



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

## The ESCape Project

Essential Skills Certificate  
(Workplace, Community & Education)

---

## Learning to Learn

## Contents

Learning to Learn Unit 1 <b>Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning</b>	<b>3</b>
Learning to Learn Unit 2 <b>Organising Yourself for Effective Study</b>	<b>17</b>
Learning to Learn Unit 3 <b>Writing – General Issues</b>	<b>25</b>
Learning to Learn Unit 4 <b>Essay Writing</b>	<b>37</b>

Learning to Learn Unit 1

# Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning





## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning

- How to apply what you have learned in a variety of ways and contexts.
- How to critically evaluate information, including examining different and often contradictory points of view.
- How to evaluate sources in light of all the information you have, to make a balanced or informed judgement or argument.



### Summary

This section introduces you to the **Learning to Learn** module and explores your motivation for wanting to undertake the **Essential**

**Skills Certificate** (*Workplace, Community and Education*).

## Section 2 Goal Setting



**When you have completed this section, you will be able to:**

- See the links between positive thinking and success.
- Develop and keep up a positive attitude in striving to achieve your goals.
- Use a task or goal reward achievement system, where you set yourself definite tasks and targets, and reward your successes (achievements).
- Distinguish between long term, medium term, and short-term goals.
- Apply learning goals in a practical way.

### ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS: LINKS BETWEEN POSITIVE THINKING & SUCCESS



**Get an Attitude! Success is not just about hard work, it is also about your attitude to your studies and your belief in your ability to succeed.**

Of course, there is effort involved, but the effort is not quite so difficult when you believe you can do it. Believing in yourself is the first step in helping you keep up your commitment and effort. Thinking positively will increase your confidence, make studying easier, and increase your chances of success.

Believe in yourself, and your ability to achieve your goals. No one is forcing you to work. You are working to achieve your goals! Develop and sustain a positive attitude.



**Set yourself attainable goals, and list the specific tasks that further these goals.**

If you follow this advice, you will be able to see your progress for yourself, and this will increase your belief in yourself and in your ability to succeed.

Build on what you enjoy.



**Use rewards for working, particularly on subjects you find difficult or which do not appeal to you.**

Reward yourself when you attain your goals. Rewards provide you with regular and powerful feedback that you are being successful. When you reward your successes, they multiply. Success brings more success. Your success and confidence increase = increased performance.

### The "Fight or Flight" Syndrome

Your attitude and approach very often determine how you deal with problems and difficulties. It matters, for example, whether you look at setbacks and obstacles as problems or challenges. Of course there will always be genuine setbacks and problems and indeed, crises in life, but in the general run of events, your ways of coping (coping mechanisms) will either strengthen your resolve to achieve your goals (the "fight" syndrome), or set off your "flight" tendencies.



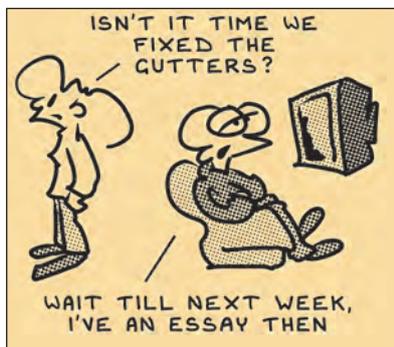
**Avoidance tendencies can be very strongly developed behaviours, and can ruin your attempts to make a go of your studies.**

To combat this type of avoidant behaviour, develop a realistic sense of what really needs to be done (write a paper?) against what you suddenly imagine needs to be done (tidy the attic?) when a deadline is pressing.

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning



If you allow it, there will always be very acceptable reasons why you cannot study. Nip these destructive, time-wasting habits in the bud. This positive decision, where you take ownership of your learning, is important. You make the choice, and if that is to do nothing, then that is your choice. No one is forcing you to act in any way. You are not being pushed by anyone, you are making your own choice, and accepting the consequences of that choice. But it



helps to be able to recognise “avoidance” for what it is, and to be determined not to let it get the better of you.

### Set Yourself Up:

#### The Goal Reward Achievement (GRA) System

The GRA system is based on the principles of classical and operant conditioning, research conducted by Watson, Skinner and other behavioural psychologists. It holds that behaviour that is rewarded tends to be repeated and, over time, becomes rewarding in itself, and so more likely to be repeated.



**When behaviour is followed by a reward, the behaviour (in this case, studying) is reinforced and so more likely to be repeated.**

This principle can be used very successfully to keep you “on track” and your learning focused. The principle is that you reward your successes, for example when you complete an assignment, or a week’s homework, and so on. The reward itself does not always have to be big. It can be as simple as having a mini-break, getting to watch a half hour programme, or going to the cinema. What is important is that it is something you want or enjoy, and that it is linked with the task you just completed. As you succeed on small tasks, you begin to enjoy the feeling of having achieved something. In effect, you train your brain!



#### ACTIVITY

How will you reward yourself for completing study/course tasks? Write down your list of rewards here.

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



**Remember, you have to consciously develop behaviours that match your good intentions, and that enable you to achieve your goals. And you have to actively avoid giving in to, or continuing with, actions and behaviours that block your progress.**

#### A Cautionary Tale or Two

Be aware that if the goals you have set yourself are too difficult (for example, “learn everything now”) you may become disheartened and feel overwhelmed. If they are too easy, you will do very little, and fool yourself that you are working. If your goal is too far into the future you may become demotivated, or you will feel you can leave it all until tomorrow.

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning



**Set yourself goals that are attainable, that encourage you to keep on studying, and that carry rewards upon successful completion.**

Beware however: if you still get to watch your favourite television programme even though you haven't done the work you set yourself, you're only fooling yourself.



**Remember the rule, no work: no reward.**

Practise this system regularly, and you will soon begin to notice the difference it makes—in both your attitude to learning, and your ability to learn and remember. Studying then becomes the norm and not the hated chore, and you begin to enjoy studying itself!

### SETTING GOALS: AN OVERVIEW

#### Your long-term goals

To identify these long-term goals, you need to look forward a year, perhaps even two years into the future, or even longer. You might have an ambition to achieve a degree, for which this course is the starting point. On the other hand, your long-term goal might be to successfully complete this course. The important thing is that it is your specific goal.

#### Medium-term goals

Once you are clear about what you want to achieve, you can then set about taking the steps towards achieving it. Here you need to look partly into the future, perhaps to halfway through the course, or one month ahead, and plan.

Your next step is to develop routines and good study habits that help you to achieve your goals as well as fulfil your everyday commitments at work and at home. This is the basis of good time management—to find ways to support your efforts to keep on top of all your regular commitments, and yet still allow for this new exciting venture into learning.

To this end, you need to be able to get an overview of what is ahead of you, and *devise schedules or routines* that enable you to get there. This will also enable you to monitor your progress and to keep your momentum going.

Remember “success breeds success”, so aim to achieve success step by step.

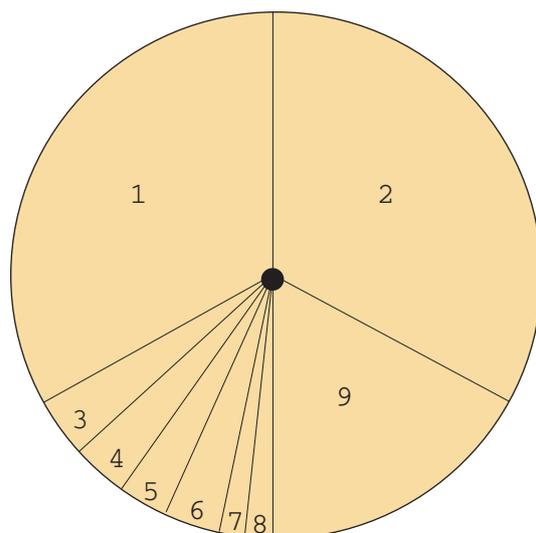


**To enable both long-term and medium-term goals, a timeline or year planner is useful and of great practical value in that you have a visual reminder of deadlines and important dates throughout the course/first month.**

#### Short-term goals

Once you have an overall picture of the year ahead, you can make a day-to-day timetable which keeps you on track, but which is also flexible. See it as a means of using time more efficiently rather than as an imposition; attitude is all-important.

First, you need to look at how you spend your time now. Begin by making a pie chart of how you spend your time at present on a typical week: how many hours spent at each activity. Look at the sample first, and then make your own.



Time chart for 1 week - SAMPLE

1. Sleep. 2. Employment. 3. Socialising. 4. Relaxing (reading, TV etc.). 5. Sport/exercise. 6. Preparing and eating meals. 7. Home chores. 8. Travel. 9. ?

Time chart for 1 ~~week~~ <sup>weekday</sup>

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning

Remember, you will need to make room in the pie for Essential Skills Certificate activities: study, class time, practising at the computer, visits to the learning centre, assignments and so on. How will you find that time?

One way to do this is to firstly make out an inventory or list of everything you feel you have to do on a daily/weekly basis. List all the different jobs /roles you fulfil, and the tasks/time involved in each one.

### Your “everything” inventory (see sample below)

Now take that list and study it carefully. Prioritise the items on the list, discard those you can, and make space (mental and physical) for all the important and urgent activities, including studying, that you really have to do throughout each day/week.

### Make Your New List: Prioritised

When you have worked out what you really have to do, the next stage is to fit everything into a workable daily/weekly routine or schedule that over time and with practice, becomes habit. By developing good study or organisational habits you will find that you use time more efficiently, and achieve much more in less time.

Now do out a pie chart or a yearly planner for your typical week while you are taking the Essential Skills Certificate Programme. Fill in on it the time you intend to spend each week on the Essential Skills Certificate Programme related activities: study, workshops, assignments, practice etc.



### Summary

This section outlined the importance of having a positive attitude towards your studies. It described how to set

attainable goals for yourself and to list specific tasks that further the achievement of your stated goals. You learned about the GRA system and the importance of having a timeline or year planner to help achieve your deadlines.

### Your “everything” inventory

Jobs/roles	Tasks Involved	Day/time	Delete or Not?

### Make Your New List: Prioritised

Jobs/roles	Tasks Involved	Day/time	Delete or Not?

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning

### Section 3 Using Your Time Well



**Create sensible day, week and year planner timetables to help you to schedule your study, and still meet your other work and social commitments**

#### Guidelines for Organising Your Time Efficiently

When organising your time, perhaps some of the following tips will help you.

Remember, there are 7 days (168 hours) in a week. Essentials like sleep, work, exercise, free time, quality time with others, family and domestic commitments, travel, and household chores all have to be allocated times slots in your calendar. ~~You cannot leave the ordinary world and devote yourself entirely to studying, however appealing this prospect might seem when yet more dust settles.~~

There are times when you should perhaps put studying on hold, for the reason that it might be counter-productive to try and do all things at all times. For example, do not study if you are tired; instead peel the spuds or polish the car.



