**Instructional Terms / Process Terms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Account | Account ‘for’ asks you to give reasons for.  Account ‘of’ asks for a detailed description. |
| Analyse | Investigate in depth, explain the important/relevant parts, describing and criticising in detail. |
| Argue | Offer an idea/opinion, give an example, discuss what it means and the implications and then defend against possible weaknesses. |
| Assess | State in a balanced way the points for and against or the strengths/weaknesses/value of the information. Then give your opinion. |
| Classify | Match, select, identify, label something |
| Comment | State clearly your opinions on the topic. Support your views with evidence or explanations. |
| Compare | State similarities and differences |
| Consider | Think about and state thoughts. Support with evidence. |
| Construct | Put together in a logical order. |
| Contrast | Emphasise the differences between two or more things. |
| Criticise | Give your considered opinion about the pro/cons of practises/theories and backup your opinion with research/references. |
| Critically analyse or evaluate | Look at weaknesses and strengths and give your conclusion, i.e. how useful is this based on the evidence (research/references). |
| Define | Give the exact meaning of something. Show how the distinctions you make are necessary to clarify a particular aspect. |
| Demonstrate | Give evidence/proof using examples. |
| Describe | Give a detailed account. Use words to create a picture. |
| Develop | Take the thinking on a point to the next step or further. |
| Discuss | Explain an idea in depth and in detail. Look at the advantages and disadvantages. Think about other ways of looking at it. |
| Distinguish | To point out the differences between theories/points of view, etc. |
| Evaluate | Make a judgement about the value/importance/worth of something. Give your views and others’ views. |
| Explain | Make your point, clearly, and give your reasons. |
| Explore | To look at something from different points of view, showing possible answers and reasons in order to make a decision. |
| Extent | ‘To what extent’ asks you to weigh up the evidence for or against something, to state how valid something is. |
| Identify | To point out the facts about a topic, include an in-depth look at circumstances or situations. |
| Illustrate | Use examples, diagrams, and pictures etc. to explain and make clear. |
| Interpret | Use your own words, thoughts and judgements to make the meaning of something clear. |
| Investigate | To carefully and thoroughly look at the facts or causes and state your conclusion. |
| Justify | To prove something is correct by giving reasons for your decision, opinion or conclusion. Evidence of research and references needed. |
| Outline | To give the main features, structure or general principles of a topic, omitting the details. |
| Reflect | What is your experience? What have you learnt? Usually OK to use “I” and “my” but please check your assignment brief.  Refer to reflection model used: Kolb, Gibbs, Johns or CSP, etc. |
| Relate | To show how things are connected. |
| Review | Present an overview of and critically examine the subject. |
| State | To present thoughts in a brief, clear and concise form. |
| Summarise | Give a brief and clear account of the key points of a topic. |
| Trace | To follow the development or the main trends of something, referring to evidence (resources/references). |

Compiled by The School of Combined Studies, English Language Teaching , University of Hertfordshire, 2008

**To help with Level 5 writing, please remember to work with the resources available on the ASA website, including:**

* **Examples of Level 5 writing**
* **The study guide in the critical writing section**
* **The academic phrasebank**

