

Writing a critical review

Critical reviews require careful planning and drafting just like any other assignment. This guide suggests what to focus on at each stage of the process.

1. Plan your approach



Read your assignment instructions carefully in order to:

- determine your exact criteria;
- find out what proportion of your review you should dedicate to summary and evaluation; and
- know whether the summary and evaluation should be presented as separate sections or a combined section.

2. Make notes



Skim read the text and make notes about:

- ✓ the main question or questions;
- ✓ the author's aim;
- ✓ the methods used;
- ✓ the evidence provided;
- ✓ the key findings or answers; and
- ✓ the implications and significance of the findings.

3. Evaluate the text



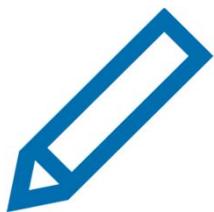
Use your notes to evaluate the text against your criteria.

- Judge the quality or value of the text (for other researchers, or to practitioners in the field, or to students).
- Consider the merits of the text in the short term as well as the long term.
- Consider the merits of the text in comparison to other related texts.

When evaluating the text you could answer some of the following questions:

- Is the question the text tries to answer relevant, interesting, new, or useful? To who, and why?
- Does the text give new answers or interpretations to an old question?
- Is the text detailed, or brief? Simple or complex?
- Is the evidence presented to support the answer extensive? Strong? Weak? Relevant? Persuasive? Contradictory?
- Are the conclusions reached final, limited, qualified or preliminary?

4. Write it up



When writing and proofreading your critical review:

- Stay focused on your evaluation criteria.
- Read the text you are reviewing again to check that you have covered everything.