ye kind."

About criticism:

--"He has a right to criticize who has a heart to help."

Abraham Lincoln

--"Adverse criticism from a wise man is more to be desired  
than the enthusiastic approval of a fool." American Salesman