

# Developing your Essay Writing



## This was our advert...

This workshop is aimed at Level 2 and 3 students who have written essays and want to improve the quality of their work. We will explore how to use references and determine the level of detail required to develop an economical but effective argument. We will discuss how to remove superfluous material, tightly edit your work, and ensure that there is clarity and cohesion from the outset. Pacing your writing and avoiding a rushed submission are discussed. It is helpful (but not essential) to attend or watch the recording of the 'Introduction to essay writing (beginners)' workshop before attending.

# Hopefully!

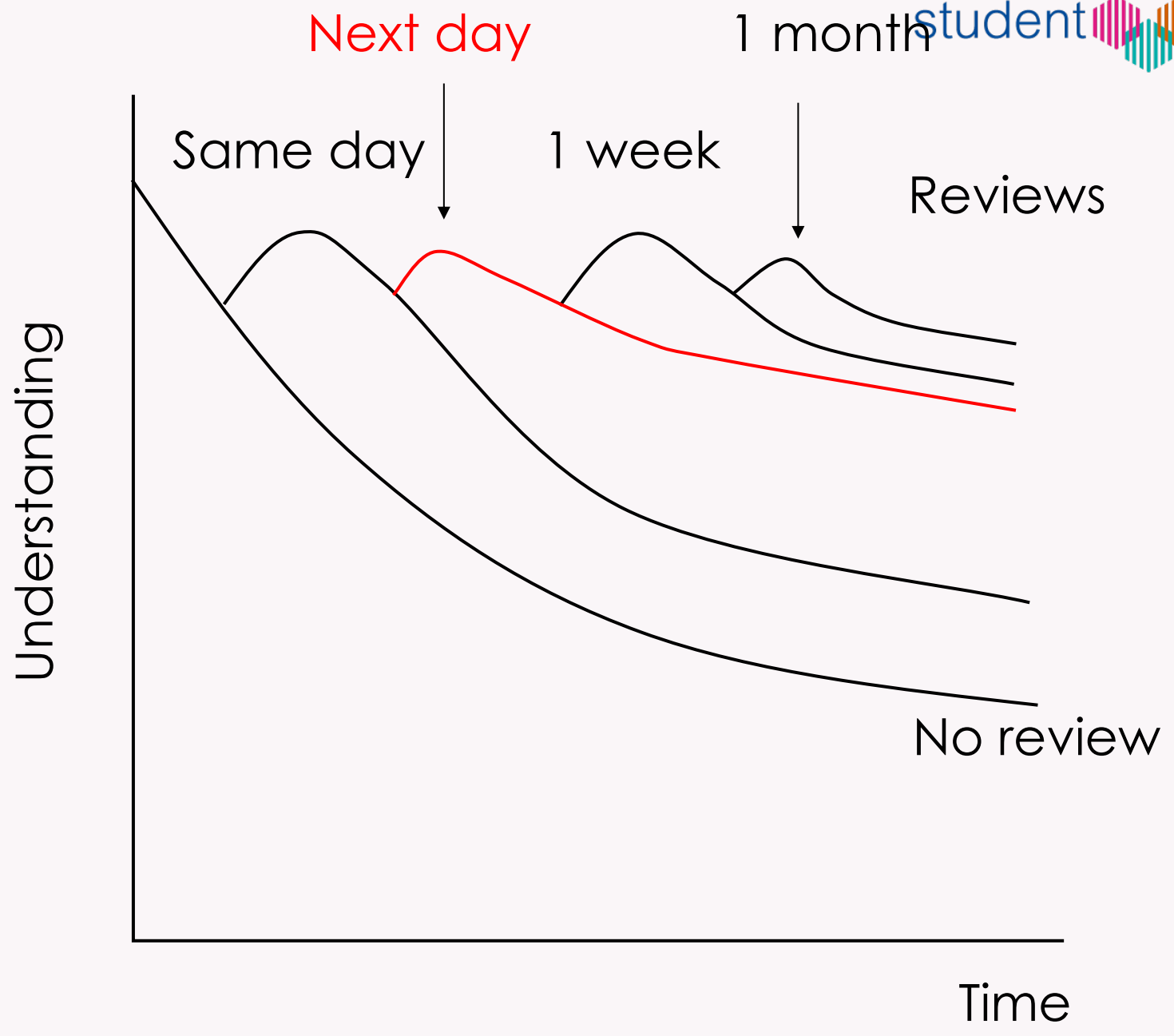
- We'll cover ideas to address many of these issues
- Remember your own module assessment guide as well as the studenthome help and the library
- Quick guide to Harvard / cite them right  
<https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/quick-guide-to-harvard-referencing-cite-them-right>

