

Upgrade Study Advice

Essay writing: an overview

1 What exactly have you been asked to do?

Read the question / title carefully. Write it out. Circle key words

2 The practicalities

- Look at the *learning outcomes* – these tell you what you're supposed to be learning from an activity, and can help you focus.
- Look at the *assessment criteria* – this is what your tutor/ assessor is looking for in your work. Look at the A grade criteria – very handy. Do you understand what the language means?
- Number of words? Deadline? Check with your tutor if anything is unclear.

3 The early stages

What do you know already? What could you argue?

- Check lecture notes, handouts, your thoughts

Brainstorm

Sketch a first plan

4 Get reading and researching

What do you need to know? And how will you find it out?

- Pick 3 texts, or key chapters to start with (see your reading list)
- Follow up with more specific articles when you know what you need to know. Check www.brookes.ac.uk/services/library/skill/skill1c.html
- Make brief notes as you go (see Notemaking)
- Record your sources with your notes and page refs (for references) (see Referencing)

5 Plan and draft

Review or redo your plan – so you can work from it.

And write a first draft – as quickly as you can, starting wherever it's easiest (probably not the introduction!)

6 Take a break

Critical reading

- Yourself
- Someone else
- Your tutor?

7 Then redraft and edit

Ask yourself *Does this make sense? Is it clear?*

Editing

- For organisation and structure – clear paragraphs: (see Paragraphs: how to write) and introduction and conclusion
- Accuracy – flow, language, minor edits

Writing a final draft

- Final organisation
- Layout and appearance: use Times New Roman 12, not bigger or smaller and 1.5 spacing
- References section: check all your in-text references are in your references section, and all your references listed are in your text (See Referencing)

Of course you can do all this in a rush! But it's less stressful if you start work on it when it's set. Check Time Management.

The latest version of this guide is always available at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/upgrade/>

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