**Work with your time constraints rather than against them.**

Use whatever time is available; for example, be happy to block in hour/half-hour study slots on your timetable, rather than feeling that you always have to set aside at least two – three hours at a time to get any study done. The approach suggested here will help you to develop the habit of regular, frequent study sessions, and is probably more realistic and more time-effective than waiting forever for that elusive “three hours/whole day” (which never happens).

Practise “clumping” like with like. Make all your phone calls together fast/pay all bills in the one journey/do the shopping/ ironing /cooking at particular times. (One Distance Learning student only cooked twice weekly: 3 meals each time, which he froze, and used in rotation. In time his family grew to like the regularity of at least having a dinner on the table, and forgot to quibble about the limited menu.)

Activities	% approx (Sample)	Hours per week (Sample)	Your %	Your hours
Sleep	30%	50		
Employment	24%	40		
Home chores	6%	10		
Socialising	3%	5		
Sport/exercise	3%	5		
Travel	3%	5		
Meals	9%	15		
Course w/shops	6%	10		
Study/assignments etc	16%	28		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>168</b>		

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning

Alternatively, persuade your offspring / partner/ loved ones to become independent, caring people who take their turn with chores. Anyone, male or female, can change a plug, wash clothes, cook a meal, run kids to class, or do the weekly shopping. It does not have to be you! In a way, your decision to study involves a real adjustment for everyone in the house, not just you. Those you live with will need to be prepared to adjust to the new routines in your life, and the new demands on your time. You may be able to achieve this state of affairs by negotiation upfront. But if you have been in the habit of doing everything for everybody, you may find that the people around you are slow to adjust, and you need to “train them in” a little. Be heartless about it. You really need that time.

For example: Wash clothes on wash day, not on demand. Better still, don't wash them at all if you can avoid it. One adult learner (who was rather hopeless at washing...!!!!???), ruined her teenagers' clothes once too often, and was banned absolutely from ever washing their clothes.

(With practice, this will also work with badly ironed clothes too).



**Write into your timetable exactly what you plan to do or are committed to doing at different times, whether this is dropping and collecting offspring, working outside the home, or studying.**

This may seem to be “dead” time, but one Distance Learning student very successfully managed her studying “in between runs” as she put it. To help her very busy domestic schedule of ferrying the children here, there and everywhere after school, she brought her notebook, textbook and set of notes relevant to a specific topic /essay question and worked on a specific task while she waited. This very focused way of studying helped her to cope with a demanding schedule, kept her anxiety at a reasonable level, and helped her to keep up with her workload. (It is also worth noting that she passed her examinations with flying colours.)



Another student, whose job involved a lot of travelling, carried tapes of what he needed to learn, and played them as he drove along. This works great for learning a language. There are also taped versions of books available, or you can make your own.



**Visualise yourself succeeding.**

Imagine yourself wearing a mortar board and gown, whatever. All top athletes do this type of visualisation to sustain their motivation. Borrow their ideas. Believe in them.



**Distinguish between urgent and important tasks.**

If you only deal with urgent tasks, your life will be one lurch from crisis to crisis. Refuse to live your life in “crisis management” mode. This is reactive living, and leaves you with little sense of control. Pre-empt crises. Avoid them. Avert them. Stock up on food/ treats/ etc. Then, when times really get bad, you will be able to allocate time for a real crisis. Remember, death and accidents happen: your study time you can control.

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning



**Do not expect to remember everything.**

### Manage your time better.

- Do not waste time. Use it.
- Once you have decided what you will do, do it.
- Finish what you start. Time will expand and contract according to your needs.
- Time yourself. Get the task done within your set limits.
- Break tasks into smaller, manageable parts or segments, if you are struggling.
- Tidy up at the end of every study session. Do not leave your physical workspace in a “state of chaos”.
- Make a summary of what you have achieved, where you are now, and outline where you next need to go. Move on.

### LOOK TO TODAY: TIMETABLE

Making a weekly/ daily timetable will help you organise your day-to-day tasks, which keeps you positive and focused on your studying, and which helps you achieve your targets.

Use the sample timetable template provided in this section to make a practical weekly timetable. Pin one copy on the wall of your study space and sellotape one inside the front cover of your folders/notebooks. A good timetable allows you to organise your time better, so you fit in more: more quality study time, more quality free time. To make a realistic but workable timetable, use the following tips:

#### 1. Keep the layout simple.

Make several blank copies so you can alter it weekly or as you need to. Your first effort might be over-ambitious, but you learn from your attempts what actually works. So every subsequent timetable should be more to the point, and help you achieve more.

#### 2. Keep it realistic but flexible.

There will be times when you will not be able to study as you planned. Be able to fit in some extra study sessions if you have to.

#### 3. Divide your time into: “Have to” and “want to”.

You “have to” do certain things; when they’re done, you are free to do the things you “want to.” Balance is the key.

#### 4. Assess how you use your time.

There are 7 days or 168 hours in a week. Average out the time you spend doing different things. Be ruthlessly honest with yourself. You might find you waste a lot of time (see sample diagram).

#### 5. Assess how much time you need for sleep & rest.

You do need to take care of your mind, body and emotions. Different people have different sleep requirements, for example. Aim for 7 – 10 hours sleep every night. Aim to be neither a sleeping beauty nor a raving insomniac.

#### 6. Exercise regularly: this is not a luxury.

Make sure you have adequate exercise without making it your sole purpose in life. The body and mind are inter-connected. Exercise clears the “academic fog”, keeps you fit, helps you relax, and increases your ability to focus and concentrate. Be warned, when times get tough, students often cut out their exercise time. This is a mistake. Your health may begin to suffer, and with it your motivation.

#### 7. Food: try to eat a balanced diet.

Don’t try to save time by reaching for the “convenience food”. A diet of pizzas, burgers, crisps, coke and chips will increase your chances of getting bilious and developing a health problem. Try to vary your diet: good food will feed the brain; junk food will trash it!

#### 8. Keep track.

Work out how many hours you need to spend on your study on a daily or weekly basis. Tick off work as you complete it. Stay ahead of your deadlines. This will give you a real sense of doing well.

Start at 7.00 or 8.00a.m. and finish at 11.00 p.m. (don’t make the mistake of staying up all hours, and depriving your brain of much needed rest).

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning



**Monitor and evaluate your progress at regular intervals (this is one of your medium-term goals).**

It is vitally important that you reflect upon, and learn from, your learning experience. For example, if your weekly timetable was of no value whatsoever, examine the reasons why this was so. Were you perhaps over-ambitious? Did you consider all your commitments? Have you just got really lousy organisational habits? Maybe you need to look at your goals again, and remember the saying: *If you continue doing as you always did, you will continue getting what you always got.*

Put your timetable in a prominent position, where it will at least be a visual reminder of what you planned to do to further your goals rather than a guilty reminder of what you “ought” to be doing. The difference in perspective may seem slight, but in fact is crucial. When you plan something, you consciously

further your aims. “Ought to” is an external imposition, and can have a negative impact, so rid your vocabulary store of it. Remember you choose to study to further your aims, so be positive about your studies.

### LOOK TO YOUR FUTURE: THE YEAR PLANNER

As well as your weekly planner, you need an overview of everything you have to do over the course of the whole year. Write down the “have to do’s” which are not in the weekly routine, but come up every now and again: doctor’s appointments, teacher-parent meetings, dentists, repairman, promises to spirit friends/offspring/ to Cinderella’s ball, and all such trivia that make up life’s adventure. In addition, fill in all the study-related details that you have to complete for the Programme.

Sample Daily/Weekly Timetable							
	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
7.00							
8.00							
9.00							
10.00							
11.00							
12.00							
13.00							
14.00							
15.00							
16.00							
17.00							
18.00							
19.00							
20.00							
21.00							
22.00							

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning



Use a year planner, like the example given on the previous page, to give you an overview of the year ahead. It should clearly show all deadlines.

This will give you focus and determination at different points along the way.

### Sample Year Planner Layout to make your own Year Planner

(You will need to add more weeks to your version)

This is a very direct and simple way of giving you a visual overview of what lies ahead of you for the year. Whilst your long-term aim may be to complete this course/obtain a certificate/diploma/degree, just for now, you need only be concerned with how you will get through this first stage/year. Use the year planner to chart your “journey,” allowing for the usual (and the unusual) “pit stops.” For example, be realistic about allocating “time out” for Christmas and other events. You are going to take that time anyway, so there is no point in pretending otherwise. Don’t try to fool yourself.

As soon as you know your course requirements, write them in. Include all possible deadlines: math problems to hand in, worksheets to complete, lab sessions to attend, essays, assignments, presentations, examinations and so forth. Organise your time round these deadlines. (For example, if you have a math assignment/project/essay due in by a certain date, first insert the “in-by” date, and then work backwards, allowing for each stage of the assignment.)

Block out times when you know you will not be able to study. These include important dates, such as birthdays, celebrations, weddings, in addition to Christmas, as well the more mundane aspects of life, such as work, dental appointments and other such interruptions to the usual routine.

Be clear about giving yourself time off, and do not feel guilt-ridden.

Sample Year Planner Layout to make your own Year Planner							
Week 1	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Date							
Notes							
Week 2							
Date							
Notes							
Week 3							
Date							
Notes							
Week 4							
Date							
Notes							
Week 5							
Date							
Notes							

## Motivation, Goal Setting and Time Planning

The time is rightfully yours. You need time off to relax and recoup your energies. Allow yourself this free time, but perhaps use it as a reward for work well done and goals achieved. This will double your fun and enjoyment.



**Block in definite times when you will study on this year planner. This is important, if only to forewarn your loved ones that you are not available at certain times. Mean it!**

If you have children of school-going age, block in school breaks: mid-terms, pre and post Christmas, Easter, Bank Holidays, In-service days, and so on. You will be surprised at how little you actually get done during these school breaks. Enjoy special days and celebrations, but again, arrange to put in extra study sessions ahead of time (not afterwards— life happens) and so feel extra good about taking time out to celebrate these important dates and events. The year planner will help you to pace yourself and spur you on to work hard in the first term. It will also show your progress. This will give you a sense of achievement and keep your determination and motivation high.



**Write up your long-term goal. Put it where you see it often, and especially in your study area.**



### Summary

This section set out to help you achieve your study goals by making the very best use of your available time by creating a day, week and year planner. It gave tips on managing your time better. Importantly it stressed how vital it was to regularly monitor your progress.



Learning to Learn Unit 2

# Organising Yourself for Effective Study



## Organising Yourself for Effective Study

### UNIT 2 HAS FOUR SECTIONS:

#### Section 1

Primal Spot: Find Your Study Space

#### Section 2

Resources: Help Yourself

#### Section 3

Get a Good Start: Organise Your Study Time

#### Section 4

Make it Work: Study Strategies



**When you have successfully completed this unit, you will be able to:**

- Set up a dedicated study/learning space for yourself.
- Find ways to access information and resources that improve your ability to learn and achieve your goals.
- Use strategies and "warm-up" techniques which help you avoid distractions and ease your way into your study sessions.
- Put in place practical methods of making a study session workable.

