



Critical Review

Never Stand Still

The Learning Centre

Critical Review

“Critical” = mode of writing (style)

“Review” = form of writing (genre)



Merriam Webster Dictionary

review *noun* re·view \ri-'vyü\
: an act of carefully looking at or examining the quality or condition of something or someone : examination or inspection

: an act of carefully looking at or examining the quality or condition of something or someone : examination or inspection

: a report that gives someone's opinion about the quality of a book, performance, product, etc.

: a magazine filled mostly with reviews and articles that describe the writer's thoughts or opinions about a subject



Critical Review

Academic source

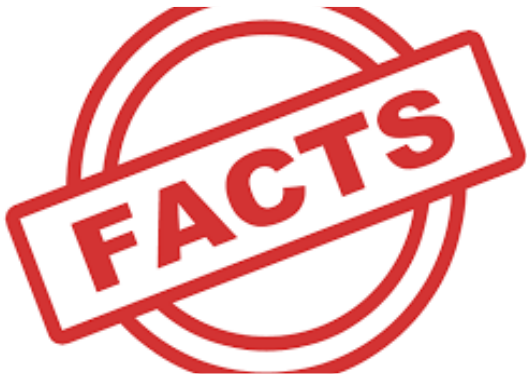
(e.g. academic article, book chapter, etc.)

Your review of that source

(critical, of course...)