# Beginners Essay Writing recap

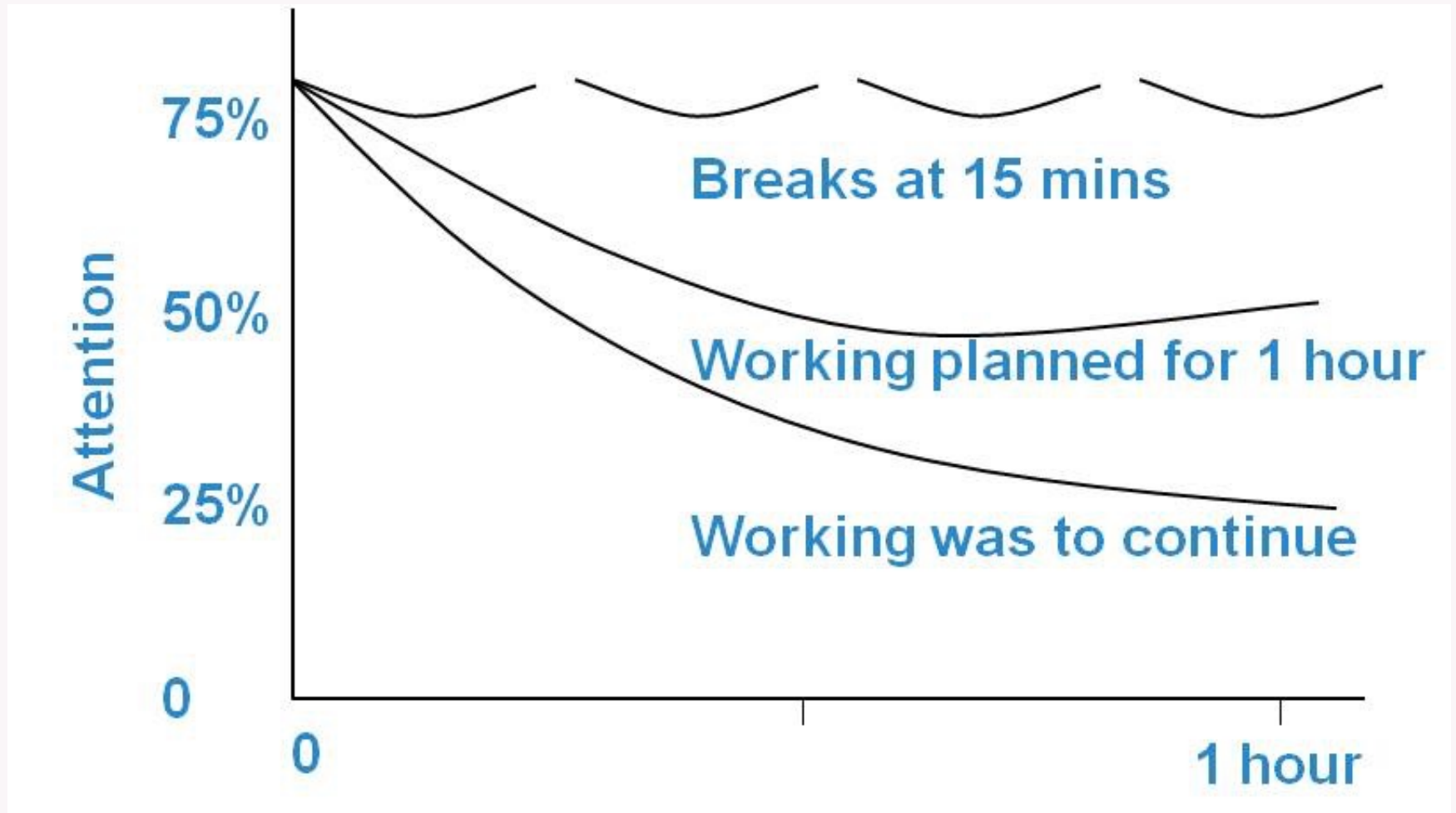
- Essay writing is a staged process
- Most of the work is hidden
- Take it one step at a time
- The final order doesn't have to be the order you write
- Do something – procrastination is a route to poor marks

# Essay writing stages

- Analyse question – process/topic/criteria
- Plan research
- Research
- Return to question
- List of points
- Plan – evaluate, prioritise
- Write draft – no one else will see it yet
- Order of writing doesn't have to be order of reading
- Edit – does it answer the question
- Check – Flow, proofread



# Breaking work up (Pomodoro)



<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/beating-procrastination-the-pomodoro-technique>

