

Welcome to the Brooklyn Speculative Fiction Writers Group!

The purpose of this group is to help aspiring writers improve their craft and get published. A major component of that progress consists of reading and critiquing the members' writing. This document serves as a basic procedural guide for how critiques work in this group.

Stories and chapters should be finished, and should preferably have been through at least one edit by the writer to eliminate obvious errors and inconsistencies.

The reasoning behind this is that the purpose of critique is to help the writer with the finer details of craft, not to correct spelling and punctuation. When the work is as close to complete as the writer can make it, the group will be more effective at helping make the work as good as it can be.

Stories must be formatted as if they were going to be sent out for consideration at a market.

If your goal is publication, it's useful to know how a manuscript should be formatted so that it will not be rejected. Even if your goal isn't publication, double-spacing and page-numbering your work helps in the critique process.

[A wonderfully clear and concise guide to manuscript formatting can be found here.](#)

Stories should be in one of the following formats, so that anyone, using any software, can download and read them:

.doc (not .docx, so save back one version if you're using the latest version of Microsoft Word).txt or .rtf

Submissions (whether short stories or novel chapters) should not exceed 10,000 words. If you would like to submit work in excess of this limit, please contact the organizer prior to uploading your file.

Work should be submitted to the group approximately one week in advance of the meeting date.

Deadlines for submitting work to be critiqued at a particular meeting will be listed in the details of the invitation of that meeting.

Files need to be posted to the Files section of the group's page, which is located under More on the menu bar.

Members who wish their work to be critiqued need to RSVP "Yes" on the Meetup page for the group. If that member cannot attend the meeting, they should change their RSVP so other members can prioritize their reading time.

An email is sent to the membership the day after the deadline, detailing which stories will be critiqued. The list of stories is also posted under the Discussions area of the group's page, and updated if there are changes.

Work can be printed out by each member and marked with comments prior to the meeting. Otherwise, comments can be marked in the digital manuscript (use Track Changes in Word or a different color font), or comments can be sent via email. Messages can be sent directly to members through Meetup.

Due to the limited time the group can devote to one member's story or chapter, a marked-up copy of the story allows each member to pass along all their comments to the writer.

If a member cannot attend the meeting and still wishes to critique work, that work can be downloaded, commented on digitally (as described above) and emailed to the writer.

Works of 1,500 words or less can be read aloud and critiqued on-the-spot if the writer wishes and if time allows.

Attendance Etiquette

If you RSVP "Yes," attend the meeting. If you are unable to

attend, change your RSVP. This is a courtesy to the meeting's host, so they can prepare for the meeting. It is also a courtesy to the writers who have submitted their work and deserve a thorough and diverse critique. If you can't change your RSVP, please leave a message on the event page for that meeting or email the Organizer in charge of that meeting as soon as you know your availability.

The Organizer(s) reserve the right to remove a member from the group if he or she "No Show's" more than 3 meetings without informing at least one of the Organizers.

Rules of Critique:

1. Be nice: think of how you would feel about a particular comment before you speak it aloud.
2. Critiquers should avoid interrupting one another, or from going on too long, so that everyone has their chance to speak.
3. The writer, unless asked a specific question, should not speak during their critique.

This rule maximizes the effectiveness of the critique by preventing discussions or arguments by the writer, who will not generally be present to comment on their work once it's published anyway.

4. Depending on the volume of work to critique during a particular meeting, each member will always get at least 20 minutes of critique time for their work, unless they state that less time is acceptable.

5. Work will be critiqued in the order in which it was submitted to the group. If too many works were submitted to critique in one meeting, stories at the bottom of the list get bumped to the next meeting that the writer is able to attend.

6. OPTIONAL: The Red Line of Death (RLD)! When a story is read by editors or slush pile readers, it has very little time to make an impact before it gets tossed into the rejection pile. The RLD is a line drawn in the manuscript itself, generally in

red, where they lost interest or would reject a manuscript because the story went wrong, characters failed to engage, spelling or grammar errors were present, or any other reason. The writer MUST request this critique by asking for Red Line of Death or RLD in the description of their manuscript when it is posted on the site.

These regulations are subject to change and addition as the group needs. Submit your comments and suggestions directly to the Organizer(s).