

Critical analytical writing vs. descriptive writing

Descriptive writing	Critical analytical writing
states what happened	identifies the significance
states what something is like	evaluates strengths and weaknesses
gives the story so far	weighs one piece of information against another
states the order in which things happened	makes reasoned judgments
says how to do something	argues a case according to the evidence
explains what a theory says	shows why something is relevant or suitable
explains how something works	indicates why something will work (best)
notes the method used	identifies whether something is appropriate or suitable
says when something occurred	identifies why the timing is of importance
states the different components	weighs up the importance of component parts
states the options	gives reasons for selecting each option
list details	evaluates the relative significance of details
list in any order	structures information in order of performance
states links between items	shows the relevance of links between pieces of information
gives information	draws conclusions

Cottrell, S. *The Study Skills Handbook*, (2003), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p.232