

Student Hub Live people



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Amanda Smith has been an OU Law School tutor at levels 1 and 2 since 2009. During that time, she has discovered the pleasures and pitfalls of being an OU student by studying for an MA in Online and Distance Education, worked as an Educational Advisor, written tutorial, skills, and research materials. In her (very little) spare time she can be found walking the hills, tending her garden, travelling Italy, ballroom dancing and knitting to keep warm!

Workshop



- This is going to be a structured workshop to help you getting thinking critically if you are new to it or at lower levels of study.
- We'll get you starting to think about key elements and give some tutor advice about aspects that are important
- There is a lot of interaction so please be ready to answer polls (questions) or add to chat pod during the session

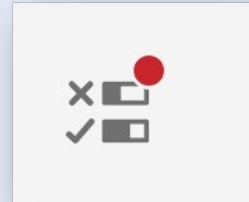
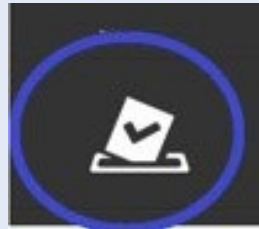
Online workshop basics



- Polls are anonymous to other participants but the chat box will have your name this will change to user number in the recording.
- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website.
- Slides are available to download during the session (*may not be accessible on some mobile devices*) and from <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>.
- It's a starting point for you to investigate more
- It's university wide not module specific

Mobile users

If you are on a mobile device remember you need to tap into the polling option



To come back to these slides after completing a poll click on the share pod slides icon



Chat pod icon



Please be aware



- These sessions are large scale
- They are very busy
- There is lots of interaction
- They are not the same as other tutorials
- You can maximise slides on your own screen by clicking the icon (this will hide the chat)



- We welcome all students at our workshops. Please do be aware that they can be very busy and some students may struggle with the non scripted nature.
- Slides are available to download within the live session and from the event page on the [studenthublive](#) website 24 hours ahead of every session to follow along or prepare for what will come up.

Please



- Do NOT share any personal information in the chat pod during the session
- On the recording names will be anonymised to user number
- However if you type anyone's full name or any other personal information in the chat pod it can be seen by everybody and it would also show up on the recording so we would not be able to make the recording available

Critical thinking and writing (Beginners)



This was our advert...



First in a 3 part series. Aimed at access and level 1 students or those who are new to critical thinking and writing, this workshop covers the basics. Critical thinking is about developing a questioning mind. There are five tiers of critical thinking. You start with the content then the validity, the relevance, your criteria and the highest level is evaluation of information. We'll look at the questioning process that goes along with these levels.

First thoughts word cloud



- How do you work through key points in your module to help you understand things?
- Please use the word cloud provided to give your ideas
- Note that these need to be single words rather than phrases, if you press the space button your first word will go through

Our ideas



- Notetaking
- Highlighting and annotating
- Making a mind map
- Key points cards (flash cards)
- Post it notes
- Talking to a friend
- Watching videos or searching for additional explanations

Note taking



- There was a creative note taking session on Wednesday 29th May catch up at
- <https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/content/creative-note-taking-1900-2000>
- Access through this room then view past recordings and look for the name
- There was also a studio broadcast;
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfjFAz2ZQOU&t=337s>

Why is this relevant?

- Thinking critically requires the understanding of relevant module content, so you must have located that and recognise what was important to be able to think critically about it.
- Critical thinking is about dissecting different aspects of the source and considering it in context of the questions you are asking (or are being asked) – your criteria.

Topic:	
Source: (e.g. author, book title, page number, edition)	
Description	
Claims	
Evidence for claims	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Questions and queries	
Links to other topics	

Content/description



- This is saying **what** something is
- It gives facts and details overall
- Some are **more important** within the context than others though which is where evaluation comes in
- Description is about identifying what matters and having the confidence to leave out what is not important for your purpose.