<http://academic-skills.health.herts.ac.uk/academic-writing/>

Guidelines for writing in an academic style

1. Except in reflective writing, do not use the first person (I*, we, us, our, me, my)*. Instead, say ‘*This essay will...’*  or use passive constructions: *‘It will be argued that …’.*
2. Never use the second person (*you, your, yourself*).
3. Do not use slang or colloquial vocabulary: ‘*kids*, *a lot* or *lots of*, *a bit confused’.* Instead, use: ‘*children, a significant* or *considerable number; slightly confused’.*
4. Use vocabulary accurately and make sure you know the meaning of the words you choose. There is a difference between *research and evidence,* or *ethics and morals,* which you are expected to know if you study these subjects. The Thesaurus is a great tool, but use it carefully and critically.
5. Be as precise as possible when dealing with facts and figures. Avoid phrases such as ‘*about a hundred’* or ‘*hundreds of years ago’*. Instead, use the exact figures or dates, or use the word *‘approximately’* when you have to make an estimate.
6. In your conclusions or ideas, avoid absolute statements and overgeneralizations. Do not use words such as *‘all’*, *‘always’* or *‘never’* and avoid statements such as ‘*Education reduces crime’.* Instead, use tentative language*:* *‘Education may reduce crime’* or *‘tends to reduce crime’*. Useful words are the verbs’ *tend to’, ‘appear to’, ‘seem to’* and modal verbs such as’ *may, might, can, could, should’*.
7. Avoid words that show your personal attitude such as ‘*fortunately, surprisingly, obviously, unfortunately’*.
8. Do not use contracted verb forms: ‘*can’t,* *won’t, don’t’. Use the full form: ‘cannot, will not, do not’*
9. Avoid words and phrases in the left column and use the ones in the right column instead. These are only a few examples.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *like* when introducing examples | *such as, for instance* |
| *thing, nothing, something* | *factor, issue, topic* or the specific word for item |
| *little/big* | *small/large, insignificant, significant* |
| phrasal verbs such as *get better, get worse, go on, bring up, put up with* | *improve, deteriorate, continue, raise, tolerate* |
| *good/bad* | *positive/negative* |

1. Do not use direct questions such as ‘*Why did the war break out in 1914?’* Instead, use statements such as ‘*There were three main reasons for the outbreak of war’.*
2. When listing, do not use *‘etc…’* or *‘and so on’*. Instead, be specific with your examples and add *‘and’* before the last item of your list. Also, remember that if you use ‘such as’, the reader does not expect all the items.
3. In essays, remember to NOT number paragraphs or sections of your text. Use linking phrases and signposting language instead to guide your reader, such as *firstly, secondly, finally, a further point in favour of...., the following paragraphs will explore ...., in contrast to the point made above...*

Adapted from Bailey, S. (2015). *Academic Writing. A Handbook for International Students.* (4thed.). London: Pearson Education.

**Rewrite the following sentences to make them more concise and academic:**

1. There are several studies in epidemiology that have shown that when people consume alcohol in moderate amounts they have a lower risk of developing heart disease in comparison to those people who drink a lot of alcohol.
2. This essay will look at several different theories that have been developed by psychologists for attempting to explain why…...
3. In 1916, the disease of polio reached epidemic proportions when 27,363 cases of polio were reported by health care workers in America and more than 7000 people died of polio as a result of the worst outbreak of polio in the history of the country.
4. There are many issues to examine in the results of the study. The first issue, the most important of the issues, is the fact that the placebo achieved the same results as the drug. The second issue is that ……
5. Social Workers look to engage service users who are viewed as vulnerable or in need due to their struggling to participate in society fully for whatever reason.

**Some possible revisions for the sentences above:**

1. Some studies in epidemiology have concluded that moderate alcohol consumption results in a lower risk of heart disease / Some studies in epidemiology have shown that moderate alcohol consumption lowers the risk of heart disease.
2. This essay will explore several theories psychologists have developed to explain why…../Psychologists have developed several theories to explain why ……..
3. In 1916, American health workers reported 27,363 cases of polio and over 7000 deaths, in the country’s worst polio epidemic.
4. The *first* and most important issue presented by the study is the fact that the placebo achieved the same results as the drug. The second is that ……
5. Social work is undertaken with those who are marginalised in society, the dispossessed, the dysfunctional and those in crisis.

Musson, P. (2011). *Effective writing skills for Social work students.* London: Learning Matters. Sage Publications Ltd.

Osmond, A. (2013). *Academic writing and grammar for students.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Soles, D. (2005). *The academic essay. How to plan, draft, write and revise.* (2nd ed.). Abergele: Studymates.