Academic Writing Modes



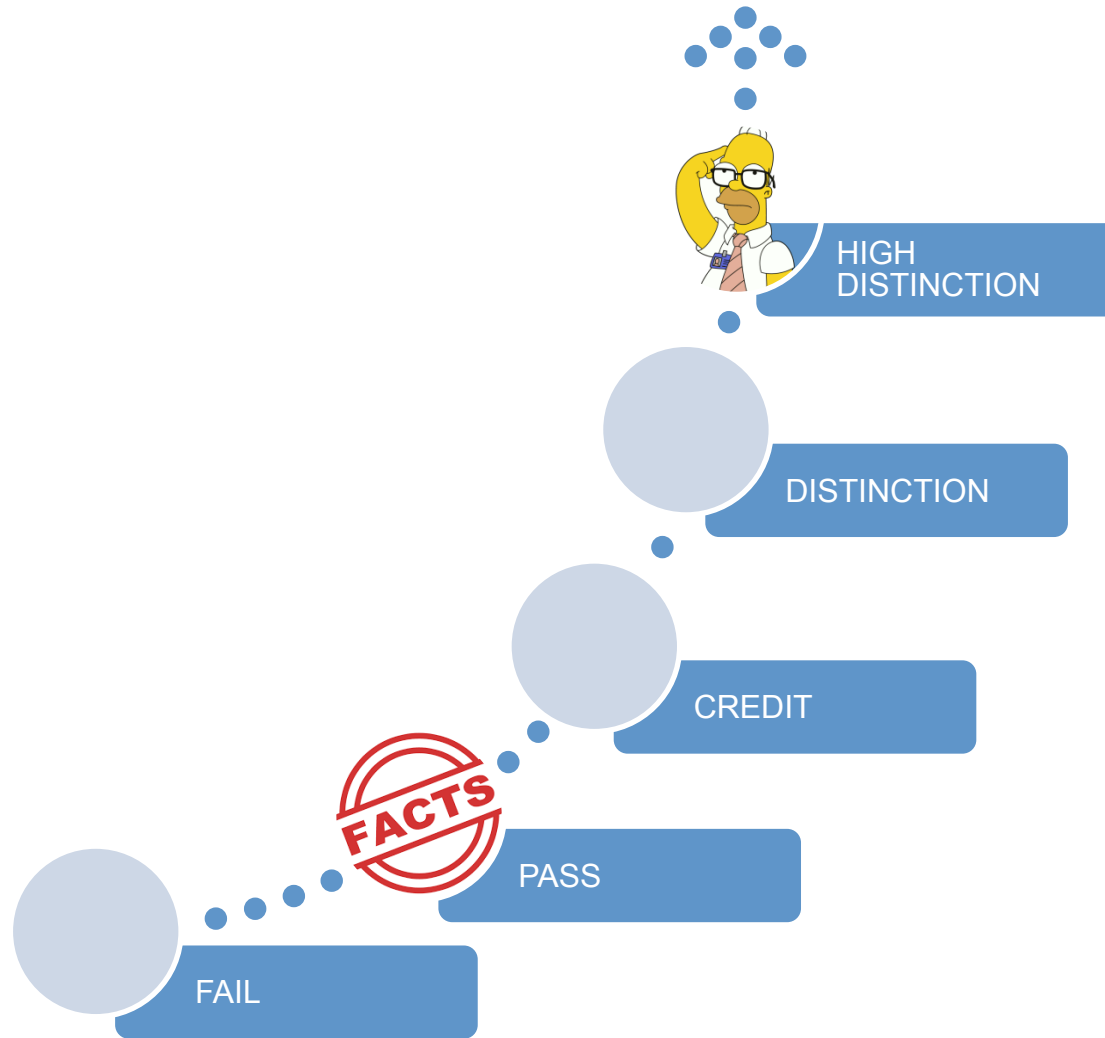
Descriptive



Critical



Reflective



Critical Thinking

Uncritical thinking is:

- Passive
- Aimless
- Gullible, accepting
- Superficial
- *descriptive*

Critical thinking is:

- Active
- Purposeful
- Skeptical, questioning
- In-depth
- *evaluative*



Critical Thinking: Analysis

Analysis (from Ancient Greek ἀναλύω, “I unravel, investigate”)

to verify claims, evidence

to test hypotheses, methods, assumptions

to examine findings, conclusions



Critical Thinking: Synthesis

Synthesis (from Ancient Greek συντίθημι, “to put together, combine”)

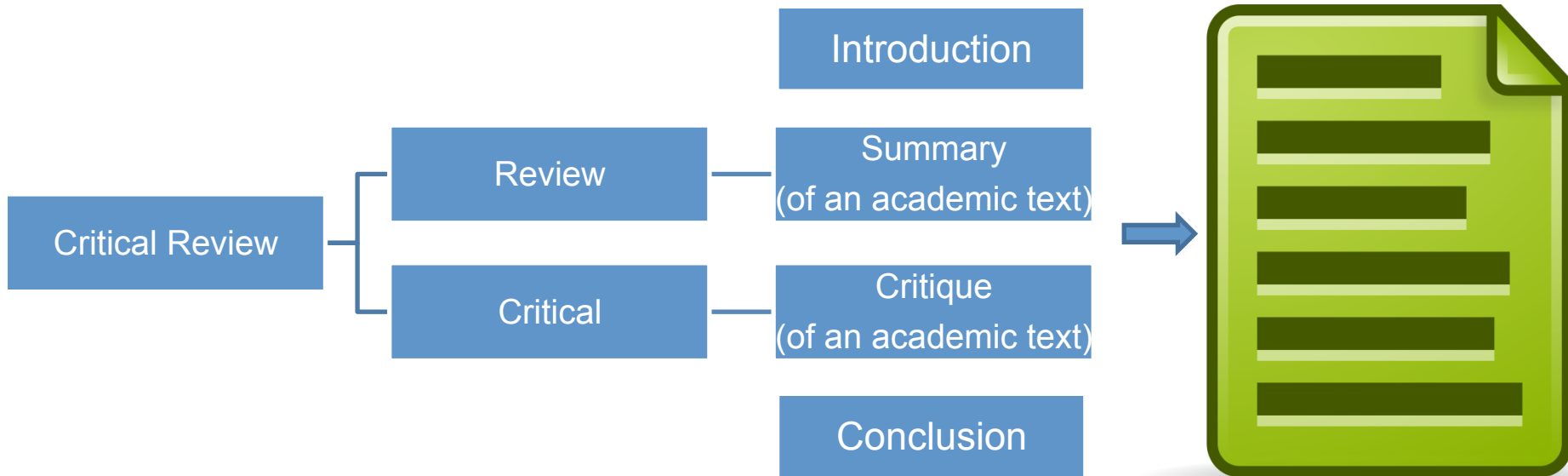
consider wider contexts, consequences, effects,
implications

