



Demonstrating critical thinking in writing

What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is a skill which involves two processes:

- 1) the observation, analysis and reflection of new knowledge; and
- 2) its integration into thinking or action (Deakin University n.d.).

More information about this skill can be found in the [Critical Thinking](#) UniSA Study Help resource.

Critical thinking and writing

To show critical thinking in your writing you need to show that you can:

- see where there are similarities and differences between various points of view
- identify contentious issues
- apply the ideas in different contexts

Doing this builds on and transforms information by examining evidence and arguments presented by others and contributes to your own practice, knowledge and thinking.

How to show critical thinking in your writing?

There are numerous ways to reflect critical thinking in your writing and these can relate to a text, concept, idea or image. These can include:

- presenting a case by providing reasons, using evidence, comparing and evaluating arguments
- justifying selection where there are alternatives
- identifying why and how it is relevant, significant or suitable
- assessing the importance of details
- evaluating the significance of its parts
- identifying the relevance of relationships
- examining evidence critically
- weighing up its strengths and weaknesses
- grouping similar points together
- presenting information in a logical order to help understand the line of reasoning
- justifying the timing's importance
- specifying best practice or options
- drawing conclusions
- using signpost words such as [phrases](#), verbs and [linking words](#) to indicate and navigate sequence of the argument (adapted from Cottrell 2005; Learnhigher 2012)

How to make an informed critical analysis?

To present a well-considered and well-structured point of view, you need to categorise your ideas and spend time thinking, analysing, planning and organising.

1. Read broadly to ensure that you familiarise yourself with the information being discussed.

2. Read for specific detail. Reflect on why the information is relevant and how it informs your position. Ask yourself questions such as:
'How does this influence my position?' or
'How does this information support/build on/refute what I already know?'
3. Plan your writing and organise your ideas.
4. Write a draft.
5. Revise and edit work your work critically. Doing this after several days makes it easier to be critical of what you have written.

References

Cottrell, S 2005, *Critical thinking skills*, Palgrave McMillan, UK.

Deakin University n.d., *Critical thinking*, Deakin University, viewed 21 November 2019, <http://www.deakin.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/51222/critical-thinking.pdf>.

Learnhigher 2012, *What's the difference between description and critical analysis?* <<http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/learning-at-university/critical-thinking-and-reflection/whats-the-difference-between-description-and-critical-analysis>>

University of South Australia n.d., *Linking words and phrases*, UniSA, viewed 21 November 2019, <https://lo.unisa.edu.au/pluginfile.php/1687844/mod_resource/content/0/Vocabulary_linking%20words%20and%20phrases_Oct%202017.pdf>

University of South Australia n.d., *Critical thinking*, UniSA, viewed 21 November 2019, <https://lo.unisa.edu.au/pluginfile.php/1687763/mod_resource/content/0/Critical%20thinking_Sep%202017.pdf>

Additional sources

University of Edinburgh - [Critical Thinking](#)

University of Leicester - [What is Critical Writing?](#)

University of Manchester - [Academic Phrasebank](#)

How to demonstrate these characteristics in your writing?

Below is piece of writing which identifies how language and some of the characteristics identified have been applied to show critical thinking.

<p>Comparing one piece of information against another</p>	<p>In order to understand how ideal beauty is a cultural construct, the nature of beauty itself must be understood. Vacker and Key (1993, p. 473) propose that ‘the nature of beauty is entirely dependent upon the contents of human consciousness’. Goines (1995) and Englis (1994) agree that what is defined as beautiful is dependent on culture or ‘culture- bound’ (Goines 1995, p.12). Englis, Solomon and Ashmore (1994) take this a step further arguing that ideal beauty is not only culture bound, but also culturally constructed. This cultural construct of ideal beauty is seen in the changing concepts of beauty ideals over time and the variations which exist across cultures (Frith, Shaw & Cheng 2005; Mazur 1986). Lin and Yeh (2009, p.66) also acknowledge that what is considered beautiful is dependent on ‘cultures, nations, societies, and individuals’. Thus, beauty ideals and their representations have reflected the historical and social context of a culture, particularly social priorities, gender roles and dominant ideologies (Frith, Shaw & Cheng 2005). One such example is Prada’s Candy advertisement (Figure 1) with its link to social priorities. This design places black bars along the top and bottom suggestive of a wide screen film, which refers to the ideal beauty of actresses. Therefore, the social priorities this advertisement taps into are beauty as a means of success and a quality to be admired.</p>	<p>Group similar points</p>
<p>Present a case according to evidence</p>		<p>Present case by providing reasons, using evidence, comparing and evaluating arguments</p>
<p>Evaluating the significance of its parts</p>		
<p>Draw conclusions</p>		<p>Indicate and navigate sequence of the argument using signpost or linking words</p>
<p>Identifying why and how it is relevant</p>		
<p>Draw conclusions</p>		