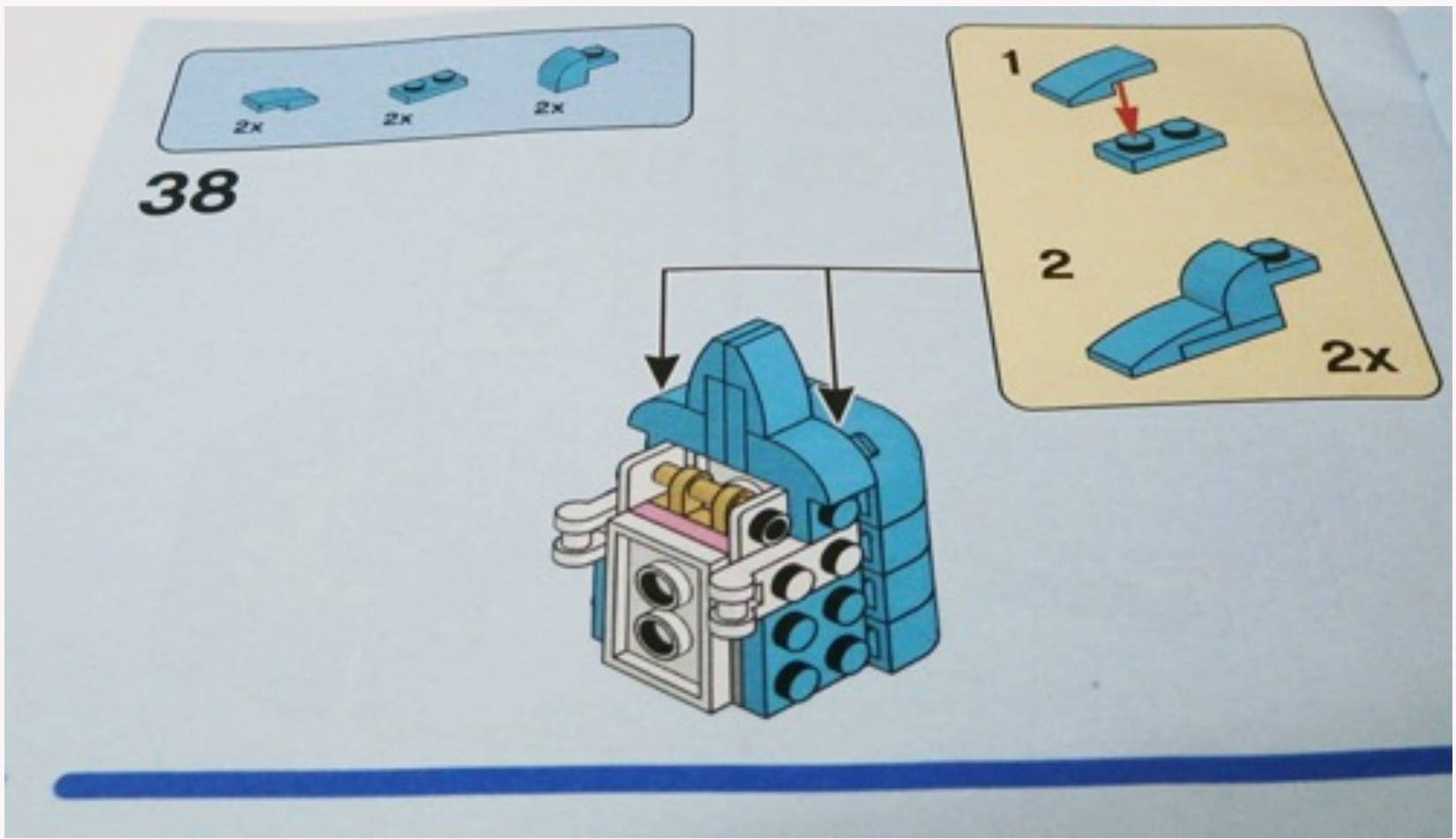
<https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/page/view.php?id=165521>

# Building an excellent essay





# Plan



## Excellent essays

Poll – If you were a tutor  
what would you be  
looking for in an  
excellent essay?

# Memory

Poll: What helps you remember something you read?

## We remember best:

- When we've been active
- Beginnings
- Ends
- Interesting parts
- Bits that are different
- Things that we can relate to

# Introduction structure idea

- Hook
  - **Headline:** How would you get someone else to read your essay in the first line?
- **Context**
  - Define terms in the question and background information
- **Map**
  - A tourist guide to your essay
- **Thesis**
  - What are you going to test, it must relate to the original question- main argument

# Conclusion

- Finale point
- Main supporting points
- Link to thesis
- Link to question
- No new material
- **What do you want your audience to remember?**

## Your essay

Poll: What would you do  
to make your essay  
special?

