

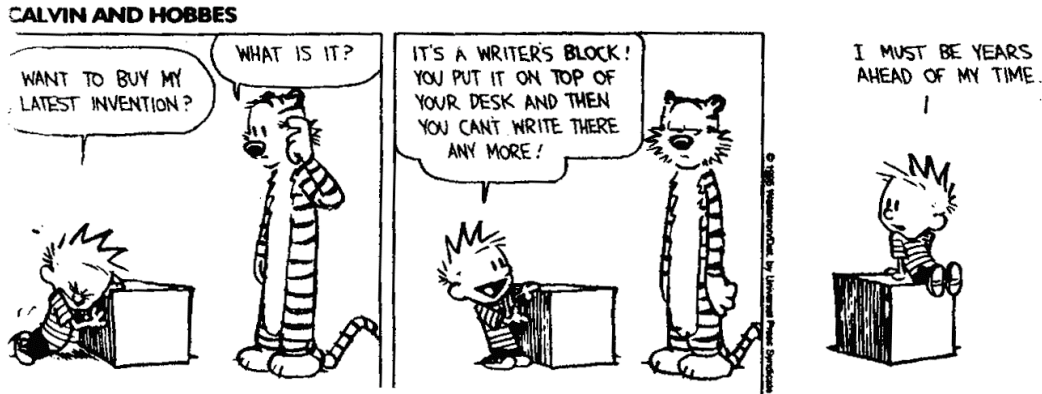


**OZARK  
ARTS COUNCIL**  
*Enriching Lives By Promoting The Arts*

## The Ozark Writers' Block | Group Guidelines

<http://thelyricharrison.org/OWB.html>

Founded April 2008 by Debbie Savannah George-Jones & Katy Atkinson



### Meetings:

Second and fourth Monday of every month, 6 p.m., at the Ozark Arts Council office next to the Lyric Theater (113 West Rush).

### Mission:

The Ozark Writers' Block mission is to support fellow writers in this solitary profession of putting words on the page, of telling a story, of showing images, of creating universes out of nothing. The main purpose of the group is to provide helpful critiques on works in progress, and aid the writer in improving their skills.

### Writer Requirements:

The group is open to writers of all levels of experience, and of all ages and interests; however, keep in mind that some content may have adult themes, which may not be suitable for children. Attendees may read up to seven pages of their work from any style or genre: from non-fiction essays to poetry; from novels to short stories. The group will then provide helpful critiques. Copies of the work to share with the group are highly encouraged, but not required. All work presented remains the sole and exclusive property of the author.

The Ozark Writers' Block is not geared toward socializing; it is a working writers' group, and thus attendees should refrain from discussing subject matter unrelated to writing or the work being read. The main premise is that writers write, and that it is difficult to edit your own work.

The guiding principle of the group is to critique, not criticize. We are here to help, not tear down. The group is a safe place to receive feedback and learn more about the writing process. We are here not to change your unique writing style, but to help you strengthen it. Members must be prepared to read what they are working on, to take criticism of that work, also to provide helpful criticism to others.

Depending on the level of attendance, not everyone will be able to read at every meeting. Meetings are free and no reservations are necessary. Donations to help offset operating costs are welcome.

Members are welcome to create groups that meet at other times to focus on a particular genre, e.g. faith-based, poetry, etc.



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### **Rules of Being Critiqued:**

1. Realize that all writing can be improved.
2. If you don't want honest feedback, don't read.
3. Check your ego at the door. If you are looking for a mutual admiration society, then Ozark Writers' Block is not for you.
4. If you want your writing to improve, you have to learn to accept constructive criticism. It's nothing personal, and it doesn't mean you're a bad person or a bad writer.
5. Listen. The person speaking wants to help you find ways to improve your work.
6. Take notes.
7. Do not interrupt. Be quiet.
8. Share your weaknesses. If you have areas that you think need work, let the group know so they can help you.
9. Refrain from defending your work, and don't be argumentative. Your writing needs to stand on its own. If it doesn't, fix it. You can probably explain away every comment from the group, but you won't have that option when you're trying to sell your work.
10. Be aware that all feedback is valid, even if you don't agree with it.
11. Be willing to make changes. Conversely, don't change anything you feel must remain in order to make the story yours.
12. Use the suggestions you find helpful, but don't feel bad if you don't. It's your writing; you don't have to make changes that make you uncomfortable.
13. Ask questions if you're unsure about something. You may answer specific questions and add comments.
14. Be aware of the time you are taking. Remember that the other attendees would also like to share their work and get feedback. Stay focused on the topic of writing and your piece.
15. Thank the group for their input. Participation takes time and effort; show your appreciation.

### **Rules of Critiquing:**

1. The group's concern is the craft of writing. What a writer says is his or her business; the group's job is to help each other say it effectively.
2. Be objective, as if the writer is absent.
3. Critique the writing, never the writer. Never say, "You are..." or "You should..." Instead say, "The writing is..." or "The story should..."
4. Don't make your comments personal. Put-downs and personal attacks are NEVER allowed.
5. Elaborate. Be specific rather than general in your comments. Give examples.
6. Share what works and what is good about the piece; share what doesn't work and ways to "fix" any potential problems.
7. Be aware of the time you are taking. Some comments can be written on the provided copy and not shared with the whole group. When commenting to the whole group, stay focused on the topic of writing and the piece that was read.
8. Find something positive to say. Identifying the author's strengths is just as important as identifying his or her weaknesses.
9. Always be honest and unapologetic. Never argue over controversial content.
10. There are bound to be disagreements. This is good; just keep it civil and a friendly debate. Don't argue.
11. Remember that subject matter is personal. You don't have to like a story to give it a fair critique.
12. Be aware of your biases and critique around them.
13. Remember that real people wrote this stuff, and real people have real feelings.
14. Let the author know what you are feeling as you read his or her work. Do you feel sympathetic toward the heroine? Is the pacing too slow for your taste? This kind of feedback allows the author to decide if your reactions are the ones they intended.
15. Write your comments legibly.