

Assignment Construction



Types of Academic Writing

There are four main types of academic writing

1. Descriptive
2. Analytical
3. Persuasive
4. Critical

Each of these types of writing have specific language features and purposes



Integrating types of academic writing

In many academic texts you will need to use more than one type. For example, in an empirical thesis you may be required to use all four types of academic writing.

Critical Writing

- you will use critical writing in the literature review to show where there is a gap or opportunity in the existing research

Descriptive Writing

- the methods section will be mostly descriptive to summarise the methods used to collect and analyse information

Empirical Research

Descriptive & Analytical Writing

- the results section will be mostly descriptive and analytical as you report on the data you collected

Analytical & Persuasive Writing

- the discussion section is more analytical, as you relate your findings back to your research questions, and also persuasive, as you propose your interpretations of the findings.

Descriptive

The simplest type of academic writing is descriptive. Its purpose is to provide facts or information. An example would be a summary of an article or reporting on the results of an experiment.

The kinds of instructions for a purely descriptive assignment include:

identify

report

record

summarise

define

Analytical

It's rare for a university-level text to be purely descriptive. Most academic writing is also analytical. Analytical writing includes descriptive writing, but you also re-organise the facts and information you describe into categories, groups, parts, types or relationships.

Sometimes, these categories or relationships are already part of the discipline, sometimes you will create them specifically for your text. For example, if you're comparing two theories, you might break your comparison into several parts, such as: how each theory deals with social context, how each theory deals with language learning, and how each theory can be used in practice.

The kinds of instructions for an analytical assignment include:

analyse

compare

contrast

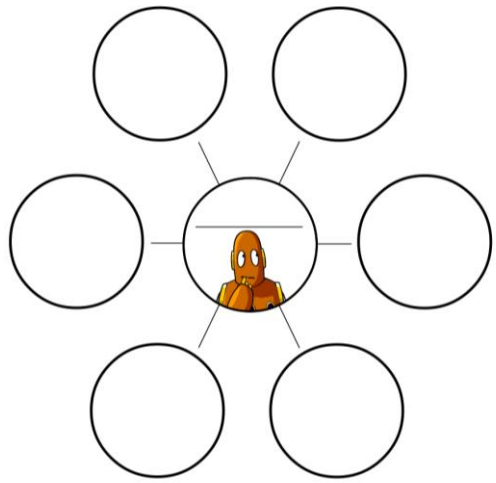
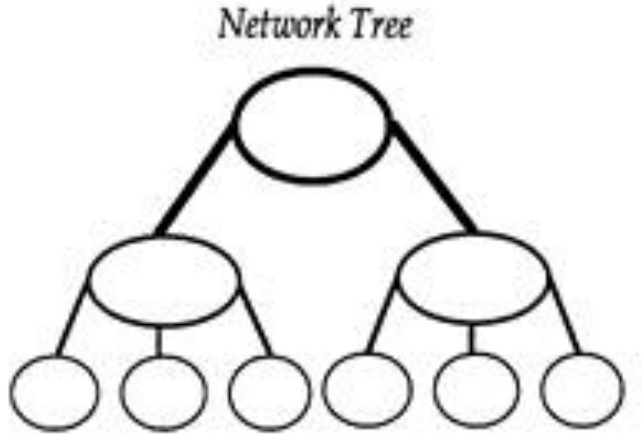
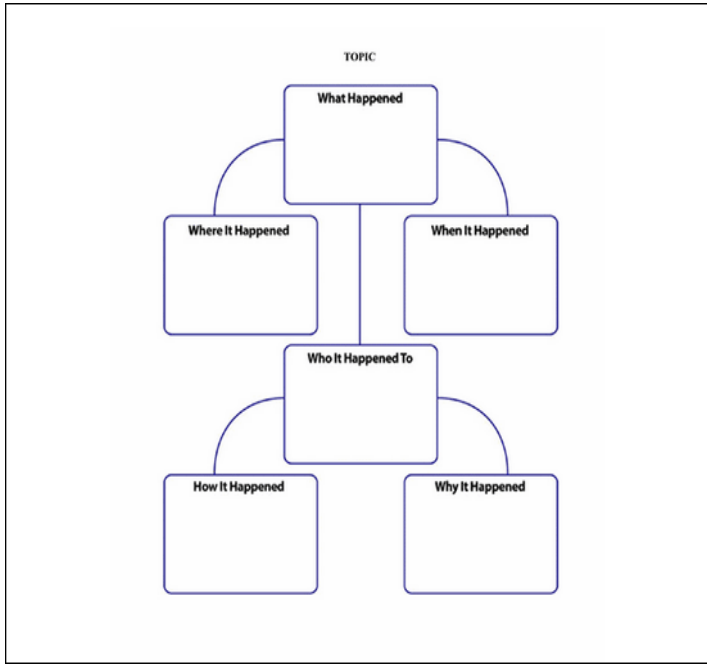
relate