# Using PEEL to write paragraphs

- PEEL
  - Point – make it in first sentence
  - Evidence – support it with facts
  - Explain – why the evidence is supportive and why is it relevant
  - (Link – link the paragraph to the next section and/or question gives flow to essay)



## Point Poll

Poll – how do/would you decide on your point for each paragraph?

# Point

- Does it help tell the story?
- Does it connect to the other points?
- If it wasn't there would the essay be any worse?
- Do I have evidence to back it up?
- Is it in the right place?
- Would someone who hadn't read the source understand why it's in the essay?
- **Does it help answer the question?**

# Evidence

Poll: How do you  
choose your evidence?

# Evaluating sources - PROMPT

- Presentation
- Relevance
- Objectivity
- Method
- Provenance
- Timeliness

<https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/advanced-evaluation-using-prompt>

# PROMPT.

- Presentation – poorly presented work can be very valid. Equally a beautiful presentation doesn't mean the information is good.
- Relevance – Is it relevant to your needs?
- Objectivity – What's the author's point of view – could there be bias

# PROMPT

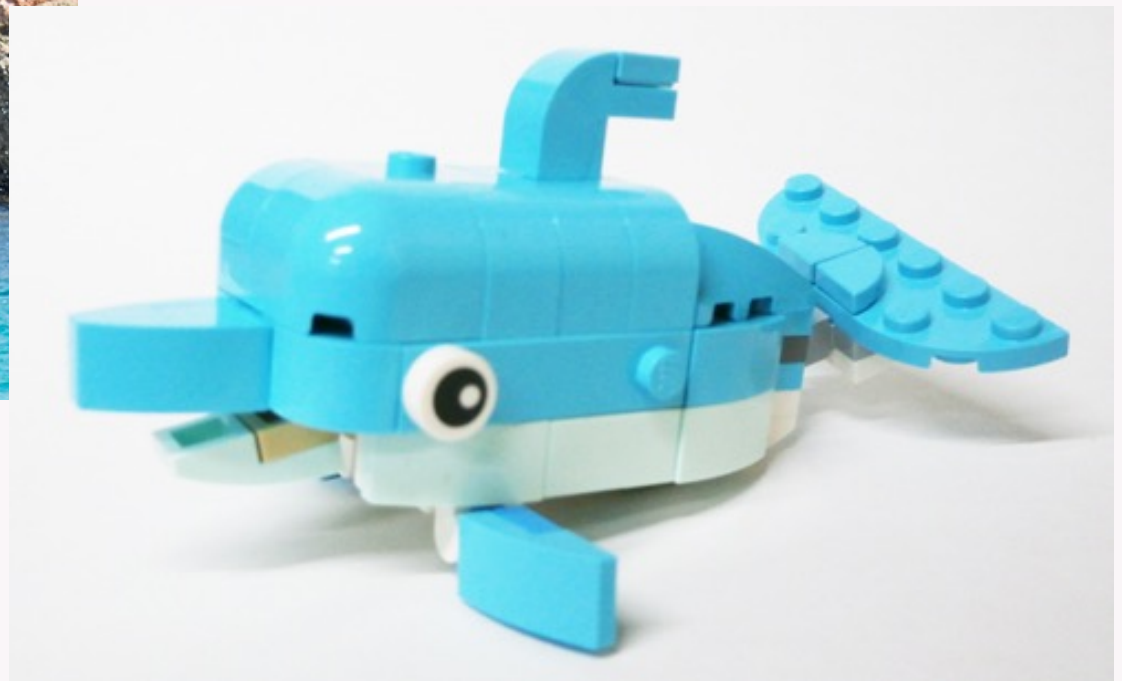
- Method – How were the results obtained?  
Is the method rigorous?  
Do the results match the method?
- Provenance – Who wrote/made it?  
Is it peer viewed?  
Which organisation was involved?
- Timeliness – When was it written?  
Does that matter for your purpose?

# Reference

- Extract your point
- In-text citation (Smith and Patel, 2017)
- End of essay reference, depends on type of source
- Find your exact version in your course materials
- Most use Harvard cite it right
- Smith, P. and Patel, K. (2017), '110 ways to make a brick dolphin', *Journal of Brick Ideas*, 8(3) pp101-192

<https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/quick-guide-to-harvard-referencing-cite-them-right>