## Section 1 Primal Spot: Finding Your Study Space



**Set up a special dedicated study/learning space for yourself.**

Having a special space for study helps you to concentrate and also helps you to develop and maintain good study habits. To help you get into the habit of studying, it is vital to work out routines and strategies that make studying the norm. One of the most important first steps is to set up a regular place to study, where you have everything "to hand" so that settling down to study is easier. No-one else should touch it, move your stuff or interfere.

### Study room/ Workspace

Find a workspace/room that you can always associate with study and coursework. Do it right now. Keep the room airy but warm, and have good light to avoid eyestrain. Avoid using a family space (like the kitchen table) where you have to set up and clear away when others need it, as this will affect your ability and motivation to study.

### Shelves & Storage

Have shelves to keep your books in order and clearly visible, where you can easily get them if needed.

### Clutter-free Desk

Keep your desk/workspace free of clutter, or you will spend your time tidying up and searching for things instead of actually studying.

### Year Planner

Put your year planner up on the wall in front of you so that you can see it at all times. It is a reminder of what you have done, and what still has to be done.

### Timetable

Keep your weekly timetable on the wall of your study space also, as well as placing another one in your study notebook or diary to keep you on track and focused. Put a note up on your door during your study times.

## Section 2 Resources: Help Yourself



**Find information and resources that improve your ability to learn and achieve your goals.**

You should take stock of all the resources you have available to help you achieve your goals, and then use them carefully for full effect. Here are some of the more obvious, and maybe not so obvious:

**1. Your brain:** This is the best resource you have. Develop it: train it well, work it well, treat it well (rest and good food) and you will soon have a brain that is more efficient than you imagined. The more you use it and exercise it, the more powerful it will get, and the better it will work.

## Organising Yourself for Effective Study

**2. Course tutors:** The tutors do not get paid to see that you fail. Their job is to help you learn. Make use of their knowledge and experience to improve your learning.

**3. Course Notes/Modules:** These are specially prepared for you by course tutors to aid your learning.

**4. Books /Internet/ CD-ROMs/audiotapes/newspapers:** These are all sources of information. Use them to increase your knowledge and understanding.

**5. Course Co-ordinator/your Learning Centre Staff:** These all offer special support for learners on this Course. Use them.

**6. Course or syllabus outline:** Make sure you have one of these. Seeing the course in totality gives you a picture of your final destination. You can then plan your route to get there.

**7. Group learning:** This is a very useful and effective way of learning, especially useful for distance learners. Make contact with other people doing the course, and form a study group. For example, if each member takes an aspect of the learning task, researches it, makes detailed notes of all the important points, and then presents (“teaches”) it to the rest of the group. Groups should be small, and everyone committed and willing to work.

**8. Sample assignments:** These are very useful. They give you an idea of the level of quality to aim for in your own work.

**9. Past examination papers:** If applicable to, and available on your course, these are crucial. They highlight the kinds of topics and questions that are usually asked in exam questions. The past papers will be very similar to the types of questions you will be set in the exam proper. Be careful if the syllabus changes however, so use them in conjunction with tutor hints and advice, but don’t take too many chances or learn too little—you can get caught out like this!

**10. Marking schemes or marking criteria:** It is useful to have an outline of the methods and strategies (criteria) used when your work is being assessed. This way, you know what is expected of you. There are no hidden obstacles or hoops to jump through, and this takes a lot of the anxiety and worry away.

## Section 3 Get a Start: Organise your Study Time



Learn to use strategies and “warm-up” techniques which help you avoid distractions and ease your way into your study sessions.

**Noise & other distractions:** You may feel background music helps you focus, and maybe it does. But remember the power of association: if you build up the habit of listening to music or other background noise to concentrate, come exam time you might not do as well without this “prompt”. So, beware!

**Phone a friend:** Phone calls can be a real time-waster! If you are always available to take calls, send and receive text messages during your study sessions, you will take longer to finish. Make an agreement with family/friends that texts/phone calls are for during breaks or at least not during certain times. Get your partner or other family member to “field” calls during the time you are studying.

**Stick to your study schedule:** Make yourself start a study session when you’re supposed to, even if you don’t want to, or don’t feel like it. The routine study slot will eventually become a habit and you will see the positive results of getting work done rather than having great intentions and little else.

**Warm up:** Warm up as you would for any exercise. Start with reading over some old learning, then move into the new learning. Get an overview of what you are trying to learn. It will put the new learning in context and make it easier to understand. Question while you are learning. (What does this mean? What are the main points?) This active questioning helps you to remember and, added to good notes, will make your learning more effective.

**Chunking:** Learn in small chunks. Start with one section of the module and complete it before moving on to the next section. This keeps the brain more active. If you are learning formulae/foreign verbs, learn them bit by bit, and check your knowledge of them often and regularly. This is a better way of learning than trying to remember huge chunks in one go.

## Organising Yourself for Effective Study

**Memory aids:** Use lists to help you to remember. For example:  
5 causes for a war.  
20 quality rules.

Use “**made up words**” composed from the first letter in key words to help you remember:  
MUD = memorise/understand/do

Use **diagrams** to help you remember. Create your own flow charts to help you recall how a process works.

**Tell someone.** Telling someone else helps you to remember, and to pinpoint the main points in what you read. Of course it is sometimes hard to find someone who is prepared to listen. This is one of the reasons that study groups are so useful – you can depend on other group members to listen if you are all learning the same thing.



**ACTIVITY 1.** (Place this activity in your portfolio for assessment) Identify up to 5 obstacles that you believe will get in the way of effective study in your circumstances?

No.	Obstacle
One	
Two	
Three	
Four	
Five	

Now try to set out up to 3 key practical steps you will need to take to eliminate or significantly reduce the negative impact on your learning of those obstacles you identified above?

No.	Obstacle	Practical Steps
One		A.
		B.
		C.
Two		A.
		B.
		C.
Three		A.
		B.
		C.
Four		A.
		B.
		C.
Five		A.
		B.
		C.

## Section 4 Get a Start: Organise your Study Time



**Put in place practical strategies to make your study sessions workable.**

Divide your study periods into manageable blocks or units (1 unit = half hour). Start small, especially if you have difficulty concentrating. You can always build up the time you spend studying once you have established the habit, and as your stamina increases.

Study for 25 – 30 minutes, then take a break, even for a few minutes, and then continue. This gives the brain a chance to rest and to make sense of or consolidate the learning.

Write in exactly which topic/ subject you intend to cover in each time slot, rather than just writing in a vague intention to “study”. After a workshop, go over your notes as soon as possible, so that you will remember everything important that the session tutor said. Remember the 80/20 rule: you can lose up to 80% of your learning if you don’t review it within 24 hours.

There is really no “best time” to study; it depends entirely on the individual. You might be a morning person, or you might come alive later on at night. Work round what you like, and what is practical. Get up an hour earlier in the morning if it works best for you.

If you opt for evening study (or have to study in the evening because it is the only time available) the best approach is to study early in the evening rather than late, because the brain gets sluggish and tired as the night progresses. Tiredness makes learning more difficult, and you retain less information for your time and energy — you are not getting “value for money”.

How many hours of study depends on your background and current level knowledge and understanding. Never compare yourself to others in this regard. Find what is right for you.

## Organising Yourself for Effective Study

**Other commitments:** Work your timetable round your other commitments, but make sure you give yourself enough study time for your course, home, work, loved ones, commitments and leisure pursuits. As you settle into your new routine, your ability to fit all commitments in becomes much more developed. *Include some revision slots during the week.* This will keep retention high and give you a real sense of achievement, and you'll be doing revision and exam preparation all year.



**Keep monitoring your progress, and look to improving your lifestyle rather than pushing yourself to the limits and inviting stress on yourself.**

**Learning personalities and learning styles:** It is useful to examine your learning preferences, and to see how you can change your learning methods and styles to improve your learning capabilities. The traditional and somewhat narrow view of intelligence, considered academic ability, or intelligence quotient (IQ) as the main factor in determining who was “bright” or intelligent. More recently, this view has quite rightly been challenged and it is now more commonly accepted that intelligence is in fact multi-faceted, and not a simply a matter of academic ability. There are different forms of intelligence e.g., physical, as in a top-class football player, or an athlete. Just as top-class athletes or footballers work to develop their abilities and skills, so you too can work your develop your learning capacity.

**It is important to find out where your strengths and your weaknesses lie.** You find your strengths, and then look at ways of building on them. As regards your weaknesses, aim to minimise them, not ignore them. Depending on your learning style, you may find some methods of learning more difficult or indeed off-putting at first.

One approach is that you change or adapt the material you are trying to learn to a style or method that works for you, so that you find it easier to understand it. Although you might find it time consuming at first, it will help you in the long run. You will probably find that as your understanding grows, you will get better at understanding material, whatever way it is presented.

**Watch too, how others learn,** and as importantly, how they succeed, and what methods they use. Can you train yourself in any of the techniques that make them successful? Efficient learners use a variety of methods at different times to achieve their goals. Use every technique that makes your learning easier for you to understand and remember. Here are some:

**Use learning techniques that involve a multi-sensory approach** to help make the information easier to understand and remember. Where possible, use a mixture of learning styles and methods that include oral (speech), aural (listening), visual (seeing), and kinesthetic (doing), techniques to help you take in, understand, and remember information. This will make your learning stand out and will improve your ability to take in information.

**Try different ways of learning for different subjects.** Not all subjects can be or should be studied the same way. Skim or speed read to get the general ideas first; you will find it easier to learn and remember the facts that support these ideas. When you can, use diagrams, charts, mind maps, time-lines: anything that helps you understand and retain information more easily.

**Mix n’ match subjects you don’t like or can’t get down to studying.** Mix those you like / dislike / are neutral about with each other. Good practice is to start with a subject you like, follow with a neutral or a subject you dislike, and then one you like. You can start this in small doses and increase the time you spend on a subject you dislike— it will get easier.

**When writing your essay or project,** break it down into stages to make it more manageable. This way, you can concentrate on one aspect rather than be overwhelmed by the whole task.

**When you are learning formulae,** theorems or indeed any information, try applying it rather than just trying to memorise it. So work out the solutions, don’t just read over them. Doing something makes it easier to remember and to retain it.

## Organising Yourself for Effective Study

With subjects like Mathematics, this involves working out examples or working through problems. This is excellent practice, because it involves you applying the theory to an actual situation. Even if you don't fully understand the problem, look up an example, check with a friend, or ask your tutor for help.

**History and similar topics/ subjects.** When presented with facts, dates, events and incidents in History, you might use a time line across the middle of the page, and fit all the information on either side of this line, to show connections, influences, causes and consequences. This visual map of events and dates can make more sense than blocks of writing.

**Studying a play or novel.** Watching a performance is an excellent way of getting to grips with the plot, themes and events as they unfold (allow for director bias). A follow-up activity (or an alternative) could be to listen to the play (or important parts) at the same time as you follow the text when you are studying the play, especially when the language is unfamiliar, as in a Shakespeare play.

