

student hub live is the OU's live online interactive platform to support academic community



Margaret Greenhall is a study skills specialist. She tutors on science level one and level two environmental courses. She is also an OU geology student. Her hobbies are rowing, baking and Lego.



Fred Motson has taught Law at undergraduate and postgraduate level for 15 years. He Chairs a first year Law module and teaches across Levels 1, 2 and 3. His hobbies include 5-a-side football, computer games and following Derby County FC.

Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop to help you get thinking your essay writing skills
- There is a lot of interaction so please be ready to answer polls (questions) or add to chat pod during the session
- You'll get the chance to discuss further and ask additional questions at the end

Session purpose

- **Is for:**
- Covering some ideas on essay writing
- Give some guidance about ways to improve your essays
- Provide a space to share ideas and connect with other students
- **Is not for:**
- Telling you what you HAVE to do
- Providing module specific advice

Inclusivity

- We welcome all students at our workshops. Please do be aware that they can be very busy and some students may struggle with the non scripted nature. Slides are available to download within the live session and from the event page on the studenthublive website to follow along or prepare for what will come up.

Please be aware

- These sessions are large scale
- They are very busy
- There is lots of interaction
- They are not the same as other tutorials
- You can maximise slides on your own screen by clicking the icon



Please

- Do NOT share any personal information in the chat pod during the session
- On the recording names will be anonymised to user number
- However if you type anyone's full name or any other personal information in the chat pod it can be seen by everybody and it would also show up on the recording

Initial poll

What's your main reason for coming along today?

- Never written essays before
- Hints and tips to get better
- Learn how to plan
- To help stop procrastination
- To get new ideas
- Essays scare me and I need help
- I would like better grades
- I want to learn how to make essay writing easier
- Other - please use chat

Introduction to Essay Writing

R

This was our advert...

- This is the first session on essay writing, and it follows on from our series on essay planning. Essays are often the first long piece of writing people have done and getting the content and structure right is a new skill to learn.
- We'll look at the different stages involved and the purpose of essays and show you how to structure what you write, identifying the vital components. We'll consider the types of information sources you might use and where to find them. You will receive advice on finding your own voice and avoiding plagiarism.
- Essays are a great tool for showcasing your understanding of what you have been studying and they help you to get more depth in your subject area, so it makes sense to refresh your skills and produce the best essay you can.

Help elsewhere

- Help centre <https://help.open.ac.uk>
- 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>

Planning

- Most of the work in writing an essay is spent making the plan
- Excellent essays are planned so you know what you are going to do and can then know how to achieve that
- Any plan needs to have enough information for you to know what is included in each part of the essay
- A plan is a recipe for what you intend to do
- Best cure for writer's block

Essay planning stages

- Analyse the question
- Plan the information search
- Plan the essay writing

- Plan your time

First thoughts poll

How do you feel about writing essays?

Poll time

What's the purpose of an essay?

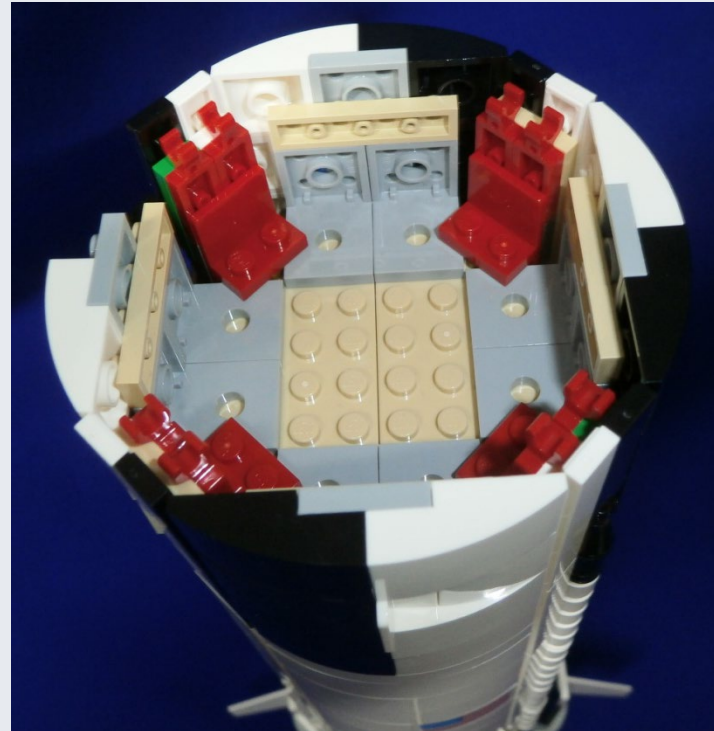
What's the purpose of an essay?

