



HOW TO BE AN AWESOME BETA READER

Be open minded and respectful while reading

- Understand the time, energy, heart, and soul that the writer has injected into this project.
- Writers approach stories with mindsets and backgrounds different than your own, and that's half the fun of reading! Hopefully the book does match your preferred style and genre, but even if it doesn't, be respectful of the story entrusted in your care.

Listen to what the author has asked of their readers

- Pay attention to specific requests of the author, including a timeline and where/how to send feedback, as well as what type of feedback they are looking for.
- Often writers are seeking general feedback regarding the plot, story, themes, characters, etc.
- What is less common is author's asking you to comment on grammar and spelling. Unless specifically asked, don't spend your time nitpicking through spelling errors.

Openly communicate with the author

- Whether you have a time conflict and won't meet their deadlines or the story wasn't quite what you were expecting and you no longer wish to offer your feedback, let the author know.
- Most authors understand that not everyone they send their manuscript to will finish it. Do them a service by being upfront if you don't intend to continue to read.
- They will appreciate the open and honest communication instead of having to hunt you down.

Trust your gut

- If you're reading and are concerned that you don't "know what you're talking about" or that your comments aren't be helpful, relax. As long as you have previously read a book, you have related experience to this task.
- Trust the thoughts that are top of mind about the story, write them down without too much internal battle of whether or not the information is helpful. If it is related to their story, it's probably useful.

Don't forget to tell the writer what you liked!

- Most people sign onto beta reading because they enjoy reading, so share what you enjoy!
- This is super important for two reasons:
 1. Writers have pretty much handed you their soul on a piece of paper. Don't crush their soul by only giving them back negative comments.
 2. When you identify things you like, writers can better identify their strengths. This will help them when strengthening the rest of the areas of the story.

Give constructive feedback

- Giving a writer a laundry list of things you would do differently isn't helpful.
- DO provide feedback that matches what the writer has asked for.
- If they haven't specified what type of feedback or have just asked for "general" criticism, comment on things that stick out to you.
- If you find issues in the story, comment on them in a constructive manner and the writer can decide how they wish to fix it.

Tips for Providing Constructive Feedback

- Explain **why** something sticks out to you instead of leaving a negative remark without further context.
- Make suggestions! A little riffing can be helpful for writers to gain a fresh perspective or to generate new ideas. Do **NOT** tell a writer **how** they should make their changes.
- Write comments in the form of a question. For example: what was the purpose of the scene? Why did you kill this character? Why are there so many penguins?
- Leave comments as something actionable. The writer can either decide to take that action or not. For Example: Have you considered giving this villain a more dramatic backstory?

