

Critical writing

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Session aims

- ❑ To discuss expectations of critical writing
- ❑ To discuss what critical writing is
 - the importance of argument
 - reading critically
 - critical paraphrasing
 - structuring your work critically
 - evaluation in your paragraphs

On being critical

- Lecturer: Your writing is “too descriptive and not 'critical' enough” or “you do not engage in analysis of sources” or “you have clearly read widely, but what is the point?”.
- Student: “Oh?”

Critical Analysis

Critical writing is the process of pulling together the steps from critical thinking (sourcing, reading, comparing, etc.) to present a strong **argument** within your assignment. This will involve selecting the sources and the information you chose, to create a logical structure and argument, which answers the question.

(Cottrell, 2017)

Critical
thinking

Critical
writing



*A critical awareness
of current problems
informed by your
academic discipline
and practice*

*Ability to evaluate
critically current
research*



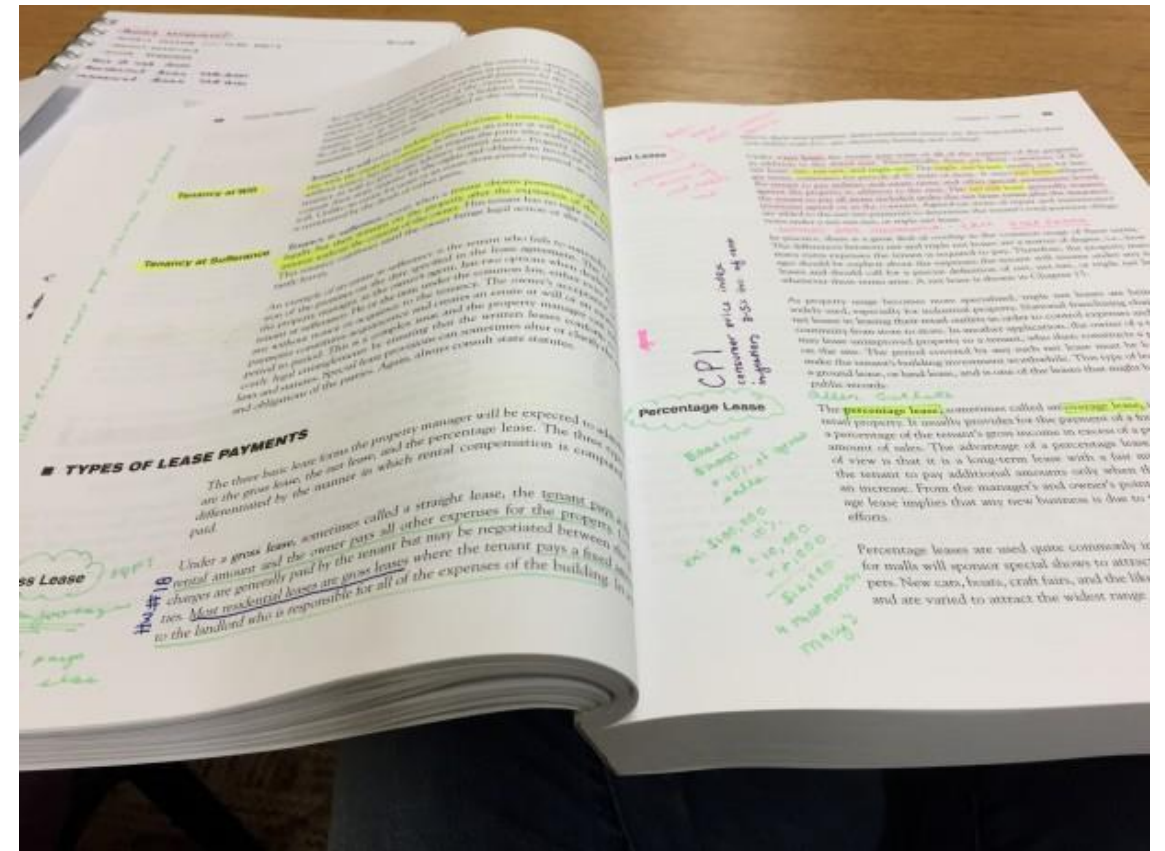
Insofar as your argument depends on your
knowledge and use of evidence...

... critical writing starts with **critical
reading!**

Critical reading

Reading with a purpose

- As you read you should be engaging with the texts by **annotating / paraphrasing critically** as you go along
- Use your title/research question to guide this process



Questions are key!

