

Writing an Assignment: 10 Steps

This is a suggested task list for writing an assignment. Each part of the process is sectioned into distinct phases. The plan phase involves formulating the title, planning time, research, assembling ideas and writing an essay plan. Next is the writing phase, at this stage you will draft, edit and redraft your work continuously until you are happy with your writing. The final stage involves checking the work by proofreading and finalising.

Phase 1: PLANNING – for half or a third of the time:

1. Formulate idea or title;
2. Plan time;
3. Research;
4. Assemble ideas;
5. Plan.

Phase 2:

WRITING – for a quarter or third of the time:

6. Write draft;
7. Edit;
8. Write re-draft.

Phase 3:

CHECKING – for a quarter or third of the time:

9. Proof read;
10. Finalise.

Planning (for half or a third of the time)

1. Formulate an idea:

This is the main title of the essay and the basis from which to generate your thoughts and concepts.

2. Formulate an idea:

This is one of the most important aspects of writing an essay but is often forgotten. It allows you to allocate time to all of the aspects of the process. Preparing early in the process can reduce stress at the end. Keep a diary for the year to track what you have to do by when. Enter assignment deadlines. This will be useful especially for Step 6 where you may find it helpful to allocate dates for each section of the essay (e.g. introduction etc.). Create a to-do list for each step. Estimate time per step. Identify time in the week

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to work on the assignment. Set specific tasks to do at particular times. Then stick to the plan and alter it when required. Refer to the help available on time management.

3. Research:

This is a time-consuming aspect of writing an essay and plays an essential part in ensuring that you have an effective argument and write critically. This stage must have commenced before writing a plan of the essay. What do you already know about the topic and its focus? What do you need to know? Collect the **evidence, tools, and data** you need.

Start in your **reading list** in the module guide, then expand by searching the **library catalogue** and NELSON using keywords. Top up with specific **databases** and or talk to your Academic Librarian. See [Skills Hub](#) for more help with searching. **Take notes** on what you read to summarise and identify useful examples and include references. See the 'Using Sources' guide for more information. **Think critically** about what you are reading in terms of: its currency, reliability, bias, authority, and evidence.

4. Assemble ideas:

Once you have looked at research you might need to take another look at your ideas and gather your final themes or concepts in order to devise a plan. This also might mean conducting further research as themes or concepts have changed. Examine the notes from your research, then mind map your first thoughts on the topic. Start with a central word, problem or question in the middle of a blank page. Add ideas or words without deleting or rejecting anything. Make connections to what you have read and keep going until you run dry. Group ideas and words together. At this stage, try to use one or two words only for the sub-headings. Redraw with only the sub-headings in place. Use these to build your plan.

5. Plan of essay:

This is writing a plan of your themes, concepts or ideas. It is important to keep checking back to this to stop procrastination and ensure you keep to your word limit and theme or concepts. Assessment guidance may outline a structure and format. If not, structure your assignment carefully, there are different options:

- In a sequence, this may be by starting with the history to present day;
- Examining the issue in depth, from the problem to the solution through evaluation and outlining recommendations;
- By topic, assemble the ideas which you identify as important;
- By argument, organise points in support of and counter to your argument;
- Follow a structure set by your tutor if provided.

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Writing (for a quarter or a third of your time)

6. Draft:

This is your first attempt at writing your ideas in structured paragraphs. Drafts are imperfect, first attempts. Write in complete sentences with references but do not feel that it has to be perfect before you write it down. At this point, don't get it right, just get it written. Write point by point and section by section. This way you can start early when you are ready to write or complete one section, even if you don't know what to write in the next.

7. Edit:

It is important to edit your work after you have put your initial ideas in written form. This allows you to check that the themes flow and the writing is at the correct level for the reader. Try reading your writing out loud. Check that the content is appropriate, the structure helps to communicate meaning, the support is adequate and clearly explained, the language is suitable, the sentences aren't too long, the learning outcomes are met, and the references are accurate.

8. Re-draft:

Once you have edited the work you can then amend your 1st copy. Move sentences and paragraphs; explain all ideas fully; add connections and links, support arguments; delete irrelevant information; make sure you answer the question; shorten sentences; improve the introduction and conclusion. The edit and re-draft stage could be endless. Section your essay into parts to help you with redrafting; once you are happy with the content, leave that section until the final stages of the process.

Checking (for a quarter or a third of your time)

9. Proof-Read:

This is an excellent opportunity to pick up spelling and grammar mistakes. Time restraints can sometimes stop you from completing this stage. If you have planned your time effectively you should have time to complete this activity. Use spell check cautiously and check for similar sounding words and spelling variations.

It is good to set yourself a deadline to finish your assignment 5 days before the due date. A good tip is to read the work out loud to help identify poorly written sentences or lack of commas and full stops.

10. Finalise:

Finalising the essay is the end of the process ensuring that all of the documents are formatted to the guidance outlined in the module handbook. You should also ensure that the page layout is functional. Check that each in-text citation is referenced in the relevant format and in the reference list.