

# Understanding Processes Involved in Writing Essays

Source

<https://canvas.sydney.edu.au/courses/12076/pages/unit-4-writing-persuasively>

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# Outline of the session

- Task 1: Description/analysis
- Mapping structure of the texts
- Strategies for setting up taxonomies for analysis – moving to analysis
- Task 2
- Task 3 – Naming type of text – moving to argument
- Task 4 – Analysing argument essay

# Task 1: Say whether the texts are descriptive/analytical

## **Text A:**

*A car is a machine for transporting people. Cars usually can carry a maximum of 5 or 6 people. They use petroleum or diesel fuel although there are also some electric cars. Many people are killed or injured each year in car accidents. In Australia, most people drive cars and the roads of many urban centres are choked with this form of private transport.*

*A bus is a form of public transport. Buses generally operate on urban, suburban, or inter-urban routes. As well as buses operated by the government, there are some private bus companies, particularly for long distance travel. Many people can be transported in one bus, and so just one serious accident can claim many lives.*

- **Text B:**

*Two of the most common vehicles for transporting people are cars and buses. Whereas the capacity of the car is usually limited to about 5 or 6 people, the greater passenger capacity of the bus brings savings on fuel and other costs as well as reducing the amounts of traffic on the road. The ownership of buses is usually governmental or business which ensures that bus travel is generally safer than travel by privately owned cars, although just one serious accident can claim many lives. However, public ownership also means that buses are often not as convenient as private cars in terms of their accessibility to all areas.*

## Text A

## Text A:

### Cars

- carry maximum 5-6 people
- use petrol, diesel or electricity
- kill or injure many people in accidents
- most Australians drive cars
- urban centres choked with private cars

A car is a machine for transporting people. Cars usually can carry a maximum of 5 or 6 people. They use petroleum or diesel fuel although there are also some electric cars. Many people are killed or injured each year in car accidents. In Australia, most people drive cars and the roads of many urban centres are choked with this form of private transport.

### Buses

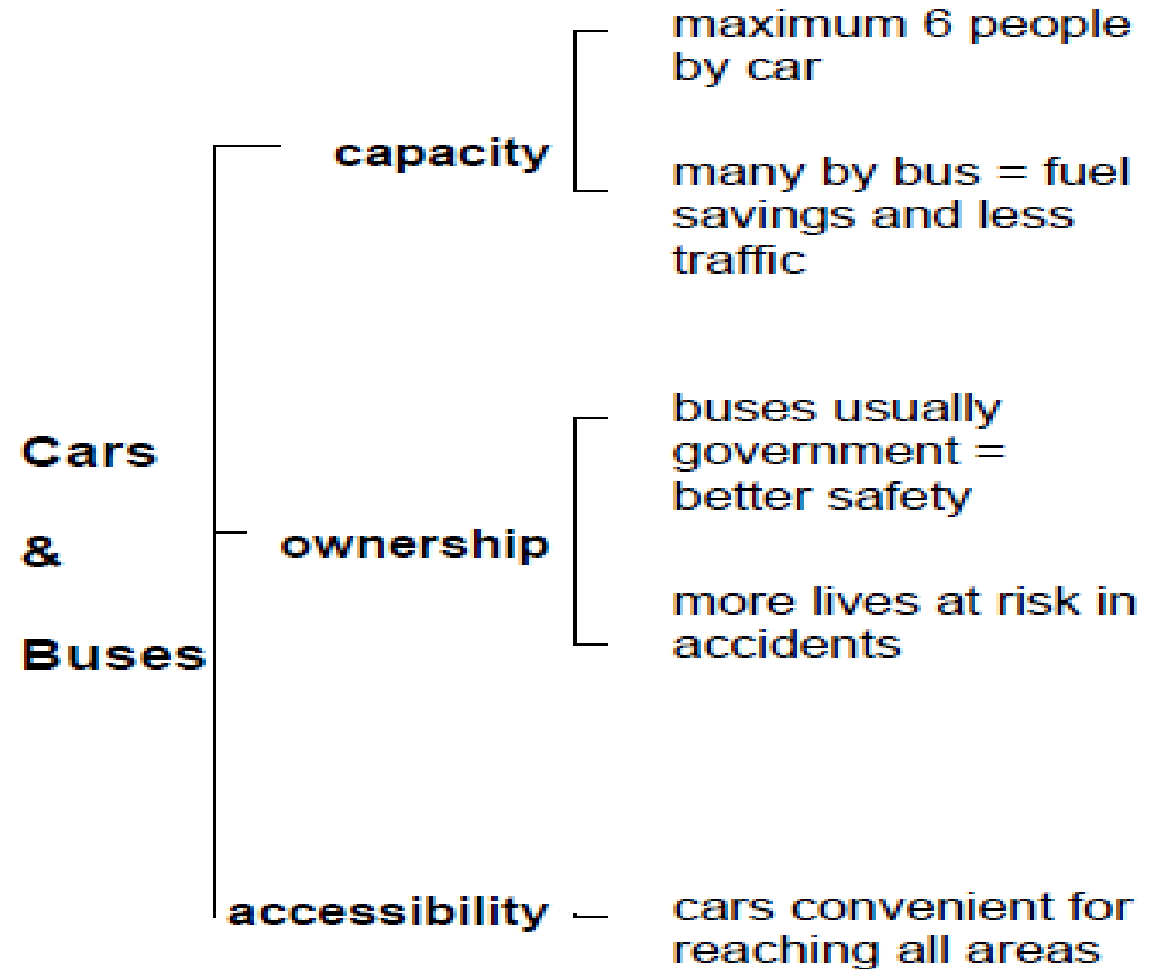
- operate on urban, suburban, inter-urban routes
- operated by governments and companies
- carry many people so many lives at risk

