

Confidently using other's ideas

This was our advert...

How do you express the essence of concepts and theories created by someone else? How do you interpret and apply these effectively in your own words and avoid accidental plagiarism? Using other peoples' ideas involves much more than simply paraphrasing or including long quotes, but it can be a challenge to know what to focus on and also what to exclude.

Video broadcast sessions

Previous live broadcasts about relevant concepts for this workshop.

- Isabella's **Interpreting and using other people's theories and facts**
- <https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/content/interpreting-and-using-other-peoples-theories-and-facts-09th-march-2022> or https://youtu.be/VLjw_nDYBo (Youtube)
- Rob's **Whose idea is it anyway? Confidently citing the right source**
- <https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/content/whose-idea-it-anyway-confidently-citing-right-source-23-march-2022> or <https://youtu.be/hy8lZ8M83Y0> (Youtube)

First thoughts

- Think of your favourite ‘theory’ that you have heard, it can be about anything, factual or otherwise – e.g. That cows always sit down when it will rain or that it is more difficult to sleep when there is a full moon... What is it about that theory that you like so much?
- Use the short answer poll pod to indicate the theory briefly **and** say why you like it so much
- Don’t worry if you haven’t got a favourite theory – have a look through some of the suggestions and see what others think

Why do we like our theories?

- They are persuasive and we agree with the facts
- We like the person who presents them
- They fit into our world view
- They make sense



Moving on...

- So far we have mainly dealt with generalised ideas so we need to move on to academic theories
- By these we mean ideas and concepts that are put forward by academic people, such as ones you come across in modules. They may be presented as fact or named as a theory (e.g. Einstein's theory of relativity or Piaget's theory)
- Regardless of the name they include information that is relevant to your study, which you need to be able to use

Challenges poll

- When it comes to writing about academic theories what is the biggest challenge for you in doing that effectively?
- Please use the short answer poll to give your ideas

Our ideas

- Understanding the theory appropriately
- Writing in our own words
- Using the terminology correctly
- Knowing which part is most appropriate in context

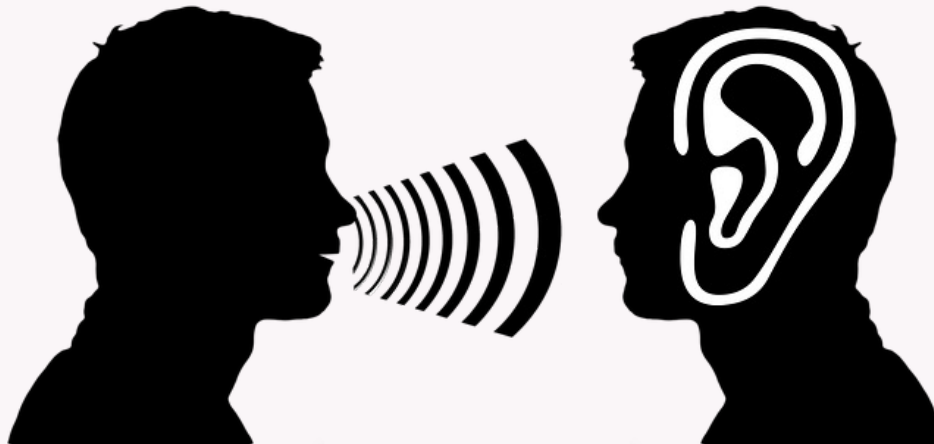
Using a theory - 1

- This is an active process and starts with understanding the theory – without that you can't know what is important



Using a theory - 2

- Next you need to know how to articulate the important information, using appropriately terminology, but in your own words – to demonstrate you understand
- Tips: Explain it to someone, write it down.... Get it from the text into another format. Then check!



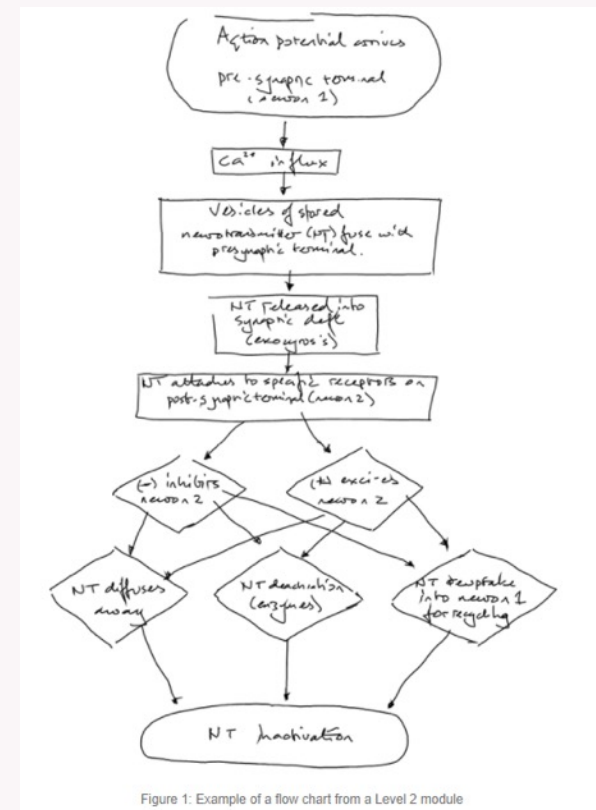
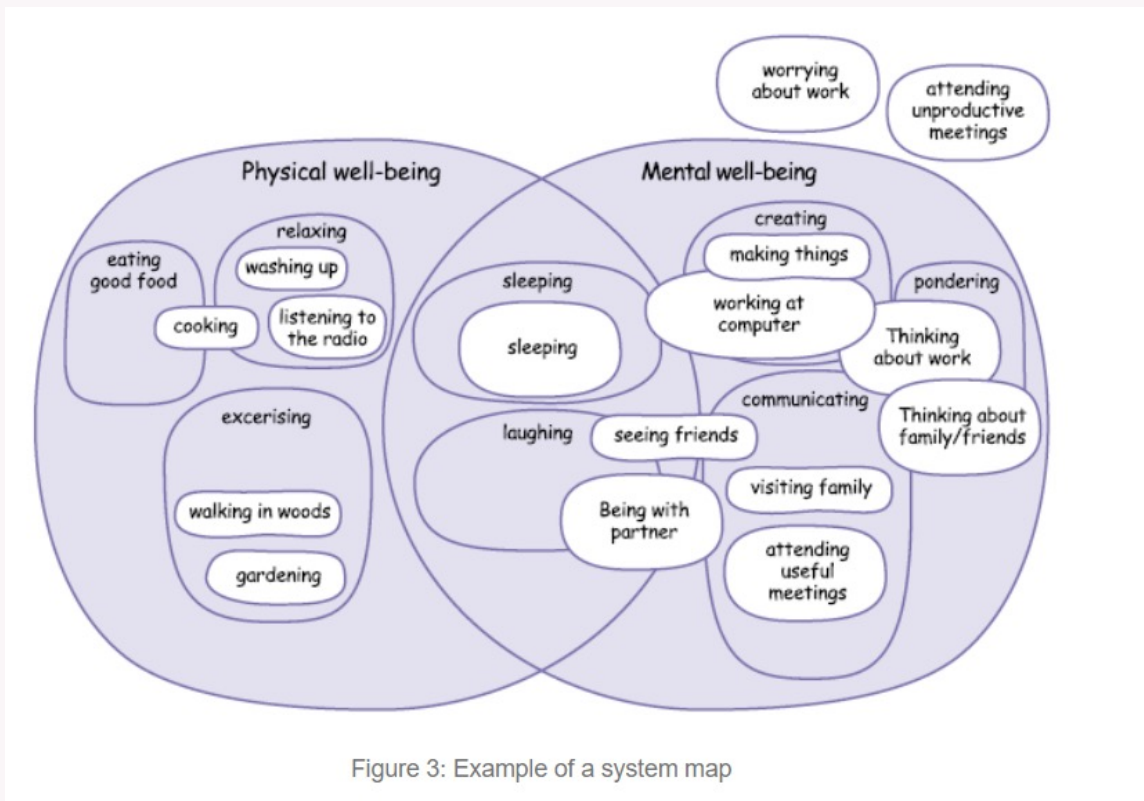
Using a theory - 3

- Finally you need to extract the information about that theory that is relevant to the task in hand – whether than is answering a question, writing an essay or something else.



Breaking it down

- To understand the parts of a theory, and therefore to be able to identify what is relevant, you can use mindmaps or tables.



Check!



- Make sure you haven't just paraphrased the information but have genuinely explained

Primary sources

- A primary source is the original piece of research (e.g. a journal paper) or first theory (in the case of Freud and similar)
- You may be using this in some places and are therefore going 'to the horse's mouth' getting the person who did the research or came up with the idea
- You may be asked to analyse the method used to obtain the original information – if not then consider whether it adds anything to your purpose (other than words!)

Secondary sources

- Often give additional information and context about a theory, e.g. something about the person themselves (e.g. who/what Freud used to develop his theory)
- This information is *not* the original theory but context
- Not all secondary information will be useful for your end context, e.g. the question you are answering – some is contextual and to help you engage

Secondary sources

- A secondary source is not the original piece of research or theory but it someone writing about it and extracting relevant information for a purpose
- Can you think of a time when a secondary source would be more useful than the original primary source? Please use the poll pod provided to give your suggestions

Our ideas

- Different language
- Refining
- Extracting information for a purpose, e.g. not everything
- Reviewing and linking to other relevant information or contexts

Most of the time...

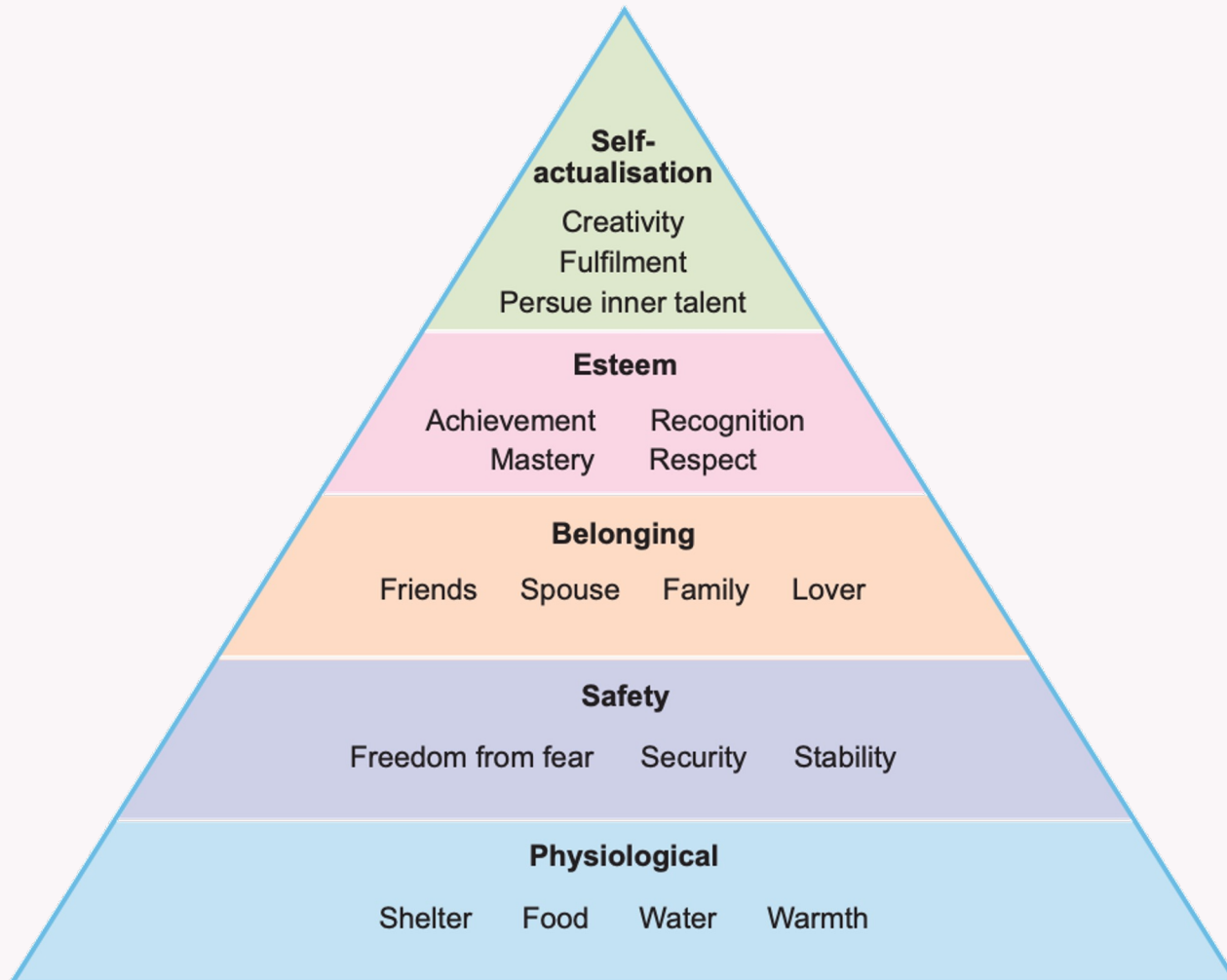
- You will be using secondary sources (or indeed tertiary!) so won't be asked to use the primary source
- The exception is for original research, e.g. an experiment, case or piece of literature where you need the exact original wording

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



- The theory was developed through secondary research of published works
- First published in 1943
- There are 5 essential needs that must be met for employees in the work place.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow's theory

- That's those theories very popular when it was published and have been taught in schools and colleges for many years.
- However subsequent researchers and individuals have questioned the academic rigour behind the theory

Why are we mentioning Maslow?

- It doesn't matter if you are studying business, psychology, social science, education, child development or indeed anything else – the idea is to recognise the point about passing through stages and there being an influential theory
- Most people have heard of Maslow even if they don't know much about the theory - this means his theory and indeed himself, had a big impact



Using theories

- You don't have to personally agree with a theory to be able to use it academically
- It is about recognising where it is important for your specific context
- Describe the important information, take *yourself* out of it



Applying a theory

- The way that you apply the information from a theory will be very different depending on your context and what you are asked about



Contexts for Maslow

- To what extent is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs a good example of a theory of motivation?
- Describe Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- Compare and contrast Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with another theory of motivation.

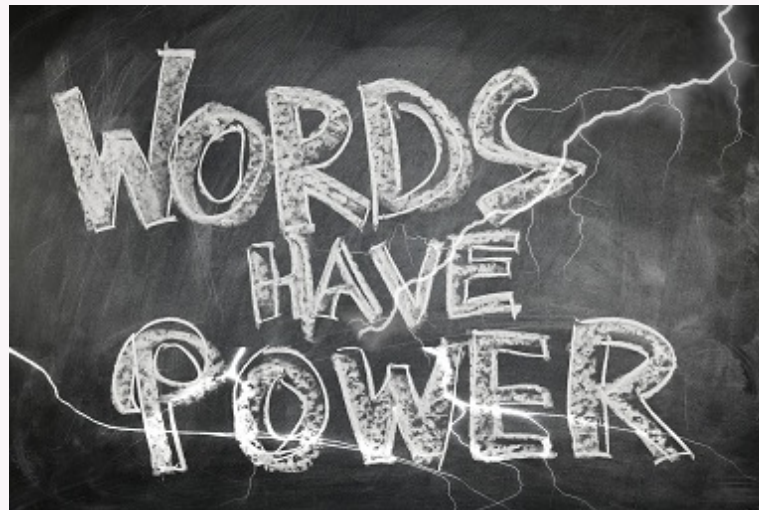
You should be able to see that whilst there are some themes (e.g. the theory itself), the way you would use information, and the detail that is required would be different

Using theories

- Consider the context you are being asked to use a theory in
- Is it a historical account of how views changed?
- Is it a description of the theory?
- Is it a critique of why the theory is not as good as another one?

Using theories.

- You can still respect the contribution a theory has made, and provide the information about that for your context, even if you don't personally agree
- Take care not to be dismissive when using theory evidence – value laden words can change the perception and interpretation of what you are saying



Using the Maslow example

- “When I reflect on Maslow’s contributions, my thoughts settle on his theory of motivation and on his approach to science. My first thought is that he could have done more to protect the integrity of his formulation of a need hierarchy (Maslow, 1970), which specifies that the satisfaction of higher needs is contingent on the lower needs having been met.”
- Maslow needed to protect his theory
- Models can be challenged through new thinking or new interpretations

However you could say, while writing in your own words, As thinking moves on, the text may “protect the integrity” – this uses relevant terminology but for a purpose

A point on referencing

- Whenever you cite something you only cite what you have personally read
- You can't cite a source that you haven't read
- You can cite your secondary source's use of the primary source e.g. Rennie 2008 c.f. Moore 2023 (c.f. means cited from)
- The original source:
- Rennie, D.L. (2008) Two Thoughts on Abraham Maslow, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 2008 48:4, 445-448

Discussion activity

- Discuss as a group - Can you identify a time when you needed to communicate another's ideas in a TMA. What can you do differently next time based on what you know now?
- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group.

Take home message

- Using someone else's theory or words involves understanding what they are and being able to apply in context
- Recognising the value that a theory has on overall understanding is different from agreeing with that theory
- Information from a theory or source will differ depending on the overall context

Upcoming sessions



11-Jul @11am Learning from feedback

13-Jul @11am Creative notetaking

18-Jul @11am Effective academic communication

19-Jul @11am Moving up to the next level

Details and booking information from
<http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Past student hub live online study skills sessions [here](#)

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