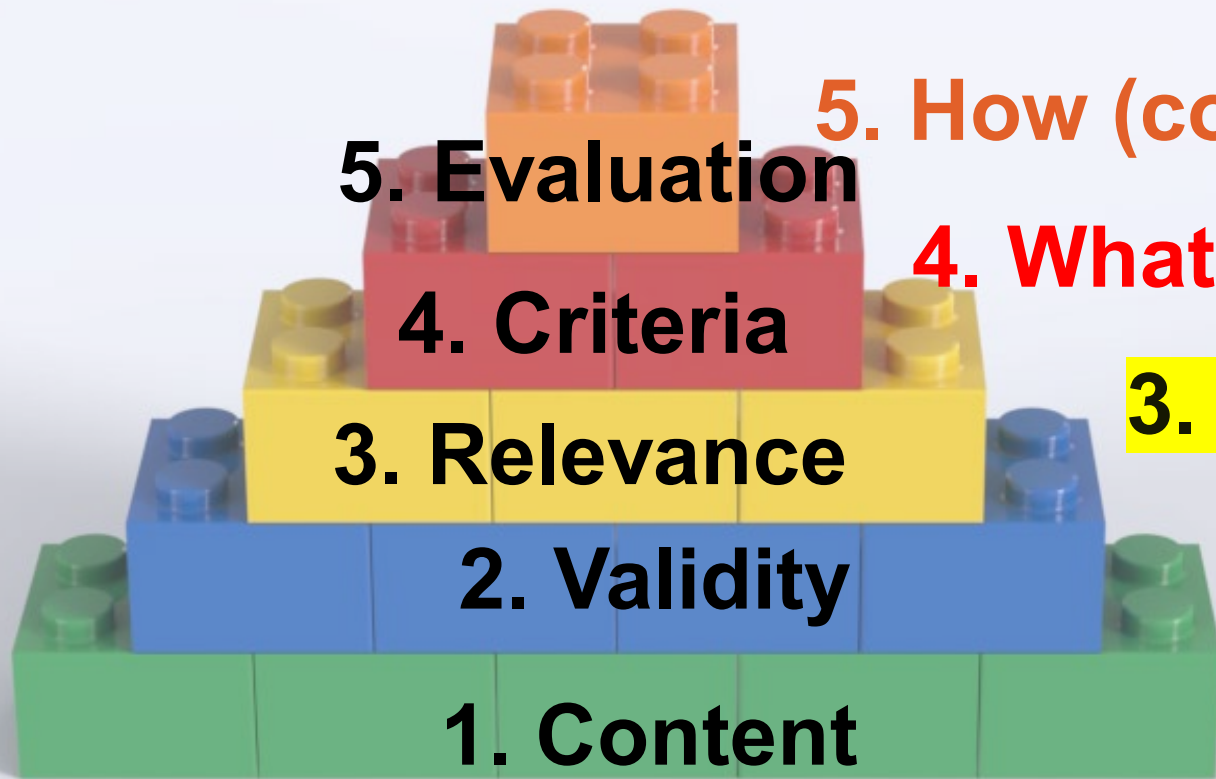
Activity



- You have been invited to contribute to a program entitled 'my most prized possessions'. You have to name your 10 most prized possessions **and** explain why you have chosen each in a short sentence.
- Please use the short answer poll available to suggest anything that is relevant to how you might start to do this. *Hint – it is not stating what the possessions are at this stage but how you will formulate the decision.*
- Remember to scroll to see other answers and see what others think

- Monetary value
- Sentimental value
- Heirloom
- Practical

Critical thinking process



5. How (connect/use)?

4. What's important?

3. Why?

2. Who?

1. What?

Link this to your module



- Bringing together those two activities, your key points and your prized possessions. What are the key points in your module—the prized possessions that you don't want to lose from the module?
- What points form the bottom of your pyramid?
- Recognising why they are key points helps you in your analysis
- The criteria on which you decide may vary, it might not always be your choice

Looking for clues – poll



- Is there anything in your module that helps you recognise what is most important?
- Please use the short answer poll to give your ideas and look to see what other people have said

Our ideas



- Learning outcomes – these state what you should be expected to know from topics, sections, books, the module overall and emphasise what is most important
- TMA and assessment questions – bluntly these will emphasise what you need to know for the marks!
- Professional outcomes for some people

Critical analysis



- This is a higher level skill that gains more marks than anything else.
- It means looking at the information and evaluating it and considering whether it allows you to answer the question fully.

