

Academic Writing

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and evaluating information.

How do we construct and interpret knowledge?

Creating a conceptual framework for your discourse.

- Your introductory writing should formulate a conceptual framework that allows your question, proposition, or perspective to be discussed.
- A conceptual framework for your writing should include a contextual review. (Who is working within your field of study? – theorists, writers, artists, designers, makers, philosophers, etc...)
- Academic writing should be situated in a relevant context: cultural, theoretical, political, marxist, feminist, structuralist, post-structuralist, etc...

Whatever the topic, enquiry must be grounded in research

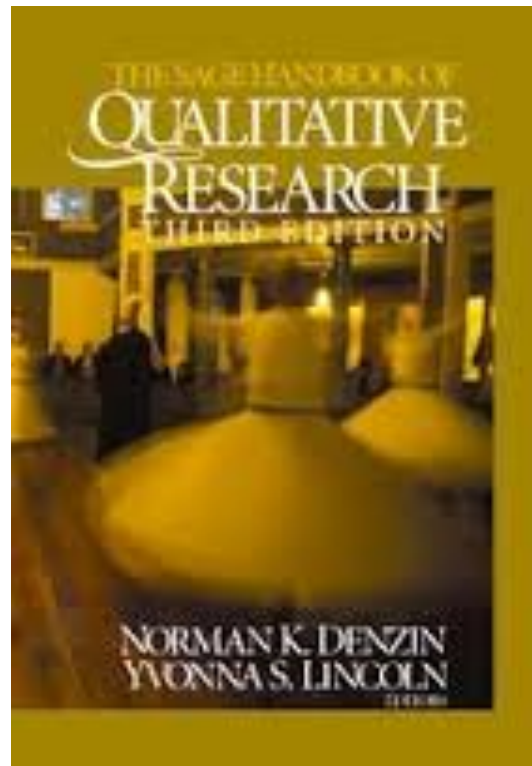
All academic writing should be supported by appropriate critical opinion and quotation.

An academic essay must include a Bibliography.

OBJECTIVE/SUBJECTIVE

- OBJECTIVE - critical opinion (quotation)
- SUBJECTIVE – your opinion (autoethnographic)
- Autoethnography:
 - From Greek *auto* (self), *ethnos* (culture) and *grapho* (to write)
 - The self-reflective study and exploration of embodied experience, within cultural and social contexts.
 - The researcher uses self-observation, or full immersion in phenomenological, embodied enquiry and lived experience.

‘Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but rather reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms.’ (Denzin and Lincoln: 960)



Voice

First Person OR Third Person

Third person:

This text proposes that....

This discourse suggests....

It may be suggested that...

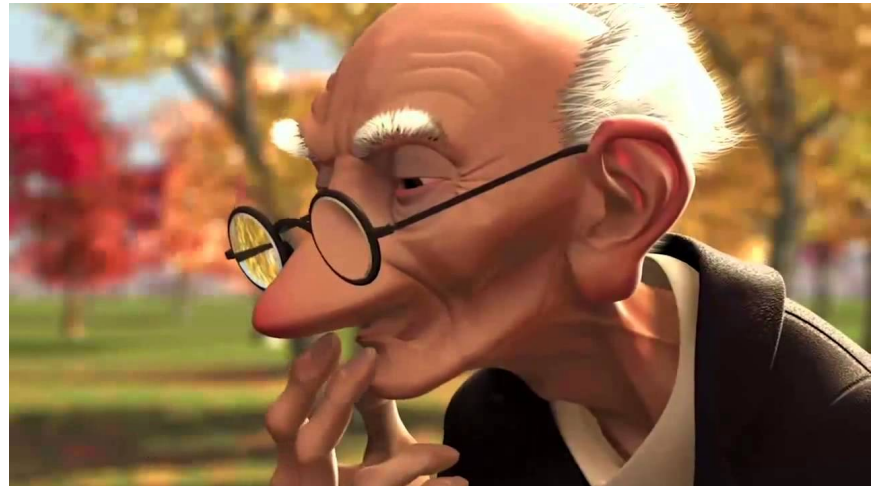
What is an academic argument?

