Essay Writing

Selected Essays

2023

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B2 First for Schools Writing Part 1 (An opinion essay)

Summary

- Review the format and focus of Part 1 of the Writing paper.
- Revise useful vocabulary for writing an opinion essay.
- Learn useful techniques for planning your own essay.
- Evaluate two examples of a Writing Part 1 essay.
- Practise and evaluate your own answer to a Writing Part 1 task.

Review: Writing Part 1

The B2 First for Schools Writing paper has two parts. Part 1 has only one task, which you **must** answer. You will:

- ✓ be given the essay title.
- ✓ be given two ideas to write about.
- ✓ need to add one more idea of your own.
- ✓ need to give an opinion and support it with reasons.
- ✓ need to write between 140 and 190 words.

Tip! You don't have to be an expert, but you still have to answer the question!
The topic will be something of general interest, so you won't need any specialist knowledge. However, it is very important that you write approximately the right number of words. This shows that you can select relevant information, organise it well, avoid repetition and keep the reader interested.

Your essay will be assessed according to these four criteria:

1. Content	Focuses on how well you have completed the task, in other words, if you have answered the question.
2. Communicative Achievement	Focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the task and whether you have used formal or informal style appropriately. For example, is the style right for a magazine article?
3. Organisation	Focuses on the way you put together the piece of writing. Are the ideas logical and ordered? Have you used paragraphs and linking words?
4. Language	Focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes demonstrating the range of language that you know, as well as how accurate it is.

Tip! Manage your time.
Try to spend no more than 40 minutes on Writing Part 1. The Writing Paper has two parts and you will have 80 minutes in total. Part 1 and Part 2 are both worth the same number of marks, so you should spend approximately the same amount of time (about 40 minutes) on each part.

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Prepare to write 1: Review useful language

In Writing Part 1, you need to show that you can use language appropriately to do things such as:

- Agreeing or disagreeing
- Giving opinions
- Giving information or explanations
- Giving reasons
- Giving examples
- Comparing and contrasting ideas and opinions
- Drawing conclusions

You should also use a range of suitable expressions to organise your essay and help your reader understand the connections between your ideas.

Look at the following phrases. Can you put them in the correct groups according to their function in an opinion essay? (The first one has been done for you as an example.)

- ~~In my opinion / view…~~
- However, …
- I partly / fully agree that…
- Although…
- In addition to this, …
- Firstly / Secondly / Thirdly …
- Moreover, …
- Finally…
- Consequently…
- In conclusion…
- Furthermore, …
- Another reason why…
- To sum up…
- I firmly believe that…
- What is more, …
- As a result…
- I personally feel that…
- First / Second of all…

Giving your own opinion	Structuring and sequencing your ideas	Adding ideas	Contrasting two ideas / examples / statements	Explaining
Example: In my opinion / view…				

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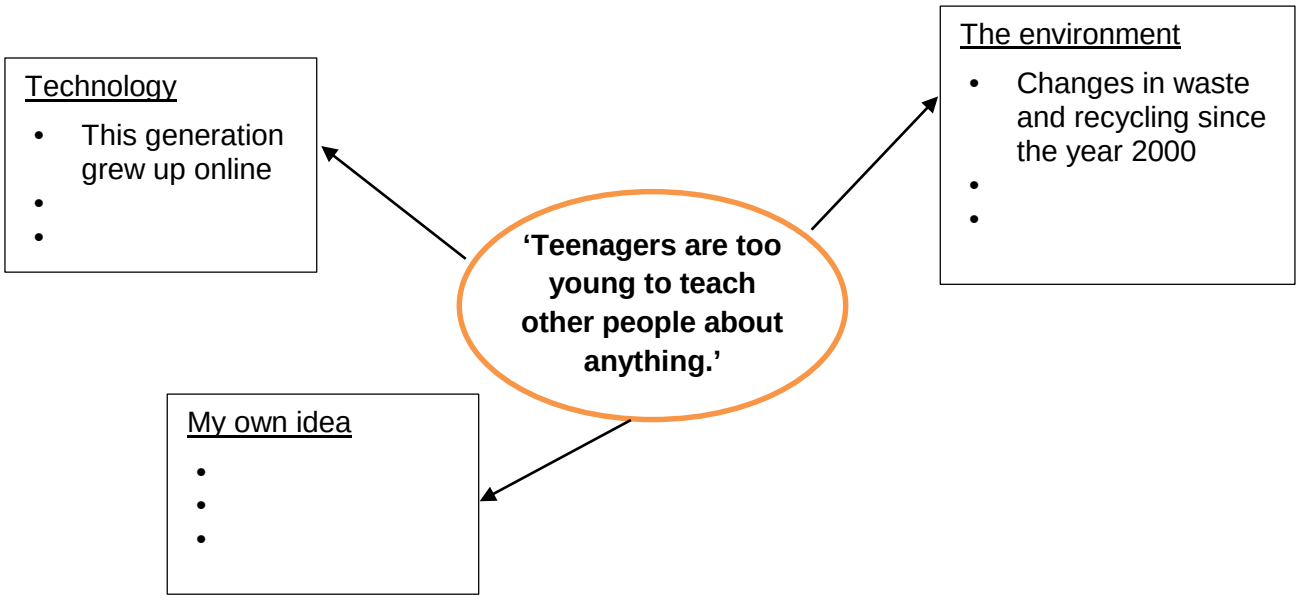
Prepare to write 2: Generate and organise ideas

1. Imagine that you have been given the following essay task:

> **'Teenagers are too young to teach other people about anything.'**
>
> **Do you agree?**
>
> **Notes**
> Write about:
>
> 1. technology 2. the environment 3. …… (your own idea)

How could you develop these first two ideas? Take notes in your notebook using a mind map like this:



Tip! Read the task carefully.
In Writing Part 1, you must use **all** the notes which are given in the task. For example, for the task above, if you wrote about technology but didn't mention the environment, you would lose marks.

2. Add your own third idea to the mind map above, then add some notes to develop this idea.

3. Now do a brief internet search about this topic. (Make sure you use websites that are in English!) Can you find anything interesting that you would like to add to your mind map?

Tip! Plan the structure of your essay before you write.
One of the assessment criteria for Writing Part 1 is *Organisation*. It's difficult to organise an essay clearly without making a simple plan first. Decide what points to include, in what order, and how they are connected – *then* start writing your essay. (Cross out your plan before you submit your test paper, so the examiner will assess only your essay and not the plan.)

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Here's a useful structure for an opinion essay:

Paragraph 1	Introduce the topic using a general statement and give your opinion. Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement.
Paragraph 2	Give the first reason to support your opinion. Provide specific justifications for your opinion, using examples if necessary.
Paragraph 3	Give the second reason to support your opinion. Provide specific justifications for your opinion, using examples if necessary.
Paragraph 4	Give the third reason to support your opinion. Make sure this is clearly different from the points you made in the previous 2 paragraphs.
Paragraph 5	Summarise your ideas and repeat your opinion using different words to provide a strong conclusion.

Evaluation task 1: Two sample essays

Below, there are two examples of essays written in response to the task given in **Prepare to Write 2**. It's now your job to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these essays according to the 4 assessment criteria that you looked at in **Review: Writing Part 1**.

1. Read each student's work and take notes in the table below their essay.
2. Give each student a mark out of 5 for each assessment category.
3. Which essay do you think would get a higher mark in the B2 First for Schools exam? Why?

Student A:

Adults often think teenagers to be noisy, childish and violent. Some of them even don't think they have any adult senses or wise thoughts at all but, as a teenager, I think we're intelligent enough to teach other people some things, and, according to this, I'm not agree with the quotation on top of the page.

For example, lots of teenagers have better knowledge in technology, so they can teach the older generation how to deal with gadgets. In our gymnasium there are special classes for the senior people where they are taught to work on computers, and their teachers are teenagers.

Moreover, teenagers have the great knowledge in ecology, and they are really concerned on saving the planet alive. We talk a lot about environment on classes, we take part in ecology olympiades and contests for the best ecological projects and often won them, so we have a lot to tell the others about environmental problems and ways of their solving.

Besides this, teenagers can teach adults foreign languages. According to the statistics, 50% of adult generation of our country don't know any foreign languages, so we can help them to come by the new knowledge or to improve that what they have. And, of course, students from foreign countries can teach Russian students their language, and Russians can teach them Russian. It is sometimes done in linguistic centres.

To sum up I can say that teenagers have great knowledge in many fields of study, so they can also teach the people of older generation and their classmates and friends.

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Content: • Did they use all the notes given in the task? • Did they write 140-190 words, or is it too long / short?	**Communicative Achievement**: • Is the style suitably neutral / formal? • Is every point justified with a clear reason?	**Organisation**: • Is the essay organised into clear paragraphs? • Is the order logical? • Is the punctuation correct? • Did they use linking words?	**Language**: • Did they use a good range of vocabulary and grammar related to the topic? • Did they use language accurately?
___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5

Student B:

I don't think that teenagers are too young to teach other people about anything. Of course, they can't know very well some things, for example: some scientific theories, history, mathematic at all and etc, but a lot of teenagers know a lot about technology. It's normal for them to spend a lot of time with computer, different gadgets. Most of them know, how these gadgets work, so they can explain other people different moments of their working. My Granny often asks to me for a piece of advice about her mobile phone. Teenagers' knowledge about technology usually based on practice, so often they don't know about process of creating the phone, the TV, etc. They really shouldn't try to tell about things, which they don't know.

People don't need special knowledge about our world to make it better. Teenagers have a lot of time for help the environment and sometimes they tell about it people, who usually are very busy and couldn't notice the awful problems. So they can and must tell and teach people to help our planet.

In my opinion, teenagers shouldn't teach other people about things, which they know very bad, it may be only funny and of course they ought to teach other people and help them with things, which they know very good. Today all people have opportunity to learn everything, what they want. They can search information in the Internet, in books and the age doesn't matter.

Content: • Did they use all the notes given in the task? • Did they write 140-190 words, or is it too long / short?	**Communicative Achievement**: • Is the style suitably neutral / formal? • Is every point justified with a clear reason?	**Organisation**: • Is the essay organised into clear paragraphs? • Is the order logical? • Is the punctuation correct? • Did they use linking words?	**Language**: • Did they use a good range of vocabulary and grammar related to the topic? • Did they use this language accurately?
___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5

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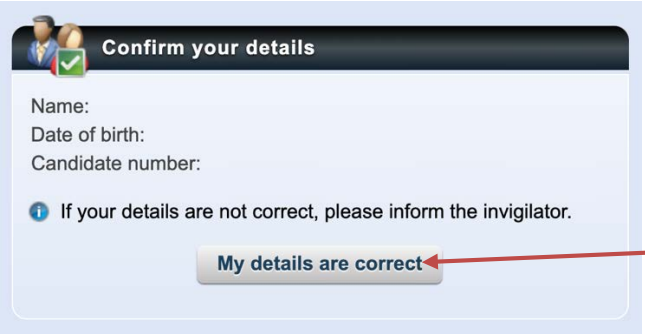
Now compare your notes and marks with the examiner feedback. This is supplied at the end of the document. See **Evaluation task 1: Sample essays - Examiner feedback.**
Do you agree or disagree with the examiner? Why?

Exam task: Writing Part 1

Great work! You're ready to practise writing an opinion essay for a real Writing Part 1 test.

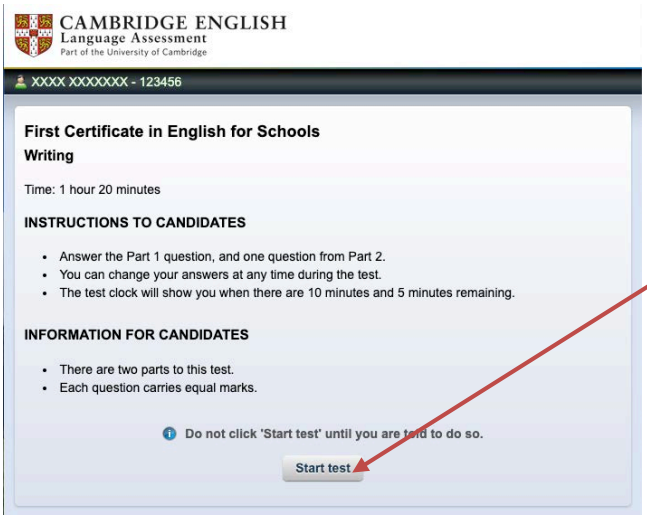
There are two ways you can do this: on the computer, or on paper. Both options are explained below.

1. To try the computer-based test, you need to use the Firefox or Chrome browser. **Click here to open the test website** and then follow the steps on the next page to begin the test:



1. This is only a *practice* test. You do not have to enter any personal details here.

2. Simply click this button to continue.



3. Read all the instructions carefully.

4. Click this button to start the test. You will move to the next screen and the timer will begin automatically.

Important! Before you begin, please note:

- The online practice test includes Writing Part 2 as well, but you don't have to do this part now.
- Make sure you save a copy of your essay for the final stage in this lesson.

2. If you prefer to do the practice test on paper, simply use the task below.

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Some parents teach their children at home rather than sending them to school. Is this a good or a bad thing for the children?

Notes

Write about:

1. having a parent as a teacher
2. making friends
3. ..... (your own idea)

Source: *Sample Test 1, D255/02*. © UCLES 2015 Cambridge English Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International.

Evaluation task 2: Your own essay

Great work! In the real exam, you should always check your work carefully one final time before you submit your paper. Look at the essay you just wrote and ask yourself honestly:

Content	1. Have you included all the points from the question in your notes? 2. Is your writing too long/short?
Communicative Achievement	1. Have you given a clear reason to justify each point? 2. Have you given your opinion in the first and the final paragraph – but using different words.
Organisation	1. Is your writing organised into clear paragraphs? 2. Have you included linking words to connect your ideas?
Language	1. Have you checked your spelling carefully? 2. Have you used a variety of adjectives/adverbs? If you have repeated words, can you use synonyms?

Now play the role of the examiner. What mark would you give your writing for **Content**, **Communicative Achievement**, **Organisation** and **Language**?

Evaluation task 2: Compare your own essay with a model answer

Compare your essay with a model answer for the task you practised in this lesson and read the examiner's feedback.

Look back at your essay and think:

1. What are the similarities and differences between your essay and the model answer?
2. Is there anything you would you change about your essay? What? Why?

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Improve your writing skills

Tip! Get a study buddy. Students can learn a lot from each other.

Working together with other students is a really good way for you all to learn and develop your skills. If you have a classmate or friend who also did this practice Writing Part 1 task, why not swap essays and evaluate each other's work? You can give useful critical feedback that will help each other improve the next essay that you write.

Reflect: How do you feel about your writing skills?

Write some ideas in your notebook about these questions:

1. What have you learned from this lesson about writing a good opinion essay?
2. Which areas of writing do you still need to develop?
3. What did you do well in this sample task?

One final tip before you go

Visit **WriteAndImprove.com** to practise your writing skills and get immediate feedback to help you continue developing. There are a range of exam-style tasks at different levels for you to try.

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Answer key[1]

Prepare to write 1: Review useful language

Giving your own opinion	Structuring and sequencing your ideas	Adding ideas	Contrasting two ideas / examples / statements	Explaining
In my opinion / view… I personally feel that… I firmly believe that… I partly / fully agree that…	Firstly / Secondly / Thirdly … First / Second of all… Finally… In conclusion… To sum up…	Another reason why… In addition to this, … Moreover, … Furthermore, … What is more, …	However, … Although…	Consequently… As a result…

Evaluation task 1: Sample essays - Examiner feedback

Here is examiner feedback for the two essays you evaluated in this lesson.

Student A – Examiner feedback

Content	**Communicative Achievement**	**Organisation**	**Language**
All content is relevant and the reader is fully informed. The writer discusses the statement and gives examples to support their opinions and develop their argument. The essay is focused on the knowledge and skills that teenagers have. The third point, the writer's own idea, focuses on language skills that teenagers have and how they can use these to help others communicate.	The essay uses a good style which communicates the writer's ideas effectively and clearly. The paragraphs are well constructed and the main points are introduced with suitably formal phrases (*For example; Moreover; Besides this; According to; To sum up*). The essay does not present *both* sides of the argument, but this is OK.	The text is well organised and uses a variety of linking expressions and grammar (like pronouns) to make references clear. Some organisational features are used well: for example, the first paragraph presents a popular view of teenagers (*noisy, childish and violent; Some of them* [adults] *even don't think*). This is contrasted with, *but, as a teenager, I think*, mirroring the construction of the previous statement.	There is a range of technical and some environmental vocabulary, plus some formal essay vocabulary (*According to the statistics*). There is a range of simple and complex grammar, which is mostly accurate. There are some mistakes with less common vocabulary, but this is only because the writer is being ambitious.
Mark: 5	Mark: 4	Mark: 5	Mark: 4

[1] All sample tasks and feedback in this lesson are adapted from the B2 First for Schools *Handbook for teachers*.
 Available online at **https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/first-for-schools/**

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Student B – Examiner feedback

Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
All content is relevant and the reader is fully informed. The essay discusses the main question of whether teenagers are too young to teach and provides an opinion on what teenagers are good at (*a lot of teenagers know a lot about technology*), and how practical knowledge of technology can help others (*they can explain other people different moments of their working*). In the second point, the writer explains that teenagers have time to learn about environmental problems and should share this knowledge. Finally, the third point presents the negative aspect that teenagers are more practical and sometimes aren't able to teach a subject in much detail (*they can't know very well some things, for example: some scientific theories; often they don't know about process of creating the phone; shouldn't teach other people about things, which they know very bad*).	The essay uses a good style in general, which communicates the writer's ideas effectively overall. The writer uses good language for giving explanation and opinion. The first two points are included in separate paragraphs, but the third point is an idea which is expressed in the whole essay. If this idea were discussed in a separate paragraph, the three points would be presented more clearly, and it would be easier for the reader to pay attention.	The essay is generally well organised, with a clear introduction and paragraphs. The writer uses a variety of linking words and other referencing features (*Of course; for example; Most of them; In my opinion*). The conclusion states an opinion on the main question (*teenagers shouldn't teach other people about things, which they know very bad*). It doesn't summarise all of the main points, but this is OK.	A range of everyday vocabulary is used appropriately in the context of this essay (*a piece of advice; based on practice; process of creating; special knowledge*). Simple grammatical forms are used well. When the writer tries to use more complex forms, there are a lot of mistakes. For example, specific expressions or use of prepositions (*they can't know very well; explain other people; tell about things; time for help*). The number of mistakes makes the whole essay less effective, but the reader can usually still understand what the writer means.
Mark: 5	Mark: 2	Mark: 3	Mark: 2

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Evaluation task 2: Your own essay

Here is a model answer, with examiner feedback, for the task you practised in this lesson.

Nowadays, more and more parents are making the controversial decision to teach their children at home rather than sending them to school. Although this approach to education has advantages, pupils who learn only at home definitely lose more oportunities.

First, children who don't go to school only know two teachers, the same people who are also their parents. Because of this, the pupils may not learn other points of view outside their family. Besides this, there is also the question if parents have the qualifications and knowledge to teach every subject. Perhaps their mother and father are experts in one or two subjects, but any school provides teachers expert in every subject.

We should remember that there is more to education than learning about topics. In addition, going to school is also a way to meet people your own age and to make friends. It is clear that children can socialise better at school, and as a result, children at school will have the chance to start many lifelong relationships.

I agree that parents can have some good reasons for having home school, but overall, considering teachers and friends, it's much better for children to attend school.

Content	**Communicative Achievement**	**Organisation**	**Language**
All content is relevant and the writer discusses the first two points in the question. They talk about the disadvantages of having parents teaching their own children. They explain that only one view might be offered and that there might not be enough knowledge about certain subjects. On the second point, the writer says that children have more opportunities to socialise at school and will find it easier to make friends. However, there is no third point (your own idea). This means the reader doesn't have all the information they need.	The essay is very well written. It uses the right style for an essay, which keeps the reader interested. It also uses formal language well. The writer gives balanced views and opinions, and also supports these views with examples (*Perhaps their mother and father are experts in one or two subjects*). Both simple and more complex ideas are communicated clearly to the reader (*pupils may not learn other points of view outside their family*).	The writer uses a wide variety of linking words and expressions to connect the ideas in the text. The essay is generally well organised, with positive and negative opinions being given (*Although this approach to education has advantages; Because of this; Besides this, there is also; I agree that ... but*). The essay has a good overall structure, with a clear opening paragraph which introduces the topic of the essay. Two points are developed in the main part of the essay and there is an effective conclusion which summarises the writer's own view.	The writer demonstrates a good range of vocabulary, including some effective common word combinations (*controversial decision; this approach to education; more to education than learning; socialise better; lifelong relationships*). There is a range of simple and complex grammar which makes the ideas clear. There are some mistakes, but the reader still understands what the writer means.
Mark: 4	Mark: 5	Mark: 5	Mark: 5

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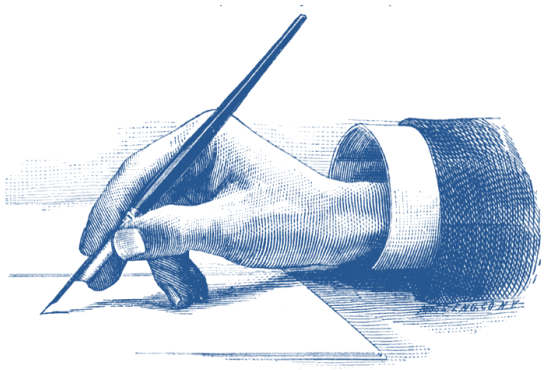
Conventions of Academic Writing



Successful academic writing involves adhering to a particular style and conventions.

Generally, you should:

- Keep your writing **formal**. Avoid emotive language and slang.
- **Avoid contractions**: can't/don't/wouldn't should be written as cannot/do not/ would not.
- **Avoid rhetorical questions**. Generally, you should not directly address the reader with a question. Instead, you could rephrase it: 'the question arises whether ...'
- Keep the **tenses consistent**.
- **Do not use pronouns like I, We or You** (unless you are doing reflective writing). Keep the language impersonal: refer to what 'the essay' will do, rather than what you will do.
- **Avoid sweeping generalisations**. Be specific and always provide references where needed. Your language should be attentive to the fact that the issues you discuss may be subjects of academic debate.
- **Write small numbers out in words**, but larger numbers in figures: five years; 5,000 years.
- **Avoid over-reliance on quotations**. Do not copy large chunks of text: use either a few relevant sentences in quotation form or paraphrase, crediting the author by providing a reference. Quotations should be used in support of your argument and not instead of writing.
- **Academic writing should be objective (emotionally neutral)**. Most academic writing requires you to stand back and analyse dispassionately, as an objective onlooker.

Tip: Try to mirror the writing style of peer-reviewed writings in your discipline.

For information please contact us on 028 9097 3618 or email lds@qub.ac.uk

http://www.qub.ac.uk/lds

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Formatting Conventions

Before you submit your work, double-check that it is presented in an appropriate format. Remember that first impressions count!

Always follow the **specific guidelines of your School**.

Generally, you should:

- Use a **standard font** in a **readable font size** (such as Times New Roman, 12).
- Use **double line spacing** and include **adequate margins**.
- Print your essay on **one side of the page only**.
- Ensure that your **paragraphs are appropriately sized** and that they are **formatted consistently**. Indent all new paragraphs, except the first (introduction) paragraph of the essay, using the TAB key. Do not skip a line between paragraphs.
- **Quotations** should be relevant to your argument and used judiciously in your text. Excessive use of quotations can disrupt the flow of your writing and prevent the reader from following the logic of your reasoning. Short direct quotations, up to two or three lines in your assignment, can be set in quotation marks (single or double – be consistent) and included in the body of your text. Longer quotations should be entered as a separate paragraph and indented from the main text. Quotation marks are not used in this case.
- For **abbreviations,** it is good practice to give the full details and put the abbreviated form in brackets the first time you mention it, and then subsequent mentions can just use the abbreviation. For example, first reference: National Health Service (NHS), and subsequently just use NHS.
- Include the **essay title** at the beginning of the essay (top of the first page in bold).
- **Number the pages** of the essay (go to 'insert' and the 'page number' option in Word).
- Include your **School's cover sheet**, if required.

QUB Information Services provides a helpful guide to using Word (as well as other Microsoft Office programs): go to your Queens Online home page, then look in the folder **IT and Library Guide** in the 'University Documents' box.

Or follow this link to directly access the PDF guide to Word: http://bit.ly/XrNy8q

For information please contact us on 028 9097 3618 or email lds@qub.ac.uk

http://www.qub.ac.uk/lds

RULES AND CONVENTIONS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

The details in this hand-out are based on material first developed by Hazel Hall at Queen Margaret University College in November 1998.

This hand-out probably merits consideration for the world's top ten of boring documents. However, if you want to do well in your assignments you need to get the basics right. If you don't get these "little" things correct, then the perceived integrity of your work as a whole is at risk. Always proof read your work to remove the surface glitches so that the value of your hard work shines through.

Part I: Basic grammar rules for academic writing

The rules

Rule 1: You must write in sentences
Rule 2: Subjects and verbs in sentences must agree with each other
Rule 3: You must use appropriate punctuation
Rule 4: You must use the right vocabulary
Rule 5: You must use the apostrophe correctly and with care

Rule 1: You must write in sentences

Sentences have the following characteristics: they start with a capital letter; end with a full stop, exclamation mark or question mark; and contain a verb (doing word).

Students commonly make the mistake of not writing in full sentences (they fail to provide a main clause in their "sentence") or write very long, rambling sentences that would be better chopped into smaller ones. Short, clear sentences are usually more effective than those which are long and complex. If you are in any doubt, split up any longer sentences into two or three shorter ones. This advice is especially important if you find writing difficult, or English is not your first language. Short sentences will help you avoid grammatical mistakes and make it easy for the reader to follow your line of argument. Each sentence that you write should make sense if it were read out independently of the sentence before and after it.

Rule 2: Subjects and verbs in sentences must agree with one another

If the subject of a sentence is singular, then the verb form must be singular as well:

> The student passes the exam.

In this example the student is the subject. There is just one student, so the subject is singular. The verb is "to pass" and agrees with the singular subject. If this sentence described the

activity of several students the subject would be plural, so the verb agreement would reflect this:

> The students pass the exam.

Problems can occur with case agreement in two circumstances:

1. A statement begins in the singular, but drifts into the plural. The following sentence is incorrect:

   > *An information manager needs to know whether they are doing their job properly.*

   The easiest solution to this problem is to make both the subject and verb plural:

   > Information managers need to know whether they are doing their jobs properly.

2. Collective nouns cause confusion. The following sentence is incorrect:

   > The government are passing new legislation.

   Since there is just one government in the example given above, the sentence should read:

   > The government is passing new legislation.

   Once you know this rule for written work, you will notice that in spoken English it is often broken. For example, would you say "There's four of them here" or "There are four of them here"? Whilst this is acceptable in spoken English, it is not for formal written work. Make sure that you get this right in your written assignments. (Similarly students should watch out for other instances where the influence of speech may have an adverse effect on writing. Consider, for example, how someone might say “I should *of* done it”, when the grammatically correct construction is “I should have done it”.)

Rule 3: You must use appropriate punctuation

If you have any doubt about punctuation, use as little as possible and write short, direct sentences. It is perfectly possible to write a good piece of work using only the comma and the full stop.

3.1 Commas

Commas are used to denote a weak pause in a sentence. If you find that you write in long sentences, check whether it might be better create several short sentences replacing commas with full stops. (If you do this you must also check that the verb forms make sense.)

3.2 Dashes and hyphens

Try to minimise the use of dashes in your formal work. They can give the impression of a style that is too chatty. They may be used in pairs to insert an explanatory comment or a short list:

> Each member of staff - from the most junior to the Chief Executive - is invited to comment on the plans.

Dashes should not be used as a substitute for parentheses - or mixed with them.

Hyphens are used to connect prefixes to words (for example, CD-ROM drives) or when forming compounds such as "second-in-command".

3.3 Exclamation marks

Use exclamation marks as little as possible in formal work. They give the work a juvenile and over-excited tone.

3.4 Full stops

Full stops are not needed after titles such as Dr, Mrs or Co, nor are they required for well-known company titles such as IBM.

3.5 Question marks

It is unlikely that you should use the question mark in the work you submit. After all, you are meant to be answering the question, not posing any new ones!

3.6 Colons

The colon is used to introduce a strong pause within a sentence. It separates two clauses which could stand alone as separate sentences but are linked by some relationship in their meaning. There are four instances in which you might use a colon.

1. A colon can introduce a list:

   > The job placement entails various duties: setting up a database, liaising with customers, ordering supplies and taking minutes at meetings.

2. A colon can precede a long quotation:

   > The Computing Officer explains the reason for this decision: "Java can enable searching on any kind of platform. Time and money has been wasted by developing 35 different versions, each requiring different programmers. With a joint effort we knew we'd have an amazing product."

3. A colon can be used before a clause which explains (often by way of illustration) the previous statement:

The Business Information Systems degree course is highly regarded: academic standards are high, the lecturers are pleasant and the students enjoy the modules taught.

4. A colon can be used to indicate a sharp contrast:

   She enjoys keeping up to date with friends on Facebook: her friend thinks it is too time-consuming.

3.7 Semi-colons

You should only use the semi-colon if you know how to use it properly. It is difficult to identify when to use it, since it represents a pause that is longer than a comma, but shorter than a full stop. There are four main uses:

1. A semi-colon is used when a second clause expands or explains the first:

   Neither system matched the requirements exactly; this had to be checked with the supplier.

2. A semi-colon is used to describe a sequence of actions or different aspects of the same topic:

   There was funding for the project; a member of staff was keen to implement the system; the work could be achieved within the time scale set.

3. A semi-colon is used before clauses which begin with "nevertheless", "therefore", "even so" and "for instance":

   She left the house early; even so she missed the bus.

4. A semi-colon is used to mark off a series of phrases or clauses which contain commas:

   Those involved in information work hold memberships with organisations such as: CILIP; UKeIG; ASIST; BCS: and the European chapter of SLA.

Rule 4: You must use the right vocabulary

It is important that you use the right vocabulary in your work. The mistakes that crop up regularly in students' work are usually due to confusion between two words such as:

- affect/effect, quote/quotation, practise/practice, license/licence (the first is the verb, the second is the noun);
- dependent and dependant (the first is an adjective, the second is a noun);
- alternate and alternative, principal and principle (these words have different meanings);
- less and fewer (less means less in quantity: there is less water than before. Fewer means smaller in number: there are fewer people than before).

Bear in mind that a spelling checker can identify spelling errors in your work, but will not pick up misused vocabulary.

Rule 5: You must use the apostrophe correctly (and with care)

The apostrophe has two functions: it indicates the possessive case and contractions.

5.1 Possessive case

The possessive case refers to ownership. You can say "the work of the information manager" or "the information manager's work." The use of the apostrophe depends on whether the possessor is singular or plural.

> When the possessor is singular, possession is indicated by using an apostrophe followed by the letter s added to the noun:
>
> the student's assignment
>
> When the possessors are plural, possession is indicated by placing the apostrophe after the final s of the noun:
>
> the students' assignments

Note that some organisations omit the apostrophe in their name, for example Barclays Bank. In academic writing, however, you must use the apostrophe to denote possession.

5.2 Contraction

In written English words that have been contracted (i.e. shortened) use apostrophes to show where the missing letters would normally appear. This has two main purposes: to avoid confusion with other words and to indicate a different pronunciation for example "we're" is a shortened version of "we are". The apostrophe distinguishes the word "we're" from "were", which has both a different meaning and different pronunciation.

Examples of the use of apostrophes to denote missing letters:

1. They don't employ staff in Wales. [do not]
2. I can't come on Monday. [cannot]
3. It's likely that the company will grow by 10% in the next financial year. [It is]

NB Possessive adjectives do not use apostrophes.

Adjectives are describing words. There are many of these in English, for example blue, happy, distinguished.

Possessive adjectives are words that describe possession. There are seven of these in English: my, your, his, her, its, our, their. Note that *none* of these takes an apostrophe. This includes "its". So, if the use of the word “its” appears in your work to denote ownership, remember that it does *not* take the apostrophe.

Examples of the use of possessive adjectives:

1. The information manager has been in her job for ten months. [The job belongs to her].
2. The organisation prepared its information strategy in 2013. [The information strategy belongs to it].
3. Their market sector is in decline. [The market sector belongs to them].

Check every instance of the words "its" and "it's", "there" and "their", "you're" and "your" in your finished work.

Part II: Conventions in academic writing

1. Style conventions: numbers and dates; capitals; print enhancements; abbreviations; typing and spelling
2. Tone conventions: formal, jargon and cliché-free, impersonal writing
3. Forming arguments: how to turn your information into a well-written essay or report

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1. Style conventions

1.1 Numbers and dates

Numbers below one hundred are usually written in full:

> Ten students came to the lecture.

Numbers above one hundred may be presented by digits:

> There are 400 databases available.

Dates are usually given in the conventional combinations of numbered day, named month and numbered year. Punctuation is not required:

> The service was set up on 11 April 2012.

References to centuries are spelt out, without capitals:

> During the twentieth century many communication technologies were developed.

Decades may be referred to by name or number. The numbered form is not followed by an apostrophe:

> In the 1990s the term "Internet" became a media buzz word.

1.2 Capitals

Capital letters are used for:

proper nouns: Hazel Hall, Professor, Edinburgh Napier University.
names of civic holidays: Christmas Day
geographical names: Central Belt
public thoroughfares: Princes Street
important events: Graduation Day
trade names: Windows, Java
journal titles: *International Journal of Information Management*
the first letter (only) of book titles: *Navigating business information sources: a practical guide for information managers*

1.3 Print enhancements

Print enhancements should be used sparingly. If you over-use them in an essay your work can end up looking like a ransom note. Bear in mind that you should follow the conventions of the referencing system that you are using if you quote book or journal titles in your work. For example, APA referencing requires you to denote book and journal titles by using italics.

1.4 Abbreviations

Abbreviations are not used in formal English. They give the impression of a style that is chatty and too informal. So, for instance, when you want to introduce an example into your work you should use, in full, the phrase "for example".

When you are taking notes in class you may like to use the abbreviation for "for example". The abbreviation is for the Latin term "exempli gratia" and is written as "e.g."

Do not confuse "e.g." with "i.e."

"i.e." is an abbreviation for the Latin phrase "id est" and means "that is to say" or "in other words".

1.5 Typing and spelling

Even if you are good at spelling you can make typing errors. All work for submission should be spell checked before it is printed out. (Make sure that the spell checker you use is set to UK English.) All print-outs should then be proof read. If there are still mistakes in your work you should correct, spell check and proof read again until you are satisfied that all mistakes are eradicated. Don't be lazy about proof-reading. Your lecturers expect you to hand in your best work. If you hand in work that is below the standard of what you could achieve with more care and attention, you are doing yourself a big disfavour. This may be perpetuated when lecturers are asked to comment on your progress in formal situations, for example when writing references.

There are some words that students regularly misspell. It is worth learning the spelling of these, bearing in mind the hints on how to remember the correct spelling:

- accommodation (think - plenty of room for 2 x C and 2 x M)
- apparent (think - parent)
- definite (think - infinity)
- liaise (think - 2 x i, liaising with one another)

- necessary (think - it's necessary to wear 1 collar, 2 socks)
- occasionally (think - it would be rare to wear 2 collars, 1 sock)

---

2. Tone conventions

2.1 Write formally

A report or essay is a formal piece of work. The tone of your work should be formal, and not chatty. For example, rather than beginning sentences with the work "Also" or “Besides”, which gives the impression that what you are about to write is an after-thought, use an alternative such as "In addition". Similarly the word "However" is more appropriate to start a sentence in a formal piece of work than the word "But".

