CRITIQUE GUIDE
Evaluating your work is an important part of the design process. It allows you to step back and look at your work in a critical way and to ask yourself if your solution communicates the message. Critiquing should be done BEFORE the final design stage and again at the end of the process. Allowing others to critique your work is also very important. Others will see what you don’t see and will help you rethink and improve your idea/design. It is important to make sure you are on track and meeting your client’s needs and objectives.

After you have reassessed your final design by asking yourself the questions listed below, we will be critiquing each other’s work in class. It is important to comment on the works by referring to the design principles and whether or not the final piece solves the objective. Avoid starting with “I really like this piece.” Likes and dislikes are too subjective when critiquing. Also comment using positive criticism...and remember to not take criticisms personally. Critiques are VERY helpful. Be open and honest in your comments. It’s amazing what we can learn from each other.

Ask yourself these questions when you are assessing your project.

1. CONCEPT
   - Redefine your objective.
   - You should be able to articulate your objective in a single sentence.
   - Does your concept answer the objective?
   - Do the type and images support the concept?
   - Is your idea intelligent?
   - Is it believable?

2. AUDIENCE
   - Is the concept appropriate for the audience?
   - Are the type and images appropriate for the audience?

3. CREATIVITY
   - Is your concept really creative?
   - Have you seen this idea used before?
   - Have you used clichés?

4. DESIGN ISSUES:
   - Did you incorporate the design principles?
     - alignment
     - balance
     - contrast
     - emphasis
     - flow
     - repetition
   - Is the type easy to read?
   - Is the page attractive, legible, and readable?

Has the information been set up using a HIERARCHICAL method?
- first read (most important), second read, then third read

Is the project CRAFTED AND PRESENTED professionally?

Do not underestimate the importance of making sure everything is neat and clean, with all visual elements aligned that are supposed to be aligned. You want people to notice the message, not be distracted by a poorly constructed page.
Critiques

Graphic Design Solutions, by Robin Landa

A critique is an assessment, an evaluation of your project. Assessing your solution maximizes your learning because it forces you to reexamine the problem, to evaluate the way you went about solving the problem, to determine how well you used the design medium, and to see if you fulfilled your objectives. Most design instructors hold a critique or critical analysis after students create solutions to a design project. Holding your own critique before you present your work to a class, an instructor, or a client allows you to check your thinking and gain insight into your particular style of problem solving. How do you hold a critique? Here’s a guide:

Part I: The project

1. Restate the goal or aim of the project in your own words. Make sure you understand the project or problem.

2. Did you fulfill the goal or did you miss the point of the original problem? At times, you may come up with an approach to a problem that does not directly answer the problem, but you like it and pursue it regardless. Be aware that sometimes it pays to let go of a gimmick or approach that is not on target, even if you love it.

3. Is your solution appropriate for the purpose of the project? Often, it can be difficult for beginners to determine when a design or a design element is inappropriate. For example, if you design a business card for a banker, you certainly would not want to create a design that conveyed a playful or unstable spirit.

4. Is your solution appropriately executed? Is your choice of color, media, size, and style right for the purpose or goal of the problem.

5. Did you create a hierarchy of information? Have you designed your solution so that your audience knows what to read or look at first, second, and third?

6. Does your solution communicate the intended message to your audience? Ask people to tell you what message they are receiving from your design.

Part II: The process

1. Did you do any research? And if so, did you use it? If you did not do any research, how did you gather information about the subject matter? Do you need to do more? (Whether you go to the library, or access photo archives, or use an encyclopedia on CD-ROM, make sure you do research).

2. How many thumbnail sketches and roughs did you do before creating the comp? How much time did you spend thinking about the problem? Did you go to the finish before working out any bugs in the solution?

3. Did you lock yourself into your own area of strength rather than experimenting with less familiar tools, techniques, or methods? For example, if you always use the computer to create your design, were you willing to try cut paper or another technique?

4. Did you make any false assumptions about what you could or could not do, or did you take a positive approach and assume you could do anything if you really tried? Did you experiment? Experimentation is important; it can lead to exciting discoveries. Even mistakes can yield interesting results. For example, if you accidentally move an image while it is being photocopied, the copy will be distorted. The distortion may be interesting and appropriate for your needs. You can also use flip, sketch, or skew commands on the computer to experiment.

5. Did you really become involved with the problem? Did you use your intuition and feelings? Was your solution personal or removed? Not everyone finds the same subject matter or project exciting. Remember, it is not the subject or the project that is exciting, it is what you do with it.

6. Were you too judgmental? Did you give yourself a chance to be creative? Were you patient with the project and with yourself? Try to be as supportive of your own work as you would be of a friend’s work.

7. Did you take chances? Were your solutions innovative? Did you dare to be different, or did you do what most people would do? When the critique is held in class, one way to test whether your solution is original is to notice how many others came up with similar solutions.