

## 10 Takeaway Tips

### Critical Analysis

1. If you find any of these words in your essay title or assignment brief the chances are it will involve you being critically analytic: *discuss, analyse, contrast, consider, compare, evaluate, criticize, interpret, justify*.
2. To be more analytical, identify the significance of source material, propositions and arguments. This means not simply taking other writers' judgments at face value.
3. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of arguments or findings from data. To do this one piece of information is weighed up against another.
4. Justify why you think something is 'right' or is the valid answer to a question.
5. Aim to show why something is relevant or suitable, rather than taking the validity of information for granted just because it's published.
6. If you are being critically analytic you stick to the evidence and structure your information in order of importance.
7. Critical work aims to demonstrate why links between your chosen points and sources are relevant. It does not assume that the reader will automatically know why certain responses fit together.
8. Critical analysis ultimately allows the writer or thinker to draw conclusions, rather than simply know a body of knowledge. So, come to some conclusions!
9. Use a set of prompts (like the ones given in the *Have A Go!* Activity) to help you think critically about the texts you consult when researching for essays and assignments.
10. Critical Reading and Critical Thinking lead to being able to write critically. Engage in what you read, leave time to think before you put pen to paper. The key word is *questioning*. You have to ask questions of the information you find when trying to answer an assignment brief.

**Have A Go!**

Next time you are researching for a lecture, seminar, essay or assignment. Try completing something like this to help you cast a critical eye over the quality of the argument and its evidence or the data and its findings.

Authors/Source			
Title/series			
Web-site address			
Date		Download date	
Publisher/provenance		Place of publication	
Volume (if app		Issue	
Edition			
Author's Position/Theoretical position			
Essential Background Information			
Overall argument/hypothesis			
Conclusion			
Supporting points			
Strengths of the line of reasoning & supporting			

## Academic Skills Advice

evidence	
Flaws in the argument/gaps/other weaknesses in both argument or supporting evidence	

This is adapted from Cottrell, S. (2005) *Critical Thinking Skills Handbook*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 155.