

Table 1.2 (Continued)

Element of critical reading		Element of self-critical writing	
When I read an academic text I:	[Tick]	When I write an academic text I:	[Tick]
9 look out for instances of irrelevant or distracting material, and for the absence of necessary material;		9 sustain focus throughout my account, avoid irrelevancies and digressions, and include everything that is relevant;	
10 identify any literature sources to which the authors refer, that I may need to follow up.		10 ensure that my referencing in the text and the reference list is complete and accurate, so that my readers are in a position to check my sources.	
Total number of ticks		Total number of ticks	
<p><i>The more ticks you have for both columns, the further you have already progressed in becoming a critical reader and self-critical writer. Look back at any items that you have not ticked. Consider how you might incorporate these elements of critical reading and self-critical writing into your habitual approach to study.</i></p>			

In Table 1.2 we have highlighted the link between elements of critical reading and their counterparts in self-critical writing. Whatever you look for as a critical reader of literature, your assessors may also look for in your writing when judging how far it meets their assessment criteria. The elements of self-critical writing relate to meeting the needs of your readers, so that they can grasp what you are trying to communicate. But just as importantly, they enhance your capacity to make your argument convincing to your readers. This is why developing a strong sense of your audience is to your advantage. Meeting your target readers' needs and convincing them will help to ensure that your account meets the assessment criteria. During your studies, you will find it useful to refer back to this exercise occasionally, to monitor your progress in developing critical reading and self-critical writing skills.

Where now?

Having discussed how to make the most of what you read, the next step is to consider how to select effectively from the vast array of literature available. That is the topic of the next chapter. Then, in Chapter 3, we introduce the basics of critical reading, in the form of five Critical Synopsis Questions that you can ask of a text. Chapters 4 and 5 use these insights to introduce some simple techniques for self-critical writing: presenting your own ideas in a well-supported way. Part One thus prepares you for the more detailed engagement of Parts Two and Three, where we revisit the same approach at a more advanced level.