

Questionnaire #3: Social Media-Based Groups

This questionnaire will help you evaluate any social media-based group you may be considering that does critique or connects writers with alpha or beta readers.

The questionnaire asks you to consider a lot of factors. It may seem overwhelming, and it may not be practical for you to complete it right after your first encounter with a candidate group, much less during the initial experience if you decide to join one. For those reasons, it may be a good idea to read through the questions now or before that meeting and decide which ones you need answers to most and which you can postpone answering or skip altogether.

Because the groups on these sites operate so differently, there are many questions that won't apply to the groups on a particular platform. As a result, these questions will give you the opportunity to skip those that aren't relevant.

Check the boxes for your answers to the questions below, or fill in the blanks, if appropriate. Make a copy for each group you are considering.

General Information About the Group

Question 1: What is the name of this group?

Question 2: What platform is it hosted on?

- Facebook
- Goodreads
- Google Groups
- Reddit
- Other:

Question 3: Is the group public or private?

- Public
- Private
- Private, with these additional restrictions:

Question 4: When was the group founded?

- More than 10 years ago
- 5-10 years ago
- Less than 5 years ago
- I couldn't tell



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Question 5: How many members does the group claim to have? (Note: this may not be meaningful information.)

members

No information provided

Question 6: How many members appear to be active on the group? (Note: this may be very difficult or impossible to determine.)

members

I couldn't tell

Question 7: Could you read the group's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), terms of use, rules, or other guidance if you hadn't signed up for the group?

Yes

No, I have to sign up to see them. (Skip to [Question 12](#))

Question 8: Were the group's FAQs, terms, etc., easy to find?

Yes

No

Question 9: If you could find the FAQs, terms, etc., were they easy to understand?

Yes

Some yes, some no

No

There was too much information!

Question 10: Did the group have any rules or policies regarding bad behavior in critiques or in their forums, such as "trolling" (personal attacks on others)?

Yes, clear and specific

Yes, but generic

I didn't find any

Question 11: Could you tell if these rules or policies were consistently enforced?

Yes, they are

I couldn't tell

No, they don't appear to be

Question 12: Does the group seem to be specifically for residents of a certain city, region, or nation?

Yes

I couldn't tell

No

How the Group Works

Question 13: Is critique the primary purpose of the group?

Yes (skip to [Question 19](#))

No

Question 14: What other things does the group focus on? Pick all that apply.

Connecting authors with critique partners who will then work separately, away from the group.

Connecting authors with alpha readers. (Skip to [Question 17](#) if you are only interested in finding alpha or beta readers.)

Connecting authors with beta readers. (Skip to [Question 17](#) if you are only interested in finding alpha or beta readers.)

Discussions of other writing-related topics.

Drawing content for an affiliated contest, website, or magazine.

Networking with other writers, agents, or editors.

Promoting members' work.

Letting members post their work for others to read.

Promoting something the organizers or members are selling: books, courses, services, etc.

Other:

Question 15: If the purpose of the group is to connect members with critique partners, how do they do that? Pick all that apply.

Members search lists of already-formed critique groups and ask to join any that seem like a good fit.

Members announce they want to form their own group and invite other members to join it.

Members post a request to something like a forum page.

Members may post work directly to the group and receive critique there.

Other:

Question 16: What kind of critique partnership(s) does the group promote? Pick all that apply, then skip to [Question 19](#) if you're not interested in alpha or beta readers.

One-on-one

Small group

Either one

I couldn't tell

Other:

Question 17: If the purpose of the group is to connect members with alpha or beta readers, how do they do that? Pick all that apply.

Members search lists of alpha or beta readers and pick ones to contact.

Members post a request on something like a forum page.

Other:

Question 18: If a member is looking for an alpha or beta reader, are they expected to offer to do a similar read for any author who offers to read for them?

Yes

No

I don't know

Other:

Question 19: How much of the group could you explore without joining?

All of it

A lot of it

Some of it

None of it (Skip to [Question 55](#))

Question 20: If you could explore the group:

A. Did it seem to be logically organized?

Yes

Not really

No

B. Was it easy to get around in?

Yes

Not really

No

Submitting Work to the Group

Question 21: Could you read any of the members' submissions without joining the group?

Yes

No

Question 22: How do members submit their work for critique?

Send via e-mail

Post to a forum thread

Copy into an online form

Critique partners decide among themselves (skip to [Question 25](#))

Alpha or beta readers specify what they want (skip to [Question 25](#))

Other:

Question 23: If the group uses posts to forum threads or online forms, are there any special format requirements?

Yes, forum threads require special codes for boldfaced, italicized, underlined, etc. text.

Yes, forum threads or online forms can only accept work in:

Plain Text

Rich Text Format

The old Word format (.doc)

Other:

Question 24: Do you know how to format text this way?

Yes

I think so

No, but their instructions were clear

No

Question 25: Can you submit work to the group right after joining?

Yes

No, I must submit critiques first

No, I have to find my critique partners or alpha or beta readers first

Other:

Question 26: Are there any limits on how long a submission can be?

No

Yes, words

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

Question 27: Are there any limits on how often members can submit work?

No

Yes, no more than _____ per week

Yes, they must earn a certain number of points first by

Yes, they must write _____ critiques or earn _____ points first

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

Other:

Question 28: Can members submit chapters of a novel?

Yes, no restrictions

Yes, within the length limits

Yes, but special permission or coordination is required

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

No

Question 29: Are members required to submit a certain number of works within a given time period?

