

The Process of Academic Writing

DBA • Academic Writing Course



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Steps in the Process

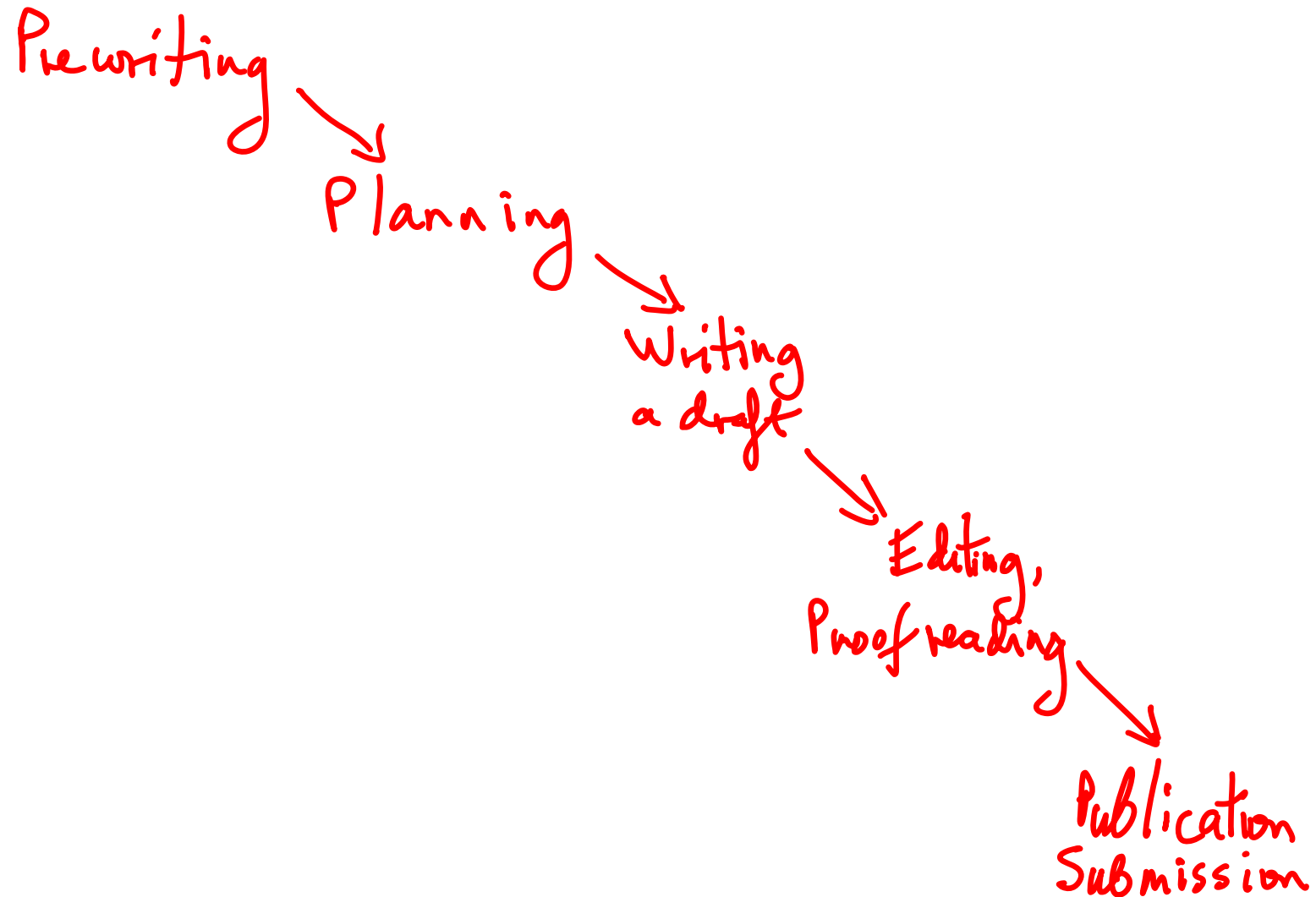
- » **Pre-writing** — Research, Reading and Peer discussions
- » **Planning** — “working” Outlines and Abstracts
- » **Writing** — Drafting and Revising
- » **Editing** — Proof-reading and Standardising content
- » **Formatting** — Layout for Publication/Submission

