Learning objectives

After studying this chapter you should be able to:
1. Compare three types of thinking and discuss techniques for sound thinking.
2. Explain the purpose of each part of an academic document and identify the characteristics of an effective argument.
3. Distinguish four common essay genres and describe a process to develop and write a successful argumentative essay.

Academic writers

Academic writers, in their work, read and evaluate what others have said:
- to find out what is already known
- to understand the main arguments being put forward by authoritative writers and scholars in the field
- to analyse ideas in order to verify or critique the existing body of knowledge

It is important for them to think clearly as they solve problems and develop arguments in writing.
**Inductive thinking**

Inductive thinking examines specific information to derive a general principle.

An inductive approach presents and examines items of information in a logical sequence to reach a conclusion.

This conclusion can be in the form of a generalisation based on the evidence.

A generalisation is made by assuming that what is true of all known instances is also true of all unknown instances.

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**Deductive thinking**

Deductive thinking applies general principles to reach specific conclusions.

Using deductive thinking allows you to think by:

- proposing a general or universal statement
- applying the universal statement to a particular case
- reaching a conclusion about the particular case

This type of thinking asks the receiver to accept the original.

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**Lateral thinking**

Lateral thinking acknowledges intuition and unconscious reasoning.

Using lateral thinking allows you to think by:

- recognising dominant polarising ideas
- searching for different ways of looking at things
- relaxing the rigid control of vertical thinking using chance
- analysing the ideas to establish relationships
- determining that the new information is valid and logical
Techniques for sound reasoning

Distinguish facts, opinions, beliefs and prejudice
Form objective opinions
Present advantages and disadvantages
Avoid exaggeration
Check statistics

Structuring the content

As they plan and write, academic writers:
• follow layout guidelines
• apply logic and appropriate order of information
• research in-depth and present a coherent argument
• use correct spelling, grammar and format
• seek and respond to constructive criticism
• re-read, revise, edit and proofread before submitting their completed document

Parts of the document

Introduction
Literature review
Body
Conclusion
Abstract, précis or summary
Developing the argument

Before developing the argument in the body of the paper, thesis or report, a thesis statement is formulated which
• identifies the issue, problem, gap in knowledge or other goal to be addressed in the paper, thesis or report.

The argument that follows is a process of reasoning
• it demonstrates interrelationships between various lines of evidence
• it aims to convince others of the validity of what is being argued.
Problems in developing an argument

Browne and Keeley (2007, p10) state:

‘Critical thinking can be used to either (1) defend or (2) evaluate and revise your initial beliefs . . . Weak-sense critical thinking is the use of critical thinking to defend your current beliefs. Strong-sense critical thinking is the use of the same skills to evaluate all claims and beliefs, especially your own.’

Writing essays

An academic essay is a document with a defined structure—an introduction, a body and a conclusion—that requires the writer to present an argument through reasoning and the use of evidence.
Writing techniques

While there is more than one way of writing a successful essay, the best essays demonstrate the writer's insightfulness, reason and clarity as he/she responds to the set topic.

A writer presents a persuasive, convincing argument by:
- defining the thesis or contention and providing a context clearly in the introduction
- building a case and offering supporting credible evidence to support the thesis statement in the body of the essay
- making links between the original thesis, the evidence and the findings in the conclusion

Language

Clear and objective language should be used throughout the document.

Effective sentence and coherent paragraph construction are important.

Objectivity is based on thinking rather than emotional reaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 23. A few different types of topic sentences organize a paragraph</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific to general</td>
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<tr>
<td>General to specific</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spatial order</td>
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<td>Chronological order</td>
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</table>
Paragraphs

Introductory paragraphs contain the thesis statement
Developing paragraphs develop ideas and concepts:
• begin with a topic sentence
• provide evidence that supports the topic
• analyse, interpret, discuss or explain how the evidence supports the point made in the topic sentence
• end with a concluding sentence that sums up the paragraph or makes the transition or connection to the next paragraph
Transitional paragraphs link ideas and sections in an essay of a developing paragraph
Concluding paragraphs focus on the original premise and synthesise the information presented in the body of the essay

Linking devices

Linking phrases and bridge words form logical connections between ideas and give continuity to the writing
Bridge words are words that create logical bridges between one idea and another
Repetition of key words and phrases can link the sentences in a paragraph
Usually the topic sentence (a signalling device) contains the key words used later in the paragraph

Avoiding plagiarism

The Plagiarism.org website (2011) states:
'All of the following are considered plagiarism:
• turning in someone else's work as your own
• copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
• failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
• giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
• changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
• copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.'
Writing an argumentative essay

A useful strategy to organise your supporting material is:

1st main point
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)

2nd main point
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)

3rd main point
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)

Organising the supporting material

1st main point
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)

2nd main point
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)

3rd main point
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)
- evidence/support (author, referencing details)

Editing

Revising of a paper or thesis requires the writer to consider the overall structure and content of the document.

Editing is the polishing and sharpening of detail in the document, once the writer is satisfied with its overall structure and content.

For revision, the table of contents can be used to initially check that your sections are in logical order, and that you have not left out anything.