

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



Margaret Greenhall is a study skills specialist. She has applied the same skills as you'll use in writing essays to write a book. She tutors on science level 1 courses. Her hobbies are rowing and Lego.



Lucy Anderson is an OU tutor at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She puts the critical evaluation skills she learnt as a research scientist to good use preparing module materials, exams and assignments. In her spare time, Lucy is found covered in mud either with her horse or on the allotment.

# 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](https://www.studenthublive.com) 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 is your main reason for coming along to this session? Please choose the option that fits for you today:

- Study skills for current module(s)
- Study skills for future module (s)
- Connecting with other students
- Gain new ideas
- Responding to suggestion from tutor
- Recommendation from SST/Library
- Curious about what studenthublive is

# Developing your Essay Writing

**R**



## 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.

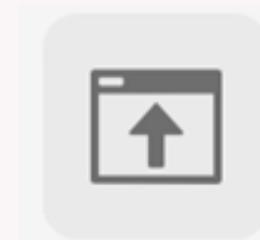
# What do you want to learn?

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



# Hopefully!

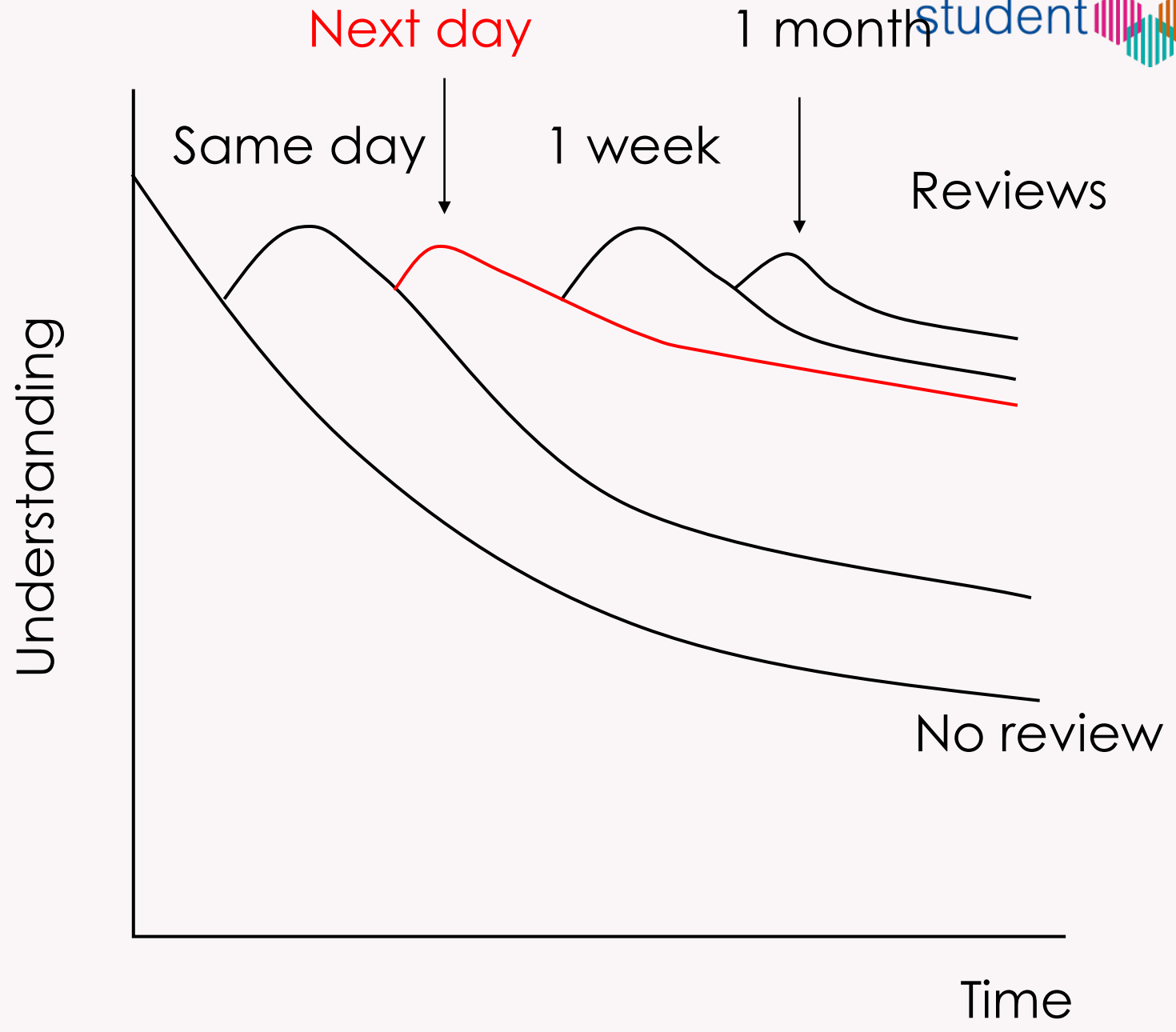
- We'll cover ideas to address many of these issues
- Remember your own module assessment guide as well as the studenthome help and the library
- Quick guide to Harvard / cite them right  
<https://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/quick-guide-to-harvard-referencing-cite-them-right>