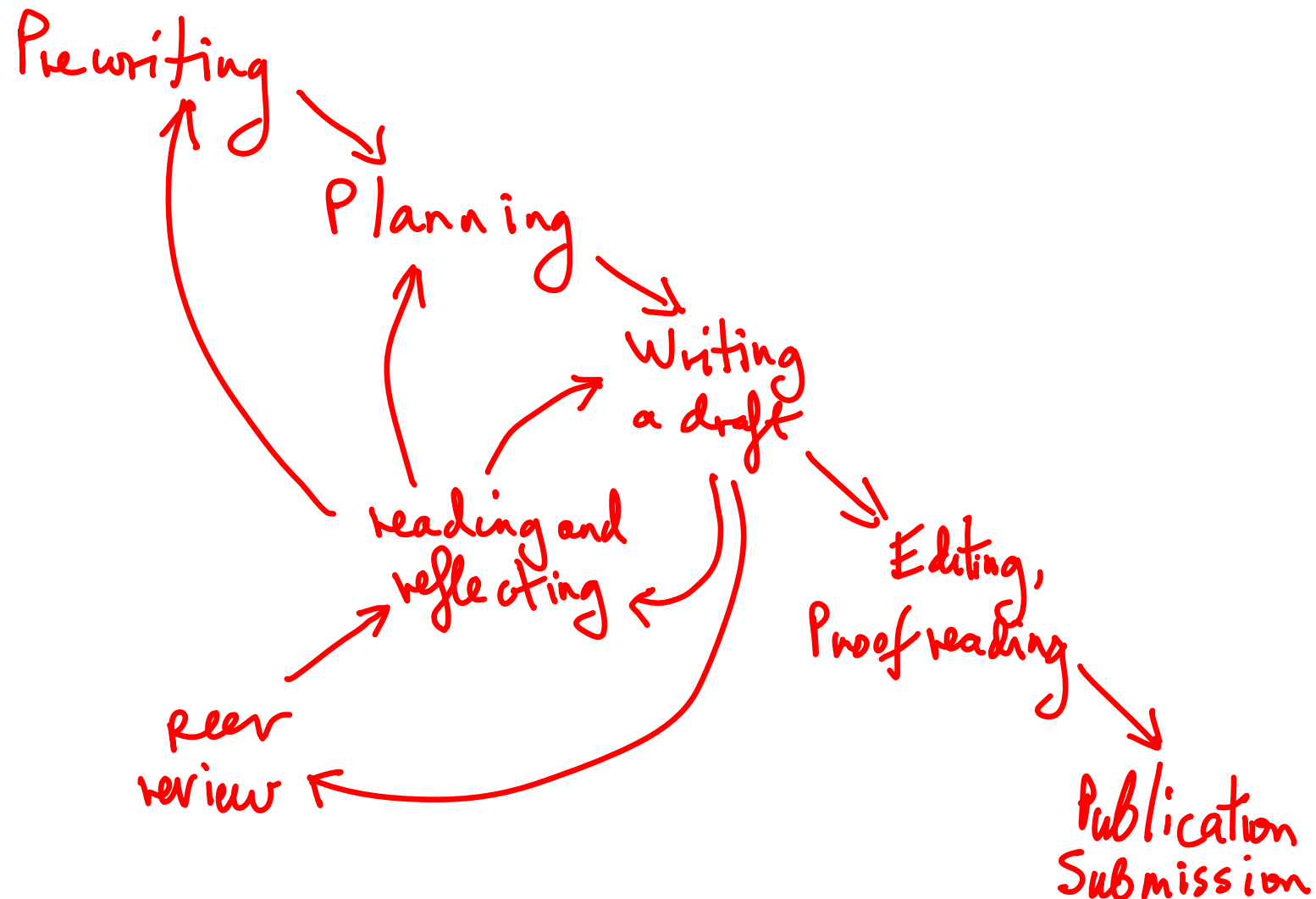
Writing (and reading) are key to academia