examine

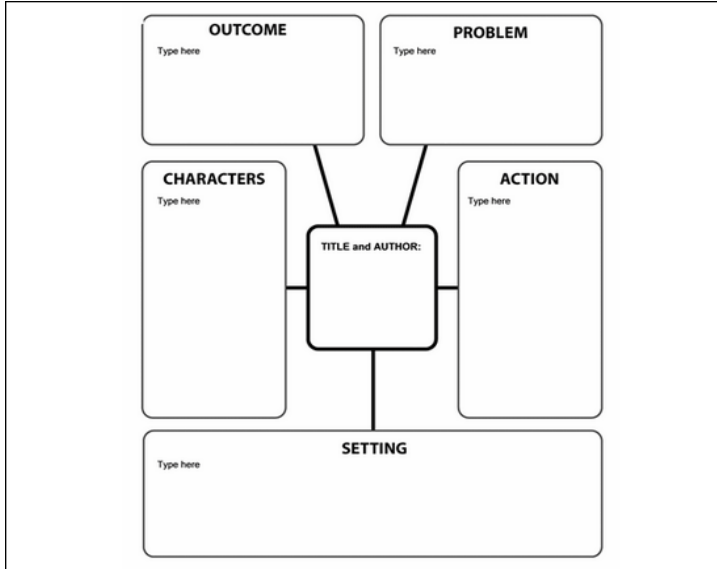
To make your writing more analytical:

- spend plenty of time planning. Brainstorm the facts and ideas, and try different ways of grouping them, according to patterns, parts, similarities and differences. You could use colour-coding, flow charts, tree diagrams or tables.
- create a name for the relationships and categories you find. For example, advantages and disadvantages.
- build each section and paragraph around one of the analytical categories.
- make the structure of your paper clear to your reader, by using topic sentences and a clear introduction.





Brainstorming



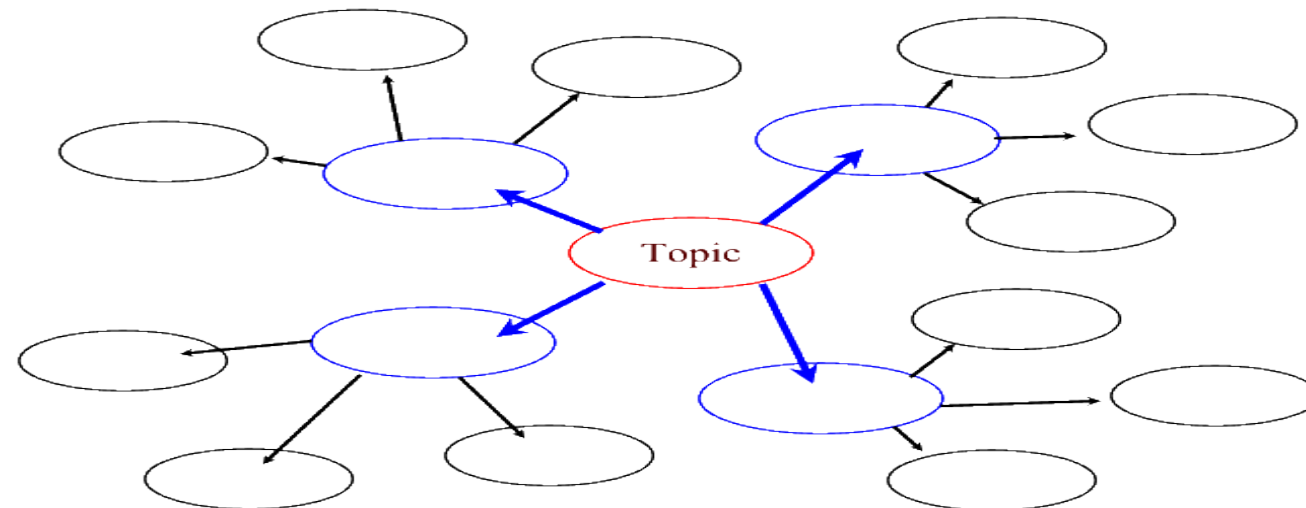
Brainstorming exercise (Descriptive & Analytical)

Group Activity

The purpose of a Christian education would not be merely to make men and women pious Christians: a system which aimed too rigidly at this end alone would become only obscurantist. A Christian education must primarily teach people to be able to think in Christian categories.

