

# F I L M R E V I E W

When writing a film review, ask yourself the following: What is there about the film that is worth praising or scoffing at and just how much information do the readers need and want in order to determine whether they would enjoy seeing the film?

Below are brief descriptions of the essential elements of a film review. The order that they may appear in a review depends on the film and on the reviewer. Generally speaking, the information occurs in the order provided below.

## 1. Include the following:

- A “catchy” review headline
- Title of the movie
- Starring actors
- Director
- MPAA film rating (G, PG, PG-13, R)
- Rating (stars out of five)
- Image from the film

## 2. Introduction/background information

- Tells the purpose of the film and identifies the target audience
- Consists of information about the stars, director, and production staff of the film
- It may discuss the film's source material (if it is based on a true story or a book) as well as mentioning the genre

## 3. Summary of storyline

- A brief description of the film's plot that emphasizes the most important moments of the film without revealing the film's ending or any surprises
- Be concise

## 4. Evaluation/Critique

- The main focus of the review - section in which the reviewer analyzes and critiques the film
- Points out good points in the film (plot, character, pacing, special effects etc.)
- Comments on the acting. Makes an overall comment and talks about special individual performances.
- Tells whether the film is successful in its purpose. Is the story credible? Are the characters believable?
- Concludes by telling the reader if the film is successful at entertaining its target audience.

# How to Write a Film Review

Before you go to a film, keep an open mind. Try not to make judgments about a film based on its director, cast, or genre.

1. **Be prepared.** Take a notepad and a pencil or pen.
2. **Watch the film.** View the film with a critical eye: Does the beginning draw you in? Does the rest of the film hold your attention? What works well? What doesn't? Be aware of the various aspects of the film as you evaluate it – the acting, directing, camera work, sound quality, musical score, special effects, lighting, costumes, make-up, and editing.
3. **Take notes.** It's not easy to write in the dark, so write big and jot down short phrases to remind you of key thoughts. Watch the opening and closing credits, recording the names of the director, actors, and anyone else you want to single out.
4. **Develop your notes in detail.** As soon as you finish viewing the film, you must write down all your thoughts while they are still fresh in your mind.
5. **Write the review.** A film review should mention the film's title, year (unless it's new), director, and cast. It should tell a little about the plot – without giving away important details. Your overall recommendation (see it or don't see it) has to be supported with convincing reasons. They don't have to be brilliant reasons. Sometimes the best are common sense: "If a comedy keeps you laughing, it must be good" or "I never believed the main characters cared about each other."
6. **Share your review.** Give it to classmates/friends/family to read (and for feedback). Post it in the classroom, or submit it to the school or community newspaper.

# Due Date

By Katherine Monk,  
Postmedia News  
November 5, 2010



Robert Downey Jr. and Zach Galifianakis do Odd Couple shtick Hangover-style in this formulaic -- but funny -- road comedy.

*Zach Galifianakis and Robert Downey Jr. play a modern brand of Odd Couple who are forced to share a car trip together when they're both placed on a "no-fly" list.*

*The gags are all formula, but the two leads have enough depth and talent to bring real dimension to their characters.*

**Starring:** Robert Downey Jr. and Zach Galifianakis

**Rating:** Three stars out of five

**MPAA film rating:** PG

*The Hangover* was a lot of fun. It made a lot of money. And it showed us male bonding in ways we'd never experienced before. So really, it was just a matter of time before the clones started marching down Main Street.

*Due Date* is handsome copy. A project produced and directed by *The Hangover's* Todd Phillips, the movie's DNA features the same blend of flawed machismo, paternal sensitivity and boyish inanity as its predecessor -- only this time, wrapped around a road-trip device.

Opening with the image of Robert Downey Jr. in bed, speaking to his pregnant wife, we learn the couple is on the cusp of welcoming their first child. The only real obstacle is the flight home. Peter (Downey) is in Atlanta. His wife is home in Los Angeles.