# Building the essay

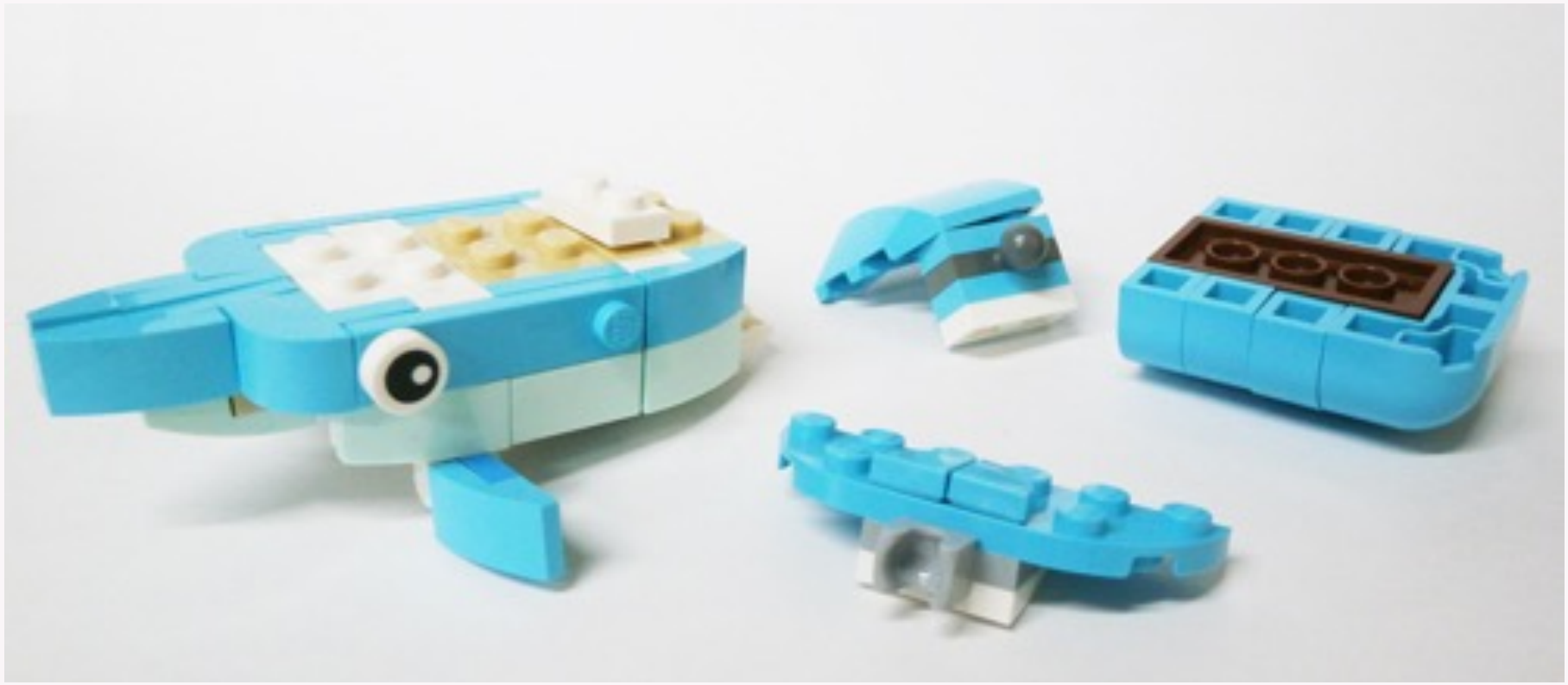




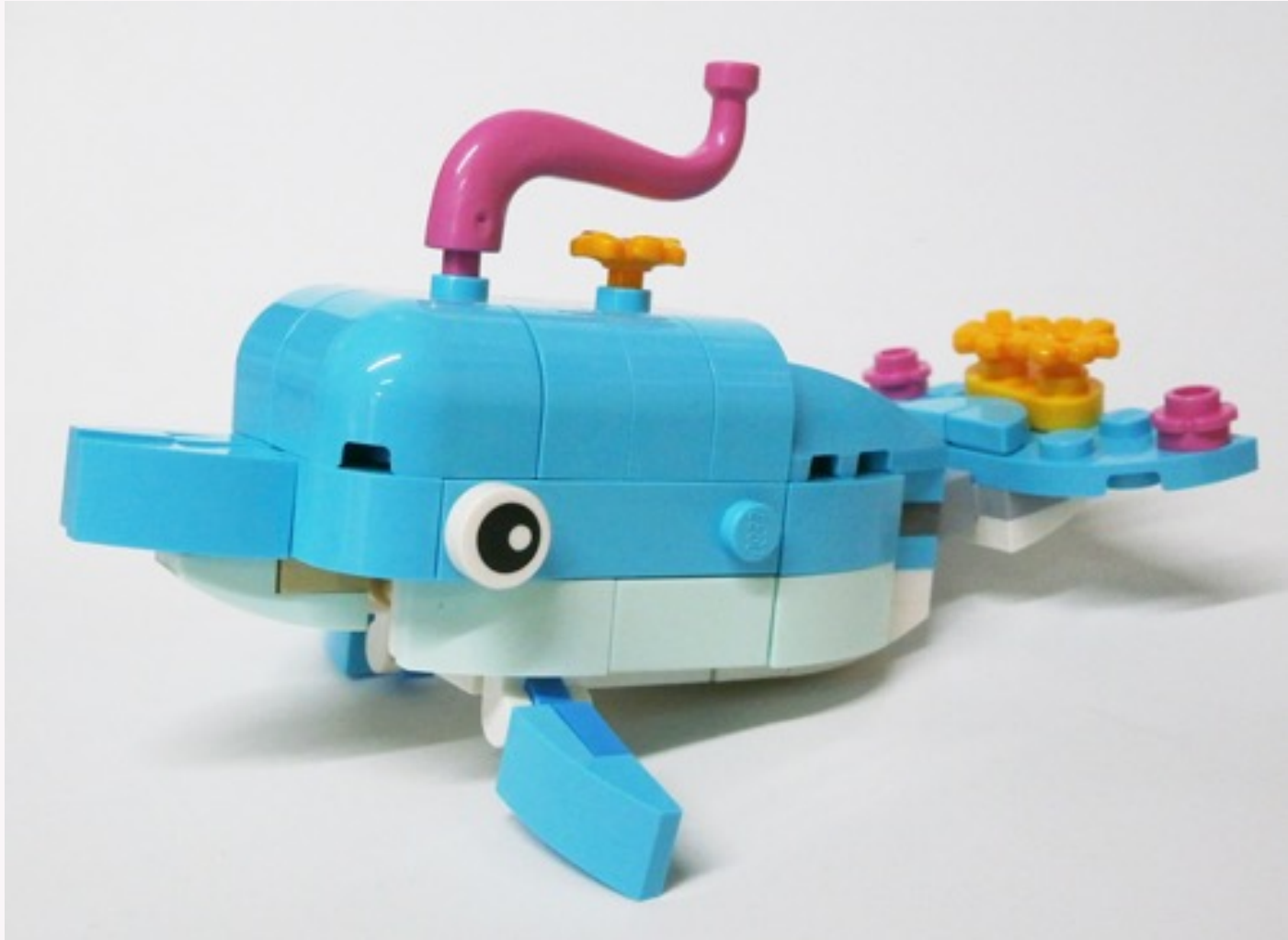
# Game – Which mistake am I?



