



Getting A Grip of Academic Writing

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Outline

- ✚ Why bother with academic writing rules?
- ✚ What does academic writing cover?
- ✚ Common errors in academic writing
- ✚ Key issues to note in academic writing



Why bother with academic writing rules?

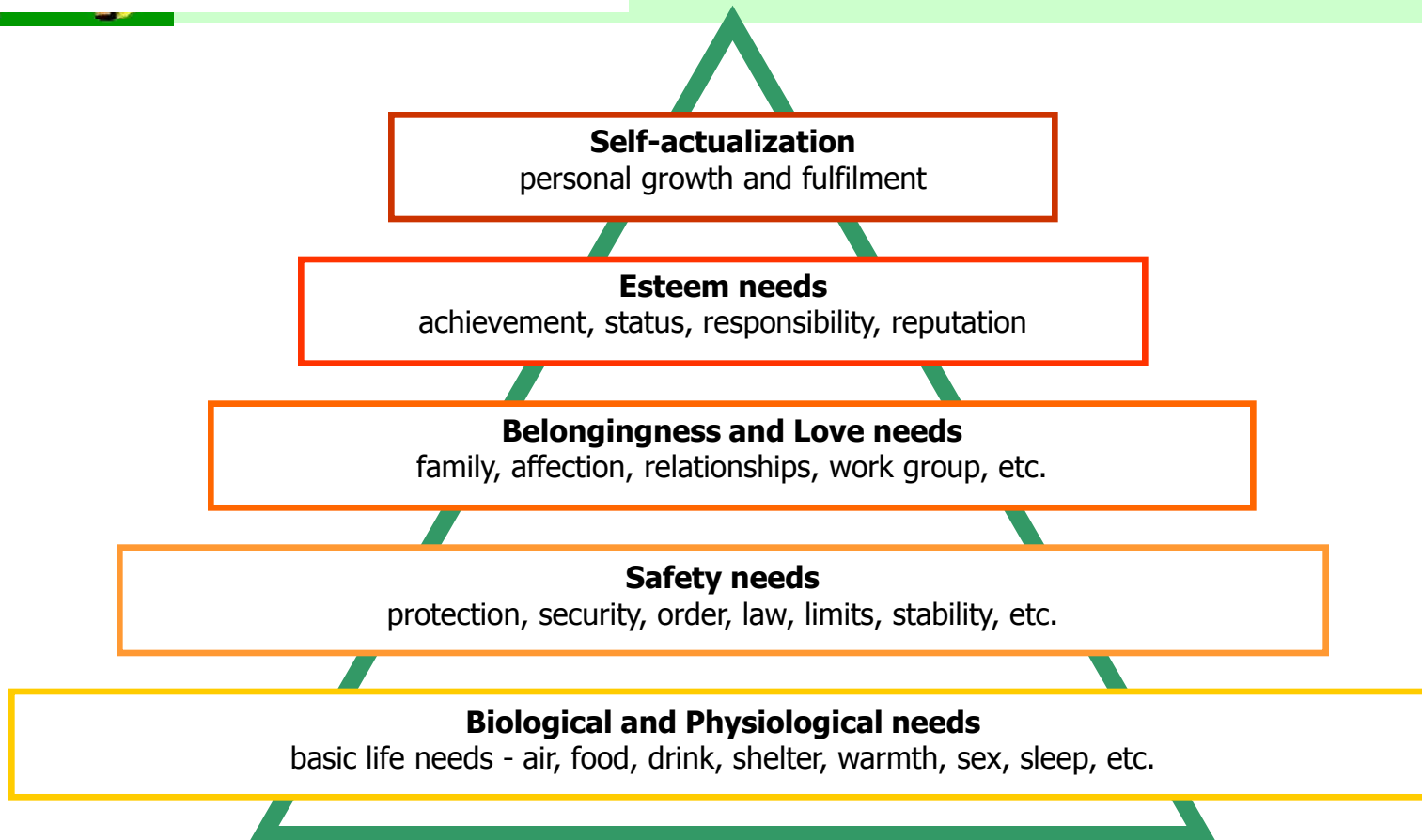


Importance of good academic writing

- ✚ Helps you express yourself
- ✚ Vital for **effective** communication
- ✚ In academia, your writing forms part of **your image**
- ✚ Ensures you **achieve success** as a student & a professional
- ✚ Helps achieve **personal fulfilment** - hierarchy of needs



