



# WHY DO TUTORS ASK STUDENTS TO WRITE ESSAYS?

Tutors ask students to write essays to:

- learn about the topic
- to show their understanding
- to clarify their own thinking
- to get a grade that leads to a qualification.

## STAGES OF WRITING

- Thinking about the question
- Gathering information and ideas
- Organising your ideas
- Getting something on paper
- Writing a first draft
- Reviewing in the light of feedback/reflection
- Producing a final draft



# UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION

## INTERPRETING YOUR ASSIGNMENT

All assignment questions can be broken up into the following components:

### **The Instructional verbs**

These words show you the approach to take. It's important to interpret these words properly.

### **The topic**

This clarifies the context of the discussion you'll need to construct.

### **The specific aspect of the topic**

This helps you to narrow down your topic.

### **Restrictions imposed on the topic**

This will limit your discussion.

## WHAT ARE YOU BEING ASKED TO DO?

The instructional verbs in your set question will determine the type of writing you are about to undertake.

### **Discuss**

- Investigate or examine by argument
- Sift through evidence and give reasons for and against

### **Assess**

- Decide on the importance of and give reasons for

### **Evaluate**

- Make an appraisal of the worth of something
- You can make your own value judgements but back them up with argument and justification

**THE QUESTION MATRIX**

A question matrix can help you to break down the question you are answering by:

- defining terms
- determining how the terms relate to the question
- deciding what the terms are.

**“Identify and discuss barriers preventing effective global action on climate change”**

<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	<b>[EFFECTIVE] ACTION</b>	<b>BARRIERS</b>	<b>GLOBAL</b>
What is the definition of climate change?	What is meant by effective action?	What is meant by ‘barrier’ in this context?	What do I want to focus on in terms of global?
How does this relate to the module?	How is an action deemed effective with regards to climate change?	Who/what are creating the barriers? (Does this have any impact?)	Is it governments, multinationals, everyone?
What’s the timescale?	What [important] actions are there?	What are the barriers?	

THE QUESTION MATRIX TEMPLATE

ESSAY TITLE

TERMS	TERMS	TERMS	TERMS



# PLANNING YOUR TIME FOR YOUR ASSIGNMENT

## S-M-A-R-T OBJECTIVES

A great way to start planning your time is with smart objectives. When creating a S-M-A-R-T action plan ask yourself whether your tasks are:

### **Specific**

- Are they clearly identifiable, or are they vague?

### **Measurable**

- What are your success criteria? If your goals are not measurable, how will you know when you've achieved them?

### **Action-orientated**

- What are your goals and how will you achieve them?

### **Realistic**

- Are they "do-able"? Are they achievable given the limited time and resources you have?

### **Time-bound**

- Have you set a deadline? Can you say what needs to be done, by whom, and by what time?



## S-M-A-R-T OBJECTIVES

Example - Read and make notes on main set text (Pearce and Turner, 1990) for climate change essay:

“Identify and discuss barriers preventing effective global action on climate change”

### **Specific**

- I will read Chapter 11 ‘Pollution-Control Policy in Mixed Economies’ tonight

### **Measurable**

- I will have covered one substantive element of this topic

### **Action-orientated**

- I will take Cornell-style notes (see ‘Note-Making’ guide), identify key evidence and data on post-its and produce a mind-map

### **Realistic**

- One chapter is ok because it’s dense material and I need to get to sleep early to be ready for my work shift tomorrow

### **Time-bound**

- I will start at 6pm and finish by 9pm



# FIRST DRAFT

## CREATING A DRAFT FROM YOUR PLAN

### Focus

- Make sure you focus on your assignment question and how you've interpreted it

### Core ideas

- Write out your central idea and main line of reasoning

### Headings

- Write out your headings and sub-headings from your plan

### Ideas

- Add the content and develop the topic idea of each paragraph

### The big picture

- Use your plan
- Keep referring back to the big picture and the links you made between your ideas
- Make sure you answer the question



# STRUCTURE

## INTRODUCTION 5%

**Your introduction tells the reader how you will answer the question. Your introduction should:**

- comment on the title or topic of the essay
- define or explain any difficult or ambiguous terms in the title
- direct the reader by stating which aspects of the topic you intend to cover and why.

## MAIN BODY 85%

**Answer the question! Answer in a chain of paragraphs that build and present a case. Each paragraph should contain 1 big idea and should:**

- introduce the idea
- define any concepts
- offer an argument
- offer and discuss evidence
- make a final point.

**The reader is asking you - and in your writing you should answer - the following questions:**

- what is this paragraph about?
- what exactly is that?
- what is your argument on this (in relation to the question)?
- what is your evidence?
- what does it mean?
- what is the final point (in relation to the question)?

## CONCLUSION 10%

**Your conclusion should:**

- re-state your arguments
- re-state your points
- have no new evidence
- prove that you have answered the whole question
- make recommendations if applicable.

Some think you should write a draft first so you know where you are going, and re-write it when you're finished.





