

### UNIT 1

Myth #1: The "Paint by Numbers" myth  
Some writers believe they must perform certain steps in a particular order to write "correctly." Rather than being a lock-step linear process, writing is "recursive." That means we cycle through and repeat the various activities of the writing process many times as we write. Myth #2: Writers only start writing when they have everything figured out Writing is not like sending a fax! Writers figure out much of what they want to write as they write it. Rather than waiting, get some writing on the page—even with gaps or problems. You can come back to patch up rough spots. Myth #3: Perfect first drafts We put unrealistic expectations on early drafts, either by focusing too much on the impossible task of making them perfect (which can put a cap on the development of our ideas), or by making too little effort be- What Is "Academic" Writing? 5 cause we don't care or know about their inevitable problems. Nobody

Characteristics of the Critical Essay  
"Critical" here is not used in the sense of "to criticize" as in find fault with. Instead, "critical" is used in the same way "critical thinking" is used. A synonym might be "interpretive" or "analytical." 1. It is an argument, persuasion essay that in its broadest sense **MAKES A POINT and SUPPORTS IT.** (We have already discussed this argumentative nature of academic writing at length.) 2. The point ("claim" or "thesis") of a critical essay is interpretive in nature. That means the point is debatable and open to interpretation, not a statement of the obvious. The thesis statement is a clear, declarative sentence that often works best when it comes at the end of the introduction. 3. Organization: Like any essay, the critical essay should have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. As you support your point in the body of the essay, you should "divide up the proof," which means structuring the body around clear primary

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Who – author or editor When – publication date What – title Where – source information

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writes perfect first drafts; polished writing takes lots of revision. Myth #4: Some got it; I don't—the genius fallacy When you see your writing ability as something fixed or out of your control (as if it were in your genetic code), then you won't believe you can improve as a writer and are likely not to make any efforts in that direction. With effort and study, though, you can improve as a writer. I promise. Myth #5: Good grammar is good writing When people say "I can't write," what they often mean is they have problems with grammatical correctness. Writing, however, is about more than just grammatical correctness. Good writing is a matter of achieving your desired effect upon an intended audience. Plus, as we saw in myth #3, no one writes perfect first drafts. Myth #6: The Five Paragraph Essay Some people say to avoid it at all costs, while others believe no other way to write exists. With an introduction, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion, the five paragraph essay is a format you should know, but one which you will outgrow. You'll have to gauge

supports (developed in single paragraphs for short papers or multiple paragraphs for longer papers). 4. Support: (a) The primary source for support in the critical essay is from the text (or sources). The text is the authority, so using quotations is required. (b) The continuous movement 16 L. Lennie Irvin of logic in a critical essay is "assert then support; assert then support." No assertion (general statement that needs proving) should be left without specific support (often from the text(s)). (c) You need enough support to be convincing. In general, that means for each assertion you need at least three supports. This threshold can vary, but invariably one support is not enough. 5. A critical essay will always "document" its sources, distinguishing the use of outside information used inside your text and clarifying where that information came from (following the rules of MLA documentation style or whatever documentation style is required). 6. Whenever the author moves from one main point (primary support) to the next, the author needs to clearly

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the particular writing assignment to see whether and how this format is useful for you. Myth #7: Never use "I" Adopting this formal stance of objectivity implies a distrust (almost fear) of informality and often leads to artificial, puffed-up prose. Although some writing situations will call on you to avoid using "I" (for example, a lab report), much college writing can be done in a middle, semi-formal style where it is ok to use "I."

signal to the reader that this movement is happening. This transition sentence works best when it links back to the thesis as it states the topic of that paragraph or section. 7. A critical essay is put into an academic essay format such as the MLA or APA document format. 8. Grammatical correctness: Your essay should have few if any grammatical problems. You'll want to edit your final draft carefully before turning

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Not published yet.  
Last updated 6th March, 2023.  
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