**Language learning.** Listening to tapes/ CDs is a very effective way of learning any language if you cannot use it in everyday speech. You listen, take in, grow used to, and copy, the sounds, vocabulary, intonations and speech patterns of the language.

**Practise active learning.** You might feel that although you seem to spend hours listening or reading, yet you still remember little if anything of what you've heard or read. Become actively involved in your learning, rather than waiting for it to somehow "happen." The key is to read/listen carefully and actively while trying to follow a line of reasoning and/ or explanations. You will learn more about active listening in later modules.

**Learning with numbers.** Numerical data and information can be presented in different ways: graphs, pie charts, bar charts, tables of numbers and so on. It is in your interest to learn how numbers are being used, and what they are used to represent. When you read *tables*, always scan down columns and across rows initially. Look for patterns of steady rising

or falling and for peaks and troughs. Where you see a blip, examine the information more closely to see what might have caused it. Do not draw hasty conclusions when reading tables: cautious exploration of possible causes is the order.

**Summarise.** Write briefly in your own words in 2 – 3 sentences what you have learned at the end of every study session. If the chapter or section is very difficult, summarise more often. This also is an excellent technique for helping memory and for later retrieval of information, especially when preparing for examinations.

**Go over what you have learned often and regularly.**

This way, you will remember much more, and you won't have to revise as much when tests are due. Review within 24 hours, and thereafter regularly, to ensure learning is transferred into your long-term memory (LTM). This will make it easier to retrieve at examination times.

**Study notebook or diary.** Keep a written diary of events and deadlines. This keeps you organised and you know what you have to do. Use it to monitor and check on your progress.

**Monitor & evaluate your progress.** This is a very important part of any learning. At intervals, you have to take stock and see what you are doing right, and perhaps more importantly, what you could do better. Look at the ways you learn. Are you using every available resource for your different subjects? Can you improve on your learning techniques? Can you adapt effective techniques for subjects or areas you have difficulties in? With reflection and evaluation, you can keep your learning at high speed without too much effort.

**Practise stress management techniques.** Whereas a certain level of stress can improve performance, and generate a buzz round your studying, too much stress is unhealthy, and can lead to anxiety, insomnia, eating problems, illness and so on. You have a duty to yourself— and only one life. Value it.

**Reward yourself.** Have time off as a reward for work well done, not for NO work done!



Learning to Learn Unit 3

# Writing – General Issues



**UNIT 3 HAS FIVE SECTIONS:****Section 1**

Time Management

**Section 2**

Sources of Information: Using the Internet

**Section 3**

Plagiarism

**Section 4**

How To Do In-text Citation

**Section 5**

How to Prepare a List of References

## Section 1

### Time Management for Your Writing Assignments

Let's begin on a practical level. Learners often receive a number of assignments at once and prioritise according to which they are most or least confident about. This approach can often mean that some assignments can get "lost in the rush". It is therefore very important that you schedule a completion timetable for every assignment. Timetabling your work eliminates the "mañana" approach— putting off until tomorrow what you can do today— and sets definite goals.



**When you have successfully completed this unit, you will be able to:**

- Apply time management guidelines to your written assignments

**Basic Time Management Guidelines: a Reminder**

Earlier, you learned about the importance of time management. Here is a simple reminder of a few basic guidelines.

- Mark in your diary or on your wall-planner when you received the assignment and when it is due.

**Take careful note of the deadline.**

- Decide on how much time per day you can reasonably devote to it, given your other commitments.
- Timetable in by the hour each step of the essay/ report writing process, that is, researching, writing and redrafting (all of which will be dealt with throughout this module).
- Translate the word count into number of pages and paragraphs.
- Put the assignment out of your mind during the days you are not free to work on it.

**Stick to your timetable.**

Firstly, you should schedule when you are going to work on your assignment. If you are given four weeks to do an assignment, it doesn't mean you can forget about it for two weeks— time management is a key element of a clear approach.

**Sample Timetable**

Essay Topic Received 21 Feb.	2000 words = 6.5 – 7 pages = 14 – 16 paras.	
Wk 1	Mon; Wed; Thurs; Sun	2 hrs. per day— research and note-taking.
Wk 2	Mon; Thurs; Sun	2 hrs. per day— planning and writing.
Wk 3	Mon; Thurs; Fri	Writing and redrafting.
Wk 4	Mon; Thurs	Redrafting and final check
Essay due 21 March	12 days	24 hours before essay is due to be submitted

## Writing – General Issues

### Section 2 Sources of Information for Written Assignments

This section will introduce you to the main sources of information for written work. Being clear at an early stage about where you are going to get your information from can help you to stick to your deadline, a very important basic requirement.



**When you have completed this section, you will be able to:**

- Decide on appropriate sources of information for your written assignment.
- Identify reliable sites on the Internet.

The range of sources used by third-level learners are as follows:

- Equal Ireland modules
- Lecture/tutorial notes/course handouts/portfolio activities/workshop activities/notes from group discussions
- Reference books
- Primary texts
- Secondary (critical) texts
- Journals
- Internet
- CD Rom
- Archives
- Newspapers and magazines
- Personal interviews

**All information used for academic purposes must be verifiable.**

What this means is that it can be traced back to its source. This is why “anecdotal” information (hearsay, in other words) is not used for academic purposes.

**In order to show that your information is verifiable, you must keep a Reference List or List of Works Cited.**

**How to do this is dealt with in a later unit of this module.**

- For undergraduate essays, your **Equal Ireland modules/ lecture notes/tutorial notes/course handouts** are your main source of information.

- Lecturers/tutors will also provide you with a **list of recommended reading**, containing primary and secondary sources, and occasionally journal articles, which will usually provide you with all the sources you will need.
- **Reference books** provide general information. Encyclopedias, atlases and dictionaries are all reference books. There are often reference books giving definitions, descriptions of key figures and so forth associated with particular subjects, such as the Dictionary of Western Philosophy.
- **Primary texts** are creative works and are usually core reading on recommended readings lists, depending on your subject. A creative work is an original idea or work of fiction, such as Albert Einstein's *Theory of Relativity*, JD Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* or Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*.
- **Secondary or critical works** are books that examine a particular field, idea, book or historical figure.
- **Journals** are specialised magazines devoted to a particular subject. Contributors write articles on new findings or critical examinations of subjects. A well-known journal is the medical journal, *The Lancet*.
- **CD Roms** provide indexes for a variety of disciplines, from Humanities subjects to Engineering. You can conduct an author or subject search and find results for related articles, whether in thesis, journal, article or book form.
- **Archives** contain material relating to a person, organisation or historical period. Archives usually contain what is known as “ephemeral” material—that is, letters, diaries and contemporary records.
- **Newspapers** can be very useful for up-to-date research. Information should be carefully scrutinised to ensure that it is verifiable.
- **Personal interviews** with key figures in an area of research can be very useful. However, you must ensure that the information is verifiable by carefully recording details of the interview and seeking the interviewee's approval.

#### Using the Internet

Using the Internet for research purposes can be a valuable pursuit or a waste of time. The Internet is extremely useful in that it can be used to instantly publish findings, conference papers, court judgements and so on. This capability, however, also means that the rules of conventional publishing do not apply.

For this reason, there is a lot of unverifiable information available on the Internet.

The easiest way to avoid using unverifiable information is by referring only to sites recommended in your module, by your tutor or other reliable sources. However, if you find yourself researching on the Internet and are unsure of the verifiability of the site you are using, there are some basic guidelines:

Check the url, or origin address – is it from a reliable organisation?

The origin of a site can often tell you a lot about it:

- .gov sites are from a government agency.
- .org sites are usually from a non-profit organisation or charity, although some are registered to private individuals.
- .edu sites originate in educational institutions.
- .com sites are used by commercial ventures.
- Avoid anonymous sites.
- Sites listing an editor or editors with credentials are generally useful. Ensure that you record all the necessary details required for your citations and references (this will be explained in a later unit).

Remember, any information from a chat room falls into the category of anecdotal and is therefore unverifiable. However, for technical subjects, specialised chatrooms for users are an invaluable resource, especially for IT-related topics.



#### SUMMARY

This section listed a range of sources for your written work and reminded you of the pitfalls of using the Internet, where a lot of the sites have no proper statement regarding the source of the information.

#### SUGGESTED READING

Crème, Phyllis and Mary R. Lea. 2001. *Writing at University: A Guide for Students*. Buckingham: Open University Press. Rose, Jean. 2001. *The Mature Student's Guide to Writing*. Houndsmill, Hampshire: Palgrave.

## Section 3 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is claiming as your own work something developed or written by someone else.

It is taking the credit for someone else's ideas, and making out that you thought of these ideas yourself. This is a form of intellectual theft. In third level colleges, plagiarism is a serious offence. It merits a severe penalty. In some colleges, the student loses the entire marks for that assignment. In other colleges, the student is brought before the disciplinary committee. You need to be aware of how serious an offence plagiarism is, and take care to avoid it in your assignments.



**When you have successfully completed this section, you will be able to:**

- Explain what plagiarism is.
- Take the necessary steps to avoid plagiarism by citing sources for any materials you include in your assignments.

#### Examples of Plagiarising the Work of Other Students

- Getting someone else to write your essay, report or assignment.
- Taking an assignment written by someone else, putting your own name to it, and handing it in as your own work.
- Copying bits and pieces out of the work of another student and including them in your own essay or report.

#### Examples of Plagiarism from Published Sources

Taking ideas, theories, direct quotations, diagrams, statistics, tables, photographs, graphs or graphics of any kind from a published source or the Internet, and including them in your assignment without stating a source.

- Direct quotation: Using the exact words of another person without giving them credit for it.
- Paraphrasing: Putting someone else's ideas into your own words without giving them credit by citing the source for the ideas.

## Writing – General Issues

- Using statistics, tables or a graphic (diagram, figure, picture and so on) without citing a source.
- Summarising material from a source without acknowledging where the ideas came from.

### Fair Use

Remember, you cannot base your assignments and reports on chunks of material “borrowed” from your reading materials. Instead, you must form your own opinions about the essay or report topic, and use your reading materials fairly to support your own ideas, making sure to cite the sources of everything you use.

### Common Knowledge

A lot of information is considered “common knowledge”, so you do not have to quote a source for it. For example, Galileo discovered that the earth goes round the sun. Up until his discovery, everyone thought that the sun circled the earth. Even though this new idea was thought up by Galileo, we do not need to cite him as the source— this information (fact) has become common knowledge, something that “everyone knows”. As a rule of thumb, any fact that you would be able to find in five different publications, where those authors do not cite a source for it, then you do not need to cite a source for it either.

Such facts are “common knowledge”.

