Mastering Essay Writing

# This was our advert…

This workshop is aimed at Level 3 and post graduate students who have written numerous essays and want to polish them further. We will explore how to perfect references and produce effective arguments. We will discuss how to edit your work, and ensure that there is clarity and cohesion in the finished piece. The 'Developing your essay writing (intermediate)' workshop covers many of the basics used in this workshop and it would be extremely useful to have attended that workshop or watch the recording prior to joining this workshop.

https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/eventlist_catchup

What do you want to learn?

Using the short answer poll provided please say what you are hoping to learn from today's session
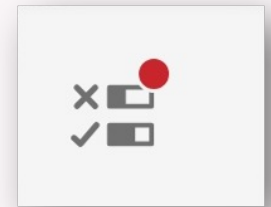
If you are on a mobile device remember you need to tap into the polling option

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

This session assumes…

- You understand what you are being asked to write the essay about

- You have read all the relevant content

- You have already planned the essay in outline

- You are familiar with essay writing in general and have written some essays before but want to improve

➢ This is the **advanced** session not covering basic writing or planning

Planning recap

- Effective essays are planned so that you have a clear idea of what you are going to do

- In our planning sessions we discuss structuring effectively

- We give ideas for ways to recognise what was important and highlighted the fact that a plan can give away key clues – it needs to be obvious what is going to come,

Polls

In your essay, planning, which of the following do you regularly do?

- Analyse question – process/topic/criteria
- Plan research
- Research
- Return to question
- Brain dump
- Organise brain dump
- Plan – evaluate, prioritise

What sort of structure do you use to plan your essay?

- Handwritten linear
- Typed linear
- Flow diagram
- Mindmap
- Pod grouping
- Venn diagram

An essay journey

- Remember our analogy of the journey: An essay starts somewhere, it goes somewhere, and it will have differences along the way

- You need to let your reader know this so that they know what to expect.

- This session looks at improving the ways you can improve key parts of your journey.

Paragraph structure ideas recap

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

PESELS
- Point - make the point for paragraph
- Explain - what do you mean
- Support - provide evidence
- Evaluate - what is for/against
- Link - to the essay task
- Signpost - to the next paragraph

CLEO (law)
- Claim/ Law / Evaluation /Outcome

Using Tutor Feedback

•Are you so keen to make progress that you read the mark, but not the comments provided in the feedback you've been given?

•Do you allow yourself the time to refer back to what you did in light of your tutor's feedback and see whether or not you can apply that advice to the next assignment?

•Is your tutor as critical of your work as you are? Perhaps you are too self-critical and your tutor's comments could help to provide a better sense of perspective.

If you are not reading and acting on your tutor's feedback, you are denying yourself the opportunity to improve and to save time. You are wasting a very valuable learning resource. You may be working hard but you won't be 'working smart'.

Academic language

What do you think we mean by 'Formal or Academic Writing?

In the poll tell us some of the things that make a piece of writing 'Formal or Academic'

We will then compare with some ideas form the OU.

Academic language

What do we mean by 'formal writing' at postgraduate level?

• Work needs to be grounded and supported by appropriate (informed and credible) sources.

• The language used is more tentative or cautious (fewer 'absolute' statements).

• Colloquial terms and contractions (don't, won't, shouldn't, etc.) are avoided.

Academic language

•Ideas from others need to be attributed accurately (cited and referenced appropriately).

•Writing needs to be structured logically, with clear expression of thought.

•It needs to show a deeper, more critical engagement with the subject matter.

•There should be clear evidence of your extended reading and understanding of the topic.

