DIMERS

# Guide for You (the Writer) — How to Write Critically

Use the **DIMERS** structure, embedding the required questions at each stage. Every major section must end with a **Limit → Implication** statement to demonstrate criticality and application.

## D – Describe

* What’s it about?
* What does it consist of (theory, evidence, case study)?
* What are the **key arguments** the author is making?
* What are the main findings or claims?
* How is the text positioned (e.g., policy-focused, theoretical, empirical)?
* We must “clearly state and comprehensively describe the issue or problem”.

## I – Interpret

* We must “independently interpret and evaluate sources”, “thoroughly analyse assumptions behind and context of your own ideas or other’s ideas”.
* For websites etc., consider <https://researchguides.ben.edu/source-evaluation> (The CRAAP test).
* Who or what does this apply to?
* Who or what does it not apply to?
* Is it relevant in all situations or only some?
* What actors, cases, or variables are missing?
* What are the implications for those not covered?
* **“So what?”** — why does this matter in Defence Forces, strategy, or communications contexts?
* **Sceptical**
  + Why am I being told this?
  + How much of this is rhetoric (persuasion)? Are they using emotive words to elicit a particular response?
  + How else might you read the same data?
  + What are the implications?
  + How else might you read/interpret the data? Would somebody else agree?

## M – Methodology

* What type of article is it (theoretical, empirical, data-driven, commentary)?
* What is the study design (e.g., RCT, cohort, case study, qualitative interviews, policy analysis)?
* Where does it fall on the **hierarchy of evidence** (SR/MA → RCT → cohort → case-control → cross-sectional → case study → expert opinion)?
* Was the methodology robust or weak?
* Are the data and evidence appropriate and sufficient?
* What are the stated limitations?
* What **unstated weaknesses** are visible (bias, small sample, short timeframe, narrow focus)?
* **Sceptical**
  + Who is telling me? Vested interest/bias?
  + What am I not being told?
  + Where’s the evidence to support this?

## E – Evaluate

* Is this theory widely supported in the literature.
* Do other theories agree.
* What contribution has this made to the literature?
* How valuable is it compared to other papers?
* Do other studies agree or diverge — and why?
* What does it add that others do not?
* Are there contradictions, overstatements, or clear biases?
* Where does a **“however”** arise?
* Example: *“Smith (2020) claims transparency always builds trust. However, Rid (2018) shows that in conflict settings transparency can create operational risk — likely due to contextual differences.”*
* **Limit.**
  + What is the limit? Does it apply in all contexts?

## R – (Autho)R

* Does the author actually mean what they say?
* Are they hedging or overstating?
* What do they mean when they say it?
* Are there credible scholars who object or disagree?
* What biases, assumptions, or institutional interests shape their perspective?
  + e.g., NATO-funded research may promote StratCom approaches favourable to member states.
* How might these biases influence interpretation of findings?

## S - Synthesis

* Identify differences/commonalities or meaningful & insightful connections from the literature.
* Identify the “so what” from the source?
* Does it mirror other sources?

## Decision Rule

Every section must end with a **Limit and Implication**.

* *“Because the study only examined NATO contexts → cannot assume generalisability to Ireland → implication: adapt cautiously, not adopt wholesale.”*
* Each DIMERS section ends with Limit → Implication (e.g., “NATO-only sample → limited transferability → adapt cautiously for Ireland”).
* When doing a DIMERS analysis of a source: after DIMERS you will suggest a PEEL paragraph about the text.
* When analysing a source for me you will print everything in a latex code. include inline citations. they’ll be of the format “SURNAME\_YYYY” (the surname is capitalised).

# Notes from Angela McGinn

Critical thinking in practice:

**Appeal to ignorance** — assumes a claim must be true simply because it has not been proven false.

**Appeal to authority** — treats someone’s status or reputation as proof of truth, regardless of evidence.

**Ad hominem** — attacks the character or motives of a person instead of addressing their argument.

**Strawman** — misrepresents an opponent’s argument in order to knock down a weaker version.

**Slippery slope** — argues that one small step will inevitably trigger a chain of extreme consequences.

**False dichotomy** — reduces complex issues into only two opposing options, ignoring other possibilities.

**Whataboutism** — diverts criticism by raising a counter-accusation, distracting from the original point.