



ESSAY PLANNING & WRITING

Tertiary assessment is primarily undertaken through essay writing. Essay questions can vary in many ways but the process for writing them is generally the same. This process involves careful planning and preparing before writing and revising. The following steps are a guide to assist you in essay writing.

1. ANALYSE & DEFINE THE TOPIC OR QUESTION

A good essay must answer the question appropriately. Identify instruction words (analyse, explain, compare, contrast, discuss, evaluate...) content words (words that indicate what the topic is about), limiting words (part that defines or narrows the content to a particular focus).

2. IDENTIFY THE KEY IDEAS & TOPICS TO RESEARCH

This draws from your analysis. Brainstorm, review lecture and tutorial notes, look at course outline and requirements to determine areas of importance.

3. RESEARCH

Using the key ideas or topics from the last stage, research to find relevant evidence. Look at the library catalogue, bibliographies, lecture notes and slides and online resources. Remember to always take notes as you research and record all the sources of your information accurately.

4. DEVELOP A THESIS STATEMENT & FORMULATE YOUR ARGUMENT

Consider if the thesis statement answers the question and what you will need to do to persuade your reader. Identify the evidence (examples, quotations, definitions) and structure (compare and contrast, evaluate, look at case studies).

5. WRITE AN ESSAY PLAN

An essay plan is a visual organisation of your ideas to help you develop your argument logically and identify the order of your presentation.

Essay Question:

Introduction: This includes your thesis statement, how you will answer the question and any background information on the topic. It will use approximately 10% of the word count.

Body: Divide the body into paragraphs, each dealing with one idea or topic. Each paragraph needs a topic sentence, explanation or evidence and a concluding sentence that links to the next paragraph. The body will use approximately 80% of the word count.

Conclusion: Summarise the thesis without restating and synthesise the evidence. This should be approximately 10% of the word count.

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6. WRITE A DRAFT

Write the initial essay to work out what you know about the topic and identify areas that need strengthening. Make sure you are clear about what you are writing about and the direction of your argument.

7. MORE FOCUSED READING & RESEARCH

Identify information 'gaps' in your draft and find sources and examples for particular points.

8. REVISE AND REWRITE

Read your work carefully, check that the structure and arguments are clear, develop the body paragraphs, work on clear transitions between paragraphs, delete unnecessary information. If you have time, take a break before moving on to the next step.

9. EDIT & PROOFREAD

Read the essay aloud. Edit the argument for clarity and coherency, edit the structure for smooth transitions and logical development, edit paragraphs for clear content and well-developed ideas, edit sentence structure and vocabulary. Proofread for grammar, spelling, punctuation and accurate referencing. Check formatting is correct.

10. SUBMIT ESSAY

Ensure the word count is recorded, attach the cover sheet and bibliography, number the pages, check that the essay is backed up and saved. Tidy notes and consolidate files when the essay is done. Evaluate your study process to identify improvements for next time.

When You Get an Essay Back

After you have skipped straight to the grade, it is important to put your initial response behind you and review the comments and feedback that has been provided on your work. Consider this process as part of a conversation and respond to the comments on your essay. This is an important part of improving your writing and learning from your mistakes.

Marginal Comments:

Correct the grammar, punctuation or spelling errors, rewrite sentences so they are clearer, or find the correct word.

End Comments:

These usually deal with more general issues such as confused paragraphing, incomplete argument or lack of evidence. Respond to these yourself and try to improve any aspects that you can.