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

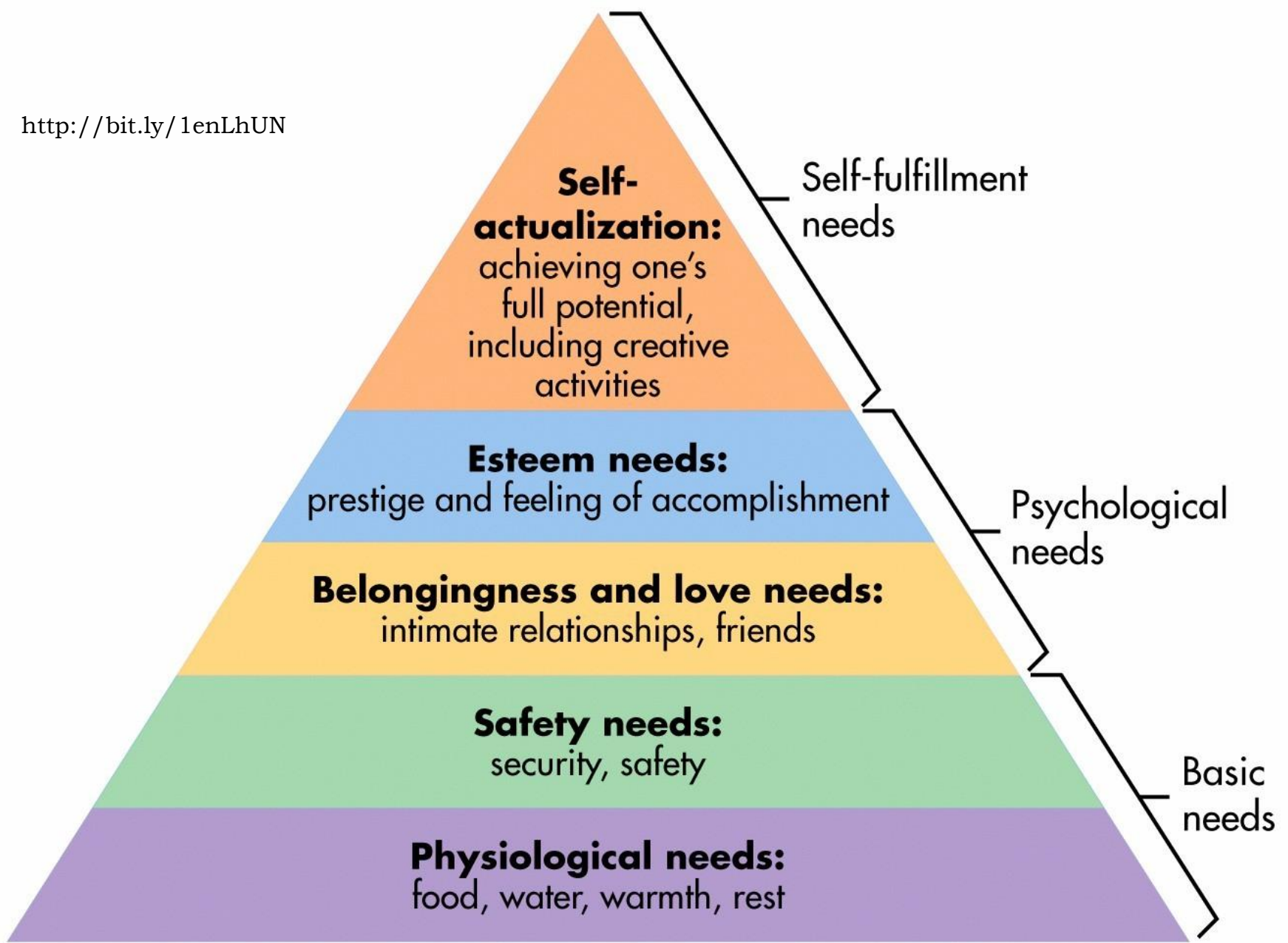


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<http://bit.ly/1enLhUN>





What does academic writing cover?



