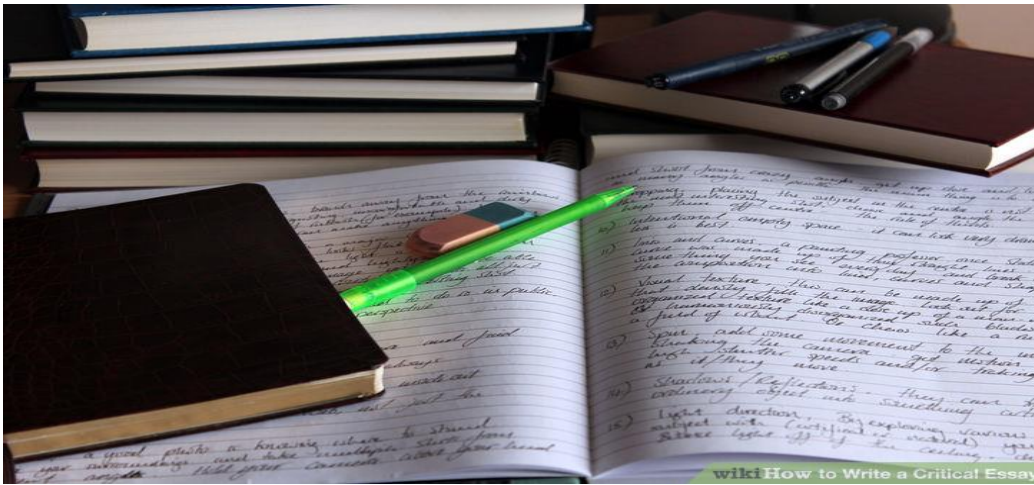


WRITING CRITICALLY

HOW TO ARTICULATE
CRITICAL THINKING IN
YOUR WRITTEN
ASSIGNMENTS



In feedback from written assignments tutors sometimes write that the work does not show enough evidence of critical thinking

Here are some ideas to improve the level of critical analysis in your work and demonstrate this in your writing

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DESCRIPTIVE WRITING AND CRITICAL WRITING IS IMPORTANT

Descriptive writing

- Is relatively simple
- Sets the scene
- But can use up your word-count without getting you many marks
- Reports information but does not develop your argument

Critical writing

- Evaluates your sources and the arguments of other authors, describing their relevance to the brief, their strengths and weaknesses
- Needs a certain amount of confidence
- This confidence can only be developed through appropriate amounts of critical reading

So critical writing is harder than descriptive writing

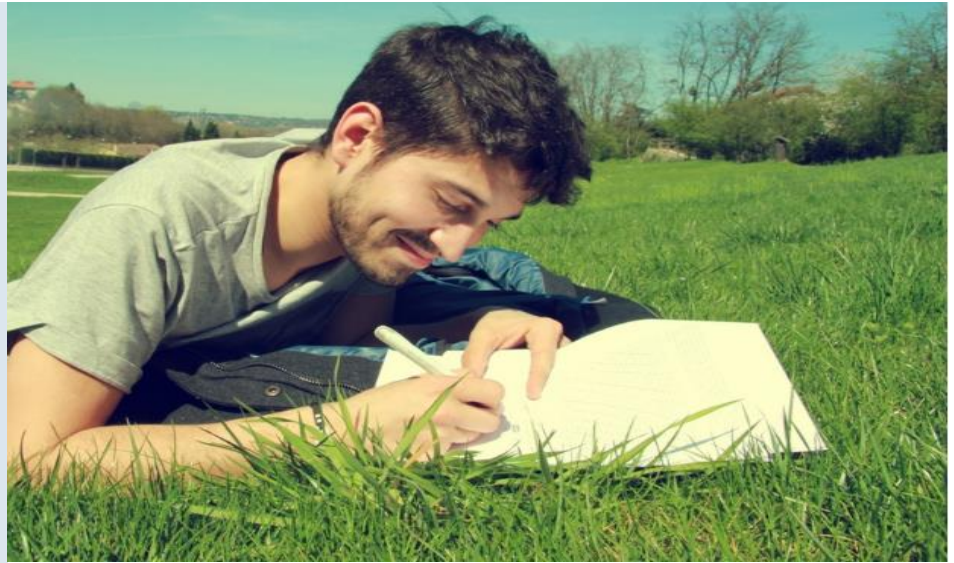
It needs high level skills and a certain amount of risk-taking because you are participating in academic debate. But you cannot offer up an opinion without backing up what you have to say with evidence from your reading. Engaging with quality academic sources, such as journal articles is unavoidable

To find your academic voice – try to write in a cool, considered way – avoid sounding arrogant, dismissive or judgmental – be sceptical rather than cynical – find reliable, academic sources to support what you say, even if you are sure that you are right



Integrate quotes in your writing

- it is usually better to summarise or paraphrase other peoples' ideas (with citations) in your writing, rather than directly quote
- this approach will integrate your sources into your writing automatically and demonstrate that you have understood what you have read
- stringing lots of quotes together does not allow you to demonstrate that you have done any critical thinking
- if you do directly quote, introduce and then discuss the quote, so that you are interpreting it for your reader and showing how it relates to your argument



GOOD PARAGRAPHS ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF YOUR ARGUMENT

Keep your descriptive writing to a minimum and in a separate paragraph to your critical writing

Make one point per paragraph – introduce the point, provide evidence to support your point and then discuss it by reflecting critically on the point.

This is the bit of writing, towards the end of the paragraph, which will potentially carry the most marks

Establish the line of your argument by organising your paragraphs effectively

You need to lead your reader from your introduction to a carefully considered conclusion, following the thread of your argument

Imagine that your reader is an intelligent and interested person, but not necessarily someone who is a specialist in your subject.

Explain ideas carefully for this, imagined general reader