



CRITICAL
READING SKILLS

(1) ESSAY BASICS:

o Title

- topic + main idea

o Thesis

- topic + main idea + support

o Support

- order, tone, relevance, accuracy

o Conclusion

- reiteration, justification,
- conclusions, recommendations

(2) TOULMIN METHOD:

o Claims

- evaluate author's thesis, main point

o Grounds

- evaluate support, proof

o Warrants

- determine justification, So What?!
- after supporting their claims with ample, accurate, and relevant evidence, reliable sources should take their ideas to the next level
 - o they should make recommendations and/or suggestions—
 - o fodder for the next essay
 - more than just griping

(3) ROGERIAN METHOD:

- o Does the author
 - give a full, fair, objective presentation of material?
- o Does the author
 - present both sides of the issue (if not more)?
 - is the Other Side presented fully, fairly, objectively?

(4) PERSUASIVE APPEALS:

o Logos

- *logical* appeals:
- reasons, stats, facts, figures, examples

o Pathos

- *emotional* appeals:
- eye-witness accounts, anecdotes, pleas, graphics

o Ethos

- *ethical* appeals:
- credibility; full, fair, objective treatment; credentials
- Rogerian Method

(5) “ANALYZE”:

- o Questions (?)
 - ask questions raised by the essay
 - (reader=skeptical of a point/fact)
- o Insights (!)
 - note great lines, insightful remarks,
 - quotes for *your* essay
- o Assumptions
 - note where the author assumes rather than states facts
 - (groundless claims)
- o Overgeneralizations (?!)
 - note where the author relies on stereotypes and overgeneralizations, oversimplifications

(6) “ARGUMENT CULTURE”:

o Dr. Tannen

- Does the source demonstrate binary thinking:
 - only 2 sides of the debate exist
 - right/wrong, right/left, for/against
- Does the author use war metaphors:
 - to make it a win-or-lose situation
- Does the author seem inclusive
 - to establish a dialogue as opposed to a debate
- Does the author explore other sides to the issue
 - Side #3

(7) AUTHORITIES and STATISTICS:

o Authorities

- note the source's credentials
 - education
 - experience
 - related to the *field at hand*
 - professional associations & affiliations
 - achievements *in the field*
- beware of false or misleading credentials
- beware of bias related to credentials

(7) AUTHORITIES and STATISTICS:

o Stats

- beware of too many or misleading
- author should
 - qualify; contextualize
 - explain, interpret, infer
- Does the author round up/down, convert to a more favorable mode, omit anything?
- Are the figures accurate, relevant, complete?
- Where do they come from?
- **Follow the money: who's paying?!**

(8) SUBTEXT:

- o The Subtle Psychology of Persuasive Discourse
 - Argumentative Archeology
- o note the author's
 - suggested/IMPLIED/inferred
 - o values, attitudes, beliefs
- o read between the lines

(9) OUTLINE, SUMMARIZE, REPORT:

o Outline

- remain objective, paraphrase or directly quote, create skeletal view of argument in order

o Summary

- remain objective; give author, title, date, thesis; paraphrase or directly quote; follow author's organization of main reasons & examples; write a 1-paragraph detailed compression of the original

o Report

- Outline + Summary + Essay Basics/Toulmin Method + "analyze"

(10) LOGICAL FALLACIES:

- o Analyze author's
 - Induction and Deduction
- o Determine if claims are based on
 - facts vs. implications, assumptions, inferences
- o Note author's use of
 - insufficient, irrelevant, ambiguous evidence
 - and faulty reasoning

(11) DOCUMENTATION:

- o Does the author cite sources for her/his claims and grounds?
- o Are there parenthetical citations?
- o Are there footnotes or endnotes?
- o Is there a Works Cited, Works Consulted, or Bibliography page?
- o Are the sources in proper MLA format?

(11) DOCUMENTATION:

- o Are the sources relevant, impartial, balanced, professional, and scholarly?
- o Is there a list of references or works for further reading?
- o Is there any evidence of plagiarism, substandard research, or lazy documentation?
- o Does the author correctly paraphrase and summarize borrowed information?
- o Does the author directly quote sources in a proper manner?