

Critical Thinking Essay Example:

Patterns, Strengths, and Pitfalls



- Scope: critical analysis vs. summary, report, or opinion piece



- Three-part path: recognizable patterns, demonstrated strengths, common pitfalls



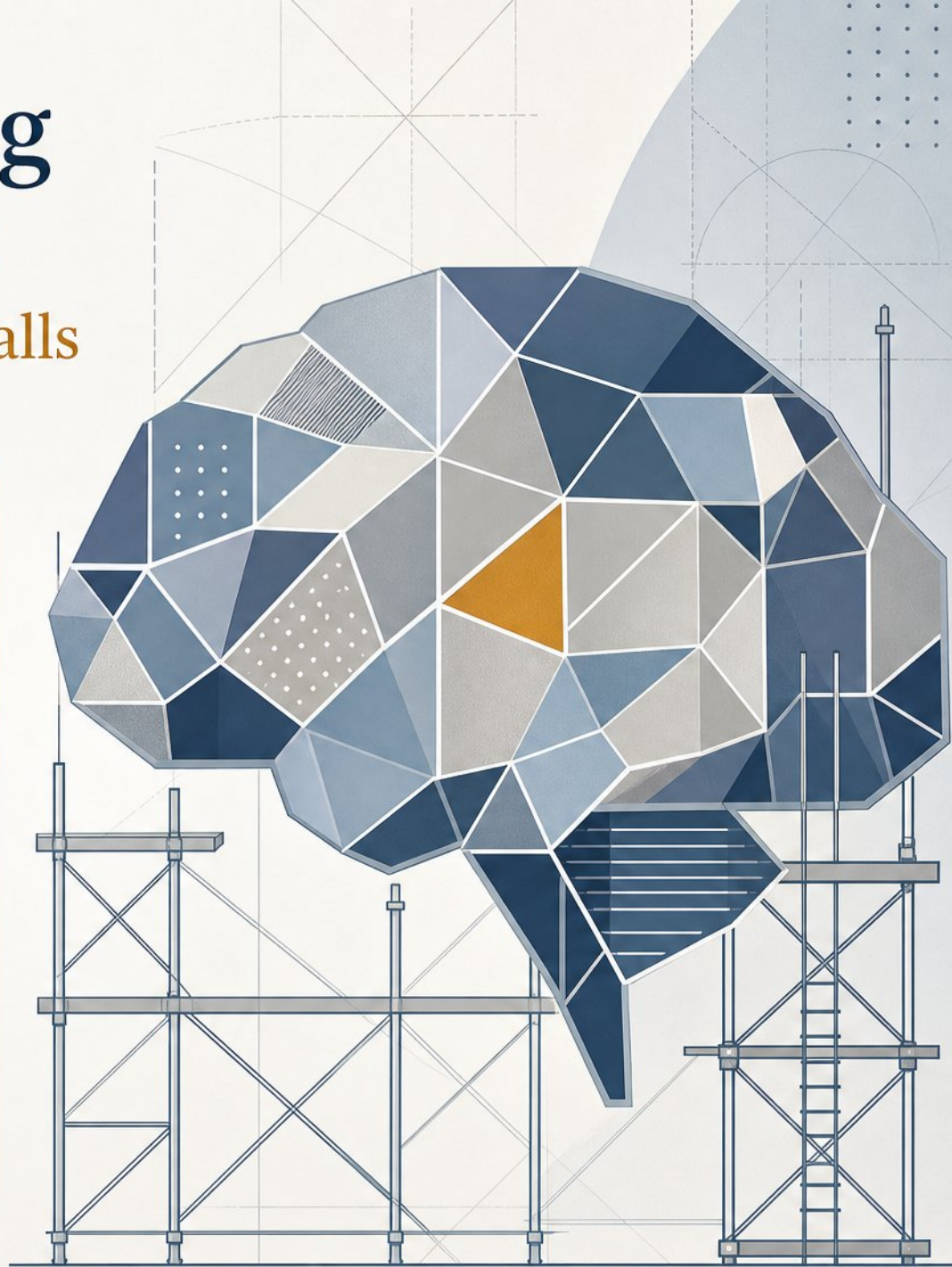
- Why worked examples build transferable analytical judgment