T. S. Eliot

In your own words describe what an education at Avondale College gives you compared to an education from a secular institute.



Persuasive

In most academic writing, you are required to go at least one step further than analytical writing, to persuasive writing. Persuasive writing has all the features of analytical writing (that is, information plus re-organising the information), with the addition of your own point of view. Most essays are persuasive, and there is a persuasive element in at least the discussion and conclusion of a research article.

Points of view in academic writing can include an argument, a recommendation, interpretation of findings or evaluation of the work of others. In persuasive writing, each claim you make needs to be supported by some evidence, for example a reference to research findings or published sources.

The kinds of instructions for a persuasive assignment include: argue, evaluate, discuss, take a position.

argue

evaluate

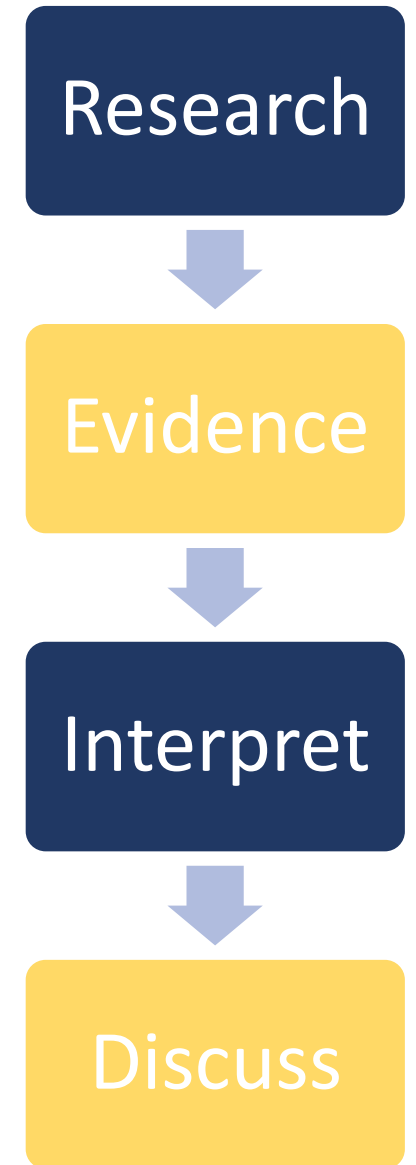
discuss

take a position

establish

To help reach your own point of view on the facts or ideas:

- read some other researchers' points of view on the topic. Who do you feel is the most convincing?
- look for patterns in the data or references. Where is the evidence strongest?
- list several different interpretations. What are the real-life implications of each one? Which ones are likely to be most useful or beneficial? Which ones have some problems?
- discuss the facts and ideas with someone else. Do you agree with their point of view?

