



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin



Student Learning Development

Academic Writing

JF/SF School of Religion



Dr Tamara O'Connor

student.learning@tcd.ie
<https://www.tcd.ie/sld/>



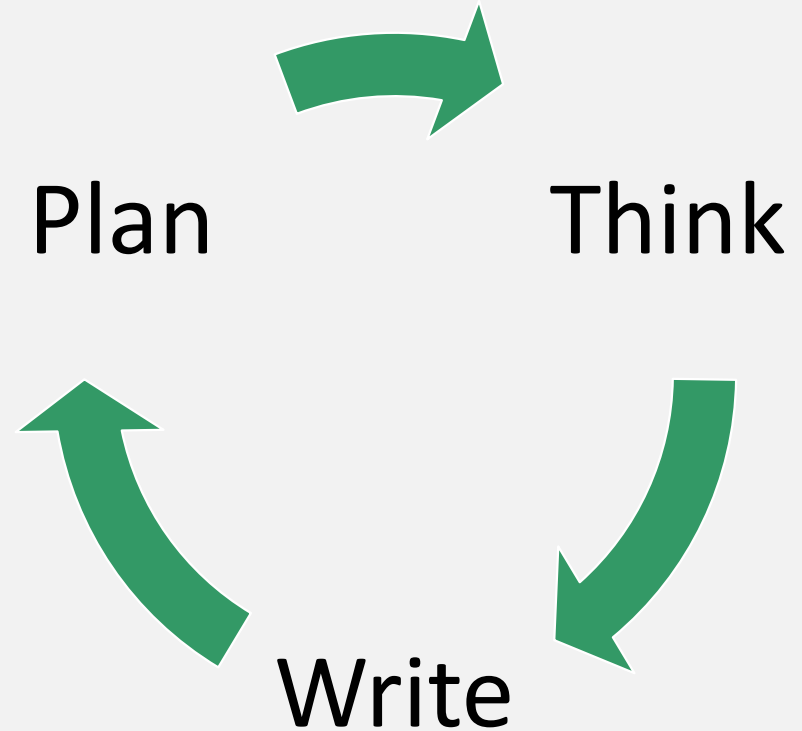
Today's objectives

- Focus on writing process instead of product
- Introduce academic integrity
- Explain common features of academic writing
- Understand the purpose of these features and their impact
- Point you to further resources for academic writing



Essay Writing Process

- Planning
- Thinking
- Researching
- Writing
- Editing



Writing Process:

Early stages

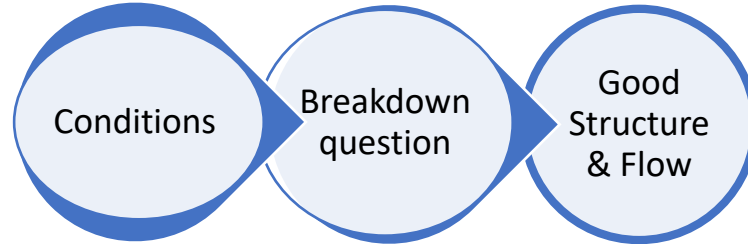


Later stages



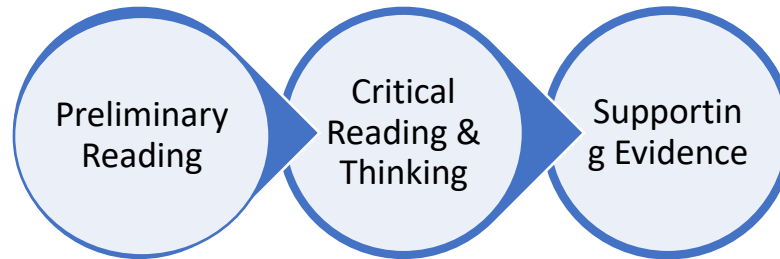
Product

Plan

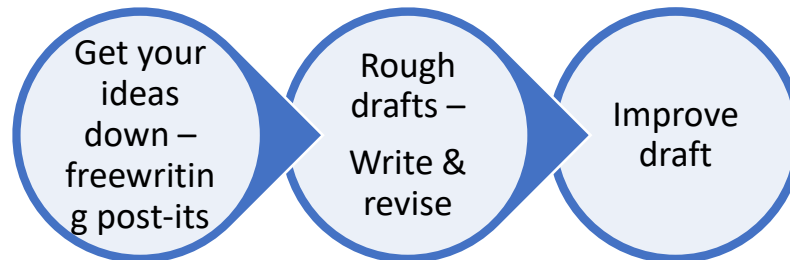


Final Essay

Research



Write



Edit



Single Parent Struggle

For many years, children growing up in a single parent family have been viewed as different. Being raised by only one parent seems impossible to many yet over the decades it has become more prevalent. In today's society many children have grown up to become emotionally stable and successful whether they had one or two parents to show them the rocky path that life bestows upon all human beings. The problem lies in the difference of children raised by single parents versus children raised by both a mother and a father. Does a child need both parents? Does a young boy need a father figure around? Does the government provide help for single parents? What role do step-parents and step-siblings play? With much speculation, this topic has become a very intriguing argument. What people must understand is that properly raising a child does not rely on the structure of a family but should be more focused on the process or values that are taught to these children as they learn to mature. Children of single parents can be just as progressive with emotional, social and behavioral skills as those with two parents.

People claim that the only way for children to gain full emotional and behavioral skills is to be raised by both a mother and a father. When a topic such as this one has a broad amount of variables it is impossible to simply link these problems to only having one parent. In the article, "Single-parent families cause juvenile crime", author Robert L. Maginnis states, "Children from single-parent families are more likely to have behavior

Academic Integrity

Why Is It Important?

- Engaging with the research of others
- Showing clearly which ideas are our own
- Giving credit where credit is due!

Check your handbook!

Visit <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity>



‘Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before’.

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a Feminist Life*. Duke University Press, p.17.



Avoiding Plagiarism: Using Reading/Research in Your Work

- Direct quotation
- Paraphrasing
- Summarising

Whichever mode you use, you must acknowledge your source.



How to Acknowledge a Source? Citation!

1. In-text citation or footnote

+

2. Reference list or Bibliography at end of assignment.

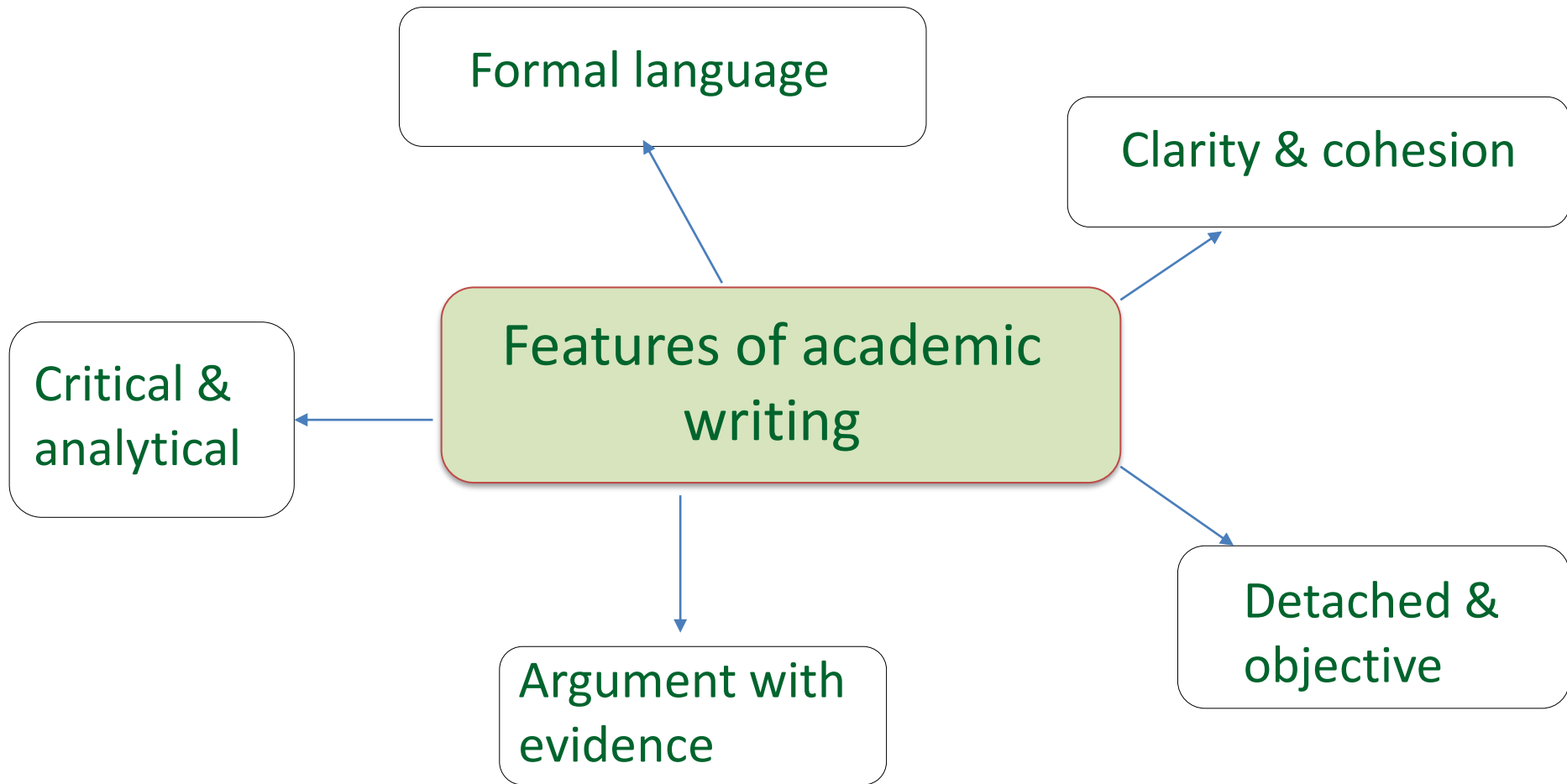
Check any of your texts or articles for examples!



