

Critical reading before writing

1. How much do you know about academic writing?

1.1 *Find out by doing this fun quiz.*

1 The main difference between academic writing and normal writing is that academic writing:

- (a) uses longer words
- (b) tries to be precise and unbiased
- (c) is harder to understand

2 The difference between a project and an essay is:

- (a) essays are longer
- (b) projects are longer
- (c) students choose projects' topics

3 Teachers complain most about students:

- (a) not answering the question given
- (b) not writing enough
- (c) not referencing properly

4 The best time to write an introduction is often:

- (a) first
- (b) last
- (c) after writing the main body

5 Plagiarism is:

- (a) a dangerous disease
- (b) an academic offence
- (c) an academic website

6 Making careful notes is essential for:

- (a) writing essays
- (b) revising for exams
- (c) all academic work

7 An in-text citation looks like:

- (a) (Manton, 2008)
- (b) (Richard Manton, 2008)
- (c) (Manton,

8 Paraphrasing a text means:

- (a) making it shorter
- (b) changing a lot of the vocabulary
- (c) adding more detail

9 Paragraphs always contain:

- (a) six or more sentences
- (b) an example
- (c) a topic sentence

10 The purpose of an introduction is:

- (a) to give your aims and methods
- (b) to excite the reader
- (c) to summarise your ideas

11 Proofreading means:

- (a) getting a friend to check your work
- (b) checking for minor errors
- (c) rewriting

12 Teachers expect students to adopt a critical approach to their sources:

- (a) sometimes
- (b) only for Master's work
- (c) always¹

2. Finding Suitable Sources

- *You are studying family law. Read the text extracts 1–3 below and decide which are the most suitable for academic use, and why.*

Text 1

If there are serious reasons why a parent should no longer have a parental relationship with a child (such as abandonment, neglect, abuse, etc.), the family court may terminate that parent's rights. If someone else wants to become a child's legal parent, the family court can grant an adoption where the parent-child relationship is legally created. More information is located on the [Adoptions and Terminating Parental Rights](#) section of this website.

¹ The keys: 1) b 2) c 3) a 4) c 5) b 6) c 7) a 8) b 9) c 10) a 11) b 12) c

Text 2

We issued proceedings under Schedule 1 of the Children Act 1989 in London to secure the jurisdiction of England and Wales. We then wrote the father of the child a letter advising him of the proceedings, seeking financial disclosure and requesting he pay a monthly sum for the child. The parties negotiated and reached an agreement after some time. S now receives child maintenance for her son every month.

Text 3

This research asks one simple question, a question many studies on the arranged marriage omit to ask, namely “What exactly is the arranged marriage?” Author Naema Tahir, born and bred in the arranged marriage culture, but educated in the free-choice marriage culture, argues that much literature on the arranged marriage fails to offer full exploration of this traditional marital system. Instead, the arranged marriage is often analysed through the lens of the modern free choice marriage system. However, this is not a neutral lens. It considers the free choice marriage to be the ideal. billions around the world.

- *The main features of academic texts are given in the table. Fill in the right column with the examples from the the texts above.*

1 Formal vocabulary	<i>This research asks one simple question, a question many studies on the arranged marriage omit to ask</i>
2 Use of references	
3 Impersonal style	
4 Long, complex sentences	

3. Types of text

➤ *The table below lists the most common written sources used by students.*

Work with a partner to consider their likely advantages and disadvantages.

Text type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Textbook	<i>Written for students</i>	<i>May be too general</i>
Website		
Journal article		
Official report (e.g. from government)		
Newspaper or magazine article		
e-Book		