Definition of academic writing

‘Academic writing refers to a particular style of expression that scholars use to define the boundaries of their disciplines and their areas of expertise’.

<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide>



Examples of Academic writings

- + College or University assignments (essays, lab reports, book reviews...)
- + Research reports
- + Journal articles
- + Academic books and book chapters



Some common errors in academic writing



Some common errors in academic writing...

Exercise 1

1. Write down **two** errors that you think you often make in your academic writings.
2. Discuss these with your neighbour and agree on **two** that you think are either most common or most important



Common errors in academic writing...

Exercise 2

- Read through the following extract and identify errors in the text.



Some common errors in academic writing...

✚ Grammatical errors

- Wrong spellings [common_writing_errors.pdf](#)
- Wrong choice of words
- Incomplete sentences

✚ Writing in the passive voice

✚ Using bullets, lists excessively

✚ Plagiarizing

✚ Assuming your reader understands your context, background...

✚ Failure to adhere to required standards



Key issues to note in academic writing



Characteristics of good academic writing

- # **Formal tone** - you do not write like you are writing to your friend, or write as you speak

- # **Use of the third person**
 - 1st person: I, me, we, us
 - 2nd person: you
 - 3rd person: he, she, him, her, it, they, them, Peter, Jane...

- # **Focus of subject** - what are you writing about?
What is your subject? What is the research focus?



Characteristics of good academic writing...

+ Full grammatically correct sentences

- × No incomplete sentences
- × No colloquial speech [Examples of Informal Language.pptx](#)
- × No slang
- × No SMS language

+ Clarity and conciseness

- × No vagueness
- × No rumblings – wordy, going round in circles...



Characteristics of good academic writing...

+ Cohesiveness

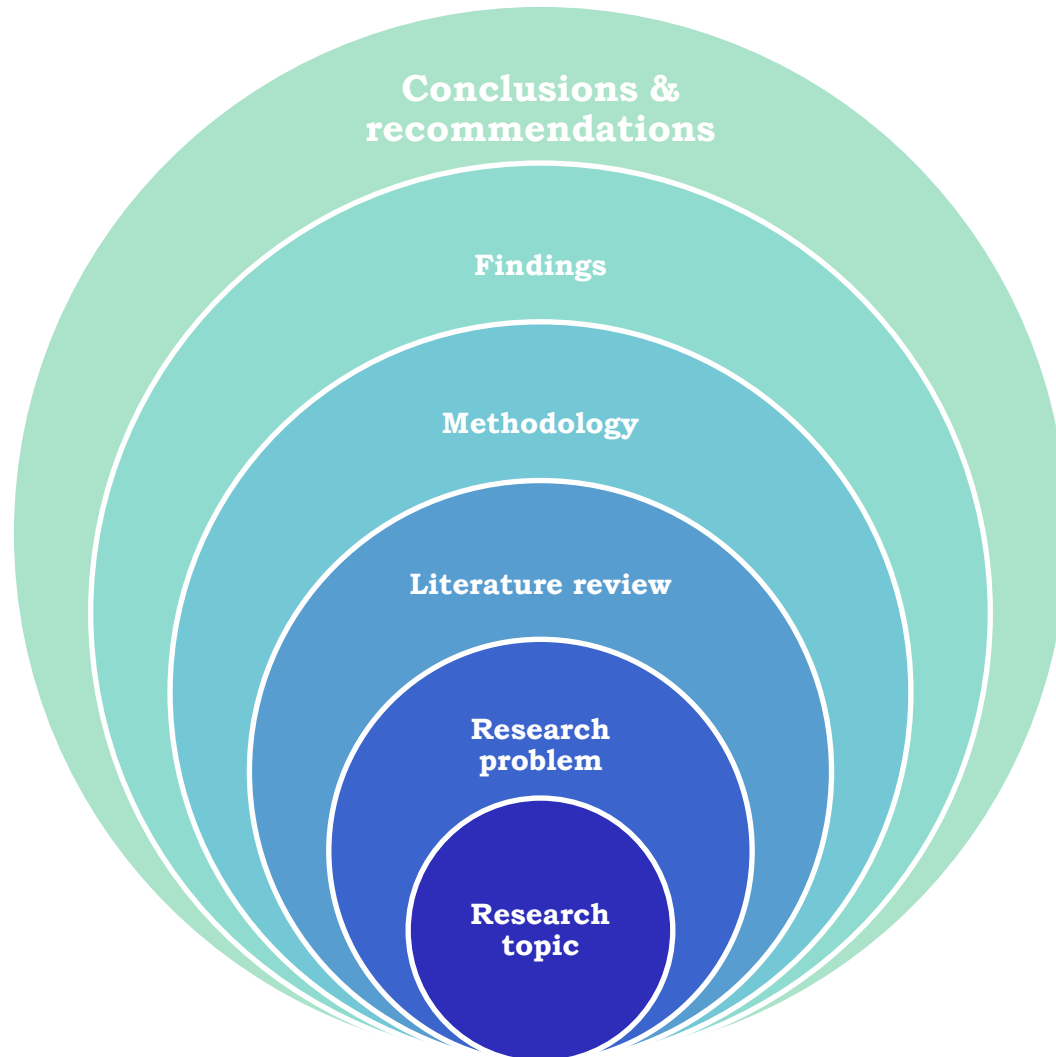
- ideas flow logically
- the ideas are well linked to form a whole
- Sentences, paragraphs all well linked
- Entire document 'holds together'
- × **Avoid staccato style of writing**

