

# Applying other people's ideas with confidence

## 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? Using other peoples' ideas is much more than paraphrasing or including long quotes, but it can be challenging to feel confident in what to focus on and also what to exclude. Join us in this popular SHL workshop to find out how to convey and apply other peoples' ideas in an academically appropriate way that will help you achieve better results in your next assessment.

# 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/VLjvw\\_nDYBo](https://youtu.be/VLjvw_nDYBo) (Youtube)
- Rob's **Whose idea is it anyway? Confidently citing the right source**
- <https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/content/whose-idea-if-anyway-confidently-citing-right-source-23-march-2022> aord <https://youtu.be/hy8lZ8M83Y0> (Youtube)

# First thoughts

- Think of your favourite ‘theory’ that you have heard (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



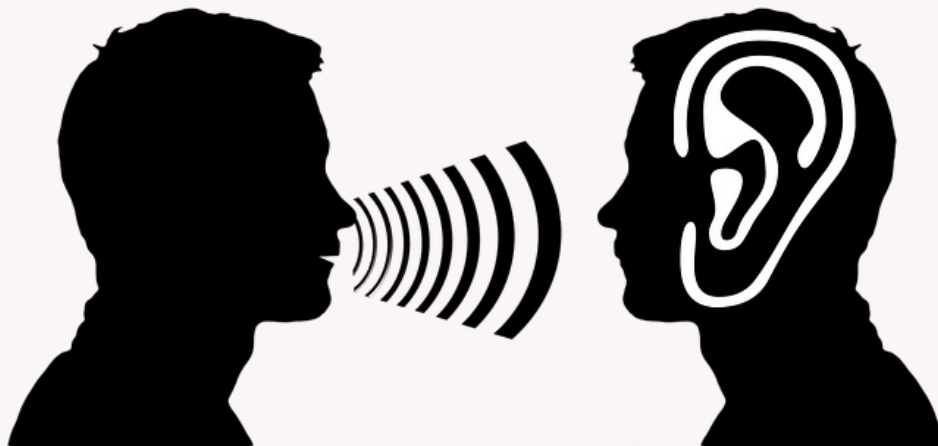
# Using a theory - 1

- 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 that 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.