You must, however, cite a source for any new facts, say for example recent information about the impact of global warming on the climate of Ireland. It is only facts that have become common knowledge that you can use without citing a source



**You must always cite a source for opinions – someone’s personal point of view about a fact.**

For example, if you are doing an essay on a social issue, like equality in the workplace, you will probably draw facts from a range of published works, use ideas drawn from your own experiences, and perhaps carry out a small survey based on a questionnaire. You will need to cite sources for all the opinions and facts taken from your reading materials, and explain clearly what information comes from your survey.

The next section explains how to cite your sources correctly, using intext citation. You must follow the instructions exactly, looking carefully at the examples.



### SUMMARY

In this section you learned what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.



**ACTIVITY 2.** *(Place this activity in your portfolio for assessment)*

1. Explain in your own words what plagiarism is.

---

---

---

---

---

2. List three ways that people can plagiarise from other students.

---

---

---

---

---

3. What is a direct quotation?

---

---

---

---

---

4. What is paraphrase?

---

---

---

---

---

5. What is “fair use”?

---



---



---



---



---

6. Give an example of something that is “common knowledge”

---



---



---



---



---

Basically there are two key actions to referencing your work:

**1. In-text citation.** These are references which are placed within the main text of your assignment *and*  
**2. Preparing a Reference List or Bibliography** which is located following the conclusion of your essay or assignment.

In this Section you will learn how to approach these two ‘referencing’ actions. At the end of the section we include a sample paper, which has both in-text citations and a reference list. You might find this sample useful when you are putting together your assignments.



**When you have successfully completed this section, you will be able to use correct citation and referencing methods.**

## Section 4 Referencing

Remember, everything you write for an assignment at Third Level has to be verifiable. Therefore you need to acknowledge any source material you use e.g. quotations or extracts from books, journals, newspapers, websites etc and you do this by referencing the author of the material.



**A reference is an acknowledgement of quotations or extracts from books, journals, articles, websites or other material or sources you include in your written assignment.**

The purpose of referencing is to enable any readers of your work to easily locate and consult the source material you used i.e. the book, journal or website to which you refer to in your essay or assignment. Therefore, when referencing it is important that sufficient detail regarding the author of the work is included.

### The Harvard Style

There are various ways of setting out references. Each academic discipline has its own style. You do not have to know all of these, just be aware that they exist and look them up if and when you need to use them. In this section, you will learn how to use the ‘Harvard Style’, which is really a generic term for many referencing styles. You are strongly urged never to mix styles as this will only confuse the reader and maybe, more importantly, could cost you marks in an essay or assignment.

Please note that you do not have to learn how to reference ‘off by heart’. Whenever you are writing an assignment, just refer to the guidelines set out here, or any additional guidelines given to you by your tutor co-ordinator, and you’ll be fine. Don’t be overly concerned if you do not get it right the first time. Just begin to practice these principles and you will be amazed at how you will find it easier as you go along.

## Writing – General Issues



**The most important issue to remember in terms of referencing is that all of your references are consistent (use only one style) and clear.**

### How do I cite sources (in-text citations) in my essay?

You must cite all of the sources you use (books, articles, websites etc) **within the text of your essay.**

Examples 1:

Studies carried out by **Arson (2006)** identified several groups within the category 'vulnerable and low-skilled'.

Example 2

According to **Loiter**, 'company expenditure on training in Ireland comprises around 2.4% of payroll costs per annum'. **(2005, p. 287)**

### How do I prepare a Reference List or Bibliography?

A **reference list** is a list of all of the sources cited within the text of your essay. In addition to your reference list, the **bibliography** includes **all** background reading or material that has assisted you in the writing of your work, from books and articles, to films, letters, interviews and the internet. It is good advice to keep a simple listing of all of the books, articles or material which inform your ideas and which you may later use in your essay or assignment. This will be invaluable and will make it easier for you to prepare your final bibliography.

The reference list and/or bibliography are included at the **end of your essay** and **after the Conclusion**

Example:

Aran, M. J. (2004) *Education in Ireland Today*, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Peat, A.P. (2005) *Labour Force Reserve: Understanding the New Labour Reserve*, 2nd ed., Dublin: Mulligans.

Did you notice:

- The references are in **alphabetical order** by author's surname
- **Capital Letters** are used for all personal names and places and for articles and chapter titles.
- The *titles* of books are always in **italics**.
- The order of referencing is consistent i.e. the **name** of the Author is followed by the **year** of publication is followed by the **title** of the book.
- Punctuation (full stops, commas, capital letters etc.) Make sure you are consistent as inconsistency in punctuation is a common mistake made by writers.

### The Three C's

The main principles for referencing are the three C's i.e. Clarity, Conciseness and Consistency. We will now look in a little more detail at referencing for:

1. Books
2. Conference Papers
3. Film/DVD/Video
4. Journal Articles
5. Newspapers
6. Radio/Television
7. Webpages

**1. Books**

One Author

Author(s) name, initial(s). (year of publication) *Title of Book or Report: Subtitle* (if any), ed. (if not 1st edition), Place of Publication: Publisher.

EXAMPLE:

Peat, A.P. (2005) *Labour Force Reserve: Understanding the New Labour Reserve*, 2nd ed., Dublin: Mulligans.

Two or More Authors

Author(s) name(s), initial(s). (year of publication) *Title of Book or Report: Subtitle* (if any), ed. (if not 1st edition), Place of Publication: Publisher.

EXAMPLE

Hodkins, E. C. and Keogh, N. T. (2005) *Missed Opportunities in Education*, Dublin: IPA



**Try it yourself.**

**Take a Book. Now look on the cover, or the spine, or check on the reverse of the title page. Here you will find your reference. Following the guidelines set out above, include your reference here.**

---



---



---

**2. Conference Paper - Unpublished**

Author(s) name, initial(s). 'Title of the contribution/paper'. Accepted for *Title of the Conference*, conference date.

EXAMPLE:

Burke, T. (2006) 'Supporting the Distance learner'. Accepted for *9th International Conference on Distance learning* (BIS2006), November.

**3. Film/DVD/Video**

Director name, initial(s). (year of distribution) *Title of Film* (format), Place of Distribution: Distribution Company.

EXAMPLE:

Larkin, J.D. (2002) *The Risen People*: [Film], Dublin: Liffeside Attractions.

**4. Journal Article**

Author(s) name, initial(s). (year of publication) '*Title of article*', *Title of Journal*, Volume (*Issue number*), (or) *date/month of publication* (in the absence of volume and issue), *page number(s)*.

EXAMPLE

Arson, M. J. (2004a) 'VEC's and Resource Centers', *International Vocational Educational Journal*, 26(3) 18-27.



**Take an Article from a Journal. To find the information you need for your reference, take a look at the cover and the table of contents of the journal**

**issue and include the reference here:**

---



---



---

**5. Newspaper**

Author(s) name, initial(s). (year of publication) 'title of article, Section (if relevant), title of Newspaper, date, page number(s)

EXAMPLE

Sticklets, E. (2005) 'Blended Learning as a Response to Upskilling' *The Irish Times*, 17 May, 1.

**6. Radio/Television – Interview or Contribution**

Contributor name, initial(s). (year) *Interview on Title of Programme* (format), Name of Channel, Date of transmission, time of transmission.

EXAMPLE:

Hegarty, M. (1999) *Interview on Morning Ireland* (radio) RTE Radio 1, 19 June. 08.30.

**7. Webpage**

Owner of webpage (year of publication) *Title* (online), available: web address (accessed date).

EXAMPLE:

Department of Education and Science (2005) *The Lisbon Strategy* [online], available: <http://www.des@gov.ie/lisbon/> [accessed 16th May 2005].

## Writing – General Issues



Sometimes it is difficult to find appropriate references on websites. Look at the top and bottom of the page, the logos and the web address and write out your reference here.

---



---



---

### SAMPLE PAPER

Here is a sample paper with in-text citations. It gives examples of books, journals, newspapers websites etc. It shows how to deal with quotations when writing an assignment.

We then go on to compile a reference list for this paper.

### SAMPLE PAPER

EXTRACT FROM THE EQUAL IRELAND BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE ESSENTIAL SKILL CERTIFICATE (WORKPLACE, COMMUNITY & EDUCATION)

#### POTENTIAL MARKET SIZE

##### Labour Force

Given the fact that over 500,000 Irish workers have yet to conclude 2nd Level education and that it is estimated that 60% of all new jobs created in the next few years will require a Degree with the balance needing a good Leaving Certificate, there is an imperative to address this deficit. **(Higgins and Keher 2005, p.136)** In attempting to estimate a more reasonable market potential, it is said that 20% are unlikely to return to learning at all. Some studies have shown that 15-20% of this group do not believe that education would provide better employment opportunities. For those who do return, they generally tend to avail of traditional approaches such as local third level institutions' access programmes or through other local options, such as the VEC and local Resource Centres. **(Burnwell et al 2006; Arson 2006a)**

Book 2 Authors

More than one study and first mention of author

According to a recent article in the Irish Times, many of the target group are said to be time poor, money poor, need childcare assistance or assistance with elderly care or do not have easy access to transport which can prove to be very difficult obstacles to overcome. The article also cites evidence that such challenges can be overcome and one example given is the Blended Learning Programme 2002/4 funded by EQUAL Ireland which redressed the balance for some 136 participants in the BMW region. **(Blended Learning Report 2005 cited in Stickleys 2005, p.13)**

Newspaper

The widespread availability of such flexible options also contributes to government and EU employment policy. For example, the main objective of the re-launched EU Lisbon Strategy (2005) is the realisation of the most competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world (with the aim of reaching a 70% overall employment rate by 2010, female employment rates of 60% and 50% for older workers). **(Department of Education and Science 2005)**

Government on line reference

“The emergence of a significant number of young low-skilled workers is causing concern, given the link that exists between low-skill jobs and unemployment. Only about 12% of these young people receive training each year. There are now 34,500 young people working in jobs with limited prospects and training who left school early. **(Fuelled 2001, pp.77-78)** ←

Long quotation indented

Currently, according to Loiter, “company expenditure on training in Ireland comprises around 2.4% of payroll costs per annum” **(2005, p. 287)** ←  
This is above the EU average, but at the lower end of the 3%–5% best practice target. Also, there is a marked lower level of training expenditure for both young unskilled workers, older workers and lower-skilled workers generally. Only 12% of young low-skilled employees receive training each year.

Short Quotation  
Name of Author  
in text

Studies carried out by **Arson (2006b)** identified several groups within the category ‘vulnerable and low-skilled’, including those young people who have left school early and taken up jobs; older people whose skills have become more obsolete, and more generally people at work who receive little training, and are in jobs with little prospect of advancement.”

2nd mention of an Author

There are some new studies which have recently focussed in on the concept of ‘labour force reserve’ to identify people of working-age who, despite being classified as ‘inactive’, are actually ‘willing to work’ should the opportunity arise. **(Peat 2005, p. 164)** ← These people consider themselves effectively trapped on the outside of the labour market because of barriers — real and perceived — even though they are willing and able to work. The figure for this ‘labour reserve’ in Ireland can be estimated at 78,500 people. A dramatic portrayal of the difficulties faced by this ‘labour reserve’ can be seen in the film titled *The Risen People* **(Larkin 2002)** ←

Book 1 Author

Film

It has been argued by **Pine and Kindling (2005)** that a truer number of those unemployed are the 96,700 reported as unemployed in the QNHS Survey and this estimated ‘labour reserve’ figure of 78,700 people, giving an actual under-utilised labour force potential of around 175,000 people. This is a major target for upskilling and further education.