•Writing at the very highest level, approaches the style you would read in a scholarly publication, such as an academic journal.
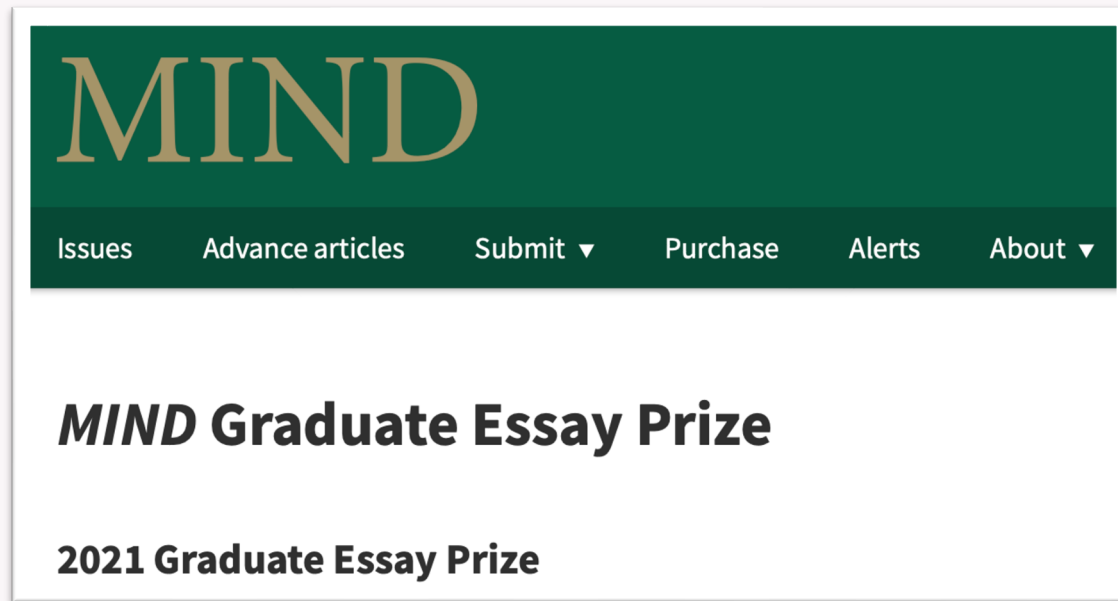
Academic language

https://academic.oup.com/mind/pages/graduate_essay_prize

The winner of this year's prize is the essay 'What Would a Phenomenology of Logic Look Like', by James Kinkaid
The essay can be accessed using your OU credentials at:

https://academic.oup.com/mind/advance-article/doi/10.1093/mind/fzaa031/5900373

Academic language

The **Academic Phrasebank**   https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk

- being critical
- being cautious
- classifying and listing
- comparing and contrasting
- defining terms
- describing trends
- describing quantities
- explaining causality
- giving examples
- signalling transition
- writing about the past

Succeeding in postgraduate study
https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/succeeding-postgraduate-study/content-section-overview?active-tab=description-tab

Academic language

the student hub live

Academic Phrasebank
The University of Manchester

[Search box] [Search]

Introducing work | **Referring to sources** | **Describing methods** | **Reporting results** | **Discussing findings** | **Writing conclusions**

Academic Phrasebank / Being cautious

GENERAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

- Being cautious
- Being critical
- Classifying and listing
- Compare and contrast
- Defining terms
- Describing trends
- Describing quantities
- Explaining causality
- Giving examples
- Signalling transition
- Writing about the past

An enhanced and expanded version of PHRASEBANK is available in PDF or Kindle format:

[PDF icon] [kindle icon]

Being cautious

One of the most noticeable stylistic aspects of academic communication is the tendency for writers to avoid expressing absolute certainty, where there may be a small degree of uncertainty, and to avoid making over-generalisations, where a small number of exceptions might exist. This means that there are many instances where the epistemological strength (strength of knowledge) of a statement or claim is mitigated (weakened) in some way. In the field of linguistics, devices for lessening the strength of a statement or claim are known as hedging devices.Analysis of research reports have shown that discussion sections tend to be particularly rich in hedging devices, particularly where writers are offering explanations for findings.

— Devices that distance the author from a proposition

It is thought that …
It is believed that …
It has been reported that …
It is a widely held view that …
It has commonly been assumed that …

According to Smith (2002), …
According to recent reports, …
According to many in the field …
Many scholars hold the view that …
Smith (2001) holds the view that …
Recent research has suggested that …
There is some evidence to suggest that …
If Smith's (2001) findings are accurate, …

Concluding Paragraph

An essay should always have a concluding paragraph.
An effective concluding paragraph should:
- refer to the assignment question and its key content words
- refer to the claim made in the introduction
- refer to and draw together the points made in the main body of the essay
- provide a clear answer to the question
- provide a brief comment (optional).

Discussion activity (poll)

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further

- ***The area of my essay writing I feel I need to improve most is……..***

- ***I am going to improve my essay writing further by…***

- 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 appears as 'user number'

Activity: Comparing conclusions

- There are two pods containing conclusions here.

- In order to read the conclusion you will need to maximize the pods by clicking on the icon top right or the three dots and selecting 'Go Full Screen'

- To return click on the reduce icon or the three dots and 'Exit Full Screen'

- Put your comments about each of the conclusions in the relevant poll
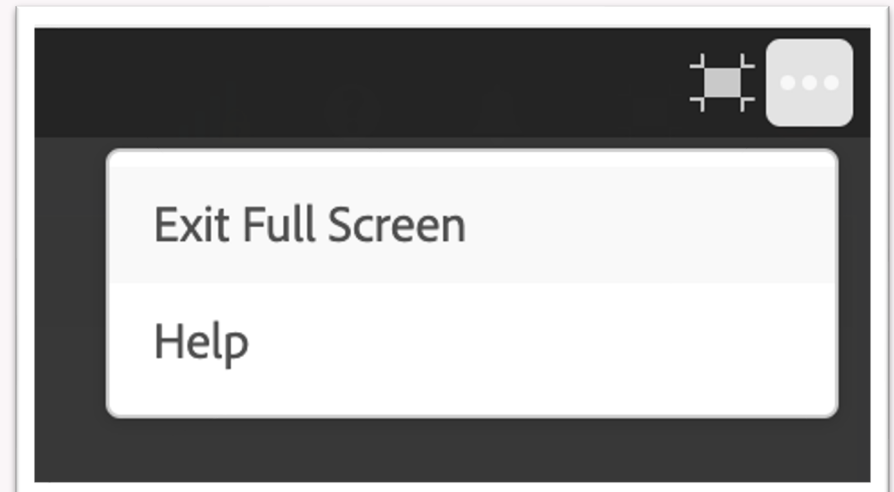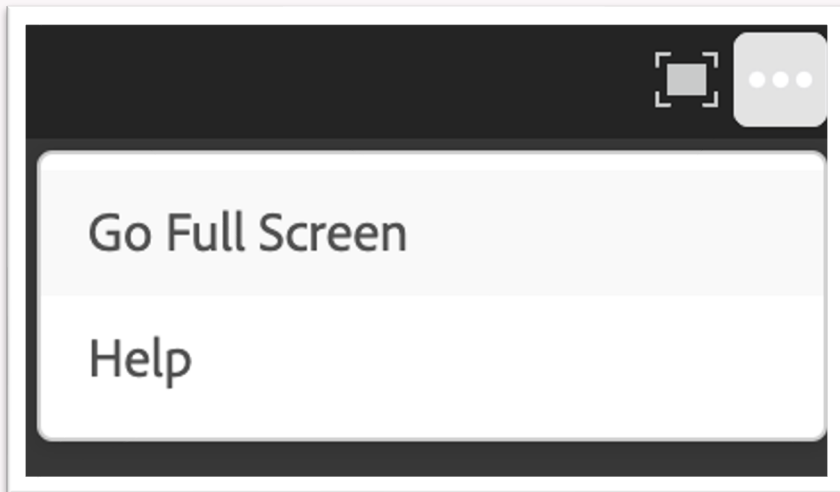
Concluding Paragraph 1

To conclude, in each of the settings described there can always be valid reasons for an individual's private space to be entered. Aspects of safety cannot be ignored and regulations must be adhered to, particularly in non-domestic settings. There are always the problems of staff routines, and the greater good of all patients must be balanced against an individual's needs. However, care should be taken when handling all these situations. Care staff should always remember that they are dealing with individual people. It must be difficult enough to cope with the loss of physical or mental capabilities, and to have to come to terms with the impossibility of ever leading a healthy independent life again without the added indignity of being treated as an object. Everyone is entitled to respect and to be given at least some control and freedom. This is a basic human right.

Concluding Paragraph 2

To conclude, whether they work in hospitals, residential homes or patients' homes, carers must be sensitive to the different characteristics of private and public spaces. This sensitivity helps to carefully balance, on the one hand, patients' need to privacy, dignity and control over their lives and, on the other, the carers' need to guarantee safety and effective care. Evidence shows that this approach ultimately affects quality of care as patients will appreciate the security provided by the care context but at the same time benefit from having at least some autonomy and some control over their private spaces. This is likely to increase patients' well-being and favour the recovery process.

Referencing

Welcome to Cite Them Right

Choose your referencing style

Quick guide to Cite Them Right referencing for Law modules

https://www.open.ac.uk/library/referencing-and-plagiarism/quick-guide-to-cite-them-right-referencing-for-law-modules

Quick guide to Harvard referencing (Cite Them Right)

https://www.open.ac.uk/library/referencing-and-plagiarism/quick-guide-to-harvard-referencing-cite-them-right

Take home message

- Perfecting essay writing requires a careful application of appropriate language

- Feedback is an essential resource

- Information has to be tailored to the remit and lend appropriate weight to different concepts

Upcoming sessions

15 Nov 7pm Intro to critical thinking & writing
22 Nov 7pm Developing critical thinking & writing
29 Nov 7pm Advanced critical thinking & writing

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
Send us feedback at studenthub@open.ac.uk