

# Design --- Critique

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# Workshop Goals

## Build Confidence

**Sharing work is vulnerable.**

Treat critique as a tool for growth and learning, not as a judgment of personal value.

## Promote Clarity

**Vague opinions derail design.**

Provide clear, actionable critique to help the team move forward with purpose.

## Encourage Collaboration

**Critique is a team sport.**

Foster shared ownership, cross-functional understanding, and better outcomes.

# What is Critique?

“ Critique is a form of analysis. During a critique, participants examine a design then theorize the impacts and effects of its components [...] in order to identify where the design is strong (achieving goals and principles) and where it can be improved upon (not adequately achieving goals and principles).

— Discussing Design

”

# What is Critique?

## Critique Is

- A conversation
- Discussing how elements and components achieve or miss goals
- About making the work better

## Critic Is Not

- Approval or review
- A judgement of personal worth or skill
- Focused on what is lacking instead of what is trying to be solved

# What Makes a Great Critique?

# Focus on the Goals

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- Anchor your critique in the design's purpose and objectives.
- **Before critiquing**, ask and answer: “*What problem are we trying to solve with this design?*”
- Refer to **user needs, business goals** or **design principles** when giving feedback.
- Ensure all parties understand and agree on the goals before the critique begins.

# Focus on the Goals



“I don’t really like the hero image—it feels too bold.”



“The hero image grabs attention, but does it support the goal of guiding users toward the sign-up CTA? Could a more contextual image help reinforce the message?”



Always tie your feedback to the stated goals. If the goal is conversion, ask how the design supports that. If it’s clarity, ask whether the layout helps users navigate easily.

# **Separate Self From Work**

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- Critique the work, not the person.
- Remember critique is a tool for improvement, not evaluation.
- Use neutral language and avoid emotionally charged words like “bad” or “wrong.”

# Separate Self From Work



“I wouldn’t have used a bottom nav—it feels wrong to me.”



“The bottom navigation is a common pattern for mobile. How does it perform in usability testing compared to the previous layout?”



Avoid framing feedback around personal taste. Instead, focus on the design’s effectiveness, usability, and alignment with user needs or platform conventions.

# Ask Clarifying Questions

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- Use questions to understand intent before offering critique.
- Clarifying questions help uncover constraints, rationale, and hidden assumptions.
- Focus questions around the underlying intent behind decisions, not the decisions themselves.

# Ask Clarifying Questions



“This chart is confusing. You should use a bar graph instead.”



“Can you walk us through why you chose a line graph for this data? What kind of user behavior are you hoping to highlight?”



Start with questions to understand the designer’s intent. This opens up dialogue and often reveals constraints or strategic decisions that aren’t immediately visible.

# Tips for a Great Critique

- **Descriptive and constructive:** Talk about the actual design and avoid generalizations.
- **Make it about the design:** Be objective and focus on the work.
- **Keep it actionable:** Offer ideas (if you have them), but don't be prescriptive.
- **Do not design during the session:** Discuss the current solution, do not generate new ones.
- **Strong opinions weakly held:** Remember, your perspective is just one perspective.
- **Leave the room with actions:** Documenting your discussions and decisions is the only way you'll actually make changes.

# **Roles in a Critique**

# Roles in a Critique

## Presenter

Shares the work and provides context for the critique.

## Facilitator

Guides the critique session to ensure it stays focused and inclusive.

## Critiquer

Offers constructive, goal-oriented feedback.

## Note-Taker

Captures key insights, decisions, and action items.



EDUCATION

# The Presenter

## *Tell the story of your work*

- Clearly state the **goals** of the design.
- Share relevant **constraints** and **rationale** behind decisions.
- Ask for **specific types** of feedback (usability, visual hierarchy, tone).



Avoid defending every decision.

*Invite critique with openness.*

# The Facilitator

*Establish and enforce expectations and guidelines*

- Keep the conversation aligned with the **goals** and **time constraints**.
- Ensure all voices are heard, especially quieter participants.
- Redirect unproductive feedback or tangents.



Watch for tone and dynamics.

Step in if the conversation becomes personal or off-topic

# The Critiquer

*Give useful and meaningful feedback—positive and negative*

- Focus on the **design's intent**, not personal preferences.
- Use structured prompts (“How does this align with goals?”).
- Ask clarifying questions before suggesting changes.



Be specific and actionable.

Avoid vague comments like “It feels off.”

# The Note Taker

*Register all the insights and suggestions from the discussion*

- Document feedback and ensure nothing is missed.
- Highlight themes or repeated concerns.
- Record next steps or follow-ups



“AI Notetakers” can be a helpful addition—but should not replace the responsibility of an individual.

# Types of Critique

# Critique Toolkit

## Standard Critique

**What** Typical “present and critique” format

**Why** Looking for something slightly formal, and exhaustive

## Silent Critique

**What** Everyone stays silent, reviews a document and adds feedback independently

**Why** Need a mass volume of feedback, to keep people focused, or you want feedback async / remotely

## Pair Design

**What** Pair up in smaller groups of 2-3 rather than a large group

**Why** You need deeper collaboration on a problem — flexible and hands-on

## Jam / Workshop

**What** Brainstorms, Crazy 8s, Affinity Diagrams, Group sketching, etc.

**Why** Best for the beginning of the design process — or if you’re stuck and want to see something in new ways

## FYI

**What** Give a quick heads up on a project while people are together

**Why** You’re not ready for discussion, but want people to know what’s going on early.



# Remote Critique Tips

# Prep Work

- Ensure all points are clear for all attendees before meeting.
- Ensure the audience is right for the stage of feedback you're looking for.
- Send out file(s) and feedback request to be reviewed prior to meeting.

## Pre-Crit Prep Work

Before you have the opportunity to showcase your efforts during the meeting, it's important that you take the time to get ready for it.

It is important to ascertain the issue that people are having, and the person you are aiming to assist, as well as making sure you are explicit about the kind of feedback you would like to get (eg: interaction and not visual design).

Let me make these point absolutely clear for everyone:

- Context of use.
- The problem.
- The scope.
- The goals.
- Proposed solutions.
- Type of feedback.

It's important to write things out so that your audience has a very clear understanding and orientation at the beginning of the meeting as to what the problem is you're trying to solve. What the goals are and what your solutions is so that they can then give you the best and most actionable feedback.

# Figma and FigJam?

- Figma Design is likely where all of your work lives
- Figma Design is not designed for bulk commenting, feedback, or ideation
- Can easily embed Figma Designs within a FigJam file
- Figjam can host “open sessions” to allow anyone access for 24 hours
- FigJam is great for collecting feedback and brainstorming
- FigJam provides templates for critiques and jam style activities



# Zoom

- Common video call service for collaboration
- Allows for real-time voice or video calls
- Whiteboards similar to FigJam for individuals without FigJam access or familiarity
- Meetings can be recorded for reference later
- Meeting AI can function as a supplemental note-taker to augment human note taking

zoom

# **What is working for you?**

# What could be improved?