

# Tips for Analysis Essays



## What is Analysis (sometimes called critical analysis)?

When you critically analyze a text you make evaluations (positive and negative) of the text. You judge the text based on specific criteria like the relevance, coherence, logic, validity, findings, or persuasiveness of the text. Often the assignment instructions will specify what you should focus on.

## Tips for Analyzing Scholarly Peer Reviewed Articles:

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### Tip #1: Make sure to include both summary and critical commentary.

Your critical analysis of a scholarly article should combine some summary with critical commentary.

- You might **summarize**: the author's thesis statement or overarching claim, minor claims, and/or evidence.
- You should not only summarize: **you should also evaluate the author's claims**. You might critique: the author's reasoning, evidence, and interpretation of facts, statistics and data.

**Tip #2: Evaluate the author's argument by considering questions** like the ones below. As you read, pause and examine the effectiveness of the source.

- What are some strengths of the article?
- What are some problems/limitations/weaknesses with the author's evidence?
- Are there any points the author makes that aren't logical?
- Does the author overlook any important factors he/she should consider?
- What assumptions does the author make?
- How do the author's claims connect to claims of other authors looking at the same issue?
- How does the author's writing style and word choice affect his/her argument?
- How does the author establish credibility?
- What is the author's intended purpose?

Not all of these questions will be relevant. Choose a few to focus on.

**Tip #3: Choose a few key points about the source to write in your analysis essay.** Avoid listing all of your observations about the text. Instead choose just a few critiques and weave them into an argument about the source.

**Tip #4: You will most likely need to read/examine the source you are analyzing more than once.** If you are reading a complex article, you should not expect to fully understand the article the first time. As you read, you might want to annotate the text by highlighting key ideas. You may also want to summarize the author's main points. Re-read the text until you're able to:

- Understand the author's thesis/claim
- Recognize the author's main points that support the thesis
- Understand concepts that are essential to the author's argument (terms/concepts from a specific field, e.g. psychology terms)
- Identify weaknesses in the author's argument



# Analysis Essay Outline

## A Potential Outline for a Critical Analysis Essay

### Introduction

- 1. Provide any essential background that is relevant to your thesis statement. Keep your background section narrow: avoid writing about the whole history of your topic.
- 2. State the author's thesis
- 3. Summarize the author's main reasons that support his/her claim
- 4. Include your own thesis (your claim about the work you are analyzing)

*Example thesis about Michael Moore's documentary Sicko:*  
 Moore (2007) relied too heavily on exaggeration and cherry-picked facts which damaged the effectiveness of his argument.

### Analysis Paragraphs

You could have any number of analysis paragraphs.

Each analysis paragraph should present one key idea.

In your analysis paragraphs you will critically evaluate **the effectiveness** of the source. You can evaluate:

- Strengths or weaknesses of the author's claims
- Limitations of the author's evidence
- Perspectives, biases, values, or assumptions that appear to play a role in the author's argument
- The author's organization, writing style, or intended purpose

**Each paragraph should include:**

- 1. **A topic sentence** that evaluates **one key aspect** of the work and connects back to your thesis statement
- 2. **Evidence:** Specific details about the source (quotes, paraphrases, summaries of key ideas). Include sufficient references to the source material.
- 3. **Analysis of the evidence:** Don't assume the evidence speaks for itself. Include critical statements that tell the reader the importance of the evidence (statements that interpret/analyze the material for your reader).

See Tip #2 on reverse

See our "Quote Sandwich" Resource

### Conclusion

Don't just restate what you wrote before.

- 1. Comment on the balance between the article's strengths and weaknesses
- 2. Include some final comment on the value of the source
- 3. Look to the bigger picture in some way (comment on the future of the issue/topic or implications)

*Examples of the bigger picture for Moore's documentary Sicko:*

- How other sources/news sources have addressed the same issue more ethically.
- Why accurate investigative journalism is important for changing public sentiment about health care reform.