

Writing Workshop Guidelines

First and foremost, writing workshops are an exercise in mutual trust and respect. In choosing to share your poem(s) with other people, each one of you is doing a very brave and worthwhile thing.

Respectful, constructive feedback requires you to meet the poem on its own terms (ie, if this is a rhyming poem, "I think you should completely re-write the poem because I don't like rhymes" is not constructive feedback).

As in most situations in life, the golden rule (do unto others, etc) applies. Be honest, but be kind.

Ask the poet if there are certain aspects of the poem they particularly want your feedback on. Keep these in mind as you read through the poem (and read through it a few times).

Questions to ask yourself as you formulate your response to a poem:

- What story is the poet telling?
- What style or tone do they want to create?
- What do you particularly like about the poem? Why?
- What is the poet trying to accomplish with this poem?
- What might the poet change to make the poet do that thing better?
- Do certain aspects of the poem confuse you? If so, why do you think this is?

How to Make a Zine

Zine-making isn't about rules or knowledge; it's about freedom and POWER. Zines are self-published, small-circulation, often nonprofit books, papers, or websites. They usually deal with topics too controversial or niche for mainstream media, presented in an unpolished layout and unusual design. Everyone, from a major NGO to a teenager like you, can be an author (and also an editor, art director, and publisher) of a zine, and that's part of what makes them so awesome.

Since the invention of the photocopier machine, zine-making has been one most popular forms of independent publishing, especially in underground communities. But it's hard to generalize about zines, the same way it's hard to generalize about *culture*. Not just hard—impossible. Because like all art and media, zines can be anything and everything. And they are.

There's a whole wiki devoted to zines here. If you type "zine making" into Amazon, you'll get 10 pages of results. But to be honest, I've never read a book about zine-making, and I don't think you have to, either. For me, zine-making isn't about rules or knowledge; it's about freedom and (guess what?) POWER.

Zines are super powerful! They can communicate rebellious words and strong ideas. People who feel a burning need to share their energy with the world make zines, so it's no coincidence that zine culture is often associated with some of the most energetic movements: punk, feminist, queer, etc. Some publications that sprang from those subcultures, enjoyed cult status; others got so popular that they turned into regular magazines that you can find in bookstores.

But zine-making has always been about being a nerd, too. Someone who creates a zine has become obsessed with a subject so small and niche and bizarre that there isn't even a magazine for people obsessed with it: a celebrity who's seen better times; pulp science fiction; games; or something so weird you can't imagine more than one person being into it. Zines are not looking for a broad audience. They're not supposed to appeal to everyone. That's the point: they're exclusive. And "exclusive" can mean anything from "anyone interested in *Doctor Who*" to "only you and your friends" to even "only you."

Nowadays (boy I sound old all of a sudden) you can make a digital zine/mag and reach people on the other end of the planet in a blink, but what's nicer than a little handmade book you can hold in your non-virtual hands? Or the unique feeling of being one among a tiny group of special people in possession of a carefully made publication?

—by Emma Dajski, excerpted from ROOKIE magazine