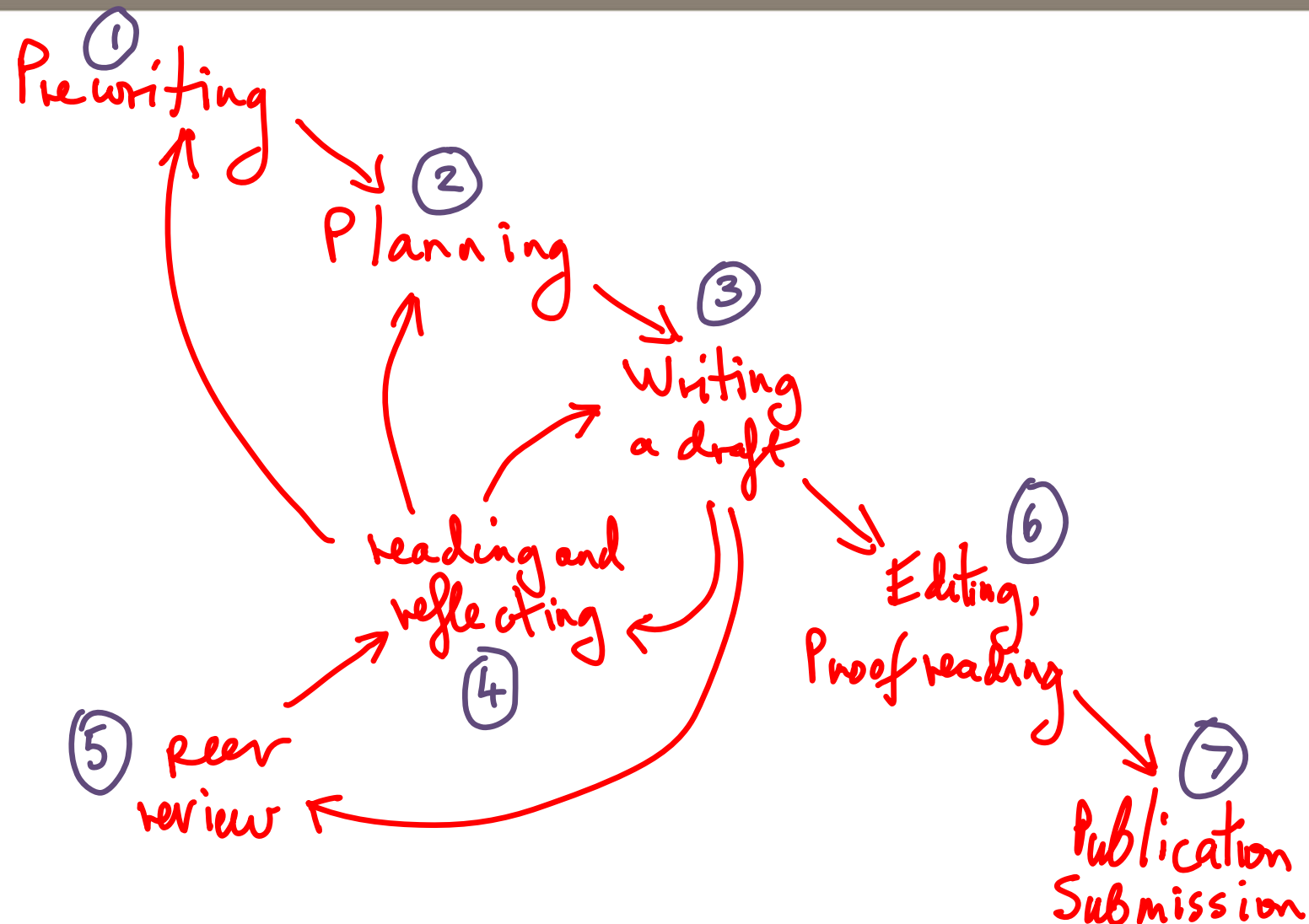
- » Understanding the academic writing process will make the task of drafting your doctoral thesis that much easier

The purpose of academic writing is to:

“Persuade readers of the validity of your research by way of a coherent and concise, evidence-based text.”