The use of brackets should be kept to a minimum. They are used to indicate a supplementary remark, an authorial aside, or a qualification of some sort. Use them too frequently and you end up with a choppy effect.

Square brackets are used to indicate additions or changes that the author has made to the text. For example, if you want to illustrate a point with a quotation it may be necessary to add a couple of words by way of explanation:

> The new legislation means that they [software companies] may be liable for mistakes.

2.2 Avoid clichés

A cliché is an expression that has been so overused that it has lost its force of meaning. Phrases such as "at the touch of a button" and "at their fingertips" should not appear in your work. (To use a cliché, they should be "avoided like the plague"!) If you feel tempted to write with a cliché, you are probably about to state the obvious, which is not worthwhile given the word limits on your work.

2.3 Avoid "journalese"

Make sure that you have not written work in an exaggerated or sensational style: you are not a journalist! Your work should read as a measured set of rational arguments. If you say anything bold, this should be backed up with a reference from the literature you have consulted in preparing your work, or by an example that proves your point.

2.4 Avoid jargon

Use the jargon of your subject area with precision, accuracy and constraint. Take special care with terms that have specialised meanings in your subject area. For example the terms "tacit" and "explicit" have specific meanings in the context of knowledge management.

2.5 The impersonal writer

It is rare that you would be expected to write in the first person singular (using the word "I") when preparing essays and reports in the subject area of Computing. Some people get round

this by using the third person singular, but this can be very clumsy. You should aim to write impersonally. The idea is that you remove any personal bias from the argument when you write impersonally. Check the three sentences below to see how this is achieved:

1. I conducted a survey on the use of social media in schools. [First person singular]
2. The author conducted a survey on the use of social media in schools. [Third person singular]
3. A survey was conducted on the use of social media in schools. [Impersonal writing]

Note that some grammar checkers will question the use of the passive voice (i.e. how the verb is used in the last example given in the list above). It is argued that the use of the passive makes the text "heavy". This can be the case, and in many cases it is appropriate to use the "active" voice, for example in writing out an instruction leaflet or creating an exciting narrative in a work of fiction. However, in academic work the use of the passive voice is wholly appropriate when the goal is to present a set of arguments in an unbiased way. It also permits the construction of short, neat sentences. Consider the examples below:

1. The researchers administered the questionnaires over a period of three days. [Active voice]
2. It took three days to administer the questionnaires. [Passive voice]

---

3. Forming arguments

3.1 Sensible use of paragraphs

Assignment specifications give you few words to write up your essay or report. You must make the most of them. As you structure your work ensure that each section offers a different (yet related within the context of the assignment specification) perspective of the issue under discussion, and that you present a logical development of a clear line of thought.

A paragraph deals with just one topic or major point of an argument relevant to the essay or report. That topic or argument should normally be announced in the opening sentence. This is sometimes called the topic sentence. The sentences which immediately follow the topic sentence should expand and develop the statement, explaining its significance to the question in general. This opening statement and amplification should then be followed by evidence to support the argument being made. You should provide illustrative examples which are discussed as an explanation of the central idea. Alternatively you can quote a source that supports your argument. The last sentence of a paragraph should round off the consideration of the topic in some way. It may also contain some statement which links it to the one which follows.

Paragraphs should normally be between 50 words minimum and 200 words maximum in length. However, they might be longer if you were explaining a topic in considerable detail in an extended essay. Paragraphs should be long enough to develop a point, not just state it.

Consecutive paragraphs may be linked with terms such as "However" so as to provide a sense of continuity in your argument. However, if you are in any doubt, let them stand separately and speak for themselves.

The recommended organisation of a typical paragraph is:

1. opening topic sentence, i.e. main point given
2. explanation of topic sentence
3. supporting sentences that explain its significance
4. discussion of examples or evidence (citing authorities; drawing on empirical evidence, i.e. research carried out by others or, in the case of a dissertation, you; drawing on your own experience, for example from placement)
5. concluding sentence

Sometimes, even though you have a set of arguments crafted into good paragraphs, it is difficult to work out how to order them in the written up version of the report or essay. It is possible to play around with the structure by:

1. writing the main point of each paragraph on to separate pieces of card
2. experimenting with ordering the cards so that eventually associated cards end up next to each other in a logical sequence
3. writing on a separate sheet of paper the order of topics
4. numbering the topics on the sheet of paper to show a hierarchy which reflects the logic of the new order of paragraphs

You now have the order of the components of your assignment. You then have to consider how to link from one paragraph to the next in the text so that there is adequate signposting and guidance for the reader. You can check that the links work by:

1. underlining linking words and phrases
2. asking someone else to read through your work and asking that person to explain how the paragraphs relate to one another

A well-structured assignment typically has the following format:

- It begins with an introduction which provides the reader with the indication of the direction the report or essay will take before conclusions can be drawn
- Paragraph 1 that makes claims relevant to the question set and central to the overall argument of the work, presents evidence to back up claims made and ends with a linking statement to paragraph 2
- Paragraph 2, that makes claims relevant to the question set and central to the overall argument of the work, presents evidence to back up claims made and ends with a linking statement to paragraph 3
- Paragraph 3, that makes claims relevant to the question set and central to the overall argument of the work, presents evidence to back up claims made and ends with a linking statement to paragraph 4 *and so on until all the main points are made*
- It ends with a conclusion which relates back to the introduction where what the report set out to do was been noted. It concludes on the evidence presented in the main text of the report itself. It adds value to the work presented by making sense of the report's/essay's main points, showing the implications of the arguments made. No new material appears in a conclusion. It is a genuine conclusion and not a simple summary of the rest of the work.

Throughout the work the sequence of the argument is well sign-posted. This is achieved through sensible use of language (for example, "As the next example shows...", "It can therefore be concluded that..."), conciseness, reminders to the reader, as appropriate, of what the main arguments are, how this is amplified through the work and where they are heading. If your work requires you to use the report format you can sign-post your work through the use of clear headings with section numbering. It is much easier to do this if you compose your work at a keyboard, rather than hand-write your work and then type it up. It is also useful to be able to print work out regularly to get an overview of how the work is developing.

3.2 Repetition and waffle

Repetition (or waffle) will not win marks. If you are tempted to use a phrase such as "As already mentioned", "As explained above" or (the dreadful) "aforementioned", check that you are only providing a link back to earlier arguments, rather than simply repeating them. If you are using repetition and waffle as a strategy to make your essay or report meet the recommended word length, you need to think carefully about how well you have prepared to write up your assignment. It is likely that you have not gathered enough information or read adequately for the assignment if this is the case.

3.3 Answer and analyse

No matter how well presented your work is, to pass your assignments you must answer the questions set. The work that you present should be relevant to the discussion.

There is always some description in essays or reports for assignments, but it is the degree of analysis of what is described that is valued by those marking the work. This might be described as the "So what?" factor of your work. You will be rewarded for linking ideas together to draw conclusions, or discussing the implications of what you have described. You will be rewarded for questioning the material that you have researched for preparing your assignment. You will not be rewarded for simply listing everything that you have discovered on a topic. As you progress through undergraduate studies the degree of analytical ability assumes greater importance.

Academic Essay Writing for Postgraduates

[Independent Study version]

CONTENTS

There are Supplementary materials in a separate file.

INTRODUCTION

Academic Essay Writing for Postgraduates is designed to help you plan, draft and revise the assignments you will be doing for your Master's degree at Edinburgh.

We focus on

- the *criteria* used to evaluate Master's-level writing
- the typical *components* of academic texts
- the way those components are *organised* in texts
- the English grammar and vocabulary used to *signal* these key elements

There are seven Units, each dealing with an important element of academic assignment work at postgraduate level. Look through the Contents page on the left and get an overall picture of what you will be covering in these materials.

In each Unit are a number of Tasks in which you are asked to think, analyse texts and write short answers. The best way to use these materials is with another student, with whom you can share ideas and argue. You will find our answers to the tasks - sometimes fact and sometimes opinion - in the *Answer Key and Study Notes* section that begin on page 43.

We very much hope you find the materials useful. We welcome suggestions for improvements (email address on page 41).

Acknowledgments

Some units include adapted or reused material from previous in-session and pre-session ELTCcourses.

Our thanks go to Sylviane Granger and Stephanie Tyson and to Blackwell Publishers for permission to adapt their *World Englishes* paper for use in this course. (Full details of all cited sources are given in the *References*).

Unit 1 What is good academic writing?

As an international student at the University you probably have some concerns about your written English. However, the use of correct English is only one of the factors that academic staff consider when marking your work. The answer to the question 'What is good academic writing?' is **Writing that meets the expectations of the audience**. When you are doing a written assignment for a postgraduate degree, it is important to keep in mind the criteria that the readers will use in marking your work.

Task 1.1
Have you written any assignments yet for your degree course? If so, what sort of comments did you get from the readers/assessors?

Most Master's course organisers provide information, like that in the box below, about the criteria that will be used in marking your work.

Criteria of assessment

Project work takes many different forms which will be reflected in the way it is assessed. However, the following list summarises the eight main criteria used in evaluating written work:

1. evidence of adequate and appropriate background reading
2. a clear statement of aims and relevant selection of content
3. sensible planning and organization
4. evidence of systematic thought and argument
5. clarity of expression
6. careful presentation (e.g. accurate typing and proof-reading, helpful diagrams, etc.)
7. observation of conventions of academic discourse, including bibliographic information
8. observation of length requirements

Notice that only criterion 5 relates to **language**. Criteria 1-4 are to do with **content** and Criteria 6-8 involve issues of **presentation**.

Task 1.2
The five extracts below come from feedback given to British and international students on a project for the course whose criteria are shown on the previous page. Underline the positive words or phrases, and circle the negative ones.

CRITERIA

Example 1

Balanced, well argued and well presented. The summary of advantages and disadvantages was succinct and comprehensive. We noted, however, a number of errors in the bibliography.

Example 2

You covered a great deal of ground, although at times you needed to add definitions of technical terms. In general, a solid piece of work, weakened by poor proof-reading, spelling, bibliographical omissions, odd spelling and punctuation. Closer attention to detail would have improved the whole impression.

Example 3

Comprehensive, partly because it was too long. What should have been the 'Introduction' occupied too much space and was out of balance with the rest. Extensive use of references, although it was not always clear that you understood all the issues discussed. You seem still to have serious self-expression problems in English.

Example 4

Superficial treatment - e.g. lack of discussion of underlying principles. Over-simple acceptance of terms used in the literature; insufficiently critical. You should have sought more guidance from your tutor.

Example 5

Your work is still hampered by difficulties of expression - many points where your argument needs clarifying. You tend to adopt others' terms without questioning them critically. A number of inconsistencies in your bibliography entries.

Task 1.3
Decide which criteria in the list on page 3 those comments match. Write in the appropriate number(s) on the right-hand side.

Task 1.4
Some of the markers' criticisms seem not to match the eight criteria. **What implicit criteria** do these markers seem to be using in evaluating their writing?

Making your point

In the process of persuading your readers to accept your argument, there are three main intellectual sources you can use:

(1) logical reasoning
(2) texts written by authoritative researchers in your field
(3) data that you gather yourself

We will be discussing the use of all three sources in these materials.

In the case of the third source, different disciplines have different notions of **what is acceptable as data**:

- observations of yourself (introspection) or of other people
- opinions of people you have interviewed
- findings of other researchers
- results of your own practical experiments
- non-academic texts (e.g. law reports)
- professional experience and judgment

Task 1.5
Which of those are acceptable in your own field?

Logical argument

Language Box: Argument

To show **reasons**:
Because (of) / as / since /
Given (the fact) that...
In the light of (the fact) that...
As is shown / implied / suggested by...
Due to / owing to

To show **consequences** and **conclusions**
If… then…
Therefore / so / consequently
As a result / consequence
Hence / Thus (**very formal**; more common in sciences)
For this (these) reason(s), we can say that...
This leads / points to
This suggests / implies / indicates / shows / proves that...
From this we can see / conclude / deduce that...
It can be assumed / inferred / argued that...

Balance

One key element in a successful asssignment is **balance**, in two senses: *physically*, it refers to the distribution of information in your text; and *intellectually*, there is an expectation that you will present both sides of an issue.

Balance in presentation

You need to decide roughly how much space (how many words) to allocate to the various sections of the assignment. Sometimes, the instructions make that clear; sometimes you have to interpret what the lecturer had in mind, as in this example, for an essay in Educational Management:

> ***Outline the problems likely to arise from the introduction of larger lecture classes and discuss the possible solutions.***

By using *outline* (meaning *summarise*), the lecturer showed she wanted her students to write more on the second aspect (*discuss*) of her question. Other words with a similar meaning to *outline* include *sketch*, *list* and the adverbs *briefly* or *in brief*.

If you are unsure about the expected balance in an assignment, ask for advice from the lecturer responsible for setting it. Otherwise you may discover too late that you have given too much space to one element and not enough to another.

Balance in argument

The second aspect of balance in academic writing is that you are expected to present an 'even-handed' argument. Making a strong logical case to persuade your reader to accept your point is really only half the picture. Effective argumentation also involves

(1) anticipating possible objections to your reasons or evidence
(2) showing that you have considered those objections,
(3) using counter-arguments - the process known as *refutation*.

Task 1.6
The text below discusses a proposal to extend university library hours. Underline the arguments **in favour** of the change and those **against**. Which side does the writer finally come down on?

The Students' Union demand for a 24-hour library service has much to commend it. Recent increases in average class size have led to greater pressure on library resources, both in terms of study space available to students and of access to print materials. The parallel move in some courses towards more self-directed learning packages has also encouraged, or required, students to make greater use of recommended readings, including electronic sources. At the same time, a number of possible objections have been raised, in particular by the library staff: perhaps the most worrying is the strain on family life caused by increased or altered work hours, including 'unsocial' hours such as weekends. Another is the implications of the recent European directive on the 48-hour working week, which does not specifically exempt library (or academic) workers from the regulations. However, it should be feasible to devise and negotiate librarian working schedules that would bring Edinburgh into line with other British universities that have already adopted 24-hour opening.

Language Box: Counter-argument

Anticipating the counter-arguments

Opponents/Critics of this position (may, might, etc.) argue that...
Another argument against X is ...
It may be objected that..
One possible objection is that...
Several questions come to mind: ...
One might ask/wonder whether...
Certain objections must, of course, be considered: ...
Smythson (1995) has recently argued against…on the ground(s) that…
It is true that…

Refuting them

But..
On the other hand...
However,...
Nevertheless...
This is merely...
While this may be true in cases where..., it does not apply to...

… and to **strengthen a refutation** you can use *'surely'*:
*While this is valid for part-time staff, it **surely** does not apply in the case of full-time workers*

Task 1.7

Below is a student's discussion of card sorting, an experimental technique in psychology. How many counter-arguments does he mention? Does he then confirm that the technique is valid, or does he indicate that he accepts the counter-arguments?

The card-sorting technique

Psychologists have used sorting - also known as direct grouping - as one of several methods to investigate the mental lexicon. Typically, subjects are given a set of cards with words printed on them and are asked to sort them according to similarity of meaning into as many groups as they wish. The theory behind each experiment has depended on the preferences of the researcher. Miller (1969), for example, made the assumption that native speakers would sort nouns according to the semantic features they share, while ignoring their distinguishing features. However, feature theory is no longer as fashionable as it was when Miller wrote his paper. It has come under attack from various quarters… It has been criticised for its reductionist approach to meaning, which imposes an arbitrary structure in which there is no self-evident way of showing which senses are more important then others. There is also no theoretical limit to the number of features that can be identified… Nevertheless, it seems difficult to carry out any kind of contrastive lexical analysis without making use of some kind of semantic features.

adapted from Hill (1992: 68)

Before you read Unit 2

Later in these materials we will be referring to **Sample essays** on academic use of the Internet, written by an international student at Edinburgh.

Before you start Unit 2, read the first **sample essay**, which you will find on pages 22-25 of the ***Supplementary Materials***, which are in a separate file.

We stress that it represents a *sample*, and *not a model* - in other words, it could be improved in a number of ways. Later we will be considering those improvements.

Unit 2 Writing the Introduction

Short essays

An essay introduction will often contain these elements:

General Orientation

General statements (especially on the importance of the topic)
Background information
Reference to recent developments / previous work (specialist literature)

Focus on your paper

Content: aims / thesis (main point or idea)
Structure

Figure 1. Model of an introduction to a (short) essay

General orientation

A common structure for the **General Orientation** element in an introduction is a combination of four elements *Situation – Problem – Solution – Evaluation*. They may appear in a different order, or they may not all be present. Look at the example below.

Cloning (the replication of an organism by the manipulation of a single cell) is no longer mere fantasy. The idea of human cloning is not new, but until recently it was a subject for fiction rather than science. That changed in 1997, when researchers at the Roslin Institute near Edinburgh cloned Dolly the sheep, the first animal cloned from an adult cell. But even Dolly's creator, Professor Ian Wilmut, has serious concerns about the apparent success of cloning technology. Most animal cloning experiments have resulted in unsuccessful implantation or abnormal foetuses. Of the animals that are born alive, many die of catastrophic organ failure. There is no reason to think that cloned human babies would not also suffer from these problems. However, Dr Panayiotis Zavos and Dr Severino Antonori claim that they have developed the technical skills to begin the greatest human experiment of our age and have announced that they will clone the first human within a year. Many people object to their intentions on ethical as well as medical grounds.

Task 2.1 Can you find all four SPSE elements in that text?

Task 2.2
Read the first page of the sample essay, and then work on the questions below:

i. Where do you think the essay introduction ends?

ii. Analyse which element of the model each sentence represents, and write in the letter next to it (**G** = General statements, **B** = Background, etc.)

iii. Decide how the student could have improved the introduction, by omitting or adding sentences. (There are some language mistakes in the text, but don't worry about them yet – we will come back to that issue later).

Longer assignments

For a longer assignment, such as a project or MSc dissertation, the Introduction needs to be more substantial and more complex. One important feature of a project – and especially a dissertation – is that you may be expected not just to discuss work and ideas already in your field, but also to present the findings of your own research, whether that is based on reading, observation or experimentation. For that reason, the introduction needs to justify your contribution to the field.

Stage 1: ORIENTATION

1a - General statements (especially on the importance of the topic)
1b - Background information
1c - Reference to previous studies

Stage 2: JUSTIFICATION

2a - Indicating a gap
2b - Questions/problems
2c - Value of further discussion (i.e. by you) **of the topic**

Stage 3: FOCUS ON YOUR PAPER

3a - Content: aims/thesis
3b - Structure
3c - Limitations
3d - Means (method)
3e – Evaluation

Figure 2. Stages of the Introduction to a project or dissertation
(adapted from Anderson 1993)

N.B. That is not a fixed model of how you must write your introduction; it shows the range of options you have when deciding what to include. In this session ansd the next we will be practising the language you can use in the different stages.

Language Box: Stage 1 - Orientation

1a - General statements

*Hunger striking **has a long ... history** in Ireland.*

*The sceptical paradox **is well known**:...*

***There has been much interest recently in** the concept of ... and its relevance*

*Research and speculation on ... **have been growing at a rapid rate**...*

***In recent years** the study of ... **has focused on** ...*

1b - Background information

Stage 1b sometimes contains essential **facts** about the subject-matter which the reader has to know in order to understand the text - for example **definitions**, or other basic information.

1c - Reference to previous studies

***Halliday (1978) has developed** an elaborate framework to show that ....*

*There is now a **considerable body of research** which suggests ....*

***Most researchers** in the field agree that ....*

***Recent studies** have shown that ....*

***Much recent work** ... has indicated that ...*

***Jones (1978)** found ... that ..*

.

Stage 2: JUSTIFICATION

This is an important element in the Introduction, and is more substantial in projects and dissertations than in essays. We will come back to it in more detail in Unit 3.

Language Box: Stage 3 - Focus on your paper

3a - Content: aims / central idea

*My **primary purpose** is to...*

*I will **discuss** ...* *In ... I shall **argue** that ....*

*In this paper I will **claim**...*

*In this paper I **present results of a pilot study** ....*

*The **aim** of this paper is to **demonstrate** that ...*

*This paper **investigates/describes** ...*

*The **object** of this paper is to **look critically at** ....*

*This study **attempted to explore** ...*

3b - Structure

*This paper will **first** ..., and **then** ...*

***Having** analysed ..., I will go on to ....*

***First**, brief definitions of ... will be offered; **second**, ... the language data and the analysis will be presented; **third**, an attempt will be made...; **finally**, ...*

3c - Limitations

*Since ... is **beyond the scope of** this study ....*

*It is **not the purpose of this study** to ..., **but rather** to ...*

*I will **not attempt** here to .... **Rather than focus** upon ..., my intention is ....*

*I **do not attempt** to describe or compare ... Instead, I **seek to** …*

***Only** the data from ... **are considered** here*

3d - Means (method)

***My approach is** characterised by two assumptions ....*

***I have based my study on** ....*

***The data** on which the discussion is based **comprises** ....*

*The present paper **uses** and **extends** those concepts and **is based on** ...*

3e - Evaluation

*... **offers a possible explanation for** ....*

***This study offers new proposals** ...*

*There is some evidence to suggest that the… **should be widely applicable**, although the problem of ... **is likely to limit their use**.*

SUPPLEMENTARY TASKS

If you have time, here are two suggestions for further activities:

1. Do Study Task 2 in the *Supplementary Materials* (page 5). It involves comparing and improving different students' introductions to the same essay.

2. Study the language of the opening paragraph of the first sample Internet essay. Identify and correct the mistakes - you should be able to find some in every sentence.

Unit 3 Acknowledging your sources

An essential rule of the academic 'game' is that you should display **your knowledge of the field**, showing that you are aware of important sources relevant to your topic. In a postgraduate essay, you need both to read and report what has been written, and also to **evaluate** and **criticise** where appropriate. (We look at this area in more detail in Unit 4). For a postgraduate project including an empirical element (e.g. experiment, questionnaire or survey), you also need to locate your work within the framework of existing research.

In any assignment you must provide evidence for the argument you are making, by **citing** publications in the field. Citation includes **summarising** what you have read or **directly quoting** an appropriate extract from a source. Whether you summarise or quote, you must **acknowledge** the source, by providing the author's name and the publication details - both in your text and also in a list of References, or Bibliography, at the end of your assignment.

Why acknowledge?
One answer to that question is this: full acknowledgment is expected and required in all academic work - whether by students in coursework, or by academics (lecturers and researchers) in their publications.

Task 3.1
Read the University of Edinburgh advice (below) and check any unfamiliar words.

The process of referencing may seem rather complicated and arbitrary, if it is new to you, but it should begin to make more sense as you progress through your studies here. In order to assess your work and to give you useful feedback, your markers need to have a clear sense of what ideas you have developed for yourself and what comes from elsewhere. To be fair to all of the students on the course, it is important that each student is given grades that accurately reflect their own efforts. As you learn to produce work at a university standard, you are developing the skills that will allow you to participate within wider communities of scholars. In these communities, new knowledge and understanding is developed by building on the work of others.

By properly acknowledging earlier work, you give credit where it is due and help to maintain the integrity and credibility of academic research in this area. Clear referencing also allows readers to learn about the wider literature through your work. Understanding the ways in which particular scholars have contributed to the development of the literature makes it much easier to make sense of the current state of play.

However, in all subjects there are certain facts which are so well-known that it is not necessary to provide references for them in your work. This is what is known as the **'common knowledge'** of this subject area. At first it can be difficult to know what is and is not common knowledge and it is better to give references to a source if you are in doubt.

Adapted from http://www.aaps.ed.ac.uk/regulations/Plagiarism/Intro.htm

A different answer to the question "Why acknowledge?" is that, if you don't, you commit **plagiarism**. Below is some practical guidance for university students, adapted from Andy Gillett's University of Hertfordshire website
http://www.uefap.co.uk/writing/writfram.htm

Plagiarism is the representation of **another person's** work as **your own**. There are three main reasons why you should not do this.

1. **It is not helpful.**
   If you plagiarise, you suggest that something is your work when it is not. This will not get you good marks. To do well in higher education, you need to be responsible for the ideas and facts that you use in your writing. You need to provide evidence for these ideas and facts. You need to show where they have come from and what they are based on. You do this by acknowledging the sources, by citing. This will support your arguments and help you succeed in your academic writing. It will also show your lecturers that you have read and understood the required texts.
2. **You need to come to your own conclusions.**
   You need to show that you have understood the material and come to your own conclusions on the basis of what you have read and heard. Copying from textbooks, or pasting text from the Internet into your own writing, is not good enough. Most of what you write will come from the ideas of other people (from the textbooks you read, the lectures and the seminars you attend, and your discussions with other students, etc.). This is what academic study is all about. However, the purpose of an assignment is for you to say something for yourself using the ideas that you have studied, so you can present ideas you have learned in your own way. The emphasis should be on working with other people's ideas, not simply reproducing their words.
3. **It is against the regulations.**
   You must not use another person's words or ideas as if they were your own. This is against university regulations and is considered a very serious offence. If you plagiarise, your lecturer cannot understand how well you understand the course and cannot therefore give you useful advice and support. In addition, if you plagiarise, you are not learning. This will become obvious in any written examination you are required to take.

You need to acknowledge the source of an idea unless it is common knowledge. It may be difficult to decide exactly what is common knowledge within your subject, but if your lecturer, in lectures or handouts, or your textbooks do not acknowledge the source, then you can assume that it is common knowledge within your subject. For ideas which are generally accepted as valid within your specialism, there is no need to provide a reference. Here are some tips on making sure you provide the necessary acknowledgments in an assignment:

- Take notes in your own words as far as possible. A good strategy is: read, put away your books and think, and then write your notes.
- If you do want to use a direct quotation, make clear (to yourself) in your own notes that it is an extract from the original text. Write down the reference details and page number. This will help you avoid accidental plagiarism when you copy from your own notes.
- When you use ideas of other people, follow the conventional system for citing and referencing their ideas at the relevant points in your assignment (inside your text and in the references). This will make it impossible for anyone to accuse you of cheating or stealing someone else's work. It will also help you to develop your research skills.

Practice in Citing sources and Writing a Bibliography (list of References) is available in *Supplementary Materials* - Study tasks 5, 6, 12 and 13.

Task 3.2 (adapted from one on the University of Hertfordshire website)

How many of these cases do you think would be regarded as plagiarism?

1. Changing some of the words and sentences in a text, but keeping the overall structure of the text and the vocabulary the same as in the original text.
2. Taking some short fixed phrases from several different sources and putting them together with some of your own words.
3. Copying a paragraph directly from the source with no changes.
4. Copying a paragraph making only small changes - for example, replacing some words with words with similar meanings.
5. Copying out an article from a journal, website or textbook, and submitting it as your assignment.
6. Cutting and pasting a paragraph: using the sentences of the original, but putting one or two in a different order, and leaving one or two out.
7. Paraphrasing a paragraph: rewriting the paragraph but changing the language, organisation and detail, and giving your own examples.
8. Quoting a paragraph by placing it in quotation marks and acknowledging the source.
9. Rewriting a passage from a source and presenting it as your own work.
10. Taking just one word or phrase from a text, because it is very well expressed.
11. Using another author's organisation and way of arguing.

Including references in your text

We will be using a short extract from an academic paper by Granger and Tyson (1996), which illustrates ways of referring to earlier publications in the Introduction section. The paper reported their study of differences between native and non-native university students' writing in English.

After analysing how the writers referred to previous research, we will focus on issues of language and presentation in citing others' texts in your own writing.

Task 3.3
Read the Introduction to Granger and Tyson's paper (on the next page). The underlined expressions have been highlighted for our purposes; they were not underlined in the original paper.

The use of connectors in English essays by native and non-native students

S. Granger and S. Tyson

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, interest in written English discourse - both the native speaker and learner varieties - has grown dramatically. In particular, following the publication of Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976), attention has focused on cohesion in texts. The aim of many of these studies, particularly those conducted in the USA in the early 1980s, was to discover the possible relationship between the use of cohesion links and coherence, and the level of writing proficiency. On the whole, no such correlation has been found. For Tierney and Mosental, for example, cohesion was pervasive in all the texts they studied but was 'causally unrelated to coherence' (1983; 225). Neuner (1987) found no statistical difference in the number of individual connectors used in good and poor essays by US students.

Although quantitative analysis can be helpful - Pritchard (1981), for example, found a higher incidence of connectors in 'problem passages' of students' essays - it is important to consider qualitatively how these connectors are used. As Hartnett (1986: 143) concludes, 'Using cohesive ties successfully is apparently not easy. Both good and poor writers may use the same kinds of connectors, but they use them differently'. When studying the writing of non-native learners in particular, it is therefore necessary to combine a quantitative and a qualitative approach, comparing frequency with type of use.

Another problem with many studies is that they are very small-scale. Connor's (1984) study, for example, was based on six essays. There is a pressing need for large-scale studies in order to obtain a more accurate description of cohesion/coherence problems in English learners' writing. This need for empirical data formed the rationale behind the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) project (see Granger 1993).

..... (the Introduction ends here).....

References

Connor, Ulla.1984. A study of cohesion and coherence in English as a second language students' writing. *Papers in Linguistics* 17/3: 35-57.

Granger, Sylviane. 1993. The International Corpus of Learner English. In *English Language Corpora: Design, Analysis and Exploitation*. Edited by J. Aarts, P. De Haan and N. Oostdijk. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi. 59-71.

Halliday, Michael A.K. and Hasan, Ruqaiya 1976. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.

Hartnett, Carolyn G. 1986. Static and dynamic cohesion: signals of thinking in writing. *System* 17/3: 359-71.

Pritchard, R.J. 1981. A study of the cohesion devices in the good and poor compositions of eleventh graders. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia.

Tierney, R and Mosental, J. 1983. Cohesion and textual coherence. *Research in the Teaching of English* 17: 215-29.

Task 3.4

Look again at the underlined verbs. Which tenses have the authors used - and why?

The way you construct Stage 1c and Stages 2a-c of the Introduction is particularly important in demonstrating your awareness of previous research. Here are those stages again:

STAGE 1: ORIENTATION
1c - Reference to previous studies

STAGE 2: JUSTIFICATION
2a - Indicating a gap
2b - Questions/problems
2c - Value of further discussion (i.e. by you) **of the topic**

It is in these stages that you show the connection between what you have read and what you are going to write, so you need to make clear to the reader not merely what work has already been done, but also how your own work builds on that.

Stage 1c: Choosing the right reporting verb

English offers a wide range of 'reporting' verbs, but which one you choose affects how your reader interprets what you mean. When reporting previous work, you can *accept* it and extend it into new areas; alternatively, you may want to *question* or *reject* what others have claimed or argued, and propose alternative ideas.

You have to be careful to choose a verb that reflects the appropriate **degree of certainty**, either of the original or secondary author (you), about what was reported or claimed. For example, using the verb *claim* suggests you want to distance yourself from the writer's statement, so your reader will expect a criticism to follow:

Task 3.5
Below are some common reporting verbs, arranged to show what they imply about your attitude to what you are reporting. Can you think of any others/ If so, add them in, under the appropriate heading.

doubtful	neutral	certain
claim	*comment*	*state*
speculate	*suggest*	*show*
hold	*argue*	*deny*
assume	*discuss*	*refute*
assert	*report*	*point out*
	note	

For detailed advice on ways of reporting in English, have a look at this University of Toronto website: ***http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/reporting.html***

STAGE 2: JUSTIFICATION

In a project or dissertation, you need to persuade the reader that your contribution to the field is necessary. Three common strategies are to:

- indicate a ***gap*** or ***deficiency*** in what has been done so far
- say that certain ***questions*** or ***problems*** remain to be resolved
- stress the benefit or value of ***further attention*** to the topic

Language Box: Justification

Stage 2a - Indicating a gap

*Surprisingly, **only one** extensive article has been published.*

*This aspect of ... **has not been given much attention**.*

*The **limitation** of all these interpretations is that....*

*Studies of ... are **rare***

Negative expressions *(few, little, not much, hardly*, etc*.)* are very common here.

*the literature on ... **has concentrated principally on** ...*

***Most of the data** on ... which can be found in the literature **pertain to** ...*

***Most existing research** on ... **has been based on relatively small samples** ... which **has made it impossible** to carry out satisfactory studies ....*

Stage 2b - Indicating questions/problems

Either direct or indirect questions:

***Would** an analysis of ... bear out their claims?*

*...requires clarification. **Is it ..., or is it ...?***

*But **the question remains whether ...**.*

Stage 2c - Importance of the topic

Highlight the positive value or advantage of the topic:

*His elegant model **merits testing** as a macrosociological theory. ..*

*The article **well deserves careful analysis**...*

Task 3.6
Look back to the Introduction to Granger and Tyson's paper. Underline the expressions they used to justify their own contribution.

SUPPLEMENTARY TASKS
Study Tasks 5, 6, 7 or 8 (pages 10–13 of the *Supplementary Materials*) address some of the issues we have covered in this unit.

Unit 4 Critical use of source materials

Lecturers here often say that students – both British and international – are not critical enough in the way they read and use source texts. You are expected not simply to accept and repeat what you have read, but to make clear how valid you think it is in general, and how relevant it is to your own topic. Being prepared to **question** and, if necessary, **reject** what you have read is regarded in British universities as a sign of a good student.

Cultural assumptions such as this are particularly problematic, because they are normally **implicit**:

Academic culture and cultures of learning

In one sense, culture is taken for granted. It involves assumptions, ideas and beliefs which are often not articulated, and members of a culture may not be explicitly aware of such assumptions. Culture is a pattern of normal ways of doing things, what people expect and how people interpret situations in which their expectations are not met. Academic culture, then, refers to this taken-for-granted system for carrying out academic matters. It involves patterns of expectations which are rarely made explicit, but which operate at a deep level and affect people's behaviour, values, thinking, attitudes and beliefs.

Jin and Cortazzi (1996: 206)

When lecturers set assignments beginning *'Discuss'*, *'Comment on…'*, *'Assess…'*, they are in fact inviting you to be critical. The problem is that they may assume that all students will realise this. We saw in Unit 1 that two of the feedback comments showed that the markers had expected the students to be critical, even though that was not one of the criteria listed in their Course Manual.

Task 4.1

The extract below illustrates the sort of assumption that Jin and Cortazzi were referring to. It was feedback from an Edinburgh academic on a student's first draft. He used the expression 'critical understanding' in two places. What do you think he meant?

In general [these sections] do not reflect adequate critical understanding of the theoretical issues you discuss, nor do you show clearly enough what literature is relevant, and how, to your particular research topic. At present, the draft gives the impression that you feel obliged to summarise everything you have read just in case it is relevant; you need to prune this material drastically, and you need to reduce the number of quotations and to increase the amount of space devoted to your own critical understanding of the issues discussed in relation to what you are setting out to show…. Your line of argument and the steps that you follow in pursuing that line need to be made much clearer; you need to impose a much more transparent structure on your discussion.

The critical review

On some postgraduate courses the need to show critical understanding takes a more specific form: the *critical review*. Below are the instructions for two past review assignments for Edinburgh MSc courses:

Task 4.2
Compare the two sets of instructions from past assignments. What elements are common to both? In what ways do they differ?

MSc in Public Health Sciences:
Assessing Economic Evaluations in Health Care

It has been suggested that economic evaluations can improve the process of allocating scarce resources in health care. Many decisions makers in the health arena, however, remain sceptical. The paper (title...) has landed in your in-tray, with a note asking for rapid and concise report (1500 words).