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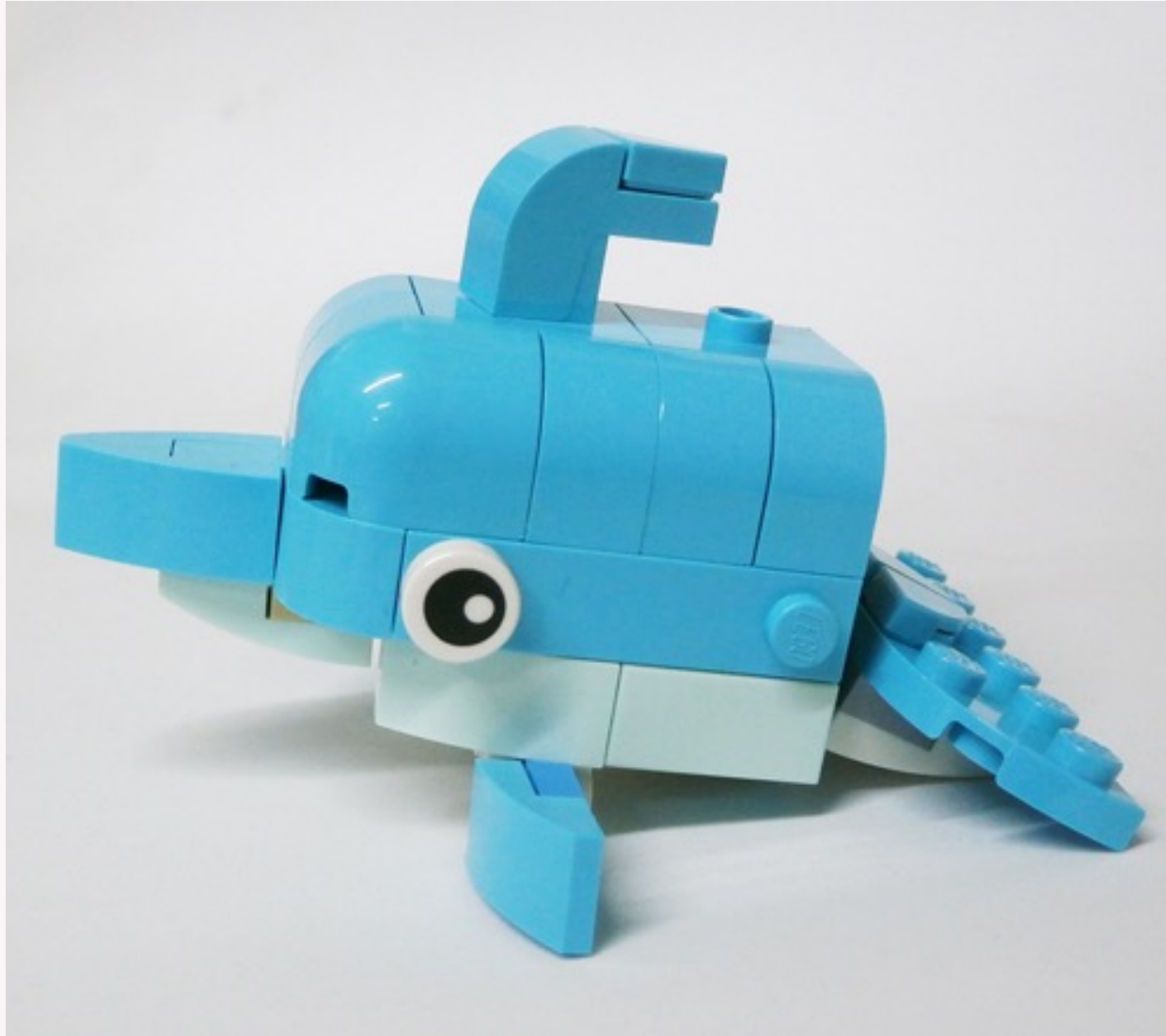