1. Prewriting – Choosing a Topic

- » Decide what to write about
- » Understand and generate ideas on the given topic
- » Research, read and consider the existing ideas, opinions and research that has been printed in books and journals or published on the internet

Methods:

- » Brain-storming; talking with peers; discussing ideas with tutors
- » Searching for relevant articles on the topic that you are interested in (Part of this will involve note-taking and building up a reference list)

1. Prewriting – Reading and Note-taking

From the outset, as you read on the subject that you plan to focus on it is good practice to take notes and build a **bibliography** (not to be confused with your reference list):

- » When taking notes from any source, **always** jot down all reference details
 - » This saves time and reduces accidental plagiarism
- » When you copy phrases or sentences indicate these with quotation marks so you know when you include these into the body of your thesis at a later stage that they are “quotations” as opposed to your own paraphrasing
 - » Make a note of the page number/s of such citations also

2. Planning – Methods

- » **Clarify** – decide on topic
- » **Focus** – conduct a thorough review of this topic
- » **Organise** – build up a bibliography of extant research electronically

Methods include:

- » Making lists (and playing around with the ordering)
- » Graphic organisers: e.g. spider diagrams, clustering charts
- » “Working” Outline views, Thesis statements and Abstracts
 - » a provisional plan of your doctoral thesis’s sections and initial thesis statement

2. Planning – Utility of a “Working” Outline

- » If you complete a comprehensive “working outline” and formulate a credible and well thought out “working abstract”
 - » The actual writing of your doctoral thesis will be that much easier!
- » Follow your working outline like a recipe for your thesis
 - » This will help you with organisation and structure

3. & 4. Drafting and Revision

- » Whatever process — e.g. a list or an outline view — you decide to adopt, writing a good academic text takes
 - » **Time**
 - » **Work**
 - » (and lots of) **Redrafting**
- » Redrafting can be done to the electronic version of the document (e.g. Track-changes) or on a printed version with a red pen!
- » **Ensure that you leave adequate time for the redrafting stage.**

3. & 4. Drafting and Revision

- » Follow the prescribed academic style format and ensure that each section includes only material relevant to that section heading.
 - » Use numbered headings and decimalised sub-headings (e.g. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3)
- » You will need to revise your draft text a number of times.
- » Re-reading will help you identify
 - » Errors (e.g. typos) and actual Mistakes (factual inconsistencies)
 - » Inconsistences and/or contradictions
 - » Unnecessary repetition

5. Peer Review

- » Peer review is an essential part of professional academic life.
 - » In practice this means getting your tutors to read sections of your thesis as and when you draft them
 - » In more general terms, all of the articles that you read in academic journals will have been (anonymously) “peer-reviewed”
 - » This means that all articles will be pre-screened and checked for reliability and validity prior to being published..

6. Editing and Proof-reading

After the peer review process you will need once again to edit and proof-read your text to correct “surface features”

- » Linguistic accuracy and consistency
 - » Spelling, punctuation, abbreviations
 - » American or British English
 - » Technical terms, transliterations
- » References, acknowledgements, appendices
 - » Citations correct, references complete

7. Formatting & Organisation

Finally you need to format and organise your text to meet the FBE's formatting requirements.

- » Font type, size and spacing
- » Sections and sub-heading conventions
- » Pagination
- » Citation and referencing style.

Key Academic Writing Skills

- » Paraphrasing
- » Summarising
- » Synthesising
- » Analysing
- » Evaluating

Definition

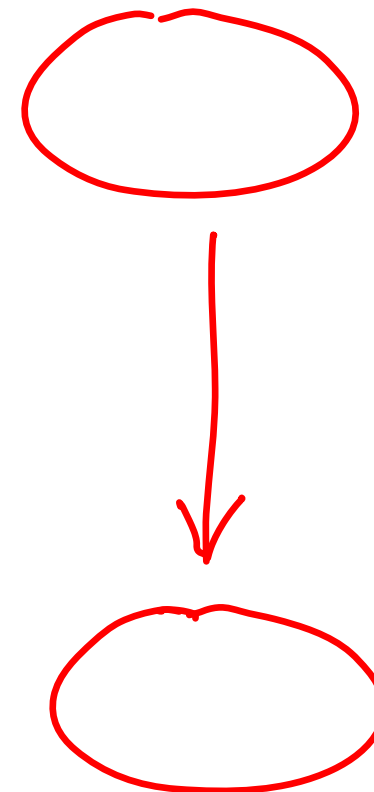
- » “To express the meaning ... in other words”

Explained

- » Being able to explain the meaning of a concept; idea; theory etc. using *different* words

and, *ideally*...