Avoiding Plagiarism

- Give yourself time to complete assignment
- Take clear notes while researching – differentiate between your thoughts/ideas and the author's
- Pay attention especially to author names, title and page numbers
- Give yourself time to put together your reference list/bibliography





1. Formal language

- Avoid the three Cs:
 - **Contractions** (isn't, didn't could've etc);
 - **Clichés** (in the nick of time, this day and age etc)
 - **Colloquialisms** (kids, mums, loads of, cool etc).
- More formal words:
 - use 'quotation' rather than 'quote',
 - 'many' rather than 'lots of' and
 - 'obtain', 'acquire' or 'become' instead of 'get'
- Pronouns – First person (I) or Third person (It)



2. Clarity & Cohesion

- Concise
- Cohesive
- Logical structure
 - Overall
 - Paragraph level



Clarity

Precise vs vague

Precise

- 75%
- The majority
- Three studies
- 45 respondents
- In Ireland
- In Dublin
- In July 1945

Vague

- A lot of
- Everyone has
- Loads
- It always
- A few years ago



Clarity:

Ambiguous vs unambiguous

Ambiguous/Unambiguous?

They're having a barbecue in the garden behind the house they are renting next Saturday at 8.

They're only renting the house at eight o'clock?

Ambiguous/Unambiguous?

They're having a barbecue next Saturday at 8 in the garden behind the house they are renting.

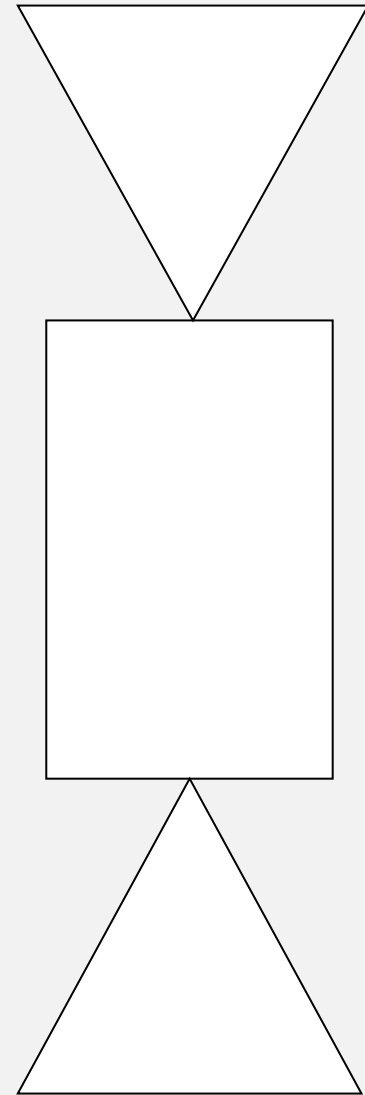
<https://annehodgson.de/2011/06/01/practice-academic-writing-skills-2-ambiguity/>