- Takeaway: a reusable framework and practical checklists



- Central claim: strong essays test claims with evidence



What Critical Thinking in Writing Actually Means



- Critical writing evaluates and interprets; it does not attack or dismiss



- Criticism means responding to ideas, argument, and style



- Descriptive writing summarizes and lists; critical writing evaluates



- Core moves: claim, evidence, reasoning, counterargument, conclusion

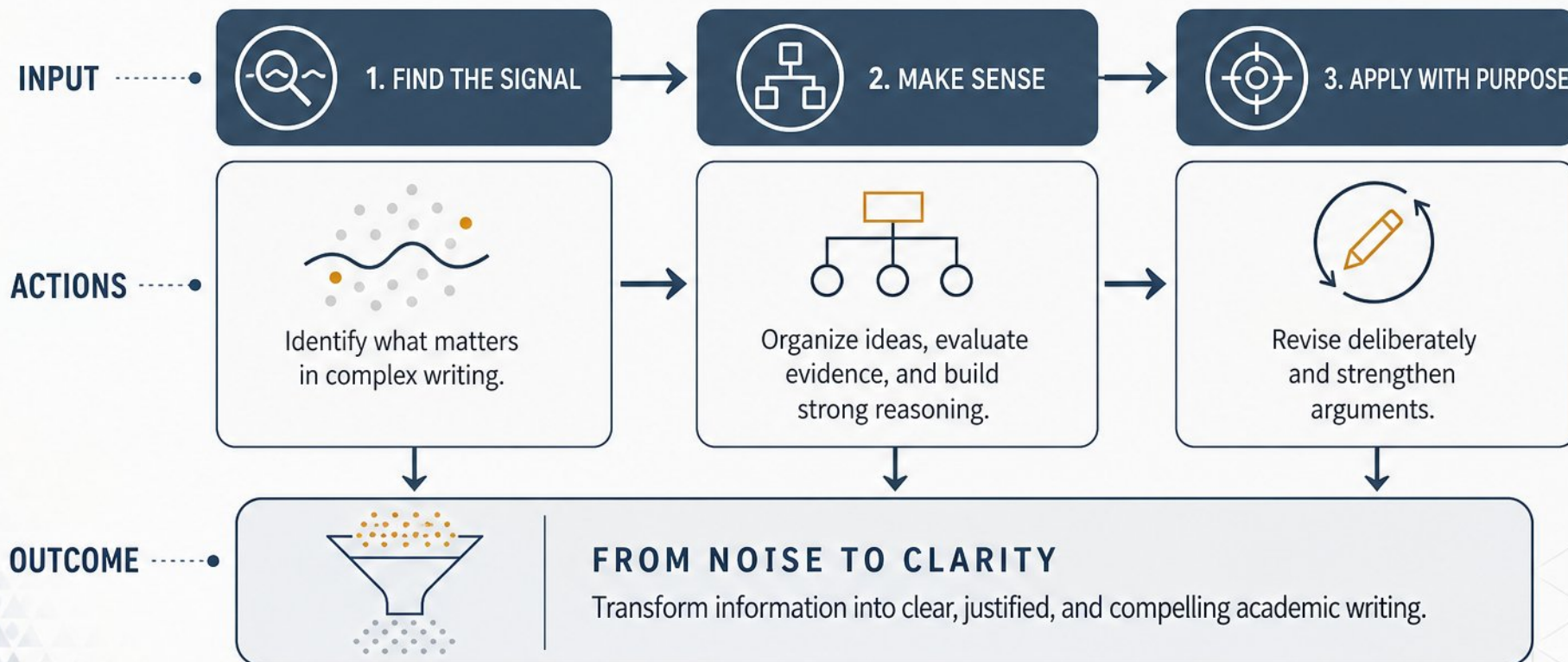


- Habits of mind, not a single template: scepticism plus objectivity



How This Training Is Organized

- Learning path: patterns, strengths, pitfalls, evidence, counterarguments, style, practice, feedback
- Worked example plus reusable checklists turn models into revision tools
- Students analyze and revise; educators model; support staff diagnose with exemplars
- Focus narrowed to academic critical thinking essays and evidence-based revision