# Beginners Essay Writing recap

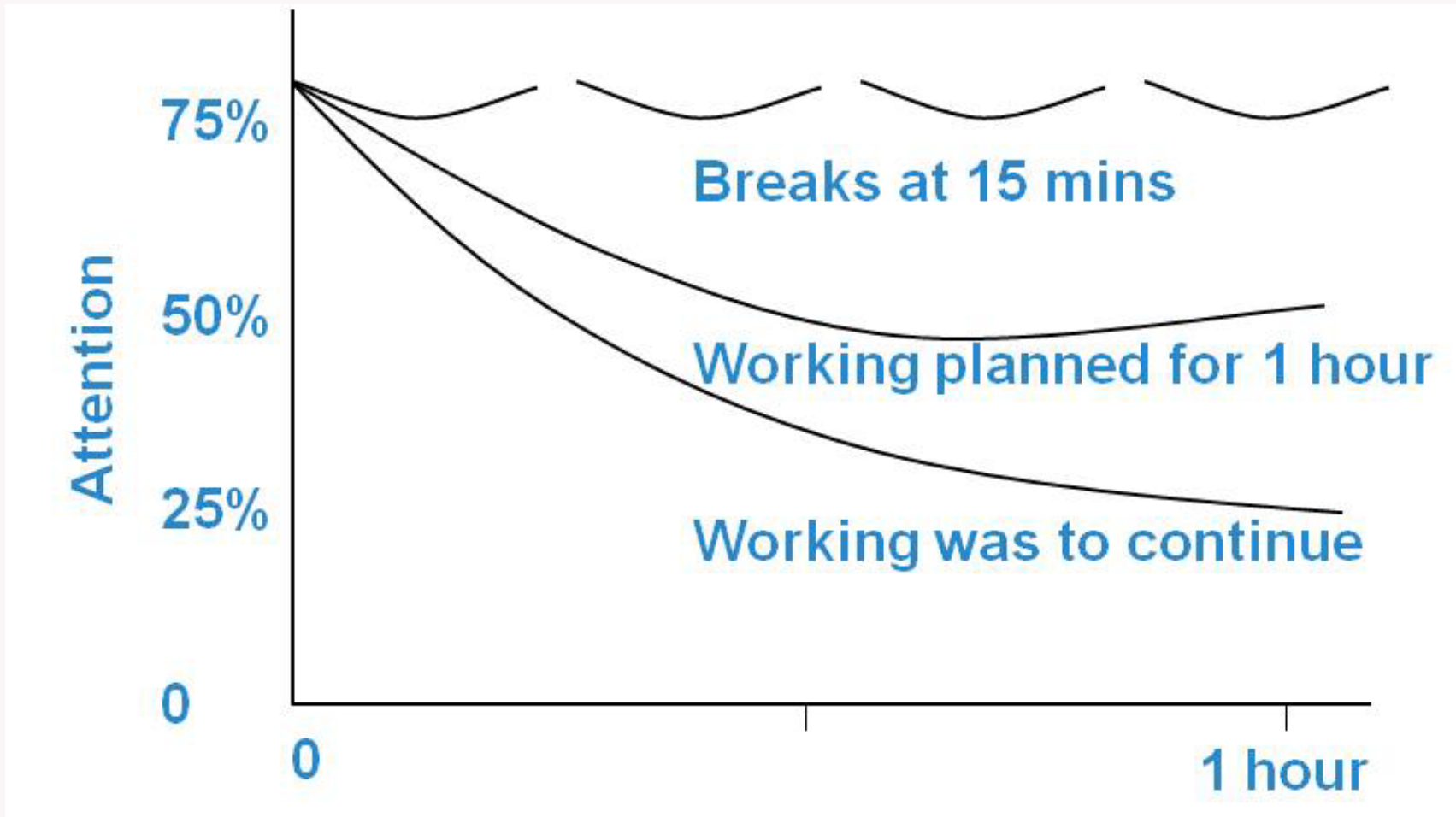
- Essay writing is a staged process
- Most of the work is hidden
- Take it one step at a time
- The final order doesn't have to be the order you write
- Do something – procrastination is a route to poor marks