+ Authoritative & objective presentation of arguments

- × **No emotions - avoid being confrontational**
- × **Avoid subjectivity**

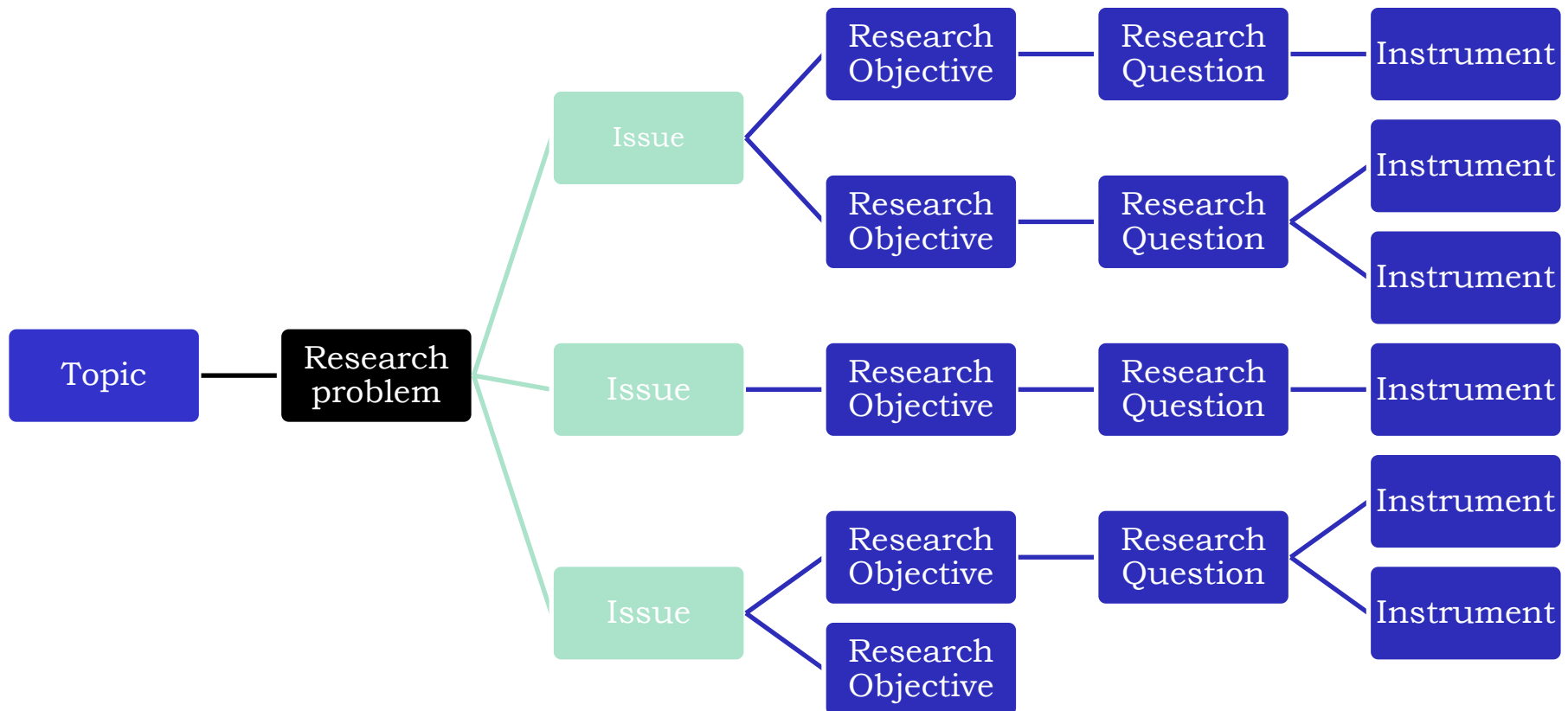


Report **MUST** be cohesive





Report **MUST** be cohesive





Characteristics of good academic writing...

+ **Appropriate language**

- Formal expressions
- Choice of words – appropriate to topic & profession
- Well structured sentences
- Well organized paragraphs
- Grammatically correct expressions

Continuously polish up your language



Characteristics of good academic writing...

- Need the **four** language skills (Listening, speaking, reading & writing)
- What are reading?
- What TV programmes do you watch?
- What radio stations do you watch?
- How often do you write anything?



Characteristics of good academic writing...

✚ Use arguments that are based on evidence (other literature)

- × Avoid depending on rumours and hearsay
- × Unsubstantiated arguments
- × Sweeping statements e.g. 'All Iteso are tall' vs 'Many Iteso are tall'

✚ Avoid words that indicate you are generalizing, or are being presumptuous

'all; always; never; every concerned citizen; clearly; it is obvious that; absolutely; obviously; there is no doubt that; without a doubt; definitely; this essay has proven; absolutely certain; any right-thinking person; certainly; undoubtedly; every'

<http://www.time4english.com/aamain/writing/wacmainf.asp>



Characteristics of good academic writing...

+ Demonstrate critical thinking skills

- Operate at higher order thinking skills
- Don't not simply accept views of other authors – evaluate them
- Present balanced arguments
- Express your own views, & accept your own limitations



Characteristics of good academic writing...