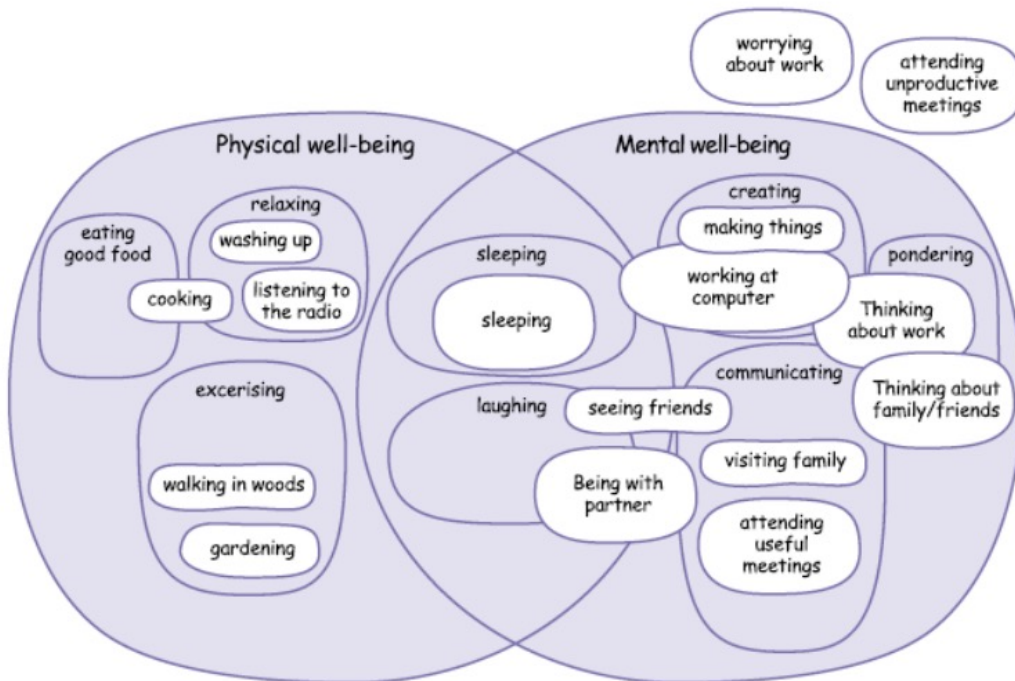


Figure 3: Example of a system map

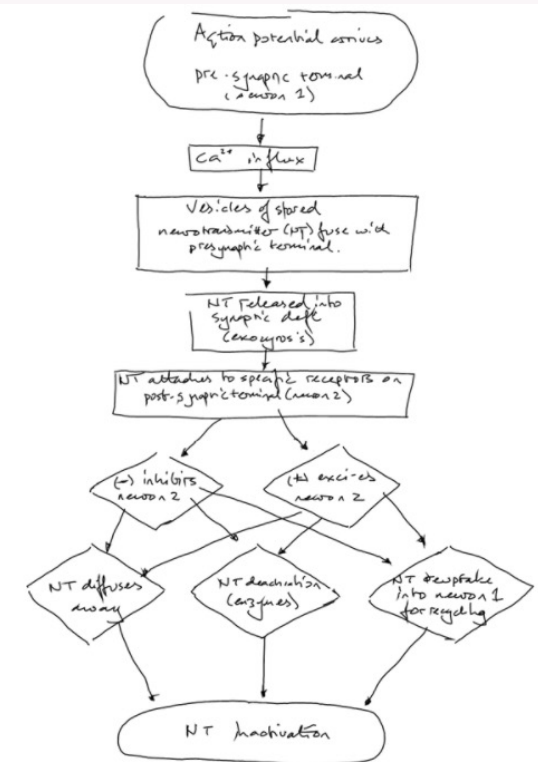


Figure 1: Example of a flow chart from a Level 2 module

# 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



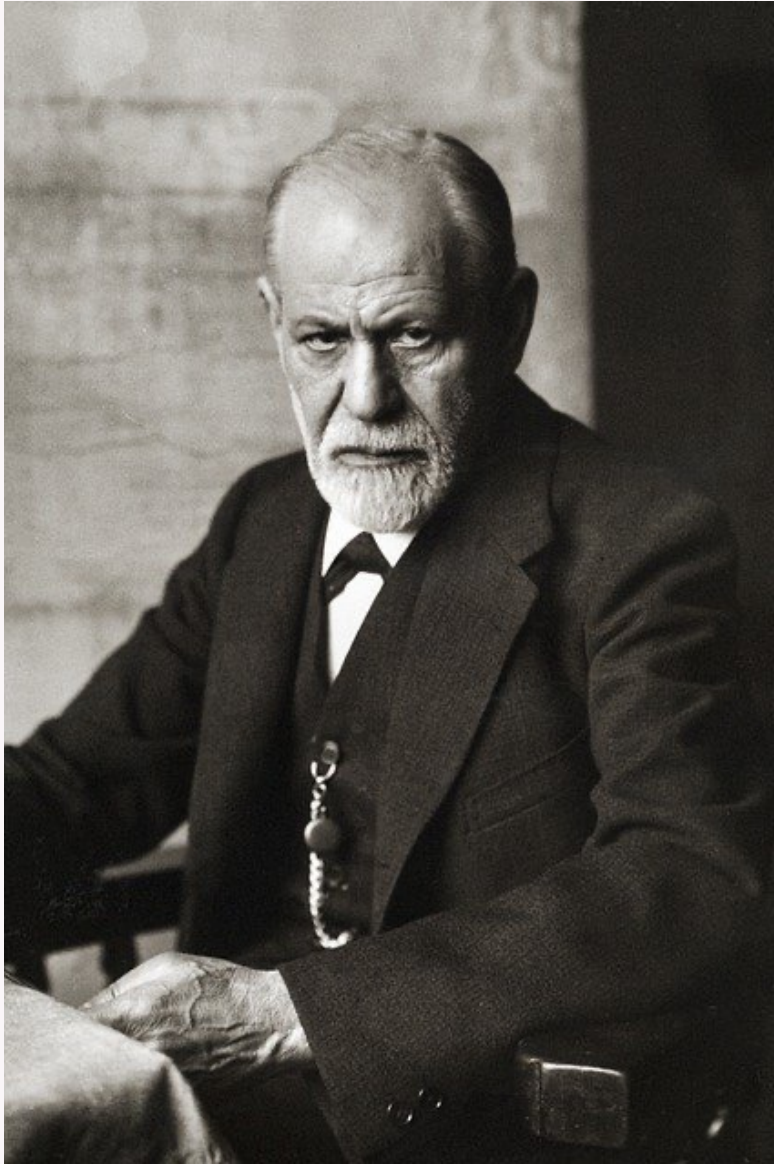
# Our ideas

- 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

# Freud's psychosexual theory



- The theory was developed through observation
- Proposed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when developmental stages were a key research and theory focus
- There are 5 stages of development through which all people pass

# Freud's stages

Name	Age	Principal task
Oral stage	Birth–18 months	Weaning
Anal stage	18 months–3–4 years	Toilet training
Phallic stage	3–4 years–5–7 years	Sexual identity
Latent stage	5–7 years–puberty	Learning
Genital stage	From puberty onwards	Genital intercourse

