Critiquing a Research Article

A critique asks you to evaluate an article and the author’s argument. In this type of paper, you need to look critically at what the author is claiming, evaluate the research methods, and look for possible problems with, or applications of, the researcher’s claims.

In your introduction, give an overview of the author’s main point and how the author supports his or her point. Explain what the author found and describe the process he or she used to arrive at this conclusion. Next, interpret the information from the article; think about the following:

- Evaluate the research methods:
  - Does the author review previous studies? Is current and relevant research used?
  - What type of research was used – empirical studies, anecdotal material, or personal observations?
  - Evaluate the sample. Can you detect any problems with the sample, in size, composition, or in the way the sample was selected in relation to the purpose of the study? For example, was the sample too small to generalize from? Was it composed of all white participants or participants only of one sex, or all of a similar age? Does the way in which volunteers were found influence the results? For instance, volunteers gathered at a health food store might have different attitudes about nutrition than the population at large.

- How useful does this work seem to you? How does the author suggest the findings could be applied and how do you believe they could be applied?
- How could the study have been improved in your opinion?
- Does the author appear to have any biases (related to gender, race, class, or politics)?
- Is the writing clear and easy to follow? Does the author’s tone add to or detract from the article?
- How useful are the visuals (such as tables, charts, maps, photographs) included, if any? How do they help to illustrate the argument? Are they confusing or hard to read?
- What further research might be conducted on this subject?

In your conclusion, try to synthesize the pieces of your critique to emphasize your own main points about the author’s work, relating the researcher’s work to your own knowledge or to topics being discussed in your course.