Your report should contain three sections. The first should summarise the report in no more than 250 words. This should be followed by your assessment of the methods employed in the paper. Finally you should recommend which – if any – of the programmes evaluated in the paper should receive public funding.

M.Sc. in Computer Science: Assessed Exercise

Aim

This exercise is intended to encourage you to read in more detail on a topic related to the material presented in lectures. You will also gain experience in following up academic references and in thinking critically about content and presentation of papers.

Requirements

You should select a topic from the list and carry out a survey of papers (at least 3 but no more than 10) related to it, starting with the reference(s) provided. You should then submit a written report on your topic including:

- *an introductory description of the topic;*
- *a summary of the main articles you found;*
- *a criticism of the content and presentation of the articles.*

You will find that the quality of articles varies greatly, so give credit for clear explanation and complain when this is lacking. Think about whether the subject matter is put properly into context and whether the reference list is helpful.... As a rough guide, a typical report might be of around 3000 words (excluding references). However, quality rather than quantity is of the essence, so say what you want to say clearly and concisely. The report should include a properly constructed reference list.

Language Box: Negative evaluation

This study would have been (better) if it had (included) [X]

Neither [X] nor [Y] was considered / addressed (in sufficient depth)

The authors omitted to mention / did not explain how...

It is not clear how [X] was established / measured / identified

There is no / inadequate explanation of [X]

Little attention has been paid to [X]

My reservations are to do with the argument that [X]

My doubts concern [X]

One unsatisfactory aspect of the study is [X]

It is/remains doubtful / a matter for debate whether…

There are grounds for serious doubts as to whether [X]

It is arguable whether…

At first sight this appears reasonable, but on further reflection…

This has little / nothing to do with [X]

[X] is not relevant / seems irrelevant / has no obvious relevance to..

Their conclusion seems out of place / unfounded

Task 4.3
Can you think of other expressions with similar meanings? Put them in the spaces.

Balance in evaluation

Writing a critical review does not require you simply to be negative. You should also make positive comments, such as those in the Language Box, where you think they are deserved.

Language Box: Positive evaluation

This study has a direct bearing on... [Y]
This study is directly relevant to... [Y]
[X] is central to / suitable for / an important element in... [Y]
[X] plays a key / crucial / pivotal role in...
The authors make a forceful / strong / cogent case for/against... [X]
Their argument is clear / persuasive / succinct / effective

Task 4.4
Below is the 'skeleton' of an MSc student's review of a book on teaching foreign language listening. What you see is the basic structure of his argument. As you read it, underline the words that express negative views, and circle the positive expressions. (Do nothing to the ones that *neutrally* report the authors' work).

The main thrust of the authors' argument is to discredit the 'bottom-up' model as an adequate description of competent listening. In doing this, however, they tend to undervalue the crucial importance of … They seem to assume that … They claim that "teaching programmes should not…" (1988: 42). It is regrettable that they give no definition of … Moreover, it is worth noting that in their own proposed listening programme they make no mention of any sort of….

The aim of many of their listening activities is to… They attempt to get listeners to become aware of … They thus focus on … This is an admirable break with traditional listening practice, which involves… The authors are also to be commended for offering clear criteria for… (although little, unfortunately, is said about…) and for devising a useful and challenging means of …

To conclude this critical examination, I believe that the emphasis on higher-level processes in the book is entirely suitable for learners who … However, I believe that it would be less suitable for beginners because…

Adapted from Leader (1992:12-16)

Evaluating sources on the Internet

Particular problems now arise from the availability of so much information on the Internet. The Net is an excellent resource, but it has to be used carefully and, above all, critically. On-line research requires additional skills to those needed for traditional library research using printed materials.

The main difference is that books and articles in a library have been carefully evaluated by experts before they were accepted for publication. This process, called **peer review**, makes an article on cloning in *Time* magazine quite different from one in the *Journal of Biomedical Ethics.* Secondly, when books and other materials come into the University library system, they are systematically catalogued and cross-referenced using standard procedures, followed by research libraries all over the world. This process is the basis for the way materials are organized in the Library, and it makes possible the various search functions of university Web catalogues.

But with the Internet, anyone can put anything they like onto a website, without review or evaluation. This means that students need to take particular care when doing research on-line (unless you are using one of the official academic resources on the Net, such as on-line academic journals, and official university and scientific sites).

Task 4.5
The next section is advice from a University of Toronto website on reading Net sources critically. Read it and check any expressions you are unsure of.

Criteria for evaluating specific sources on the Net

If you ask yourself these questions when looking at a Web site, you can avoid many errors and problems.

Authority

Who is the author?
Is the author's name given?
Are her qualifications specified?
Is there a link to information about her and her position?
Have you heard of her elsewhere (in class, or cited in your reading)?
Has the author written elsewhere on this topic?

Affiliation

Who is the sponsor of the Web site?
Is the author affiliated with a reputable institution or organization?
Does the text reflect the views of the organization, or only of the author?

Notes:

*If the sponsoring institution or organization is not clearly identified on the site, check the URL. Academic websites will have **edu** (in North America and Australia) or **ac** (in the UK). Government sites are identified by the extension **.gov**.*

*URLs containing **.org** are less straightforward, and require careful research: these are sites sponsored by non-profit organizations, some of which are reliable sources and some of which are very biased.*

*Sites with the **.com** extension should also be used with caution, because they have commercial or corporate sponsors who probably want to sell you something.*

Audience Level

What audience is the Web site designed for? You want information at the college or research level. Don't use sites intended for school students or sites that are too technical for your needs.

Currency

Is the Web site current, or out of date?
Is the date of the most recent update given? (Generally speaking, Internet resources should be up-to-date; after all, getting the most current information is the main reason for using the Net for research in the first place).
Are all the links up-to-date and working? (Broken links may mean the site is out-of-date; they're certainly a sign that it's not well-maintained).

Content Reliability/Accuracy

Is the material on the Web site reliable and accurate?
Is the information factual, not opinion?
Can you verify the information in print sources?
Is the source of the information clearly stated - whether it is original research material or secondary material borrowed from elsewhere?
How valid is the research that is the source?
Does the material as presented have substance and depth?
Are any arguments given based on strong evidence and good logic?
Is the author's point of view impartial and objective?
Is the author's language free of emotion and bias?
Is the site free of errors in spelling or grammar and other signs of carelessness in its presentation of the material?
Are additional electronic and print sources provided to complement or support the material on the Web site?

If you can answer all these questions positively when looking at a particular site, then you can be pretty sure it's a good one; if not, it's probably a site to avoid.

The key to the whole process is to think critically about what you find on the Net; if you want to use it, you are responsible for ensuring that it is reliable and accurate.

Source: http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/library/utml/common/services/researchinternet.html

The University of Edinburgh library service provides on effective searching and use of electronic source materials:

http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/howto/#internet

Try it out and see which resources there can help you as you are working on written assignments.

Summary

In this unit we have seen that postgraduates are expected to read (and write) critically. But your criticisms cannot be vague; they have to be justified in relation to your particular purpose.

The importance of relating what you have read to the topic of your assignment was stressed by the Edinburgh academic whose comments we read at the start of this unit:

> *… you need to reduce the number of quotations and to increase the amount of space devoted to your own critical understanding of the issues discussed in relation to what you are setting out to show .*

Using the Net as a research resource has obvious advantages in terms of speed and quantity, but these have to be balanced against the risk of using unreliable information - and, of course, the risk of plagiarism, which we looked at last week.

So being a critical reader is even more important now than it used to be.

SUPPLEMENTARY TASK
Read Supplement 9, 'Criticism in academic cultures'. If possible, show it to another student and discuss your responses. Alternatively, write up your own response.

Compare your responses with the answer to Study Task 10

Unit 5 Expressing caution

One feature that makes academic writing different from other forms of communication is the need to take care over the degree of certainty or uncertainty you express. This applies particularly when you are making claims on the basis of what you have read in the sources you are citing, and when you are interpreting research findings. In discussion we may make stronger, more definite statements without being challenged, but in academic writing, we have to adjust the strength of claim to match the evidence we have cited. This expression of academic caution is known as **hedging**.

Various words are used to describe this feature of academic language. We talk about hedged claims being *'tentative'*, *'limited'*, *'moderate'* or *'modest'*. On the other hand, claims that are stronger than is justified by the evidence are said to be *'overstated'*, *'exaggerated'*, or *'immoderate'*. Cases where a writer has provided no support at all would be criticised as *'unfounded'* or *'unwarranted'* claims.

One way of being cautious is to choose an appropriate **modal verb**. But these are only one set of a range of words used to express caution, such as those below:

Language Box: Expressing caution

Modal verbs	*must / should / may / might / could (have… …ed)*
Full verbs	*appear to / seem to (have… …ed)*
	suggest
	point to
Adverbs	*apparently / perhaps / possibly / potentially*
	relatively / comparatively
	arguably
Nouns	*possibility*
	potential
	(on the) evidence (available)
Adjectives	*possible / potential / plausible / probable / likely / not impossible*
	reasonable to assume

Caution in interpreting others' research

In most academic fields, postgraduates are asked to *interpret* findings of published work. You need to choose words carefully, in order to express the appropriate degree of caution in your interpretation.

Task 5.1
The extract below comes from a study investigating how British students who speak Spanish as a second language (L2) are influenced as they learn Portuguese as a third language (L3). Underline the definite expressions and circle the [cautious] ones.

One point about which there is wide agreement in the literature is that transfer (both positive and negative) is more likely to take place from a language which is similar to the new foreign language being learnt, than from a language which is unrelated. There is some evidence that this can lead to more transfer taking place from the L2 than from the mother tongue, where the L2 is perceived as closer to the new language being learnt. This phenomenon has been found in all areas of language, and with specific reference to Spanish and Portuguese. Clearly, Spanish and Portuguese are closer to each other (both historically and typologically) than they are to English, and it seems to be the case that learners' perceptions of similarities between languages generally correspond to their actual relatedness. Hensey (1967) analysed the errors of learners of Portuguese (both Spanish L1 and Spanish L2) and found what appeared to be Spanish-based transfer errors in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Similarity is not the only cause for L2/L3 influence proposed in the literature. Bentahila (1975) and Rivers (1979) suggest recency as a possible factor: whichever foreign language was learnt most recently will influence the next language learnt. Meisel speculates that the way in which foreign languages are stored and processed in the brain may be different from the way in which the L1 is dealt with, and that this could lead to L2/L3 influence.

(Based on Benson, 1990: 124)

Task 5.2
Is the student (Benson) expressing her own opinion of the research findings, or is she reporting the caution of the original authors?

Caution in interpreting your own findings

If an assignment requires you to report and analyse the results or data from your own research, it is important that you choose the appropriate level of certainty when interpreting what you have found.

Task 5.3

This comes from a recent research paper in which the authors reported the findings of a survey on **attitudes to learning English** in two groups of students in Edinburgh - one from Hong Kong and the other from Japan. Underline the words (full verbs, modal verbs, adjectives, etc.) used to moderate or strengthen the interpretation.

Discussion

When we compare the comments of the two groups, it is clear that the similarities are far greater than the differences, apart from their views on whether or not they wanted to sound like native speakers or aimed for 'international intelligibility' – in other words, wanted to be easily understood but to keep their own accent in English. Most of the Hiroshima group aspired to native-like pronunciation, rather than accented international intelligibility. On the other hand, the Hong Kong students' opinions were more evenly divided: half the group (10) wanted native-like pronunciation, with most of the others (8) aiming for international intelligibility.

The comparatively high number of Hong Kong students who aimed for international intelligibility may reflect to some extent the much higher profile of English in Hong Kong than in Japan - not to mention the fact that Hong Kong English is a recognised regional variety of English. In this sense, aiming for intelligibility may be a belief based on first-hand experience of Hong Kong English or, possibly, a desire for group solidarity.

The overwhelming majority in both the Japanese and Hong Kong groups declared themselves 'very willing' to change their intonation, including those individuals who found English intonation 'strange' or 'different'. It could be that the fact that the two groups had relatively proficient English was also a slight influence on their views.

(adapted from Davies, Gollin and Lynch, 2005: 30-31)

Task 5.4

Below are two paragraphs from the sample Internet essay that we asked to read at the end of Unit 2. (The whole essay is on pages 22-25 of your *Supplementary Materials*).

In some places the student has not been cautious enough in making points and claims about Internet use. For example, a sentence such as "*Everyone has access to the Internet at home*" would clearly be an exaggeration.

Look for points that you think are not cautious enough (e.g. overgeneralisations) or too cautious. Decide how to make them more, or less, cautious. Edit the text at those points to include your changes.

First of all, the Internet is always a good place to get started. Writing an essay is often a painstaking task and sometimes you will even get stuck in choosing an appropriate topic. If it is really a problem, using a search engine by typing in several simple keywords about the topics in mind will give you some rough pictures. It is rather like a "brainstorm" that you will find thousands of opinions and ideas for a single topic, which may reflect how "hot" the topic is, how many people have similar idea with you and how much resources on Web you can make use of. Through comparison, you will find how valuable a topic is or is not.

When a topic is selected, the next step is to seek professional help and turn to electronic resources such as e-journals and e-periodicals for reference. Reading on computer perhaps not quite comfortable, but as a tradeoff, you can make marks on these e-books while doing this will never be permissible on print in the library. Moreover, as more and more researchers begin to use Internet resources, you will find a lot of articles on journals and periodicals have Internet hyperlinks as reference in their bibliographic, those you can turn to by just mouse clicks. To make the full use of the Internet, you can also exchange ideas with the author or ask questions via email. In a word, the Internet provides everything you need in reading, not only the reading materials, but also other convenience like the search engines, electronic dictionaries, communication tools and quick access towards other materials.

Caution in interpreting data

If you are not used to discussing statistical data, you may find this advice helpful:

KEY POINTS

- Take your time and don't jump to conclusions.
- Look fairly quickly at the main headings of the table. Then pick on one or two numbers and check what they seem to be telling you. Does the table 'make sense'?
- Go back to the words round the edges of the table and at the heads of columns and read them carefully, to be sure you know what you are looking at.
- Read any footnotes.
- Scan for any interesting data - horizontally along the rows and vertically up and down the columns. Check for:

  high and low points **trends** **blips**

- Summarize for yourself the main conclusions you think can be drawn.

(Based on Northedge, 1990: 98)

Task 5.5
The table below shows the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales over a 60-year period. Decide what conclusions you can draw about life and education in Wales, on the basis of this evidence. Use Northedge's guidelines and the Language Boxes to help you express the right level of caution.

Write out your interpretations as full sentences.

Wales: Percentage of population speaking Welsh - all regions, by age

AGE	1941	1961	1981	2001
All ages	36.8	28.9	20.8	19.7
3-4 years	22.1	14.5	11.3	14.7
5-9 years	26.6	20.1	14.5	19.3
10-14 years	30.4	22.2	17.0	20.3
15-24 years	33.4	22.8	15.9	14.6
25-44 years	37.4	27.4	18.3	15.1
45-64 years	44.1	35.4	24.8	19.4
65 years and over	49.9	40.7	31.0	26.4

SUPPLEMENTARY TASK
If you have time, look at Supplement 10, 'Interpreting Data' in the *Supplementary Materials* (page 16), which presents some data on TEAM results.

Do Study Task 11 – discussing the questions with someone else first, if possible – and then draft a paragraph interpreting what the data shows.

Unit 6 Writing the Conclusion

In Unit 1 we considered the features of 'good' academic writing at master's level. One of the implicit criteria used by markers was **coverage**. 'Covering' a topic means giving it *comprehensive* treatment. It is achieved through the whole piece of work, but the place where you can highlight the ground you have covered is the **Conclusion**. There you have the opportunity to leave your reader with the final impression that your text is coherent, complete and competent.

Task 6.1
Below are the conclusions from the two transport essays in section 1 of the Supplementary Materials. The title was: *'It has been pointed out that road transport policies in the developing world help the rich at the expense of the poor. How far is this also true in developed countries?'*.

Which is the better conclusion to an essay on that topic - and why?

Essay 1

To sum up, it is the poorest communities that suffer most, in various ways, from policies that encourage road building. This is as true in developed countries as in the developing. I believe it is important that governments should take account of the needs of less well-off citizens, by adopting transport policies that restrict - rather than extend - the use of the private car. As things are, the minority benefits from road transport development at the expense of the majority.

Essay 2

It can be seen, then, that road building mostly directly benefits the rich in the Third World, while it is the poor that pay the costs. With this in mind, it seems that "the construction of motorways is a modern parable, using public funds to make life easier for the rich and harder for the poor" (Eher 1995: 171). These policies carry a serious risk: the differences in effect on the better-off and worse-off in a developing economy could become a cause of dispute and conflict. It is vital that the interests of the majority are not ignored.

What to include in the conclusion to an essay

Study this advice from an Edinburgh MSc course handbook:

Conclusion – has two requirements:

i. *summarise your argument*. This is your opportunity to draw together the threads of your argument and tell the reader what conclusions they should take away from your treatment of the literature. Don't simply tell us that you looked at **x**, **y** and **z** topics. Never introduce new substantive material in a conclusion.

ii. *reflect on the implications* of your case, returning explicitly to the aims of your paper and the reasons for your interest in the theme. At this stage you are allowed to 'take off the blinkers' and comment on related but wider themes – be they practical or theoretical. Where appropriate you may finish a paper by pointing to areas which, on the basis of your paper, warrant *future research*.

(MSc in International Business and Emerging Markets handbook, page 28)

Task 6.2
Some words or expressions in that extract may be unfamiliar - e.g. 'take off the blinkers', and 'warrant'. Check their meaning.

Task 6.3
Below is the conclusion from the sample Internet essay that you looked at earlier. Compare it with the advice in the MSc Handbook. Can you suggest ways of improving it? Use the space below the box to draft your improvements.

The essay was intended to discuss how beneficial the Internet is for students on master's degree programme by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of using Internet resources. Although I quite agree that Internet resources have advantages on selecting topics, referring to electronic materials, collecting data and developing academic interest, I have to admit that inefficiency in looking for resources, difficulty in evaluation resources and inappropriate use of resources would turn the whole thing upside down. In the essay, cases from self-experiences are included, as to give some indications on an efficient and proper use of Internet resources. However, fewer new ideas are given on discussing the disadvantages especially on plagiarism due to limited study on this aspect. Last but not least, the Internet is just a format of resource. There is no right or wrong with the resource, but it matters how you do with the resource. Using properly, there will be a lot of convenience for our research and study.

What to include in the conclusion to a project

(Here, 'project' means an academic assignment based on some sort of empirical data - from an experiment, survey, questionnaire, etc. It would include both a piece of course work and also 'summer' dissertation) .

A project conclusion has two main functions: it should **refer back** to what you have written, reminding the reader of your argument, and giving some sort of evaluation and/or interpretation; and it should **point forward** to what you think might happen in the future, with suggestions or recommendations, or predictions or warnings. In their analysis of Conclusion sections of empirical papers, Weissberg and Buker (1990) suggest there may be up to six elements:

A. **Restatement of purpose** (or hypothesis)

B. **Summary** of main points / findings; whether they support the hypothesis; whether they agree with other researchers' findings

C. Possible **explanations** for the findings; and/or **speculations** about them

D. **Limitations** of the study

E. **Implications** (generalisations from the findings)

F. **Recommendations** for future research and **practical applications**

Task 6.4
Which of those six elements were not included in the MSc Handbook advice on essay conclusions (top of page 33)?

Task 6.5
Below is the conclusion from a study of the relationship between a person's height and their success in learning English. Decide which of the six elements each sentence represents.

Conclusion

[1] The aim of this study was to see whether a person's height can positively influence their ability to learn a foreign language - in this case, English. [2] We have presented evidence that there is indeed a positive correlation between height and language proficiency. [3] Learners of English between 1.8 and 2.0 metres in height achieved higher overall IELTS scores than learners less than 1.8 metres tall. [4] It has to be acknowledged that our sample was small, and was limited to 30 middle-aged Dutch lecturers in English literature and 30 French primary school pupils. [5] However, if our findings are supported by research into a wider range of English learners, it might be advisable to give young children physical stretching exercises before they begin to learn a foreign language. [6] Whether the same positive effects can be achieved by encouraging children to wear shoes with higher heels remains to be investigated.

Language Boxes: the Conclusion

Restatement of purpose

The aim / purpose / objective of this study was to...
This study was intended / designed to...
Among the aims of this study was the (investigation) of...
Our research investigated / examined / explored whether...

Summary of findings

The results showed /were that...
We found that... (X) increased / decreased significantly when..
We found that the majority of British parents are in favour of....
The findings (do not) support the hypothesis that...
These findings are (in)consistent with previous research
The findings run contrary to the conventional view that...

Possible explanations and speculation

It may be that the findings were affected / influenced by...
(X) may be due to...
It could be that...
If these results are confirmed by other studies, we may have to...

Limitations

We need to be cautious about these findings, because...
... there was no control group
... the study was based on a limited number of ...
... the survey was conducted only among inexperienced lawyers
It has to be emphasised / acknowledged that the study was exploratory

Implications

The present study offers clear evidence for
The study supports the view / claim that...
There is therefore some evidence that...
This leads us to believe that...
This suggests that (X) may be an important (factor) in (Y)
Our research investigated / examined / explored whether...

Recommendations

Likely areas for further research / work are...
Future research should focus on...
One avenue for further study would be to…
Future investigation will no doubt reveal whether...
Further research is needed into...
It is important / relevant to investigate (whether)...

SUPPLEMENTARY TASK

If your Master's course assignments will involve drawing conclusions from empirical research findings, you should find it helpful to do Study Task 12 (Supplement 11).

Unit 7 Revising your text: Redrafting, editing and proof-reading

Redrafting means making large-scale changes to the draft. *Editing* involves smaller 'local' changes and improvements. *Proof-reading* is correcting slips and inconsistencies.

When revising your work, the key word is clarity, in relation to three overall aspects of your text:

- argument
- use of language
- presentation.

Checklist for Revising

The introduction

- Have you explained the importance of the topic?
- Have you provided background information?
- Does the introduction make clear the structure of the essay?
- Is it clearly separated from other sections?
- Is it concise?

The argument

- Have you included all the key points?
- Is your sequence of points clear and logical?
- Have you considered possible counter-arguments?
- Is the relationship between the points clear?

The evidence

- What sort of evidence have you used? (Text, statistics, graphical data)
- Have you shown how the evidence is relevant to your argument?
- Have you clearly separated others' reported views and your own views?
- Have you evaluated the strength of the evidence?
- Do you make any claims? Are they justified?
- Have you acknowledged all your sources?
- Have you integrated direct quotations into your own text?

The conclusion

- Does it summarise the ground covered?
- Does it explain your final position on the question?
- Does your final sentence provide a strong and concise ending to the essay?

Proof-reading

Have you carefully checked your text for slips in

- Spelling / punctuation / word-processing
- Grammar (e.g. verb forms, article use, singular / plural nouns)
- Style (e.g. avoiding informal vocabulary and contractions)
- Bibliography and in-text citations (see Supplement 12)?

Editing

Task 7.1
The Conclusion to the first sample Internet essay needs editing. Read it carefully and underline the parts which you think are

- unclear
- poorly expressed
- repetitive
- illogical

Decide how to improve the text and make the necessary changes

The essay was intended to discuss how beneficial the Internet is for students on master's degree programme by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of using Internet resources. Although I quite agree that Internet resources have advantages on selecting topics, referring to electronic materials, collecting data and developing academic interest, I have to admit that inefficiency in looking for resources, difficulty in evaluation resources and inappropriate use of resources would turn the whole thing upside down. In the essay, cases from self-experiences are included, as to give some indications on an efficient and proper use of Internet resources. However, fewer new ideas are given on discussing the disadvantages especially on plagiarism due to limited study on this aspect. Last but not least, the Internet is just a format of resource. There is no right or wrong with the resource, but it matters how you do with the resource. Using properly, there will be a lot of convenience for our research and study.

Proof-reading

(*Proofs* are the final draft version of a book, which the author and editor check before it is sent for printing). Proof-reading may not be the most *exciting* part of writing, but it strongly influences the **overall impression** your work makes on the readers. Make sure you allow yourself plenty of time to proof-read your assignments.

> *a piece of writing that has not been proof-read will irritate readers, impede rapid understanding, and cause readers to think that the writer is less intelligent and educated than may be the case.*
>
> Brookes and Grundy (1990: 60)

The use of computers means that readers' expectations about the accuracy of proof-reading in written assignments are much higher than they used to be. ***Spell-check*** programs are very useful, but they are not perfect:

(1) they only recognise words that they have been programmed to recognise, so they will query every occurrence of a proper name or technical term, unless you have added them in yourself;

(2) they don't understand the meaning of what you write, so will accept any worlds they recognise, even if they are in fact mis-spellings of other words: e.g. *their* for *there*, *it's* for *its*, and *practice* for *practise*.

Task 7.2
The extract below comes from an MSc project submitted by a British student. It contains at least 10 mistakes - grammar, word-processing, repetition, and punctuation. Find the errors and correct them.

The Karelian English Teaching (KET) programme has been in action for a decade. Although it's value may be difficult for British teaching assistants to perceive, the effects it is having on Karelian teachers and the students is definitely showing. On a micro level all the people who are are in contact with the assistant professionally and personally, have felt the impact on the way they perceive foreigners. Similarly the effect living in Karelia has had an effect on the lives of assistants and the their views of Karelia. On the macro level it will take some time for changes to take place English language teaching in Karelia, but the process has begun. Changes are taking place in the teaching style of Karelian teachers although there is inevitably some resistance to change but through perseverance and flexibility this change can take place.

Postscript:
Continuing to improve your writing

You can help yourself to improve your writing by paying close attention at three different stages of working on assignments for your degree course:

- when doing the **reading** for an assignment
- while doing the **writing** itself
- after you have had **feedback** on your work.

Attention when reading

Carry on doing what you have been doing in these materials: read analytically. While you are reading the articles and books recommended by your lecturers, analyse them as samples of *successful academic writing*, as well as sources of information. Reading is the key route to getting new ideas about writing, as well as the facts and concepts of your specialist field.

Attention during the writing process

Writing an assignment is likely to include at least some of the following stages:

Preparation:
- specifying the ***topic*** and ***aims***
- ***searching*** for relevant literature
- ***reading***
- making ***notes***
- collecting and interpreting ***data***
- ***planning*** (thinking, drafting an outline)
- ***discussion*** with supervisor/colleagues
- ***revising outline***

Writing:
- ***drafting***
- ***evaluating*** critically, further ***planning***, further ***discussion***
- ***revising: redrafting*** and ***editing***
- ***proof-reading***

Researching and writing an assignment can be a lonely activity. Discuss your ideas with someone else and get their advice, *at an early stage* in the process (e.g. when you have written a first draft). This helps you feel more confident about what you are doing, and can highlight problems in good time for you to revise your draft.

Attention after writing: Feedback

You may find that the lecturers who mark your assignment concentrate on the content and make no comment on your English. If so, take that as a **good sign**.

Even when they do say something about problems with English, British staff tend to make general comments like *'too informal'*, or even just *'Grammar!'*. To make improvements in your future writing, you need to ask them for more specific feedback. For example, ask them to underline or highlight parts of your text that they found difficult to understand.

Websites on academic writing

There is a rapidly growing number of sites that address various areas of academic writing, but the quality is very variable. Below are listed some URLs that we think you may find useful.

General advice on academic writing

Advice on writing assignments is offered on the Net to students on various courses at **Edinburgh University**. Here are some examples:

http://www.ling.ed.ac.uk/teaching/essay.shtml (Linguistics)

http://www.pol.ed.ac.uk/pol_1/pol1ah/essayquestions.html (Politics)

http://www.bto.ed.ac.uk/guide/essays_talks.html (Biology)

Ask your Master's programme organiser whether there is such advice for your course.

One of the best sites (in my opinion) offering practical advice is one we referred to earlier in this course, the University of Toronto:

http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/advise.html

Another is the *Academic Phrase Bank* at the University of Manchester, which is a more comprehensive version of the **Language Boxes** in ELTT courses 4 and 5:

http://www.phrasebank.man.ac.uk/

Later in your course, when you may want advice on writing your Master's dissertation, have a look at

http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/

Plagiarism

The best place to start is the Edinburgh webpage **Plagiarism Prevention and Detection: Resources for Students**

http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/services/plagiarism/resources-students.phtml

Paper on the problem of 'Mouse-click plagiarism' (advice for university teachers):

http://escalate.ac.uk/resources/webplagiarism/MouseClickPlagiarism.rtf

A short article describing a Biology lecturer's views of the problem and strategies to avoid it:

http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/synergy/article.cfm?articleID=9

A recent British plagiarism case has damaged the reputation of Dr Raj Persaud, a well-known psychiatrist. To read about it, try googling for **Persaud**.

Advice on evaluating Internet sources

These pages contain useful advice for university students on selecting Internet material:

http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/library/utml/common/services/researchinternet.html

http://www.uwec.edu/library/Guides/tencs.html

http://www.seda.ac.uk/ed_devs/vol2/online_resources.htm

The best place to start improving your writing?

On the last couple of pages we have listed only a small fraction of the websites now offering writing practice and advice to international and native-speaker students. The best way in to what is now available is via the website *Using English for Academic Purposes*, maintained by Andy Gillett of the University of Hertfordshire:

http://www.uefap.com/links/linkfram.htm

That will give you a better idea of the wealth of material on the Net.

If you find other websites that you think we should recommend to students, please let me know by emailing Cathy.Benson@ed.ac.uk

I very much hope that you have found these materials enlightening and that they will help you do your next piece of course writing. If there are other areas of academic writing that you think should be covered in materials like these, please let me know.

Tony Lynch

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Answer Key and Study Notes

UNIT 1 What is 'good' academic writing?

Task 1.2
Solution below. I've underlined the good points and put the negative ones in CAPITALS.

Task 1.3 See comments on right-hand side below.

	CRITERIA
Example 1	
Balanced, well argued and well presented. The summary of advantages and disadvantages was succinct and comprehensive. We noted, however, a number of ERRORS IN THE BIBLIOGRAPHY.	**3, 4, 6** *conciseness, coverage* **7**
Example 2	
You covered a great deal of ground, although at times you needed to ADD DEFINITIONS of technical terms. In general, a solid piece of work, but WEAKENED by poor proof-reading, spelling, bibliographical omissions, odd spelling and punctuation. CLOSER ATTENTION TO DETAIL would have improved the whole impression.	*coverage* **5?** **6, 7** **?4, 6**
Example 3	
Comprehensive, partly because it was TOO LONG. What should have been the 'Introduction' occupied too much space and was out of balance with the rest. Extensive use of references, although it was NOT ALWAYS CLEAR that you understood all the issues discussed. You seem still to have SERIOUS SELF-EXPRESSION PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH.	*Coverage*, **8** **3** **1, 4? (5?)** **5**
Example 4	
SUPERFICIAL treatment - e.g. lack of discussion of underlying principles. OVER-SIMPLE ACCEPTANCE of terms used in the literature; INSUFFICIENTLY critical. You should have sought more guidance from your tutor.	**2, 4** *critical evaluation*
Example 5	
Your work is still hampered by DIFFICULTIES OF EXPRESSION - many points where your argument NEEDS CLARIFYING. You tend to adopt others' terms WITHOUT QUESTIONING them critically. A number of INCONSISTENCIES in your bibliography entries.	**5** *critical evaluation* **7**

Task 1.4 'Implicit' criteria have been shown above right, in *italics*. Examples 4 and 5 show that the markers expect students to evaluate (criticise) what they read, and not just describe it. We come back to this in Unit 4, *Critical Use of Source Materials*.

Task 1.5 is an open question.

Task 1.6 Three arguments in favour of extended hours: (1) current shortage of study space; (2) access to print materials (3) access to electronic resources. N.B. *'At the same time…'* is a marker of a counter-argument to follow. Arguments against: (1) strain on staff of unsocial hours; (2) implications of EU directive on working hours.

The writer is finally in favour: *'it should be feasible…'*

Task 1.7 There are two counter-arguments: (1) reductionist approach; and (2) no limit on features. He confirms its validity: *'Nevertheless…'*

Unit 2 Writing the Introduction

Task 2.1
Suggested answer:

Situation – sentences 1-3
Problem – sentences 4-7 (*But even*… to *from these problems*)
Solution – sentence 8
Evaluation – final sentence

Task 2. 2 (sample essay on pages 22-25 of your *Supplementary Materials*)
I think paragraph 1 is the student's Intro. I would analyse the sentences like this:

Nowadays... **G**
Some may take... **G**
However, there has... **R**
In my point of view... **C** (thesis/main idea)
What's more... ?? (I'd say this doesn't belong in the Intro)
My purpose... **C** (aims. Not explicit enough for **S**tructure))

I would improve it by adding a **Structure** sentence, or a **Background** sentence, about the Internet or university study.

It's important to bear in mind that different terms are used on Master's courses at Edinburgh to refer to various types of assignment (*exercise, short essay, long essay, project*, etc.). Bear in mind that there are no general rules about what makes any one different from another.

So you should find out the 'local' expectations by checking in your course's *Handbook*.

Supplementary Tasks (page 13)
You will find these tasks (and those for the other Units) in your supplementary materials. Write up your answers and then compare them with the answers and solutions provided in the *Study Notes* at the back of the supplementary materials.

Unit 3 Acknowledging your sources

Task 3.1 (page 14)
I've included the text on page 14 because it's from the University of Edinburgh website, but you may find that the simpler language in the text on page 15 makes the position clearer.

If any of the issues mentioned here are not clear to you, ASK your Master's course organiser.

Task 3.2 (page 16)
Only case 8 is not plagiarism. It is the only case in which we are told that the student has acknowledged the source.

Although you may think that some cases are "more serious" than others, the official line at the University of Edinburgh is that any case of plagiarism - even unintentional - is subject to penalty in terms of loss of marks or, in extreme cases, expulsion.

I suggest you visit the University of Edinburgh website (URL on page 14) and read the official policy carefully. All students are expected (and assumed) to have read it. "Ignorance of the law is no excuse".

Task 3.3/3.4 (pages 16-17)

Para. 1 - Perfect (*has grown, has focused*) to provide general background; and Past (*was to discover, was pervasive, found*) for reference to specific studies.

Para. 2 - One case of Past (*found*). Then a shift to Present (*it is important, concludes, it is necessary*) to mention the current situation and needs.

Para. 3 - continues with Present (*is, are*), then Past for specific example (*was based on*), Present (*is a need*, and Past to show how the project started (*formed the rationale*).

Task 3.5 (page 18)
The University of Toronto site is very good - not just for reporting verbs. It's in the list of recommended websites on pages 40-41.

Task 3.6
There are none in para 1. In para 2, there is the contrast between the **quantitative** analysis (summarised in para 1) and the need for ("it is important to consider") **qualitative** study, too; again "it is necessary to combine X and Y". In para 3, "another problem... is they are very small-scale" and "pressing need for a more accurate description".

STUDY TIP:
Students often ask, "Should I summarise or should I quote?". At postgraduate level, it is rare for direct quotation to be used in science, engineering and medicine; it is more common in most humanities and social science writing (including empirical research reports, such as Granger and Tyson). If in doubt, ask the lecturer setting an assignment for advice.

Unit 4 Critical use of source materials

Task 4.1 (page 20)
The expression *critical understanding* encapsulates the need to show that you are familiar with the background literature (cf. Unit 3), but also that you have thought about weaknesses and gaps in the previous research/theory, or ways in which the authors' assumptions do not apply to the particulars of your own topic/context.

