



Descriptive Writing versus Critical Analytical Writing

This Infosheet is designed to help you distinguish between the two types of writing - both of which are valuable in academic work.

You will see examples of these in sources you encounter. In your own work, whilst some description will be needed, you need to focus on providing evidence of your critical analytic thinking in your assessed work - this is what accrues the most marks.

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING	CRITICAL ANALYTICAL WRITING
■ States what happened ■ States what something is like ■ Gives the story so far ■ States the order things in which things happened ■ Says how to do something ■ Explains what a theory says ■ Explains how something works ■ Notes the methods used ■ Identifies why the timing is of importance ■ Says when something occurred ■ States the different components ■ States options ■ Gives the reasons for selecting each option ■ Lists details ■ Lists in any order ■ States links between items ■ Gives information	■ Identifies the significance ■ Evaluates strengths and weaknesses ■ Weighs one piece of information against another ■ Makes reasoned judgments ■ Argues a case according to the evidence ■ Shows why something is relevant or suitable ■ Indicates why something will work best ■ Identifies whether something is appropriate or suitable ■ Weighs up the importance of the component parts ■ Evaluates the relative significance of details ■ Structures information in order of importance ■ Shows the relevance of links between pieces of information ■ Draws conclusions

Adapted from Cottrell, S. (2013) *The study skills handbook*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.



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How can you contact us?



academic-skills
@bradford.ac.uk



01274 236849



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