

The Secret to Good Academic Essay Writing

Dr Paul O'Callaghan BSc, HDipEd, BaccPhil, DECAP
 Honorary Lecturer, Queen's University, Belfast
 Visiting Lecturer, Tangaza University College

Passing or Failing an Essay

Pass/Fail Marks for 28 MA Students in Elective Module 2015

□ Students who Failed □ Students who Passed

Example of why a student failed

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) first appeared in the DSM-III in 1980. The impetus for the development of this diagnostic category arose primarily from the need to account for the characteristic array of symptoms displayed by Vietnam veterans in the United States, and as such PTSD was conceptualized around traumatized adults. However, since that time there has been increasing recognition that children, too, can develop severe and debilitating reactions to traumatization.

Kaminer, D., Seedat, S., & Stein, D. (2005). Post-traumatic stress disorder in children. *World Psychiatry*, 4(2), 121-125

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Excerpt from assignment on PTSD written by MA Student, Tangaza University, September 2015

Five Elements of Effective Writing

- Write critically
- Use your sources correctly
- Use your own voice
- Write for your reader
- Write like an expert

Godfrey, J. (2011). *Writing for university*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Element 1: Critical Writing

“Being critical in academic work means looking at ideas, theories and evidence with a questioning attitude rather than taking them at face value. It means analysing things in detail, finding weaknesses and strengths and from your analysis deciding what you think and why” (Godfrey, 2011, p. 17).

Critical versus Non-Critical Writing - Spot the Difference

Sample A	Sample B
<p>Lai et al. (2013) discuss the diverse nature of autism spectrum disorder. Geschwind and Levitt (2007) believe that there are “many autisms”. Wing and Gould (1979) argue for a triad of impairments that all children with autism suffer from.</p>	<p>It is now well established that autism involves impairment in social and communication skills (Wing & Gould, 1979). However, research indicates (see, Lai et al., 2013) that there is a range in the degree of these difficulties that individual children with autism can present with.</p>

Top Tips on Critical Writing

- Read with a critical eye i.e. check for inconsistencies, research limitations, alternative opinions as you read a text
- When you write make sure you evaluate evidence/viewpoints/opinions by giving reasons for your evaluation



Group-work Task: Critique the Following Research on Social Stories

In the first published study evaluating Social Stories, Swaggart et al. (1995) used an AB [pre-post] design to measure their effectiveness in improving the behaviour of three primary school children. All three responded positively to the intervention. The two children who received a Social Story describing sharing and parallel play behaviour voluntarily shared toys more and were less aggressive in play sessions, while the appropriate greeting behaviour of the other child increased and inappropriate touching decreased in comparison to baseline levels (Swaggart et al., 1995).

Styles (2011, p. 418)

Element 2: Use Sources Correctly and Effectively

“When using [paraphrasing or summarising] a source you must either change just about *everything* (except key terms) or change *nothing* and use it as a quotation. A ‘half and half’ approach is not acceptable in academic work” (Godfrey, 2011, p. 49).

Two Ways to Use Sources Correctly and Effectively

Quotation

- Using the exact words of the source
- Example: “neither executive dysfunctions nor mentalising deficits can easily account for special abilities...shown by some children with autism”, (Birch & Frederickson, 2015, p208).

Paraphrasing or Summarising

- Paraphrasing or summarising the research
- Example: Birch and Fredrickson (2015) argue that the savant abilities of autistic children cannot be fully explained by either the executive dysfunction or the mentalising deficits hypotheses.

Top Tips on Using Quotations

- Using sparing and only if necessary
- Use correct punctuation e.g. As Lai et al. (2013) state, ‘...there are many autisms’
- Don’t make any changes to the wording or punctuation of the actual quotation
- Always comment on your quotation



Correct the Following Quotations

- Rutter (2013) believes that ‘research up to the turn of the century had led to an acceptance that autism constituted a...neurodevelopmental disorder’ (p. 1749).
- Birch and Frederickson (2015) state that ‘Autism was first described by Kanner...in 1943...’ (p. 200)



Paraphrasing and Summarising Examples

Paraphrasing Example

• Article 37 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) prohibits the use of torture or any other painful, degrading or humiliating punishment or treatment with children and young people.

Summarising Examples

• The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) and the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009) both protect the rights of the child from physical and psychological harm.

Tips on How to Summarise a Text

- Reverse the order of information
- Use a different sentence structure
- Use synonyms e.g. feelings → emotions, ban → prohibit, state → claim
- Use different word forms e.g. autistic children → children with autism
- Always remember to reference!!!



Golden Rules of Referencing and Quoting



IF YOU DO NOT REFERENCE ANOTHER AUTHOR THAN THE POINT YOU ARE MAKING IS IN YOUR OWN WORDS AND IS YOUR OWN OPINION/CONTRIBUTION



IF YOU DO NOT USE QUOTATION MARKS THEN THE TEXT MUST BE WRITTEN IN OWN WORDS AND YOU MUST GIVE THE SOURCE AND THE YEAR

Group-work Task: Summarise and Paraphrase the Following Passage

You must not do anything, or allow someone else to do anything that you have good reason to believe will put the health, safety or wellbeing of a service user in danger. This includes both your own actions and those of other people. You should take appropriate action to protect the rights of children and vulnerable adults if you believe they are at risk, including following national and local policies.

Health and Care Professions Council (2012)