- » To achieve greater clarity in so doing.



Practice: Paraphrasing

» Worksheet: Paraphrasing

TASK 1. FINDING KEY POINTS

You have been told to write an essay on the title: *Can money buy happiness?*

Read this extract and underline the **five** key points.

The Measurement of Happiness

Economists have recently begun to pay more attention to studying happiness, instead of just using the more traditional GDP per person. They have found that in the last 50 years there has been no apparent increase in personal happiness in Western nations, despite steadily growing economic wealth. In both Europe and the USA surveys have found no rise in the level of happiness since the 1950s, which seems surprising given that wealthier people generally

» Key points

(1) Economists have recently begun to pay more attention to studying happiness, instead of just using the more traditional GDP per person. They have found that (2) in the last 50 years there has been no apparent increase in personal happiness in Western nations, despite steadily growing economic wealth. In both Europe and the USA surveys have found no rise in the level of happiness since the 1950s, (3) which seems surprising given that wealthier people generally claim to be happier than poorer people. In America, for example, more than a third of the richest group said they were 'very happy' while only one sixth of the poorest made the same claim. Although it would be

(4) One possible explanation has been that people rapidly get used to improvements, and therefore devalue them because they are taken for granted. Central heating is a good example: whereas 50 years ago it was a luxury item, today it is standard in nearly every home. (5) Another theory is that the figures for GDP per person, used to assess national wealth, do not take into account quality of life factors such as environmental damage or levels of stress, which must affect people's feelings of happiness. The report of a commission set up by the French president recently

Key points paraphrased:

1. Economists have begun to research happiness, rather than simply relying on GDP.
 2. Although Western economies have expanded since the 1950s there has been no parallel growth in happiness.
 3. However, more rich people say they are happy, than do poor people.
 4. It seems that people soon get accustomed to gains and therefore take them for granted.
 5. GDP does not measure environmental or social factors that will also affect people's happiness.
- » These are *examples*, each could be paraphrased using alternate structures and vocabulary.