Task 4.2 (page 21)
Both assignments require the students to write a **critical section** (called *assessment* in one and *criticism* in the other). But there are a number of differences: the **length** of the assignment; its **focus**, which is *methodology* in the first, and *content and presentation* in the second.

The word '**summary**' is used differently in the two texts: a summary of the *student's own report* in the Public Health one, and of the *articles read* in Computer Science. The Computer Science assignment requires **full referencing**, while the PH task implies that **no background reading** is necessary.

Task 4.3 (p 22) – open question.

Task 4.4 (p 23)
My answer is shown below. Negative points are underlined, and positive ones are in CAPITALS.

The main thrust of the authors' argument is to discredit the 'bottom-up' model as an adequate description of competent listening. In doing this, however, they tend to undervalue the crucial importance of … They seem to assume that … They claim that "teaching programmes should not…" (1988: 42). It is regrettable that they give no definition of … Moreover, it is worth noting that in their own proposed listening programme they make no mention of any sort of….
The aim of many of their listening activities is to… They attempt to get listeners to become aware of … They thus focus on … This is an ADMIRABLE break with traditional listening practice, which involves… The authors are ALSO TO BE COMMENDED for offering CLEAR CRITERIA for… (although little, unfortunately, is said about…) and for devising a USEFUL AND CHALLENGING means of …

To conclude this critical examination, I believe that the emphasis on higher-level processes in the book is ENTIRELY SUITABLE for learners who … However, I believe that it would be less suitable for beginners because…

Task 4.5
This text was found useful by students attending our ELTCpre-sessional course. If you have more 'advanced' questions about search and evaluation, try this URL:
http://www.hopetillman.com/findqual.html

It was compiled by a librarian (Hope Tillman) and was originally a talk she gave at Harvard, updated (2003).

Again, consult your MSc organiser for advice on any specialist web evaluation sites in your field.

Unit 5 Expressing caution

[There is additional material linked to this Unit in Supplements 10 and 11].

Task 5.1 (page 28) Here is my solution:

One point about which there is wide agreement in the literature is that transfer (both positive and negative) is more likely to take place from a language which is similar to the new foreign language being learnt, than from a language which is unrelated. There is some evidence that this can lead to more transfer taking place from the L2 than from the mother tongue, where the L2 is perceived as closer to the new language being learnt. This phenomenon has been found in all areas of language, and with specific reference to Spanish and Portuguese. Clearly, Spanish and Portuguese are closer to each other (both historically and typologically) than they are to English, and it seems to be the case that learners' perceptions of similarities between languages generally correspond to actual relatedness. Hensey (1967) analysed the errors of learners of Portuguese (both Spanish L1and Spanish L2) and found what appeared to be Spanish-based transfer errors in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Similarity is not the only cause for L2/L3 influence proposed in the literature. Bentahila (1975) and Rivers (1979) suggest 'recency' as a possible factor: whichever foreign language was learnt most recently will influence the next language. Meisel speculates that the way in which foreign languages are stored and processed in the brain may be different from the way in which the L1 is dealt with, and that this could lead to L2/L3 influence.

Based on Benson (1990: 124)

Task 5.2 Benson was reporting the caution expressed by the source authors.

Task 5.3 (page 29)
Hedging is underlined in the box below; strengthening is in bold **CAPITALS**.

Discussion

When we compare the comments of the two groups, it is **CLEAR** that the similarities are **FAR** greater than the differences, apart from their views on whether or not they wanted to sound like native speakers or aimed for 'international intelligibility' – in other words, wanted to be easily understood but to keep their own accent in English. Most of the Hiroshima group aspired to native-like pronunciation, rather than accented international intelligibility. On the other hand, the Hong Kong students' opinions were more evenly divided: half the group (10) wanted native-like pronunciation, with most of the others (8) aiming for international intelligibility.

The comparatively high number of Hong Kong students who aimed for international intelligibility may reflect to some extent the **MUCH** higher profile of English in Hong Kong than in Japan – **NOT TO MENTION** the fact that Hong Kong English is a recognised regional variety of English. In this sense, aiming for intelligibility may be a belief based on first-hand experience of Hong Kong English or, possibly, a desire for group solidarity.

The OVERWHELMING majority in both the Japanese and Hong Kong groups declared themselves 'very willing' to change their intonation, including those individuals who found English intonation 'strange' or 'different'. It could be that the fact that the two groups had relatively proficient English was also a slight influence on their views.

Task 5.4 (page 30)
The words I would replace are shown in brackets below.

You will probably identify some of the (many) language errors in the text, but we are going to come back to them in Unit 7, *Revising your Text*, so for the moment we'll ignore them and focus on the issue of caution.

First of all, the Internet (is always) **can be** a good place to get started. Writing an essay is (delete 'often' = *not strong enough*) a painstaking task and sometimes you will even get stuck in choosing an appropriate topic. If it is really a problem, using a search engine by typing in several simple keywords about the topics in mind (will) **may / can** give you some rough pictures. It is rather like a "brainstorm" that you will find thousands of opinions and ideas for a single topic, which may reflect how "hot" the topic is, how many people have similar idea with you and how much resources on Web you can make use of. Through comparison, you **may (**will) find how valuable a topic is or is not.

When a topic is selected, the next step is to seek professional help and turn to electronic resources such as e-journals and e-periodicals for reference. Reading on computer perhaps not quite comfortable, but as a tradeoff, you can make marks on these e-books while doing this will never be permissible on print in the library. Moreover, as more and more researchers begin to use Internet resources, you will find a lot of articles on journals and periodicals have Internet hyperlinks as reference in their bibliographic, those you can turn to by just mouse clicks. To make the full use of the Internet, you (can also) **might also be able to** exchange ideas with the author or ask questions via email. In a word, the Internet provides (everything you need in) **a great deal of support for your** reading, not only the reading materials, but also other convenience like the search engines, electronic dictionaries, communication tools and quick access towards other materials.

Task 5.5 (page 31)
Here's my draft:

> *There has been an overall decline in the percentage of the population speaking Welsh over the period 1941-2001. However, the rate of decline slowed between 1981 and 2001. There is evidence of a rise in Welsh speaking among school-age children, particularly those 5-9 years old. This may be due to changes in education policy, such as the increased efforts to teach Welsh as a second language and also the introduction of Welsh-medium primary schools. It might also be related with a general increase in interest in Welsh national culture and possibly connected with the opening of the National Assembly in 1998.*

Supplementary task (Study Task 11)
You can compare your interpretation of the data with mine on page 19 of the supplementary materials.

Unit 6 Writing the Conclusion

Task 6.1 (page 32)
Essay 1 has the stronger conclusion. The ending to Essay 2 is not related to the title, which asked for discussion of road transport policy in **developed** countries. So the student's Conclusion, about the **Third World**, reveals that he has not answered the question.

Task 6.2
Make sure you understand the expression 'substantive new material', because that's an important point about conclusions.

Task 6.3
This is an open question, so see what you think. My preference would be to shorten it, to make it less waffly. One or two of the sentences don't clearly convey (to me) what the student means. Below is my revised version of what the students wrote:

(I would delete sentence 1)

The Internet has four clear benefits for Master's students: it helps them to select topics, to refer to electronic materials, to collect data and to develop their interest in their field. However, one has to balance those advantages against the potential for inefficiency in looking for web resources, the difficulty in evaluating those resources, and their inappropriate use. In this essay I have included examples from my own experience, to illustrate the efficient and proper use of Internet resources, but I have focused less on disadvantages - especially plagiarism - due to the lack of available research. In the final analysis, the Internet is just one form of resource; as with any resource, there are no rights and wrongs - it is a question of how you make use of it. Used properly, the Internet can certainly facilitate students' work at postgraduate level.

Task 6.4
The elements missing, I think, are A, C and D.

Task 6.5
This conclusion is fictitious, by the way!
Sentence 1 = **A**; sentence 2 = **B**; sentence 3 = **B**; sentence 4 = **D**; sentence 5 = **F (applications)**; sentence 6 = **F (future research)**.

Unit 7 Revising your Text: Redrafting, editing and proofreading

Checklist (page 36)
This is basically a summary of what we have covered in the previous six Units of these materials. But the last point under the heading **The conclusion** is new: the importance of composing a strong final sentence, to leave your reader with a good impression. The sample Internet essay has a very "good" example of a weak ending.

Task 7.1 (page 37)
The sample provides plenty of room for improvement! I gave you my reformulation of the Conclusion on page 50.

You may well find that you would make changes to my version. There is, in these cases, no single correct answer. I hope this will help you appreciate that editing and improving a text is not just a question of language.

Task 7.2 (page 38)
By the way, I hope you noticed my deliberate misspelling on page 38 - under point (2), *worlds* should be *words*. Did you spot it?

Here is my solution to the proof-reading task, corrections shown in **bold**:

*The Karelian English Teaching (KET) programme has been in action for a decade. Although **its** value may be difficult for British teaching assistants to perceive, the effects it is having on Karelian teachers and students **are** definitely showing. On a micro level all the people who **are** in contact with the assistant professionally and personally [**delete comma**] have felt the impact on the way they perceive foreigners. Similarly [**delete "the effect"**] living in Karelia has had an effect on the lives of assistants and [**delete "the"**] their views of Karelia. On the macro level it will take some time for changes to take place in English language teaching **in** Karelia, but the process has begun. Changes are taking place in the teaching style of Karelian teachers**;** although there is inevitably some **resistance**, [delete **"but"**] through perseverance and flexibility **such** changes can take place.*

Postscript (pages 39-41)

This section summarises ideas and sites that ELTCstudents and teachers have found useful. Make sure you visit **Andy Gillett's website** ('The best place to start?' on page 41).

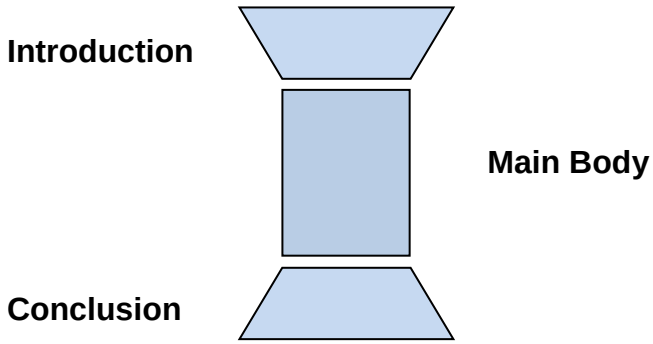
Tony Lynch

Essay writing from the English for Uni website

At university, one of the most common forms of writing is the academic essay. The purpose of an essay is to help you to discover more about a topic and in the process develop a number of important skills. Such skills include text analysis for a range of different arguments and perspectives and the development of the various elements of structured writing which should be found in an essay.

In other words, in an essay you are required to write a reasoned analysis of the issue or issues in question, drawing upon a range of external sources to help you support your position.

An essay is a highly structured piece of writing, and to produce such an ordered piece of writing requires you to consider a number of elements. The overall structural elements follow a typical pattern:

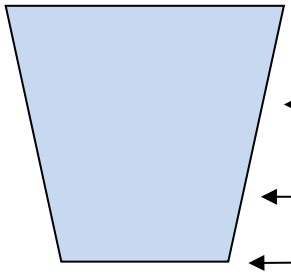


Writing a good essay can be compared to baking a cake—if you do not mix the appropriate ingredients in the right quantities or order, and do not follow the required processes, then the end result will not be what you hoped for!

So, writing a good essay involves following rules to help you achieve the desired result. The following example is based around a 1000 word discussion essay.

The parts of an essay

Introduction



Background statement – where you set the context for your essay

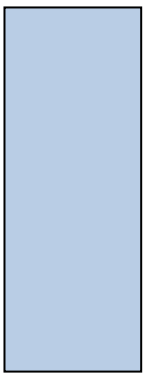
Issue(s) – where you outline the specific issues that are relevant to your essay

Thesis – where you state your position in relation to the issues

Scope – where you outline what exactly is going to be covered in relation to your argument

Thesis and scope are sometimes combined to form one or more sentences known as a *thesis statement*. In that case, the introduction might follow a BIST structure rather than a BITS structure. The thesis statement often comes at the end of the introduction, although it can be written earlier. There is no set model for an essay, but the English for Uni website presents one popular way to do it.

Main Body



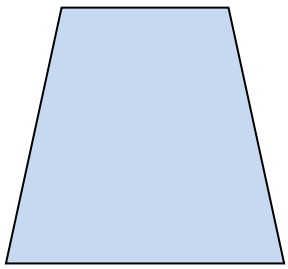
Each paragraph should focus on one idea only.

The idea can then be developed in a number of ways, such as through explanation, evaluation, exemplification or incorporation of research data.

Your paragraphs should be balanced – keep to the rule of no less than 3 sentences per paragraph.

Your paragraphs should link together – use connective words, both within and between paragraphs, to keep a sense of cohesion and linkage.

Conclusion



Your conclusion ties your essay together. It should normally:

Begin with a link to the preceding paragraph.

Restate your thesis and summarise your principal points.

End with a broad statement relating to the significance of your argument.

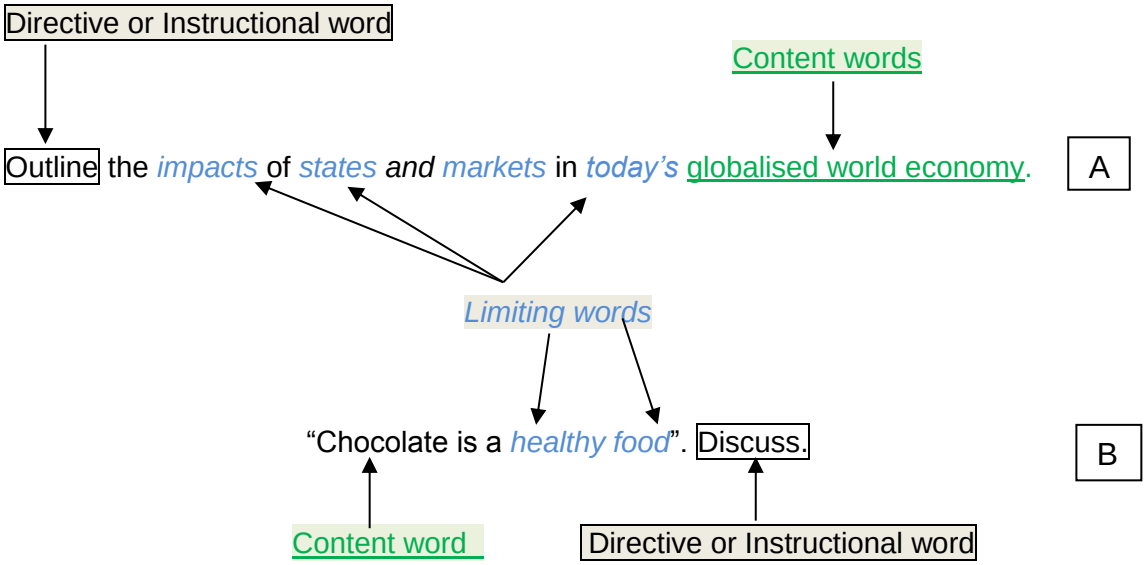
A conclusion is not normally longer than an introduction.

Topic/Title

When you receive an essay question, it is important for you to  analyse it very carefully in order to understand what exactly the specific aim of the question is. To do this, you need to break down the question into its component parts. Most essay questions will contain these three elements:

- Content/Topic words – those words which give the subject of the essay
- Limiting/Focus words – those words which provide a narrower scope for the essay
- Directive or Instructional words – those words which tell you how to approach the essay

Look at these sample essay titles from A) Economics and B) Nutrition:



If we take B as an example, then to answer the question fully would first involve looking closely at the directive word Discuss and analysing its exact meaning:

Discuss	Present various points and consider the different sides. This is usually longer than an explanation, as you need to present evidence and state which argument is more persuasive.

So, to answer this question, in your essay entitled:

> "Chocolate is a *healthy food*". Discuss."

you would need to:

- consider a number of points in relation to the title
- balance your points between supporting and opposing positions
- consider which of the positions is the most persuasive and explain why

You also need to consider the length of your essay – in a 2000 word essay you can cover substantially more points than in a 1000 word one! This example is based on a 1000 word essay.

In relation to Content words your focus is clear – chocolate!

In relation to *Limiting words*, you need to consider what *healthy food* actually means.

A good way to expand your vocabulary is to look at the Academic Word List http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/ (developed by Averil Coxhead at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand). The uefap website (http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/selfram.htm) also has very useful lists of words found in particular subjects, such as mathematics, business and health science.

Directive or Instructional words

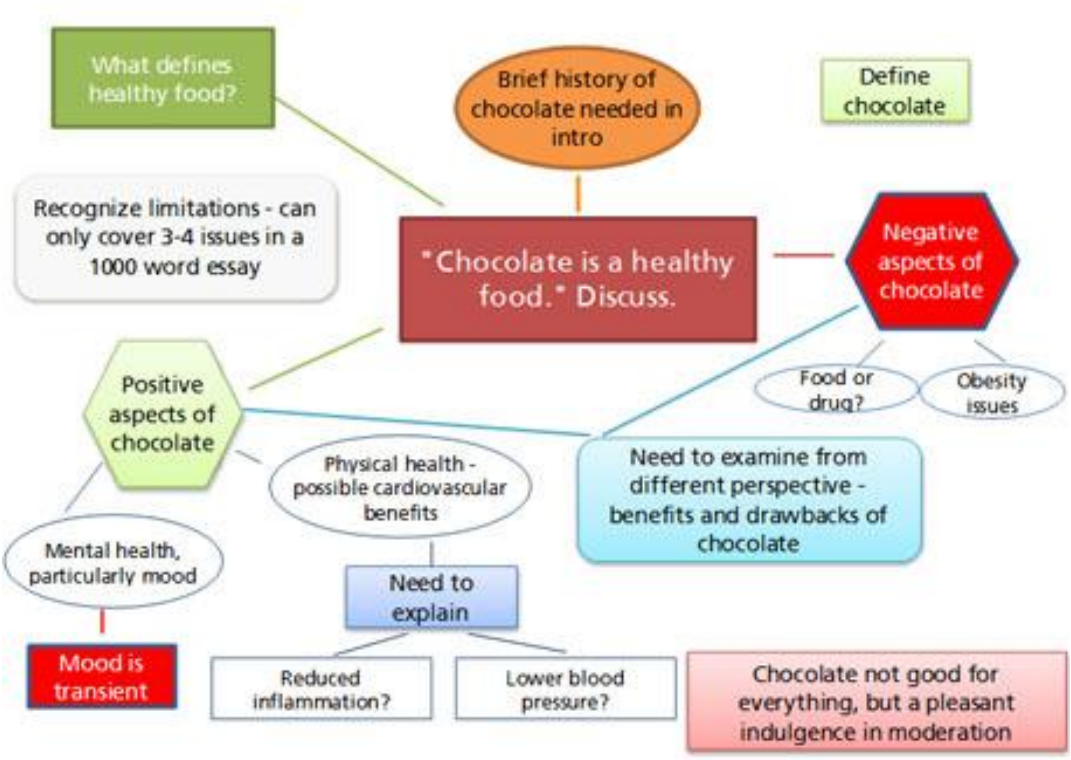
There are a number of directive words, or instructional words as they are sometimes called, which have specific and recognised meanings in relation to essay writing. These directive words tell you what to do in your essay, so it is important to understand the exact meanings of these words to help you answer the question properly. Some common directive words include:

Analyse	Look at something in depth, examining the details.
Argue	Give reasons for why you agree or disagree with something and show that you understand different points of view.
Assess	Compare different points and see if the argument or information is true or persuasive.
Compare	Show the similarities between two sets of information or arguments. 'Compare' often appears with 'contrast' in essay questions.
Contrast	Show the differences between two sets of information or arguments. 'Contrast' often appears with 'compare' in essay questions.
Criticise	Evaluate an argument or a text to see if it is good. 'Criticise' does not mean you have to be negative.
Critique	Evaluate an argument or a text to see if it is good. 'Critique' does not mean you have to be negative.
Define	Explain the meaning of a word or a term, especially in the context of your essay. You can use a dictionary definition it it's helpful, but remember that the word might be used in a particular way in the subject you are studying.
Describe	Give details about something.
Discuss	Look at the different sides of an argument and say which is more convincing.
Evaluate	Look at the strengths and weaknesses of the material and give your final opinion of it.
Examine	Look at something in detail and consider its strengths and weaknesses.

Explain	Help your reader to understand more about something by giving relevant details.
Illustrate	Give examples to make something clearer.
Interpret	Help your reader to understand more about something and provide your own perspective if necessary.
Justify	Give reasons to explain what you think about a subject.
Outline	Give a broad explanation of something without too many details.
Prove	Show if something is true and demonstrate how you reached that conclusion.
Review	Look at something in detail and give your perspective on it.
State	Put your ideas or arguments clearly.
Summarise	Pull everything together and present it clearly without using too much detail.

Brainstorming

What is brainstorming?
Brainstorming, the generation of thematically related ideas, is an important ingredient in the earlier stages of planning your essay. Brainstorming allows you to produce ideas, based around a central concept or focus, which can be expressed in the form of a mind map.
When doing a brainstorm for an essay, remember that this is an idea generation technique. Those ideas don't need to be put into any particular order or categorisation at this first stage—these can come later.
Here is a possible brainstorm for the chocolate essay, done in the form of a mind map:



Note that the central focus (the essay question) has several boxes linked to it which represent the writer's first ideas. They are in no particular order at first, but then the writer attaches connections, out of which further considerations and connections develop. A brainstorm like this is *organic*; it does not necessarily stop growing - you can add, remove or reorganise it as you wish.
If you like to put more system into your brainstorm, use a step-based model such as the following:

👣 Step 1
Time yourself for the first draft of your mind map
Set a fixed time for this drafting from your base topic/question and stick to it.

👣 Step 2
Look critically at your draft

For example: Can you see what has potential? If so, extend it, perhaps with possible examples and/or connections. Are there any imbalances? If so, try to make appropriate balances (with examples and connections) whilst ensuring you are still sticking to the essay question.

 Step 3

Think about ordering

Start thinking about the ordering of your ideas. What are primary and secondary ideas? Which issues might you tackle first in your essay and why?

 Step 4

Anticipate readers' needs

Are there any words and/or phrases that might need explaining? If so, when is the best time in the essay to do this?

 Step 5

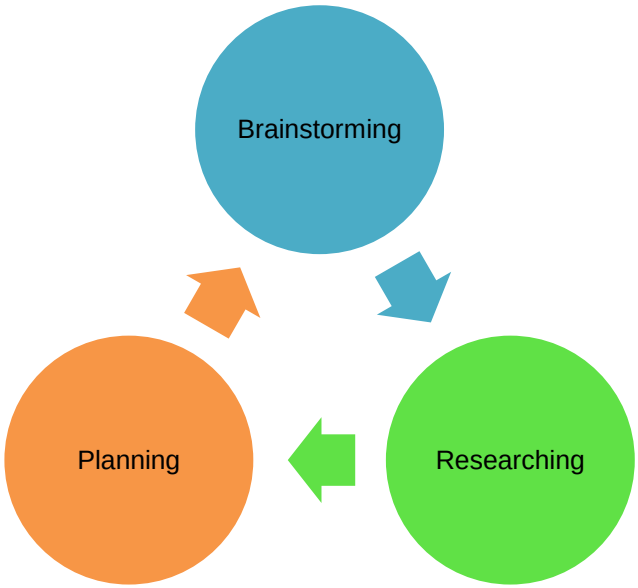
Move

Reflect upon your brainstorming. Once you are happy with your brainstorm you can use it to inform the development of the next stage of your essay writing preparation—planning your essay.

Researching for your essay

Once you have done some brainstorming, it's time to get researching!

Brainstorming helps you to see what you know about the topic. Researching will give you more depth. Brainstorming, researching and planning are cyclical, which means that each process helps the other processes and you might want to do each process more than once.

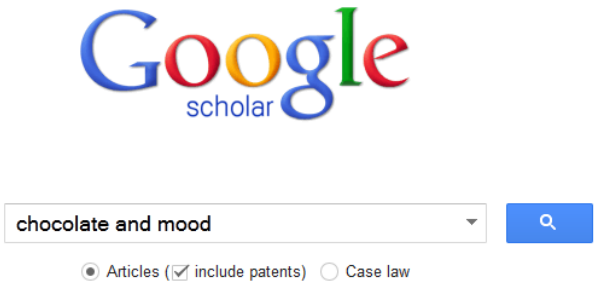


Remember that an academic essay requires academic sources.

Finding what you want takes time and it takes effort. The best place to start (assuming you haven't already been given a prescribed reading list!) is by using an academic database. If you are not sure how to use a database, then book an appointment with your *subject librarian* at your institution.

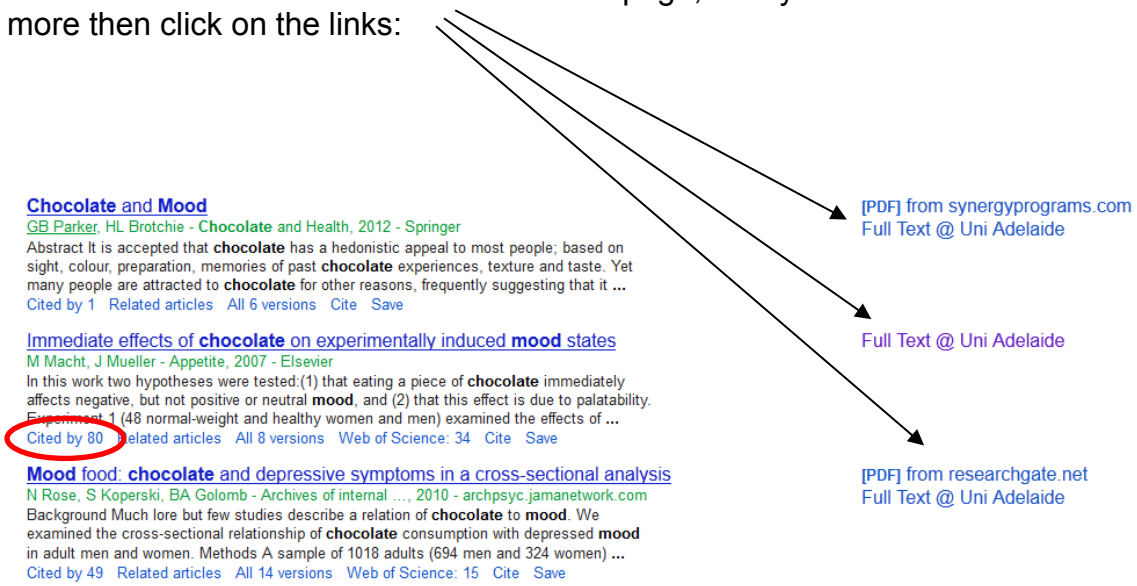
Another option is to use an internet academic search engine such as Google Scholar. This is the example we are going to use. NB Make sure you are logged in to the library at your educational institution, so that you can use the full database capacities linked to Google Scholar.

You need to enter **keywords** to begin with. For the chocolate essay, one of the first associations we thought of was **chocolate** and **mood.** If we enter this word combination into Google Scholar it will look like this:

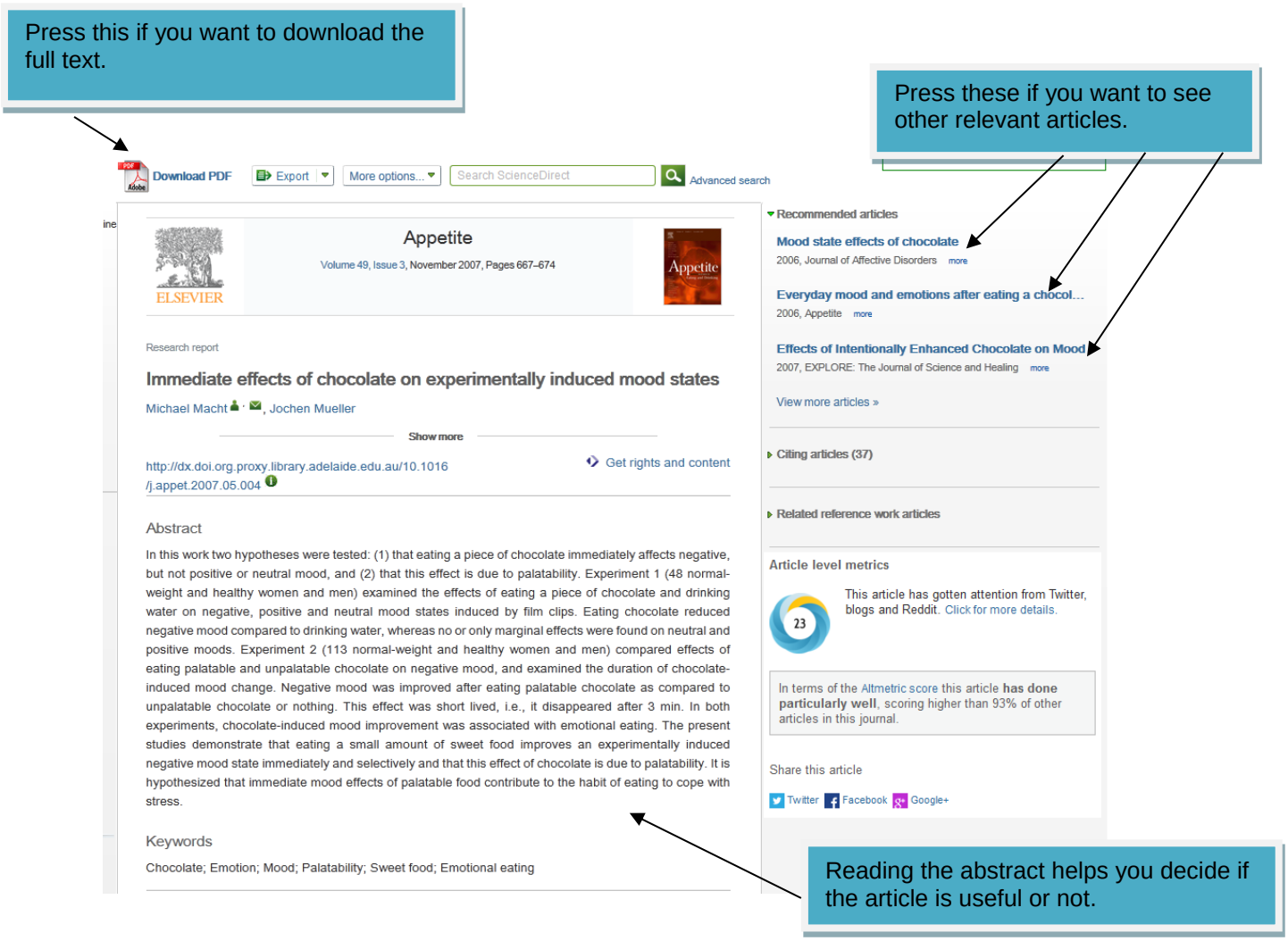


This will take you to a webpage which lists a number of relevant articles. An example of this can be seen below.

These are the first three articles on the webpage, so if you want to find out more then click on the links:



The second article has been cited 80 times, suggesting it is highly valued. If, say, you think the second article looks promising, click on it and follow the instructions on the database. You will then see the abstract:



Once you have located the abstract there are a number of things to consider.

Read the abstract and ask yourself if the content of the article is likely to be relevant to your essay.

a) If yes, click on the pdf. This will take you to the full article which you can then skim read the article quickly to decide if it is relevant.

b) If no, then you have a choice. Either click on the links to other related articles or go back to Google Scholar and then choose another article to skim read.

If you do not find what you are looking for, then you need to change your **keywords** search.

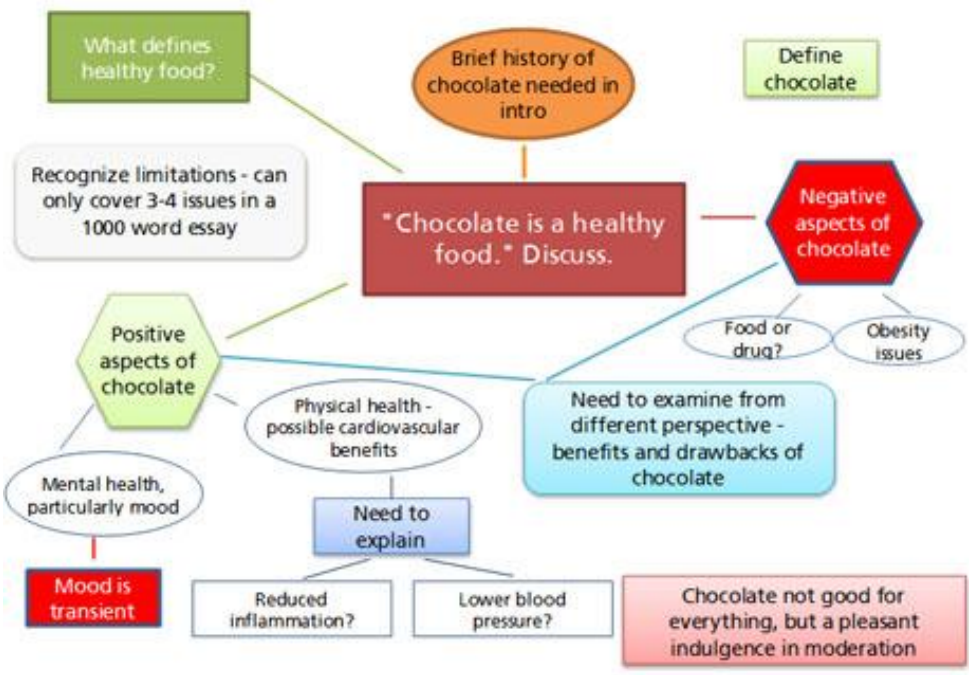
When you have found what you think might be useful make a note in your plan at the appropriate place.

Do the same thing for all the points that need academic references to support them.

Remember too that, **during your research, you might discover new issues and perspectives that you hadn't considered before,** thus your original plan might be quite different from the final one!

Planning your essay

Once you have brainstormed your ideas and done some initial research, start putting them into a logical order as part of the essay planning process. Here is the brainstorm for the chocolate essay again, which you can use to develop the planning process:



Planning or a plan?
In the first instance, it is important to distinguish between planning and a plan.

- Planning is an ongoing process, from when you receive the essay title to when you submit your final draft.
- A plan is a physical outline of the way you intend to conceptualise, structure and present your ideas.

Plans can be structured/restructured at any time during the planning process.

At this point it is time to write your first plan. However, **do not stop doing research yet**. Why not?

A plan helps you to put your ideas into a form which gives you a **clear direction** for your **reading**.

Once you have written your ideas up into a plan, you are beginning to **give a structure to the essay writing process** in order **to make your argument more coherent.**

You might surprise yourself by discovering **you know more about the subject matter than you thought.** This can **help build your confidence**.

Remember that a plan is just that—a plan. It can be modified after you do more research; you might discover some different perspectives or issues you hadn't previously anticipated.

Example: First plan (linear style)

Title: "Chocolate is a healthy food." Discuss.

Introduction
Context for paper – popularity of chocolate.
Issue – whether chocolate is a healthy food is questionable.
Thesis – chocolate may be enjoyable but not healthy.
Scope – (only 4 aspects are covered in our example in order to keep it short)
4 aspects:
Positive: Can have a positive impact on mood
Positive: Possible health benefits for cardiovascular system
Negative: Chocolate can be seen as a drug rather than a food
Negative: Potential correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity

Main body
Paragraph 1
Ways in which chocolate can have a positive impact on mood. (I need to find academic sources to support this.)
Is the chocolate + improved mood scenario measurable/transient? (Evidence needed for this.)