... when reading...



... and while writing!

Remember while you read:

Why am I reading this?

***CONSTRUCT AND SUSTAIN AN ARGUMENT
BASED ON EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS***

What does this do to my argument?

Does it support it?

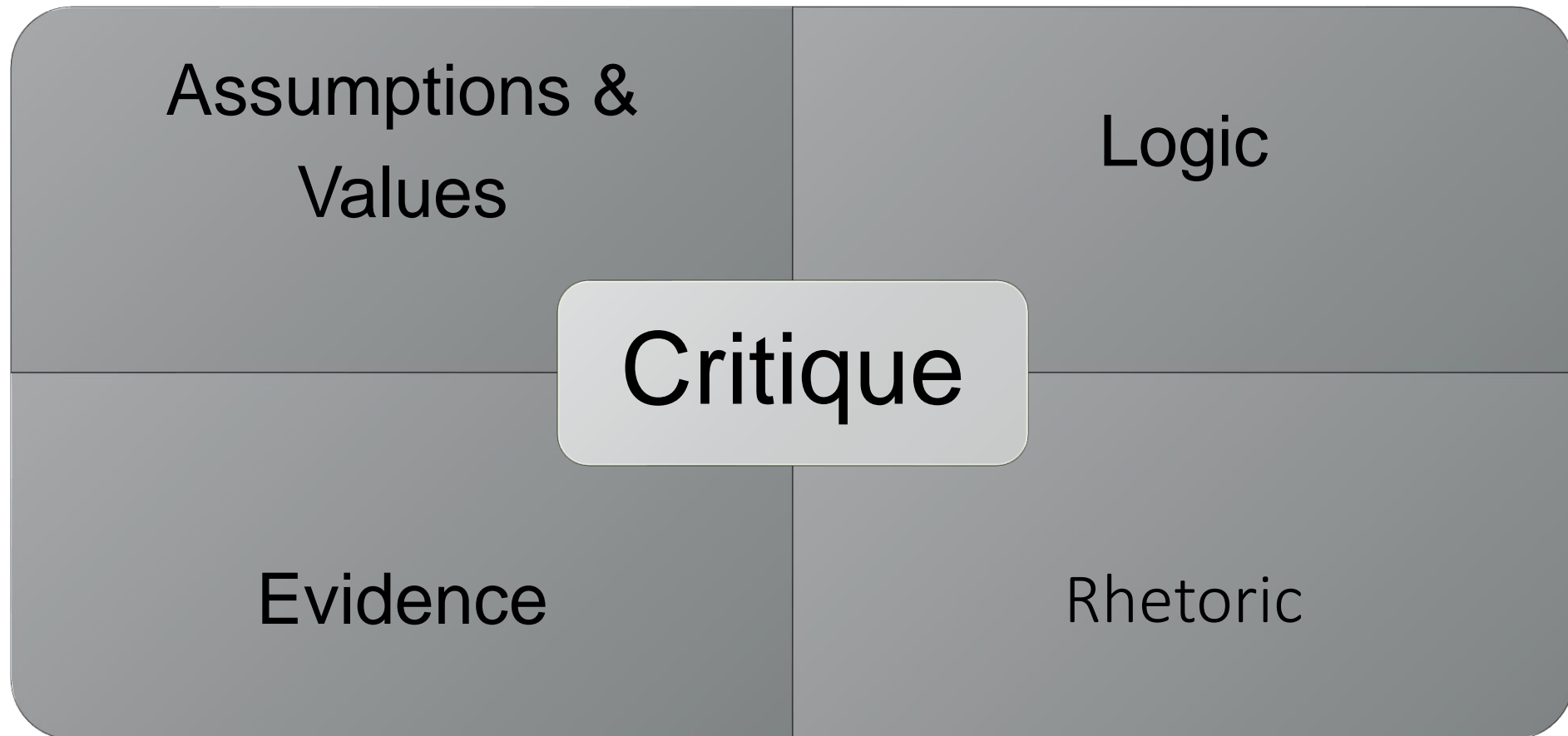
Does it challenge it?

Does it highlight a new dimension I hadn't previously considered?

How does it compare to other material I have read?



The components of critique



Read critically...

EVALUATE:

Is the argument presented **valid**?

How does it **compare** to other perspectives/publications?