Clarity & Cohesion

Overall Structure

- Introduction
 - outline of essay
- Main section – body paragraphs
 - Main point A
 - details, evidence
 - Main point B
- Conclusion
 - summary of main points
 - personal conclusions



The Benefits of Immigration to Industrialised Countries (2000 words)

Position/argument: immigrants provide net economic and cultural benefits to industrialised countries

I Background: industrialised countries (500 words)

A. Demographic changes (200 words)

1. Ageing population
 - a. (evidence)
 - b. (evidence)

2. Zero or negative population growth

B. Changes in labour force (300 words)

1. reduced work force, especially in low-level service and agricultural jobs
2. ageing work force may lack contemporary skills
3. new ideas needed for old problems

II Benefits of immigration (600 words)

A. Demographics (250 words)

1. Higher birth rate among many immigrant groups (100 words)
2. Younger average age of immigrants (100 words)

B. Labour features

1. Hard workers willing to do many jobs native-born population eschews (e.g. agricultural and service work)
2. Entrepreneurs with particular skills, knowledge and drive
3. Pay more in taxes than receive in social services

III Cultural issues (600 words)

A. Benefits of multiculturalism (250 words)

1. Bring diversity in an increasingly global world
2. Retain connections with people in other countries

B. Difficulties related to immigration (350 words)

1. Immigrants may face discrimination and racism
2. Immigrants face issues of adaptation/acculturation (e.g. Muslim schoolgirls who want to wear headscarves)
3. Immigrants may need to learn a new language
4. Require greater government provision of bi/multilingual education

IV Conclusion (250 words)

A. Challenges for both immigrants and the industrialised countries

1. Challenges for immigrants: language, work, education, culture, etc.
2. Challenges for countries: education, discrimination, etc.

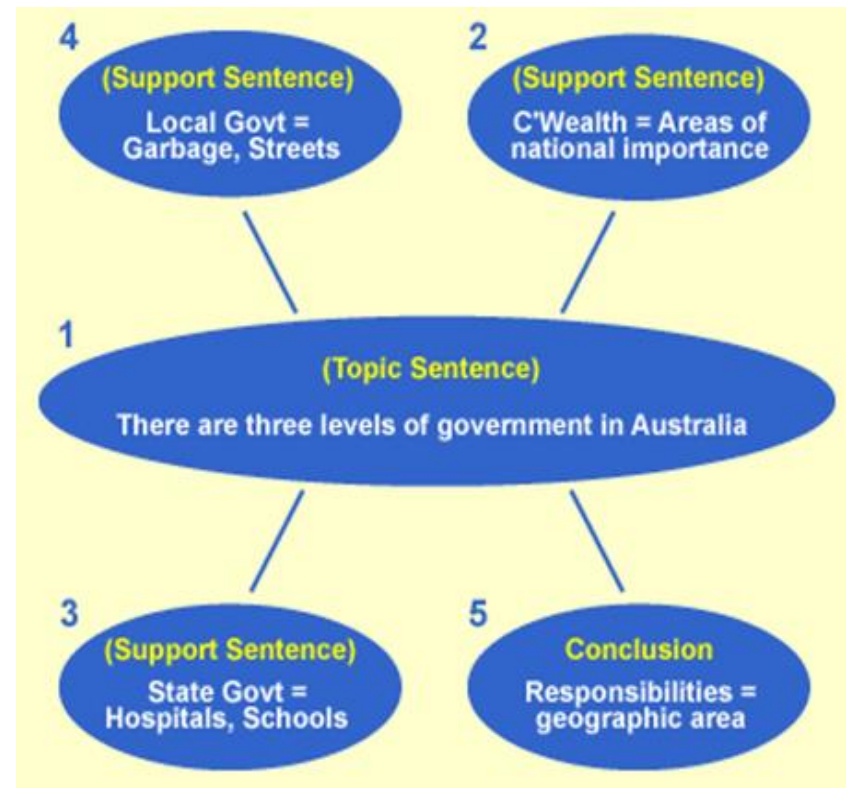
B. Advantages of immigration outweigh the disadvantages

