

How to give a Design Critique



What is a design critique?

"A critique is a form of analysis that uses critical thinking to determine whether a design is expected to achieve its desired objectives (and adhere to any pertinent best practices or heuristics)" - Conor and Irizarry in *Discussing Design*

In CS171 we typically expect a written critique to contain up to 1000 words and to include appropriate illustrations or screenshots to make your points.

General rules of a design critique:

The main three rules in a design critique are:

- (1) Be honest in your critique and candidly criticize what we think is wrong if — and only if—
- (2) you can clearly explain why it's wrong, and
- (3) if you are willing to do it in a considerate manner.

For each critical statement, you make try to identify a specific aspect of the design, relate that aspect to an objective or best practice, and describe how and why the aspect works to support or not support the objective or best practice. Supporting your statements with rationale, i.e., explaining *why* is key and you are expected to draw on the material you've learned throughout the course such as guidelines, heuristics, best practices, etc. Remember that your *critique should be driven by evidence and design principles* and is not about your taste, opinion, or "gut reaction".

Detailed questions to assess:

- How is the visualization a success or a failure?
 - What is the objective of the design? What questions does the visualization answer or try to answer?
 - What elements of the design are related to that objective?
 - Are those elements effective in achieving the objective? Why or why not?
- Asses the use of :
 - Visual encodings and representations, color
 - Accuracy of data and visual representation
 - Gestalt principles (use of space)
 - Marks and channels (Bertin)
 - Tufte's principles (chart junk, etc.)
 - Labels, readability, usability
 - Interaction, navigation
 - Storytelling aspects
 - Consistency

Resources:

- <https://github.com/comp-journalism/UMD-J479D-J779D-Fall2016/wiki/Assignment-%233---Visualization-Critique>
- <http://www.thefunctionalart.com/2014/08/some-words-about-constructive-criticism.html>