Critiquing—Keep It Positive!

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SAMPLE CRITIQUE SHEET:

Did the story make sense (character, setting, plot, and theme)? Why, why not?

Was the storyteller familiar enough with the story to tell it smoothly?

**Technique:**

*Story beginning*

Excellent  Good  Needs some work  Suggestions:

*Eye contact with audience*

Excellent  Good  Needs some work  Suggestions:

*Use of voice*

Excellent  Good  Needs some work  Suggestions:

*Use of facial expression*

Excellent  Good  Needs some work  Suggestions:

*Use of gestures*

Excellent  Good  Needs some work  Suggestions:

*Use of space/body to tell the story*

Excellent  Good  Needs some work  Suggestions:

*Story ending*

Excellent  Good  Needs some work  Suggestions:

*Comments:*

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Things to remember when coaching children:

- The less you know the storyteller, the more careful you need to be.
- It's all about helping the child and building trust.
- Critiquing is about positive reinforcement.
- Watch your wording—children react to the negative—they don't respond to it.
- Maintain a balance, praise and advice. First praise, praise, praise...THEN offer suggestions.
- **BUT**—get rid of the "but"! ...or they won't hear anything else.
- Take it slowly. Have them work on one thing at a time.

Examples:

- "You might try..."
- "I'd like to see you add..."
- "You are so good at...you might try..."
- "I like the way you...There's an easier way..."
- "I love the way you...could you try..."
- "I'd love to see you..."

I use peer coaching. They need to be trained to do this, but it doesn't take long. We begin with each one telling one thing they liked. After a few sessions we add one thing they'd like to see them try. By stating it this way it stays positive most of the time.

Resource List:

- **Tell It Together: Foolproof Scripts for Story Theatre**, Barbara McBride-Smith
- **Tell It Again! and Tell It Again2, Easy-to-Tell Stories with Activities for Young Children**, Shirley C. Raines and Rebecca Isabel
- **Stories that Kids Can Read and Tell Series**, Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss from August House
- **Twenty Tellable Tales**, Margaret Read MacDonald
- **Three Minutes Tales**, Margaret Read MacDonald
- **The Storyteller's Start-up Book**, Margaret Read MacDonald
- **Five Minute Tales and Three Minute Tales**, Margaret Read MacDonald
- **Teaching with Story**, Margaret Read MacDonald
- **Ready-to-Tell Tales**, David Holt and Bill Mooney
- **Story Cove series from August House**, simple folktales in picture book format. Good for retelling practice with very young tellers and beginners.
- **Raising Voices**, Judy Sima and Kevin Cordi
- **World Storytelling series from August House**
- Aaron Shepard's website: [www.aaronshep.com](http://www.aaronshep.com)

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