

How do I write more critically: the essentials.

Before you write:

- ❖ Read critically, looking for the author's:
 - Argument and evidence;
 - Rhetoric or use of language;
 - Bias or objectivity;
 - Assumptions or problems with ideas.
- ❖ Make connections between different things you have read or learnt.
- ❖ Compare and contrast different things you have read or learnt about.
- ❖ Respond to what you read by considering whether you agree or not and why.
- ❖ In response to your assignment brief, develop an argument or a stance based on your reading.

When you write:

- ❖ Plan your structure in relation to your argument: what do you need to say in order to prove or develop your point?
- ❖ Include other points of view, not only those that support your argument;
 - Select the most important: don't discuss every alternative interpretation.
- ❖ Refute those points of view: explain why they are wrong or flawed.
- ❖ Develop your points through evidence.
- ❖ Talk through some of the evaluations, comparisons and relationships you identified when reading;
 - Decide which are central to the question; don't mention every thought.
- ❖ Reach a conclusion on the basis of these evaluations and discussions.

The example below is a paragraph taken from an essay, written in response to the brief: "Women are more intelligent than men. Discuss in reference to at least two theories of intelligence." The content of each sentence has been broken down to show the different techniques used.

In this example the theory is described and summarised:

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences suggests that emotional and interpersonal abilities should be valued to the same extent as traditional academic intelligence.

Then, the theory is applied to the question:

Therefore, intelligences which have been traditionally viewed as feminine would be considered as important as those which are viewed as traditionally masculine.

Learning Development

This sentence uses evidence from two sources where both authors agree:

Studies have shown that women focus more on feelings and on building relationships (Briggs, 2009; Meyer, 2011).

In this sentence the evidence is connected to the theory:

Therefore, on some of Gardener's dimensions, women would score more highly than others.

Here the cited source disagrees with the theory:

However, the multiple intelligences theory has been criticised for incorporating the concept of 'abilities' into the idea of 'intelligence', and for not being developed on the basis of evidence (Demetriou, et al., 2010).

Finally, the concluding sentence provides a summary based on the evidence:

Thus, while it may be valid to consider a full range of abilities in order to compare genders on intelligence, the multiple intelligences hypothesis requires further testing.