Critical analysis



It is a questioning process –

- **What is the relevant content?**
- **Who said what? Who are they?**
- **Why is what they said valid?**
- **Did they miss something out?**
- **Can I find anything that disagrees with them?**

Critical analysis



- **What is important?**
- **What are my criteria?**
- **How can I use this?**
- **How does this connect to other information?**

Choosing criteria poll



- You need to buy a book from an online book shop. There are ten books on the topic.
- Which of these would be your most important criteria?
 - 1. The author
 - 2. The reviews
 - 3. The price
 - 4. The length
 - 5. The contents
 - 6. The cover art
 - 7. The date of publication

Drawing these together



- What is the purpose?
 - What is relevant to meet the purpose?
 - What is not relevant to that purpose?
-
- **What are your criteria?**

Critical analysis hints



- It isn't about ripping something to shreds
- It **is** about evidencing your assertions
- If you ascribe to one person's theory as presented what is it about it that is convincing?
- Have you looked at what might not be right about it?
- Is there anything missing ?
- Is the view / evidence important because of the amount of people that agree or something else?

Your evaluations (assertions)

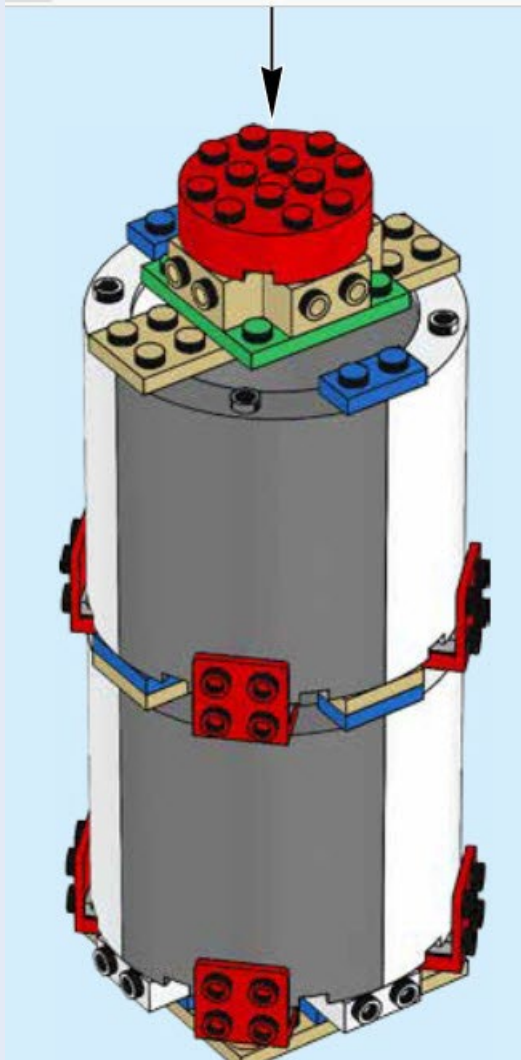


- These are *yours* but not presented in a subjective way – essentially they are you as a student of your module representing the module content
- So it is not about your personal opinion of whether you agree or disagree with some facts presented, someone's theory, or the results of an experiment
- It is about how you as an objective university student can convey information appropriate to your learning level