Note that the writer has some ideas but wants to find relevant external sources for more

Paragraph 2
Possible benefits of chocolate on cardiovascular health – how much/what type(s) of chocolate have benefit? (Sources needed to help answer these questions.)
Problems with measuring correlation between chocolate consumption and cardiovascular health. (Sources needed to help answer this.)

Paragraph 3
Chocolate best viewed as a food or a drug.
Indulgence or addiction – are the boundaries unclear? (See what external sources have to say on this.)

The writer poses questions. This gives direction to reading.

Medication elements of chocolate? (Readings needed around this issue.)

Paragraph 4
The correlation between chocolate and obesity.
(Definition of obesity needed.)
What does the literature say?

The writer begins with a summary of the four arguments.
The writer ends by reaffirming the thesis statement.

Conclusion
Summary of four arguments presented

Chocolate is not a healthy food, but it is enjoyable nevertheless.

Example: Developing an essay plan after research (linear style)

Title: "Chocolate is a healthy food." Discuss.

Introduction
Context for paper – popularity of chocolate.
Issue – whether chocolate is a healthy food is questionable.
Thesis – chocolate may be enjoyable but not healthy.
Scope – (only 4 aspects are covered here to keep the example short)
- Positive: Can positively impact on mood
- Positive: Possible health benefits for cardiovascular system
- Negative: Chocolate can be seen as a drug rather than a food
- Negative: Potential correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity

Main body
Paragraph 1 with possible sources
Ways in which chocolate can impact positively on mood. 'Feel good effect'- Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006), Scholey and Owen (2013), Macht and Dettmer (2006) and Macht and Mueller (2007).

Is the chocolate and improved mood scenario measurable/transient? Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006) – chocolate mood effects do not last. Macht and Dettmer (2006) – anticipation effect and more studies needed.

Paragraph 2
Possible benefits of chocolate on cardiovascular health – how much/what type(s) of chocolate have benefit? (Sources needed to help answer these questions.)
Problems with measuring correlation between chocolate consumption and cardiovascular health. (Sources needed to help answer this.)

Paragraph 3
Chocolate best viewed as a food or a drug.
Indulgence or addiction – are the boundaries unclear? (See what external sources have to say on this)

Medication elements of chocolate? (Readings needed around this issue.)

Paragraph 4
The correlation between chocolate and obesity.
(Definition of obesity needed.)
What does the literature say in relation to other causal factors?

Conclusion
Summary of four arguments presented.
Chocolate is not a healthy food, but it is enjoyable nevertheless.

Example: Developed essay plan (linear style)

Title: "Chocolate is a healthy food." Discuss.

Introduction
Context for paper – popularity of chocolate.
Issue – whether chocolate is a healthy food is questionable.
Thesis – chocolate may be enjoyable but not healthy.
Scope – (only 4 aspects are covered here to keep the example short)

- Positive: Can positively impact on mood
- Positive: Possible health benefits for cardiovascular system
- Negative: Chocolate can be seen as a drug rather than a food
- Negative: Potential correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity.

Main body
Paragraph 1
Ways in which chocolate can impact positively on mood. 'Feel good effect'- Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006), Scholey and Owen (2013), Macht and Dettmer (2006) and Macht and Mueller (2007)

Is the chocolate and improved mood scenario measurable/transient? Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006) chocolate mood effects do not last. Macht and Dettmer (2006) – anticipation effect and more studies needed.

Paragraph 2
Possible benefits of chocolate on cardiovascular health – how much/what type(s) of chocolate have benefit? Can provide heart-friendly flavanols (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002) – helps with blood clotting and is anti-inflammatory (Schramm et al., 2001)
Maximising benefits of chocolate lies in minimising fat levels (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002). Current processes destroy flavanols (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002).

Note the change of focus from original idea (correlation between chocolate consumption and cardio. health) due to lack of research data available.

Paragraph 3
Chocolate best viewed as a food or a drug.
Indulgence or addiction – are the boundaries unclear? Chocolate contains some biologically active ingredients, but in small amounts (Bruinsma & Taren, 1999). 'Chocolate addicts' – negative correlation: chocolate consumption and mood (Macdiramid & Hetherington, 1995) but chocolate cravings sensory rather than addictive (Bruinsma & Taren,1999).
Medication elements of chocolate? Used in relation to magnesium deficiency in women (Pennington, 2000 in Steinberg et al., 2003). Findings concur with Abraham and Lubran (1981) who found a correlation between magnesium deficiency and nervous tension in women.

Note the narrow focus of medical benefits (i.e. only considering magnesium) due to short length of essay.

Note the findings show that there is no clear relationship between chocolate and obesity – an issue flagged in the introduction.

Paragraph 4
The correlation between chocolate and obesity.
No specific correlation found in literature (Beckett, 2008; Lambert, 2009). Typified by Mellor's (2013) findings – adults showed no weight increase after chocolate controlled diet. Lambert (2009) exemplified that chocolate consumption alone unlikely to precipitate obesity.
'Chocoholic' more likely to consume other sweet foods and less likely to exercise as much as others. Chocolate consumption thus marginal in causes of obesity.

Conclusion
Summary of four arguments presented
Chocolate is not a healthy food, but it is enjoyable nevertheless.

Writing your conclusion

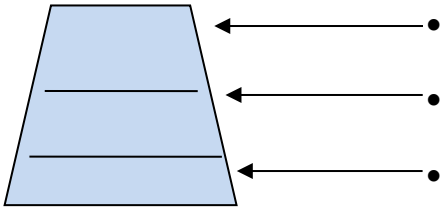
It might seem a little strange to think about writing your conclusion before you write the body of your essay! However, thinking about your final message is an important point of guidance for the rest of your essay. In addition, unless you know where you are going, you can easily lose direction. So your conclusion, in the essay construction process, can function as something like a map. Also, the conclusion is the last thing the reader actually reads, so it needs to be memorable.

There are a number of questions you should ask yourself, such as:

> How will everything finish?
> What are you aiming for?
> What final impression do you want your readers to have?

As a reminder, look here at how a conclusion normally functions:

Your conclusion ties your essay together. It should normally:



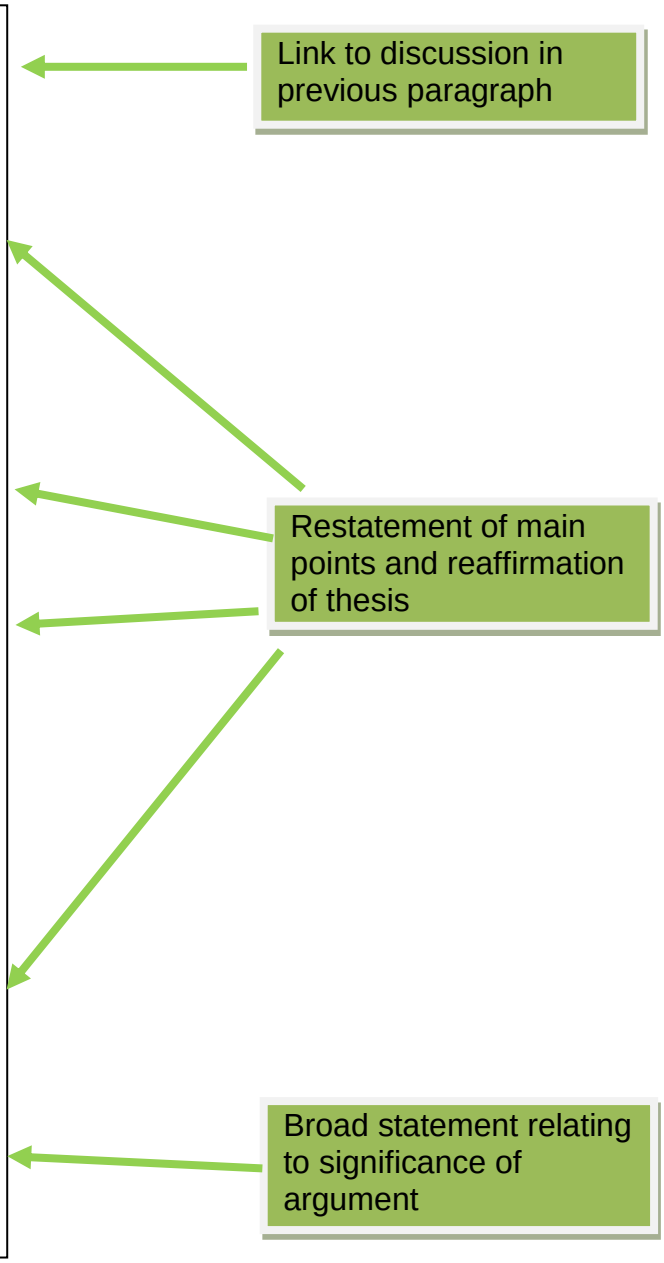
- Begin with a link to the preceding paragraph.
- Restate your thesis and summarise your principal points.
- End with a broad statement relating to the significance of your argument.

So, our chocolate essay conclusion should mirror this pattern.

The conclusion should not just repeat the ideas from the introduction. The introduction includes the background to the essay, the important issues and a thesis statement. The introduction leads your reader into the essay. The conclusion reminds your reader of the main points made in your essay and leaves your reader with a final impression and ideas to think about later.

Chocolate essay conclusion

Obesity and chocolate consumption seemingly have no proven correlations. Yet, in this essay, many chocolate focused arguments have been presented, including the transient effect of chocolate on mood and evidence that it is as likely to create feelings of guilt as of well-being. Another possible positive dimension to chocolate is a correlation with cardiovascular health. Yet the potential benefits of flavanols in chocolate are currently offset by the high fat/carbohydrate content of most forms of chocolate. Whether chocolate is a food or a drug is also unclear. The literature outlines the chemical properties of chocolate which could help explain some addictive type behaviour, particularly in regards to nervous tension in women, but also there is a strong research focus on chocolate as a sensory-based indulgence. It can therefore be said that chocolate is not a healthy food, but can be enjoyed as part of a healthy and balanced diet and lifestyle.

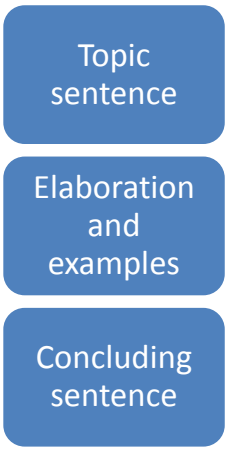


Writing the body paragraphs

At the heart of your essay lie your body paragraphs. A paragraph is a set of sentences which are based around a single controlling idea.

Typically, a body paragraph will follow the format below.

Each paragraph should focus on one controlling idea only, found in the **topic sentence**. The controlling idea can then be developed in a number of ways: elaboration or explanation; evaluation; exemplification; or incorporation of research data.



Paragraphs should be balanced – keep to the 'no less than 3 sentences per paragraph' rule.

Paragraphs should link together – use connecting words, both within and between paragraphs, to keep a sense of cohesion and linkage.

Paragraphs should have a concluding sentence.

Some more detailed explanation:

1) The Topic Sentence should unambiguously express the topic of the paragraph and be linked with the overall thesis of the essay. The topic sentence can function as a sentence of transition from the previous paragraph.

2) **Elaboration of the main point** should add more detailed information in relation to the topic sentence.

3) **Examples and Evidence in relation to your point** should provide exemplification and justification of the points made using paraphrases, summaries or direct quotations, all of which need to be appropriately referenced.

It is very important not to do a 'shopping list' of quotations. You must provide linkages through your own voice, which helps in the process of evaluation of external sources in relation to the main point of the paragraph.
Examples and Evidence can be included in any of the sentences of your paragraph, including the topic sentence, and can question the validity of the main point.

4) **A Concluding Sentence** should echo the main point of the paragraph and function as a bridge to the next paragraph.

Remember to link all the points in your paragraph to the idea in the topic sentence. One way to check if you have done this is to write keywords in the margin for each sentence. If your keywords are related to the topic sentence, your paragraph is good. If there are ideas that are not related, you should remove them.

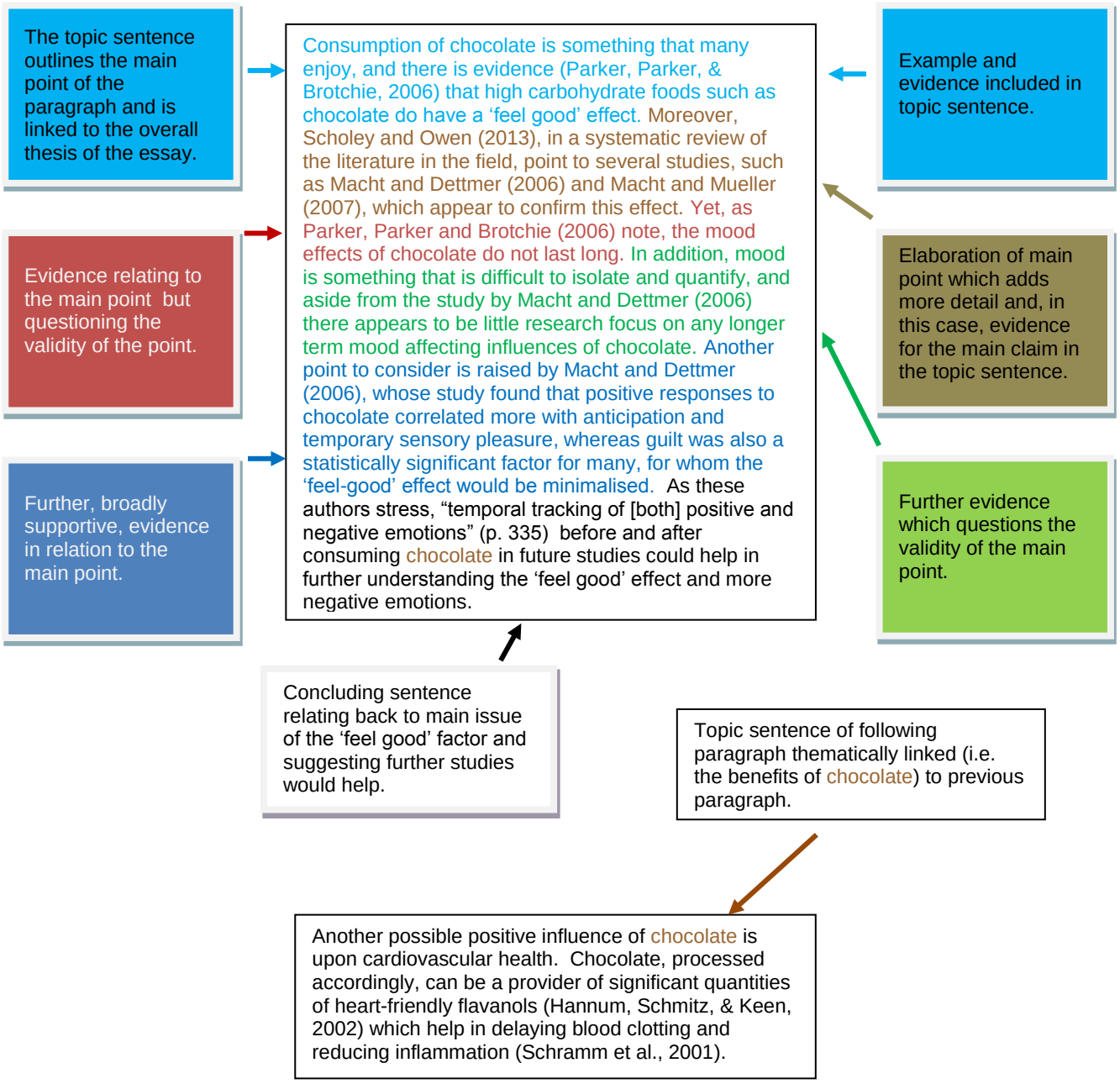
In the following example, the unrelated ideas are highlighted in red:

Paragraph	Sentence Keywords
It has been claimed that chocolate is a healthy food, but in fact it contains a lot of sugar, which can be unhealthy. For example, sugar can cause tooth decay, which can lead to dental problems in later life. **Sugar makes chocolate sweet, so it is a necessary ingredient.** Too much sugar can also lead to obesity, which is a serious health risk. **There is currently an obesity epidemic in many western countries.** In addition, sugar contains a high amount of fructose, which is bad for the liver. The amount of sugar contained in chocolate means, therefore, that chocolate, particularly milk and white chocolate, may not be healthy.	Topic sentence – sugar and health sugar and tooth decay (health) **sweet ingredient – unrelated** obesity (health) **obesity in the West – unrelated**

These unrelated ideas can be removed to make a more coherent paragraph:

It has been claimed that chocolate is a healthy food, but in fact it contains a lot of sugar, which can be unhealthy. For example, sugar can cause tooth decay, which can lead to dental problems in later life. Too much sugar can also lead to obesity, which is a serious health risk. In addition, sugar contains a high amount of fructose, which is bad for the liver. The amount of sugar contained in chocolate means, therefore, that chocolate, particularly milk and white chocolate, may not be healthy.

You can then add examples and references to make your paragraph stronger.



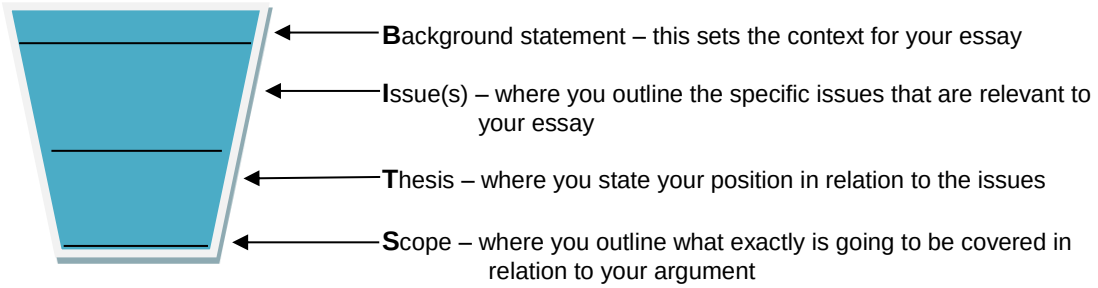
Writing your introduction

Once you have drafted your main body paragraphs and your conclusion, it is time to draft your introduction!

> Writing your introduction last means you are more likely to have a tighter fit between the introduction, main body and conclusion because you already know what your essay will be about.

Let us have another look at the functions of an introduction:

Introduction



Thesis and scope are sometimes combined to form one or more sentences known as a *thesis statement*. In that case, the introduction might follow a BIST structure rather than a BITS structure. The thesis statement often comes at the end of the introduction, although it can be written earlier. There is no set model for an essay, but this website presents one popular way to do it.

This is one way in which the elements of an introduction are organized. For example, sometimes an essay will begin with a direct quote, out of which the issue in question emerges. The direct quote in such an instance would function as a 'hook' to draw readers into the essay, therefore having a similar function to a background statement.

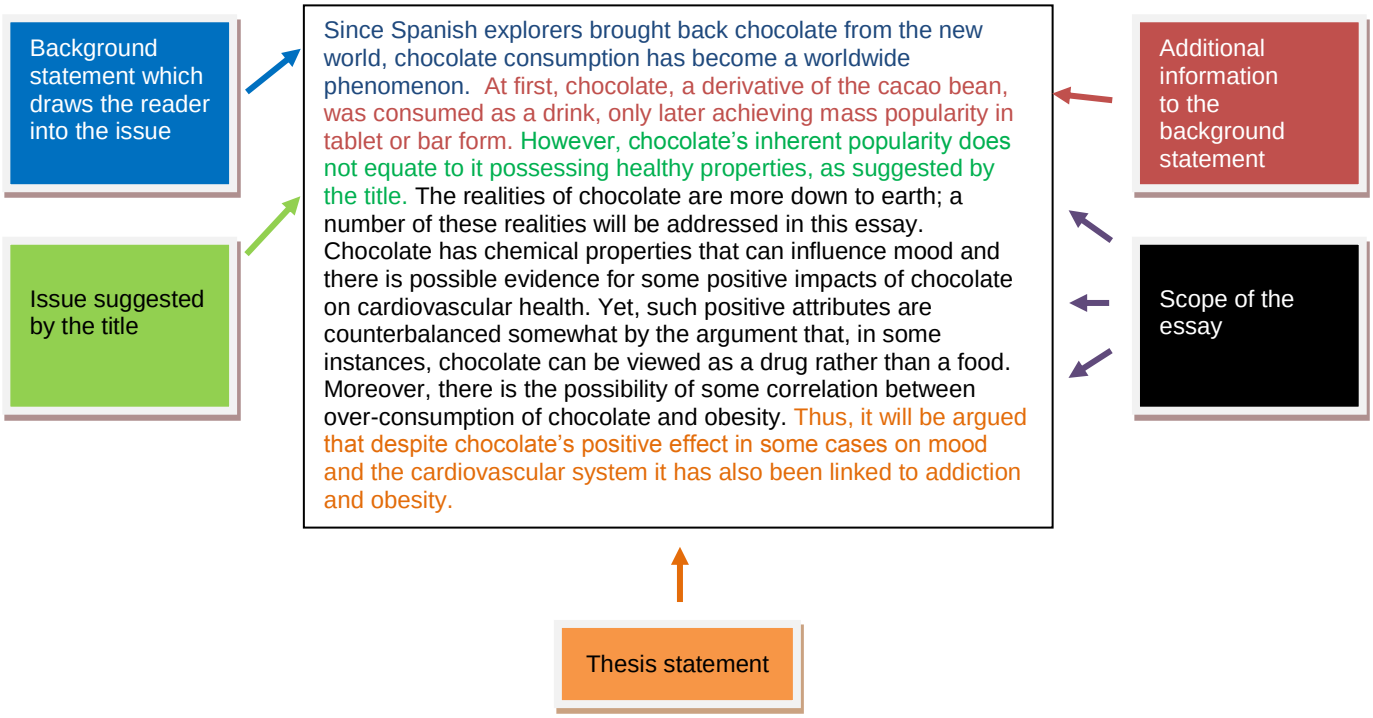
Sometimes, particularly in the case of a very short essay, the background statement will be by-passed and the essay will begin with an issue.

Essays also sometimes begin with an issue, outline the scope and then move on to end the introduction with the thesis statement.

It is important to remember that there is not a fixed ordering for the introduction, though the **BITS/BIST** patterning is a very common one, which is why it is modelled for you as an example.

Example introduction

"Chocolate is a healthy food". Discuss.



Writing references for your essay

When you are writing an essay you will need to include references to external academic sources. This is done for a number of reasons.

Why do we need to reference in academic essays?

- To show respect for other people's ideas and work
- To clearly identify information coming from another source
- To distinguish an external source from your interpretation or your own findings
- To support your own arguments, thus giving you more credibility
- To show evidence of wide (and understood) reading
- To avoid being accused of plagiarism, which includes copying another's work, paraphrasing or summarising without acknowledgement, colluding with others and presenting either identical or very similar essays

The whole issue of plagiarism and academic integrity is a very important one in academic writing.

What does referencing include?

- In-text citations, which can take three forms:
  - Paraphrasing, where you keep the original author's ideas intact, but just change the wording
  - Summarising, where you summarise the whole of the author's work, rather than one particular aspect
  - Direct quoting, where you take a word-for-word copy of a short extract from the original author's work, and include it in your essay, making use of quotation marks and page number

  All of these need a reference in the text.

- A reference list at the end of your essay, which includes details such as:
  - Author(s)
  - Date of publication
  - Title
  - Publisher and place of publication (for books)
  - Journal name, volume and issue (for journals)
  - Internet address or doi (digital object identifier) for electronic sources

Referencing is integral to academic essay writing and shouldn't be viewed as an 'add-on'. When you are referencing, always use a referencing guide to help you ensure 100% accuracy.

When determining whether or not to incorporate a particular reference in your text, it is also important to consider the credibility of the source. Normally, when writing an essay at university you will be expected to use only academic sources. The link on the English for Uni website to *Source Credibility* will help you to determine whether an external source is academic or not.

The chocolate essay uses the *APA* style of referencing, which is easy to distinguish from the Harvard Author-Date System as the **in-text citation** format is different:

Harvard	**APA**
…cocoa and chocolate products at levels where they are biologically active (Ariefdjohan & Savaiano 2005)	…cocoa and chocolate products at levels where they are biologically active (Ariefdjohan & Savaiano, 2005)
No Comma	Comma

When you are writing an essay and including external sources, more often than not you want the reader to focus on **what** is said rather than **who** is saying it. In this instance the information comes before the author. For example:

Information before authors' names

Chocolate, processed accordingly, can be a provider of significant quantities of heart-friendly flavanols (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002), which help in delaying blood clotting and reducing inflammation (Schramm et al., 2001).

Information before authors' names

Such citations are called information-centred citations.

When the focus is more on **who** is saying it then the citation is written like this:

Authors' names before information

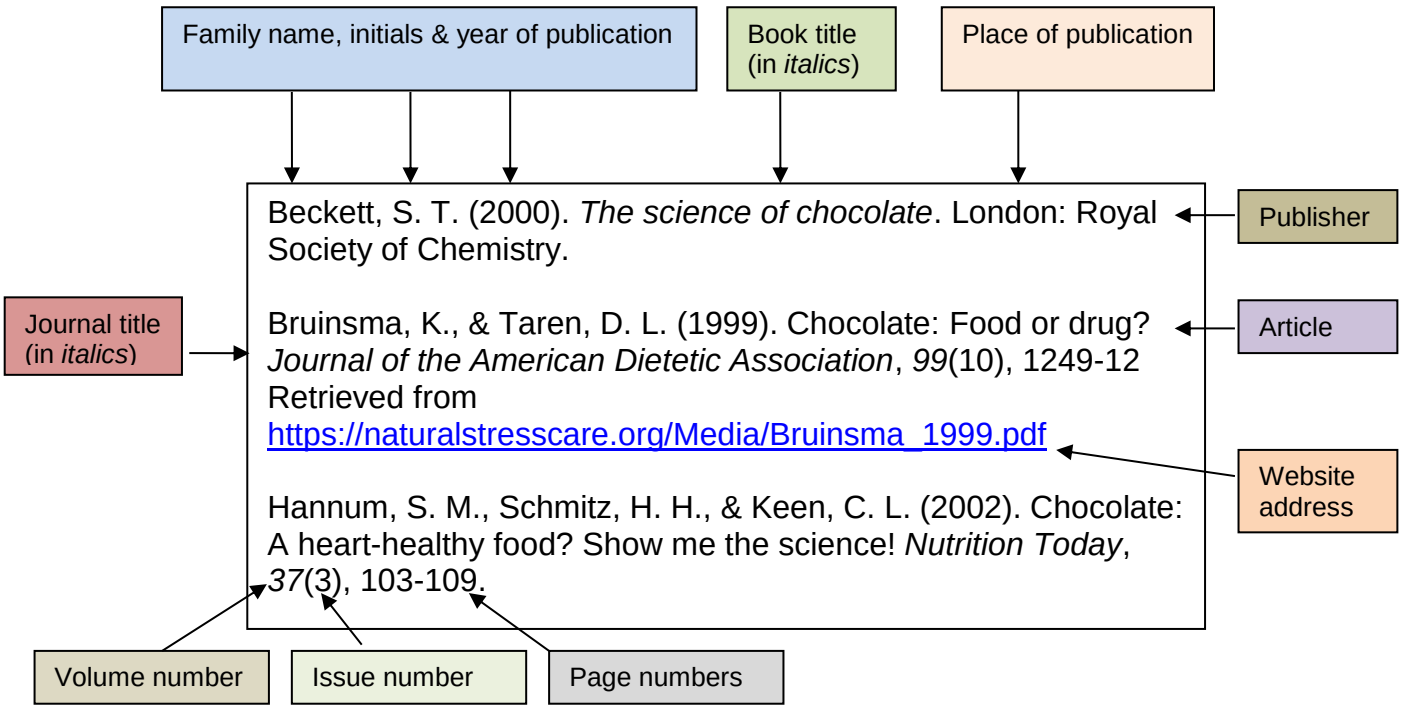
…Macdiarmid and Hetherington (1995) found that self-determined 'chocolate addicts' reported a negative correlation between chocolate consumption and mood, perhaps indicative of addictive or compulsive type behaviour.

Such citations are called author-centred citations.

> Try and achieve a balance between both types of in-text references in your essay writing.

Reference list

In the *APA* style of referencing, the reference list has certain conventions that you must also follow. Here are some examples from the chocolate essay:



> **Tip**
> Don't make referencing something you do just as an editing or proofreading activity. Include your in-text citations and reference list as part of your first draft.

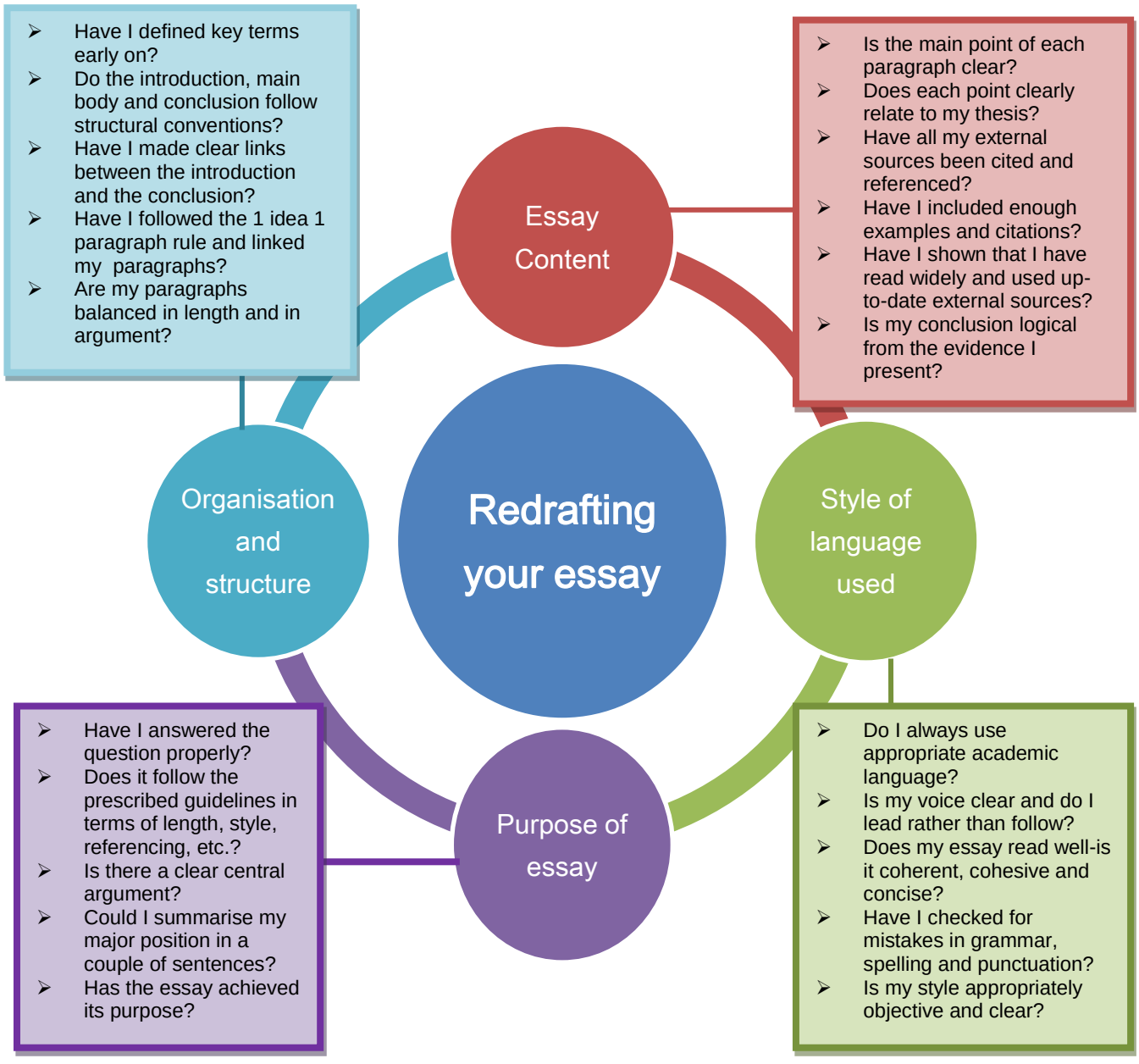
An excellent website to help with your APA referencing is the APA interactive tool at Massey University. http://owll.massey.ac.nz/referencing/apa-interactive.php

Redrafting your essay

Now that you have completed the first draft of your essay it is time to take another detailed look at your draft. Leave yourself enough time to do this. For a 1000 word essay you need at least three days to redraft your essay.

> Tip
> Always save each draft as a separate file; then you can see how your essay develops and improves.

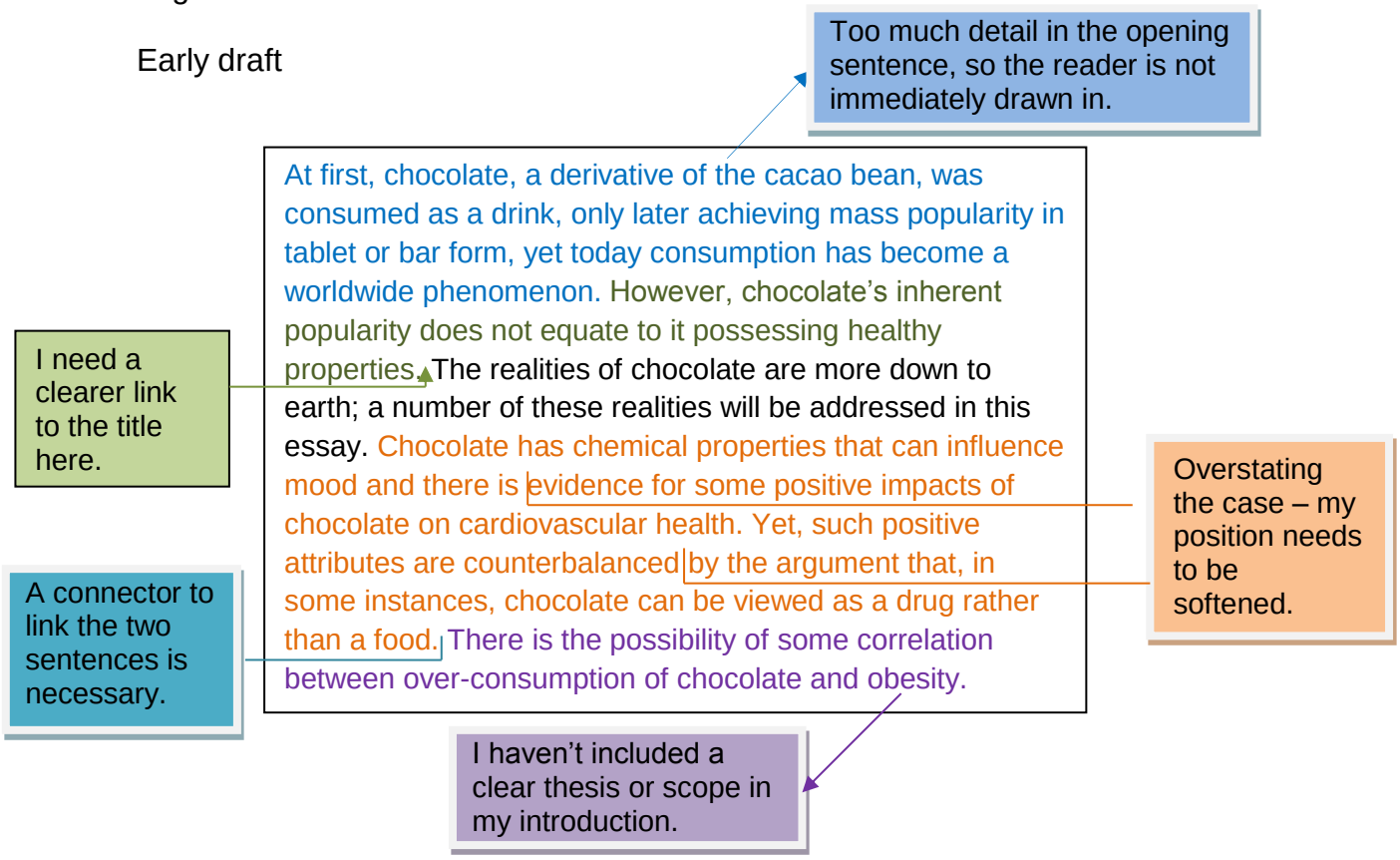
This process is a vital part of writing your essay and is one that is undergone by professional writers in the development of their work.
But at what levels do you need to need to re-engage with your work?
Click on the 4 smaller circles in the figure below to find some examples of the sorts of questions you should be asking yourself:



The questions suggested above are just some of the questions you need to ask yourself. It is often a good idea to create your own checklist.

