



# Critical Thinking and Writing

Critical thinking and writing require to you do more than just summarise a text. Instead, you need to think about what the information in the text means and form your own opinion about its impact and relevance.

Here are some of the important things to keep in mind when thinking and writing critically:

## Persuasive language

Pay attention to the language that the author is using. Are they trying to persuade you or evoke an emotional response from you? If so, why? For example, which of the following would evoke an emotional response?

- Three people were arrested in the raid.
- Following extensive efforts from dedicated officers, three thugs were arrested in a successful raid.

Both the above statements refer to the same event, but one of them provokes an emotional response.

## Bad arguments

Does the evidence support the conclusion?

- Cola is more popular than lemonade, therefore, lemonade tastes bad.
- Influencers can have thousands of followers. This shows that everyone who uses social media follows a lot of influencers.

Both of these are bad arguments! The evidence does not lead to the conclusion.

## Strengths and limitations

What strengthens the author’s argument and what is limited? Think about what enhances the text and what the text is missing. For example:

What is it?	Strengths	Limitations
Survey of new teachers with less than 5 years’ experience	Data directly from teachers	No data from experienced teachers
UK study	Current research on relevant topic	Not Australian
Research on interventions for dementia	Sample population: male and female; Australian nursing home	Only on residents aged 80+

## Thinking critically—key questions to ask:

These are some of the questions to ask when thinking critically about a text:

What is the author's main argument?	What evidence is used to support the conclusion?
How much is fact and how much is opinion?	Is the author biased?
Is the methodology appropriate?	Has the author used enough evidence?
Is the text like other texts or different?	What are the strengths and limitations of the text?

## Summary versus critical writing

A summary restates the main points of a text.

Both Coke and Pepsi coexist by selling to their existing customers, rather than trying to steal each other's (Sheth & Koschmann, 2019).

Critical writing requires you to think about the validity of a text, and offer your opinion on the text's relevance, and what it means for the topic.

Sheth & Koschmann (2019) argue that marketing tactics have little effect on convincing Coke or Pepsi drinkers to switch brands. This suggests that consumers are loyal to their preferred brand of cola regardless of promotions or advertisements for the competition. However, the authors note that their study is limited to these two brands and that a similar study on different products could have different results.

Remember, critical thinking and writing only happens when you've done research using good quality sources. Spending time reading and taking notes will help you understand the information and you'll be able to transfer that understanding to your assignment.