+ Demonstrate critical thinking skills

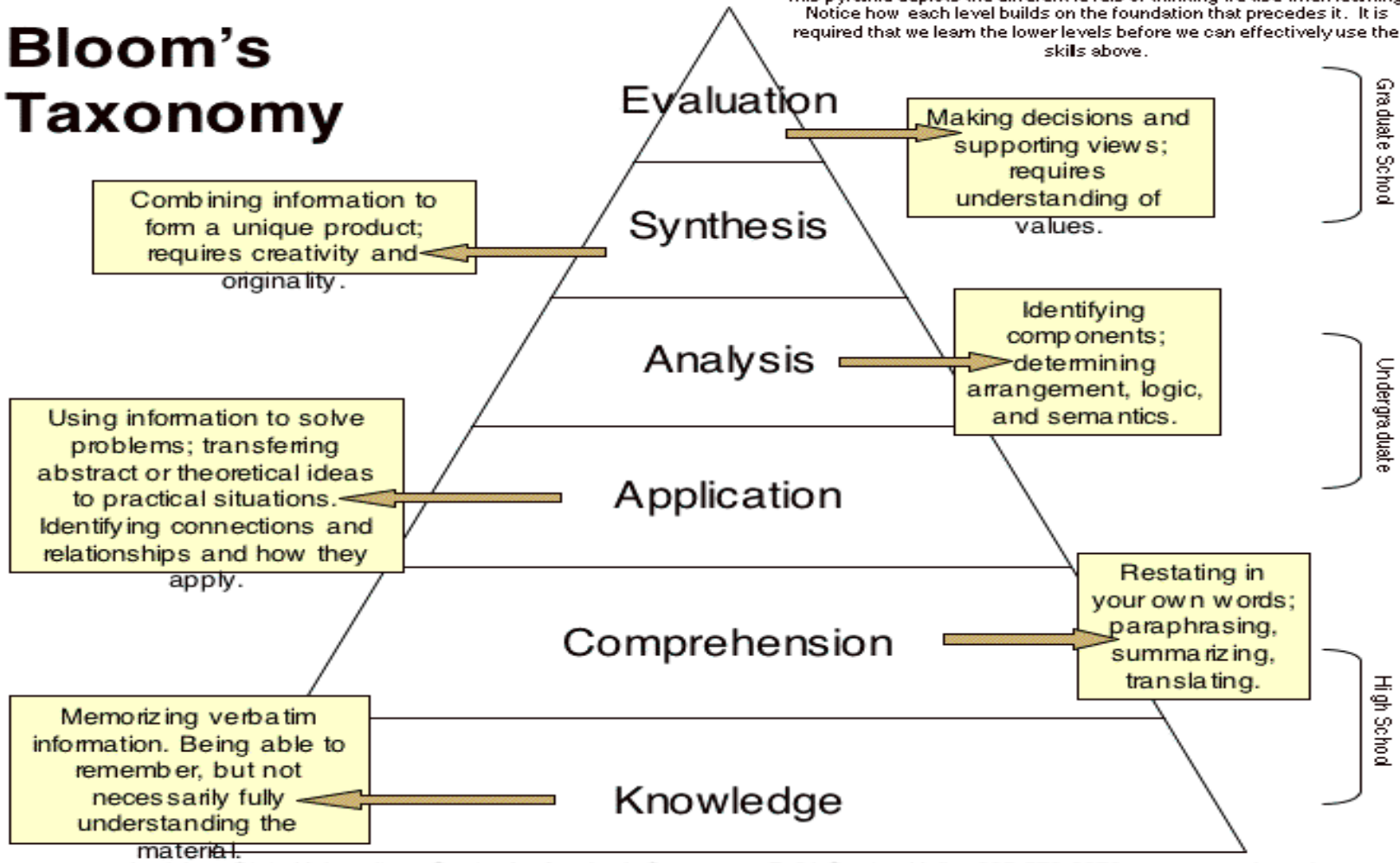
- × Avoid simply focusing on negative aspects of a theory or article
- × Do not take everything on the Internet or that has been published as truth/excellent therefore not requiring critique
- × Avoid patronizing attitude – being full of yourself