A bus is a form of public transport. Buses generally operate on urban, suburban, or inter-urban routes. As well as buses operated by the government, there are some private bus companies, particularly for long distance travel. Many people can be transported in one bus, and so just one serious accident can claim many lives.

## Text B

Two of the most common vehicles for transporting people are cars and buses. Whereas the capacity of the car is usually limited to about 5 or 6 people, the greater passenger capacity of the bus brings savings on fuel and other costs as well as reducing the amounts of traffic on the road. The ownership of buses is usually governmental or business which ensures that bus travel is generally safer than travel by privately owned cars, although just one serious accident can claim many lives. However, public ownership also means that buses are often not as convenient as private cars in terms of their accessibility to all areas.

## Text B



# A strategy for organising information: setting up a taxonomy:

- A taxonomy is a type of organisational diagram which will help us see what is happening with our writing.
- The way we have organised our information affects the **structure** of our writing on the macro-level.
- The structure of the information indicates the **focus** of our ideas

- The taxonomy also reflects **the level of analysis** you have used for processing your information.
- The taxonomy for text a) is descriptive; text b) is more analytical.
- How can we move our focus from descriptive to analytical?



# Processes Involved in Analysing Information and Ideas

- In planning analytical writing, there are a number of processes that should be going on simultaneously.
  - a) we should be seeking to understand the characteristics of the individual parts of the topic we are exploring.
    - *For example, the characteristics of cars and the characteristics of buses.*
  - b) we should be seeking to understand the relationships amongst the individual pieces of information and ideas.
    - *For example, that cars carry 5 or 6 people, and buses carry many people.*
  - c) we should be trying to organise these pieces into some groups according to the relationships amongst them, and to give each group an abstract heading.
    - *For example, there is a relationship between the number of people able to be carried in cars and buses, and we can refer to this by the abstract heading "capacity".*

(d) trying to establish some **overall picture** of how these groups relate to each other, of how they contribute to making a whole picture.

- Your view of the whole picture will be affected by many things:
- for instance, how far you have got with your reading, how much you have reflected on the topic, your level of expertise in the field.
- **At this stage, using taxonomies is a very useful strategy.**
- *For example, capacity is just one kind of comparison between cars and buses. There are other ways in which we can compare them, such as ownership and accessibility.*

(e) being as **flexible** as possible to the thought of changing this picture and its parts as often as it is necessary.

Most people cannot find perfect solutions to complex problems on their first effort.

*For example, you might compare cars and buses instead in terms of their economy (what type of fuel they use, how fuel-efficient they are), or even their contribution to pollution or social isolation.*

# Task 2

## **Text a**

*Questionnaires and face-to-face interviews are methods of data collection in the social sciences. Questionnaires can be used to sample a large number of people over a wide geographical area. They can normally be conducted by just one person and the only major costs involved are stationery and postage. However, questionnaires do not allow the researcher to ask for extra information.*

*Face to face interviews, by contrast, are relatively small scale. They are labour intensive and time-consuming and consequently costly. But interviews have the advantage of allowing the researcher to clarify questions if necessary. Also, during interviews the researcher can ask additional questions.*

