Giving good critique — 10-point checklist

Good critique...

1. **is aware of the relationship between critic and critiqued**
   Commenting on a stranger’s work will require more care and empathy than offering critique to a close friend, who probably already trusts you and knows that your heart is in the right place. Politeness goes a long way!

2. **forms a judgement on both positive and negative aspects of the work**
   Don’t say: “This project is amazing! I can’t think of any way it could be better!”
   Do say: “I really admire how you handled the visual hierarchy in this layout. Have you considered a different font pairing, though?”

3. **expresses judgements in respectful and compassionate language**
   Don’t say: “Your color choices are all over the place! They make me feel sick!”
   Do say: “I’m not sure that a triadic colour palette really works for this brief — have you tried a simpler option?”

4. **refers to established principles of good design, not to personal taste**
   Don’t say: “Have you looked at how I did this? I prefer blue to purple.”
   Do say: “Do you think that a simpler colour scheme could work?”

5. **uses Socratic questions to identify problems without suggesting solutions**
   Don’t say: “This heading would be better if it was centered.”
   Do say: “Does the heading have enough impact?”

6. **focuses on the work and doesn’t criticise the person**
   Don’t say: “This page looks underdeveloped — you need to work harder!”
   Do say: “This page would benefit from extra attention when you work on the next iteration.”

7. **is mindful of its purpose and the reason it has been requested**
   Don’t say: “Your lorem ipsum text doesn’t make sense in Latin.”
   Do say: “The overall layout is looking clean and balanced.”

8. **takes account of the other person’s level and needs**
   Don’t say: “I know you’re new to design, but I think you should create custom ligatures for the headline.”
   Do say: “This is a great start! What other fonts did you consider for the headline?”

9. **is written in prose and addresses the other person conversationally**
   Don’t say: “text too small”
   Do say: “Hey Viv, I was wondering if you’d checked the legibility of this section? For me it’s set a bit small for comfortable reading.”

10. **includes a thank you**
    Don’t say: “This took me ages!”
    Do say: “Thanks for asking me to take a look at your work. Let me know if you’d like me to see the next draft!”