Recognizable Patterns in Strong Critical Essays



- Six functional stages: open the issue, state the claim, test, pressure, refine, judge



- Claim → evidence → analysis, not stacked disconnected reasons



- Critical structure differs from chronological summary or pure persuasion



- Paragraph roles: strongest premise, complication, counterclaim, implication



- Each paragraph needs a different function, not another reason

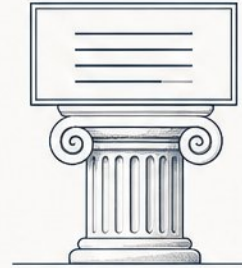
ONE

OPEN THE ISSUE



TWO

STATE THE CLAIM



THREE

TEST



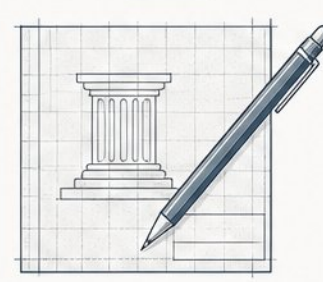
FOUR

PRESSURE



FIVE

REFINE



SIX

JUDGE



Anatomy of a Strong Thesis and Logical Architecture



- Thesis must be specific, debatable, and evidence-anchored



- Sub-claims form a hierarchy, not a disconnected list



- Label each paragraph's function before evaluating content



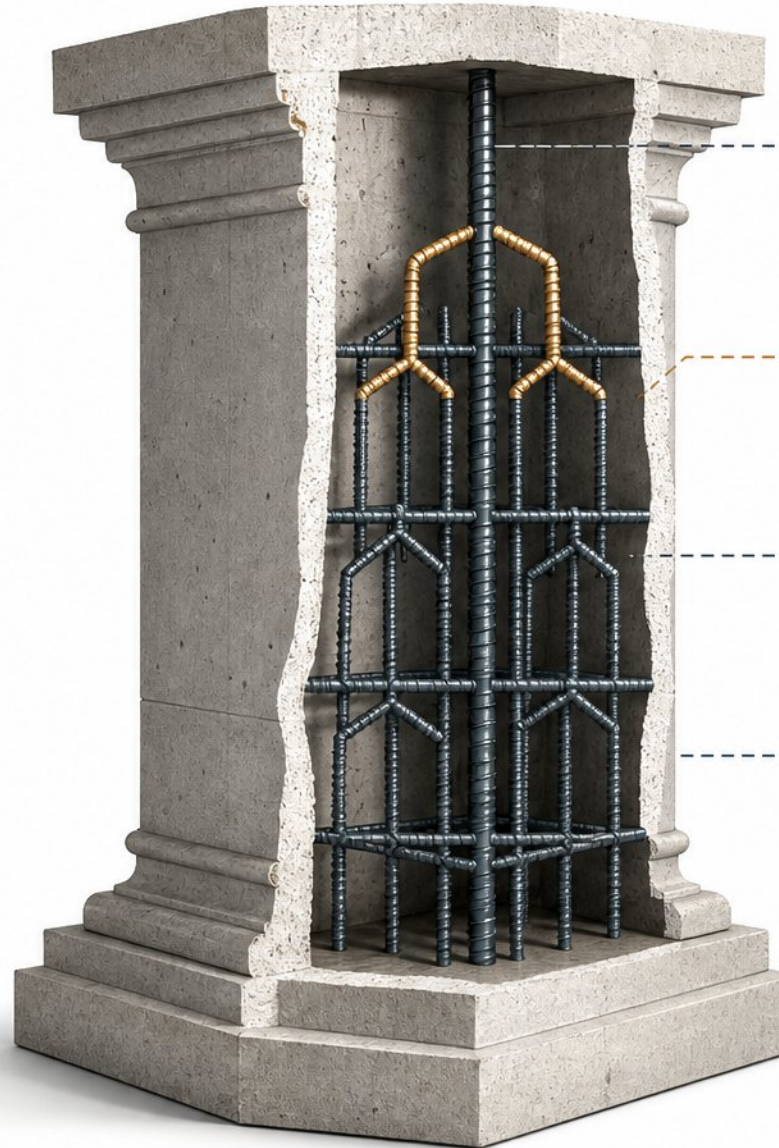
- Tree structure: thesis branches into sub-theses and points