No (Skip to [Question 31](#))

Yes, _____ submissions within _____ weeks

Yes, _____ submissions within a month

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

Question 30: If members don't meet this requirement, what happens?

It's not clear.

They can request temporary relief from the requirement.

They are put in probationary status until they meet it.

They can be kicked off the group if they don't catch up.

Other:

Question 31: Does the group specialize in certain genres and/or forms?

No

Yes:

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

Question 32: Are there any restrictions on the content of the submissions?

No

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

Yes for all submissions:

Warnings are required for:

These things are absolutely prohibited:

Question 33: Is there a target age range for submissions? Pick all that apply.

No, anything can be submitted.

Young Adult (13-19)

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

Middle Grade (9-12)

Adults/all ages

Children (5-9)

New Adult (18-25)

Picture books (pre-reader/new reader)

Question 34: How well does this match with what you write?

Completely matches

Partially matches

Does not match at all

How Critiques Are Done Within the Group

Question 35: Is critique done within the structure of the overall group or is it done separately?

Within the structure

Separately

Question 36: Did the group provide any guidance on what they expected from members' critiques?

Yes, there was very detailed guidance.

Yes, but it was pretty general.

Yes, but I didn't understand it.

Yes, but the details vary depending on the partners or readers.

No

Question 37: How do members provide their critiques?

On a separate online form

As a reply to the submission on the forum

In-line within the text

By e-mail

It varies depending on the partners or readers (skip to [Question 39](#))

Other:

Question 38: Do you know how to do this?

Yes

I think so

No, but their instructions were clear

No

Question 39: Can the author respond to the critiques?

Yes, in a reply to the post

Yes, via e-mail

Yes, by some other method:

No

I couldn't tell

Question 40: Did the group give any indication of how many critiques a member could expect to receive?

Yes, a minimum number of critiques was guaranteed.

No, but members were encouraged to keep their submissions short to attract more critiques.

No

There was no information on this

Other:

This wasn't applicable

Question 41: Could you read any of the critiques of these submission without joining the group?

Yes

No (skip to [Question 48](#))

Question 42: If you could read the critiques, on average, how many did submitters seem to get?

One or two at most

Many more than five

Fewer than five

It varied

More than five

I couldn't tell

Question 43: If you were able to review the critiques of members' work, what was your impression of them? Pick all that apply.

The critiques were:

Respectful but overwhelming.

Not respectful and overwhelming.

Respectful and helpful.

Not respectful but helpful.

Respectful but not helpful.

Not respectful and unhelpful.

Question 44: If the critiques were not helpful, why? Pick all that apply.

Too much information.

Attacked the author personally.

Too many contradictions between reviewers.

They were not relevant.

Criticized without providing suggestions on how to improve.

Other:

Question 45: What kinds of things did the members critique? Pick all that apply.

A. Fiction and nonfiction:

Beginnings and endings

Showing versus telling

Characterization

Narrative voice and style

Pacing

Structure and flow

Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.)

Other:

B. Fiction only:

Conflict and tension

Stakes

Story arc

Plots and subplots

Setting

Dialogue

Point of view

Other:

C. Nonfiction only:

Topic and main points

Depth and completeness

Viewpoint

Other:

D. Poetry:

Clarity of images

Structure and flow

Form versus content

Use of language

Other:

Question 46: If the reviewers discussed these topics in the works, did the discussions seem helpful?

Yes

Some yes, some no

No

Question 47: Overall, how in-depth were the critiques?

Very

Moderately

It varied

Not very

Question 48: Were there any rules or restrictions on who could provide critiques or alpha or beta reads?

No

I didn't find any

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

Yes:

Question 49: Was there a minimum length requirement for critiques?

Yes, words

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

No, but critiques less than words receive less credit

No

This is not applicable (skip to [Question 52](#))

Question 50: Are members required to provide a certain minimum number of critiques within a time period?

Yes, critiques per week

Yes, critiques per month

Yes, an average of critiques per week

Yes, an average of critiques per month

Yes, but it varies depending on the partners or readers

No, but a certain pace was encouraged

No

This is not applicable (skip to [Question 52](#))

Question 51: What happens if a member does not meet these requirements?

It's not clear.

They can request temporary relief from the requirement.

They are put in probationary status until they meet it.

They can be kicked off the group if they don't catch up.

It's up to the other critique partners.

Other:

This is not applicable.

The Group's Members

Question 52: The group's members seem to be (pick all that apply):

Committed to helping each other get better.

Honest but tactful and constructive.

Able to address large-scale issues (e.g. plot, characterization) as well as smaller ones (punctuation, spelling, grammar, etc.).

Too focused on small issues.

Highly critical of each other and their work.

Highly variable in their critiquing skills.

I couldn't tell.

Other:

Question 53: As best you can tell, what are the experience levels of the members?

All highly experienced.

All more experienced than me.

Some more experienced than me, some less.

All less experienced than me.

All very inexperienced.

I couldn't tell

Question 54: As best you could tell, what were the group members' goals? Pick all that apply.

Help each other improve

Get published or published again

Sign with a publisher or agent

Improve their marketing and/or publishing knowledge

Improve their craft

I couldn't tell

Other:

Overall Impression

Question 55: What was your first impression of the group overall?

I want to join or stay with this group.

I need to explore it some more.

I need to think about it some more.

I had to join but won't stay.

I will not join this group.