

Exercise walk-through

Purpose: describing and giving opinions ■ 7.1

eXercise

You must be able to

- describe without retelling the whole plot
- give a clear opinion supported by a reason
- balance praise with at least one honest criticism

Method — Describe, do not retell

A review of a film is not a summary of the film. The reader may not have seen it, so you must not spoil it — and a plot summary is not an opinion.

- **Retelling:** *First he finds the letter, then he goes to the station, then he meets his sister and they argue...*
- **Describing:** *The first hour is almost silent, and the film asks you to be patient before it explains anything.*

Give enough to orient a reader: what kind of thing it is, roughly what it is about, who would like it.

Method — An opinion needs a reason

- **Assertion:** *The acting was great.*
- **Opinion:** *The acting is the best thing in it — the lead says almost nothing for twenty minutes and you always know exactly what she is thinking.*

Method — Balance is persuasive

A review that praises everything is not believed. Include at least one genuine criticism, stated plainly:

My one criticism is the ending, which resolves too neatly for a film that spent two hours refusing easy answers.

That single sentence makes the praise credible.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

Rewrite this retelling as description.

The book starts when the family moves house. Then the boy finds a box in the attic. Then he opens it and finds the letters.

Solution 2.1

Method: Describe, do not retell

Worked steps

Any version that orients without retelling **B2**, e.g. “The story begins with a house move and a box of letters in an attic, but the discovery matters far less than what the family decides to do about it, which is where the book actually lives.”

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Turn each assertion into an opinion with a reason.

(a) "The restaurant was good."

(b) "The game is boring."

Solution 2.2

Method: An opinion needs a reason

Worked steps

(a) e.g. “The food was better than the room suggested — the noodles came in a broth that had clearly been cooking all day.” **B1** (b) e.g. “The game is repetitive: every level asks you to do the same three things in a different order.” **B1**

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

Write one honest criticism of something you like.

Solution 2.3

Worked steps

Any specific, honest criticism **B1**. *A criticism that is really praise ("it was too exciting") does not count.*

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 8 marks

Write a review of a book, film or restaurant for your school website. Describe it, give your opinion with reasons, include one criticism, and say who would enjoy it. Write about 180 words.

Solution 3.1

Method: Describe, do not retell

Worked steps

Content (4): description without spoiling, an opinion with reasons, at least one genuine criticism, and a targeted recommendation. Language (4): appropriate register for a website, precise vocabulary, varied sentences, accurate writing, roughly within the limit.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain why “I recommend this to everyone” is a weaker ending than “I recommend this to anyone who is willing to be patient”.

Solution 3.2

Worked steps

“Everyone” says nothing about the thing being reviewed and cannot be true, so a reader learns nothing from it **B1**. Naming the kind of reader who would enjoy it — and by implication who would not — gives the reader something to act on and shows a considered judgement **B1**.