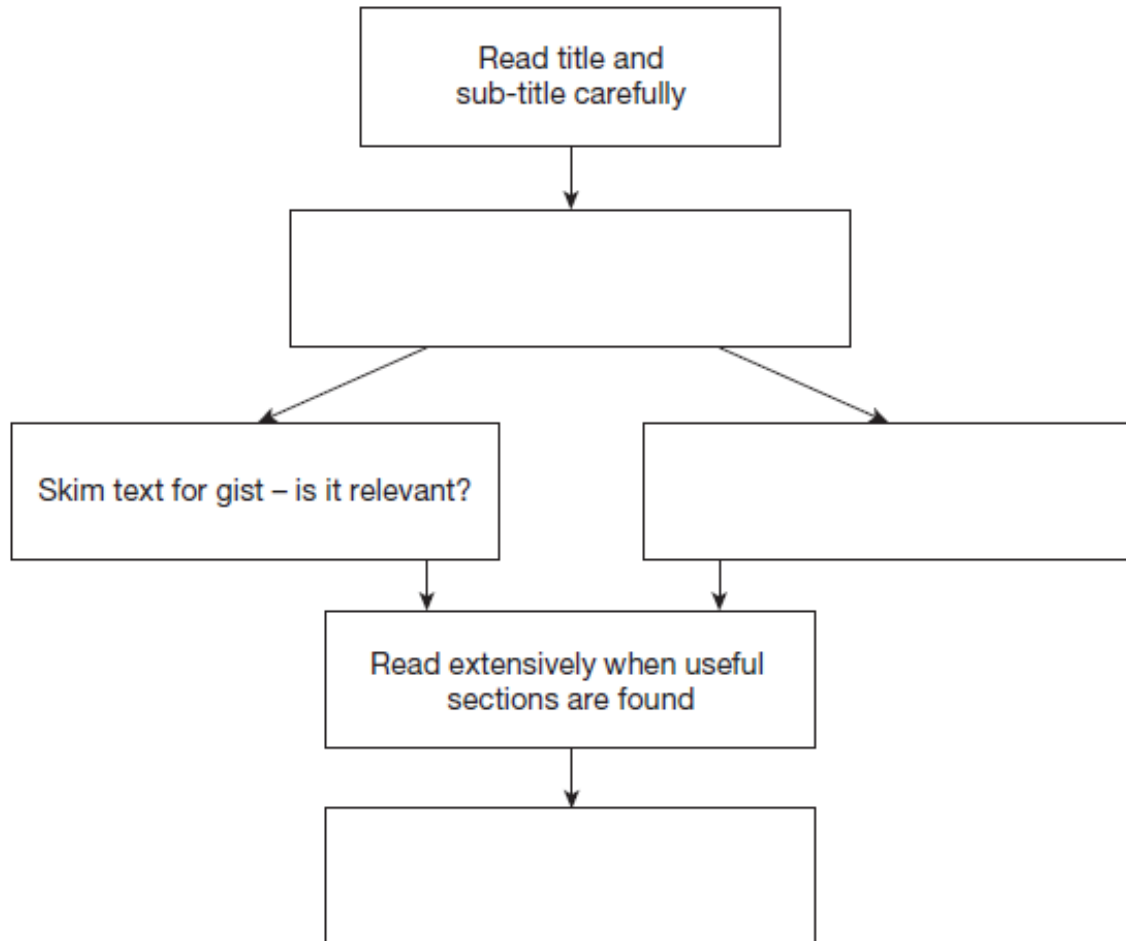
4. Developing critical thinking

4.1 Reading methods

It is easy for students to underestimate the importance of reading skills. Academic texts often contain new vocabulary and phrases, and may be written in a rather formal style. This means that special methods have to be learnt to cope with the volume of reading required, which is especially important when you are reading in another language. Clearly, you do not have time to read every word published on the topic you are studying, so you must first choose carefully what you read and then assess it thoroughly. The chart opposite illustrates the best approach to choosing suitable texts.

➤ Complete the empty boxes in the chart with the following techniques:

- Read intensively to make notes on key points
- Scan text for information you need (e.g. names)
- Survey text features (e.g. abstract, contents, index)



2. Fact and opinion

When reading, it is important to distinguish between facts:

Kuala Lumpur is the capital of Malaysia and opinions:

Kuala Lumpur is a welcoming, bustling city.

In addition, the reader needs to decide if the facts given are true:

Singapore lies near the equator (true).

Singapore was an ancient trading port (false).

You need to be careful of texts that contain unsupported opinion or ‘facts’ that you think are wrong.

➤ *Read the following and underline facts (_____) and opinions (.....). Decide if the facts are true.*

(a) Sydney is the capital of Australia.

(b) Australia is a dynamic, prosperous and enterprising country.

(c) The majority of Australians live on sheep farms.

(d) Most Australians are open-minded and friendly.

(e) Australia is the largest island in the world, and has extensive mineral deposits.

(f) Among the 22 million Australians are some of the world's best cricket players.