

Analysis, Synthesis, and Response Papers

A Brief Overview of Writing for Nursing

Nursing students are often required to review articles from academic nursing journals and literature, then think critically about, analyze, and synthesize the information, expressing whether they agree or disagree and why. The purpose of an analysis paper is to use critical thinking skills to develop, implement, and evaluate nursing interventions that manage illness and optimize health and well-being. Your goal as a writer of an analysis paper is to demonstrate that you are able to read and understand scholarship in the nursing field.

Analysis papers are typically assigned in NUR 350 and 450 and cover a range of nursing-related issues. For example, you might explore the rights of children to participate in their own health-care decisions, research viable solutions to questions raised, and examine the nurse's role in educating parents on the positive outcomes of including children in the decision process of their own care and treatment. Or, you might identify the increase of adolescent diabetes in the United States, provide statistics that describe the magnitude of the problem, discuss the significance to nursing practice, analyze contributing factors, provide viable nursing interventions and outcomes, and discuss recommendations supported with appropriate literature.

As both these examples illustrate, you must be able to read carefully information from a variety of sources and synthesize that information in order to respond appropriately as a nursing professional.

Audience

Your primary audience for an analysis paper is your professor, with secondary audiences including your fellow nursing students and professionals in the field. Your writing should be clear enough that academic audiences outside the field of nursing should be able to understand your points.

Analysis, Synthesis, and Response

Typically, an article analysis does two things:

- Summarizes and analyzes the evidence that supports the article's main points, taking care to point out where there are complications or flaws in the argument.
- Synthesizes the article's main points and its connection to other reading/concepts in the course, and/or its importance to your field.

The first step to writing an analysis paper, then, is to read carefully. While you read, you must gain:

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You must be able to read carefully information from a variety of sources and synthesize that information in order to respond appropriately as a nursing professional.

- A firm understanding of the literature and research covering your topic.
- A good grasp of the connections between your opinions and the literature.
- Clear descriptions of your viewpoint and position on the issue.
- A good idea of the structure/format that your paper will take before you begin.

A Process for Analyzing Information

Here are some tips for reading each article effectively:

1) Read the article one time all the way through. Get a general sense of what the article is about, and how the pieces of the article fit together. Do this initial reading in a quiet place where you have plenty of time to complete the article in one sitting. Stop reading only to look up terminology you don't understand. If you read a passage that you don't quite understand, re-read it 2-3 times; if you still do not understand the passage, mark it with a pen or pencil and move on. Try not to hold a pen or pencil as you read; the point is to gain an overview of the entire article rather than to jot down detailed notes about the article.

2) Read the article a second time answering these questions in the margins. They are meant to help you reflect upon, critique, and respond to the article:

- What do you think is most important or effective regarding the article's conclusion/arguments?
- What limitations do you see in the research or argument? That is, what counter-claims or arguments can you make in response to the article?
- What did you learn from reading this article? Make a list; these might be huge new understandings of the issue, or small tidbits of information you found helpful.
- In what ways does this article connect to the other articles, your own research on the topic, and/or class discussions and lectures this semester?

Only after you have read the article multiple times and done some brainstorming does it make sense to begin writing a draft.

A Process for Synthesizing the Information

Make order out of chaos:

- Read over the comments/notes you made in the margins of each article.
- As you read, make a list of the main findings/points raised in each article.
- Group those lists of findings/points into columns, so that articles making the same kinds of points—either agreeing with one another, or building on the same kind of research data—are grouped together.
- Do some informal writing about how the items in each group relate to one another. What are the fine distinctions among the articles in each group? What unique thing can readers learn from each article about the issue under discussion?
- Do some informal writing about how the groups relate to one another. What are the points of agreement or areas of distinction among each group of items?

A strong analysis reflecting depth of thought can be written only if you've read the article(s) related to your topic carefully, thoroughly, and multiple times.

If you read a passage that you don't quite understand, re-read it 2-3 times; if you still do not understand the passage, mark it with a pen or pencil and move on.