Content



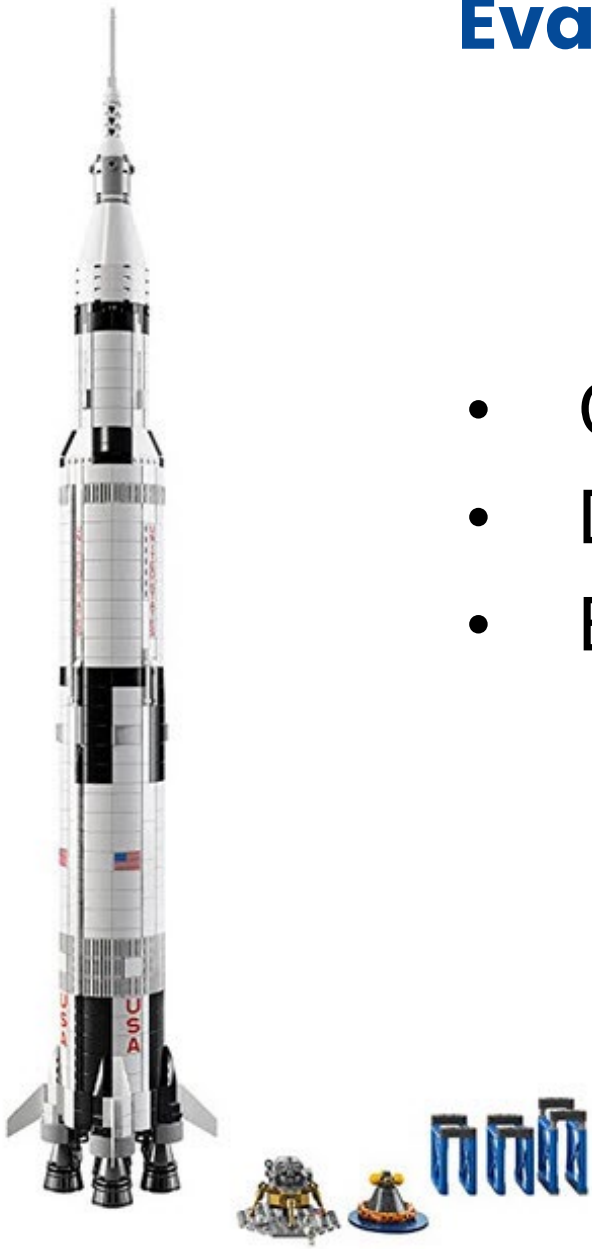
Critical thinking



- This is dissecting the information
- Checking it for validity
- Rebuilding it
- Hidden work

Evaluation

- Connecting things together
- Deciding which bits to keep
- External view the world sees



Activity time



- Think about your favourite food – **How did you decide** it was your favourite food?
- Use the short answer poll pod provided to give your ideas.

Evaluating your thinking



- You don't describe your favourite food to make it clear how you decided it is your favourite food.
- *Critical thinking* is the explanation about how you chose your favourite food – you have to make a considered decision based on the evidence.

What questions would you have?



- Lego is the world's biggest manufacturer of tyres. They make over 300 million tyres a year.

Questions



- What questions do you think are helpful for critical thinking as you study?

Before you choose your reading

- What is my best outcome?
- How does this piece of reading help me achieve it?
- How does this fit with other sources?
- What do I know already?
- What do I need to know about this topic?
- What don't I need to know?

Before you read

- Who wrote it?
- Why did they write it?
- What bias do they have?
- What is assumed?
- What is missing?
- What could be better?
- What links are there?
- What are my topic specific questions today?

As you read

- Why?
- What's important?
- What's the story?
- What are the links between parts?
- Your topic questions.

As you plan your writing

- How does it all connect?
- Am I still missing anything?
- Does my argument have flow and make sense?
- What if.....?

Questions



As you edit

- Does it flow?
- What's missing?
- What's not needed?
- What could be better?
- Does it fulfil the purpose?

Critical writing



- Objective
- Third person
- Not opinionated
- Weighing up against other point (evaluation)
- Providing evidence for assertions
- Use of words

<https://help.open.ac.uk/developing-academic-english>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-in-Third-Person>

Descriptive versus Critical Writing



- Open to ideas
- Questioning and curious

*“Descriptive writing informs
Critical writing transforms”*

- (Peters 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8falzU33zxs>)
- Examples https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1401/academic_skills/105/critical_thinking/5

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Words that show critical thinking



- However, Consider
- Perhaps, Probably
- Similarly, Fails to
- Moreover, Despite
- Convincing, Persuasive
- Strongly contested, Vigorously challenged
- Disputes, Contends

- <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/>

Using PEE to evaluate



- PEE
 - Point – make it
 - Evidence – support it with facts
 - Explain – why the evidence is supportive and it is relevant
- This is about including the fact in a way that makes it clear you haven't just stumbled across it but can relate it clearly to the topic you are presenting – the explanation is where you have evaluated the evidence.
- Unless specifically asked don't give your own opinion.

What are tutors looking for?



- What do you think your tutors are looking for in your writing?

What are tutors looking for?



- A clear indication you know what is important and have been able to link this to the overall context and purpose of the piece of writing
- If you are using evidence, that you have selected appropriate aspects of it e.g. not just namedropped, and have referenced correctly and fully
- Convincing writing that shows that you know what you are talking about and haven't just stumbled across a bit of information that you are regurgitating

What's missing?



- If there is no critical thinking what's missing?