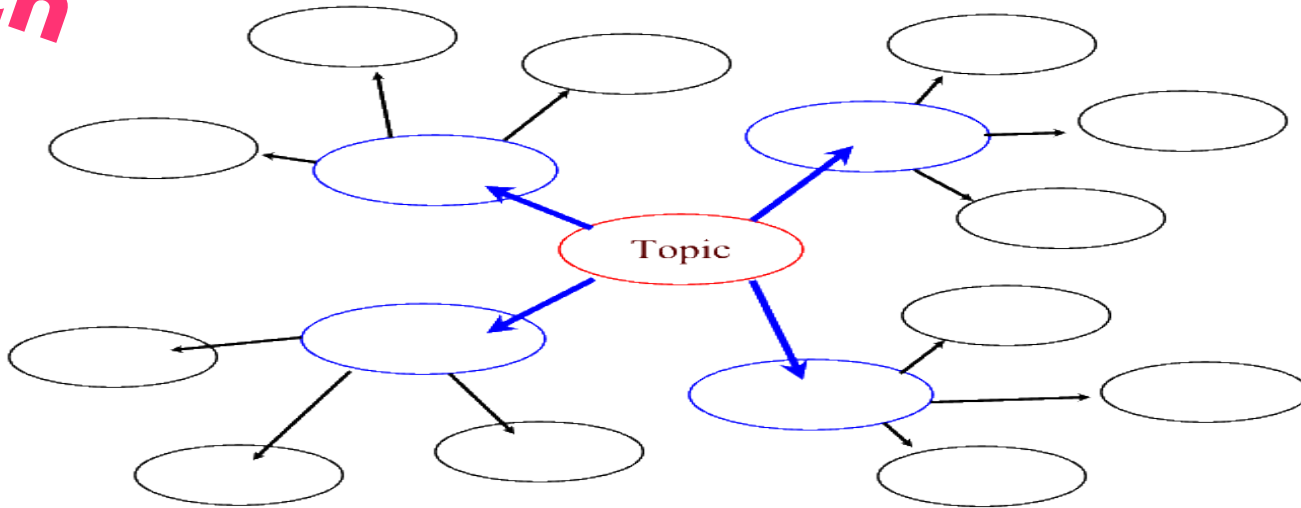


Exercise – reaching your own point of view

Group Activity



Research



Discuss

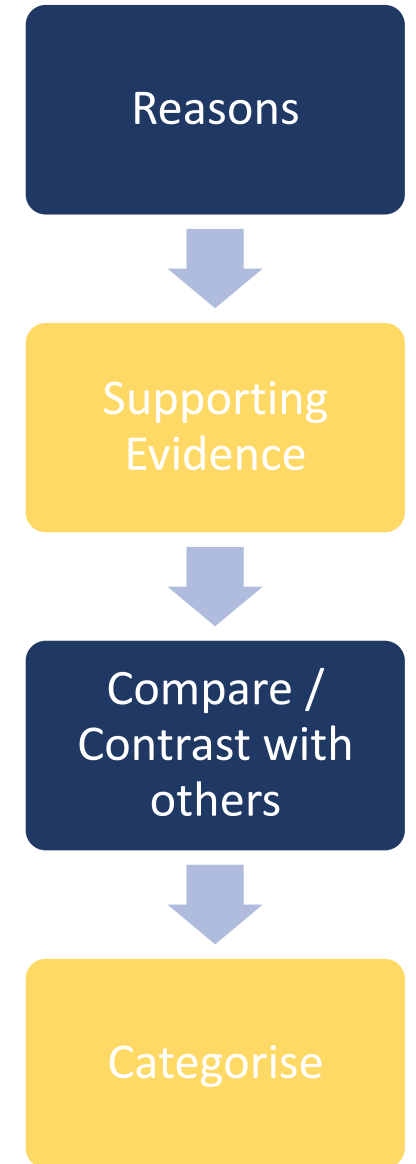
Evidence



interpret

To develop your persuasive argument:

- list the different reasons for your point of view
- think about the different types and sources of evidence which you can use to support your point of view
- consider different ways that your point of view is similar to, and different from, the points of view of other researchers
- look for various ways to break your point of view into parts. For example, cost effectiveness, environmental sustainability, scope of real-world application.

