

Guide to Critical Thinking in Writing

1. Establish a statement of purpose or a thesis, one that clearly expresses your stand on the issue.
2. Identify key concepts and provide definitions if necessary.
3. Construct a logical trail that explains, supports, expands, and/or delineates your purpose or thesis.
4. Analyze the assumptions upon which you base your argument or discussion.
5. Consider oppositional points of view, weighing them fairly in the course of your discussion.
6. Make sure you have adequately supported your argument with reliable data and evidence.
7. Explain your conclusions explicitly – that is, do not assume that your reader will make the same logical connections you have made. Check that your conclusions logically derive from the evidence you have presented.
8. Explore the implications and significance of your assertions, considering questions such as these: What objections do you anticipate? Whom will your conclusions likely benefit or hinder? What consequences will your conclusion, if generally accepted, provoke?

Assessing Student Critical Thinking Skills

California State University, Chico, Critical Thinking Assessment Project (CTAP):

- identify issues of belief, empirical truth, and logic
- evaluate credibility of sources of information and opinion
- identify necessary or probable assumptions and presuppositions
- recognize the difference between normative and non-normative claims
- identify relevant and irrelevant claims in a given context
- recognize misleading uses of language
- determine when additional information is needed for a given purpose
- construct deductive and inductive arguments
- identify valid and invalid arguments, including fallacies of deduction and induction
- recognize logically equivalent propositions
- critique and construct analogical arguments and explanations
- understand and evaluate causal arguments and explanations
- assess common types of statistical information, generalizations, and reasoning

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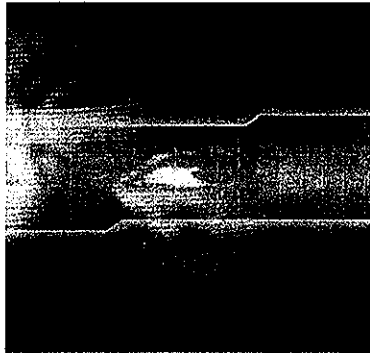
DETAILS OF WIKI ASSIGNMENT ([permalink](#))

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last edited by [Brenda Maxey-Billings](#) on Sunday, 07/13/2008 6:26 PM

ENC 1101 Group Wiki Assignment: [Group Wiki Pages](#) ([.doc](#)) [Version](#)

[Word](#)



Description: For the group writing and presentation assignment of ENC 1101, we'll enter into the realm of writing for the 21st century.

Assignment: Find or *INVENT* a concrete (i.e., non-abstract) term that your audience will be unlikely to recognize. Define the term in an "extended definition" form. Also provide "Technical Instructions" related to your term.

IMPORTANT: *If the instructor can find an extended definition of your term or related technical instructions (on the web or elsewhere), you WILL NOT receive credit! In other words, if "it's been done," then you can't do it again for this assignment.*

Format:

- You must complete the assignment in the form of Wiki pages, in the [Blackboard space](#) provided to your group. Produce at least three separate pages.
- Begin the title of each your wiki pages with the term you are defining.
- Place images to add interest to your pages, and add additional elements to expand and complete the definition.
- Consider that, since you are writing for the web, you must use a "graphic/text" format. Thus, your pages must display strong overall appeal, ease of navigation, visual AND textual interest, grammatical and mechanical correctness, appropriate citations, useful links, and readability.
- Your group must also present your term and definition to the class. You may use images or visual aids (including your Wiki pages) during your presentation, but you should NOT rely upon these aids to carry your presentation.



Instructions: Produce a set of Wiki pages investigating a "technical term" by providing an "extended definition" and developing a set of "technical instructions."

1. Select or invent a term that the average person in your audience does not fully understand.
2. In your wiki, thoroughly define the term in an accessible way for a broad, educated audience.
3. Use several (at least five) of the strategies below to help develop your extended definition.
4. Your group must also "teach" your term and key features of its extended definition to the class in an engaging and informative presentation that uses professional-quality visual aids. You must time your presentation carefully (max. 15 minutes), and your presentation must incorporate audience engagement.

Extended Definition Strategies:

- Provide a "dictionary" definition (required).
- Explore the term's etymology. (required).
- Explore the term's history and background.

- Define by function. Explain what something does or how something works.
- Define by structure. Tell how something is organized or put together.
- Define by analysis. Compare the term to other members of its class and then illustrate the differences. These differences are special characteristics that make the term stand out.
- Provide illustrations or diagrams.
- Provide understandable facts, examples, or anecdotes.
- Provide step-by-step "technical instructions" (required).
- Define by negation. That is, explain what the term does *not* mean. This distinction can sometimes clarify a definition and help a reader to better understand it.

(To critically analyze your term and develop a viable approach to defining it, make sure you understand the strategies above, as listed above and as discussed in class.)

Writing Requirements:



All your wiki pages (both group and individual) should meet the following requirements:

- Address the topic in substantive ways
- Incorporate both textual and graphic elements in visually appealing ways.
- Demonstrate a command of academic prose
- Exhibit absolutely correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and other mechanical elements
- Employ active voice and strong verbs
- Incorporate properly credited source material, both directly quoted and paraphrased
- Include "hyperlinks" where appropriate and useful
- Demonstrate an understanding of analysis and exploration of implications rather than summary

IMPORTANT: Your group's Wiki page(s) should include at least 500 words of ORIGINAL text. (That is, if you quote from sources, make sure you've also included enough of your own writing for evaluation.)

Also, since you're writing less for this assignment than for a typical essay, careful proofreading becomes even more essential. Don't wait until the last minute to write your page(s). Even a small error may negatively impact your reader's impression, so save plenty of time to proofread, proofread, and proofread again!

Assessment: Students earning the highest grade on this assignment will satisfy these criteria:

- Choose a novel (i.e. *never been done*) term, or invent an imaginative one.
- Define the chosen term fully and appropriately.
- Meet professional standards of correctness and conciseness, including correctly citing all sources.
- Make use of several of the definition strategies mentioned above.
- Present an easily understood definition, one that relies upon direct, concise language.
- Produce a practical definition (one with "use-value").
- Show evidence of critical analysis in producing the definition.
- Avoid common mistakes in definitions:
 - circular definitions, replacement of the term with synonym(s), or failure to write a user-friendly definition.
- Display overall document appeal, readability, and appropriately incorporated graphics.
- Provide illustrated, step-by-step "technical instructions" relevant for the chosen technical term.
- "Teach" the extended definition and technical instructions in an audience-friendly, engaging presentation.

Due: As specified on the [Class Schedule](#).

Example: If you still have questions, you may find it useful to visit the instructor's sample Wiki on ["Wortsnickus."](#)