Weak: "Online learning has pros and cons"



Strong: "Flexibility benefits working students, yet weakens peer learning"



• Thesis

The central argument

• Sub-Theses

Major supporting claims

• Points

Evidence and explanations

• Details

Examples and specific support

Strengths of Effective Critical Thinking Essays



Focused argument:
one debatable claim
carried through
every paragraph



Credible evidence:
scholarly sources
interpreted, not
just displayed



Logical transitions:
each paragraph
has a distinct
function



Balanced evaluation:
multiple perspectives
and assumptions
tested



Synthesized conclusion:
judgment tied to
evidence, limits
named



**Rubric-to-move
checklist:**



Evidence quality → evaluate sources, question expert viewpoints



Multiple perspectives → acknowledge complexities, synthesize counterviews



Qualified conclusions → prioritize outcomes, state consequences and limits

Common Pitfalls and Weak Reasoning



- Vague thesis states a topic, not a debatable position



- Unsupported assumptions treated as common sense or self-evident truth



- Circular reasoning restates the claim instead of proving it



- Overgeneralization draws broad rules from small, unrepresentative samples



- Weak evidence relies on opinion, outdated sources, or faulty authority





Evaluating Evidence and Source Quality



- Weigh credibility, relevance, and bias — not just availability



- Primary: original data; secondary: analysis; tertiary: overviews



- Quick test: credibility, relevance, accuracy, purpose



- Lateral reading: check what trusted sources say about it



- Weak evidence undermines even a plausible, well-written claim

EVIDENCE SOURCE A SOURCE SPECIMEN



AUTHOR / CREATOR

Who created it and what are their qualifications?



PURPOSE

Why was it created and what is it trying to do?



CONTENT & EVIDENCE

What evidence is provided and how robust is it?



BIAS / PERSPECTIVE

What viewpoint or agenda might influence it?

WEAK
SIGNAL



TRANSPARENCY

Are methods and sources clearly disclosed?

WEAK
SIGNAL

Building and Refuting Counterarguments



- Anticipate the strongest objection—not a weak caricature



- Parts: opposing view, optional concession, refutation



- Concession: grant what is valid, then explain the limit



- Templates: "Critics argue..." / "Granted..." / "However..."



- Model: cap-and-trade debate, concession, then rebuttal

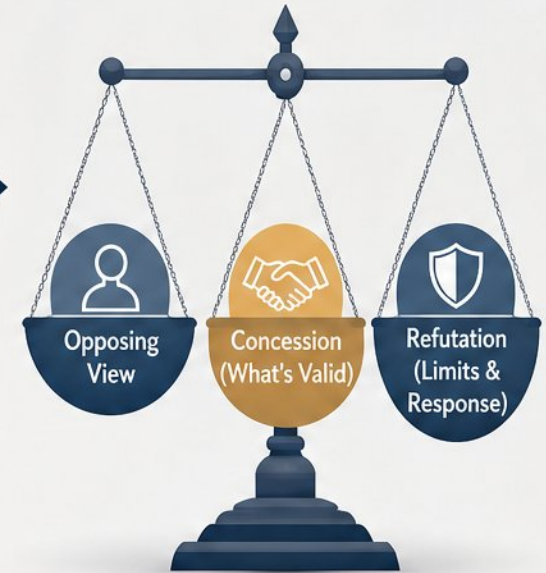
Strong Counterargument

A compelling opposing view stands on its own.



Refined, Qualified Agreement

We acknowledge what's valid, then explain the limits and respond.