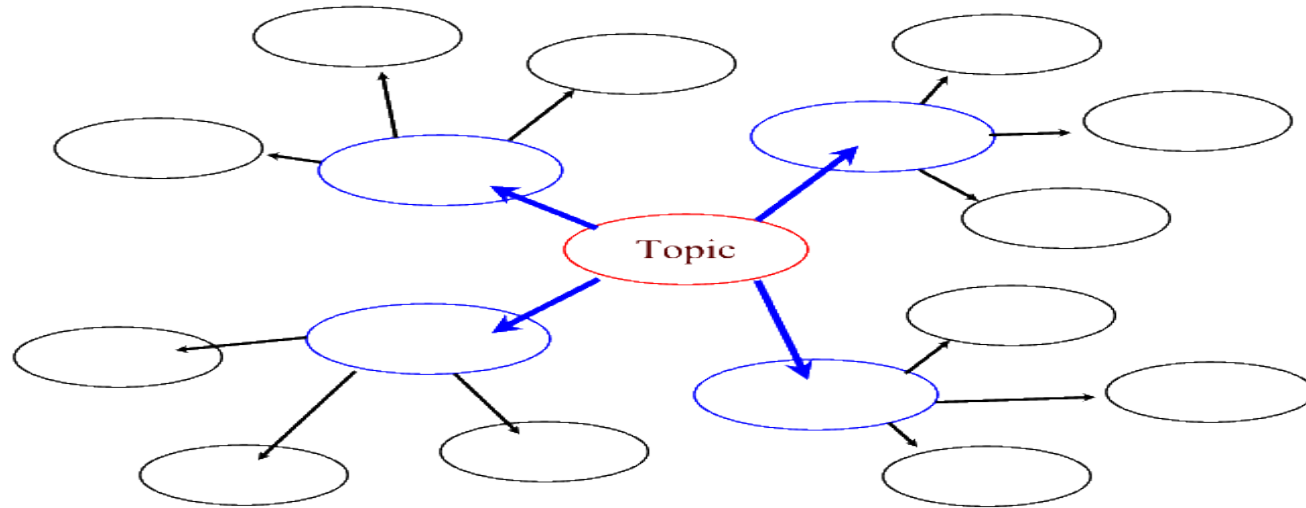


Exercise – developing your argument - being persuasive

Group Activity



Reason



Compare & Contrast

Support



categorise

To present your argument make sure:

- your text develops a coherent argument where all the individual claims work together to support your overall point of view
- your reasoning for each claim is clear to the reader
- your assumptions are valid
- you have evidence for every claim you make
- you use evidence that is convincing and directly relevant.



Critical

Critical writing is common for research, postgraduate and advanced undergraduate writing. It has all the features of persuasive writing, with the added feature of at least one other point of view.

While persuasive writing requires you to have your own point of view on an issue or topic, critical writing requires you to consider at least two points of view, including your own.

For example, you may explain a researcher's interpretation or argument and then evaluate the merits of the argument, or give your own alternative interpretation.

Examples of critical writing

Examples of critical writing assignments include a critique of a journal article, or a literature review that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of existing research.

The kinds of instructions for critical writing include: critique, debate, disagree, evaluate.

critique

debate

disagree

evaluate

review

You need to:

- accurately summarise all or part of the work. This could include identifying the main interpretations, assumptions or methodology.
- have an opinion about the work. Appropriate types of opinion could include pointing out some problems with it, proposing an alternative approach that would be better, and/or defending the work against the critiques of others
- provide evidence for your point of view. Depending on the specific assignment and the discipline, different types of evidence may be appropriate, such as logical reasoning, reference to authoritative sources and/or research data.

Summarise
accurately



Have an
opinion



Provide
evidence

CRITICAL

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CRITICAL THINKING

is a manner of thinking that employs curiosity, creativity, skepticism, analysis, and logic, where:

Curiosity means wanting to learn,

Creativity means viewing information from multiple perspectives,

Skepticism means maintaining a “trust but verify” mind-set,

Analysis means systematically examining and evaluating evidence, and

Logic means reaching well-founded conclusions.