Only after you have read the article multiple times and done some brainstorming does it make sense to begin writing a draft.

A Process for Responding to the Information

- Try to suspend judgment until you have read and analyzed each article. That is, let the information inform your opinion rather than the other way around.
- Try to write the analysis (and synthesis) before writing your response.
- After writing your analysis (and synthesis), ask yourself these kinds of questions.
 - What new information did you learn?
 - How can you use this information, as an emerging professional in the nursing profession, to guide your future research, actions, or attitudes? (Check your assignment sheet for the exact questions you should address in your response. You may be asked to provide a solution, justify a decision or action, or apply the information to your future role as a nurse.)

A Process for Evaluating Your Draft

Once you have written a draft, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Is your introduction on-topic and interesting? Does it accurately characterize the focus of the paper?
- Did you accurately, fairly, and objectively characterize the article's arguments and research in your analysis/synthesis?
- If called for on the assignment sheet, is your summary of the article(s) the right length? Your professor might tell you how long the summary should be; if not, a good guideline is that it should be no longer than a couple sentences of each paragraph of analysis. After all, the point of this assignment is to analyze the information, not summarize it!
- Does your analysis account for most of the essay? If not, you probably need to re-read the article(s) and your marginalia to generate more ideas for your draft.
- Does your analysis explain how the article's author supported his or her main points with specific research, data, historical events, professional trends, theory, ethical framework, etc.?
- Does your analysis point out any weaknesses in the argument, data collection strategies, or findings described in the article?
- Does your analysis describe specifically what the article contributes to the topic you're studying?
- If required by the assignment, did you describe your own view of the topic in light of having read the article(s)?
- If required by the assignment, did you propose a solution to the problem you discussed? Does the solution follow logically from the literature you read?
- Throughout the entire essay, did you maintain a professional demeanor? That is, did you disagree respectfully with the author of the article (when necessary)?
- Overall, have you demonstrated that you've read and thought about the article(s) carefully, using it to guide your informed opinion or proposed solution?

Writing Style

All writing you complete for your nursing courses should be professional and formal-appropriate for an academic audience:

- Wording should be direct, straightforward, and concise. For help eliminating wordiness from your writing, see our handout at <http://www.gvsu.edu/wc>.
- Paraphrasing and summarizing should be fluid and integrated throughout the writing in lieu of many direct quotes.
- Writing should be free of colloquialisms, jargon, and contractions.
- Most of the writing should be in active voice. For help distinguishing between active and passive voice, see our handout at <http://www.gvsu.edu/wc>.
- Use the first person (references to "I" or "me") only to describe your opinions. An assignment that requires you to include your response will probably include first-person references more than other papers.

Prompts for Writing Consultations

Process:

- What did the student-writer know going into the process of researching? What did he or she learn from the article(s) he or she read? How is this learning reflected in the paper?
- You might talk about individual articles that the writer is unsure about. What seems to be the main point? What is difficult to understand about the article? What seems to be the new information offered by the article?

Content:

- Discuss the analysis of article(s) in the essay. Is most of the essay dedicated to analyzing how the articles fit into a larger discussion on the topic?
- Is this a nursing-focused paper rather than a medically focused one?
- Are there suggestions offered to improve the problem?
- If applicable, discuss the part of the essay where the writer's own point of view emerges. Does the writing remain professional in tone? Does the writer's opinion or proposed solution follow logically from the summary and analysis?
- Does the paper demonstrate depth of thought throughout?

Organization, Style, and Mechanics:

- Is the paper structured logically? Does it begin with a strong introduction? Does it end with a strong conclusion including a summary of the content? Are paragraphs linked with appropriate transitions?
- Are sources introduced and integrated smoothly into the discussion? Is there paraphrasing throughout the writing instead of many quotations?
- Is proper credit given to the ideas of the authors of secondary sources?
- Does the manuscript's format and citation style conform to APA guidelines?
- Is the writing well-edited and clear?