1. Some disadvantages
2. Economic advantages
3. Cultural advantages

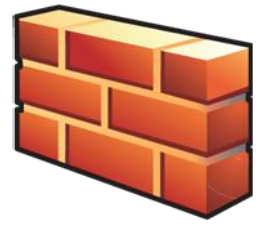
Clarity & Cohesion

Logical structure: Paragraph level

- A group of sentences
- One idea
- Unity and coherence
- Flow



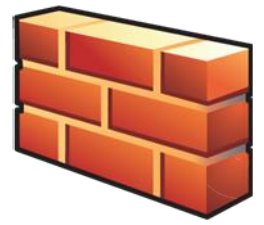
Paragraph structure



Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials. Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies. Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests.



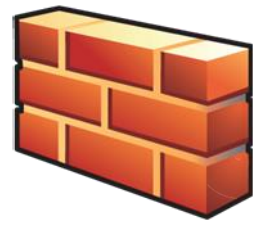
Topic sentence



Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials. Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies. Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests.



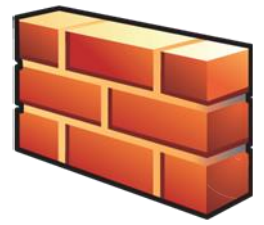
Supporting sentences



Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. **In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials.** Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies. Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests.



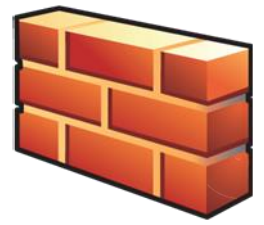
Concluding sentence



Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials. **Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies.** Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests.



Transitional sentence



Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials. Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies. **Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests.**



3. Detached & objective

- Example:

Wrong: The conditions were really horrendous. It is no wonder that so many of the poor children suffered such dreadful diseases.

Right: The conditions were poor and were likely to have contributed to the high levels of childhood infectious diseases that were observed.

From <https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/writing/style>

- Cautious
- Balanced viewpoint



4. Argument with evidence

- Drawing on and citing a range of authors & arguments
- Back up points with evidence
- Balanced viewpoint
- Signposts

Good resource for academic writing -

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>



Referring to ideas, thinking & writing of others

- We report another author's ideas by using **paraphrase, summary, quotation and synthesis**
- We use **introductory phrases and reporting verbs** to communicate our relationship to the ideas that we are reporting.
 - Brown (1983, p.231) claims that a far more effective approach is ...
 - Brown (1983, p.231) points out that a far more effective approach is ...
 - A far more effective approach is ... (Brown 1983, p.231)

From Regional Writing Centre, University of Limerick.