Journal

#### REFERENCE LIST:

Arson, M. J. (2004a) ‘VEC and Local Resource Centers’, *International Vocational Educational Journal*, 26(3) 18-27.  
Arson, M.J. (2006b) ‘Vulnerability and the Lower Skilled’, *International Journal of Aging*, 28(5) 21-33.  
Burnwell, J.M., Byrne, D.L., Murphy, P.C. (2006) ‘Employment Opportunities in Education’, *The Education Review*, 113 (1), 112-118.

Department of Education and Science (2005) *The Lisbon Strategy* [online], available: <http://www.des@gov.ie/lisbon/> [accessed 16th May 2005].  
Fuelled, D.P. (2001) *Low-skilled Workers: Unemployment*, Dublin: Penguin.  
Hodkins, E. C. and Keogh, N. T. (2005) *Missed Opportunities in Education*, Dublin: IPA.  
Larkin, J.D. (2002) *The Risen People*: [Film], Dublin: Liffeside Attractions.

## Writing – General Issues

Loiter, M.D. (2005) *Company Expenditure and Training*, Dublin: Mulligans.

Peat, A.P. (2005) *Labour Force Reserve: Understanding the New Labour Reserve*, 2nd ed., Dublin: Mulligans.

Pine, M. J. and Kindling, D.V. (2005) 'Under utilised Labour in Ireland: How Bad are things really?', *The Irish Journal of Labour Statistics* [on line], 88 (2), 227-281, available:

<http://search.einet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nhh&an=450468> [accessed 24th July 2005].

Sticklets, E. (2005) 'Blended Learning as a response to upskilling' *The Irish Times*, 17 May, 1.



### SUMMARY

In this section you learned, using the '**Harvard Style**', how to create a reference list or **Bibliography** for your essay or report. You learned how to do in-text citations as well as how to compile a Reference list and a bibliography. Consistency and clarity in referencing were emphasised. You were encouraged to use this section as a guide when putting together your essay and not to worry about learning this method 'off-by-heart'.



### ACTIVITY 3. (Place this activity in your portfolio for assessment)

1. Do up a reference list for the books and articles which are listed below:

A book entitled *Labour Force Reserve: Understanding the New Labour Reserve* was written by M. D. Langton. This book was published in 2005. The publisher was Mulligans located in Dublin.

A book entitled *Missed Opportunities in Education* was written by two authors: Nora Teresa Keogh and Edward C. Hogkins. The book was published in 2005 and was published by a publishing firm in Dublin called the IPA.

2. Point out the errors in the following reference list:

Book – two authors

Hodkins, E. C. and Keogh, N. T. *Missed Opportunities in Education*, Dublin: IPA. (2005)

Film:

Larkin, J.D. (2002) *The Risen People: Liffeside Attractions*. [Film], Dublin.

Book – one author

M. D. Loiter. (2005) *Company Expenditure and Training*, Mulligans. Dublin.

3. In your history assignment, you write about World War 11 dating from 1939 - 1945. These dates are common knowledge. Do you need to reference this?

4. You download an image from a website and include it in your assignment. Do you need to reference this?

5. You translate an article from an Irish language publication into English and include it in your assignment. Do you need to reference the article?

Learning to Learn Unit 4

# Essay Writing



This Unit focuses on how to write an essay.

#### UNIT 4 HAS THREE SECTIONS:

##### Section 1

Clarifying the Essay Topic

##### Section 2

Evaluating Reading Materials

##### Section 3

Writing the Essay

## Section 1 Clarifying the Essay Topic

This section looks at how to make an effective start to an essay assignment.

When starting out, it is important to be clear in your approach to your task. You need to analyse the essay question thoroughly before beginning to research and write the assignment. In this section you will learn how to analyse the structure and content of the essay question.



**When you have successfully completed this section, you will be able to:**

- Begin an essay assignment with confidence.
- Clarify the writing task.
- List the items that an essay corrector is looking for when assessing the essay.
- Decide on the correct approach to the essay question by thinking about the terms in which it is phrased.



**Discursive writing is the name given to the type of essay that discusses a question. This is the type of essay associated with Humanities subjects.**

This unit focuses on discursive writing. When given a discursive topic, it is very important to analyse the question you have been asked.

Analysing the question means looking for what the question is getting at, in other words, what does the question assume?

Many students simply look for the *subject* of the question rather than taking the time to consider *how it is phrased*. Examine every word in the essay question carefully. Remember, with a discursive essay you are answering a question, not giving the history of a subject.

You should analyse the question in two ways:

- What is its structure?
- What is its content?

Taking time to consider the structure and content of the question focuses your concentration and points you in the direction of the relevant sources.

If you take time to look at your question in this way, your approach to your answer will be clearer.

*Note:* Brainstorming is a useful technique for analysing the essay topic.

Most discursive essays are commonly phrased in one of two ways:

- The question begins with the word “Discuss”
- A statement is given, followed by the word “Discuss”

Remember, with Humanities subjects, there is very rarely a clear-cut “right or wrong” answer. Your essay is an examination of the question set, as you understand it.

Occasionally, other words are used to indicate a discursive essay:

- Compare
- Consider
- Contrast
- Evaluate
- Examine

## Essay Writing

### ADDRESSING THE QUESTION

Analysing the question can help you to be clear in your approach. As stated above, you should analyse a question for two things:

- Structure.
- Content.

STRUCTURE: when asked to “discuss” a statement, you are being asked to break the question down into different elements. Think about the structure of the question – how many elements are there? Take this short (500 word) first year English assignment as an example:

EXAMPLE:

Discuss the role of popular/informal language in JD Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

In this instance, the structure of the question is quite straightforward—it is not overly complicated in how it is phrased and it is not looking for an examination of all the elements in the novel.



**Whether a question is phrased in simple or in difficult terms, it is of great benefit to take the time to think about the words used and how they are put together.**

- Discuss = think about
- Role = function/effect
- Popular = “cool”
- Informal = everyday/not formal

Once you have broken the question down into its elements, you can then use the structure of the question to give you the structure of your answer. This is what is meant by “a well-constructed argument”. Looking at the elements of the question can also help you to write “an effective introduction”, which you will read about later in this unit. It can also be very helpful in terms of directing you in your research.

CONTENT: Next, you should look at the content of the question. While the structure of the question in this instance is straightforward, the subject matter (content) is slightly more complex. This is because you are being asked to look at a structural element of the novel (language) – or, how the novel is written – rather than the narrative element – or, what happens in the story.



**It is important to bear in mind that, when asked to “discuss”, you are being asked to use the question to look at the subject.**

When looking at the content of the question, ask yourself the following:

- What information do I need to discuss the question?
- Do I know where to look for it?
- Do I have an opinion of the question?

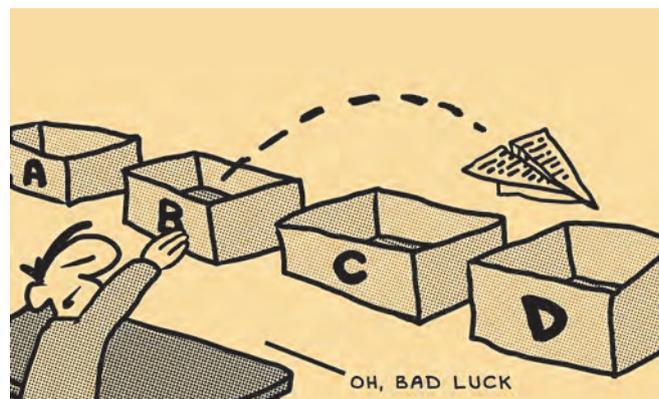
### Researching Your Subject

Once you have asked yourself these three questions, you can address the issue of where to begin your research. For a standard discursive essay, lecture notes and other course material, along with your reading list, are sufficient for research purposes. You may also want to use the Internet. In Unit 1, you learned how to identify reliable Internet sites. For thesis work, you would need to consult a broader range of sources, such as those listed in Unit 1.



### SUMMARY

This section introduced you to the first step in the task of writing a Humanities essay: clarifying the task. To do this, you need to examine the wording of the essay topic carefully, looking at its structure and content.





**ACTIVITY 4.** *(Place this activity in your portfolio for assessment)*

1. What is being assessed in a Humanities essay?

---



---



---



---

2. How would you go about clarifying a Humanities essay topic?

---



---



---



---

3. How would you go about analysing the structure of this essay topic: "Discuss the causes of the First World War."

---



---



---



---

4. How would you analyse the content of the same essay topic?

---



---



---



---

## Section 2

### Evaluating Reading Materials

This section takes you through the next step in essay writing: researching the content for your essay.

Reading for enjoyment and reading for research purposes are two different processes.

When reading for enjoyment, you let the story absorb and direct you, savouring every word. This is known as passive reading.

When researching for an essay, you read the text for your own purposes, absorbing some of it, and passing over other parts. This is known as active reading. This section examines the methods of active reading for research purposes.

Learners researching assignments can be compared to magpies, keeping a sharp eye out for what is of interest to them and using it for their own purposes.

This section looks at the importance of basic comprehension and active reading methods, then moves on to analysing sources for content (what they say) and style (how they say it). Finally, you will look at evaluating sources. That is, deciding how effective they are in getting a point across and whether they are useful to you.

Once you have decided on your sources, it is then time to use them for your own purposes, gleaming from them what is relevant to your assignment.

## Essay Writing



**When you have successfully completed this section, you will be able to:**

- Use a checklist to ensure basic comprehension of your reading material.
- Read in an active manner which will help you to save time on your written assignments and locate the relevant areas in your sources.
- Identify the most common types of content and style.
- Evaluate the general impression given by a piece of writing and how well it is constructed.
- Evaluate its usefulness for your own purposes.

### COMPREHENSION

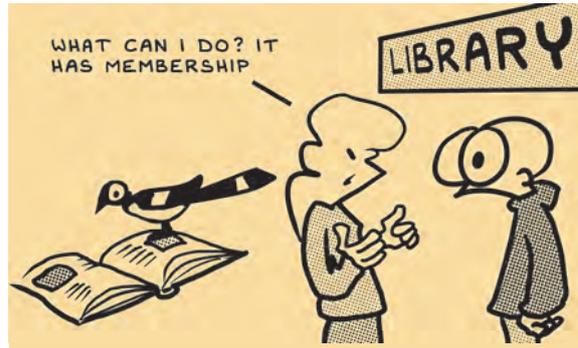
Before examining reading methods, it is important to establish the importance of basic comprehension. Comprehension means simply that you understand the basics of what you are reading.