Swales, J.M. & Feak, C.B. (2012). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students. Essential tasks and skills.* (3rd ed.). USA: The University of Michigan Press.

Making your essay flow: Linking words and phrases

Consider the following passages. Underline the parts in passage B that differ from passage A. Why does B have better “flow” than A?

1. Lasers have found widespread application in medicine. Lasers play an important role in the treatment of eye disease and the prevention of blindness. The eye is ideally suited for laser surgery. Most of the eye tissue is transparent. The frequency and focus of the laser beam can be adjusted according to the absorption of the tissue. The beam “cuts” inside the eye with minimal damage to the surrounding tissue - even the tissue between the laser and the incision. Lasers are effective in treating some causes of blindness. Other treatments are not. The interaction between laser light and eye tissue is not fully understood.
2. Lasers have found widespread application in medicine. For example, they play an important role in the treatment of eye disease and the prevention of blindness. The eye is ideally suited for laser surgery because most of the eye tissue is transparent. Because of this transparency, the frequency and focus of the laser beam can be adjusted according to the absorption of the tissue so that the beam “cuts” inside the eye with minimal damage to the surrounding tissue - even the tissue between the laser and the incision. Lasers are also more effective than other methods in treating some causes of blindness. However, the interaction between laser light and eye tissue is not fully understood.

Extracted from: Swales, J. and Feak, C. (2004). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students.* 2nd ed.The University of Michigan Press.

**Transitional Link Words and Their Uses**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| To | | Use |
| Create contrast | | but although  however despite  Conversely in spite of  yet even so  in contrast even though  nevertheless still  on the contrary whereas |
| Illustrate  Something | | for example such as  that is as follows  for instance in particular  in this case as shown |
| Show you are moving  on to the next step | | then  after that |
| Extend a point/  Additional Information | | similarly as well as  moreover indeed  furthermore in addition  as a consequence to be more precise |
| Cause and Effect | | hence due to  accordingly since  as a consequence so  owing to this |
| Show you are  concluding | therefore finally  thus in conclusion  consequently to sum up  in brief as a result | |

**Based on a list compiled by The School of Combined Studies, English Language Teaching, University of Hertfordshire, 2008**

**Language of evaluation**

When thinking and writing critically, language helps us to express, identify or describe:

* Agreement or disagreement
* Certainty, doubt
* Assumptions
* Evaluations

A few examples:

1. This is in agreement with Jones (2009), who observes that…..
2. The study has a number of limitations. These include……
3. This study successfully highlights the need for…
4. Smith (2008) refutes the notion of…..
5. The research was successful to the extent that it has enabled us to gain insight into…
6. The author appears to assume that…. The assumption appears to be that….
7. A cautious interpretation of these results might lead us to conclude that….
8. The implications of these results are unambiguous.
9. This interpretation is based upon the unfounded belief that…..
10. This observation is consistent with that of Kirby (2009), who stated that….

Extracted and adapted from: Brandt, C. (2009). *Read, Research and Write. Academic skills for ESL students in Higher Education*. London: Sage Study skills.

Many more examples are available in the Academic Phrasebank: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

**How to use gathered literature in an assignment**

**The importance of including sufficient detail about the source of evidence:**

**Example 1 : Being clear about the source of the evidence:**

1. The Waterlow tool is the most commonly used pressure-ulcer, risk-assessment tool in palliative care inpatient settings (McGill & Chaplin, 2002).

*Here, it is not clear whether the quotation is McGill and Chaplin’s opinion or a discussion from a piece of research.*

1. In a survey of over 100 inpatient palliative care units, the Waterlow tool was reported by 71% of respondents as being the most commonly used pressure-ulcer, risk-assessment tool in palliative care inpatient settings (McGill & Chaplin, 2002).