<https://ulsites.ul.ie/rwc/>

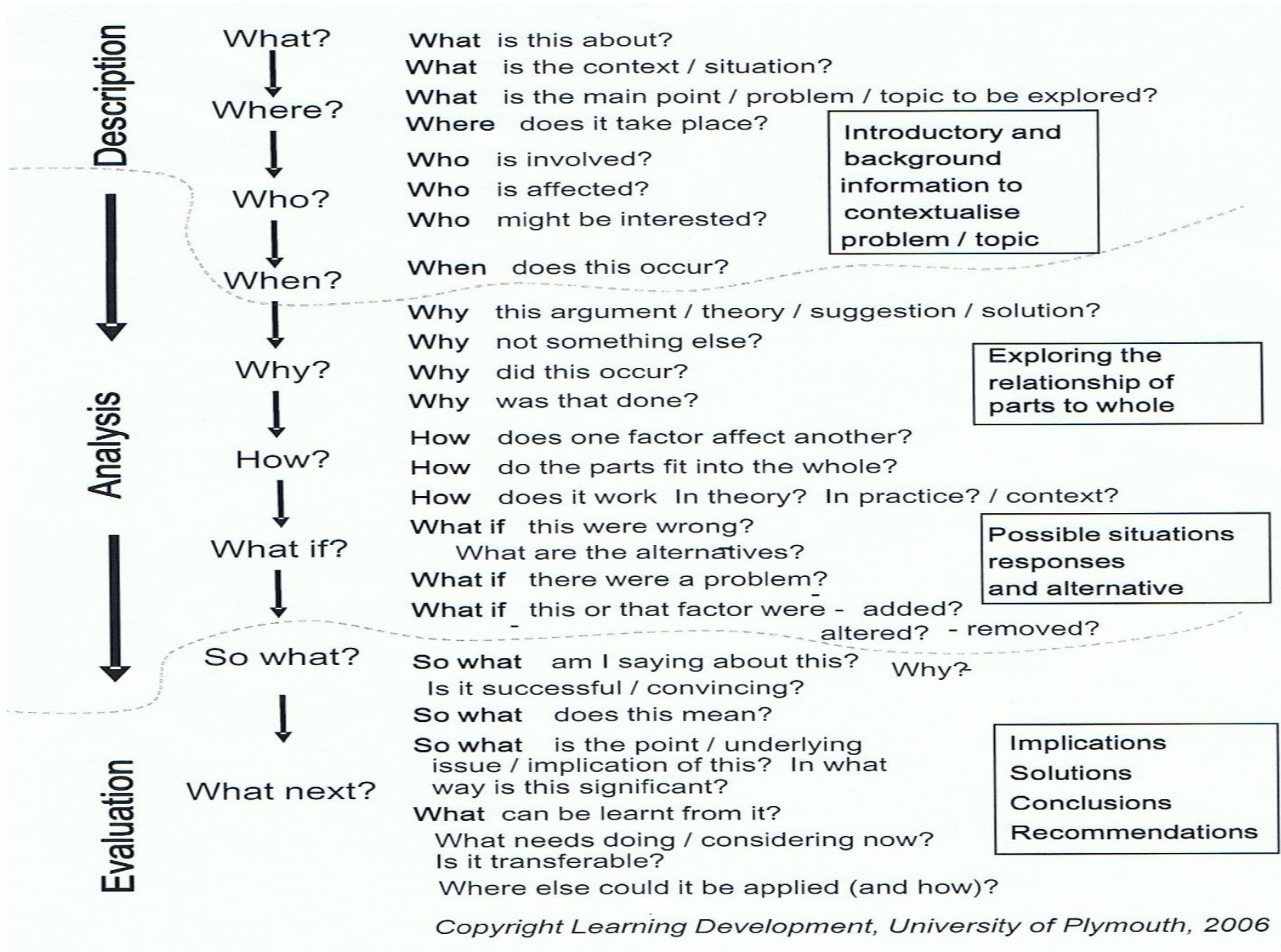


Descriptive writing:	Critical analytical writing:
states what happened	identifies the significance
states what something is like	evaluates strengths and weaknesses
gives the story so far	weighs one piece of information against another
states the order in which things happened	makes reasoned judgments
says how to do something	argues a case according to the evidence
explains what a theory says	shows why something is relevant or suitable
explains how something works	indicates why something will work (best)
notes the method used	identifies whether something is appropriate or suitable
says when something occurred	identifies why the timing is of importance
states the different components	weighs up the importance of component parts
states the options	gives reasons for selecting each option
list details	evaluates the relative significance of details
list in any order	structures information in order of performance
states links between items	shows the relevance of links between pieces of information
gives information	draws conclusions

5. Writing critically & analytically

Cottrell, S. (2013). *The Study Skills Handbook*, 4th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Critical & analytical



What does academic writing look like?



Academic writing – what it does **not** look like:

“The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.”

The Bad Writing Contest, *Philosophy and Literature*.