An academic argument is where you support one perspective; however, you may also examine the 'pros' and 'cons' of another point of view to create discursive depth to support your argument.

Academic writing should have a clear and focus.

Summaries are generally a poor basis for an academic piece of writing. (This essay will explore the history of collaboration).

- Indicating that you will examine two sides of a debate is also not great.



- Formulate your academic argument from the essay question
- **Question 1 - EXAMPLE:** In the context of Roland Barthes' text *The Death of the Author* this essay will discuss possible methods which may be used to decentre the artist/ designer as the central figure in the construction of creative meaning.

BASIC ARGUMENT

- **You should be able to write your basic argument IN ONE LINE**

EXERCISE: Write the argument for your essay in one line.

Argument

Write it in such a way that you are writing from one perspective. Make it sound like an argument....

Question 6 – EXAMPLE: Contemporary participatory practice is a method to decentralise the authority of the individual artist or designer.

The Purpose of Creating the Argument

- It will help you to structure your research.

Sub-topics:

- Identify your subtopics:
- EXAMPLE: 1. participation 2. interactivity 3. collaboration 4. The author-function (Foucault)
- Each subtopic will provide a different aspect to your argument.
- Always be mindful of the overall argument. Everything you include should be in reference to your primary question/proposition.

Paragraph structure

Begin with a 'topic sentence' which introduces each section.

EXAMPLE: "The artist has traditionally been considered to be central to the construction of meaning in the artwork".

Make it concise.

Paragraph structure

- Supporting sentences respond to the 'topic sentence' through evidence and elaboration: It explains the introductory sentence.
- Include critical voices which support your perspective.

Edit/Trackback

- This is where you check the relevancy of your argument throughout.
- It is mind-mapping in reverse.
- Read your essay.
- Can you narrow the argument back to one line?
- Check the sections.
- Is all of the information included in your essay relevant and supported by critical opinion.

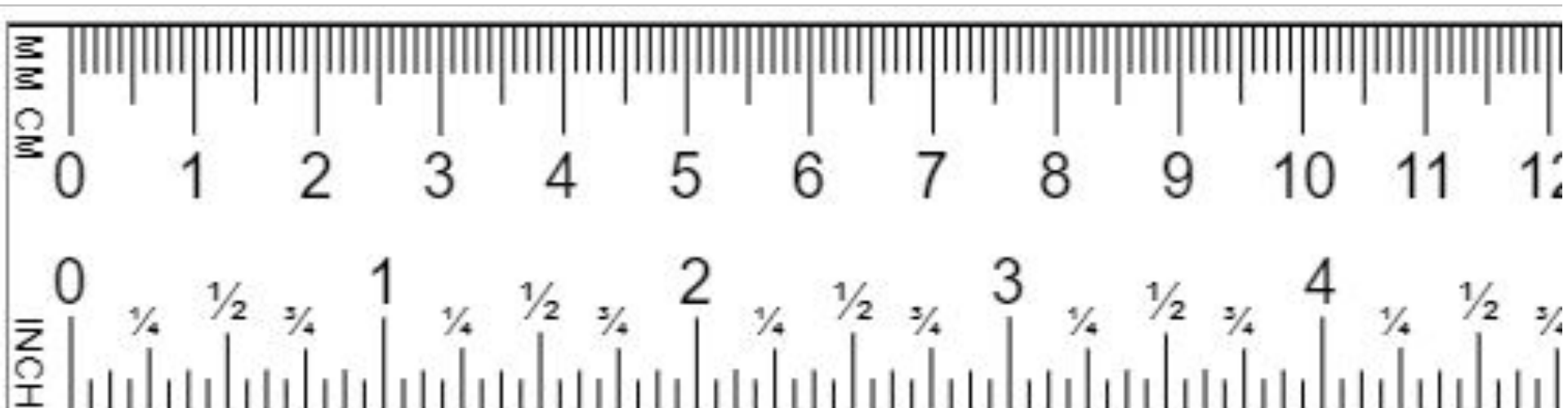
Yellow Marker Test

- Highlight essential 'topic sentences'.
- This should show you the topic and supporting sentences.
- If they come at the beginning of each section that is an effective structure.
- If not, then you may need to consider restructuring your text.