## EXAMPLE TYPES OF ESSAYS - DISCURSIVE

“Discuss what are the most likely causes of asthma in children”, topic - causal factors of childhood-diagnosed asthma.

### INTRODUCTION 5%

- Definition - what is asthma?
- How it is measured in populations (incidence and prevalence)?
- Scope of essay (i.e. children are 15 years and younger, trends since 1976, global studies and data but focus predominantly on Europe)

### MAIN BODY 85%

- Comprehensive and broad identification and discussion of different potential causal factors and correlating evidence
- Genetic/health
- Diet and nutrition
- Wealth/poverty
- Environment/pollution
- Home and lifestyle
- Psychological

### CONCLUSION 10%

- Identification of overall trends or patterns and the likelihood of any particular issue as a significant causal factor, giving explanations and possible future implications



## EXAMPLE TYPES OF ESSAYS - ANALYTICAL

“Why has there been an increase in the prevalence of asthma in children?”, topic - causal factors of childhood-diagnosed asthma.

### INTRODUCTION 5%

- Definition of asthma and how it is measured
- Brief overview of current global trends in prevalence
- Scope of essay (i.e. concentration on environmental causal factors, particularly focusing on diesel exhaust pollution, studies/data used)

### MAIN BODY 85%

- Identification and discussion of data trends
- Description of trends
- Comparison with global incidence and prevalence
- Most likely causal factors - e.g. environmental
- Data on traffic density and positive correlations
- Identification of any contrary evidence or alternative explanations

### CONCLUSION 10%

- Summary of the data and findings and to what extent they reveal the cause of child asthma prevalence, highlighting the replication of correlation globally, but also where further research is required



## EXAMPLE TYPES OF ESSAYS - EVALUATIVE

“To what extent is it likely that traffic pollution is a significant cause of asthma in children?”, topic - causal factors of childhood-diagnosed asthma.

### INTRODUCTION 5%

- Definition of childhood asthma
- Scope of essay (global studies)

### MAIN BODY 85%

- Brief discussion of most likely causes of asthma
- Brief description of components of traffic pollution linked to asthma – particulate matter and diesel exhaust – and why these cause problems
- Analysis of the data correlating traffic pollution and asthma, stating to what extent this is sufficient and identifying any gaps
- Examination of collection methods (ie self reporting) and likelihood of bias
- Alternative possible explanations – e.g. hygiene hypothesis, geographical, poverty, malnutrition...

### CONCLUSION 10%

- Repetition of significant correlative evidence
- Proven links between pollution and asthma
- Is further research required to show that it was this, rather than other significant factors - e.g. geographical location, effects of poverty and lifestyle...



# WRITING IN PARAGRAPHS

## INTRODUCING: ASSERTION, EVIDENCE AND REASONING

Good paragraph structure includes a combination of:

- statement, claim or assertion
- evidence or information which supports and gives validity to the assertion
- reason, logic, justification for the assertion.

Good paragraphs weave these three elements together to create a well-structured argument, expressed in a paragraph. This is an example of a good paragraph from a Business Student, using...

### ASSERTION

Firstly, students with experience of applying for work placements are likely to make more effective applications for their graduate career jobs because they have already had an opportunity to become familiar with the process...

### EVIDENCE

...as suggested by the High Fliers article: “students applying for work placements in their first or second year at university are selected through a very similar recruitment process to that used to recruit graduates” (High Fliers, The Graduate Market 2015, p.23)...

### REASONING

...The experience gained whilst applying for internships would be beneficial when applying for an entry level graduate job as they would have had experience in both interviews and writing CVs, and therefore had the opportunity to practise and hone these skills.



# CONCLUSIONS

Your conclusion should take up where your introduction left off to bring your arguments and ideas in full circle. The conclusion to your essay is the last time you have a chance to impress yourself upon the reader and persuade them of your ideas. It is therefore important to:

## RESTATE YOUR MAIN ARGUMENT

- Reiterate your main idea with evidence supporting your argument.
- Don't just summarise what you've written in the main body, use a persuasive tone to argue your thesis.

## LINK YOUR IDEAS

- This is your chance to link all of your ideas now that you have presented the reader with all the topic information.
- Don't add any new ideas here.

## SIGNIFICANCE

- Think about the importance of your findings, and if it indicates further investigation.

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER SCOPE

- Mention any limitations you had to apply, and take into consideration how further scope could introduce different factors.



# REVISING, EDITING AND PROOFREADING

## GOOD PRACTICE

- Plan for revising, editing and proofreading
- Know your weaknesses
- Use your feedback from previous assignments
- Create a list of common errors
- Print out your work with double spacing and use colour
- Check for different things and proofread for one thing at a time e.g. language, format, references

## LANGUAGE

- Grammar and spelling
- Punctuation
- Abbreviations
- British vs American English
- Discriminatory language

## FORMAT

- Layout
- Numbering
- Labels
- Font size
- Spaces
- Page numbers

## REFERENCING

- Make sure you're using the right style
- For every citation, is there a reference?
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