*Here, it is clearer that Mc Gill and Chaplin are discussing a piece of quantitative research.*

**Example 2: Differentiating between research and a literature review:**

1. A study by Pellard (2006) refutes the previous comment. This study looked at two studies, which explored how children adapt after an acute burn injury. They both concluded that the parents had a fundamental role in the child’s ability to cope with the burn (Beard et al., 1989; Orr et al., 1989).

*Here, the word “study” is too vague.*

1. A literature review by Pellard (2006) refutes the previous comment. This review discussed two studies, which explored how children adapt after an acute burn injury. They both concluded that the parents had a fundamental role in the child’s ability to cope with the burn (Beard et al., 1989; Orr et al., 1989).

*Here, we now know that Pellard carried out a literature review…but is there enough detail about the type of studies reviewed by Pellard?*

**Example 3: Providing sufficient information about the type of study:**

1. In a study by Carter et al. (2007), it was found that patients who had acquired cellulitis in the community and had been admitted to hospital were positive about their hospital stay, but they expressed anxiety about secondary infections, frequent bed moves, noise and overcrowding.
2. In a qualitative study by Carter et al. (2007), 24 discharged patients, who had been previously admitted to hospital with community-acquired cellulitis, were interviewed about their experiences in secondary care. It was found that they were positive about their hospital stay, but they expressed anxiety about secondary infections, frequent bed moves, noise and overcrowding.

*Here, more detail is provided about how the results were reached.*

**Example 4: Reporting similar conclusions from many research studies.**

1. Women are more anxious than men before coronary artery bypass graft surgery. Many studies suggest this finding.

*Here, insufficient information about the evidence is given.*

1. Studies have shown that women are more anxious than men before coronary artery bypass graft surgery (Koivula et al., 2002; Blumenthal et al., 2003; Keresztes et al., 2003; Phillips Bute et al., 2003).

*Here, breadth of reading is demonstrated.*

**Comparing and contrasting authors’ views in the literature:**

**Example 1: Exploring in what way views are similar and in what way something new is added to the discussion:**

Andersen et al. (1992) defined urinary incontinence as “the involuntary loss of urine that is a social or hygienic problem” whereas the International Continence Society’s definition of urinary incontinence is “the complaint of any involuntary leakage of urine” (Abrams et al., 2003). Although both authors agree about the involuntary nature of urinary incontinence, the definition by Abrams et al. (2003) does not indicate the need for the loss of urine to cause either “social or hygienic problems”.

**Example 2: Exploring how authors’ views differ:**

There are some discrepancies between the recommended fluid intake for an adult. Gray (2001) recommends a fluid intake of 2,000-2, 5000ml to promote voiding. In contrast, Waugh and Grant (2006) suggest an average intake of 1, 200-1, 500ml of fluid daily.

**Example 3: Discussing literature in chronological order:**

1. There are numerous documents with which student nurses should be familiar, such as the Guidelines for Records and Record Keeping (NMC, 2002). Dowset (2002) suggests that nurses’ professional education will help them to appreciate the legalities and importance of accurate data collection. However, Foster and Moore (1999) disagree, since their study found that nurses do not document wound care accurately or in accordance with the NMC guidelines.

*Here, several authors’ views are being considered but the historical viewpoint is not accurately discussed. This leads to the discussion making little sense as Foster and Moore (1999) could not have disagreed with something that had not yet been written.*

1. Foster and Moore’s (1999) study found that nurses did not document wound care accurately or in accordance with professional guidelines. There are numerous documents with which student nurses must be familiar, in this case Guidelines for Records and Record Keeping (NMC, 2002). In the same year as publication of these guidelines, Dowsett (2002) suggests that nurses’ professional education will help them to appreciate the legalities and importance of accurate data collection.

Slightly adapted from Duffy K et al. (2009) Academic writing: using literature to demonstrate critical analysis. *Nursing Standard, 23 (47)*, 35-40.

**How to develop an academic argument (or a discussion) in an essay**

**What** is an argument?

The main features of an argument are about considering different points of view, comparing and contrasting these and discussing the strengths and weaknesses, or positives and negatives of each one. An argument uses *evidence to support a claim* and provides *reasons* for this (Keeling, Chapman & Williams, 2010).