# 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)



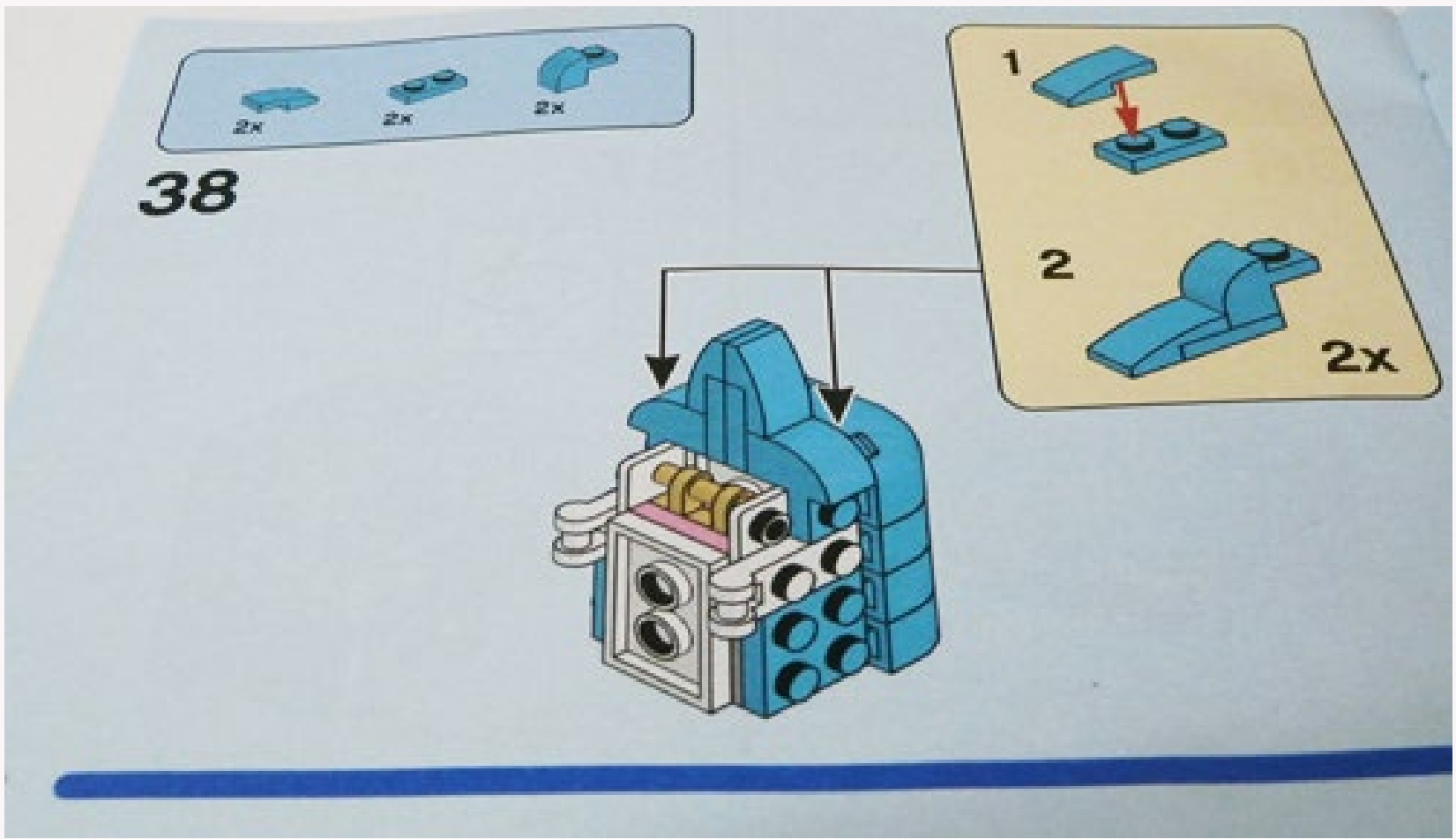
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomodoro\\_Technique](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomodoro_Technique)

