

More Tips: The ABCs of Paid Critiques

A: Be INFORMED! You have two different paid critique options: 1) Choose your own critiquer (\$100), or 2) Critiquer chosen for you (\$85). Read your options thoroughly and choose which experience may be best for you. If choosing your own critiquer, be sure to research the faculty in order to choose which person might be the best fit for you and your work. This means not choosing a picture book editor to critique your YA Fantasy, etc.!

B: Be PROMPT! Your manuscript must be emailed by the due date (**on or before 11:59 p.m.** Eastern time/10:59 p.m. Central time on **July 1**). We have promised to deliver your manuscript to your critiquer by a certain date. If we don't have your pages, we can't deliver them. Review the information on the Manuscript Critiques and Submissions page for email instructions, including the correct email address and subject line. Refunds for paid manuscript critiques are not available.

C: Be DETAILED! Your manuscript must have the correct formatting and number of pages, as specified in the instructions. Read the instructions for formatting and submission guidelines AND FOLLOW THEM. Download and review the Manuscript Formatting Guidelines PDF (and the sample pages) and, when in doubt, ASK QUESTIONS (email Erica Rodgers at e.rodgers13@gmail.com). If your manuscript arrives with formatting issues, we'll let you know and give you a chance to resubmit, so watch your inbox for confirmation of receipt or a request for resubmission.

D: Be PROFESSIONAL. We all submit our work for critique with a sense of hope. And we should! While it would be a dream for an editor or agent to ask to represent or publish your manuscript, this is an extremely RARE occurrence in a conference setting. More likely, they will simply give feedback and perhaps ask you to submit to them after the conference. In ANY case, we are expected to act in a professional manner. Treat your critiquer as a co-worker/professional peer deserving of respect. Thanking them in the hallway for a helpful critique is acceptable; chasing them into the bathroom to demand an explanation of a criticism or to talk further, is not. **Hounding faculty, raised voices, rude or unkind words, or behavior otherwise deemed inappropriate or abusive will not be tolerated. If you are asked to leave the conference, refunds will not be issued.** Of course, this probably goes without saying. We ALL know how to treat other amazing human beings with kindness and respect!

E: Be EXCITED! Someone great is going to critique your manuscript. The Midsouth does not randomly match critiquers with manuscripts, nor do we dole out manuscripts in the order they arrive. Each manuscript is read thoroughly and matched to the very best critiquer possible. We strive to give each attendee the most pertinent, useful information about their writing. This is a process with many variables! The number of critiques a faculty member is willing to do, what genres a faculty member has requested to see (or not see), and how many critique slots are available for a specific age level are all factors that must be taken into consideration. It could mean, for example, that almost all middle grade fantasy goes to an agent one year while almost all middle grade fantasy goes to

an editor the next year. It's a giant puzzle requiring time and brain power to sort! **It is the passion, goal, and mission of SCBWI Midsouth that every manuscript finds the opportunity for improvement and every writer finds their dream editor or agent.**

G: Be READY! Critiqued manuscripts will be returned to attendees via email a day or two before the conference. Read your critiquer's comments thoroughly, taking the time to digest them to prepare for your face-to-face. If you're puzzled about portions of your critique, ask a fellow attendee for their opinion. It's another way to make connections with your peers at the conference! During your critique, allow your critiquer to walk through notes and comments before jumping into any questions you may have.

Critique = Constructive Criticism = Better Manuscript = Better Writer

With the right attitude and preparation, your individual paid manuscript critique will provide a springboard to improve your writing.