Grant what is valid. Clarify the limit. Then present your refutation with reasons and evidence.

Language and Style in Critical Writing



- Hedge when evidence is uncertain: "the data suggest"



- Use boosters sparingly, only when evidence is overwhelming



- Signpost structure, not certainty: "this section examines"



- Replace vague bluster with precise, specific verbs



- Cap hedges at one per claim to avoid overhedging



From Sample Essay to Student Practice



- Analyze any model with the patterns–strengths–pitfalls lens



- Compare student drafts against a strong model using a template



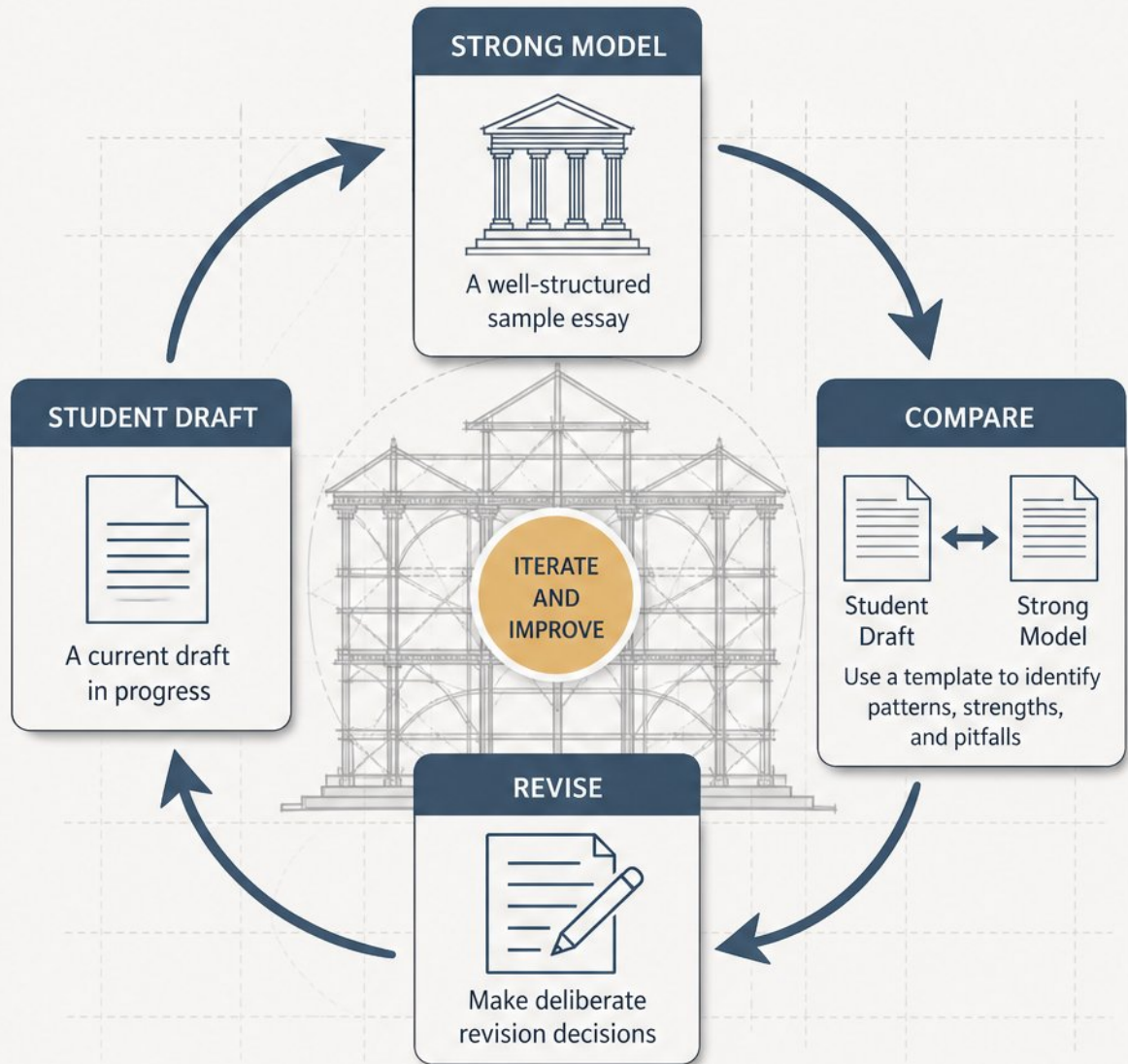
- Think-aloud modeling: show revision decisions, not just fixes



