

Reading Critically

At university reading critically has to do with analysing and evaluating the material you read. The terms *critical*, *critique* or *critically evaluate* do not have the same negative meanings as they often do in everyday life.

Similarly, *an argument* involves proposing a point of view and supporting it with evidence.

So, at university in Australia you are not just reading for information, but to develop your own ideas and understandings. To do this, you need to understand different points of view and to see how these are supported with evidence. This is what *reading critically* means. Whether you agree or disagree with the writer's *argument*, you will need to evaluate how well it is presented.

The following questions will help you analyse and evaluate what you are reading:

- What is the issue?
Where has this text come from? (Is it, for example, a political article or a scientific work or has it been written for the general reader in a newspaper?)
- Is this an authoritative source?
Is the article in a reputable journal, or is it just someone's opinions which have been posted on the internet?
- What is the writer's main point (or thesis)?
- What evidence or arguments are used to support this thesis?
- How valid is the evidence?
Are statistics, research data or the views of other recognised scholars used as support, or is it just someone's personal opinions?
Is the source of the information given? Is the information recent?
Does the writer use a referencing system?
- Why do you think the writer is presenting this point of view?
- How is the argument presented?
Is the writer using authoritative or persuasive language?
- What does the writer want me, the reader, to do?
To agree? To take action? To reflect on his/her ideas?
- Do other writers agree with these assertions?

In other words, you are trying to discover:

- What the writer is asserting
- How well s/he supports the arguments presented
- Whether you agree or disagree with the arguments, and why or why not.

If you accept these assertions, you need to ask yourself:

- Can I use these assertions and arguments in my own essay?

If your answer is 'yes', you need to ask yourself:

- Can they be used as evidence to support my own argument?
- Or can I use them to show that I have considered arguments both for and against my main point (my thesis)?

Overall, reading critically allows you to evaluate the arguments presented in the reading material and develop your point of view on the information.

**For further
information:**

- Contact the Academic Skills Adviser on your campus
- Visit our web pages on myACU.

**Print the Pamphlet
Series**

Last revision:
December 2006