- To assess your skills at reading and analysing large volumes of material
- To check your understanding of a topic
- To show your ability to communicate complex ideas
- To grade you relative to the learning outcomes
- To build your understanding and skills

Essay writing stages



Essay writing stages



Poll

What are the stages you need to go through to write an excellent essay?

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

Essay parts

- Introduction 10 -15%
- Paragraphs 75 - 80%
- Conclusion 10%
- References

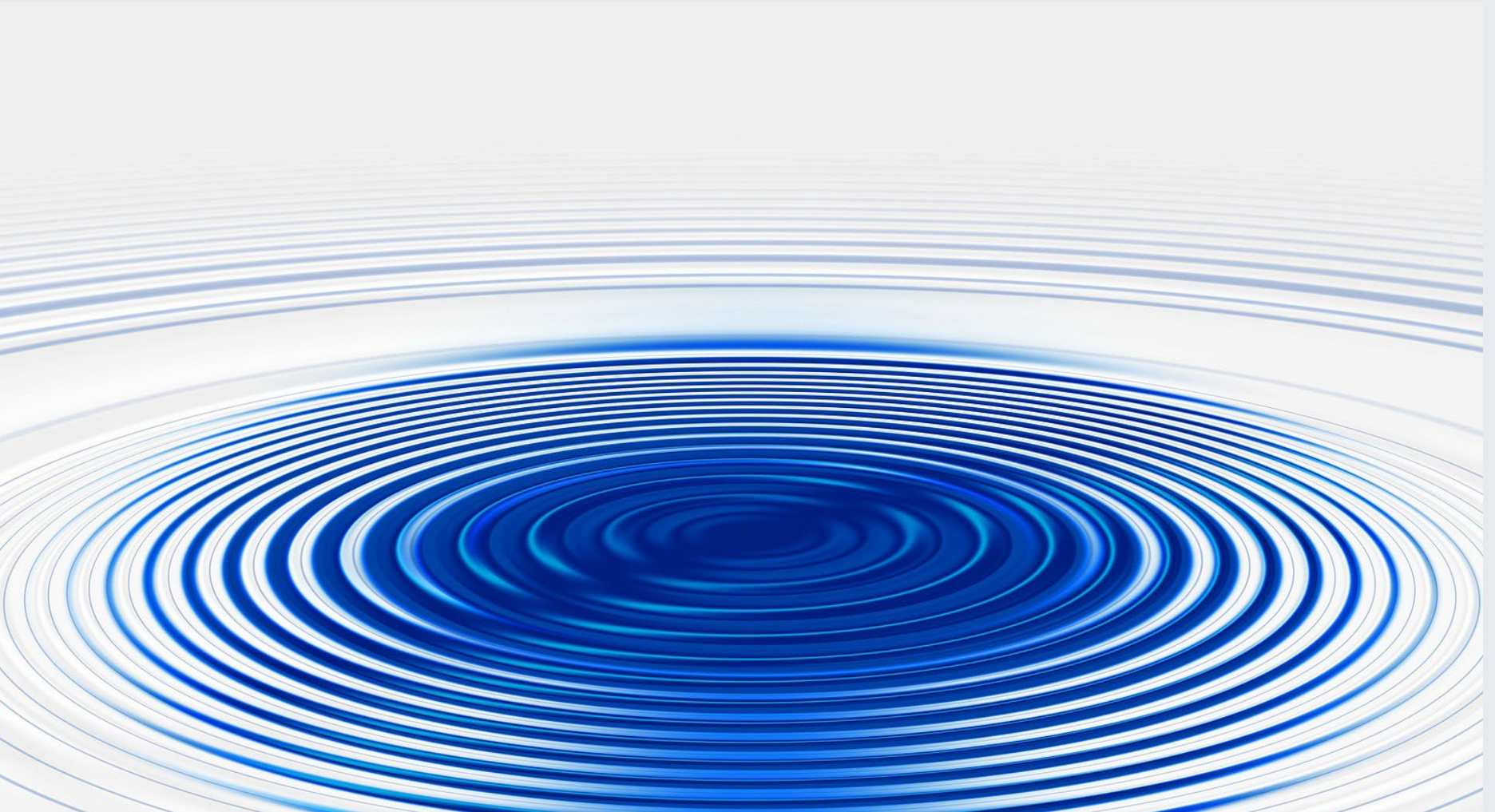
Source material poll

- What things do you use as source materials for your course?

Primary sources/references

- **Primary – Original data**
- First person experience of the material eg:
 - laws
 - physical artifacts from the time
 - research paper written by people who did research, peer reviewed in a journal
 - research thesis
 - usually first appearance of information

