



Critical Analytical Writing

From Cottrell, S. (2008, p. 286) *The Study Skills Handbook*, 3rd edn. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Generally speaking, students lose more marks for lack of critical analysis than any other single weakness in their work. Good critical writing can mean the difference between excelling in an assignment and just scraping by. Is your writing critically analysing its subject matter?

Descriptive Writing...	Critical Analytical Writing...
states what happened	identifies the significance
states what something is like	evaluates strengths and weaknesses
gives the story so far	weighs one piece of information against another
states the order in which things happened	makes reasoned judgements
says how to do something	argues a case according to the evidence
explains what a theory says	shows why something is relevant or suitable
explains how something works	indicates why something will work (best)
notes the method used	identifies whether something is appropriate or suitable
says when something occurred	identifies why the timing is of importance
states the different components	weighs up the importance of component parts
states opinions	gives reasons for selecting each option
lists details	evaluates the relevance of links between pieces of information
lists in any order	structures information in order of importance
states the links between items	shows the relevance of links between pieces of information
gives information	draws conclusions

Striking a balance between providing essential background description (context) and demonstrating critical analysis is essential.

For information please contact us on 028 9097 3618 or email lds@qub.ac.uk

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