Now let's have a look at how the writer of the chocolate essay redrafted their original introduction:

Early draft



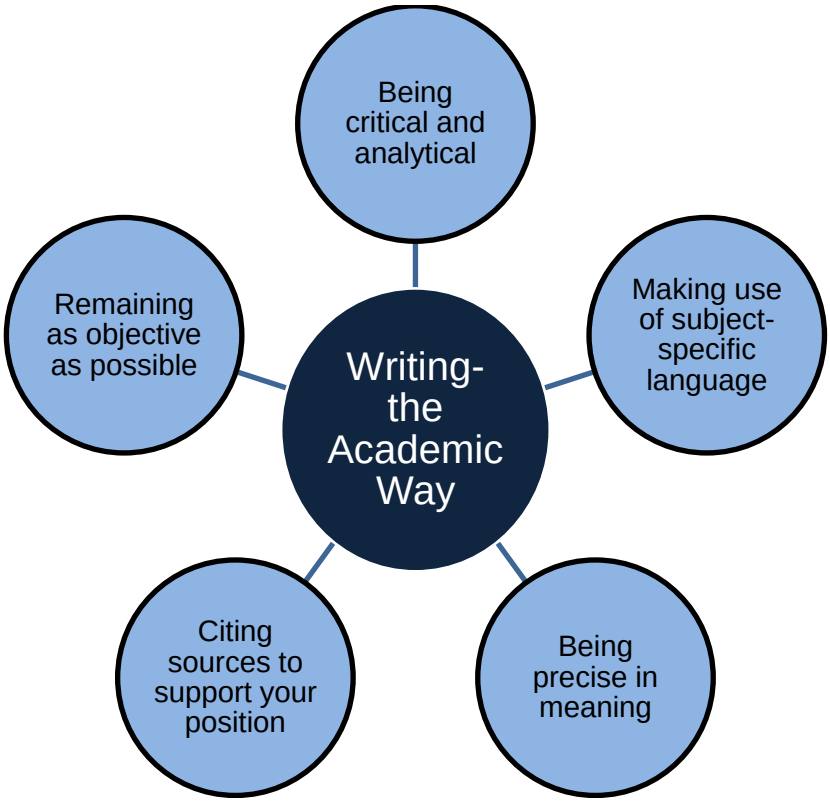
Now compare the above with the final draft:

Since Spanish explorers brought back chocolate from the new world, chocolate consumption has become a worldwide phenomenon. At first, chocolate, a derivative of the cacao bean, was consumed as a drink, only later achieving mass popularity in tablet or bar form. However, chocolate's inherent popularity does not equate to it possessing healthy properties, as suggested by the title. The realities of chocolate are more down to earth; a number of these realities will be addressed in this essay. Chocolate has chemical properties that can influence mood and there is possible evidence for some positive impacts of chocolate on cardiovascular health. Yet, such positive attributes are counterbalanced somewhat by the argument that, in some instances, chocolate can be viewed as a drug rather than a food. Moreover, there is the possibility of some correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity. Thus, it will be argued that despite chocolate's positive effect in some cases on mood and the cardiovascular system it has also been linked to addiction and obesity.

Take your time and be careful when redrafting—it will be worth it!

Incorporating your own voice

When you are writing an academic essay you are normally required to write in an ‘academic’ way, but what exactly does this mean?



Your lecturers will want to see evidence of ‘you’ in your writing, not just a string of citations; they want to hear your ‘voice’ as they read your essay. Putting your voice in your academic essay is a big step along the road to good essay writing.

Imagine your essay as a kind of story. You are the principal storyteller, the internal voice of the writer, leading the reader through to your conclusion. During the story, there are different ‘voices’ that appear from time to time. These are the external voices (citations) that add substance to your story, providing detail and support for what you are saying and sometimes even giving an alternative perspective. The external voices can be divided into two categories in your essay: the direct external voice of an author, which takes the form of a direct quote, and the indirect external voice of an author, where you take the ideas of the author but put them into your own words.

The reader needs to know at all times whose voice they are ‘hearing’. They need to know whether the thoughts and words are your internal voice or the external voice of others, so when you are writing your draft you need to be very much aware of the reader’s needs.

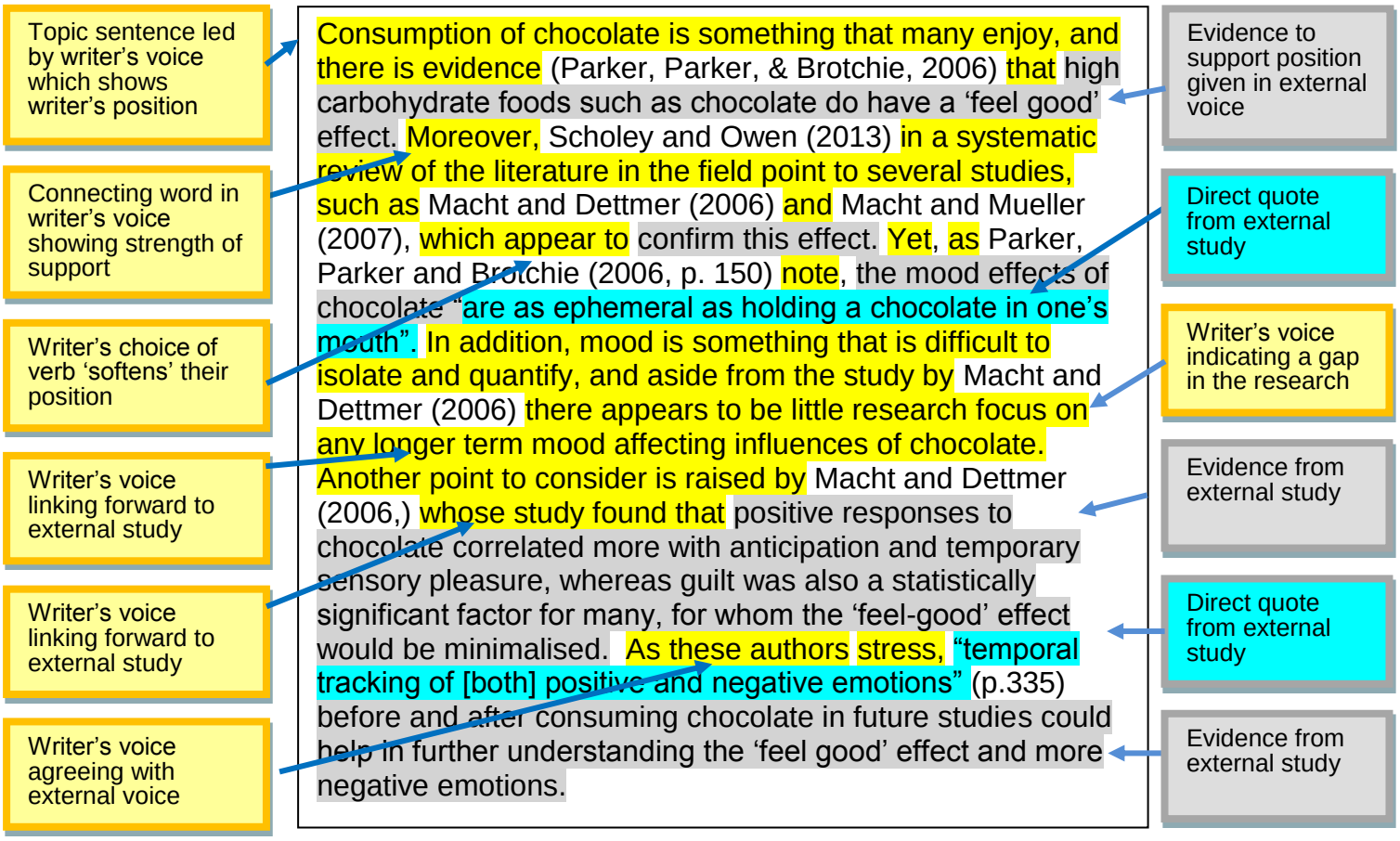
You might be worrying about how you can include your ‘voice’ and yet still sound ‘academic’ in your writing when you are writing about a subject area in

which you have little (or no) knowledge. Including your voice does not mean that you should say ‘I think’ or ‘in my opinion’.

Here are some examples of the critical/analytical language that you can use as your own internal voice when you present other people’s ideas:

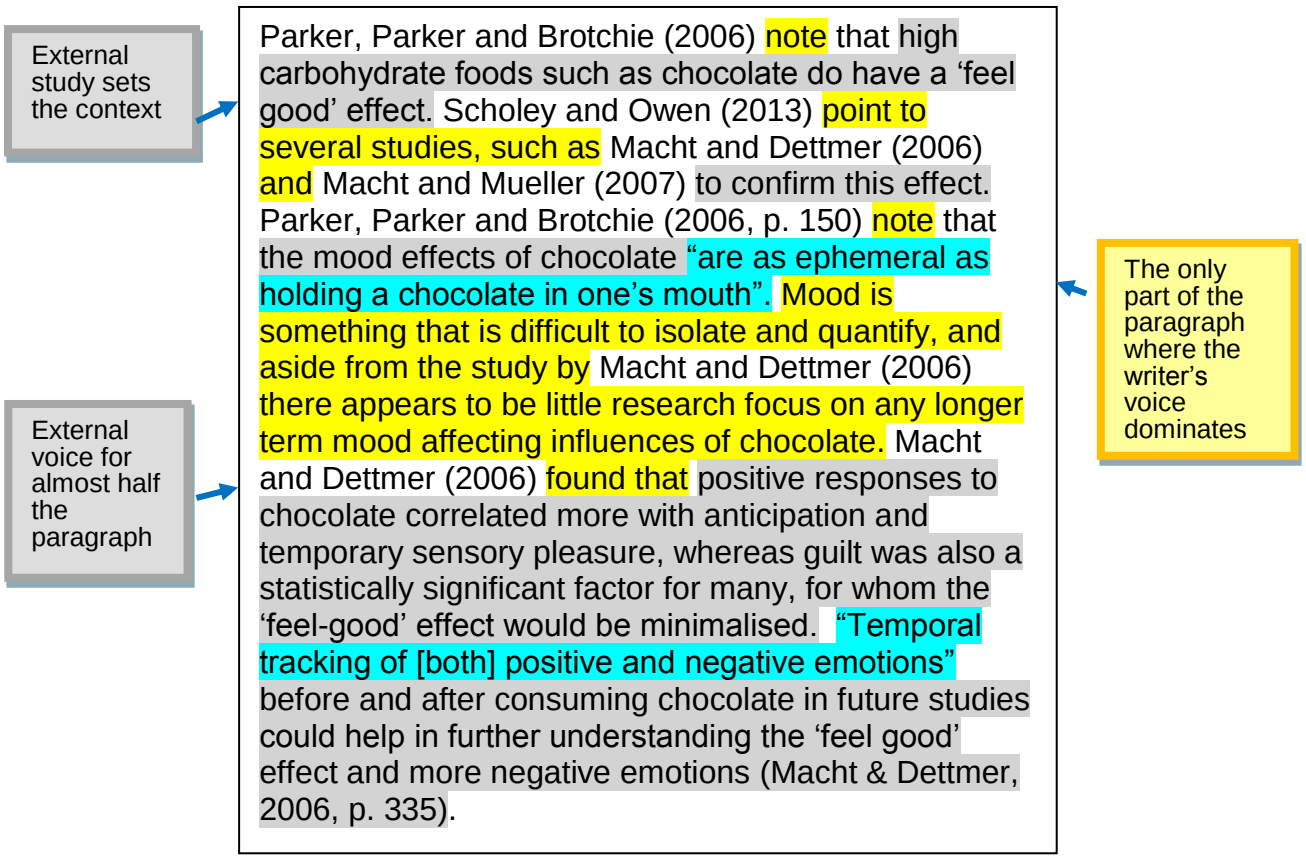
Phrase	How your voice is included
It has been argued (Smith & Jones, 2010) that…	Pointing out what has been said by an external source
As Smith and Jones (2010) note	Showing your agreement with the external source
However, Smith and Jones (2010) fail to address…	Showing that you recognise the limitations of the study
Seemingly, Smith and Jones (2010) have…	Showing you have tentative support for the external source
On the other hand, Smith and Jones (2010) argue that…	Showing that there is a contrast from the previous argument
Smith and Jones (2010) assert that…	Showing that the authors’ position is strong but you are likely to have doubts about it
It has been suggested that…(Smith & Jones, 2010; Brown & Culbertson, 2005; Lloyd & Giggs, 2004)	Showing that you recognise a number of authors have reached a similar conclusion, yet you might/might not agree with it
One advantage of the work of Smith and Jones (2010)	Showing that you are positively engaging with their work

Let’s now have a look at one of the paragraphs from the chocolate essay to see how the text is an interplay of the internal voice of the writer and the external voices of other authors. The internal voice of the writer is colour-coded in the text in yellow, the indirect external voice of an author is coded in grey, and the direct external voice of an author is coded in blue.



This is a balanced paragraph. The writer 'sets the scene' at the beginning of the topic sentence and so the findings from the studies fit into the writer's context. The writer also links together all of the sentences, using their own voice to lead into content which is provided by the external voices.

Look at the same paragraph re-written, with the amount of the writer's voice substantially reduced:



The first thing to note is that the writer is not 'in charge' of the paragraph, as an external study sets the scene. The writer for the most part does not connect the findings and so it reads a little like a list. That is something your lecturers do not want to see.

When you are drafting your paragraphs, use a colour-coding system like the one used here. It will help you ensure your academic voice is clear!

The uefap writing website (http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm) gives more detail on issue of voice in writing and will help you develop your skills in this area even more. It even has an interactive test.

When you get more confident in critically engaging with external sources, you will gradually expand the language of your critical internal voice. The Phrasebank website (http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/critical.htm) at Manchester University provides examples of some more expressions to use when assessing external sources.

Proofreading and editing your essay

The terms ‘proofreading’ and ‘editing’ are often used in relation to checking your academic writing.

Editing focuses on the **big picture elements** such as overall structure, appropriate paragraphing and whether the question has been answered.

Proofreading, on the other hand, **has a micro-focus** on the details of your essay, such as formatting, grammar and punctuation.

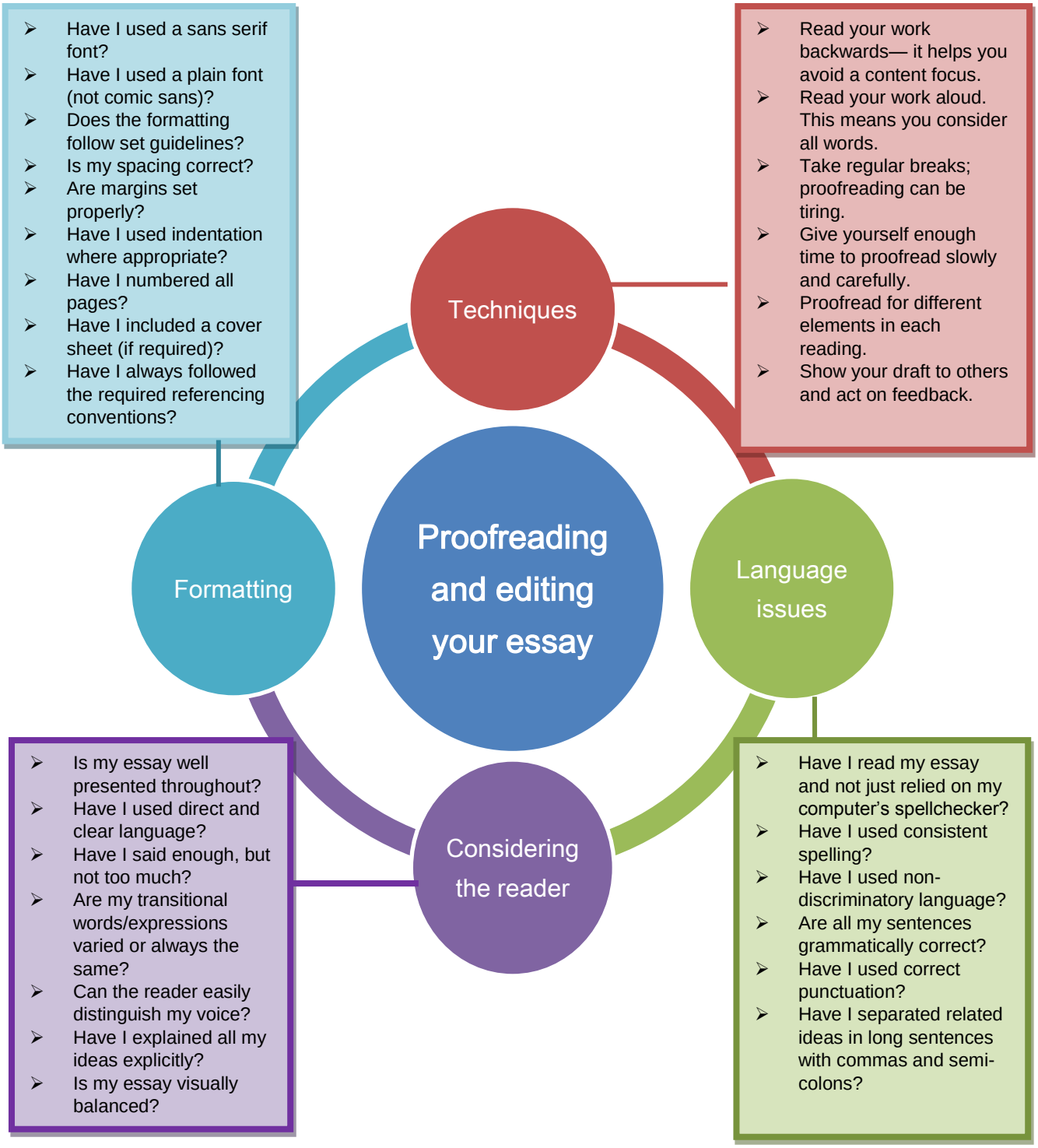
Editing | You need to edit as part of the redrafting process and proofread your final draft. | **Proofreading**

 Everybody has their own personal style of editing and proofreading, and no two people edit and proofread in exactly the same way. You need, for example, to focus on the types of errors you commonly make by looking at the marker’s comments on your previous work. Looking at markers’ comments can help you in the editing process also!

Some people proofread alone; some get other people involved. Having others involved is a really good idea.

 Fresh eyes can help you find things you might not otherwise have seen.

 There are many considerations involved in the process of proofreading and editing, and not all will be relevant in every case. Below is a visual representation of some of these considerations:



The Purdue OWL website has even more detail on the proofreading process https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/2/

Submitting on time

The issue of time management is just as important for the process of essay writing as it is for any other academic task. Students regularly underestimate the time it takes to write an essay, in particular the planning and researching stages.

Before you begin your essay, have a look at the Massey University academic writing planning calculator http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/assignment-planning-calculator.php

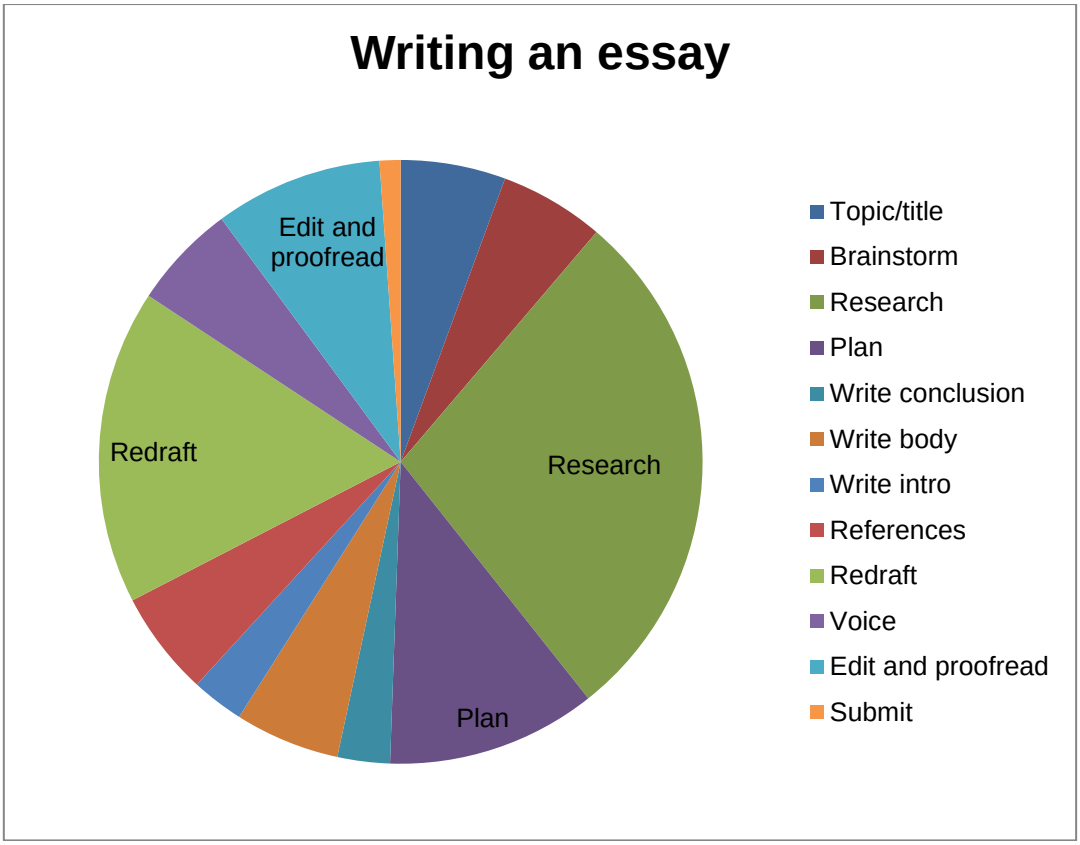
You might be surprised how long the whole process takes!

As you can see from the assignment planning calculator, if you only start your essay a few days before the due date, you will have to do things too quickly. You won't even have enough time left for redrafting or getting feedback.

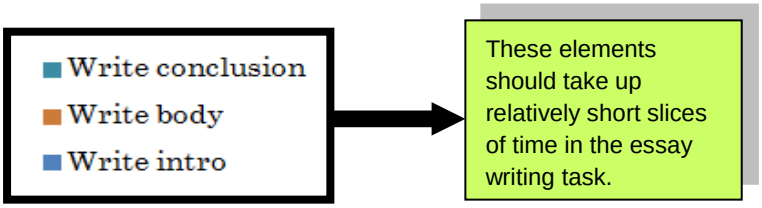
> If you think of the essay/cake analogy, you need time to mix all the ingredients properly, or the end result will not be what you want to share with others!

To write a 1000 word essay, ideally you should allow yourself about 3 weeks. This leaves you with enough time for breaks and allows sufficient time for you to pay attention to other aspects of your studies.

Let's have a look at how an essay time management 'cake' could be divided into slices:



You can see that the biggest part of your time is spent on the planning/research elements and redrafting/editing/proofreading elements, which together should comprise around 60% of your time.



Now you have some idea of the time scale involved in writing an essay, you need to be organised so that you can maximise the time available to you. Have a look at another model to see what you also need to consider:

So, writing an essay involves not just the ‘ingredients’ of the essay process itself, but sound management of the time available to you. Only then can you maximise your chances of producing a quality essay.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

'Integrity' relates to 'honesty', and academic integrity involves writing in an honest way, so that no one will think you are claiming that words or ideas from someone else are your own. This is very important in academic writing in western countries, and if you do not do this you might be accused of plagiarism, which is a serious offence at university.

> Plagiarism means using someone else's words, ideas or diagrams **without acknowledgement**.

Of course, when we write an essay we need to refer to other people's ideas. We gave some of the reasons for this before:

- To show respect for other people's ideas and work
- To clearly identify information coming from another source
- To distinguish an external source from your interpretation or your own findings
- To support your own arguments, thus giving you more credibility
- To show evidence of wide (and understood) reading

Being a good writer involves using other people's ideas to support your work. **However, you should never forget to say where these ideas come from, even if you don't quote the person's exact words.**

> **Include a reference in the text, where the words or ideas appear, and in a reference list at the end of the essay.**

All the references in the text must appear in the reference list, and all the references in the list must also appear in the text.

There is a short video clip on plagiarism here http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUAITrYV6j4 and a wonderful Plagiarism Carol http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mwbw9KF-ACY video (click on 'captions' to get subtitles in English).

Another word connected to academic integrity is **collusion**.

Collusion means that you work with someone else and submit the same or very similar assignments without your lecturer's permission.

For example, if you and a friend work together on an essay and then submit identical or very similar versions of the essay, one under your name and one under your friend's name, that is collusion. However, if you are doing a group work assignment and your lecturer has asked you to work together and submit the assignment jointly, that is **not collusion**. Collusion, like plagiarism, has an element of dishonesty in it. People who collude do so secretly, as they know that the lecturer would not be happy.

Tip
Any time you are in doubt about plagiarism or collusion, check with your lecturer before you submit an assignment.

People make genuine mistakes, so lecturers are usually very happy to advise you if you ask them.

Example essay

"Chocolate is a healthy food." Discuss.

Since Spanish explorers brought back chocolate from the new world, chocolate consumption has become a worldwide phenomenon. At first, chocolate, a derivative of the cacao bean, was consumed as a drink, only later achieving mass popularity in tablet or bar form. However, chocolate's inherent popularity does not equate to it possessing healthy properties, as suggested by the title. The realities of chocolate are more down to earth; a number of these realities will be addressed in this essay. Chocolate has chemical properties that can influence mood and there is possible evidence for some positive impacts of chocolate on cardiovascular health. Yet, such positive attributes are counterbalanced somewhat by the argument that, in some instances, chocolate can be viewed as a drug rather than a food. Moreover, there is the possibility of some correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity. Thus, it will be argued that despite chocolate's positive effect in some cases on mood and the cardiovascular system it has also been linked to addiction and obesity.

Consumption of chocolate is something that many enjoy, and there is evidence (Parker, Parker, & Brotchie, 2006) that high carbohydrate foods such as chocolate do have a 'feel good' effect. Moreover, Scholey and Owen (2013) in a systematic review of the literature in the field point to several studies, such as Macht and Dettmer (2006) and Macht and Mueller (2007), which appear to confirm this effect. Yet, as Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006, p. 150) note, the mood effects of chocolate "are as ephemeral as holding a chocolate in one's mouth". In addition, mood is something that is difficult to isolate and quantify, and aside from the study by Macht and Dettmer (2006) there appears to be little research on any longer term mood affecting influences of chocolate. Another point is raised by Macht and Dettmer (2006), whose study found that positive responses to chocolate correlated more with anticipation and temporary sensory pleasure, whereas guilt was also a statistically significant factor for many, for whom the 'feel-good' effect would be minimalised. As these authors stress, "temporal tracking of [both] positive and negative emotions" (p.335) before and after consuming chocolate in future studies could help in further understanding the 'feel good' effect and more negative emotions.

Another possible positive influence of chocolate is upon cardiovascular health. Chocolate, processed accordingly, can be a provider of significant quantities of heart-friendly flavanols (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002) which help in delaying blood clotting and reducing inflammation (Schramm et al., 2001). Such attributes of flavanols in chocolate need to be considered in the context of chocolate's other components – approximately 30% fat, 61% carbohydrate, 6% protein and 3% liquid and minerals (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002). The key to maximising the benefits of flavanols in chocolate appears to lie in the level of fats present. Cocoa, which is simply chocolate minus the fat, is the most obvious candidate for maximising heart health, but as Hannum, Schmitz and Keen (2002) note, most cocoa products are made through an alkali

process which destroys many flavanols. Optimal maximisation of the flavanols involves such compounds being present in cocoa and chocolate products at levels where they are biologically active (Ariefdjohan & Savaiano, 2005).

The biological makeup of chocolate is also relevant in determining whether chocolate is better viewed as a food or a drug, but the boundaries between indulgence and addictive behaviour are unclear. Chocolate contains some biologically active elements including methylxanthines, and cannabinoid-like unsaturated fatty acids (Bruinsma & Taren, 1999) which could represent a neurochemical dependency potential for chocolate, yet are present in exceedingly small amounts. Interestingly, and linked to chocolate and mood, Macdiarmid and Hetherington (1995) claim their study found that "self-identified chocolate 'addicts'" reported a negative correlation between chocolate consumption and mood. This is perhaps indicative of addictive or compulsive type behaviour. However, as Bruinsma and Taren (1999) note, eating chocolate can represent a sensory reward based, luxurious indulgence, based around texture, aroma and flavour anticipation, rather than a neurochemically induced craving. Yet, it has been argued that chocolate is sometimes used as a form of self-medication, particularly in relation to magnesium deficiency. A study by Pennington (2000 in Steinberg, Bearden, & Keen 2003) noted that women do not generally meet US guidelines for trace elements, including magnesium. This correlates with earlier studies by Abraham and Lubran (1981), who found a high correlation between magnesium deficiency and nervous tension in women. Thus, tension-related chocolate cravings could be a biological entity fuelled by magnesium deficiency. Overall, however, it would appear that the proportion of people using chocolate as a drug rather than a food based sensory indulgence is small, though further research might prove enlightening.

A final point to consider in relation to chocolate is the perception that chocolate is linked to obesity. A person is defined as being obese when their Body Mass Index is greater than 30. The literature on chocolate and obesity has clearly demonstrated that there are no specific correlations between the two variables (Beckett, 2008; Lambert, 2009). This is typified by the findings of Mellor (2013), who found that, over a period of eight weeks of eating 45 grams of chocolate per day, a group of adults demonstrated no significant weight increase. As Lambert (2009) notes, chocolate consumption alone is not likely to cause obesity, unless large amounts of other calorie dense foods are consumed and this calorie dense intake is greater than needed for bodily function, bearing in mind levels of activity. The stereotypical 'chocoholic' seems more likely to consume many other sweet foods and be less likely to take exercise than other people, so chocolate consumption is only one possible variable when considering the causes of obesity.

Obesity and chocolate consumption seemingly have no proven correlations. Yet, in this essay, many chocolate focused arguments have been presented, including the transient effect of chocolate on mood and the fact that it is as likely to create feelings of guilt as of well-being. Another possible positive dimension to chocolate is a correlation with cardiovascular health. Yet the

potential benefits of flavanols in chocolate are currently offset by the high fat/carbohydrate content of most forms of chocolate. Whether chocolate is a food or a drug is also unclear. The literature outlines the chemical properties of chocolate which could help explain some addictive type behaviour, particularly in regards to nervous tension in women, but there is also a strong research focus on chocolate as a sensory-based indulgence. It can therefore be said that chocolate is not a healthy food, but can be enjoyed as part of a healthy and balanced diet and lifestyle.

(Word count: 1087. This is within 10% of the 1000 word limit, which is usually acceptable. Check this with your lecturer if you are in any doubt.)

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7

Academic writing: the essay

Essay writing

'The essay is a form of refined torture. Discuss.' You almost certainly will never encounter such an essay topic, but you might think it. Don't. The essay is simply a document that adheres to certain rules, strategies and stylistic conventions, all of which can be learnt and mastered.

Let's get down to basics. Almost certainly, you want to write not merely satisfactory essays but exceptional ones that score high marks. What is it, then, that your audience or reader wants (given that in academic situations your work is likely to be read by just one person – your lecturer or tutor)? What criteria will this reader apply when allocating marks or grades?

What makes a good or bad essay?

Table 7.1 offers an insight into the criteria for success or failure in essay writing. If you are scoring fours in your work, then you are more or less satisfying the criteria; if you are scoring ones, twos or threes, then you are not satisfying the criteria.

TABLE 7.1 Critical thinking scoring guide

Score	Criteria
4	Consistently does all or almost all of the following: ■ Accurately interprets evidence ■ Identifies the salient arguments for and against ■ Thoughtfully evaluates alternative points of view ■ Draws justified conclusions based on clearly explained reasons ■ Accurately and appropriately uses and/or cites source material ■ Presents ideas in a coherent, clear and technically correct manner.
3	Does most or many of the following: ■ Accurately interprets evidence ■ Identifies relevant arguments pro and con ■ Offers evaluations of alternative points of view ■ Draws justified conclusions based on some evidence ■ Accurately and appropriately uses and/or cites source material ■ Presents ideas in a coherent, clear and technically correct manner.
2	Does most or many of the following: ■ Misinterprets evidence ■ Fails to identify salient arguments for and against ■ Superficially evaluates alternative points of view ■ Draws unjustified conclusions based on little evidence ■ Maintains or defends views based on self-interest or preconceptions, regardless of the evidence ■ Inaccurately or inappropriately uses and/or cites source material ■ Fails to present ideas in a coherent, clear and technically correct manner.
1	Consistently does all or almost all the following: ■ Offers biased interpretations of evidence ■ Fails to identify or dismisses relevant arguments for and against ■ Ignores alternative points of view ■ Draws irrelevant or unjustified conclusions ■ Exhibits closed-mindedness or hostility to reason ■ Inaccurately or inappropriately uses and/or cites source material ■ Fails to present ideas in a coherent, clear and technically correct manner.

Source: Blattner and Frazier (2002, p. 63).

These criteria for success are not arbitrary, or simply tools of torture to make life hard; rather, they are effective benchmarks against which a sustained argument can be tested – helping us to evaluate the mix of fact and opinion advanced in an effective piece of writing (or for that matter in an effective oral presentation). Switch roles for a minute: imagine that it is you who comprises the audience, and that someone else is trying to persuade you to:

1. change your mind and agree with them
2. give them money
3. help them out.

It probably makes sense for you, in the role of critical evaluator, to impose criteria upon which to assess what you are reading or hearing, and your criteria would probably be quite similar to those listed in table 7.1.

Essays: form and content

Essays are documents on specific topics that contain a mix of fact and opinion, laid out in logical sequences and employing appropriate strategies of expression. An essay comprises both content (what is said) and form (the way in which it is said). These aspects are separate, but not unrelated.

Let's take an example of an essay. Francis Bacon, one of the earliest users of the essay form, tackled a wide variety of topics. Here's one he wrote on that most basic of human impulses, revenge. The language and punctuation is that of 1625, but a modern reader can follow it without too much difficulty, and even after almost four centuries most of us can recognise what he was writing about.