CRITICAL

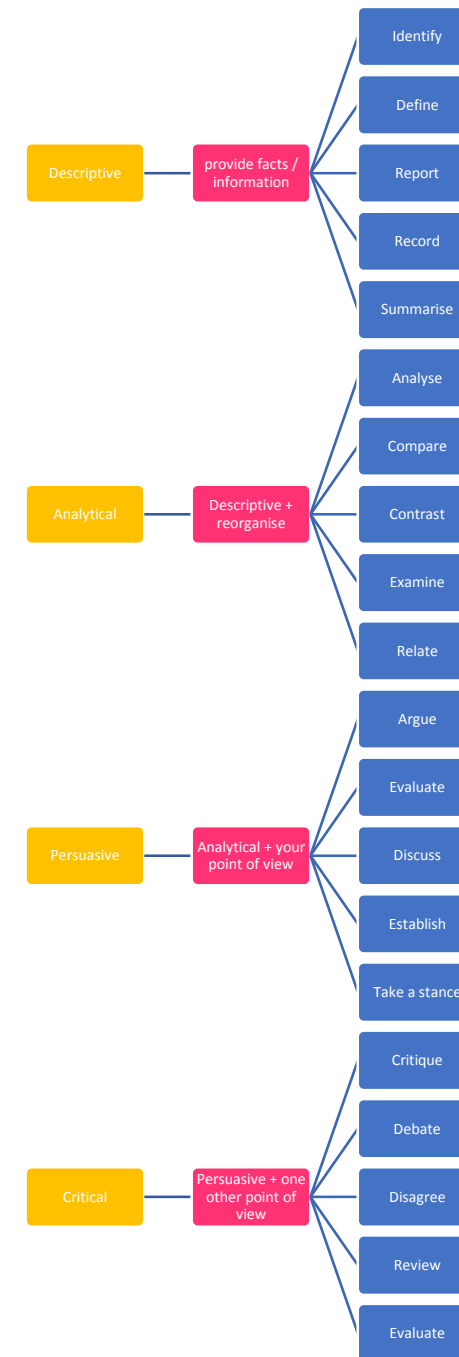
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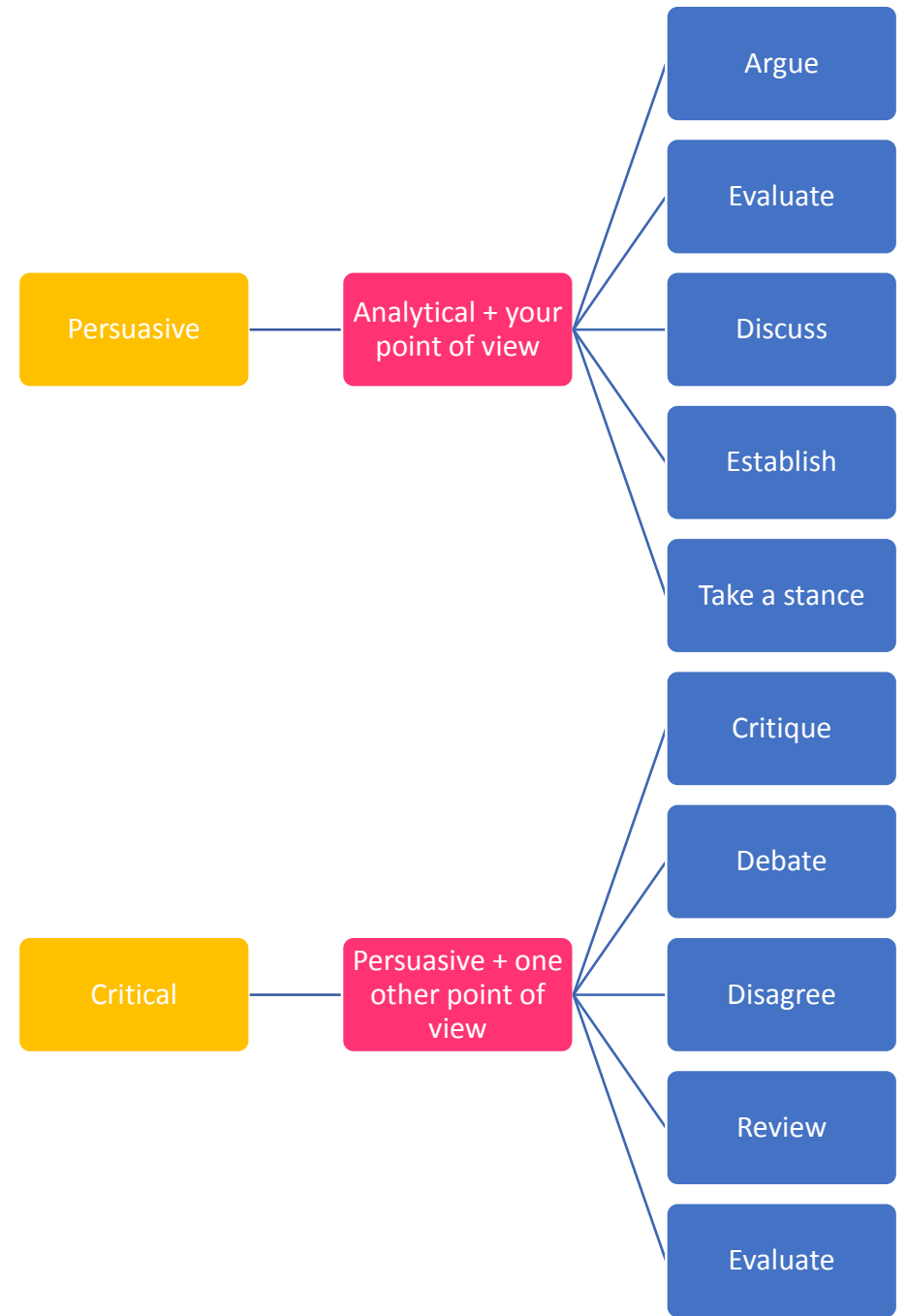
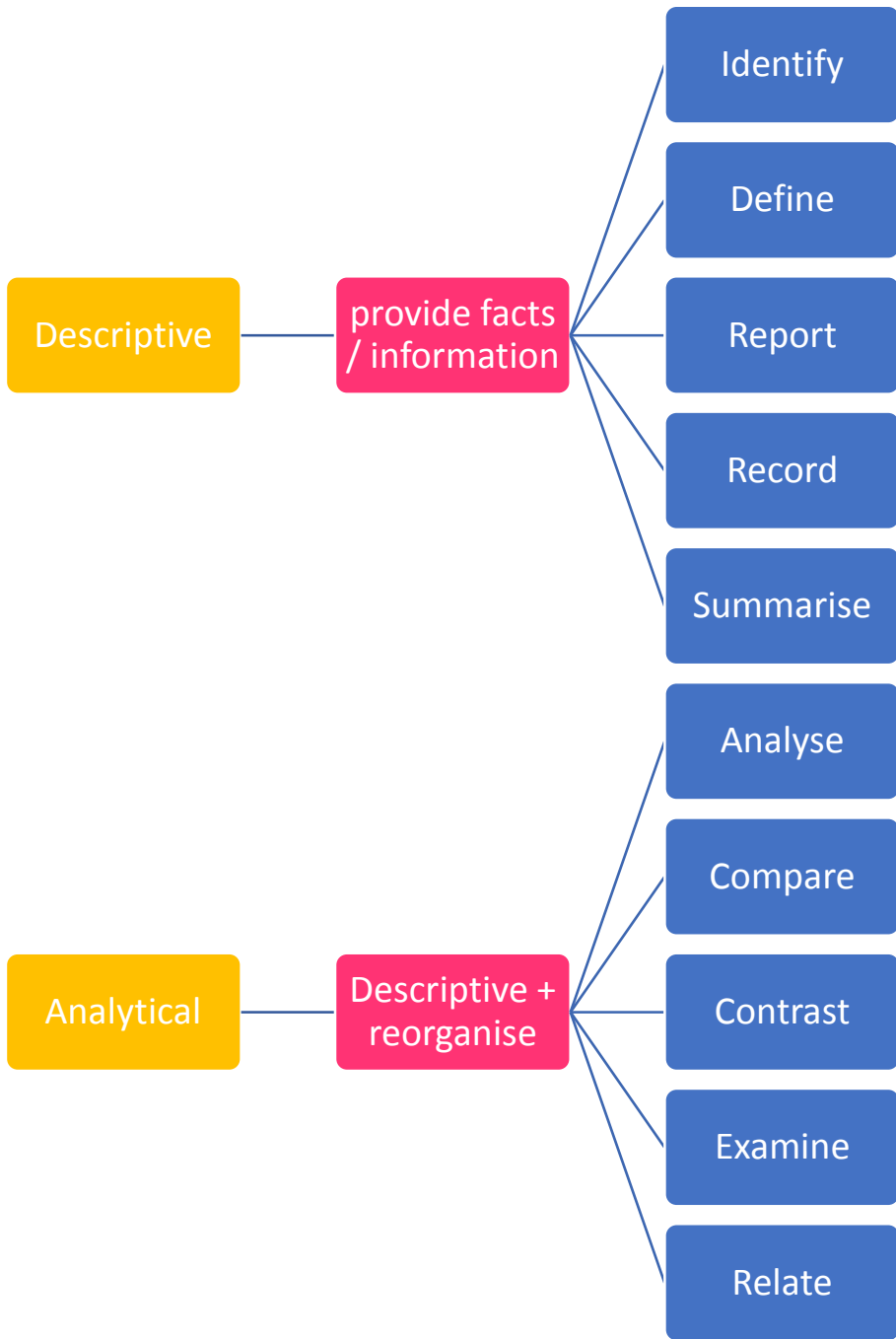
Critical writing requires strong writing skills. You need to thoroughly understand the topic and the issues. You need to develop an essay structure and paragraph structure that allows you to analyse different interpretations and develop your own argument, supported by evidence.

Summary

There are four main types of academic writing

1. Descriptive
2. Analytical
3. Persuasive
4. Critical





THE END