Learners often jump ahead of themselves when researching an essay and look only for what is directly relevant to their purpose. Doing so leapfrogs the first requirement of basic comprehension.

Below is a checklist for basic comprehension:

- Are there any words I don't understand?
- Is there any jargon or term that I don't understand?
- Am I clear on the sequence of events (where applicable)?
- Do I know who all of the people mentioned are (where applicable)?

When reading a passage, you should be able to answer YES to all of the above, where relevant. If you are unsure of anything, reread carefully. If you are still unsure, you should use a standard reference book to clarify— for example, a dictionary in the case of an unknown word or an encyclopedia if the sequence of events is unclear.



Next, you should think of the content in the context of your essay.

What this means is that you should decide how important it is in relation to your essay.

- Crucial
- Important
- Dispensable
- Irrelevant

You should also use this rating system when selecting quotations to illustrate your points.

Once you are sure you have a grasp of the basics, you can then move on to the second level of reading: active reading.

### READING METHODS

When researching for an essay, it often happens that you become a passive reader – you become caught up in the story or lost in the detail.



**It is very important that you are an active reader at all times when researching in order to keep focused and avoid wasting time, which is usually in short supply. Keep the exact wording of the question in front of you while researching.**

Remember, active readers differ from passive readers in one obvious way: passive readers will open a book and read it from beginning to end. Active readers approach a book in a different manner— they dip in and out and often focus on the parts of a book ignored by passive readers, such as the introduction and index.

There are three types of active reading:

- Skimming
- Scanning
- Close reading

Let's review these briefly, and see how these different reading styles help you to research your essay topic.

- **SKIMMING** involves reading the most informative parts of a book or chapter. Doing so allows you to get a general impression of the overall book and can help you to decide how to judge the book on the rating system given above. So what should you focus on when you skim?
  - **INTRODUCTION:** this will tell you what the author's intention is.
  - **FIRST AND LAST PARAGRAPHS OF EACH CHAPTER:** these will give you a quick idea of what each chapter contains.
  - **CONCLUSION:** this will outline for you the author's overall opinion of the subject.

Skimming can help you to see quickly how the books you have selected relate to each other:

- Are they similar?
- Are they radically different?
- Is there a general consensus on a subject?
- Is there a wide range of opinion?
- Do they rely on similar evidence?
  
- **SCANNING** is an even more focused method than skimming. Scanning involves looking for precise terms, facts or names. The precise information you are seeking can be located quickly in the following places:
  - **TABLE OF CONTENTS:** this will tell you if the precise information you are looking for is discussed in chapter length.
  - **INDEX:** this will give you every instance in the text where the piece of information is mentioned or discussed.
  - **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** this can tell you where to get further information. Skimming and scanning will help you to locate the books or sections of books you wish to focus on for your essay. It is then time to carry out a close reading, or analysis, of these key sources that you have selected.



- **CLOSE READING:** Looking closely at a passage, or analysing it, means that you are looking for two things:
  - What is the overall point?
  - How is that point made?

Determining the overall point of a piece of writing is a vital part of analysis. You will have an idea of the overall point from your skim and scan readings. You will then close read the text in order to fully understand the overall point—that is, what does the author want to say?

Examining how a point is made involves focusing on how the piece is put together, rather than what it says. You examine “What it says” at the basic comprehension stage and while skimming and scanning. You can often get a general impression from a piece of writing— analysing it tells you how that impression is created.

Some common general impressions are:

- Formal
- Casual
- Informative
- Uninformative
- Helpful
- Difficult
- Interesting
- Boring
- Simplistic
- Radical
- Typical
- Objective
- Subjective

## Essay Writing

You may find that what you are reading gives one or more of the impressions listed above. When you analyse a piece of writing, you can point to components of it that add to the general impression that it creates.

The next subsections look at how content and style combine to give a general impression. Then you will look at how to evaluate, or judge a passage.

### CONTENT

Here are some of the main categories of information:

- Factual: independently verifiable events, places, historical figures and so forth.
- Biographical: details of an individual's life.
- Anecdotal: hearsay or stories ("anecdotes") of unknown origin.
- Opinion (substantiated): personal opinion supported by factual evidence.
- Opinion (unsubstantiated): personal opinion not supported by factual evidence.
- Direct reference: use of quotation to support opinion or illustrate fact.



**Some types of information, such as anecdote and unsubstantiated assertions, are not suitable for third level purposes.**

You should also avoid using such material in your own work. If a passage contains this type of information, you should not rely on it.

Most of the information you will come across will be factual, biographical, substantiated opinion and/or direct reference.

### STYLE

Once you have identified the type or types of information used in a passage, you can then look at how that information is expressed.



**The style in which content is expressed determines how difficult or easy it is to understand.**

Here are some of the main categories of style:

- ACADEMIC: presumes reader is familiar with the subject; uses long words and sentences.
- CLEAR: uses short words and sentences. A clear style is the best approach for professional writing
- CONVERSATIONAL: addresses the reader directly; uses informal language.
- POLEMICAL: argumentative, aims to provoke a reaction in the reader.
- CLICHÉD: uses unoriginal, hackneyed words and phrases.
- DESCRIPTIVE: uses original language and vivid detail.

Authors usually adopt a style that serves the overall point they wish to get across. For instance, a polemical style usually indicates that the author expects opposition to his/her opinion.



**When conveying information, clarity of style is the best approach for professional authors and learners alike.**

And so, the general impressions listed above are created by a combination of content and style. Analysing your sources of information allows you to determine what forms a general impression.

### EVALUATION

When you evaluate, or judge, a piece of writing in a passive way, you do so by instantly deciding if you like it or not or agree or disagree with the opinion expressed. Actively evaluating a piece of writing is a different process and involves three things:

- Evaluating how well an author's overall point was served by the content and style of the writing.
- Evaluating how well a piece of writing is structured.
- Evaluating how useful it is for your purposes.



**Your tutors and your module will give you advice on the most authoritative authors – that is, the most respected and reliable authors – in a particular field. When authors are recommended by your tutors, you can be sure their work is informative and well-written.**

When evaluating how well an overall point was served by the content and style used, you should look for the following:

- Was the type of information suitable to prove the point?
- Was it strong enough to prove the point?
- Was the style suited to the content?
- Did the style express the content clearly?

A passage of writing can often include important information and be expressed in a reasonable style. However, it is also necessary for the writing to be well-structured. When assessing whether a piece of writing is well-structured, you should look for the following:

- Does the introduction give a clear idea of the author's purpose?
- Does each chapter examine an important aspect of the main point of the book (where applicable)?
- Does each paragraph examine an important aspect of the main point of the chapter or article (where applicable)?
- Does each paragraph lead logically to the next?
- Is there any point left hanging?
- Is irrelevant information introduced?
- Does the author lose sight of the overall point at any time?
- Does the author contradict his/her overall point at any time?
- Does the conclusion support the overall point?

You can also use this checklist to evaluate your own work.

You must be able to evaluate whether a source is useful for your assignment or not. Some learners summarise everything they read. This is not helpful, as much of the information you will read is not directly relevant to your assignment. Remember to bear the assignment question in mind at all times.

When you are evaluating the usefulness of the content for your assignment, use the following checklist:

- Does it give me relevant factual information?
- Does it give me a main point?
- Does it tell me something about the question?
- Does it provide a suitable quotation?

By analysing your sources in this way, you can avoid getting caught up in irrelevant detail and spending time summarising useless passages.

## ASSESSMENT

There is much speculation amongst students regarding how assignments are assessed. On the next page is an outline of how examiners assess discursive essays in the Humanities.

### What is being assessed?

The assessment is an examination of your understanding of the issues, your familiarity with the subject, your analytical skills, and your ability to draw on a range of relevant sources and present logical conclusions in a coherent manner.

All essays should include references and a bibliography listing works referred to in the text and works consulted for background information.

Special attention should be paid to the spelling of proper names, place names, titles, concepts and so forth.

#### MARKS MAY BE GAINED FOR:

- An understanding of the issues.
- Specificity and using relevant information to prove your point.
- An ability to look at issues from more than one perspective.
- A well-constructed argument.
- Clarity of expression.
- A clear and effective introduction indicating how you understand the question, how you intend to approach the essay and, where appropriate, what period you intend to cover.
- An effective conclusion.
- A range of sources (where applicable).

#### MARKS MAY BE LOST FOR:

- Taking too long to get to the point.
- Wandering off the point.
- Writing too much or too little.
- Vagueness.
- Unsubstantiated assertions.

## Essay Writing

- Very long paragraphs containing a wide range of points in no particular order.
- Three-line paragraphs which look more like notes than part of a well-constructed argument.
- Poor grammar and spelling.
- Omitting a bibliography.

SEVERE PENALTIES MAY BE IMPOSED FOR PLAGIARISM.



### SUMMARY

This section emphasised the importance of basic comprehension and active reading. It also demonstrated how to form a general impression of a piece of writing by analysing its content and structure. Finally, you learned how to evaluate how well a piece of writing is served by its content, style and structure and how to evaluate its usefulness for a given purpose.



### ACTIVITY 5. *(Place this activity in your portfolio for assessment)*

1. How would you rate the value of a source for your essay content?

---

---

---

---

2. What kind of content should you avoid in your sources?

---

---

---

---

---

3. Explain what these different writing styles mean:  
Academic

---

---

---

---

---

Clear

---

---

---

---

---

Conversational

---

---

---

---

---

Polemical

---

---

---

---

---

Clichéd

---

---

---

---

---

Descriptive

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

4. How do you decide on whether content in one of your reference sources is useful for your essay?

---



---



---



---



---

## Section 3 Writing the Essay

Do you ever feel that you understand the essay topic well, but can't get what you want to say down on paper? Don't worry— essay writing is a skill that anyone can acquire with practice.

First, you need a clear idea of the structure of an essay. An essay has three parts.

- Introduction
- Body of essay
- Conclusion

You can use this basic structure for all your essays for Humanities subjects.

There are two other important stages of essay planning and writing:

- Brainstorming— before you begin writing.
- Redrafting— after you have written your essay.

This section looks at how to avoid structural errors in your writing and how to get the most out of your efforts.



**After successfully completing this section, you will be able to:**

- Identify the three parts of an essay structure.
- Work through the stages of essay planning and writing.
- Use brainstorming techniques to find the connection between your learning and expressing it in written form.
- Use a checklist to redraft your work in order to improve the overall impression it creates.

### BRAINSTORMING

Even the most practised writer has difficulty knowing where to start an essay. Having been exposed to a wide variety of new ideas, names and words during your research, your brain may feel overloaded. You can feel overwhelmed or become fixated on one particular aspect of a question. Sitting down to begin your essay in this condition is not a good idea— it often leads to a jumble of thoughts, sentences and paragraphs that have no particular direction or structure.