An example: Francis Bacon's essay on revenge

> Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong, putteth the law out of office.
>
> Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior; for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Solomon, I am sure, saith, 'It is the glory of a man, to pass by an offence.' That which is past is gone, and irrevocable; and wise men have enough to do, with things present and to come; therefore they do but trifle with themselves, that labor in past matters. There is no man doth a wrong, for the wrong's sake; but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honor, or the like. Therefore why should I be angry with a man, for loving himself better than me? And if any man should do wrong, merely out of ill-nature, why, yet it is but like the thorn or briar, which prick and scratch, because they can do no other. The most tolerable sort of revenge, is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy; but then let a man take heed, the revenge be such as there is no law to punish; else a man's enemy is still before hand, and it is two for one. Some, when they take revenge, are desirous, the party should know, whence it cometh. This is the more generous. For the delight seemeth to be, not so much in doing the hurt, as in making the party repent. But base and crafty cowards, are like the arrow that flieth in the dark. Cosmus, duke of Florence, had a desperate saying against perfidious or neglecting friends, as if those wrongs were unpardonable: 'You shall read (saith he) that we are commanded to forgive our enemies; but you never read, that we are commanded to forgive our friends.' But yet the spirit of Job was in a better tune: 'Shall we (saith he) take good at God's hands, and not be content to take evil also?' And so of friends in a proportion. This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well. Public revenges are for the most part fortunate; as that for the death of Caesar; for the death of Pertinax; for the death of Henry the Third of France; and many more. But in private revenges, it is not so. Nay rather, vindictive persons live the life of witches; who, as they are mischievous, so end they infortunate.

Explanatory notes

Solomon: Tenth century BC king of Israel. His willingness to forgive, and not take revenge, is shown in, for example, 2 Chronicles 1:11.
Cosmus: Cosimo de Medici or Cosimo 'the Elder' (1389–1464), first of the Medici family to rule the Italian city-state of Florence.
Job: Biblical character in the Book of Job, Job 2:10.
Caesar: Gaius Julius Caesar, 100–44 BC. Roman general and emperor, assassinated by Brutus and Cassius and others, who feared Caesar was intent on becoming a dictator of the Roman empire.
Pertinax: Publius Helvius Pertinax, AD 126–193. Roman emperor, who ruled for 87 days. Killed by his own soldiers over a controversy about soldiers' pay.
Henry III: 1551–1589, king of France (1574–89); son of Henry II and Catherine de' Medici. Involved in the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century, he was killed by a Dominican monk who feared that Henry would recognise a Protestant successor.

Bacon's approach

Many ideas are packed into the 454 words of this essay. In most writing, there is a link between content and form or style, and this is certainly the case with Bacon's essay.

He makes a number of key points, many of which are further broken down into sub-points that are dialectically linked – that is, he sets out opposing arguments (on the one hand this, and on the other hand that). Table 7.2 shows how this structure is created.

TABLE 7.2 Structure of Bacon's essay 'On revenge'

Key point	First part	Second part
Revenge is a kind of wild justice	The more man's nature runs to revenge . . .	. . . the more ought the law to weed out that tendency in man.
Relationship of original wrong to revenge for the wrong	The first wrong merely offends the law.	The revenge taken for the wrong undermines the authority of the law itself.
Taking revenge or not taking revenge: relationships with our enemies	By taking revenge, a man shows that he is on the same level as his enemy.	By not taking or by passing over revenge, man shows that he is superior to his enemy. Example of Solomon.
Revenge and time present, past and future	Wise men have enough to do worrying about the present and the future without being stuck in the past, which is what thinking about revenge does.	Those who are stuck in the past, preoccupied with revenge, waste their time.
Motivation for wrongdoing	No-one does wrong for wrong's sake.	Men do wrong because it will profit them, or give them pleasure, or save their honour, and for other reasons.
Futility of being angry with others	If another man merely loves himself better than he loves me, that is not a good enough reason for my being angry.	If a man should do wrong because it is his nature to do so, then he cannot help it.
Revenge and the law	Revenge is acceptable when the law does punish wrongdoers.	We need to be careful when we take revenge, because the law might punish us for doing so, and that would mean that our enemies would triumph.

1. Main antithesis has minor antithesis nested within it.

2. Main antithesis has minor antithesis nested within it.

Key point	First part	Second part
[1]Revenge-taking: open and concealed styles	Some take revenge openly, and this is the more worthy approach.	Some take revenge in a base and crafty way.
Motivation of open-style revenge-takers	These revenge-takers seem to take more satisfaction in making the guilty party repent . . .	. . . than in inflicting pain on the guilty party.
[2]Forgiveness and our friends	Cosmus advises us not to forgive our friends.	But Job advises us that we must take the evil with the good in our friends (to a certain extent).
Cosmus's paradoxical maxim	The Bible commands that we forgive our enemies (e.g. Mark 11:26: 'But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.') . . .	. . . but you never read that we are commanded to forgive our friends.
Revenge and wounds	The man who studies revenge keeps his wounds green, or unhealed, and thus does badly.	The man who does not study revenge lets his wounds heal, and does well.
Public and private revenges	Public revenges for the most part lead to good fortune: it made sense to kill Caesar (who was intent on becoming a dictator), Pertinax (who withheld his soldiers' pay) and Henry III (who it was feared would recognise a Protestant successor to the French throne).	Private revenges for the most part lead to misfortune.
Vindictive people and consequences	Vindictive people are like witches . . .	. . . but the mischief caused by witches brings down consequences on them.

This approach serves a number of purposes:

1. It shows that extreme opinions can sometimes miss the point unless we become aware of the relationships between apparently opposed ideas.
2. It allows us to see the paradoxical nature of reality.
3. It sets up a pleasing rhythm in the exposition of ideas.

Bacon's essay can tell us much more about an effective approach to essay writing. For example:

Point of view: a stance or position; the expression of an opinion and the backing up of that opinion

Assertions: a specific line of reasoning, using specific arguments or claims

Proofs and examples: evidence to substantiate assertions

Expositional technique: the development of a structure of propositions that can be easily followed by a reader

- **Point of view**. Do we know what Bacon believes? Yes, we do. He takes a position, states his opinion and backs up that opinion with clear arguments. Bacon advocates a broad philosophical view: that not only is revenge unproductive, but it will hurt those who pursue it.
- **Assertions**. Bacon follows certain specific lines of reasoning, using specific arguments. He develops the viewpoint that certain acts of revenge or killing are justified, but that in most cases it harms both victim and perpetrator.
- **Proofs and examples**. Bacon draws on historical evidence and authorities to substantiate his assertions.
- **Expositional technique**. Bacon develops the structure of his argument by using an explicit pattern that the reader can follow without difficulty. He uses a double, or antithetical, structure at the main level of argument and occasionally branches into a subsidiary, or nested, level:

  Major point. Revenge-taking – open and concealed styles

  Minor point. Motivation of open-style revenge-takers

Major point. Forgiveness and our friends
Minor point. Cosmus's paradoxical maxim

Cumulative method: the construction of one argument upon another, creating momentum and building up a persuasive sequence of reasoning

- **Cumulative method**. Bacon constructs one argument upon another, creating momentum and building up a persuasive sequence of reasoning, using junction points or transitions ('for', 'certainly', 'therefore', 'but', 'else', 'nay') to set up cause–effect linkages, reinforcement points and contrasts.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Analysing the essay structure
Locate print or internet sources of great historical essayists such as Francis Bacon, Michel de Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Samuel Johnson and Mark Twain. For the sake of analysis, try to restrict yourself to essays under 1500 words in length. Create photocopies or printouts of a single essay to begin with, or edit on screen. Deconstruct or dissect the composition of the argument into points, and attempt to see how the points are linked. Using a highlighter pen on hard copy, break up the text into blocks, or alternatively break it into paragraphs on screen. If appropriate, use the format of table 7.2 to assess the structure. If you find this is not an appropriate approach, that in itself is an interesting conclusion.

Essay method

A contemporary academic essay will necessarily take a different form from the essay that Bacon wrote in the seventeenth century. For example, typical academic essays today rely more on using quoted sources to bolster their arguments, and are expected to cite full details of those sources in a bibliography or reference list. Nevertheless, certain elements are timeless, such as the creation and sustaining of an argument that makes sense. Better to have an essay with a strong argument, but without a single reference, than an essay with an elaborate bibliography and extensive use of quotation that is, in essence, nonsense.

Fact versus opinion: just what is it you have to say?

Your audience wants to know what you think – that is, your point of view. It is not enough, however, simply to assert a series of opinions: as in a courtroom or a science symposium, you need to prove what it is you are asserting. That means that opinions must rest on a bedrock of facts and data. That, in turn, means that you need to research your topic. As Arthur Conan Doyle's creation Sherlock Holmes puts it, 'I never guess. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts' (Doyle 1994 [1892]). (Contrast this view with Drucker (2002), who suggests it is better to get people to state their opinions first, as we all have a tendency to twist and edit facts to suit our own prejudices and values.)

Does this mean that you should bombard your reader with nothing but facts? In a literature review of a particular field or topic, perhaps – but if you are writing any other type of essay, definitely not. Facts are a means to an end, not an end in themselves, and that end, for the essay writer, is the presentation of an argument. Your audience is looking for evidence of:

- solid research in the area
- insights, including into current controversies of the area
- originality of thought.

Too many facts and not enough opinions can be as bad as too few facts and too many opinions. Striking a balance between information and persuasion means striking a balance between fact and opinion.

Critical analysis

Your essay or paper will be an example of argumentation – the presentation of a mix of fact and opinion. Argumentation is an underlying factor in most of the ways we communicate – in writing, in speech, via the media, and even in non-verbal communication.

In constructing your argument, you need to be aware of and use the tools of argumentation, such as:

- the power of paradigms, or dominant worldviews or belief systems; and the nature of paradigm shifts, or the processes of challenging those dominant world views or belief systems
- logical argumentation categories (premises and conclusions, syllogisms, and inductive versus deductive logic; distinctions of kind versus distinctions of degree, necessary versus sufficient conditions, and explanations versus excuses)
- avoidance of logical fallacies (begging the question, false dilemma, slippery slope, straw man and so on)
- lateral versus vertical thinking
- persuasive approaches (message senders, rhetorical mix, features–benefits mix, demonstration of proofs, persuasive language, foot-in-the-door versus door-in-the-face approaches, central versus peripheral processing, persuasion-propaganda sequences, motivational drives, conformity, cognitive dissonance and message responses)
- principles of influence (liking, reciprocity, consistency, social validation and so on) and tactics of influence (assertiveness, ingratiation, impression management, negative and positive politeness and so on).

All of these factors are considered in detail in chapter 12 'Argument: logic, persuasion and influence'.

Bias and balance 1

In presenting an argument in an essay, you need to demonstrate that you are willing to explore and consider all sources of fact and opinion, even those with which you may eventually disagree. This means, firstly, that you make yourself aware of a broad range of sources and are ready to cite them. Beyond this minimum requirement, you should be ready to take issue with other writers in the topic area – who almost certainly will be much more experienced and have greater authority on the subject than you – and give reasons for your contrary opinions. This can be daunting for the beginning writer, but it goes to the heart of the critical method that you need to master.

Bias: a tendency in argument to ignore opposing opinion by using sources selectively or deceptively and/or by giving disproportionate weight to sources that support only one point of view

A vital part of that critical method is the ability to be balanced in your approach – that is, to avoid **bias**. Bias, or lack of balance, can be conveyed by:

- ignoring major or minor sources of contrary data and opinion
- acknowledging such sources, but then simply ignoring them
- selectively or deceptively quoting from such sources
- giving disproportionate weight to sources that support your point of view.

Bias is ethically wrong, but it is also practically unwise: you will almost certainly be found out. Far better to take on the sources you disagree with, and attempt to rebut them honestly, or at least to cast doubt on some of their arguments. Threatening though the thought can be, you may be wrong and your opponents may be right. There is nothing to be gained from submitting a superbly presented and footnoted rationale for the Earth being flat when you can look out of the window and see that the horizon is curved.

Always be on the lookout for bias in others' writing too, for we all have blind spots. Conscious bias demonstrates intellectual dishonesty; unconscious bias, where we are not even aware of our selective manipulation of the topic, merely shows that we are not very bright.

Synthesis and originality

Let's go back and consider the vexed question of originality. There may be dozens, hundreds or even thousands of scholars and non-scholarly writers who have contributed to the field that you are interested in, so how can you possibly demonstrate originality in your work?

There are different kinds of originality. If you are undertaking your own research, then originality will be easily achievable. In well-examined topic areas, it is still possible to be original. You can do this by:

- reinterpreting the work of others in light of other more recent (or older) sources
- synthesising the arguments of various sources – showing linkages, similarities, patterns and synergies that may not yet have been detected.

This may sound intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. If you do the necessary research and reading in the topic area – taking notes, checking internet sources, and doing everything else you should do as a researcher – you may experience a sequence of responses to your reading and note taking that goes something like this:

1. *Amazement and exhaustion*. Wow, what a lot of ideas.
2. *Despair and paralysis*. I don't think there is anything else that could possibly be said about this area.
3. *Endurance*. Time passes; your brain stews on what you have read; you sleep on it; you discuss things with colleagues and friends, which provides further stimulus …
4. **Creative doubt**. But now I think about it, authority A didn't have much say about topic X, and authority B seemed to have ignored phenomenon Z …
5. *More creative doubt*. And authorities C, D and E seem to have come up with similar conclusions about topic Y, but no-one yet seems to have pointed out the interconnections between their projects.
6. *A lot of creative doubt*. Writers in this field have done wonderful work in detecting patterns, but I happen to be familiar with another, related (or apparently unrelated) field, and I can see the following similarities and differences …

Creative doubt: process in which study and synthesis of research may help a writer detect shortcomings in the literature and thus come up with original perspectives

There are no guarantees that this process will work, but input often leads to output, and occasionally virtue and hard work are rewarded. Do the research and you might be pleasantly surprised by what your brain delivers.

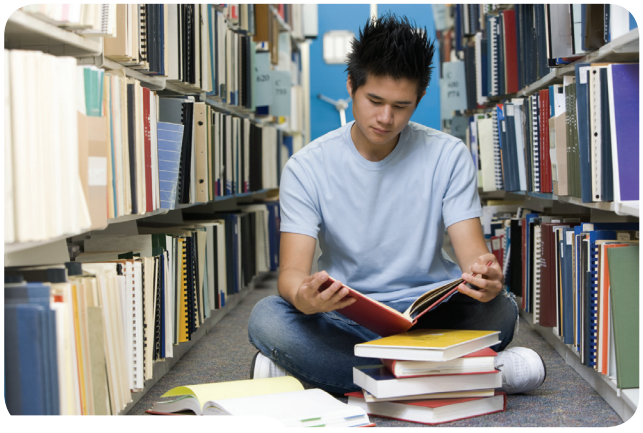
Bias and balance 2: the other side

Every student needs to come to terms with the politics of assessment: should I be a sycophant and simply play back to my lecturer/tutor what I think he/she wants to hear, or should I strike out on my own and express my own views, irrespective of the consequences? It makes no sense to offer up a barrage of unsubstantiated prejudice to an audience with diametrically opposed prejudices, pet theories and preoccupations, but be careful about self-editing so much that there is nothing left of you in what you offer. Students need to learn not only about the content of their subjects, but also about the 'rules of the game' of essay writing and the 'codes' in which such essays are written – without losing their own voice in the process (see, for example, Francis & Robson 2001).

It is only a slight exaggeration to suggest that the rule 'Know what you are talking about, and then say what you like' is one you should adhere to. Be prepared to take up any issues of bias or unfair treatment with your audience of one, and if that doesn't work, then you need to proactively broaden that audience. It is ultimately a question of being assertive, demonstrating professional competence and reading the politics of a situation astutely. Demonstrating professional competence is of particular importance.

Sources and proofs

In his 1625 essay, Francis Bacon supported his opinions on revenge with biblical and historical references. It's possible to create an excellent essay today by using similar references, but generally you will need to cast a broader net if you want to get better than ordinary marks for your efforts. You need to research your topic thoroughly, and that means finding high-quality resources. You may help your cause by being able to cite or quote those sources in support of your assertions.



Using a wide range of credible and relevant source materials to support your opinions provides a solid foundation for a well-written essay.

When we use sources, we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. At the very least, finding out what others think saves us the trouble of reinventing the wheel (doing unnecessary work) on a particular topic. Remember, however, that sources are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Describe earlier work by all means, but then develop your own analysis and argument. It may be appropriate that you tell us that X thinks this, Y thinks that and Z thinks the other thing, but the real question is: What do you think? You use sources as a platform for your opinions, not as a substitute for them.

The correct use of sources is a complex matter, but a number of points need to be noted here in the context of essay writing. Your sources should be:

1. *Credible and authoritative*. Use sources from mainstream publishers, and choose articles from professional, refereed journals rather than general, unrefereed journals or magazines. Be wary about using material from internet sources, as much of it is ephemeral and biased. Online journal articles that are available via credible databases are an exception to this rule. Of course, if your purpose is to attack orthodox views, use any sources you like, but ensure that the material is solid and verifiable.
2. *Locatable*. Your audience needs to be able to track down and check your sources. This means observing professional referencing standards, such as providing author name, title of book or journal, year of publication, publisher and place of publication in the case of a book, volume and issue number in the case of a journal, and page numbers if appropriate. Electronic citations need full location details (i.e. URL) and if possible the date you accessed or viewed the source.
3. *Up to date*. Using the most recent references available shows you are aware of the latest developments in your area, which is one of the criteria of professional performance in academic writing. Keep abreast of the latest issues of journals and recently published books. Online databases make the task much easier than it used to be. There is an information explosion going on today, and if you can demonstrate that you are harnessing the energy of that explosion, then you will receive recognition for this. Of course, sometimes it pays to cite older, original sources to show you are familiar with the foundations of a field.
4. *Relevant*. There is no point in showing off your research skills in citing references if they are the wrong references. Merely because a source is new and/or prestigious does not mean it is appropriate to cite it in your work. Irrelevant citation will be marked down.
5. *Convincing*. Even when a reference is relevant, there is no guarantee that it will be convincing in the context of your essay – that is, that it will be the proof you need to support the point you are making. If it is not completely convincing on its own, might it be more persuasive in concert with material from other sources? As a professional, you need to make these hard judgements, and to decide when the material is simply not good enough. If you find yourself believing, 'I've got to use this quote – it's the only

one I've got', then the bad news is you probably haven't done enough research in the first place. It is always better to have too much material from which to pick and choose carefully than not enough, which might compel you to use rubbish when you run out of high-quality data.

6. *In proportion*. It is useful to bring in the voices of others to back you up, but we also need to hear your voice. Don't load your essay so heavily with quoted material that there is little room for your own views. It is difficult to come up with hard and fast rules about this, but if quoted material comprises more than 20 per cent of your total word count, think very carefully about the quality and quantity of what you want to cite, and what you should be citing.
7. *Ethically rigorous*. Don't plagiarise. Plagiarism is theft, and when (not if) discovered, it will bring nasty punishments.
8. *Matched to the context*. Quotations should be worked seamlessly into the flow of your argument, rather than simply plugged in to build up your word count. When introducing a quoted passage, be careful to match your lead-in text grammatically to the opening words of the quote.

Essay structure

Your essay needs to be structured in a particular way to maximise its effectiveness. A typical structure is shown in figure 7.1.

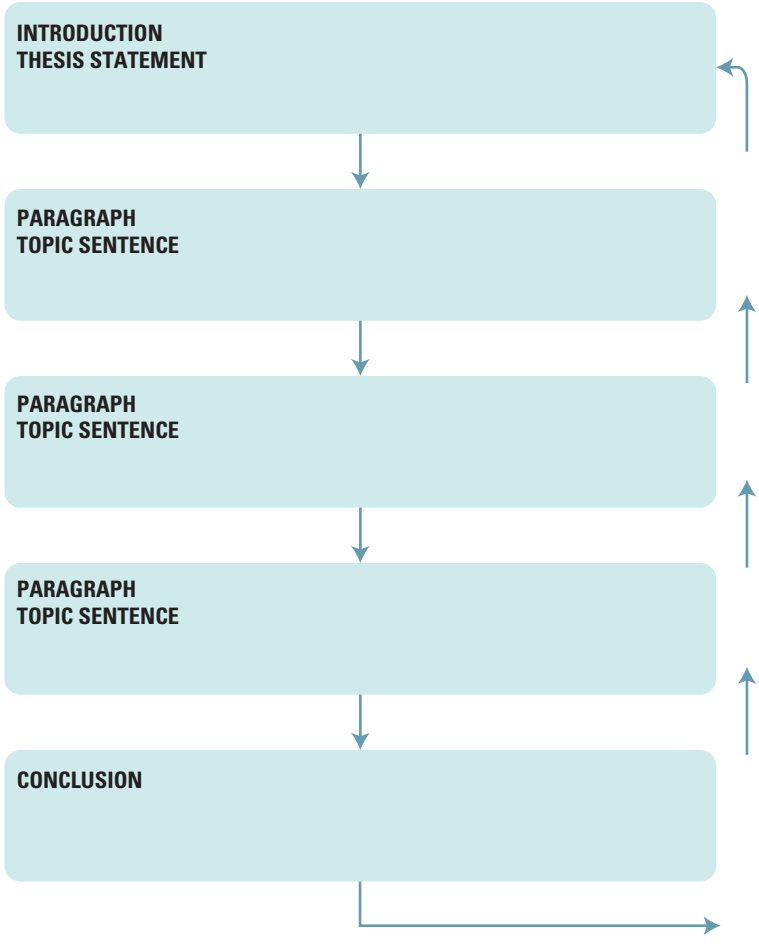


FIGURE 7.1 Structure of your essay

Structuring an essay requires planning so that you develop major and minor ideas and themes logically. Becoming more effective at writing means:

- analysing your audience or reader
- considering time management and priority settings
- considering strategies for breaking writer's blocks
- using structuring approaches to generate content and aid exposition (indirect versus direct approach, the 5W–H approach, question and answer techniques, diagramming or mind-mapping, and outlining using software tools)
- editing and proofreading.

All of these issues are considered in greater depth in online chapter 'Writing skills 5: how to write'.

The main components of an essay are:

1. Introduction
2. Body or argument
3. Conclusion.

In the introduction, you need to set down the topic question you will endeavour to answer. Here you set the scene, paying attention to the scope of what you are attempting – that is, you will define what you intend to talk about.

Thesis statements, summaries and drafting

Thesis statement: sentence or sentences, usually positioned at the beginning of an essay, that sum up the writer's argument and purpose in the discussion to follow

It is often useful to establish a **thesis statement** at the outset. The thesis statement is a succinct expression of how you will respond to the topic question. In it you inform your reader of the scope of your argument and the approach you will take. This declaration may be recapitulated in your conclusion, so that there is a clear, cohesive connection between your introductory statement of purpose and the conclusions you reach as a result of your arguments. The thesis statement, in effect, summarises the extended argument. If you are required to write a formal summary or abstract, your thesis statement will contain the gist of this summary or abstract.

Thesis statements, introductions and summaries or abstracts are often hard to write, but they are important in helping to clarify your purpose in writing the essay, which is not always easy to identify. For the following reasons, you may find it useful to write these sections *after* you have written the body of the essay:

1. You may arrive at your true opinion only once you have undertaken an exposition of the major salient points.
2. You may have unresolved conflicts about the issues in the essay, and may end up changing your mind as you write (a painful experience, involving more work, but not nearly as painful as handing in an assignment you don't really believe in, and being marked accordingly).
3. The scope of your argument may change as you expand on some ideas and reduce coverage on, or eliminate, others.

It is useful at the start to clarify the definitions of terms you will be working with. If you find yourself using a number of specialised terms, it may be helpful to collate a glossary of terms, which can be attached at the end of the essay.

Now you can begin to draft the main body of the essay. Each paragraph should cover one particular topic or subtopic. A paragraph can be one or a number of sentences long. Aim for a range of between 50 and 150 words. Keeping paragraphs relatively short helps your reader to more easily process your ideas, and to follow the linkages between your ideas.

It's hard work trying to separate out the ideas in such an undifferentiated lump of text. Great writing is sometimes defined as 'deathless prose', but *your* deathless prose may not be so deathless if your reader has to work too hard to extract your ideas, so give some thought to layout and document design.

Topic sentences

Topic sentence: usually the first sentence in a paragraph; introduces the main idea of the paragraph

You should also give serious thought to beginning each paragraph with a topic sentence. A **topic sentence** introduces the reader to the main idea of the paragraph. It usually takes the form of a statement, but it can also be a question (see figure 7.2).

There are five main factors to bear in mind in the management of intensive care patients, but they are not always listed in order of importance.

How ironic that, as the world was moving towards unanimity on the Kyoto Protocol, the global financial crisis should make many nations back off from commitments to lower carbon output when they perceived it would cost too much to meet the targets.

It is a mistake to think that Keynes was not aware of the monetarist theories being developed by the Chicago School in the 1930s.

The consensus method of group decision making has shortcomings, and I believe that these outweigh its apparent strengths.

At first glance, Drucker does not appear to give the marketing function much importance in the survival plans of the firm, but appearances can be deceptive.

FIGURE 7.2 Topic sentences: some samples

Topic sentences should flag what is coming, but like leads in news stories written by journalists, they should not only inform. Rather, they should also intrigue, making readers want to learn more. Some software summarising programs or functions (e.g. Autosummarize and Document Map in Microsoft Word) can skim the first sentence of each of your paragraphs and mechanically produce a meaningful summary of the entire document. It is possible, and sometimes desirable, to delay the topic sentence – for example, for dramatic effect – but don't push your reader's patience too far.

Writing topic sentences can help in the planning of your essay. Whether in full or summarised in note form, a list of your topic sentences can help you create a meaningful structure.

Make sure that your paragraphs are not simply unrelated blocks of text floating in a sea of white space. Link them logically and dynamically using words and phrases that define relationships, such as:

- In spite of this, …
- Yet again, however, …
- Secondly, …
- Meanwhile, in another part of the battlefield, …
- In contrast to this, …
- The exception to this rule is …

Such linkages help draw together your ideas in a coherent whole, and should not be regarded as trivial (for more on the expositional tools of paragraphing and transitional statements, as well as those of grammatical parallelism and rhetorical patterning, see online chapter 'Writing skills 3: style').

Your conclusion should sum up your argument, drawing all the threads together. In a real sense, the conclusion is the most important part of your essay, because it is the forum in which your authentic voice is heard. No new information is introduced at this stage; it's just you, summing up your arguments, recapitulating, giving your final response to the thesis statement, and spelling out the implications of this. You should not repeat the wording from the introduction, but there should be a symmetry between your introduction and conclusion. The three-part structure of your essay, therefore, should follow the form of a good spoken presentation:

1. Tell them what you're going to tell them.
2. Tell them.
3. Tell them what you've just told them.

Keeping on track

Don't lose sight of the focus of the essay. Remember, you have one purpose and one alone: to answer the question that has been set. Will the next sentence you write help to answer the question, or not? Apply this test to every sentence.

Don't wander from the main point, even if the material you have seems particularly interesting. If you have a lot of good ideas and good quoted material, maybe some of it is not for this essay, but for another one; don't waste it – store it in a notebook or a file and use it another time. If you feel you have to use it because you don't have anything else to say, then you are just going through the motions, and don't be too surprised or disappointed if you receive a low mark. It is your problem, not the assessor's, that you don't have enough material. Do something about it.

Waffle: to pad out a piece of writing with meaningless or redundant words

Don't **waffle** or pad out your writing. The only person you will be fooling by this approach is yourself.

At the other extreme, don't leave out what should be included. If you feel you run the risk of patronising your reader by stating the obvious, play it safe by putting linking and contextual material in footnotes or appendices.

Style and technique

Make sure your style is clear and easy to read. This does not mean that it should be mechanical and sterile, and devoid of personality; it does mean that the message should be at the forefront, with the medium (or the way in which you communicate the message) being secondary. If you know your stuff, then you should be able to put your ideas together in such a form that reading the essay will be a pleasant experience for your reader, and that won't do you any harm at all.

> Style matters. Some professors may even prefer essays that are well-structured and well-written but not particularly brilliant, to those that contain a truly original insight cloaked in language that would make Webster and Fowler turn in their graves. Writing a sonnet or a short one-act play is not usually a good idea, but a student should be encouraged to bring all his [her] skills as a writer to bear on the essay topic. After all, that is why the question is an essay question, rather than a true/false or short-answer. (King 1998, p. 63)

When quoting other sources, make sure you use the citing conventions appropriate to the subject or area in which you are writing. Use quoted material professionally: don't, for example, quote only part of a source to create a false impression of what that source is really saying. Whatever you do, don't plagiarise, or try to pass off someone else's work as your own (see chapter 3).

Time and technique

Writing is not really writing unless it involves some measure of rewriting. Drafting, redrafting and editing are all part of the grinding and stewing process that underlies the clear expression of your thoughts. Getting it right the first time is a good principle to follow in many areas of life, such as time management, but it is not an effective approach to producing a good piece of writing.

Having said that, it is also true that the most effective tool you have as a writer is time itself: time to stew on things, time to reconsider, time to rip it all apart and put it back together again in a better form, time to reluctantly edit out that superb phrase or witticism that doesn't quite fit, time for that flash of insight that reveals to you that you don't really believe in what you have just written, time to work through a second or third draft – it all

takes time. The only way you can ensure you have that time is to plan, to avoid procrastination and to know your own weaknesses and strengths.

Say what you mean, and mean what you say

The more research and thought you put into a topic, the more confident you should be about expressing a view on the topic. Be direct, but avoid being dogmatic. Sweeping generalisations that are only weakly supported by your evidence (or perhaps not supported at all) do your cause no good at all. Let your arguments speak for themselves as you build and interconnect assertions and proofs, creating a momentum for your thesis or ideas.

Note that academic writers use certain linguistic strategies to hedge or to boost their ideas:

> Academic texts are most frequently characterised by a desire to avoid making claims and statements that are too direct and assertive, since academic discourse is often about theories, conclusions drawn from evidence, exchanging viewpoints, and so on, rather than hard, indisputable facts. Therefore hedging (making a proposition less assertive) is very important in academic styles. Less often, it is sometimes also necessary to assert a claim or viewpoint quite directly and more confidently, a process we shall refer to as boosting. (Carter & McCarthy 2006, p. 279)

Hedging: qualification of statements or claims
Boosting: assertion of statements or claims

Examples of **hedging** and **boosting** linguistic strategies are shown in figure 7.3 (for definitions of grammatical terms such as adverbs and prepositional phrases, see online chapter 'Writing skills 1: grammar').

Hedging strategies	Boosting strategies
■ Modal/auxiliary verbs (can, could, might, may, would) ■ Adverbs (arguably, generally, typically, probably) ■ Prepositional phrases (in a sense, in most cases, in principle) ■ Impersonal constructions (it is suggested, it is generally agreed)	■ Adverbs (clearly, inevitably, plainly, undoubtedly) ■ Other expressions (for certain, it was clear that)

FIGURE 7.3 Hedging and boosting writing strategies
Source: Adapted from Carter and McCarthy (2006, pp. 282–4).

Hedging can go too far, of course: you can set off a statement with so many qualifications that your original proposition is negated, and it becomes a mystery as to why you would have wanted to make such an assertion in the first place (see online chapter 6 'Scientific and technical writing').

Similarly, an over-use of boosting phrases may create the suspicion that you are trying to bluster or deceive your way around a weak argument. By all means, use 'clearly' and 'obviously', but in moderation: let your reader be the judge of what is clear and obvious. Use your common sense: be prudent but forthright in saying what you mean, and meaning what you say.

Rather than simply making sweeping and unsupported assertions, and trying to bluff your reader, it is better to make clear statements and then qualify those statements with a judicious use of hedging or riders (figure 7.4).

You can also use boosting strategies or locutions (figure 7.5), but in the academic arena, the reality is that you will end up hedging more than boosting.

These factors, taken together, ***might seem*** to present a strong case for much, if not all, gender-specific behaviour being socially conditioned, but it may be wise to consider the critique of the environmentalist position presented by sociobiological writers such as Stewart-Williams (2010) and Hardy (2011).

Beyond a certain point, however, we are ***probably*** in the realms of speculation; even though we may theorise on what Alexander's motivations were at this point in the move eastward, the reality is that we just do not know. The data does not exist, and all we have are the anecdotes of two historians of problematic reliability and integrity.

In principle, class action suits have much to recommend them, as much for reasons of social equity as for securing natural justice, but a number of caveats need to be borne in mind, especially by those in legal practice with large pro bono commitments and other activities that may have a negative impact on cash flow.

Therefore, it ***would appear*** to make sense for hospitality industry companies to walk away from exchange rate-related losses and shift preferred payment modes to credit card and electronic fund transfer. This policy change can be communicated through letters, brochures, advertising and web presence, but the most effective channel may be for counter staff to impart this directly to guests. It ***might be*** wise to retain minimal systems for cash in major currencies, however, as catastrophic system breakdown in computer systems cannot be ruled out permanently.

Consumer demand for plain and sateen weaves could well increase because of their well-publicised appearance in the recent Paris prêt-a-porter collections, but it is ***generally agreed*** that twill weaves may still have a place for the next few years, higher manufacturing costs notwithstanding, because the superior drape and wrinkle-free properties of twill may give designers more freedom and customers more satisfaction than those of plains and sateens.

FIGURE 7.4 Stating and hedging: sample wording

I believe, therefore, that there is overwhelming evidence for the case presented by the researchers. The parallels they draw are ***clearly*** compelling.

The four trial balance spreadsheet programs and templates available to firms therefore all have much to offer, and the market leader has certain features that ***without doubt*** justify its place in the market.

FIGURE 7.5 Stating and boosting: sample wording

You, the author

Hedging and boosting, but particularly hedging, are part of academic style, and that style often presents problems for writers trying to learn how to master style in post-secondary or post-school learning situations. While writers may have been encouraged to use personal styles of expression in school writing situations, they may find that there is a different culture of expectations in tertiary educational environments. This is the problem or matter of appropriate **authorial voice**.

Authorial voice: the style most favoured in a discipline, area or publication, usually involving use or non-use of first-person pronouns and use or non-use of passive voice, nominalisations and hedging

Academic writing, together with much scientific writing (see online chapter 6 'Scientific and technical writing'), often seems to be impersonal and abstract, making heavy use of passive voice – 'It is believed … ' rather than 'I believe … '.

Writing styles can be characterised as being on a continuum ranging from personal/direct style to impersonal/indirect style (see figure 7.6). The most personal and direct type of discourse involves the author – a person you are reading, or you, depending upon the role you play – using the first person singular pronoun and the active voice. Moving away from this point, authors may use the plural first person. This is literally true when there is more than one author, but sometimes sole authors will use it to refer to a broader

community (see the footnote) or – in some circumstances – when they are not as confident as they might be, and invoke the authority of a plural.[1] Further along the continuum is the use of the agentless passive. This is often favoured in scientific writing, so that instead of saying 'I/we conducted experiments … ' the tendency is to say 'Experiments were conducted … ' Even further along the continuum comes the use of nominalisations (see online chapter 'Writing skills 4: plain English'), where simple verb constructions are replaced by noun/verb constructions. Finally, the most impersonal and indirect style may involve hedging, as well as nominalisations, in order to moderate the claims being made (the example given here is deliberately exaggerated).