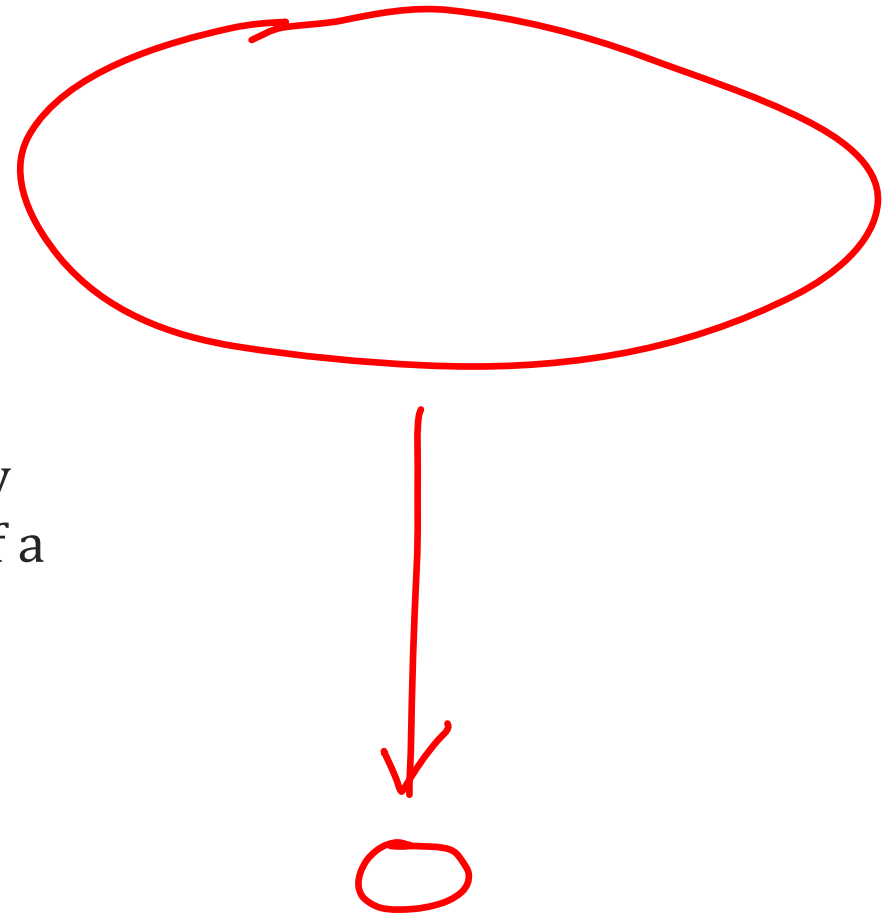
Definition

- » “Succinctly covering the key points of a given argument or theory”

Explained

- » Being able to provide a brief overview or statement of e.g. the main points of a concept; idea; theory etc.

and this will be in your *own words*.



» Worksheet: Summarising

TASK 1. DISTINGUISHING THE SUMMARIES FROM THE ORIGINALS

- The two texts below (Source 1 and Source 2) reflect different approaches to the topic of globalization.
- Read them both and then study the extract from an introduction to an essay which mentions the two sources.

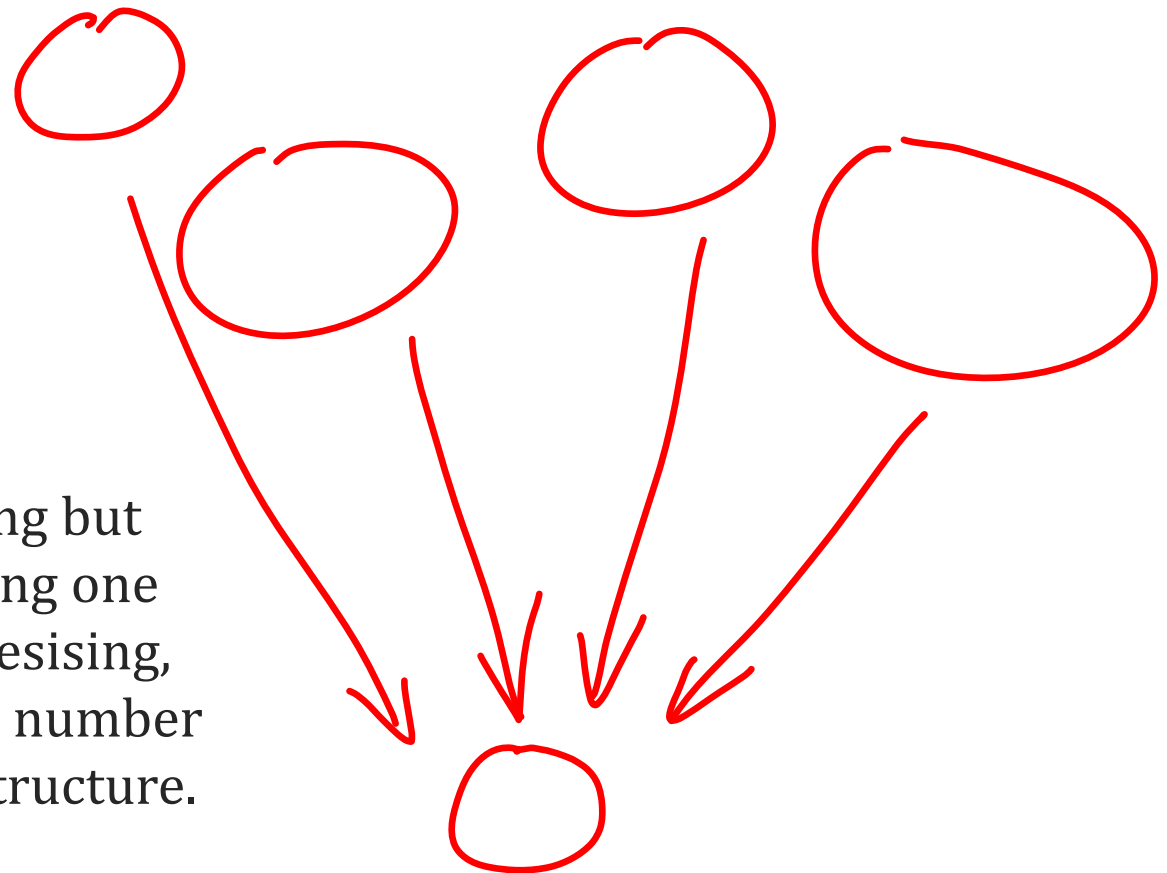
Source 1 (Costa, L. 2008) It has been argued that globalisation is not a new phenomenon, but has its roots in the age of colonial development in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, its modern use can be dated to 1983, when Levitt's article 'The Globalisation of Markets' was published. Among the many definitions of the process that have been suggested, perhaps the simplest is that globalisation is the relatively free movement of services, goods, people and ideas worldwide. An indication of the positive effect of the process is that cross-border world trade, as a percentage of global GDP, was 15 per cent in 1990 but is expected to reach 30 per cent by 2015. Among the forces driving globalisation in the last two decades have been market liberalisation, cheap communication via the internet and telephony, and the growth of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies.

