WRITING CRITICALLY

What is critical writing?

Critical writing is about developing your own academic voice within your subject area\(^1\).

It is the result of an ongoing process of reflecting, researching, note-making, reading and writing.

It means you do not accept information at face value.

Before the writing

As soon as you decide which assignment question you will answer, begin thinking critically about the topic.

It is a good idea to read as widely as possible, time permitting. This provides you with a range of perspectives to consider.

While reading, make sure you actively engage with the texts, e.g. when taking notes, ask questions about what you are reading, weigh up the evidence, examine the logic of the argument, etc. At all times keep mindful of the assignment question and/or the argument you intend to develop.

What does writing critically mean in practice?

Being able to write critically, that is, so that your academic voice is clear is usually the result of considered reading and in-depth thinking.

If at first you find it difficult, remind yourself that the more knowledgeable you are about a particular subject, the more likely you will be able to write with a critical perspective.

\(^1\) University of Leicester [http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/id/resources/writing/writing-resources/critical-writing](http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/id/resources/writing/writing-resources/critical-writing)

Critical writing checklist

Use this checklist when writing your assignments. Ask yourself the following questions:

Have I:

- engaged with my sources?
- demonstrated a clear understanding of the field of study?
- interpreted the data/ideas presented?
- assessed the strengths and weaknesses of other authors’ ideas?
- identified underlying assumptions in the theoretical perspectives I’ve presented?
- included my own opinions and the reasons for them?
- given relevant examples and supporting evidence for my claims?
- guided the reader through my ideas/thought process?
- defined all important concepts?
- looked for relationships between ideas?

Timely reminders

- It takes time to write critically.
- Writing critically is not the same as criticising. It includes commenting on both strong and weak aspects of a text, a research study or report, etc.
What else is necessary?

An essay, report or thesis that shows a high degree of critical thinking will only attract high marks if it is also well-written and conforms to the academic conventions of your discipline.

To ensure you submit a well-written assignment, report or thesis, make sure you have done the following.

- Checked your spelling (don’t only rely on spell cheque!) 😊
- Referenced according to the requirements of your discipline.
- Used punctuation to aid, not hinder, the reader’s understanding.
- Used technical words appropriately and defined them if necessary.
- Used synonyms which capture the nuances of the original text (i.e. use a thesaurus with caution).
- Written all words that could be contracted, e.g. ‘don’t’, ‘won’t’, ‘it’s’ in their long form, e.g. ‘do not’, ‘will not’, ‘it is’.

Find a proof reading and/or editing system that suits you

Outcomes for the sector and the field of [international education - LACE] demonstrated positive outcomes from programs that explicitly promote intercultural friendship and an understanding of connections across national and cultural boundaries.

Think outside the box. How many uses can you think of for this?

Like this Survival Guide? Why not check out...

Want to know more about STUDY Smarter?
Find out about all our services and resources at: [www.studysmarter.uwa.edu.au](http://www.studysmarter.uwa.edu.au)

Any suggestions?
We’d love to hear from you. Email us at [study.smarter@uwa.edu.au](mailto:study.smarter@uwa.edu.au)

This resource was developed by the STUDY Smarter team for UWA students. When using our resources, please retain them in their original form with both the STUDY Smarter heading and the UWA logo.