

Essay writing

This was our advert...

This workshop for Access and Level 1 students or those writing essays for the first time (or the first time in years!) covers the basics of drafting and editing essays. We will focus on how to prepare an essay plan, using each reference effectively. The workshop will introduce tone of voice, writing objectively, and how to differentiate between evidence taken from the module materials and your own ideas when answering an essay question. It is helpful (but not essential) to attend or watch the Introduction to essay planning (beginners) workshop before attending.

What do you want to learn?

Using the short answer poll provided please say what you are hoping to learn from today's session

(If you are on a mobile device remember you need to tap into the polling option)



To come back to these slides after completing a poll click on the share pod slides icon



Planning recap

- Effective essays are planned so that you have a clear idea of what you are going to do and can then know how to achieve that
- Any plan needs to have enough information for you or someone else with a reasonable grasp of the content to pick up and be clear on what is intended
- A plan is a road map of what you intend to do. It helps you to know what you intend to do and allows you to know whether you have done this
- You can also think of it as a recipe which makes it clear what is going to go into the essay and the order

First thoughts word cloud

- Using the option to type in where it says enter word here say **How do you feel about putting your essay plan into action (e.g. writing your essay)?**
- Note that these need to be single words rather than phrases, if you press the space button your first word will go through

Enter word here

Moving on

- We have talked about planning essays but this session is about the actual writing, so converting that plan into the final essay

Poll time

If you saw this as an advert for a film what might it be about?



Why do we ask?

- You need to be clear in your essay what it is about
- Your reader also needs to have a clear idea and follow your thread
- Sometimes essays meander or are misleading and don't cover what they say they're going to

Poll time - priorities

Which of the following aspects of the essay writing process is most important to you personally?

- Identifying the content
- Articulating how the content relates to the point
- Structuring overall
- Referencing correctly
- Editing
- Critical evaluation

Your learning journey

- Whilst there is content you need to cover within your essay, the way you do it and what you personally decide you are intending to maximise your effort on it up to you,
- At different points in your learning journey your focus may be on different underlying skills

Poll time- worries

What worries you most about writing essays?

Please use the short answer poll to give your ideas and we will discuss some (and come back to others)

Hopefully!

- We'll cover ideas to address many of these issues
- Remember your own module assessment guide as well as the student home help centre and library resources e.g.
- Referencing your sources
<https://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/pathways/13/15>
- Quick guide to Harvard / cite them right
<https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/quick-guide-to-harvard-referencing-cite-them-right>

Don't forget!

- Allocated tutor
- Module resources
- Tutorials dedicated for your module / faculty / pathway

Tone of voice 1

- Most essays are written in the third person
- You are writing, in your own words, about things that other people say, and you are using your own academic knowledge to decide what to include and why it is relevant
- You are not, **unless specified**, writing about your opinion, experiences or perspectives
- It is better to be clear than to forthwith and henceforth confuse and confuddle your reader with lots of sophisticated words that are entirely unnecessary

Identifying opinions

- Sometimes obvious due to words I, we or emotive language
- Is there a citation?
- Does the point make sense for the contexts?

Tone of voice 2

- There will be times when you are expressing your objective view about someone else's opinion
- And other times when you will be relaying what that opinion is
- And sometimes you will explain why that opinion is relevant



Using each source effectively 1

- In your essay plan you should have various sources of evidence
- That evidence needs to be linked back to the topic
- In your plan you should have considered what to include and in what order, but in writing the essay you can consider weight



Using each source effectively 2

- This does not mean relating everything that you haven't included...
- This does not mean using value laden words to try and emotively persuade your reader
- This also doesn't mean stating which source you view is most important (unless asked)
- Your words should convey the importance

Tips and techniques for writing

You are the tour guide

- This tour will....
- This is important because....
- There are lots of things here but notice this....
- This is very different compared to....
- While that was interesting, another area to look at is....



Main argument

- You need to be clear what your main argument is
- Check the instructions, including process words
- Ideally, a clear central theme or tenet will run through your essay to make that main argument clear

Being clear you are addressing the question in the right way:

- These are the instructions that tell you what you need to do:
- Describe
- Explain
- Critically analyse

- We strongly recommend the studenthome > study skills resources here - <https://help.open.ac.uk/understanding-the-question>

Structure

- You can adopt a structure like this if you wish but the key is to ensuring that the essay funnels in important information.
 - So the introduction frames what is needed
 - then the information is covered before....
 - the funnel moves back out to summarise
- All words apart from the main content and argument should be framing and shaping essay

Pace and flow

Remember our tour bus example...

- The essay must continuously drive along, or you are idling and won't see any new sights
- But a speeding trip will make it difficult to see each sight as you go past
- At times the pace can be fast (e.g. moving between sights / linking information), and at other times it can be slower (when you need to take those photos / a lot of detail)

Paragraph structures - PEE

- PEE

- Point – make it
- Evidence – support it with facts
- Explain – why the evidence is relevant

Tip – if you read the first sentence of each paragraph you should get a good idea about the flow of the essay. You should not begin a paragraph with evidence – it is important to introduce it and explain how it contributes

Discussion activity

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further.
- *Things I do well in my essay writing are....*
- *Things I would like to do better in my essay writing are...*
- 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'

Further questions

- If you have any further questions please ask them in the chat pod now and we will do our best to answer them (within the remit of this being a non-modular session 😊)

Take home message

- Essay writing is a process and takes practice
- An essay is a story that communicates a topic in a structured way and all paragraphs relate to that topic, even though they may have their own mini topic

Feedback please

Please use the following link to provide feedback to help the Student Hub Live team to continue to improve what we do

<https://forms.office.com/e/WfcmYd19JG>



25-Oct	11am	Adobe	Mastering essay planning (Advanced)
01-Nov	11am	Adobe	Developing your essay writing (Intermediate)
08-Nov	11am	Adobe	Mastering essay writing (Advanced)
15-Nov	7pm	Adobe	Creative problem-solving: techniques for success
21-Nov	11am	Adobe Niche	Support and wellbeing for student carers
22-Nov	7pm	Adobe	Power reading - boost your reading skills
23-Nov	11am	Connect Live	Busting some myths around academic conduct
29-Nov	7pm	Adobe	Memory and Learning - making the connections

Details and booking information from
<http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>

Past student hub live online study skills sessions [here](#)

Visit us at <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/> and subscribe for events as they are announced. Send us feedback at studenthub@open.ac.uk