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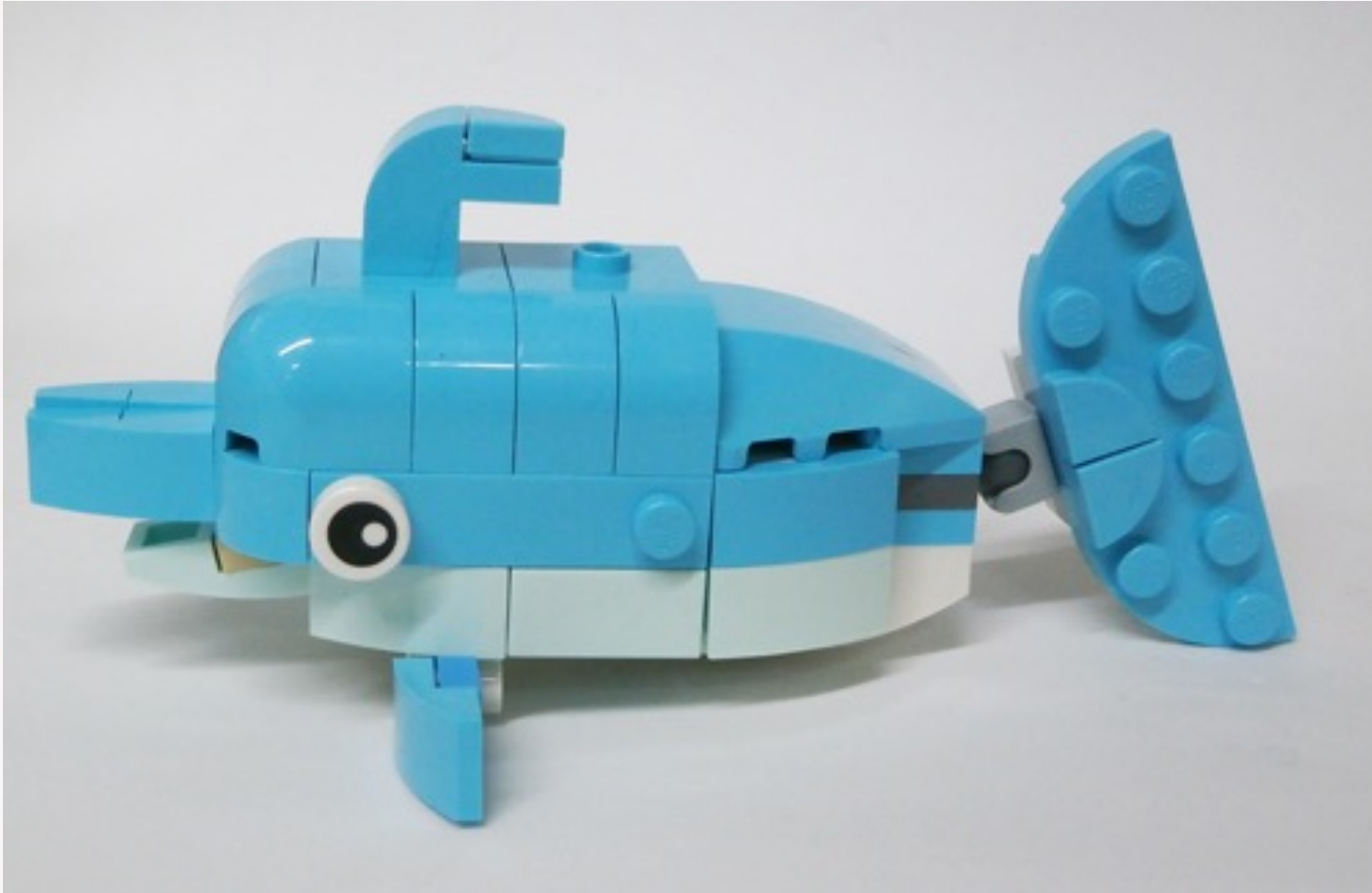