**Brainstorming involves getting all your information down in point form. This allows you to see how much information you have, without the added task of putting it into sentence format.**

The function of brainstorming is to clear your brain of the masses of information swimming around in it. It has three main uses:

- Gives you a sense of accomplishment in that you are getting rid of the “blank page” feeling.
- Identifies any “gaps in your knowledge”— that is, you can see if you need to read further in certain areas.
- Focuses your mind on the connections between your reading and your assignment.

## Essay Writing

Below is an example of brain-storming, using the English essay question introduced earlier in this unit – “Discuss the role of popular/informal language in JD Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*.”

The first step is to analyse the wording of the question itself.



**Read the wording of the question carefully to ensure you understand it fully. Avoid focusing on only one area. Underline key words.**

Secondly, jot down in point form everything that comes into your head about the question:

Discuss the role of popular/informal language in JD Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*.

How does the popular/informal language affect the novel? Good or bad? Does it have a major or minor role?

What is “popular” language? Slang? Everyday speech? Bad language? Popular with whom? Do all the characters use it? Get examples/quotes.

Is “informal” the same as “popular”? What is “formal” language? (Get examples?)

Was Salinger the first to use this type of language? Did it go down well?

Did any other authors use it?

At this point, you should organise your random information into four categories:

- Main points
- Illustration— facts, opinions
- Quotations
- Irrelevant

### STRUCTURING

Once you have brainstormed your notes, it is then time to structure them. Deciding what goes where is a vital part of essay writing.

Remember, a standard essay is made up of three parts:

- Introduction
- Body of essay
- Conclusion



**A clear structure is a key feature of a good essay.**

Regular paragraphing indicates a clear structure. It also indicates “a well-constructed argument” as outlined in the requirements for Humanities essays cited earlier in this unit. You should discuss each key element of a question at equal length. This indicates balance in your answer.

A paragraph discusses and illustrates a main point. In a discursive essay, a paragraph is usually 10 – 12 lines long. You should aim for all of your paragraphs to be of roughly equal length. You can expect to fit 2 – 2.5 paragraphs per page.

It can be a very helpful structural method to think of your essay in terms of paragraphs, rather than word count. For instance, 2000 words roughly translates into 14 – 16 paragraphs.

*Please note:* there is no definite number of paragraphs required for a given word count; 14 –16 is merely a guideline.

For the purposes of this illustration, a shorter assignment of 500 words has been selected. The table on page 49 gives a definite structure to the results of the brainstorming session above.

Once you have marked out an overall structure, it is then time to put it all together.



### WRITING THE INTRODUCTION



**Your first paragraph is the introduction to your essay, not the introduction to the history of the subject matter of your essay.**

Your introduction should contain two things:

- Your reaction to the question.
- Your statement of purpose.

The structure of the question posed, once analysed, can often give you the structure of your answer. A strong introduction can give a sense of purpose and coherence to your essay. It is important not to give the impression that you are talking about the subject in general, rather that you are addressing the exact question you have been asked.

Let's look again at the question and the requirements outlined by the lecturer in relation to the introduction:

“A clear and effective introduction indicating how you understand the question and how you intend to approach the essay”.

Below are two examples of introductions to the same question:

Discuss the role of popular/informal language in JD Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Para 1	Introduction	React to question: statement of purpose	No Quotes
Para 2	Main Point— what is the effect of using popular/informal language?	Discuss Holden Caulfield only (main character)	Short quotes; give examples of popular/informal language
Para 3	Main Point— compare informal language to formal language.	What makes Salinger's use of language different? Compare Holden to well-known character who uses formal language— think of one/find one.	Select longer quotes to show informal vs formal language
Para 4	Main Point— which is more effective and why?	Why do I think one is better than the other?	No new quotes— refer back to previous examples
Para 5	Conclusion.	Review evidence; refer back to the introduction and the question.	No quote

## Essay Writing

### INTRODUCTION 1

JD Salinger’s use of popular and informal language in *The Catcher in the Rye* has several roles: for the modern reader, the language captures the era of the 1950s and adds a quaintness to the novel; for the readers in the 1950s, it would have made the novel contemporary and hip.

Furthermore, the popular language used by Salinger is that of a 1950’s teenager and serves to define the novel as one of adolescence, a device which went on to be used in the bulk of subsequent teen novels, such as *The Outsiders*, *Run Baby Run* and *The Butcher Boy*.

### INTRODUCTION 2

JD Sallinger wrote *The Catcher in the Rye* in the 1950s. Holden Calfield is one of the best characters in literature. He is believable and much more interesting than other ones because he talks like a real life person.

He is in boarding school but hates it and runs away to the city where he meets a lot of weird people. He seems like a real teenager because he curses alot and doesn’t like most adults. He is very like Francie Brady in *The Butcher Boy*.

In terms of content, the two examples above are roughly similar— that is, they are making the same point. However, in terms of structure and expression, Introduction 1 is much better than Introduction 2. The reasons for this are as follows:

- Use of the structure of the question to structure the introduction.
- Examination of the content of the question.
- Reaction to the question.
- Clear statement of purpose.
- Good expression.
- Good presentation.

Introduction 2 is weaker by comparison for the following reasons:

- Does not refer to the wording of the question.
- Gives a general reaction to the subject, rather than the question.
- Gives no statement of purpose.
- Wanders off the point, known as “waffling”.
- Poor expression: errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Poor presentation.

A strong introduction gives both the writer and the reader a definite path to follow. If the introduction is well-structured, it shows the direction the writer is about to take and leads naturally to the conclusion.

### WRITING THE BODY OF THE ESSAY



**The body of your essay is where you go into detail about your statement of purpose— that is, what you said in your introduction that you were going to discuss.**

Each key element you have outlined in the question should now be discussed in detail. In order to explain each element, you will use illustration— that is, fact and opinion, along with direct quotation from your sources. Remember, you need to cite your sources correctly, and list them all on the List of Works Cited at the back of your essay.

Remember, a clearly constructed essay makes a very good impression and leads to higher marks. To recap, we will look once again at relevant points in the “Marks may be lost for” section of the Humanities assignment requirements introduced above.

- Taking too long to get to the point.
- Wandering off the point.
- Vagueness.
- Unsubstantiated assertions.
- Very long paragraphs containing a wide range of points in no particular order.
- Three-line paragraphs which look more like notes than part of a well-constructed argument.

You can avoid these faults by bearing in mind the structure of a good paragraph:

- Begin your paragraph with a premise— that is, a main point.
- Following sentences should provide 2 – 3 sub-premises— that is, illustration of your main point.

The premise of each paragraph should be a key element of the question. That way, your paragraph serves an obvious purpose and avoids the pitfalls of taking too long to get to the point, vagueness and long-winded passages. By ensuring that you provide 2 – 3 sub-premises in the form of fact, opinion and/or quotation, you will avoid wandering off the point, making unsubstantiated assertions and writing paragraphs that are too short.

Once you have covered the key elements of the question, you are ready to wrap up your essay with a conclusion.

## WRITING THE CONCLUSION



**A good conclusion gives your essay a sense of finality. The reader will know you have come to the end and will not feel that you have left anything hanging.**

If your introduction gives a reaction to the question and a statement of purpose, your conclusion is made much easier. The function of a conclusion is to:

- Review your evidence.
- Refer back to your view of the question.
- Refer back to your introduction.

Below are two examples of conclusions to the same question:

---

### CONCLUSION 1

This intimacy can be attributed wholly to Salinger’s use of informal language. His style inspired a generation of writers to make their characters less formal and Holden Caulfield is widely considered to be the first real teenager described in literature. The intimacy and familiarity created by Salinger’s use of language has established *The Catcher in the Rye* as a timeless classic.

### CONCLUSION 2

The novel finishes with Holden in a psychiatric unit. He had a nervous breakdown because of all the “phoney’s” he met on his travels. Even though he ends up this way, he is a very popular character with young and old readers alike.

---

As with the Introductions above, Conclusion 1 is stronger than Conclusion 2 in terms of structure:

- Reference to the terms (wording) of the question.
- Review of evidence given in body of essay.
- No new information in final paragraph.
- Good expression.
- Good presentation.

## Essay Writing

Conclusion 2 is structurally weaker by comparison for the following reasons:

- No reference to the terms of the question.
- Does not review evidence given in body of essay.
- Concludes the subject (that is, the story) and not the essay.
- Poor expression.
- Poor presentation.



**Remember, your introduction and conclusion introduce and conclude the essay rather than the subject.**

Your conclusion is not the end of the writing process however. It is very good practice to redraft your work—that is, reread it to look for any improvements that you can make to its structure and to check for errors. The next section provides a review checklist.

### REDRAFTING

One of the benefits of timetabling your writing process is that you have time to redraft your work. Redrafting involves “polishing up” your work to its best effect.

You have done the hard work of analysing the question, researching and structuring information. The final stage of essay writing is to carefully reread your work looking for ways to improve it in terms of structure and accuracy.



**When redrafting your work, you should reread it looking out for three elements:**

- Content
- Structure
- Presentation

Ideally, you should reread your work four times, looking at the three areas outlined below, followed by a final run-through. Follow this Review Checklist when redrafting your essay:

- CONTENT
  - Are my spellings correct?
  - Is my grammar correct?
  - Are my facts correct?

- Are my quotations correct?
- Have I included all in-text citations where needed?
- Have I included a reference section?
- Are the references correctly formatted?

### ■ STRUCTURE

- Does my introduction include my reaction to the question?
- Does my introduction include a statement of purpose?
- Are my paragraphs of roughly equal length?
- Does each paragraph include a premise (main point) in the first sentence?
- Does that main point directly relate to the question?
- Have I included at least 2 sub-premises (fact, opinion and/or quotation) to illustrate that point?
- Does my conclusion review the evidence I have included in the body of my essay?
- Do I refer back to my reaction to the question?

### ■ PRESENTATION

- Have I included a separate title page giving all necessary details (usually 1. Your full name; 2. Course code or title; 3. Essay title; 4. Name of tutor or lecturer; 5. Submission date)
- Have I included page numbers?
- Is my type size 12-point throughout?
- Is my font the same throughout?
- Are my margins justified (even)?

Using this checklist to review your essays can greatly improve the presentation and appearance of your work. If your tutor points out an error in your work, add it to the checklist to ensure that you avoid it the next time.

### SUMMARY



This section outlined the structural requirements of a good essay. It explained how to apply brainstorming tactics to the essay structure.

You learned from practical examples how to develop the introduction, body of essay and conclusion. The section ended with advice on redrafting to improve your essay, and a review checklist.

### Suggested Reading:

Greetham, Bryan. 2001. *How to Write Better Essays*. Houndsmill, Hampshire: Palgrave.



**ACTIVITY 6.** *(Place this activity in your portfolio for assessment)*

1. List the three parts of an essay.

---

---

---

---

---

2. What does the Introduction contain?

---

---

---

---

---

3. What is the structure of a good paragraph?

---

---

---

---

---

4. Use the brainstorming technique to decide what to include in the following essay:

“Discuss the consequences new work practices for trade unions in modern Ireland.”

---

---

---

---

---

5. What three elements should you look at when redrafting your essay?

---

---

---

---

---