# 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 – 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?**

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# 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

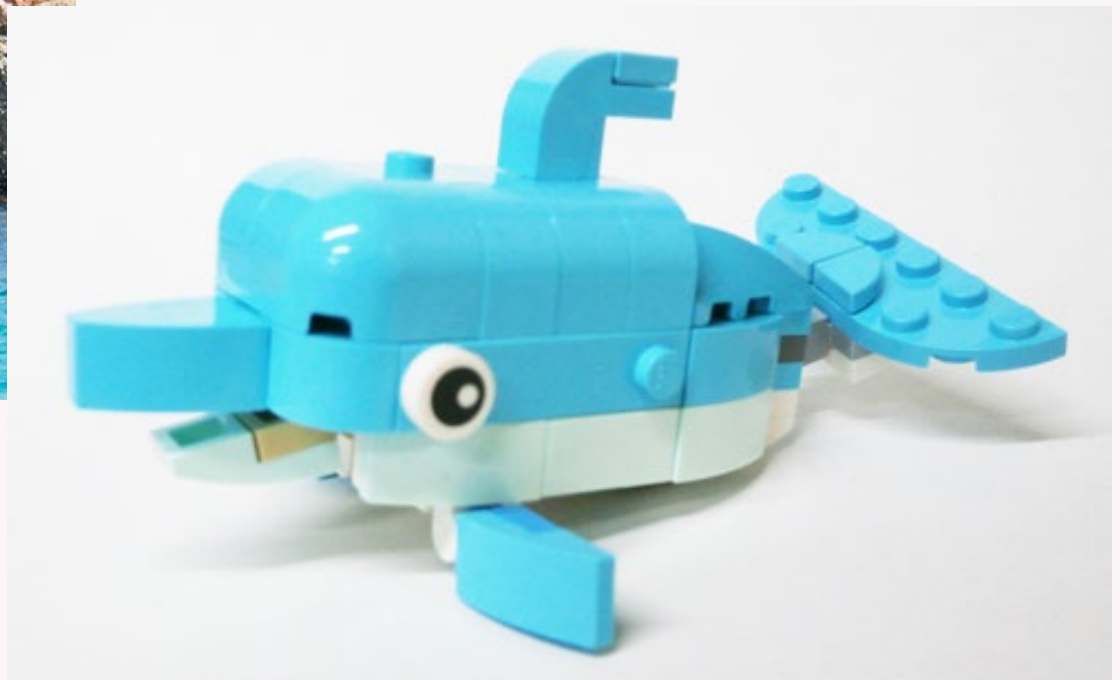
# PROMPT

- Method – How were the results obtained?  
Is the method rigorous?  
Do the results match the method?
- Provenance – Who wrote/made it?  
Is it peer reviewed?  
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?