Definition

- » “To combining a number of different things into a coherent whole”

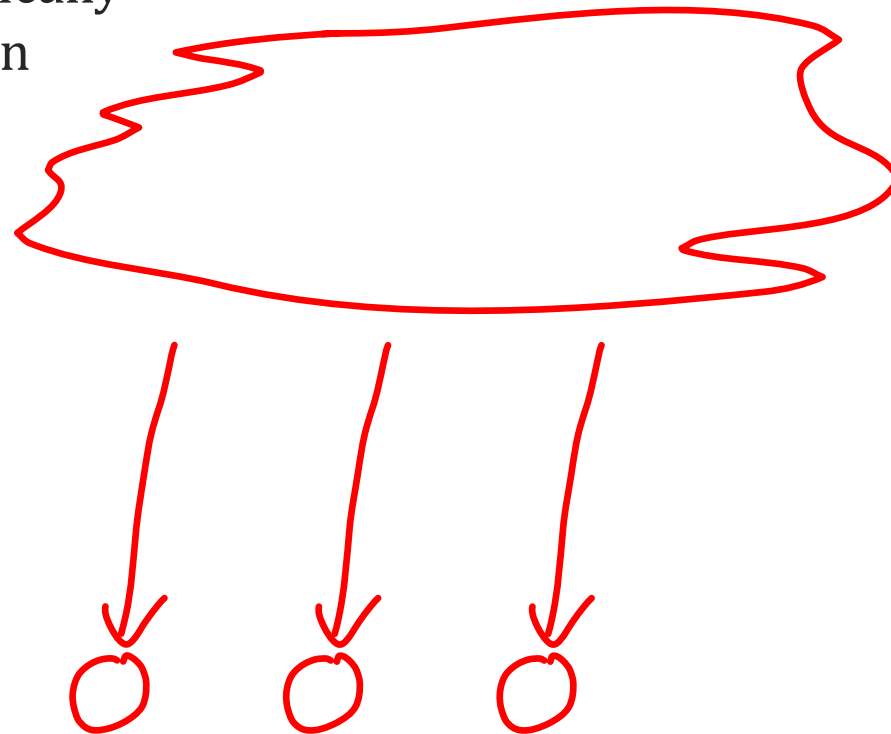
Explained

- » This is similar to summarising but instead of simply summarising one concept or idea, when synthesising, you need to bring together a number of summaries into a single structure.



Definition

- » “Examine methodically and in detail the constitution or structure of something, typically for the purposes of explanation and interpretation”



- » When you evaluate something – either your research, or that of others – you need to decide by which set of criteria you will judge it by
 - » This is similar in some respects to analysing but is arguably more difficult

