



Critical writing examples

Let's consider the differences between a paragraph written descriptively and a paragraph that uses critical writing:

Example 1: Descriptive writing

There is extensive research which suggests that digital media platforms are extremely positive for intercultural communication and bringing people together. There are many digital platforms used worldwide. The popular digital platforms we see include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, YouTube, and can be accessed and downloaded to our smartphones for free without any joining costs. These digital platforms have been accessible to the public from around 2005 and have become more and more popular as the years have increased.

Example 2: Critical writing

Digital communication has enabled individuals to connect across cultures, this is because intercultural communication is accessible and frequent, since half of the world's population use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Chin et al., 2021). As stated by Frank (2023), many digital platforms, namely Facebook and Instagram, have the capability to enhance social connectivity, monetise a source of income and deliver integral knowledge in connecting people and cultures. However, the notion of social media contributing to the enhancement of intercultural communication was refuted by Nakayama (2020), who stipulated that interactions that are shaped in the digital environment reinforce social inequality. Similarly, Harrison (2021) argued that although technology has expanded and created opportunities for different people to communicate across cultures, there are still concerns whether these types of interactions create authentic relationships. This may be due to the need to foster and form these relationships in real life experiences. However, Dunn (2019) found that students who had access to a digital platform, were able to facilitate and improve cultural awareness through their virtual experience. Lifinstve and Wellbrook (2022) further added that social media prevents the enhancement of cross-cultural connection. However, further research is necessary to analyse the effectiveness of meaningful intercultural connections via social media.

In the example of descriptive writing (example 1), you might notice that:

- No in-text citations (evidence) are used to support the ideas being discussed
- The writer has only chosen to describe how social media may lead to improved intercultural communications, but has not given any alternative points of view
- Evidence of research and further reading is not present

In the example of critical writing (example 2), you might notice that:

- A number of in-text citations have been used throughout the paragraph. This indicates that the writer has done some research and reading to write this paragraph. The claims are based on evidence from the literature that has been read.
- The writer has not only given a general discussion of social media, but has gone further to provide alternative points of view. They do not only show how social media can facilitate intercultural communication, but also show how some thinkers believe that social media can be detrimental to intercultural communication.

Below is another example of a paragraph written in a critical style. This paragraph shows how the claims a business makes in its annual report can be critiqued.

Example 3: Critical writing

According to the chairman of Shell plc, Andrew Mackenzie, one of the ways the organisation is attempting to become more environmentally sustainable is by working with customers to understand what they need, to work towards their goal of becoming a net-zero emissions business by 2050 (Mackenzie, 2021). However, it is important to note that Mackenzie's Annual Report does not address criticisms meted by environmental groups. Indeed, while Shell has set the long-term goal of becoming a net-zero business, he does not make explicit mention of Shell's continued short-term goal of expanding investment in oil and gas, especially in the developing world (Tan and Shivaprasad, 2022). Clarke et al. (2022) moreover underscore the problems related to Shell's carbon offsetting plans, including the difficulty in determining the actual 'neutrality' of these projects.