Peter is an upwardly mobile professional -- an architect, actually, and he's got rebar in all the wrong places. He's uptight, so when he gets on the plane after an ill-fated first encounter with an amateur actor named Ethan Tremblay (Zach Galifianakis), his stress levels get the better of him. He's ejected from the flight and put on a no-fly list.

The only way he's going to get home in time for his baby's birth -- without a wallet or credit card -- is to share a ride with Ethan, the cause of Peter's misery.

Playing out a very familiar Odd Couple formula, Phillips essentially sets up the opposite personalities and lets the actors turn the gerbil wheel of comedy. Because Downey Jr. and Galifianakis are veteran actors, and capable of delivering various dimensions within the box of predictability, *Due Date* never feels tired or lifeless -- but it does flirt with terribly bad taste, and full-on offence more than once.

For instance, Peter punches a child in the gut, a dog masturbates with its own paw and there are far too many *Two and a Half Men* references.

Phillips needs to veer into oncoming traffic every once in a while, just to make sure we're awake, and to lend this movie an element of suspense that goes beyond the pregnant wife (played by Michelle Monaghan) sitting spread-eagled in a hospital bed.

The real pull is the dynamic between the two men as they attempt to find some common ground, which eventually emerges when they talk about their respective fathers.

Suddenly, the straight-edged control freak and the shaggy, pot-smoking, sexually ambiguous wannabe-actor strike the same chord -- and presto! A soul-brotherhood is born.

In the end, the two men at the centre of the frame do such a good job creating whole characters, the film begins to feel like a bit of a yoke -- a harness fabricated from formula that restricts the spontaneity of the ensemble.

As it is, *Due Date* delivers what it's supposed to: oddball comedy packed with spectacular devices and male insecurity. It even finds some subtle charm, thanks to the nuanced soft stuff from the two leads -- but it never leaves the box and becomes just another Petri-dish movie spawned in the labs of Hollywood.

# F I L M R E V I E W

## Pre-writing Activities

Watch the film, \_\_\_\_\_, and record specific details that you will require to complete the first draft of your film review.

1. A “catchy” headline for your review: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Film details:

- a. Starring actors: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Director: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. MPAA film rating (G, PG, PG-13, R): \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Rating (stars out of five): 

3. Introduction/Background Information:

- a. One possible purpose of this film might be: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. The target audience of this film might be: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. Information about the stars, director, production staff etc.: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Source material: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Summary of storyline - The main details of the storyline of this movie are:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Evaluation/Critique:**

a. Some good points in this film are (plot, character, pacing, special effects etc.):

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b. The acting in this film in general is: \_\_\_\_\_  
and some special individual performances are: \_\_\_\_\_

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c. Discuss whether this film is successful/not successful in its purpose. Is the story credible? Are the characters believable?

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d. Tell the reader if the film is successful at entertaining its target audience:

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# F I L M R E V I E W

## PEER-EDITING CHECKLIST

AUTHOR: \_\_\_\_\_

EDITOR: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

<b><u>CRITERIA:</u></b>	<b><u>YES</u></b>	<b><u>NO</u></b>
This composition critiques a film.		
Review includes a “catchy” headline.		
Review includes the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Title of the movie <input type="checkbox"/> Starring actors <input type="checkbox"/> Name of the director(s) <input type="checkbox"/> MPAA film rating <input type="checkbox"/> Rating (stars out of five) <input type="checkbox"/> Image from the film		
A multi-paragraph format has been used:		
a) The opening paragraph(s) provides the introduction/background information to the film: <input type="checkbox"/> purpose of the film and target audience <input type="checkbox"/> stars, director, and production staff of the film <input type="checkbox"/> film's source material <input type="checkbox"/> genre		
b) The next paragraph(s) summarizes the storyline, but doesn't give away the ending. Summary of the plot is concise.		
c) The final paragraph(s) critiques the film <input type="checkbox"/> critique is the main focus of the review <input type="checkbox"/> points out good points in the film <input type="checkbox"/> comments on the acting <input type="checkbox"/> tells whether the film is successful in its purpose and at entertaining its target audience		
Appropriate capitalization and punctuation is used.		

**COMMENT BY PEER EDITOR:**