## **Text b**

*Two of the most common methods of data collection in social science research are the questionnaires sent by mail and the face-to-face interview. Whereas the sample size in face-to-face interviews is normally small, the questionnaire can be sent out to large numbers of people over a wide geographical area. Costs, both in labour and money, are high with face-to-face interviews, while questionnaires can be distributed quickly by just one person at a relatively low cost. However, in terms of quality of information, interviews are often superior to questionnaires as the researcher has the opportunity to ask additional questions and explain what questions mean if this becomes necessary. This is not possible with questionnaires.*

# Structure of text: Text A

Questionnaires and face-to-face interviews are methods of data collection in the social sciences

Questionnaires can be used to sample a large number of people over a wide geographical area.

They can normally be conducted by just one person and the only major costs involved are stationery and postage.

However, questionnaires do not allow the researcher to ask for extra information.

Face to face interviews, by contrast, are relatively small scale.

They are labour intensive and time-consuming and consequently costly.

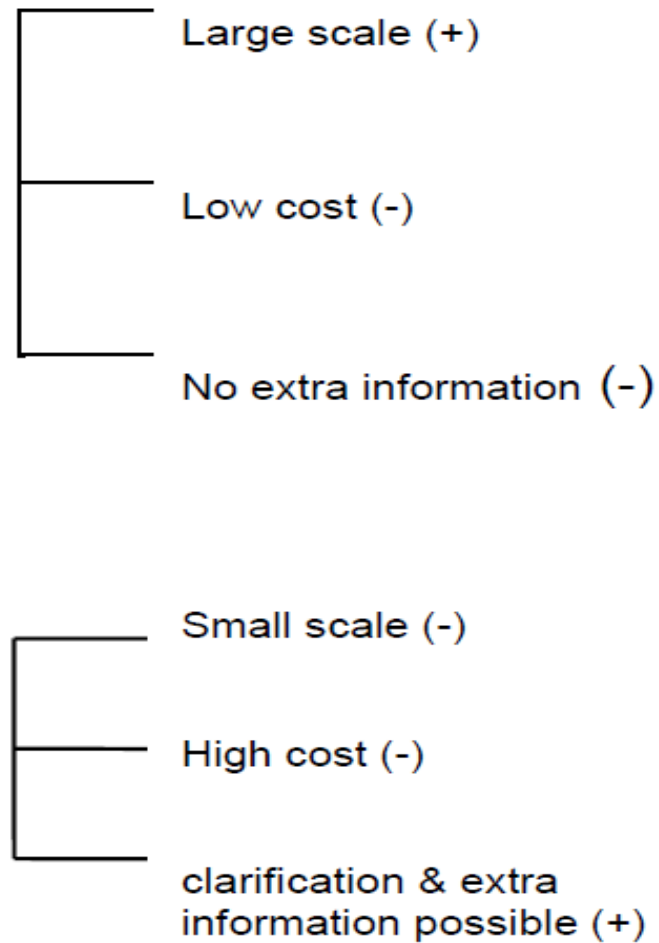
But interviews have the advantage of allowing the researcher to clarify questions if necessary.

Also, during interviews the researcher can ask additional questions.

## GENERAL DEFINITION

### QUESTIONNAIRE --

### INTERVIEWS --



# Structure of text: Text B

Two of the most common methods of data collection in social science research are the questionnaires sent by mail and the face-to-face interview.

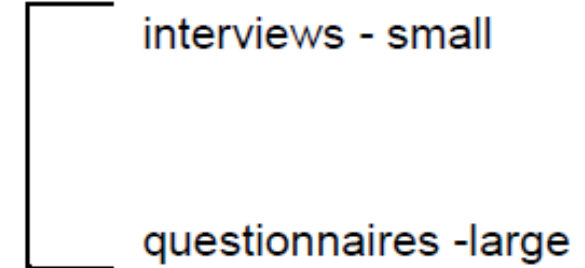
Whereas the sample size in face-to-face interviews is normally small, the questionnaire can be sent out to large numbers of people over a wide geographical area.

Costs, both in labour and money, are high with face-to-face interviews, while questionnaires can be distributed quickly by just one person at a relatively low cost.