What are its **strengths, weaknesses**?

What about its **limitations**? How can it be taken further?

Which **theoretical perspective** does it come from?

What about its **logic**? Gaps, circular, generalisation, or sound?

What about **research methods, data** and **recommendations**?

ABOVE ALL:

“So what?”

What is the import for your argument/topic?

What does this theoretical perspective



Essays as argument

Persuade your reader that a reasonable person would accept your conclusion on the **basis of the evidence you provide.**

Engage in **critical discussion** around the topic.
Develop breadth & depth of knowledge.

Weigh evidence and arrive at a **conclusion.**

More than just answering a question.

Think: Why?
How? Says who?



... with reference to literature!

Demonstrate:

Analysis and validation

you have read widely

gained nuanced insight into the available literature

considered the broader implications of the literature for your essay



Multi-dimensional nature of learning & problem-solving!

Critical paraphrasing



Rembrandt *et al.* (2015) evaluate the role of nursing in educating women about Intimate Partner Violence and recourse choices as crucial.

How do we turn this into a critical paraphrase?

The insight gained on placement/during observation **reflects/agrees with** the evaluation of Rembrandt *et al.* (2015) that the role of nursing in educating women about Intimate Partner Violence and recourse choices is crucial.

While the nurse can indeed represent most immediate and long-term response to ... (Rembrandt *et al.*, 2015), it **invites further reflection** upon the training on this specific need.

While Rembrandt *et al.* (2015) **correctly** evaluate the role of nursing in educating women about Intimate Partner Violence and recourse choices as crucial, they **do not offer** any clarification as to their distinctive role in the wider HPT/ they **do not specify** the conditions...

The **generalisation** that most public health nurses are ill-equipped to educate women on this delicate matter (Koltaj, 2015) **fails to consider** the developed guidelines and indeed legislature on..., such as the XXX Act (NHS, 2021). As this analysis has shown, ...

Use the language of critique & evaluation!

Critical Paraphrasing: Manchester Academic Phrasebank!



Academic



Introducing work

Referring to sources

Academic Phrasebank

GENERAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

Being cautious

Being critical

Classifying and listing

Compare and contrast

Defining terms

Describing trends

Describing quantities

Explaining causality

Giving examples

Signalling transition

Writing about the past

Use it to write critical sentences with following focus!

- Highlighting inadequacies of previous studies
- Identifying a weakness in a single study or paper
- Offering constructive suggestions
- Introducing problems and limitations
- Using evaluative adjectives to comment on research
- Introducing general criticism
- Introducing the critical stance of particular writers

<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Written assignment marking criteria

