

Weekly Writer's Workshop Format

as adapted from *The Teacherless Writing Class* by Peter Elbow

1. A starting group should number three, four or five.
2. Go by the rules specifically for the first ten weeks.
3. Meet once a week for ten weeks. Each member of the group must solidly commit to attending each session. The group is effective only with group members who will make these sessions a priority.
4. Meet at the same place each week, preferably with privacy and without interruptions. Each person always sits in the same place.
5. The first person reads with no introduction to the work except title, for no more than ten minutes. All other participants listen. There is a brief pause, maybe five seconds, then the writer reads the piece again. During the second run-through, other participants are allowed to take notes. Nothing is every copied or passed around.
6. In a clockwise rotation, participants give their reaction to the piece as readers, not as writers. Comments should cover continuity, motivation, believability, structure, organization, but should steer clear of judging the subject matter. Reactions are limited to two minutes. There is **no** cross-table discussion. After everyone is through with their 2-minute critique, there is a two-minute period for all participants (including the writer) to discuss the work. The entire process has taken one half hour, assuming a group of five.
7. Then the next person in the clockwise rotation takes their turn reading. The person who begins the session one week is last the following week.
8. Stick to this regimen exactly for ten weeks. At that time, discuss what would be best for your group and your needs and modify the rules accordingly.
9. If, after ten weeks, you decide to change the format, watch carefully for problems. If attendance goes down, productivity falls off, arguments ensue or personality problems arise, be willing to return to the original format. It works.