devise wider applications

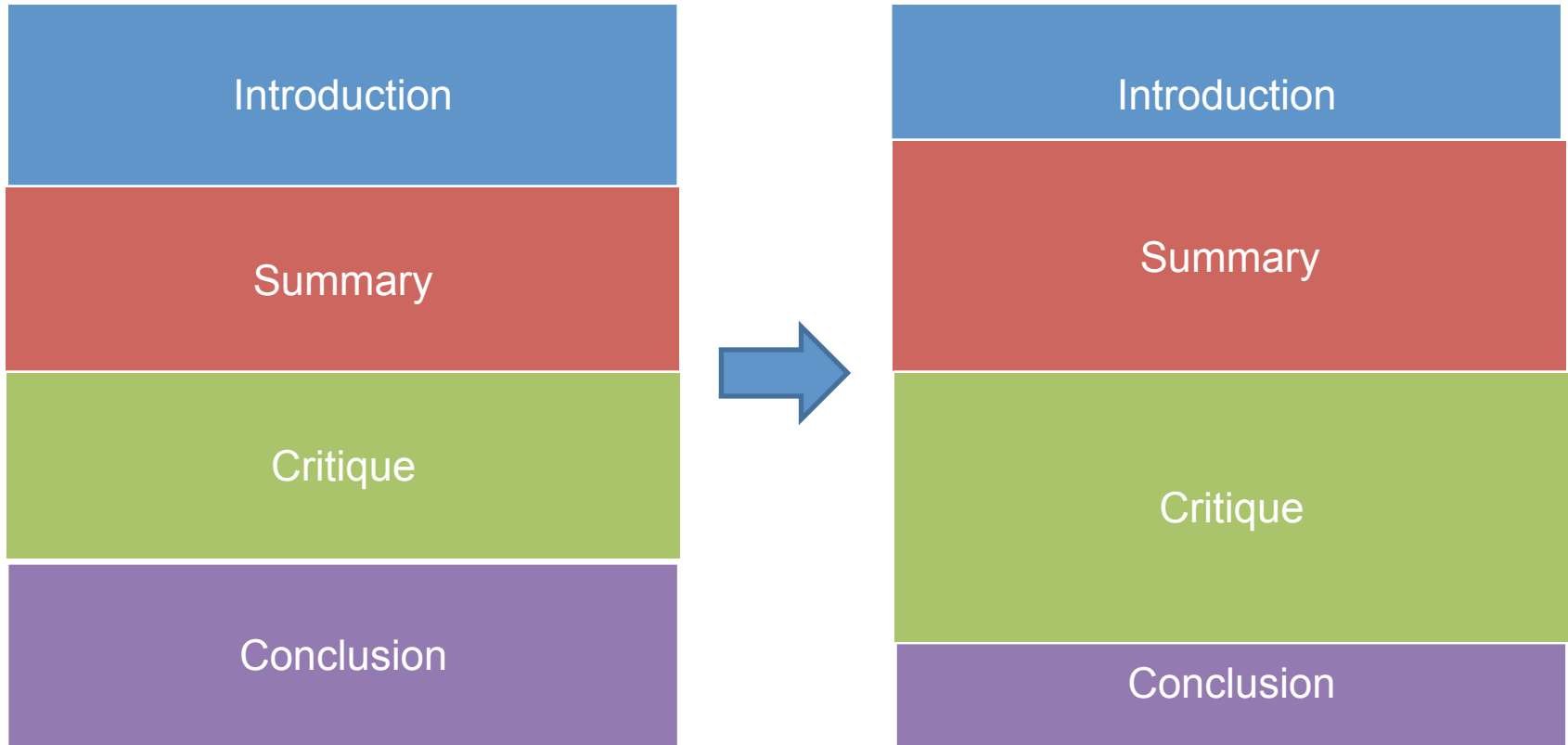
make suggestions for improvement



Critical Review - Structure



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Critical Review – Structure

- Introduction**
- Introducing the text: title and author(s)
 - Short statement of main argument / aim
 - Short assessment / main criticism

- Summary**
- Briefly outlining the text's overall structure / organisation
 - Presenting the main ideas / the ideas relevant to your assignment or project
 - Language: predominantly descriptive; reporting phrases

- Critique**
- Critical evaluation of the text's main / relevant ideas
 - Analysis: criticising argumentation; approach; methodology; findings; conclusions; evidence
 - Synthesis: implications; applications; suggestions for improvement
 - Language: evaluative; contrastive transition signals

- Conclusion**
- Summarising the text's main strengths and weaknesses
 - Restating / qualifying assessment of the text



Critical Writing: example 1

In this article *The Economist* represents the International Monetary Fund as an organisation that had no choice other than to implement the policies it implemented. However, since the Fund had an enormous range of possible courses of action in response to these events, the *Economist's* portrayal is clearly not true.



Critical Writing: example 2

The main shortcoming of this text is the author's complete reliance on personal experiences rather than objective records. For example, on page 325 there is a critical attack on the government's policy towards private schools, but the author offers no data to support the argument he is making.



Critical Writing: example 3

However, Stanton and Bardoni's (1972) research can be questioned in that whilst they carried out an anonymous survey among males under 25 years of age in Vietnam, they left it to the volunteers to define 'flashback' for themselves. This personal definition is clearly unsatisfactory and does not enable comparisons between studies, nor does it allow for an examination of the nature of such 'flashback' reports. Consequently a major variable was not controlled for nor quantified.



Critical Writing

- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>