

FPP Guide to Writing Book Reviews

While [FPP](#) contributors are encouraged to structure their reviews as they see fit, book reviews (in all publications) traditionally follow a straightforward pattern and address the same sorts of questions. The following points can help guide you in the process of writing a review.

A general overview of book review structure:

- **First paragraph:** It is okay to be somewhat ambiguous about your final assessment of the book in the first paragraph, but writers should generally use the first paragraph to answer the following questions:
 - **What was the author's goal in writing this book?** (For example: "In *Coyote's Lament*, Gene Smith argues that the phenomenal success of ACME Business Co. is the result of not only its unique culture but also a series of fortuitous events.")
 - **Did he/she successfully accomplish that goal?** (For example: "Cobbling together historical records, personal interviews, and financial data, the author presents a convincing—if sometimes rambling—argument that the company's success hangs as much on the media attention it received as on its penchant for innovation.")
- **Second/Third/Fourth paragraph:** These two to four paragraphs should supply supporting evidence for the assessment put forth in the first paragraph. Address one particular theme in each paragraph. (For example: Paragraph one could discuss how the author supplies evidence to show that sales at ACME took off after media exposure. Paragraph two could discuss employee interviews that the author collected that indicate that the innovative business culture didn't really take hold until *after* sales took off.)
- **Final paragraph:** What is your final word on the book? Here you can let the reader know not only how successful the author was in achieving his goal but whether the goal itself is worthwhile (i.e. if its worth the readers time to pick up this book). Answer questions such as: What lesson can be drawn from the book? Who will enjoy this book? Who won't? Is it a must read for everyone? Would you recommend a different book that does the same thing but better?

Additional questions you might want to address:

- What is the writer's background? How does that background color his/her perception of the topic that he/she is covering?
- How does this book tie in to current events? How do current events color the author's interpretation?
- Have publishers recently released a slew of books on the same or similar topics? If so, how does this book compare?
- Is the author breaking new ground? Is he/she standing on the shoulders of others, or does he/she have something truly unique to say?