Microediting

- Fixing style
- Are any of your sentences too long?
- Do not have a limited vocabulary (excessive repetition of words)?



Writing tips

- Make sure you evidence your statements.
- Avoid vagueness, subjectivity and unsupported comments.
- Ensure relevancy in all paragraphs by undertaking a 'Track Back' exercise for every subtopic and paragraph.

Essay Layout

- Your essay should be double spaced
- Your essay should use a 12pt font
- Your essay should be written an a legible typeface (Arial, Helvetica...)

Harvard Reference System

- Failure to reference properly can lead to accusations of plagiarism.
- The Harvard reference system is the method of including citations in the text.
- In this system, the author's surname, year of publication and page number (where applicable) are cited in the text and enclosed in brackets. All quotations must be given a reference that precisely indicates their source.
- Full details of a book/source must also be included in a **BIBLIOGRAPHY**.
- A bibliography is an alphabetical list of all the material you have used.

- **In text citations:**

- All references to sources should follow on directly from quotations and be given in brackets.
- References should include AUTHOR, PUBLICATION DATE, PAGE NO. **EXAMPLE:**
- “The process of making, maintaining and reproducing this authoritative set of meanings, ideologies and practices has been called hegemony”. (Barker, 2004, p.84)
- Paraphrasing also needs to be referenced.

- Do not use *ibid* or any other form to show a source has previously been cited; re-cite the source in full each time.

- Quotations of (approximately) less than 30 words should appear as part of the written text and be identified by “quotation marks”.

Quotations in excess of approximately 30 words should be indented from the left hand margin, single spaced and should not be placed in quotation marks.

The world we inhabit is filled with visual images. They are central to how we represent, make meaning, and communicate in the world around us. In many ways our culture is an increasingly visual one. (Sturken & Cartwright, 2002, p.1).

At the end of your essay all works referred to and all sources used in your research should be listed alphabetically in a **BIBLIOGRAPHY** using the following system – Author. (date). *Title*. Place of publication: Publishers. Series and volume number (where applicable).

Books:

EXAMPLE:

Harrison, C. & Wood, P. [Eds.] (2002). *Art in Theory 1900-2000*. London: Blackwell Publishers

Websites: (All online references must include an accessed date)

EXAMPLE:

Gilbert & George. (2008). *Manifesto Marathon*.
<http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/manifesto-marathon>.
[accessed 14 August 2013]

Online Journal articles:

EXAMPLE:

Zdjelar, K. (2010). *Katarina Zdjelar*. Frieze Magazine. Issue 130.
http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/katarina_zdjelar/ [accessed 10 June 2013]

Referencing authors in edited texts:

EXAMPLE:

Tiedemann, R. (1999). IN, Benjamin, W. *The Arcades Project*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press

Referencing editors:

EXAMPLE:

Potter, S. [Ed.] (2006). *Doing Postgraduate Research*. (2nd Edition).
London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Films:

EXAMPLE:

Fahrenheit 9/11. (2004). Michael Moore. USA.

YOU TUBE videos:

EXAMPLE:

De Botton, A. (2009). *The Perfect Home*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch#!v=eTapK5dRaw4> [Accessed: 23 June 2011]

Artworks:

EXAMPLE:

Coello, C. (1664). *The Triumph of St. Augustine*. [Oil on canvas]. Museo del Prado, Madrid

Exhibition:

EXAMPLE:

Chagall: a celebration (2009) [Exhibition]. Tate Modern, London. 15 September 2009 – 23 January 2010

Missing information:

There will be instances where some of the information that you require to reference an item proves elusive. This usually occurs when referencing older publications and occasionally electronic sources. In these circumstances you may adopt the following:

- Where there is no author cited use [Anon.]
- Where there is no publication date available use [n.d.]
- If something other is not known use [n.k.]



**KEEP
CALM
AND
WRITE
THE ESSAY**