

Introduction:

Critical writing is heavily linked with critical thinking (see separate helpsheet). This is because, “critical writing is primarily a process of evidencing and articulating your critical thinking” (University of Hull, n.d.). Being ‘critical’ is essentially, “being thoughtful, asking questions, not taking things you read (or hear) at face value. It means finding information and understanding different approaches and using them in your writing” (Williams, viii, 2014).

Key features of critical writing are:

- (1) - Refusing to accept the conclusions of other writers without evaluating their arguments and evidence.
- (2) - Giving a balanced presentation of reasons whether other writers’ conclusions may be accepted or treated with caution.
- (3) - Clearly presenting your own evidence, arguments and conclusions and recognising their limitations.

Important Tips:

Before you start writing,

~ Make sure you are clear about where you stand on the topic you are looking at. This position will reflect in your overall argument that you will develop throughout your piece of writing.

~ Make sure you persuade the reader in your writing rather than just inform them. So don’t just tell them what you’ve read in your literature but explain what the evidence means in order to strengthen your own argument and make it creditable to convince the reader. Without attempting to persuade the reader, you are not making an argument, you’re just stating information.

~ Your argument and claims must be backed up by relevant evidence.

~ Your argument should be consistent and follow throughout your piece of work in the body of the written piece and re-summarised in the conclusion. Never introduce new points near the end of your work.

~ Also note that there is no right answer in academic and critical writing. You need to acknowledge other people’s positions which may all be valid.

(Points adapted from University of Hull, Critical writing YouTube Video, 2017)

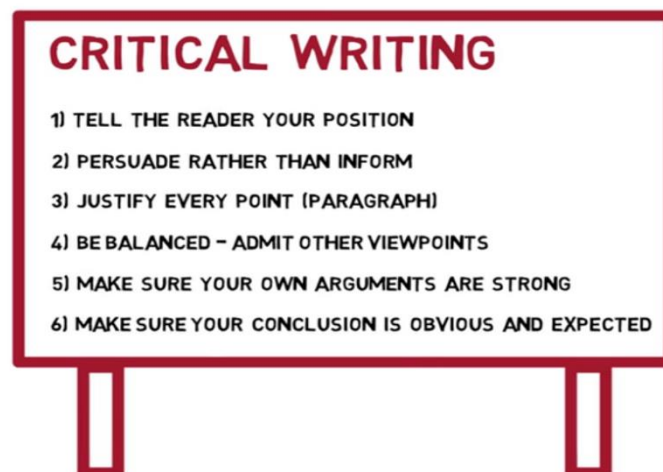
> Example of a well-structured paragraph for writing critically:

“According to research by the Food Standards Agency (2015), there may be a link between late nights and childhood obesity in children (1). However, this research focuses only on the area of sleep and does not consider many of the other factors associated with late nights, such as what children are eating when they stay up late (2). Compared to other known factors influencing childhood obesity, there is insufficient evidence about the effect of late nights for this to be taken very seriously by policymakers, though this may change with further research (3)”

(Taken from the University of Suffolk academic writing webpage - <https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/academic/writing/CriticalWriting>)

In this paragraph there is a descriptive statement (who, what and when) (1), a critical statement (2) and a judgement (3). It considers the existing research but also the limitations and then presents an informed opinion. The author can now make his or her own argument about the topic afterwards.

In Summary, remember to:



(Screenshot courtesy of University of Hull. (2017, Jun 19). *Critical writing* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btUY6jTt2Ys&t=426s>)

References and further useful links:

University of Bangor. (n.d.). *What is critical writing?*
<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/studyskills/study-guides/critical-writing.php.en>

University of Hull. (2017, Jun 19). *Critical writing* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btUY6jTt2Ys>

University of Hull. (2021, Aug 4). *Critical writing: what is critical writing?*
<https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/criticalwriting/whatiscriticalwriting>

University of Sussex. (n.d.). *Critical thinking*. <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/?id=277>

Williams, K. (2014). *Getting critical* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.