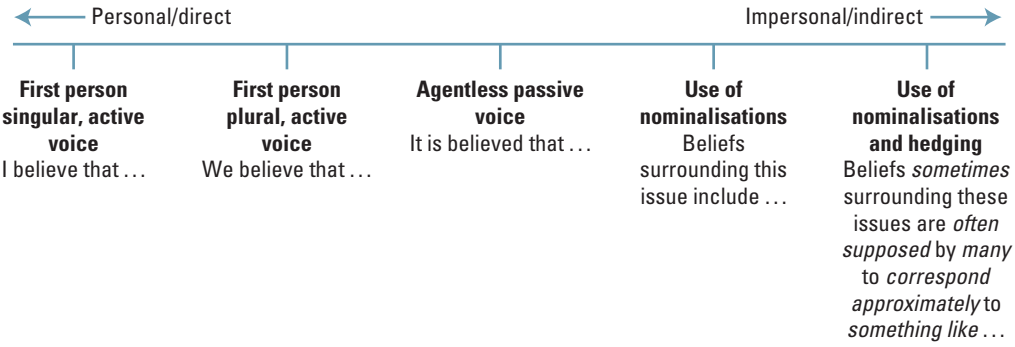


FIGURE 7.6 Personal/direct style versus impersonal/indirect style — a continuum

Even within the use of first person pronouns, however, there may be subtle variations. Tang and John (1999) suggest that there is a continuum of shades of usage for 'I' and 'we/us' (shown in figure 7.7) (see also Harwood 2005; Kuo 1999; Freddi 2005; Hyland 2002). These usages are:

- No 'I' (impersonal style)
- 'I' as representative ('In this sphere, we have words like …' or '*We* know that all dialects …')
- 'I' as guide ('In example one, *we* see …' or 'So far, *we* have said nothing about …')
- 'I' as architect ('*I* will concentrate on …' or 'In *my* essay, I shall …)
- 'I' as a recounter of research process ('*I* recorded a conversation with …' or 'All of the papers *I* read were …')
- 'I' as opinion holder ('*I* would like to show that …' or '*I* agree with Fairclough [1992b) that …')
- 'I' as originator ('Hence, *I* will examine the factors …' or 'To *me*, the phrase embodies the whole process …'). (Adapted from Tang and John, 1999)

So when should you use 'I'? This is not always clear. The traditional academic/scientific culture that shied away from personal pronouns and heavily favoured passive voice is changing, and there is a move towards a more personal and active style in a number of disciplines and publications. However, there is no uniform pattern here, and you may find that a style that is acceptable in one subject (or even for one lecturer in one subject) is not acceptable in another. You need to seek out clear guidelines on this. You have the right

1. In rhetoric, a distinction is sometimes drawn between *plural majestatis*, or 'royal we', sometimes used by royalty and popes (an individual saying 'we decree that … ') and *plural modestiae* or *plural auctoris*, or authority's or author's plural, which includes readers and listeners.

   The *plural majestatis* tends to get short shrift in modern democratic societies: Mark Twain once observed that 'Only kings, editors and people with tapeworm have the right to use the editorial "we"', while US Navy Admiral Hyman Rickover told a subordinate who used 'we' that 'Three groups of people are permitted that usage: pregnant women, royalty and schizophrenics. Which one are you?'.

to ask for guidelines or a style guide, and, in fact, the very act of asking may stimulate changes within the area you are studying in.

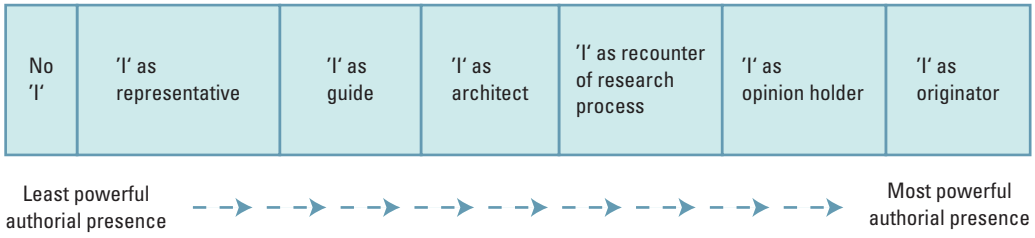


FIGURE 7.7 A typology of possible identities behind the first person pronoun in academic writing

Source: Tang and John (1999, p. S29).

Academic writing versus workplace writing: match your style to your audience

The style or register you use when you are in the role of a student is not necessarily the same style or register you might use in other settings, such as a workplace. Note, for example, the styles of expression that are used in the chapters dealing with letters, emails and memos (chapter 4), reports and proposals (chapter 5), and online writing (chapter 6). Generally speaking, the differences between academic style and workplace style are clear (figure 7.8).

	Academic style	**Workplace style**
Vocabulary/lexis	Heavy use of Latin-derived words; longer words	Stronger use of Anglo-Saxon derived words; shorter words
Technical language/jargon	Often strong, although there are some attempts to simplify	Often strong, although there are some attempts to simplify
Syntax	Longer sentences	Shorter sentences
Passive voice	High use	Low use
Style	Usually impersonal; first person pronouns often discouraged	Can be impersonal or personal, depending upon documents, situation, stance of writer
Hedging	Substantial use	Low use; used when writing is exploring possibilities and/or is deceptive
Boosting	Low use; used when writing is exploring possibilities and/or is deceptive	Low use; used when writing is exploring possibilities and/or is deceptive
Readability scores	High (12+) (see online chapter 3)	Usually lower (8+)
Document design/layout	Long paragraphs; little/no use of bullet points, headings	Short paragraphs; frequent use of bullet points, headings
Use of reference/quoted material	Extensive	Light, non-existent

FIGURE 7.8 Academic and workplace styles compared

One of the major criticisms made by employers of graduates they have hired is that too much of the graduates' writing is 'essay-like'. Essays or papers are what get you good (or bad) marks when you are in your role as a student, but workplace documents such as reports and emails are what attract favourable (or unfavourable) attention when you are in your role as an employee. Be versatile: match your style to your audience.

Layout factors

Traditionally, essays were written without headings or graphics such as figures and tables. Now the genre of the essay is discernibly taking on features traditionally associated with documents such as reports. Nevertheless, in some areas and disciplines, essay markers are uncomfortable with such features. So before you begin, seek guidance on the format expected and keep that guidance in mind as you develop your work.

ASSESS YOURSELF

1. Photocopy pages from journal articles or from books dealing with your area of enquiry. Using highlighter pens, mark up the topic sentence in each paragraph. Now, respond to the following questions.
   (a) What function do these sentences play in the paragraphs?
   (b) Are topic sentences hard to find or non-existent?
   (c) Do these sentences help or hinder comprehension of the writer's argument?
2. Cut and paste into a word-processing file some pages from journal articles or books dealing with your area of enquiry. Now, use software-summarising tools to summarise or analyse the structure of the argument of your selection. What does it reveal to you about the topic sentence structure of the samples?
3. Look at textbooks and journal articles from 20 to 30 years ago and at those of today. Are there any differences in authorial voice or style?

Before we go any further, let's take stock of what we have learnt so far. We have looked at the criteria of good and bad essay writing. Looking at Bacon's essay, we have learnt the importance of:

- having a point of view
- making valid assertions
- giving solid proof and examples
- following a sound expositional technique
- using a cumulative approach to build the plausibility of what you want to persuade us of.

These goals remain the same after almost 400 years.

We saw that the most discouraging thing for essay writers – 'How can I say something original, when it's all been said before?' – can be partially overcome by processes such as creative doubt. We have also looked at structuring topic sentences, thesis statements, transitions, hedging and boosting, and authorial voice.

With concepts like these under our belt, let's now see them put to work (or ignored) by looking at two condensed sample essays that are both on the same topic.

Putting it together: sample essays

The samples shown on the next pages are not complete essays, but they may help us to understand what works and what does not work in the construction of an essay. The 'good' example is not perfect, but it presents a useful model to learn from.

Essay one: a bad example

PUBLIC POLICY 206

WHAT ARE THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT?

Martin Plaistowe
ID No. 43211789
Tutorial Group: Wednesday 2–3 pm
Lecturer: Dr Rolf Birtles

The so-called[1] 'greenhouse effect' is nothing but a crock of hype.[2]

[3]Studies done by the Competitive Enterprise Institute show clearly that claims of global warming are false:

[4]There are three reasons why this claim is not valid, according to Dr Baliunas. First, most of the warming in the last 100 years occurred before the build-up of greenhouse gases. Second, the surface temperature record suffers from many confounding factors. The most important being the urban heat island effect, where growing cities surrounding thermometer stations bias the temperature record upwards.[5] [6] Finally, the surface record suffers from inadequate global coverage. 'Good records', according to Dr Baliunas, 'with near-continual coverage of the last 100 years, cover only 18 percent of the surface.'

> *Computer models, which have been used to bolster the case for global warming, are also deficient, said Dr Baliunas. The assumption that water vapor will increase with a rise in man-made greenhouse gases, accounting for most of the predicted warming, has been 'challenged by developments in convection theory and new measurements.'* (http://www.cei.org/utils/printer.cfm?AID=1220)[7] [8] [9]

Many academics tend, predictably enough, to push a straight environmentalist or green line on 'global warming' (Botkin & Keller 2005; McElroy 2002; Stern, 2007; Oreskes & Conway, 2011), refusing to acknowledge that there are many reputable scientists who think that the whole thing is a lot of hot air.[10] In fact the very use of the term 'greenhouse' is wrong, as Harvey points out:

> The term 'greenhouse effect' is used to refer to the tendency of the atmosphere to create a warmer climate than would otherwise be the case. However the physical mechanisms by which the presence of the atmosphere warms the climate and the primary mechanism that causes a greenhouse to be warm are in fact quite different. A greenhouse heats up by day as the air within the greenhouse is heated by the sun. Outside the greenhouse, near-surface air that is heated through absorption of solar radiation by the ground surface is free to rise and be replaced with colder air from above. This cannot happen in a greenhouse, where the heated air is physically prevented from rising and being replaced with colder air. The so-called greenhouse effect does not prevent the physical movement of air parcels. (Harvey 2000)[11] [12]

1. Sarcasm may be inappropriate.

2. Avoid use of slang.

3. No introduction to issues to be explored in essay

4. No lead-in to quote or explanation of who the expert is

5. Plagiarism: merely a cut-and-paste from website source

6. Grammatical error; sentence fragment (uncorrected)

7. Website text is ephemeral — a media release from 1998. The URL has since changed, as often happens on the net. It would have been better to seek out a more substantial and up-to-date reference from the same source, e.g. Bailey (2008).

8. Cited text is inconsistently laid out: indenting and fonts.

9. Invalid citation method for web document — try, wherever possible, to tie down to author surname: here, Georgia (1998).

10. But what, specifically, do they say? This is abuse, not argument.

11. Selective quotation; the source then goes on to say that there is, in fact, a similarity, and the entire reference accepts the notion of global warming.

12. Semantic quibbling; the essay writer is trying to show that, because an analogy is not perfect, the phenomenon being analysed cannot be real. This remains unproven.

(continued)

(continued)

Scientists have proven that 'Global warming' does not, in fact, exist (Milloy, 2009; Horner, 2009). Rather, global cooling is what we should be concerned about. Taylor (1999) has studied climate change and has proven[1] that another ice age is about to begin (Landscheidt, Theodor (2003) 'New Little Ice Age Instead of Global Warming?' *Energy and Environment*, Vol. 14, No. 2-3, pp 327–350).[2] [3]

Buydko[4] (1996) also points out that increased global warming would in fact be beneficial as increased levels of carbon dioxide would boost photosynthetic processes and increase agricultural productivity, thus ensuring that starving billions would not have to starve.[5] [6] The economic costs of succumbing to greenhouse hype are considerable, and may well be crippling, when all economic, fiscal, monetary, macro-economic, industrial, institutional and other factors are factored into any type of reasonable decision making and problem-solving process, or processes.[7] Any rational and ethical decision maker would need to weigh up, consider, ponder, contemplate and factor in every possible scenario of cost-benefit analysis to eventually arrive at reasonable policy outcomes that would be acceptable to the democratic majority that needs must provide (or withhold) the mandate needed in any democratic decision-making process. It is imperative that such a process not be held hostage by wild-eyed radicals with a hidden agenda,[8] as experts like Stott point out:

> Even if all 180 countries ratified the protocol and then actually met their greenhouse gas emission targets — a highly unlikely political scenario — we still might only affect temperature by between 0.07 and 0.2° Celsius, and even this could be thrown out by a couple of erupting volcanoes or altering landscape albedos. And what are the economics of this meaningless self-sacrifice demanded by Kyoto? According to recent models, implementing Kyoto will cost anywhere between $100b and $1000b, with a mean around $350b. Now that amount of money could pay off the public debt of the 49 poorest countries of the world and provide clean drinking water for all! Need one say more? (Stott 2001)[9]

The greenhouse effect is comprised of a number of synergistically linked processes such as radiative forcing, which is[10]

> . . . due to the increases of the well-mixed greenhouse gases from 1750 to 2000 is estimated to be 2.43 Wm^{-2}. 1.46 Wm^{-2} from CO_2; 0.48 Wm^{-2} from CH_4; 0.34 Wm^{-2} from the halocarbons; and 0.15 Wm^{-2} from N_2O.[1] [11]

The hype surrounding the greenhouse effect cannot simply be shrugged off. If the widespread changes[12] advocated by greenhouse zealots were to be implemented, then the financial costs would be crippling. No responsible administrator or politician could rationally contemplate factoring in such pseudo-science when the real work of decision making needs to be undertaken in a democratic society, or for that matter, in an undemocratic society.[13] Just as surely as the so-called ozone layer crisis was proven to be another fantasy, so too will the greenhouse effect, so-called.[14]

The credibility of the whole idea has, anyway, been dispelled by Climategate and the destruction of the hockey stick graph of change.[15]

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[1] Houghton, J.T. et al (Eds) (2001) *Climate Change 2001: The Scientific Basis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 7[16]

1. Suggested, not proven
2. Sources cited tend to be sensationalist.
3. Second reference needs to be linked with first into broader point about cooling; full details should not be cited in text, but in reference list.
4. Author's name misspelled
5. Topic change: new paragraph required
6. Author suggests only that it might be possible.
7. Non sequitur; is the essay writer denying or affirming warming? The cited author also expresses concern about warming.
8. Padding, waffle
9. Quoted author is talking about the Kyoto Protocol — introductory wording setting this connection up is needed.
10. Lead-in text and quoted text not grammatically matched
11. This is meant to be a general definition, but it contains extremely, even overly, specific and technically complex information, using undefined terms.
12. What are these proposed changes? Surely they would be a critical aspect of an essay on policy implications?
13. Repetition, padding
14. Unproven assertion
15. Both factors could strengthen the argument, but they are not explained or cited correctly (e.g. Montford 2010).
16. Reference details in footnote: citation system different from that of main style used

1. Several factual errors

2. Bizarre conclusion, shifting ground, and introducing new information

US President Obama walked away from a deal at the Kyoto conference, and we know why he did: the global financial crisis of 1995 meant that luxuries like carbon taxes would make industries uneconomic, and thus economics proved more important than spurious environmental ideas.[1]

The choice is then clear for all responsible decision makers, and that is to respond to global warming by implementing a range of low-impact technologies, from hydrogen-powered cars to nuclear power plants.[2]

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Georgia, Paul J. 1998 "Climate Science Briefings Debunk Greenhouse Scares," Competitive Enterprise Institute: Free Markets and Limited Government, Competitive Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC, October 1.[4]

3. URL address is out of date; access date is also very dated.

4. Reference list incomplete; uncited references given; not in alphabetical order; inconsistent reference style used.

1. Thesis statement

2. Exposition of ideas uses standard style of sequential narrative sentences; layout features of genres such as reports — such as bullet points — avoided.

3. Impersonal academic style used — impersonal/agentless passive voice a feature; no pronouns in authorial voice

4. Definitions

5. Lead-in text grammatically matches quoted material.

6. Topic sentences begin paragraphs.

7. Square brackets show essay writer is interpolating explanatory text not present in actual quoted passage.

8. Essay moves from setting up of basic concepts to policy implications — answering the question posed by lecturer setting topic.

9. Summary of background from fairly recent sources provides context.

Essay two: a better example

PUBLIC POLICY 206

WHAT ARE THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT?

Martin Plaistowe
ID No. 43211789
Tutorial Group: Wednesday 2–3 pm
Lecturer: Dr Rolf Birtles

The greenhouse effect and the associated concept of global warming present great challenges to policy makers at local, state or provincial, national and international levels.

[1]The fundamental position of this essay will be that the responses of decision makers in public and private sectors to the greenhouse effect phenomenon have been mixed, and this has reflected the flawed consensus that exists within the scientific community. Trends may be emerging, however, which indicate that some actors are behaving as if the effect is real, no matter what. Because their actions may accord them strategic advantages in certain arenas, this may trigger a bandwagon effect, whereby many decision makers ignore underlying uncertainties in order to preserve commercial and national strategic positions.[2] [3]

There are, in fact, two greenhouse effects. The first is the 'natural' greenhouse effect, whereby radiation from the sun hits the earth, and is retransmitted back to space: part of that energy, however, is absorbed by certain greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons), which leads to a warming of the atmosphere — just like a glass greenhouse retains some of the sun's warmth to help stimulate plant growth within the greenhouse. The second effect is the 'enhanced' greenhouse effect, due to human activity such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, which creates greenhouse gases (Houghton, 2009, p. 22).[4]

Many scientists argue that in the past few decades the planet has undergone unprecedented warming, and that this warming appears to have been caused by anthropogenic or human-caused activity. The prestigious Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its early 2001 report, concluded that:[5] [6]

> In the light of new evidence and taking into account the remaining uncertainties, most of the observed warming over the last 50 years is likely [i.e., having a 66–90 per cent chance] to have been due to the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations. (Houghton et al. (eds.) 2001, p. 10)[7]

Such global warming could result in regional increases in floods and droughts, inundation of coastal areas, increase in high-temperature events and fires, outbreaks of pests and diseases, and significant damage to ecosystems (Jepma & Munansinghe 1998, pp. 28–34 ; Parks & Ellis 2005, pp. 4–11; Gore 2007, pp. 2–14).[8]

Concerns about global warming led to the international meeting on climate change in Kyoto in 1997, which led to the declaration of the Kyoto Protocol (McElroy 2002, pp. 232–51). The Kyoto Protocol has been signed by many countries, including Australia, and commits them to specific reductions in the production of greenhouse gases. A number of countries, including the United States, have still not signed the Protocol, arguing that committing to reductions would cause unacceptable damage to their economies (Koh 2009, p. 325). On the other hand, some scientists, such as Plimer (2009), argue that the greenhouse effect is a natural phenomenon alternating with ice ages over periods of thousands of years, with anthropogenic causes having little effect.[9]

1. References include recent peer-reviewed journals.

2. Cited references show wide reading, and ability to synthesise materials from different sources.

3. Writer now moves away from 'greenhouse effect' as main concept, using 'global warming' as a term covering both ideas. A good strategy, or not?

4. Balanced treatment of non-mainstream views

5. Use of print and online sources

6. New section raises other possibilities and trends, thus picking up approach foreshadowed in thesis statement.

7. Restatement of part of thesis statement, giving overview of previous point

8. Recapitulation demonstrates that original objectives of the essay have been met.

If it is believed that global warming is real, and if it is believed something should be done about it, then a number of useful policy shifts become apparent. These policies might include the mandating of reduction in CO_2 production of motor vehicles (such as in California — see Warnatzsch & Reay 2011, pp. 23–39[1]), shifting of production of electricity away from coal-fired methods to sustainable or 'green' methods (Tükay & Telli 2011), the setting up markets in energy credits, and allowing trading of these (Christiansen & Wettestad 2003, p. 14; Stern 2007, pp. 324–27[2]), the allocating of permits to emit gases based upon current efficiency data of individual power plants (Vesterdal & Svendsen 2004, p. 963), and the changing of land management practices, leading to less burning off of biomass and sequestration of carbon through creation of carbon sinks such as forests and better management of grasslands, soils and forests (Botkin & Keller 2005, pp. 481–83).[3]

Global warming skeptics see dangers in some or all of these policies (Zyrkowski 2006, pp. 2–16; Singer & Avery 2007, pp. 3–12). Wildavsky, for example, sees global warming as a myth created by environmentalists to engineer radical social changes such as lower growth rates, smaller populations, consuming less and sharing a much lower level of resources much more equally (Wildavsky 1992, p. xv).[4]

Budyko also argues that increased warming may lead to rises in productivity of crops, which will be necessary to feed another five billion people born in the next few decades (although he does also acknowledge potentially damaging effects of this) (Budyko 1996, pp. 113–119) (see also Stott 2001).[4 5]

Some writers have suggested, however, that it does not matter whether global warming exists or not, because if actors such as policy-makers and entrepreneurs act as if it does, then jobs and wealth can be created by developing renewable energy industries. Lovins, for example, states that the major controversy about uncertainties in climate science is immaterial because of this — money can be made from renewables, so why not do it anyway? (Amory Lovins, quoted in Hoffman 2009, p. 330)[6]

Further, Krause, Decanio, Hoerner and Baer (2002, p. 342) argue that there are 'co-benefits' to behaving as if global warming was real, such as cleaner air due to less pollution and healthier people.

Lomborg (2008, 2010, 2011) follows up on this line, arguing that carbon limitation is a lost cause, as international conferences on carbon reduction keep failing. This failure will be exacerbated by the global financial crisis, with there being no 'first mover' advantage in imposing carbon taxes — the opposite, in fact, is true. Lomborg notes that three US think tanks from opposite ends of the political spectrum have come to a consensus that creation of affordable alternative energy sources is the only way — the middle way — between proponents of no carbon and a 'deep green' return to basiclifestyles. Lomberg argues that this can be done for the cost of 0.2 per cent of global gross product, or roughly US$100 billion a year, to invent alternative energy technologies that everyone can afford.

If numerous political and industrial actors behave in this way, with a consensus to spend for such a program, their actions may accord them strategic advantages in certain arenas, and this may trigger a 'bandwagon effect', whereby many or most decision makers ignore underlying uncertainties in order to preserve commercial and national strategic positions.[7]

In conclusion, a number of points about global warming are now apparent. Is global warming real? Probably, but it may not matter anyway. Some actors are moving the goalposts by redefining business objectives and government policy to develop alternative industries, to improve public health and to reap conservation benefits.[8]

(continued)

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Essay writing: dos and don'ts

Our two sample essays provide insights into what to do and what not to do when writing essays (note also the criteria listed earlier in table 7.1). Table 7.3 summarises the main principles.

TABLE 7.3 Essay writing dos and don'ts

Aspect	Do this	Don't do this
Position	Be even-handed, considering all sides of question.	Show bias, looking at only one viewpoint.
Statement of position	Use a thesis statement to introduce the direction you will take.	Jump straight into argument without creating a context for that argument.
Statement of scope	Clarify what issues are to be covered, and what will not be covered.	Avoid statement of scope.
Terminology	Define terms; if technical terms need to be used, explain them in first instance.	Avoid defining terms; switch between normal and technical language without notice.
Exposition of argument	Clearly set out paragraphs; use headings where appropriate; use topic sentences; link ideas to reinforce unfolding argument.	Avoid clear topic changes with paragraphing; use inappropriate or confusing headings; use no or few topic sentences; confuse reader with choppy exposition and development.
Structural integrity	In conclusion, recapitulate issues, showing how the topic question has been answered.	Don't provide a clear recapitulation of ideas in the conclusion; end without reference to topic question; introduce new material at the end.
Research	Use old and new material; show preference for reputable, peer-reviewed material; handle popular and internet sources with care; show evidence of understanding and synthesis of sources.	Use out-of-date material; use only popular material (such as journalism) and internet sources of problematic quality; show no evidence of understanding and synthesis of sources.
Quotation	Cite sources legitimately (i.e. don't quote selectively); lead into quotes with appropriate introductory text, matching grammatical structure of lead-in text with quoted material; if quoting, give page numbers; avoid plagiarism.	Selectively quote sources to give false impressions; insert quotes without (or with inappropriate) introductory text; ignore matching grammatical structure of lead-in text with quoted material; if quoting, don't give page numbers; plagiarise.
Original thought	Try to demonstrate original views.	Simply rehash the views of others, never stating your own.
Professional style	Use appropriate academic language; avoid waffle and padding.	Use slang, sarcasm and waffle to increase word count.

(continued)

TABLE 7.3 *(continued)*

Aspect	Do this	Don't do this
Referencing	Use appropriate referencing conventions: always cite source by using footnotes, endnotes or Harvard author-date system. Don't presume it is acceptable merely to list them in the bibliography.	Mix up referencing styles; forget to include all source details; list references out of alphabetical order; don't refer to sources by citing: only put them in the bibliography (let the reader work out where they are cited).
Layout	Use simple, clear layout; use fonts consistently; include graphics where appropriate.	Adopt confused, cluttered layout; use fonts inconsistently; omit graphics where they would help clarify; use confusing graphics or include graphics where none required.

Essay writing: a humorous approach

We have looked at what needs to be done when writing essays, but what about the things that shouldn't be done? King (1998), using a humorous approach, warns students writing in one discipline – political science – of the perils of the Six Evil Geniuses of essay writing. Every essay writer, no matter what the discipline, at times feels the presence of these evil spirits; table 7.4 shows what happens when such spirits take over honest writers. King's Evil Geniuses model of what not to do could be renamed 'games essay writers play (and usually lose)'. The chief antidote to an Evil Genius, King suggests, is intellectual honesty, and that is true no matter what discipline we are writing in. There is only one thing worse than writing like this, and that is being so misguided that you think you can do so and get away with it.

TABLE 7.4 The Six Evil Geniuses of essay writing

Evil genius	Motivation	Sample essay question	Sample essay response	Analysis
1. The Sycophant	The Sycophant thinks if she butters up the marker (e.g. by praising the lectures or the reading assignments), the marker will be likely to think better of the content of the essay itself.	Why are political scientists concerned with the concept of 'political culture'?	In their brilliant, ground-breaking work, Almond and Verba address the concept of political culture. As Professor Jones demonstrated in her excellent and stimulating lecture, the concept of political culture is important. By using it, as Professor Jones cogently argued, political scientists can explain a number of political phenomena . . .	Sycophantism is, of course, a bad idea. Essays like this read more like the minutes of a Soviet Communist Party congress than a response to an exam question. The fact that a lecturer has assigned a particular reading during a course is no guarantee that he/she thinks that the author of the reading is 'right'. Indeed, testing the student's ability to engage critically with assigned readings, instead of merely accepting them as fact because they are written by professional academics, is one of the chief reasons for asking essay questions in the first place.

Evil genius	Motivation	Sample essay question	Sample essay response	Analysis
2. The Rakish Raconteur	The Rakish Raconteur is the first cousin of the Sycophant. The Raconteur feels that writing in a conversational style and using the essay as a way of 'conversing' with the lecturer will allow his innate wit and charm to mask his lack of knowledge.	Discuss the contrasting views of 'modernisation theory' and 'dependency theory'. Which one gives a better account of economic development?	Well, as I was thinking the other night, modernisation and dependency are really two sides of the same coin. I mean, after all, who can say who is more modern than someone else? But seriously (is this a trick question?), there are a couple of ways that one differs from the other. Modernisationists think that the world is linear and ordered (they should see my dorm room!) . . .	This student may have a great career selling used cars, but his prospects in any job that requires serious analytical skills are definitely limited. This style is guaranteed to turn off any marker. Essay questions are a tool lecturers use to assess a student's knowledge and ability to formulate a clear argument. They should not be viewed as a chance to hang out with that lecture dude, know what I'm saying?
3. The Sanitary Engineer	The Sanitary Engineer (known long ago, in a less politically correct age, as a 'garbage man') is an expert at mind-dumping. He has crammed a huge amount of facts, terms, typologies and other information into his short-term memory, and nothing — not even the essay question itself — will prevent him from getting it all down on paper.	What did Tocqueville mean when he wrote about the importance of 'associations' in American civic life?	Alexis de Tocqueville was a young (26 years old) French traveller and writer who visited America for 9 months in 1831–1832 and wrote a book on his travels, published in two volumes in French in 1835–1840, and in its English translation as *Democracy in America*. His purpose in coming to the young United States (in which he visited 17 of the 24 states of the time), which had engaged in a revolution with Great Britain over a half century before and had adopted an independent Constitution, was actually to write a report on the American prison system. He travelled with an associate, Gustave Beaumont (see map and sketch of Beaumont on next page) . . .	Of course, it is a good idea to let the marker know you have full command of the facts, but throwing in a congeries of irrelevant factoids (or non-facts) without addressing the question set is never helpful. The Sanitary Engineer has accumulated a great deal of information, and his ability to recall it all is certainly impressive. But while his skills might be useful in a game of Trivial Pursuit, they will not necessarily help him answer the essay question.
4. The Jargon-Meister	The Jargon-Meister attempts to blind the reader with science. Using an array of political science terms — most of which she probably does not understand — she hopes to so impress the marker that he/she will ignore the fact that the essay really says nothing at all.	What do theorists mean when they say that humans are 'rational actors'?	Rationality is an exogenous component of selective incentives. As such, and in direct contradiction to the concept of endogenising preferences, actors cannot be truly rational unless they have engaged in side-payments to rotating credit organisations.	The Jargon-Meister appears to make an argument, and a forceful one at that. But once one peels away the terminology, it is clear that the thesis really has very little content. Political science, like all academic disciplines, has its own particular language;

(continued)

TABLE 7.4 *(continued)*

Evil genius	Motivation	Sample essay question	Sample essay response	Analysis
4. The Jargon-Meister *(continued)*			This gives Mancur Olson a collective action problem from which he cannot reasonably be expected to recover . . .	complex concepts and ideas are expressed through specialised terms that sometimes appear impenetrable to the uninitiated. Learning to wield these terms effectively is part of doing political science well, but their use should not get in the way of making a clear and accessible argument.
5. The Bait-and-Switch Artist	The Bait-and-Switch Artist is a master of prestidigitation. She engages in a sleight-of-hand in which she substitutes a new essay question for the one that appears on the page — and (poof!) the original essay question magically disappears. Her calling card is often the word 'while'.	Evaluate Theda Skocpol's argument on the origins of social revolutions.	While Theda Skocpol makes many interesting and important arguments about the origins of social revolutions, the concept of political culture is also extremely relevant. Political culture can be defined as the array of beliefs and norms in a given society relating to the legitimacy of political actors and political institutions . . .	The Bait-and-Switch Artist may go on to write a brilliant essay, but not one that answers the question that was originally asked. Of course, highlighting your knowledge in particular areas is a useful strategy when writing exam essays, but if the response provided fails to address the question asked, even the most insightful essay will not receive much attention from the marker.
6. The Knee-Jerk Nihilist	The Knee-Jerk Nihilist is the most sophisticated, most dangerous, and most evil of the geniuses. He has probably taken an introductory course in literary theory, quantum physics or postmodernism, but has forgotten most of what he learned. The one thing he took away from these courses, though, was a fundamental conviction that the world around us is just too complicated and too contradictory for us to make any sense of it.	What makes a political system democratic?	Democracy is a relative concept. In fact, the concept of 'concept' is also relative. Words mean whatever we want them to 'mean', and this is especially true for 'democracy'. For some, it means 'free' elections. For others, it means keeping your own thugs 'in power' and keeping the enemy thugs 'out of power'. No-one can ever give a coherent definition, because it always depends on the context. And since the 'context' is always shifting, the 'concept' of 'democracy' also shifts . . .	The Knee-Jerk Nihilist is smart. He has read a great deal and thought seriously about issues. He has become so disillusioned about the possibility of our arriving at any real understanding of the world, however, that he has mortgaged his powers of analysis for a modish slavery to intellectual scepticism. He also believes that because all our judgements are clouded by our own prejudices, anyone's opinion is as good as anyone else's. The Knee-Jerk Nihilist is often seen wearing black and reading Nietzsche. He is very fond of quotation marks.

Source: King (1998).

STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

SUMMARY

The essay is a particular genre of writing that is at the heart of academic writing today. Criteria of excellence in this genre have been identified, and should be observed. All essay writers want high marks, and there should be nothing, apart from not doing the hard preparatory work and not observing the codes and protocols of good essay writing, that should limit them from achieving these marks.

Good essay writing depends upon striking a balance between fact and opinion, and avoiding imbalance and bias. Solid research can create good foundations for the essay, and synthesis of data obtained in research can help writers obtain original perspectives. Sources and proofs should be credible and authoritative, locatable, up to date, relevant, convincing, in proportion, ethically clean, and matched to the context. Essays are structured in three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. Thesis statements can help clarify the writer's approach, and paragraphing, topic sentences, linking words and headings are effective means of laying out and structuring an argument. It is vital to stay focused – answering the question and not wandering or waffling along the way. Use clear style and make clear statements of argument – modifying the thrust of the argument where appropriate. Students should also remember to use the authorial voice and layout style most acceptable to assessors.

KEY TERMS

assertion *p. 227*
authorial voice *p. 237*
bias *p. 229*
boosting *p. 236*
creative doubt *p. 230*
cumulative method *p. 228*
expositional technique *p. 227*
hedging *p. 236*
point of view *p. 227*
proofs and examples *p. 227*
thesis statement *p. 233*
topic sentence *p. 234*
waffle *p. 235*

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Identify three criteria of failure in critical thinking.
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the structure used in Bacon's essay on revenge?
3. What is 'creative doubt'?
4. Identify four factors associated with worthwhile sources and proofs.
5. What role does the topic sentence play in a paragraph?
6. When is it appropriate to use 'I' in writing?
7. Identify three strategies for keeping focused when writing an essay.
8. What is the purpose of judicious hedging?
9. Identify four errors that an essay writer should avoid.
10. Identify and describe three Evil Geniuses of essay writing.

APPLIED ACTIVITIES

1. Examine some essays you have written, and reconsider the marks given and the comments made by the marker. Assuming the mark and comments are not grossly unfair, can you detect any trends apparent over a number of assignments submitted over time?
2. Consulting one or more books of quotations, find at least ten substantially different quotations on at least one topic: love; money; anger; a discipline or industry you are familiar with; a city you know or, in fact, anything you like. Now use these quotes in

a short essay (400–600 words), creating a structure and context for the quotes using appropriate transitions ('This view is reinforced by the view of . . . ', 'On the other hand, consider the opinion of . . . ').

3. Following the pattern of table 7.4, create writing samples from each of the Six Evil Geniuses for a discipline or area you are familiar with (i.e. create Evil Genius type, motivation, sample essay question, sample essay response and analysis).
4. Following the pattern of table 7.4, invent a Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Evil Genius of essay writing, giving Evil Genius type, motivation, sample essay question (in a field or discipline you are familiar with), sample essay response and analysis.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Your studies are going well. In the past eighteen months you have received seven A grades for your essays. It's not easy surviving, though: you have found it difficult to make ends meet while you are studying. Today you received a phone call from a cousin who lives interstate. She's doing a similar course, but is not doing as well as you. She offers you a healthy sum of money if you will email all your essays to her so that she can copy them and hand them in under her own name. She has promised that she will not show them to anyone else, but in the past she has actually forwarded sensitive emails you have sent to her on a confidential basis to her friends. Later today someone tells you that a new national anti-plagiarism database is going to be set up in the next few months. You are only six months away from graduating. The manager at the place where you work part-time rang today and told you that you no longer have the job.

How will you respond to your cousin's request?

SUGGESTED READING

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