USE OF LITERATURE

**INTERFACE
BETWEEN THEORY
& PRACTICE WITHIN
THE PROFESSIONAL
CONTEXT**

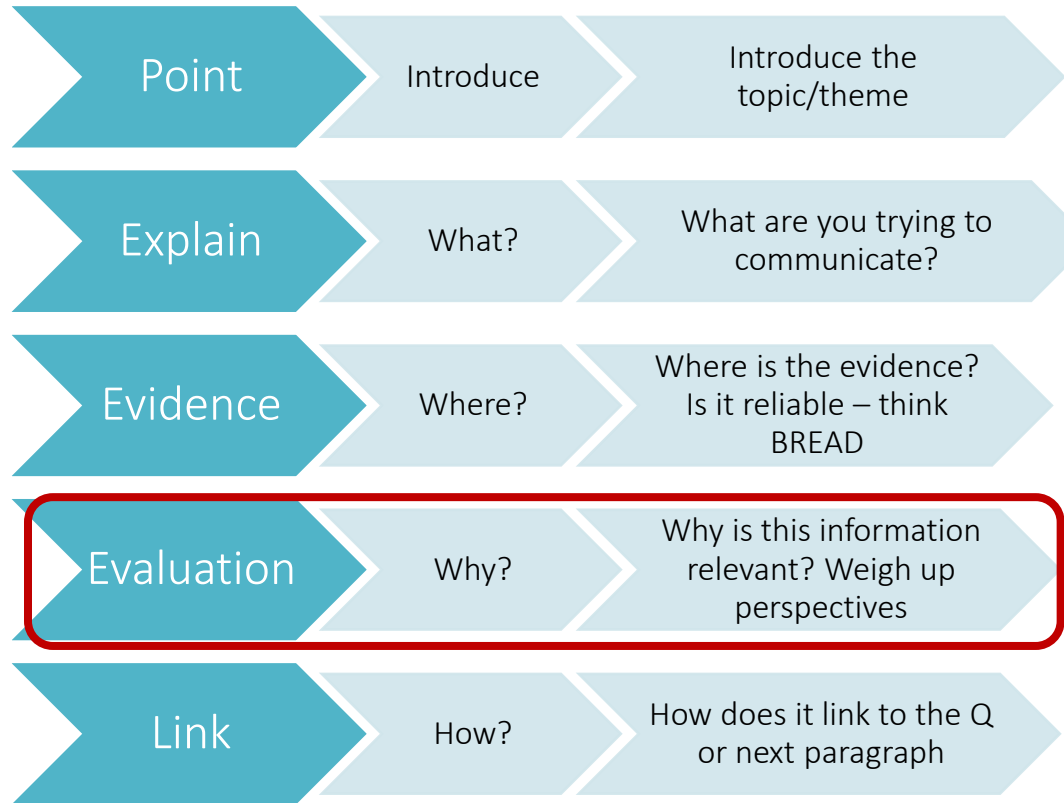
**KNOWLEDGE AND
CLARITY OF
REASONING**

**ORGANISATION OF
MATERIAL**

A critical structure...

... ensuring an effective delivery of your argument!

PEEEL paragraphs for structure



In academic writing, paragraphs are used to present new information, argument or perspective.

Tip: Try to avoid including paragraphs longer than 300 words.

Hint: A full stop is to give the reader time to breathe. A paragraph needs to allow the reader to reflect on the content. Be concise.

You may need to write multiple paragraphs to make or enhance a perspective, this is fine.

Tip: You could use multiple PEEELs.

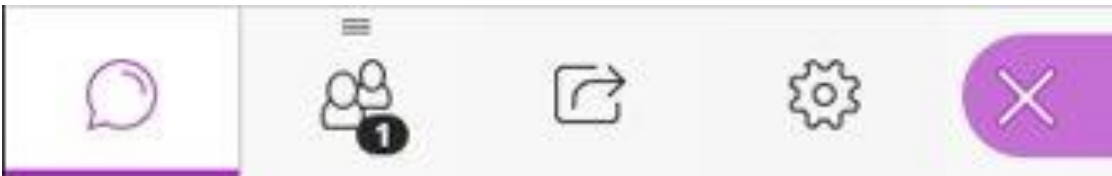
Tip: Try using the PEEEL plan to make notes of initial ideas.

KEY:
One point
per
paragraph!

Example paragraph

[Point] Notably, Lempp *et al.*, (2009), undertook a qualitative study to explore patients' experiences regarding treatment. **[Explain]** The study found that patients often felt that prescribed drugs were not effective in relieving their pain with most patients admitting that they follow their own intuition over the medical advice given. **[Evidence]** More importantly, a survey carried out by the National Pain Foundation (2014) collecting data from over 1,300 FM patients found that drugs approved by the Federal Drug Association (FDA) to treat FM are not as effective as one might think. Firstly, there are only 3 drugs which have been approved by the FDA in treating FM and these are: Cymbalta (duloxetine), Lyrica (pregabalin) and Savella (milnacipran) (FDA, 2014). Secondly, the survey found that overall patients are dissatisfied with the effectiveness of these drugs with 60% saying Cymbalta does not help, 61% saying Lyrica does not help and 68% saying that Savella does not help.

[Evaluation] This paints the picture that overall, for the majority, these drugs are not effective in treating pain. **[Link]** This dissatisfaction may be one of the reasons why some patients have turned to cannabis to treat pain (Boehnke, Litinas and Clauw, 2016).



What do you think was the next paragraph about?

Think of a paragraph you are writing for your assignments...

Is there a clear evaluation?

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Sources on critical thinking & writing

Books:

- Cottrell, S. (2017) *Critical thinking skills: developing effective analysis and argument*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Explore discipline-specific books on critical writing! E.g.:
 - Price, B. (2019) *Critical thinking and writing in nursing*. London: SAGE.
 - Aveyard, H. (2011) *A beginner's guide to critical thinking and writing in health and social care*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- **Online guidance:**
- Learning Skills Hub: <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub>
- Manchester Academic Phrasebank – “Being Critical”:
<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/>