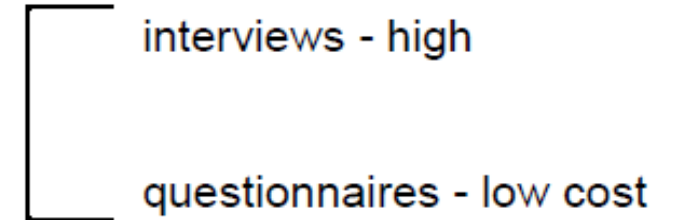
However, in terms of quality of information, interviews are often superior to questionnaires as the researcher has the opportunity to ask additional questions and explain what questions mean if this becomes necessary. This is not possible with questionnaires

## GENERAL DEFINITION

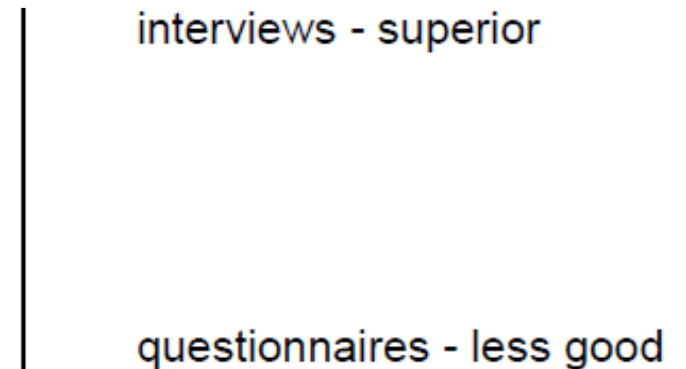
### SAMPLE SIZE --



### COSTS --



### QUALITY OF INFORMATION --



Consider the beginnings of the sentences from Text a) and Text b).

Text a)	Text b)
Questionnaires and face-to-face interviews	Two of the most common methods of data collection in social science research
Questionnaires	
They	Whereas the sample size in face-to-face interviews
However, questionnaires	Costs, both in labour and money,
Face to face interviews, by contrast	However, in terms of quality of information, interviews
Interviews	
Also, during interviews, the researcher	This



- For our reader, the **focus** of our writing at a sentence level is the information at the beginning of the sentence, i.e. in front of the main verb of the sentence.
- Academic writing values **abstraction** - ideas, categories, concepts and relationships - rather than people or simple facts:
  - e.g. *sample size, quality of information* rather than *questionnaires, interviews*.

# Analysis is the process of

- **breaking down a topic/concept/group of facts into components or categories**
- **looking for relationships between them**
- **understanding how each component contributes to the whole picture**
- **drawing conclusions about their significance**

# Task 3

Read the following texts and identify whether they are descriptive/ analytical/ argumentative.

## **Text A**

*Of the two main forms of transport for people, buses are more effective than cars for a number of reasons. The greater passenger capacity of the bus ensures savings on fuel and other costs as well as reducing the amounts of traffic on the road. Secondly, the increased safety of bus travel as a result of ownership being governmental or business ensures that deaths and injuries from accidents are minimal, compared with the numerous deaths and injuries from car accidents. Finally, the accessibility of buses to most areas is strategically possible because buses use the established road system, so that little development is needed in order to extend a new bus route. Indeed, the potential for a bus transport system to be as convenient as private cars, combined with the other advantages of buses over cars, provides a convincing argument for the expansion of the bus transport system, rather than the continuation of a costly, inefficient and unsafe system based on privately owned vehicles.*

# Text C

Of the two main forms of transport for people, buses are more effective than cars for a number of reasons. The greater passenger capacity of the bus ensures savings on fuel and other costs as well as reducing the amounts of traffic on the road. Secondly, the increased safety of bus travel as a result of ownership being governmental or business ensures that deaths and injuries from accidents are minimal, compared with the numerous deaths and injuries from car accidents. Finally, the accessibility of buses to most areas is strategically possible because buses use the established road system, so that little development is needed in order to extend a new bus route. Indeed, the potential for a bus transport system to be as convenient as private cars, combined with the other advantages of buses over cars, provides a convincing argument for the expansion of the bus transport system, rather than the continuation of a costly, inefficient and unsafe system based on privately owned vehicles.

Buses > Cars

Claim

Greater capacity

Increased safety

Evidences

Accessibility

Making a case for the expansion of the bus transport system

Warrant

Task 4: Read the text in the worksheet and answer the following questions

1. Identify the position of the author.
2. What is the function of sentence 2?
3. Around which concept the argument is organized?
4. Identify the evaluative language used to strengthen the writer's position and arguments.
5. Identify the arguments in support of face-to-face interviews?
6. What is included in the inclusion? What language strategy has been deployed and why?