**Why** do you need to be able to do this?

There are different reasons, but the main one for you will be to *demonstrate your understanding of a subject* and *make judgements* about it (Price & Harrington, 2010). You will need to do this in many assignments. You may also be required to *demonstrate your strategic thinking* e.g. for case studies, reflective accounts. Another reason may be to examine professional and/or ethical dilemmas to *verify that you can grasp the issues and processes* *that will help you in clinical situations* (Price & Harrington, 2010).

**How** do you present an argument?

This depends on what you are being asked to do, or what you feel meets the requirements best.

There is the ‘inductive or balanced’ approach, where both sides of the argument are put forward, without you putting forward your opinion until the end. Gillett, Hammond and Martala (2009, p.138) present this in an easy to follow way:

* *Introduce* the argument to the reader (e.g. why it is relevant).
* *Reasons against* the argument (state the position, evidence and reasons).
* *Reasons in favour* of the argument (state the position, evidence and reasons).
* After *summarising* both sides, *state your point of view and explain why.*

A second approach to presenting an argument or making a case is the ‘deductive or persuasive’ approach, where you state your point of view and then set out to convince the reader, with good evidence, that you are right:

* Briefly *introduce* the topic and *state your viewpoint*.
* *Explain* what you plan to demonstrate or establish.
* *Provide reasons against* the case you are making, using evidence and examples.
* *Provide reasons in favour* of the case you are makingusing evidence and examples.
* The conclusion *restates your position* and its importance.

The essay should be coherent and flow logically. Make sure each paragraph is used to advance your argument. For example: state the **position/point,** provide an **explanation,** supporting **evidence**,and an **example** and **link** back to the question/argument/case being presented **(PEEEL).** Link also from the last paragraph to the next.

Examples of useful phrases to introduce points or explanations and help you build a logical argument/discussion (for more examples, see list of linking words and Academic Phrasebank):

* There are several reasons why…
* Firstly,
* Secondly,
* Furthermore,
* This is because….
* Consequently,
* Finally,

**Who?** Read widely around the subject to see **who** has written on the topic you are discussing. When you have a good **breadth** of reading to consider, pick the leading authors in the field and read some of their work in **depth.** Are there people who have presented different definitions and viewpoints on the subject?

**When?**

On this issue, consider the most recent material on the topic, as well as how far back in time you need to look for information. You may also need to be aware, if and how, it has changed over time.

Planning is really key, as you will most likely have more than one assignment at a time to work on. Set yourself a timeline for searching the databases, journals, books and relevant sources of literature, and gathering the information ready to read – this takes time. Remember to re-read the guidelines about planning your essay.

**Where?** Read and write wherever you like – but do it!!

Good luck in developing your critical writing and academic arguments.

**References**

Gillett, A. Hammond, A. & Martala, M. (2009). *Successful Academic Writing.* Harlow: Pearson-Longman.

Keeling, J. Chapman, H. & Williams, J. (2010). *How to write well. A guide for Health and Social Care Students.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Price, B. & Harrington, A. (2010). *Critical Thinking and Writing for Nursing Students*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

**See article:** Bedford, S. & Jones, E. (2014). Should practitioners override patient choices? *Nursing Times, 110* (41),15-16. Retrieved from <http://ud7ed2gm9k.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rfr_id=info%3Asid%2Fsummon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Ajournal&rft.genre=article&rft.atitle=Should+practitioners+override+patient+choices%3F&rft.jtitle=Nursing+times&rft.au=Bedford%2C+Simone&rft.au=Jones%2C+Elaine&rft.date=2014-10-08&rft.issn=0954-7762&rft.volume=110&rft.issue=41&rft.spage=15&rft_id=info%3Apmid%2F26012050&rft.externalDocID=26012050&paramdict=en-UK>