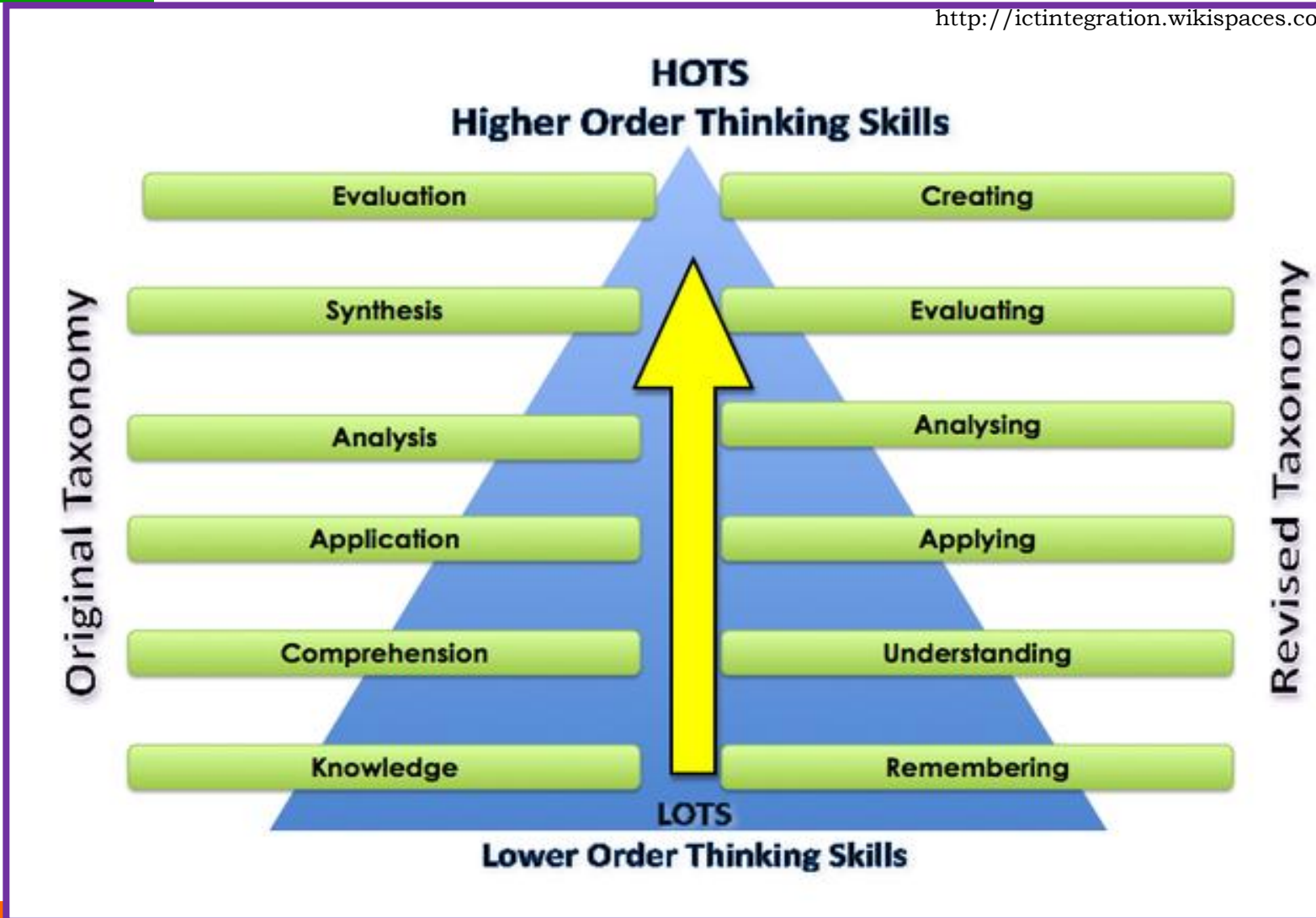
Steve Draper: <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/best/bloom.html>

Bloom's Taxonomy

This pyramid depicts the different levels of thinking we use when learning. Notice how each level builds on the foundation that precedes it. It is required that we learn the lower levels before we can effectively use the skills above.



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Characteristics of good academic writing...

+ **NO plagiarism**

- Consult various authors and borrow ideas
- Whenever necessary acknowledge authors
- Where verbatim words or expressions are used, these are acknowledged as quotations
- Endeavour to understand, interpret & analyse texts read
- Keep a good record of all literature consulted
- **PROOFREAD AND EDIT** your work

[APA 6TH EDITION.pdf](#)



Characteristics of good academic writing...

✚ When does plagiarism occur?

- Using a direct quote but which is not acknowledged
- Paraphrasing a passage but maintaining the sentence and paragraph structure
- ‘Lifting’ someone else’s research problem/questions/hypothesis/thesis/article...
- Using other person’s list of references



Characteristics of good academic writing...

✚ Every academic writing has an agreed structure

- Beginning, middle & end
- Be sure of what the demands are on you are
- E.g. Makerere guideline Section 4.2
- Follow instructions
- Cite correctly
- [Final Research Proposal & thesis format - Ver 4 July 2011\[1\].pdf](#)



Conclusion

- # Good academic writing is attainable
- # See a PhD as a gruelling but pleasurable **LEARNING PROCESS**
- # Learn to write well by practising writing
- # Know the rules



Food for thought

“If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that.”

— Stephen King

<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/writing>



Food for thought

“A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.”

— Maya Angelou

<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/writing>