

# How to check for critical writing

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## Consider

1. How well is the research question expressed? Is it clear? Or is the writer only stating or describing an area of work, a situation, rather than problematizing and exploring the area and developing a question?
2. Has the author summarised background and contextual work, work by experts and theorists? Has she referred to it? Is she showing contrasts in work and arguments develop by others? Is she analysing the work and drawing out some main points of difference, in terms not just of facts that differ but of conceptualisation, interpretation? Or does she just seem to have noted a list of other experts, produced a summary of the experts' work?
3. Is it clear what methodology or methodologies and what methods she has used in her work? Does she explore how these help her ask her question? Does she mention them in passing, then move on to what has been found, all in a bit of a muddle in the middle of the paragraphs? (Not good!) Does she defend why she chose her methods?
4. When the data is presented, is it a mass of quotations or tables with little commentary? Or are there themes and arguments being drawn out of the data and explored through selective extracts? In quotations from books or interviews, do we see themes and patterns developing, making a contribution to arguments? Do any comments really grow from the data? Or is there a mismatch?
5. In the conclusion, is the whole piece just summed up with a list of what happens in each chapter? Or does the writer draw themes and questions together, explaining how some facts have been discovered, and how the work has contributed to conceptual development - areas of thinking, meaning and argument about the subject?

Wisker, 261-2