| **Descriptive writing** | **Critical writing** |
| --- | --- |
| States what happened | Identifies the significance of what happened |
| States what something is like | Evaluates the strengths and weakness of something |
| Gives the story so far | Analyses how the story so far impacts on the current state/situation |
| Says how to do something | Analyses why things are done a certain way |
| Explains what a theory says | Shows why a theory is relevant.Identifies the strengths and weaknesses of a theory in practice.  |
| Explains how something works | Indicates why something will work (best) |
| Notes the method used | Identifies whether a method was suitable or appropriate |
| Says when something occurred | Identifies why the timing is of importance |
| Identifies the different components of something | Weighs up the importance of component parts |
| States options | Gives reasons for selecting each option |
| Lists details | Evaluates the relative significance of details |
| Lists in any order | Structures information in order of importance |
| States links between items | Shows the relevance of links between pieces of information |
| Gives evidence | Argues a case according to the evidence |
| Provides information for comparison | Makes a reasoned judgement on provided information |
| Gives information | Draws conclusions |

**Descriptive vs Critical Writing**

Adapted from Cottrell, S. (2008). *The study skills handbook* (3rd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.