Of the two methods of data collection used in the social sciences - questionnaires and face-to-face interviews - face-to-face interviews are clearly the more effective. Face-to-face interviews allow the collection of quality data in a field which is more concerned with investigating the whys and wherefores of our social experience than with mere number-crunching.

If quality of outcomes rather than the apparently more satisfying quantity of outcomes is adopted as the criterion of effectiveness in social research, then the advantages of face-to-face interviews are abundantly clear. Quality data outcomes are achieved in situations which allow the researcher to clarify opaque or poorly worded questions, to probe by asking additional questions and to pursue points of particular interest to the researcher or the respondent (Kahn and Cannell 1957).

On the other hand, quality outcomes are unlikely to be achieved where cost-effectiveness and ease of distribution become the primary research considerations (Back and Gergen 1963). Those who promote questionnaires as cost-effective and easily distributable overlook the often poor response rates, the considerable number of partial responses and the significantly lower quality of data so typical of arm's length questionnaires. While it might also be suggested that the higher quality of data yielded by face-to-face interviews is achieved at the expense of uniformity in questioning and with potential interviewer bias (Carlson 1967; Goffman 1969), this criticism is difficult to sustain in a field which pursues primarily qualitative rather than quantitative research outcomes.

While questionnaires have advantages in some research circumstances and undoubtedly have their place in social sciences research, face-to-face interviews are clearly more effective in securing quality data outcomes in the social sciences.

*Adapted from Burgess, R. G. 1984. The Research Process in Educational Settings: Ten Case Studies. London: The Falmer Press.*

# Position statement

Of the two methods of data collection used in the social sciences - questionnaires and face-to-face interviews - **face-to-face interviews are clearly the more effective.** Face-to face interviews allow the collection of quality data in a field which is more concerned with investigating the whys and wherefores of our social experience than with mere number-crunching.



# Function of S2

## Grounds for the author's position

Of the two methods of data collection used in the social sciences - questionnaires and face-to-face interviews - face-to-face interviews are clearly the more effective. Face-to face interviews **allow the collection of quality data in a field which is more concerned with investigating the whys and wherefores of our social experience than with mere number-crunching.**

If quality of outcomes rather than the apparently more satisfying quantity of outcomes is adopted as the criterion of effectiveness in social research,

1. Quality data outcomes is the concept around which the argument is organised.
2. Face-to-face interviews and quality data outcomes are put at the beginning of the sentence - the most important position in the sentence.

Of the two methods of data collection used in the social sciences - questionnaires and face-to-face interviews - face-to-face interviews are clearly the more effective. Face-to-face interviews **allow the collection of quality data** in a field which is more concerned with investigating the whys and wherefores of our social experience than with mere number-crunching.

**If quality of outcomes** rather than the apparently more satisfying quantity of outcomes is adopted as the criterion of effectiveness in social research, then the advantages of face-to-face interviews are abundantly clear.

**Quality data outcomes** are achieved in situations which allow the researcher to clarify opaque or poorly worded questions, to probe by asking additional questions and to pursue points of particular interest to the researcher or the respondent (Kahn and Cannell 1957).

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# Evaluative language

Of the two methods of data collection used in the social sciences - questionnaires and face-to-face interviews - face-to-face interviews are **clearly the more effective**. Face-to-face interviews allow the collection of quality data in a field which is more concerned with investigating the whys and wherefores of our social experience than with mere number-crunching.

If quality of outcomes rather than the **apparently more satisfying** quantity of outcomes is adopted as the criterion of effectiveness in social research, then the advantages of face-to-face interviews are **abundantly clear**. Quality data outcomes are achieved in situations which allow the researcher to clarify opaque or poorly worded questions, to probe by asking additional questions and to pursue points of particular interest to the researcher or the respondent (Kahn and Cannell 1957).

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While questionnaires have advantages in some research circumstances and undoubtedly have their place in social sciences research, face-to-face interviews are **clearly more effective** in securing quality data outcomes in the social sciences.

Argument presented as to why face-to-face interviews elicit quality data and questionnaires do not

Quality data outcomes are achieved in situations which allow the researcher to clarify opaque or poorly worded questions, to probe by asking additional questions and to pursue points of particular interest to the researcher or the respondent (Kahn and Cannell 1957).

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The position reiterated in the conclusion while acknowledging the value of questionnaires.

While questionnaires have advantages in some research circumstances and undoubtedly have their place in social sciences research, face-to-face interviews are clearly more effective in securing quality data outcomes in the social sciences.

# References

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Q & A