Professor Butler’s first-prize sentence appears in “Further Reflections on the Conversations of Our Time,” an article in the scholarly journal *Diacritics* (1997).



Identify the issues with this paragraph:

A lot of people think that the weather is getting worse. They say that this has been going on for quite a long time. I think that they are quite right. Research has shown that we now get storms etc all the time.

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/9992367/>



Identify the issues with this paragraph

A lot of people think that the weather is getting worse. They say that this has been going on for quite a long time. I think that they are quite right. Research has shown that we now get storms etc all the time.

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/9992367/>



Passage	Problem
A lot of people think...	Imprecise – how many is ‘a lot’?
...the weather...	Imprecise – ‘weather’ is a short term concept
...getting worse...	Informal
They say...	Imprecise pronoun
...going on...	Informal phrasal verb
...quite a long time.	Imprecise – how long is this?
I think...	Informal - personal pronoun
Research...	Vague – whose research?
...we now get...	Informal
...storms, etc...	vague
...all the time.	Overgeneralized



Re-written in academic language

Experts widely believe that the climate is deteriorating. Climatologists claim that this process has been continuing for nearly 100 years. McKinley (1997) appears to support this belief, demonstrating a 55% increase in the frequency of severe winter gales since 1905.

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/9992367/>



Academic writing – what it looks like:

“Spectacular festivals such as Durga puja of Kolkata and Jagatdhatri puja of Chandan-nagar, which attract revellers from other areas of West Bengal, have histories dating back at least to the late nineteenth century (Guha-Thakurta 2015; McDermott 2011). Rash festival, based on the myth of Radha and Krishna, dates back to the early eighteenth century and is still celebrated in several parts of Bengal. However, over the last fifty years, small towns in the Hooghly district of West Bengal such as Barasat, Magra, Bansberiya and Pandua have been celebrating five-day-long festivals aided by corporate funding and the political patronage of the Trinamool Congress party (TMC henceforth). These festivals have not only extended the scripturally prescribed ritual duration of the puja (worship) of Saraswati, Kali and Kartick, but they have also introduced the public worship of deities like Ganesh, Vishnu and Bharat Mata on these festive occasions.”

From Sen, M. (2023). Hindu festivals in small town India: patronage, play, piety. *Religion*, 53(3), p. 407.



Some more resources

- General advice & grammar <https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/index.html>
- Linking words & phrases [Linking/transition words - Academic writing - Library at Staffordshire University \(staffs.ac.uk\)](#)
- General writing <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/>
- Writing academically <https://libguides.hull.ac.uk/writing/home>

- Assignment planner & toolkit
<https://student.kent.ac.uk/studies/written-assignments/assignment-survival-kit>
- Referencing style [Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide \(chicagomanualofstyle.org\)](#)
- Academic integrity -
<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/skills/integrity/>



Where to find us

Visit our website at:

<http://www.tcd.ie/sld>



Email us at:

student.learning@tcd.ie

Enrol on Blackboard module:

Academic Skills for Successful Learning

See our website for instructions



Help with Academic Writing and Academic Integrity

- **Academic Writing Centre**

- Run by Student Learning Development (SLD), TCD
- **Would you like support to improve your academic writing skills?**
- Students are invited to attend for advice with writing strategies in areas such as thesis/essay/reflective writing, structuring, critical thinking and referencing.
 - **FREE** 30min ONLINE individual appointments.
 - Book today at www.tcd.ie/sld

- **1 to 1 General Academic Skills Appointments**

- Run by Student Learning Development (SLD), TCD
- **Strategies to help you reach your own academic potential, in areas such as study skills, self-management, and assessment including academic writing.**
 - **FREE** one-hour individual appointments.
 - Book today at www.tcd.ie/sld

Blackboard Module

Resources available 24/7 from wherever you are; interactive websites and useful links on topics such as Essay Writing, Critical Thinking, Thesis Writing, Exam Skills, Literature Reviewing and much more.

<https://www.tcd.ie/sld/learning-resources/blackboard/>

Thank you. Feedback, please!

<https://eu.surveymonkey.com/r/SLDWorkshop>

