Critiquing a Journal Article

The purpose of critiquing a journal article is to describe the general nature of the work. The critical review should summarize, analyze, and evaluate the journal article. Read the article carefully and underline the purpose of the study, the methodology (how they did it), the hypothesis (what they thought would happen), and the results. Your critique should be coherent and permit the reader to progress smoothly from one point to another. You do not need to use subheadings for the various sections; instead, use transitions between sentences and paragraphs to give continuity.

The review usually has three main parts:

1. Identification of the author and journal article
2. Summary of the main points
3. Analysis and Evaluation (the longest section, approximately ¾ of the assignment)

Identification of author and journal article

Critiques should begin with a full bibliographic citation (author, date, title of article, name of journal, volume, issue, and page numbers). Relevant biographical information about the author’s qualifications may also be included.

Summary of the main points

Define the general subject/problem/research area, the scope (what the author intends to discuss and why), and the central idea. Summarize the author’s major findings and conclusions.

Analysis and Evaluation

In this section, you must analyze the various parts of the article thoughtfully and carefully so that you can establish its strengths and weaknesses. Considering the strengths and weaknesses allows you to explore the article more thoroughly and evaluate it more persuasively by presenting a balanced view.
Consider the following questions; however, not all will be appropriate for every article.

- **What is the objective/purpose/thesis** of the research, study, or work discussed in the article? Does the author accomplish this objective? What evidence does the author present in support of the thesis? What are its strengths/weaknesses? How did the author support the thesis?

- **Who is the intended audience?** Is the writing style appropriate for this audience? Should the author have used different levels of language, vocabulary, and sentence patterns?

- **What is the effect of the author's language?** Is the vocabulary and sentence structure appropriate? Does the author maintain neutrality/objectivity in choosing words and terms, or are they emotionally charged or biased?

- **Are illustrations, tables, or graphs used effectively?** Do they complement the text? Are they the best method to present data or are they unnecessary?

- **Does the author suggest areas for further research or discussion?** How many references are used? Are the references recent, important? Are they used for support or rebuttal? Evaluate the contribution your selected article makes to a better understanding of the subject.

- **What methods did the author use** to investigate the topic? Were the methods used appropriate? Did the author’s approach to supporting the thesis make sense? Did the author employ the methods correctly? Did you discover any errors in the way the research was conducted? How large or representative was the sample used in the research? Did the methods test what they said they were testing? Were the results reported fairly?

- **What are your recommendations.** Summarize your evaluation of the article. Who will benefit from reading this article? What will the benefit be? How important and extensive is that benefit? Clearly state your evaluation of the article and how it would relate to the thesis of your own paper.