- Label each paragraph's function before judging its content



- Scaffold revision: one or two elements per round



Assessment and Feedback Focused on Reasoning



- Prioritize higher-order concerns: thesis, argument, evidence, organization.



- Tier 1: content/argument;
Tier 2: structure;
Tier 3: grammar patterns.



- Tie comments to rubric language: "developing" thesis — state claim more directly."



- Make feedback specific and actionable; point to exact paragraphs and next steps.



- Limit to 2–3 priority areas; students can't act on 15 comments.

FEEDBACK FOCUS: PRIORITY AREAS



REASONING

Thesis and argument clarity



EVIDENCE

Use and support of evidence



STRUCTURE

Organization and coherence



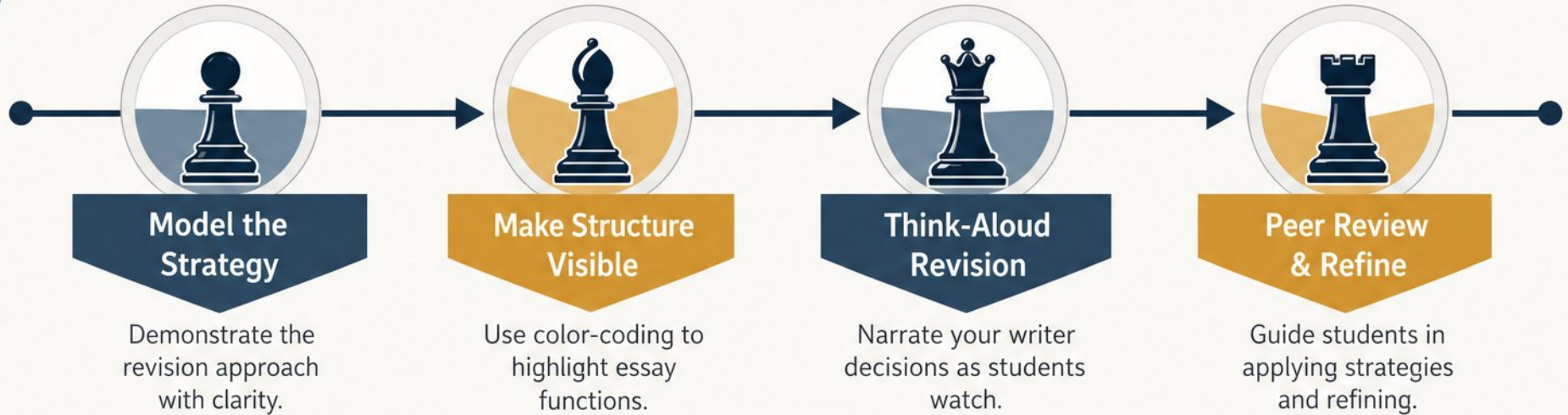
MECHANICS

Grammar, usage, and conventions





Instructional Methods for Modeling and Revision



- Color-code essay functions to make structure visible



- Think-aloud revision: narrate writer decisions as students watch



- Scaffold with models: one or two elements at a time



- Multiple revision rounds build transfer to independent writing



- Exemplars help support staff diagnose recurring difficulties



Summary and Practical Checklist



- Strong essays open, claim, test, pressure, refine, then close with judgment



- Test claims with credible evidence, analysis, and the strongest opposing view



- Avoid vague theses, unsupported assumptions, circular reasoning, overgeneralization, weak evidence



- Checklist: clear issue, debatable thesis, credible sources, counterargument, qualified conclusion



- Next steps: label paragraph functions, model think-aloud revision, use rubric-linked feedback

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