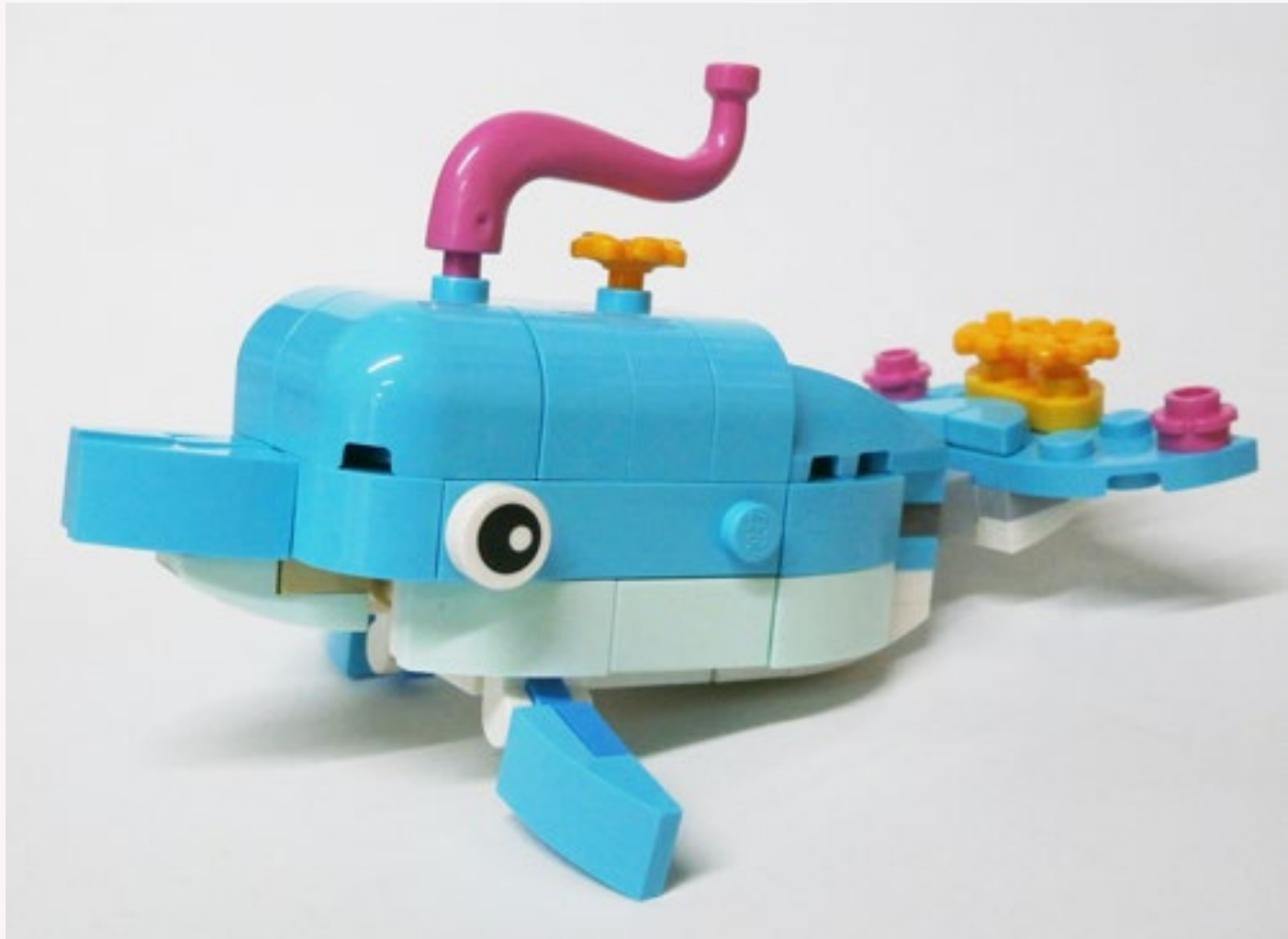


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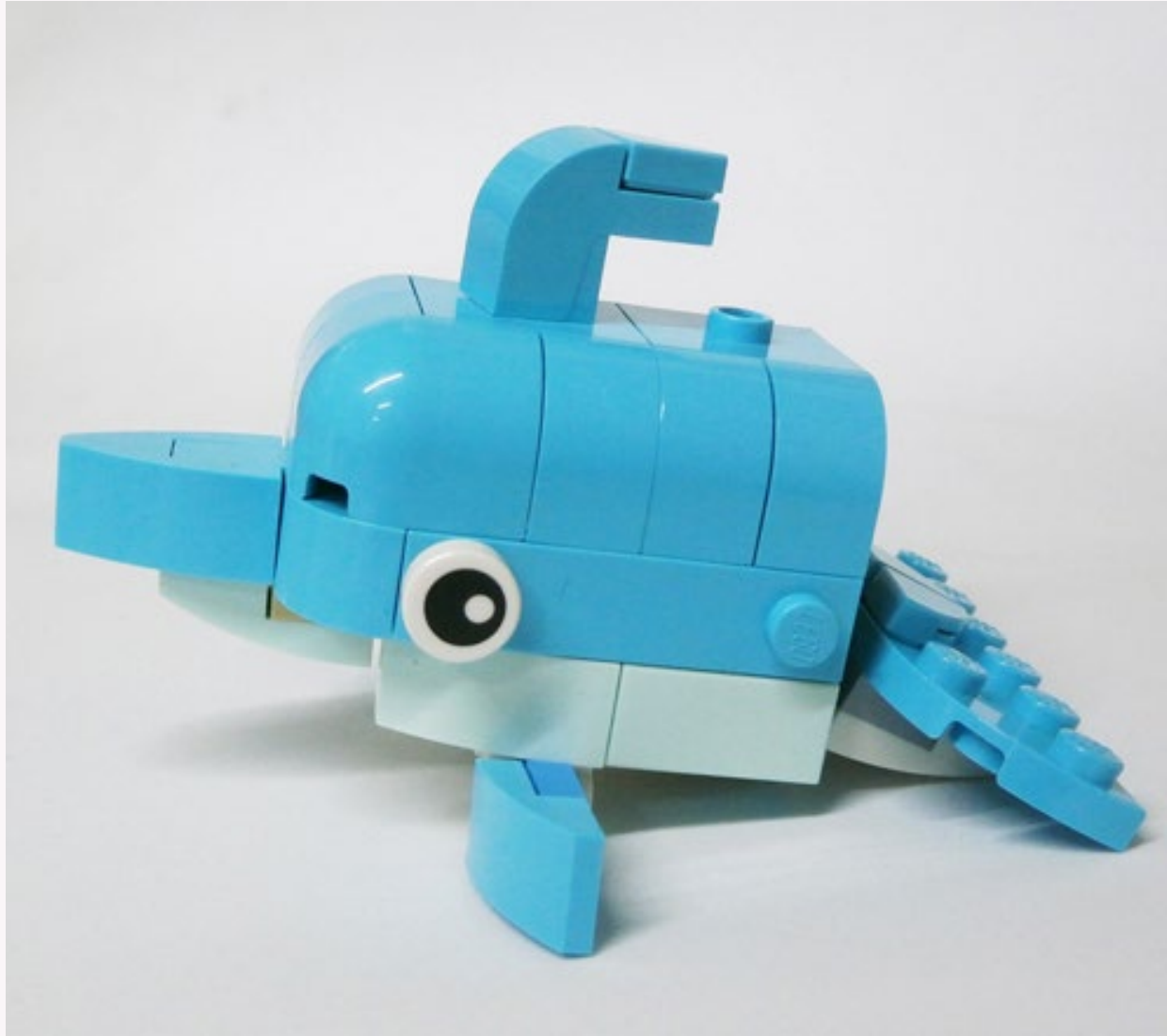