Sources/references



Secondary sources/references

- **Secondary – used the original data**
- Have seen or heard the primary sources
- Citation of a paper within another paper
- Commentary on primary sources



Tertiary sources/references

- **Tertiary – used the secondary sources**
- Have NOT seen or heard the primary sources
- Not usually credited to particular authors

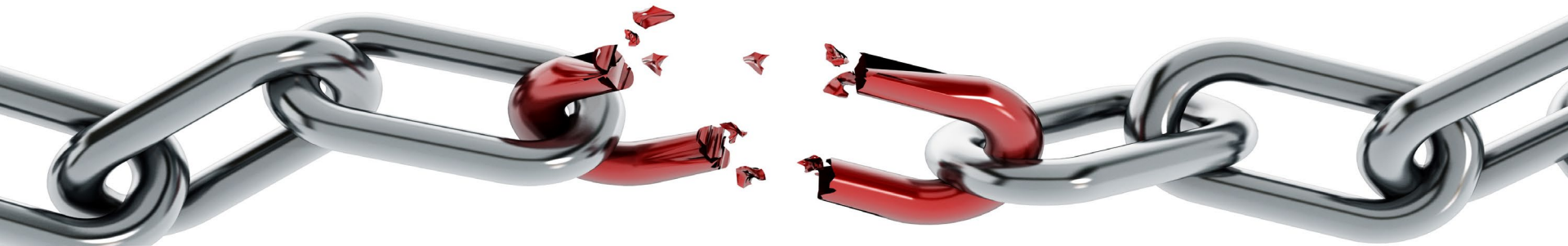
- Reviews
- Newspapers
- Books/websites
- Dictionary/Encyclopaedia

Non-confirmed sources/references

- **Hearsay/Gossip – Have not used the sources**
- Have NOT seen or heard sources
- Uncredited internet sites
- Presentations
- Books
- Opinions

Types of sources/references

- **Hearsay/Gossip – not used sources**
- Assumed to be general knowledge
- Not necessarily wrong but the chain is broken



In text citation

- However, there were 126 small coal mines with narrow seams and low quality (Nadin, 2012) in Rossendale.

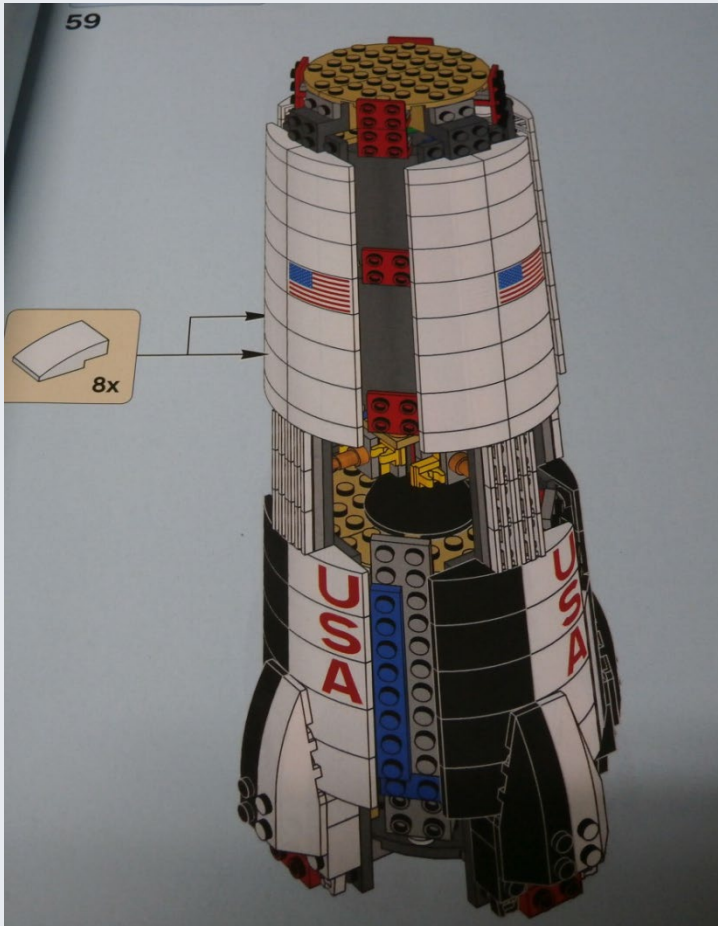
End reference

- Nadin, J, (2012) *The Rossendale Coalfield*, Stroud: The History Press
- <https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/quick-guide-to-harvard-referencing-cite-them-right>

Same source - different levels

1. Literature review in a doctoral thesis
2. Background information in the thesis introduction (not referenced)
3. The research the thesis author did

Same project different sources



Poll

- How do you use your source materials to choose your content?

Planning your research

- Make a list of all the sources
- Identify what level they are likely to be
- Go through them all at high speed – 2 to 4 seconds per page
- Prioritise them
- Leave it at least 24 hours
- Read individual sources
- Keep records as you read
- <https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/content/power-reading-boost-your-reading-skills-9-may-2024> (3/12/24)

Keeping good notes

Essay title

Date due

Date	Topic notes	Main point	In text citation	Full reference	URL

PROMPT

- Presentation
 - Relevance
 - Objectivity
 - Method
 - Provenance
 - Timeliness
-
- <https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/advanced-evaluation-using-prompt>

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)

Procrastination

- What do you do that stops you writing your essay?
- What ideas do you have for making sure you work effectively?

Getting started

- Control your environment
- Go for the low hanging fruit
- I'll just do 5 minutes
- Remember no one else will ever read it
- You need to be in it to win it

Extra details make the difference



Poll

- How do you learn a new skill?
- How can you apply this to learning to write essays in the right way?

Tone of voice

- 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 specifically asked**, 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?
- Always go back to PEEL

Writing in your own words

- Plagiarism software looks at course materials, other students' work and web
- Just removing a few words is not acceptable
- Leave time between reading and writing
- It's OK to use the same word if it's the best one just not every time
- Use thesauruses <https://www.thesaurus.com/>
- Why – it's the way you show you've understood the material
- How do you make sure you write in your own words?

Your synthesis



Editing

- Leave it at least 24 hours after writing
- Make it a separate process to spell/grammar checking
- 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?

Discussion activity



- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further
- ***I am successful at writing when...***
- ***I am going to explore 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 appear as 'user number'

Take home message

- 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



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/B50mJEfLHQ>

Selected upcoming events



- 25 Mar 11 am Critical thinking (Advanced)
- 26 Mar 7 pm Developing your essay writing
- 27 Mar 11 am Q & A ask the student support team
- 01 Apr 11 am Memory and Learning
- 03 Apr 11 am Studying with disability complete your module successfully
- 09 Apr 11 am ND planning to complete your module successfully
- 23 Apr 11 am Tackling procrastination successfully
- 24 Apr 11 am Support and wellbeing for student carers
- 01 May 11 am Studying when English is not your first language
- 06 May 7 pm Learning from feedback

For more information on all past and upcoming events, go to <http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/>