Indicators that critical thinking isn't there



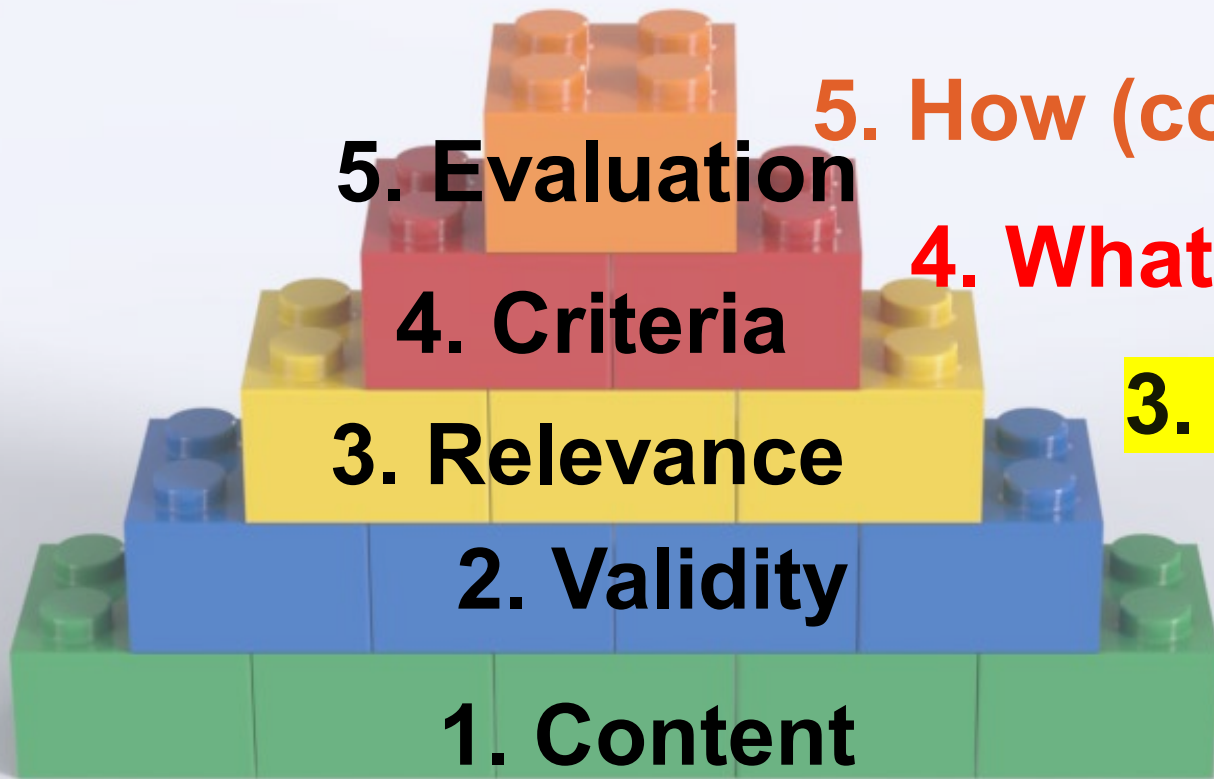
- Close paraphrasing of the content
- Non-active description rather than evaluation
- Personal opinion
- Too little information e.g. just a citation after a brief assertion
- Words like obviously – why is it obvious? What evidence has been presented to make the case?
- Can the reader be expected to understand based on the information that is actually included?

Discussion activity



- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further.
- *The best tip I have picked up about critical thinking and writing is...*
- *I am going to develop my critical thinking and writing by...*
- You are welcome to add your thoughts and we will then pick up some of the themes and talk through them.
- Chat does have names on but the recording will be anonymised so you will appear as 'user number'

Critical thinking process



5. Evaluation

4. Criteria

3. Relevance

2. Validity

1. Content

5. How (connect/use)?

4. What's important?

3. Why?

2. Who?

1. What?

Take home message



- Critical thinking and writing do require a good understanding of the topic (which takes time!).
- The key is questioning rather than basic description, e.g. saying how and why rather than just what.
- You need to understand first, then extract what is important for your purpose and convince with your writing.

Feedback please



Please use the following link to provide feedback to help the studenthublive team to continue to improve what we do

<https://forms.office.com/e/Y548n6T8DB>

Upcoming sessions



- 11-Jun 11 am Support and Wellbeing for Student Carers
- 13-Jun 7 pm Critical thinking (Intermediate)
- 17-Jun 6.30 pm Generative AI: who's the expert?
- 18-Jun 7 pm SHL End-of-year party!
- 19-Jun 7 pm Critical thinking (Advanced)
- 20-Jun 11 am Why studying sustainability can open opportunities
- 26-Jun 11 am Equality, diversity, and inclusion in the FASS
- 26-Jun 7 pm Learning from feedback
- 27-Jun 7 pm Applying other people's ideas with confidence
- 11-Jul 11 am Neurodiverse community reflecting & consolidating learning
- 18-Jul 11 am Really understanding questions

<http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

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

Visit us at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/> and subscribe for events as they are announced. Send us feedback at studenthub@open.ac.uk