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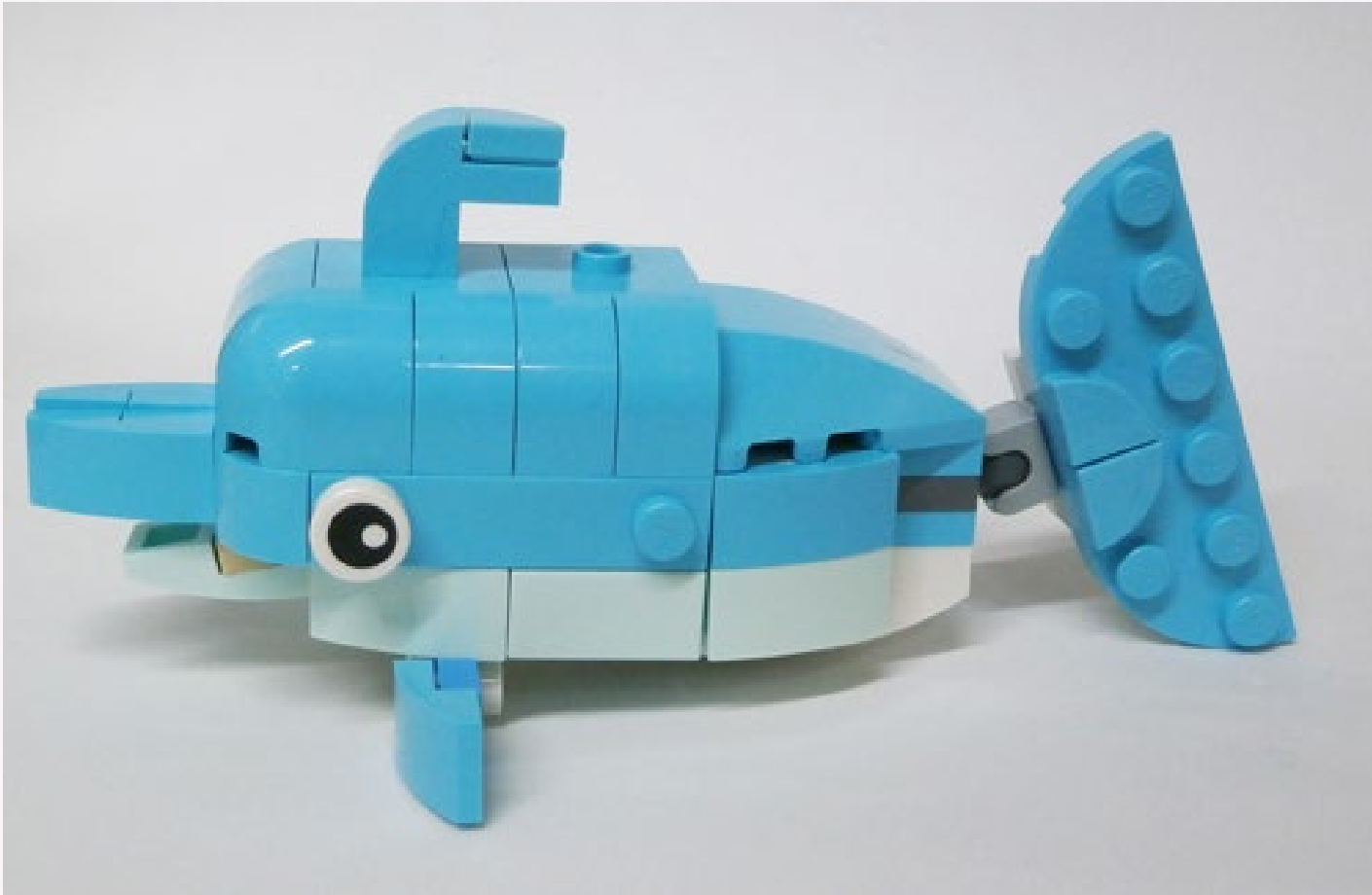
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# Essay writing mistakes

- 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

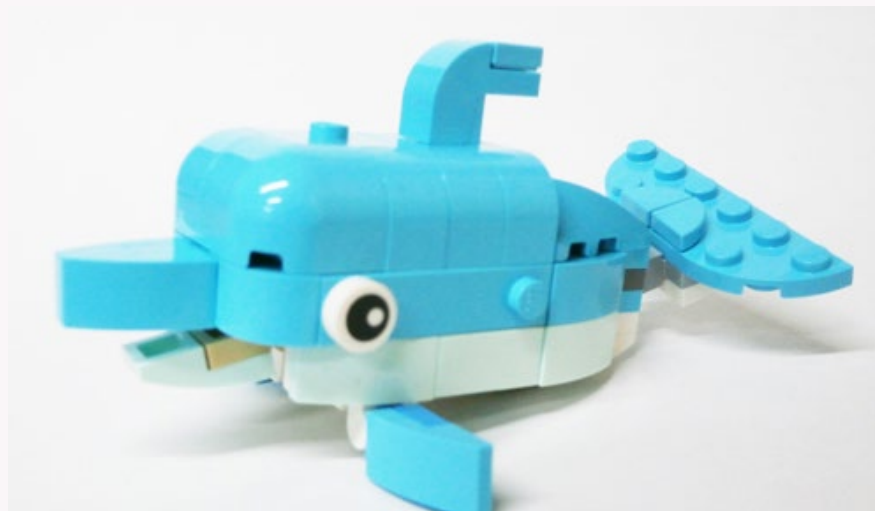
- Leave it at least 24 hours after writing
- Make it a separate process to spell/grammar checking
- Get someone else to read it
- Read it aloud
  
- Does it help answer the question?
- Does it flow?
- Has each point got evidence and an explanation?
- Word count?
- If I was reading this what mark would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

## Discussion activity (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 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/ykCWh37Z1S>

# Final polls

What do you feel are the main things you will take away from this session?

- Better understanding of today's topic
- Better understanding of the place of study skills within university study
- Enthusiasm for my studies
- Enthusiasm for my skills development
- Feel part of the university community

How can SHL help you even more in the future?

Please leave your suggestion in the free text poll.

We are using the new Adobe Connect version with a different audio set up before you enter the room– was this:

- Very good
- Good
- Neither good nor bad
- Bad
- Very bad

**More feedback please send to [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk)**

# Upcoming sessions

14<sup>th</sup> Mar 7pm Mastering Essay Writing

21<sup>st</sup> Mar 11 am Beginners Critical Thinking

**22<sup>nd</sup> March 11am Studying with neurodiversity**

28<sup>th</sup> Mar 11 am Intermediate Critical Thinking

4<sup>th</sup> Apr 11 am Advanced Critical Thinking

11<sup>th</sup> Apr 7pm Managing your Time

18<sup>th</sup> Apr 7pm Using other people's ideas

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](https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/eventlist_catchup)

Send us feedback at [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk)