

Analyzing

What is analyzing?

Analyzing is similar to putting together a jigsaw puzzle. You are looking at the individual pieces of a text, such as the specific ideas, features, or other details, and determining how they all come together to form the big picture. Analysis is usually formed as an argument that answers the question, "What do you think this text is about?"

How is analyzing different from summarizing?

Both are important skills to know, but are very different. Summarizing is merely putting the main ideas of a text into your own words. You are not making an argument. Analyzing involves breaking a text down into individual elements in order to reach a conclusion or interpretation. Analysis involves more critical thinking of the text, its ideas, and its specific features.

Specific elements you may consider in your analysis (all may not apply to your specific topic).

Author	Who is the author? What is his or her background? What seems to be their state of mind? Could that have an effect on what they wrote about?
Main idea of the text	What do you think the main idea of the text is? What was it about?
Purpose of the text	What was the author's purpose or goal? Did they achieve it? Why or why not?
Audience	Who was the intended audience? What does the author assume about the audience's values, background, or

	knowledge of the issue? Were his or her assumptions
Context	What was the historical, cultural, political, economic, and/or religious background of this text? What events may have influenced the text?
Content	What evidence or support did the author use? Was it credible? Did he or she include enough? Was it effective? Is there anything he or she left out that they could have included?
Organization	How was the text organized? Was it easy to follow? Did it serve to emphasize or de-emphasize certain things?
Word choice	What is the writer's tone? How did their choice of words possibly influence the audience? Did they use any figurative language, like metaphors, similes, or irony?
Literary elements	When analyzing literature, you may also consider elements such as imagery, symbolism, point of view, characterization, plot, setting, and theme.

Guidelines for writing an analysis

Identify	Identify what you are analyzing and what particular elements (see above) you are going to analyze. This is your analytical framework.
Examine	Examine the text closely and take notes on all the relevant details. Identify patterns in how those elements fit together.
Develop your thesis	Determine what you think the text is about based on what you have examined. This will be your thesis statement, or the main argument you will be making.
Introduction	Write your introductory paragraph. This will introduce what you are analyzing, give your analytical framework, and announce your thesis statement.

Body	Write the body paragraphs of your analysis. Each paragraph should examine one particular category or pattern of features you found. Topic sentences should relate the details of the paragraphs to the overall pattern you mentioned, with the supporting sentences examining specific details and giving examples from the text. Avoid summary as much as possible.
Conclusion	Write your concluding paragraph, which draws everything together and brings the paper to a close.
Revision	As you revise, make sure that the thesis of your analysis is strongly supported by the evidence provided, and that strong connections are made throughout. Of course, also check for errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, format, and citing.

Sources

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