

Descriptive writing vs Critical writing

Descriptive writing	Critical writing
States what happens	Identifies the significance of events
States what something is like	Evaluates strengths and weaknesses
Explains what a theory says	Shows why a theory is relevant or suitable
Explains how something works	Indicates why something will work (better or best)
Notes the methods used	Identifies how or why a method is appropriate or suitable
Says when something occurred	Identifies why that timing is of importance
States the different components	Weighs up the importance of the component parts
States options	Gives reasons for selecting each option
Lists details	Evaluates the relative significance of details
Lists in any order	Structures information in order of importance
States links between items	Shows the relevance of links between items
Gives information	Draws conclusions
Cites references	Engages with and evaluates other authors' work

Adapted from Stella Cottrell (2013) *The study skills handbook*. 4th ed. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 198.

Critical Paragraphs

(Remember to P.E.E.)

Point

Topic sentence: what's the main idea?

Evidence

Says who? Quote, paraphrase, discuss relevant sources

Evaluation

So what?
Explain the significance of your evidence. Articulate why it matters and use it to support your argument.

What next?

1. See if you can apply these ideas in our [Critical Paragraphs Worksheet](#).
2. Then see if you can apply it to your own writing!