

Creative Use of English

Writing an effective film review

Tip #1 - Spicing up the review with more sensory and emotional appeal

Compound words

A compound word links two or more words together to form a word with a new meaning. We can use compound words related to our body parts to comment on the plot of films/books to convey our feelings.

e.g. The movie is exciting. → The movie is nail-biting.
The movie is a nail-biter.

Complete the table below about different types of films.

Body part	Action Verb	Suffix	Compound noun	Compound adjective	Feeling (Adjective)
e.g. nail	bite	-er	nail-biter	nail-biting	thrilling / thrilled exciting / excited
1. hair	raise	-er	hair-raiser	hair-raising	horrifying / horrified
2. head	scratch	-er	head-scratcher	head-scratching	confusing / confused disorienting / disorientated
3. eye	pop	-er	eye-popper	eye-popping	surprising / surprised
4. heart	warm	-er	heart-warmer	heart-warming	happy pleasing / pleased
5. mind	blow	-er	mindblower	mind-blowing	astonishing / astonished
6. blood	curdle	-er	blood-curdler	blood-curdling	horrifying / horrified

Idiomatic expressions

An idiomatic expression is a type of informal language. It usually has a figurative meaning.

e.g. I watched the fight scenes attentively. → My eyes are glued to the fight scenes.

Fill in each blank with ONE word only: teeth, eyes, eyebrows, adrenaline, blood, spine, goosebumps

Feeling	idiomatic expressions
excited	e.g. The cinematic effects are so mesmerising that <u>my eyes are glued to</u> the screen from start to finish. 1. I <u>feel an adrenaline rush</u> at the exhilarating car-racing scene.
angry	2. The scene where the poor are suppressed will make you <u>grit your teeth</u> . 3. <u>Your blood will be boiling</u> when you watch how the innocent woman is convicted of murder.
scared	4. The eerie sound effects <u>send chills down my spine</u> . 5. I <u>got goosebumps</u> all over my body when the possessed boy talks to his mum.
unimpressed	6. The protagonist's sudden change is illogical and <u>has raised a few eyebrows</u> . 7. Most of the scenes don't make sense. I can't help <u>rolling my eyes</u> .

Try this

Rewrite the following sentences by adding sprinkles with creative **compound words** and **idiomatic expressions**:

e.g. The movie is touching. I wept a little when I watched the scene where the siblings make peace with each other. I enjoyed it very much.

The movie is a heart-warmer. The scene where the siblings make peace with each other is moving. It is a pleasure to watch.

(Compound noun)
(Idiomatic expressions)

1. This film is supposed to be scary but some of the plots are very confusing and unimpressive.

The film is an epic failure that some of the plots are head-scratching. I couldn't help but raise a few eyebrows while watching.

(Compound adjective)
(Idiomatic expressions)

2. This action movie is surprising. I felt so angry when I saw the protagonists being brutally attacked. The stunts in the fight scenes are also exciting to watch.

The action movie is an eye-popper. I gritted my teeth when I saw the protagonists being brutally attacked. The stunts in the fight scenes are also nail-biting. I felt an adrenaline rush when I watched them.

Notes: The compound words and idiomatic expressions useful for describing the plot and characters in a film review are also applicable to a book review.

Complex sentences

are often used to provide additional information, description and details about the film and characters. They help make your film review more **academic** and **analytical**.

Tip #2 – Providing additional information with complex structures

Participle phrases

provide more information about the subject and the action.

Circle the participles in the following examples and underline the subjects that they describe:

- Present participle (active voice) at the beginning of the sentence
Learning the truth behind the secret, Adrian Lam goes all out against his enemies.
- Past participle (passive voice) at the beginning of the sentence
Deftly directed by the renowned director Christopher Nolan, the film has been climbing box office records since its release.

Appositives

are noun phrases providing more information about the subject or the object.

Appositives: Lam and his legal team go all out against the Chungs, one of the most powerful “old money” families in Hong Kong.

Relative clauses

combine two sentences that share a common noun to provide more information, and they come in different forms:

- Relative clause with relative pronouns (e.g. who, which, that)

The story revolves around a lawyer. He is named Adrian Lam.

→ The story revolves around a lawyer who is named Adrian Lam.

(Defining / Non-defining relative clause)

Adrian Lam learns the truth behind the secret. He goes all out against his enemies.

→ Adrian Lam, who learns the truth behind the secret, goes all out against his enemies.

(Defining / Non-Defining relative clause)

- Reduced relative clause

The scene featuring the fight is well-received.

(Present participle ‘featuring’ replaces ‘which features’)

The story revolves around a lawyer named Adrian Lam.

(Past participle ‘named’ replaces ‘who is named’)

Try this

Rewrite the remarked sentences using participle phrases, relative clauses or appositives.

‘A Guilty Conscience’ review: Hong Kong film highlights issues of class and justice in captivating legal thriller

(1) A Guilty Conscience is deftly directed by long-time screenwriter Jack Ng Wai-lun. The film has been climbing box office records since its release in January 2023. It has grossed \$104 million so far and become the highest-grossing Hong Kong film ever. The movie incorporates several genres and can be categorised as a mystery, comedy, legal drama and family film. (2) A Guilty Conscience is complemented by a cast of complex and well-developed characters. This movie has captivated audiences across Hong Kong.

(3) The movie is set in 2002. (4) The story revolves around Adrian Lam. He is a renowned lawyer (Dayo Wong). (5) The audience first meets Lam as a magistrate. He does not take his job seriously. (6) A legal friend persuaded Lam. (7) Lam joins his private law firm and his first case is to defend Jolene Tsang (Louise Wong), a single mother. She has been accused of murdering her seven-year-old daughter. (8) Due to his negligence, Lam has not recorded the testimony of Desmond Chung (Adam Pak). He is Tsang’s lover and the girl’s biological father. It indirectly leads to Tsang being found guilty and sentenced to 17 years behind bars.



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