- Each stage has to be passed through sequentially, and each has an emotional function

# Freud's theory

- Freud's theory was popular at the time and other researchers including Piaget based their own theories on his, or at least parts of it
- However subsequent researchers and individuals have disagreed with some or all of the theory

# Why are we mentioning Freud?

- It doesn't matter if you are studying 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 Freud 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 Freud

- Why is Freud's psychosexual theory a good example of a stage theory of development?
- Describe Freud's psychosexual theory
- Freud's stage theory of development focuses primarily on childhood and adolescence. How does this compare to other stage theories in terms of emotions during adulthood?

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?

# Process words word cloud

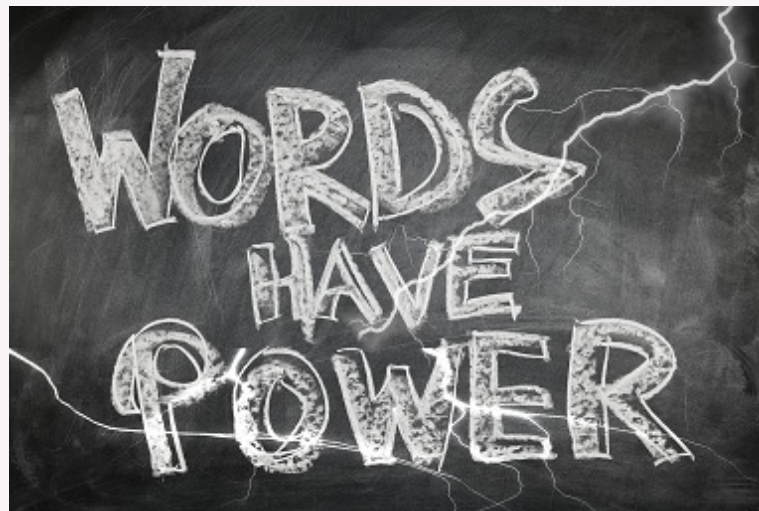
- Process words are instructions to you and form part of the question purpose telling you what to do. As an example – and *don't use this one* – **list** is a process word and is usually followed by a number of whatever to list
- Using the word cloud option type in some other process words you are aware of where it says enter word here.
- Note that these need to be single words rather than phrases, if you press the space button your first word will go through

# Process words

- There is a useful activity at <https://help.open.ac.uk/process-word-activity>
- These words have a different purpose and may evoke a different response in you as well as require a different active response

# 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



# Value laden words

- These are essential emotional arguments and either adding in something to try and 'play on heart strings' or otherwise persuade the reader.
- They are trying to get the reader to agree with you personally
- They undermine evidence that is objective as they are subjective

# Poll time

- Use the short answer poll to say some places where it might be appropriate to use direct quotations within your work.

# Using quotations 1

- Most of the time quotations are not helpful as they don't show your understanding, just the understanding of the person who wrote the original source.
- You should never copy and paste information and pass off as your own.
- If you are quoting legitimately it needs to be in "quotations marks" with a citation (Henman, 2022).



## Using quotations 2

- Sometimes you do need to use the original author's words as they are crucial to understanding the concepts
- This is different from using relevant terminology – quotations use a set series of words in the same order as they were originally
- “It is, moreover, his earnest wish that the book may age rapidly - that which was once new in it may become generally accepted, and that which is imperfect in it may be replaced by something better” (Freud, 1909)
- *Reference: Freud's preface to 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, 1909*  
available at [https://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](https://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)

## Using quotations 3

- It is rare to use a long quotation as this will use up a lot of words and doesn't demonstrate that you know why it is important in the context
- It is more likely that you will use an excerpt, or reword as part of an explanation, using appropriate terminology but not paraphrasing

# Using that Freud example

- “It is, moreover, his earnest wish that the book may age rapidly - that which was once new in it may become generally accepted, and that which is imperfect in it may be replaced by something better”
- Thinking moves on
- As we find out more we can place older information into context and either accept it as fact or show where new learning has shown it to be not as useful

However you could say, while writing in your own words, As thinking moves on, the text may “age rapidly” – 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. Freud 1909 c.f. Henman 2022 (c.f. means cited from)

## 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



7<sup>th</sup> Feb 7pm Introduction to essay planning  
(Beginners)

14<sup>th</sup> Feb 7pm Developing your essay planning  
(Intermediate)

21<sup>st</sup> Feb 7pm Mastering essay planning (Advanced)

**Freshers live – 1<sup>st</sup> Feb,**

**Freshers Social event 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb**

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

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