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# Essay writing mistakes

- Not connecting the parts
- Losing focus on the question
- Stealing other people's solutions
- Using the right parts but building the wrong story
- Missing out main points
- Using too many sources that weren't included in your assignment brief
- Using the right points but building something that doesn't quite match the question

## Editing

Poll: How do you edit your work?

# Editing,

- Leave it at least 24 hours after writing
- Make it a separate process to spell/grammar checking
- Get someone else to read it
- Read it aloud
- Get your computer to read it along with you
  
- Does it help answer the question?
- Does it flow?
- Has each point got evidence and an explanation?
- Word count?
- If I was reading this what mark would I give it?

# Read text shortcuts

## WINDOWS:

Press **Windows key+Ctrl+Enter**, and Narrator starts reading the text on the page to you. Stop Narrator from speaking by pressing the same shortcut.

## MAC:

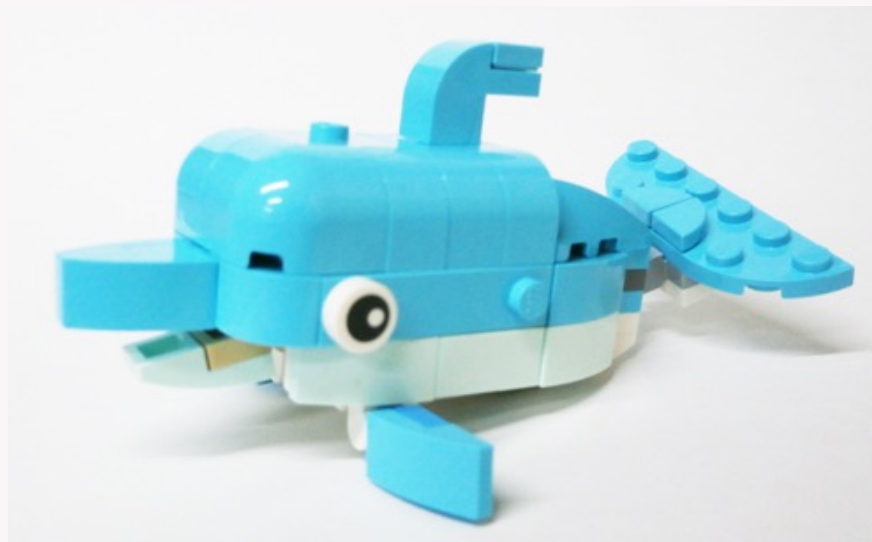
The default key combination is **Option+Esc**. If text is selected when you press the keyboard shortcut, the selected text is spoken.

## Discussion activity (poll)

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further
- ***Mistakes I'm going to avoid when writing my essay...***
- ***Things I'm going to do to write excellent essays...***
- You are welcome to add your thoughts and we will then pick up some of the themes and talk through them
- Chat does have names on but the recording will be anonymised so you will appear as 'user number'

# Take home message

- Make your essay memorable for the right reasons
- Editing makes excellent essays
- Space out and balance the stages
- Get someone else to read it



# Feedback please

Please use the following link to provide feedback to help the studenthublive team to continue to improve what we do

<https://forms.office.com/e/VwHgEag3ps>

# Upcoming sessions

Date	Time	Title
08-Nov	11am	Mastering essay writing (Advanced)
15-Nov	7pm	Creative problem-solving: techniques for success
21-Nov	11am	Support and wellbeing for student carers
22-Nov	7pm	Power reading - boost your reading skills
23-Nov	11am	Busting some myths around academic conduct
29-Nov	7pm	Memory and Learning - making the connections
05-Dec	11am	Learning from feedback
12-Dec	11am	Am I too old for this: age is just a number?
14-Dec	7pm	SHL Christmas Party
09-Jan	11am	Managing your time better
16-Jan	7pm	OU Essentials

Details, booking information and subscribe

for events at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Past student hub live online study skills sessions

<https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/eventlist> catchup

Email: [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk)