

# **STRUCTURING YOUR ESSAY**



**Semester 1**  
**Workshop**  
2018-19



# Leeds*for*Life

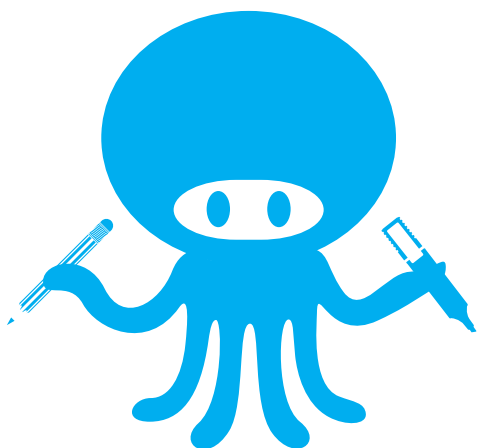
This workshop aims to help you develop the following Leeds*for*Life skills:

**Communication**

**Planning and organising**

**Critical thinking**

**Log into your Leeds*for*Life account to add these skills to your profile.**



# SEMESTER 1 WORKSHOPS

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Full details and booking via the website: <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-workshops>

Join our mailing list to keep informed of workshops released for booking throughout the year

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## 30 MINUTE EXPRESS WORKSHOPS INCLUDING:

Choosing your research topic  
Interpreting the task

Procrastination buster  
Speed Reading

Time saving notes  
When to cite

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## 60 MINUTE WEBINARS INCLUDING:

Getting started with EndNote  
Managing your workload

Writing academically  
Searching and researching

What is critical thinking?  
Writing in exams

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## 60/90/120 MINUTE WORKSHOPS INCLUDING:

Developing an argument  
Speaking in public  
Report writing  
Revision techniques for exams

Structuring your essay  
Writing skills for taught Masters  
Taking numerical tests  
Academic language: key grammar points

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All of our workshops are free of charge.  
If you need to cancel a booking please  
do so in advance to avoid a £6 charge  
for non-attendance

Watch out for new workshops and repeats of  
popular workshops throughout the semester.  
Coming up in semester 2: a range of workshops to  
support final year and Masters projects.

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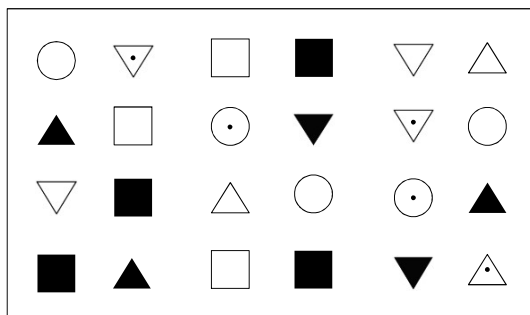
**We need your help!**..Join the Library's Student Advisory Panel to have your say on the services  
and support you receive from the Library and share your suggestions for improvements.  
Ask at the Skills@Library Office on level 1 of the Laidlaw Library for details of how to take part.

## Structuring your essay

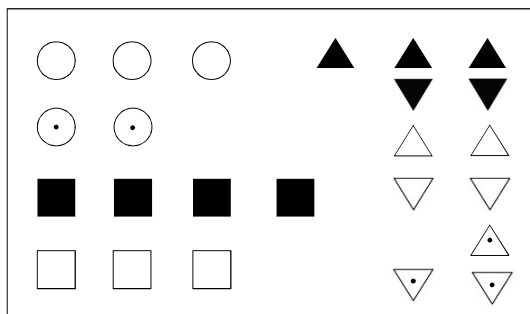


### Outline of workshop

- What is a 'good' structure?
- Laying the foundations: introductions
- Building the structure: main body paragraphs
- Topping out: conclusions
- The snag list: checking your structure
  
- Further help



adapted from Cottrell, 1999



adapted from Cottrell, 1999

## Creating an overall structure

### Introduction

- How you interpreted the question. Why this topic?
  - Define terms (if appropriate)
- Key issues or arguments you will explore
- Outline how you will explore them



### Main body

- Developing your line of argument
- Creating a clear and consistent thread throughout
  - Linking ideas and themes
- Supporting your points with detail and evidence



### Conclusion

- A brief explanation of your main findings or ideas
  - Present your conclusion
- Can you set your discussion into a different or wider context?

### Activity 1: introduction

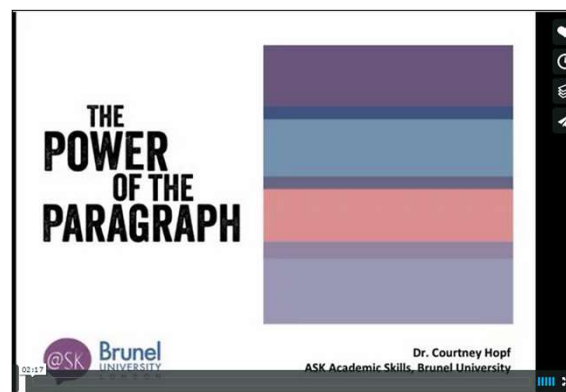
1. Read the two introductions
2. Which introduction do you think is better? Why do you think this?
3. Which introduction has the better structure?

## What should be in an introduction?

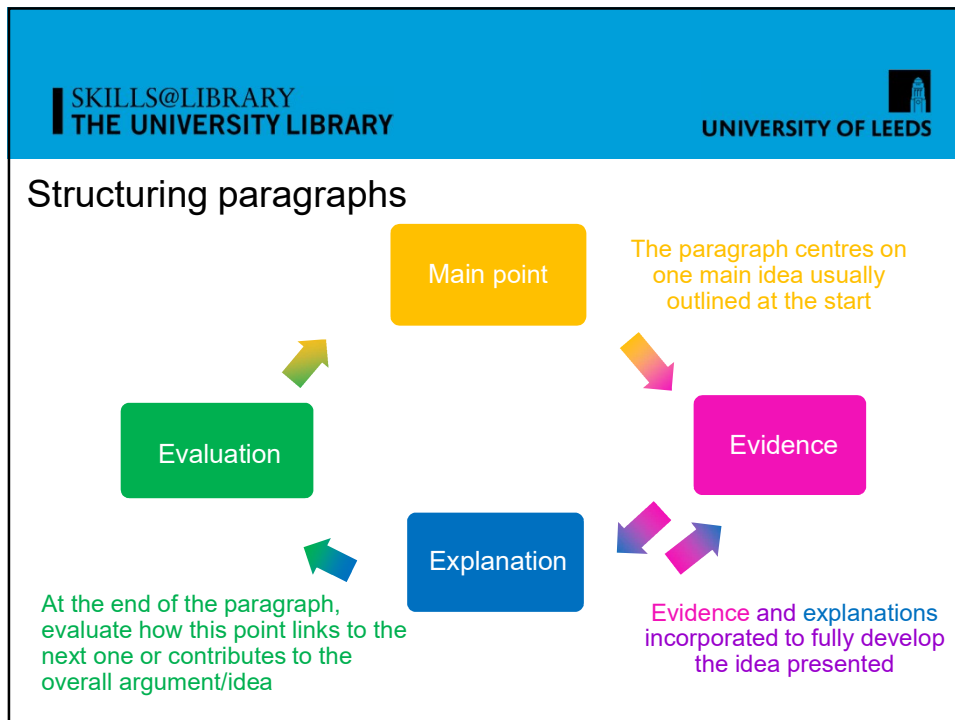
May include:

- An introduction to the main subject of the essay and why it is an important topic.
- A definition of ambiguous terms or concepts. Your reader needs to know what you mean when you say certain things. This is usually only necessary when there are terms that have numerous definitions, e.g. "Consumerism". Are you discussing this as an ideology, economic policy or type of behaviour?
- An outline of the key argument(s) presented in the essay and how you are planning to answer the question that has been set.

## The power of paragraphs



<https://vimeo.com/44666462>



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## Structuring paragraphs

Some useful guidelines for your paragraphs:

- Keep to just one main idea or argument per paragraph
- Outline the main idea of the paragraph in the first sentence(s)
- Provide evidence to support that main idea. You might use data, facts, quotations, arguments, statistics or research as evidence. If you don't have any evidence to support a point, reconsider whether to include it.
- Explain how and why you think this evidence supports your point
- At the end of the paragraph show the significance of the point to the overall argument or idea you are trying to convey in the essay, or link to the next paragraph if you are going to build upon that main point further (e.g. examine the same point from a different perspective)
- A reader should be able to look at just the first and last sentence of each paragraph and grasp what your main ideas are.



## Activity 2: structure a paragraph

You have a number of sentences that make up a paragraph.

1. Try to put the sentences into a coherent order.
2. Think about why have you structured it in this way.

## Linking ideas/sentences: signalling words

Purpose	Words
Add information/reinforcement/show agreement	'furthermore', 'moreover', 'additionally', 'it is also worth noting...'
Comparison-contrast	'similarly', 'in comparison' 'in contrast', 'however', 'and yet', 'although',
Effect/consequence/conclusion signals	'therefore', 'as a result', 'consequently'
Illustration, exemplification	'to illustrate', 'for example', 'to demonstrate'
Emphasis	'particularly', 'significantly', 'of significance'
Sequence	'First, second, third'
Distinguishing certainty from possibility	'it is thought that', 'it may be that', 'this suggests', 'one possible explanation'

Signal words: <http://web.clark.edu/martpe/signal%20words.htm>

## An example to illustrate

In the case of Herbig stars, material accretes onto the star via an accretion disc, which in some cases can be directly observed. **For example**, the dust component of the disc can be observed via the scattering of optical and near-infrared light [11]. The geometry of Herbig star accretion discs is still under investigation; **however**, it is widely accepted that as dust grains coagulate, they settle towards the midplane of the disc, making them easier to observe [12]. **However**, this only applies to Herbig stars close enough to the observer; the majority of the time, these accretion discs cannot be directly observed. As accretion discs are often not directly observable, other methods must be used in order to provide proof their existence. **An example of such a method is the measurement of disc velocity profiles, which imply the presence of a rotating disc around a star. These profiles reveal velocity gradients, which indicate the presence of material orbiting a protostar in a dislike configuration.**

### Main point

← The student outlines the point of the paragraph.

### Evidence

← Student uses evidence to further explain their main point.

### Explanation/Reasoning

← Student develops their analysis, demonstrating why observation happens only in "some cases" as outlined in the first sentence of this paragraph.

### Significance

← Student then reveals the significance of the point

## Finding your voice in your writing

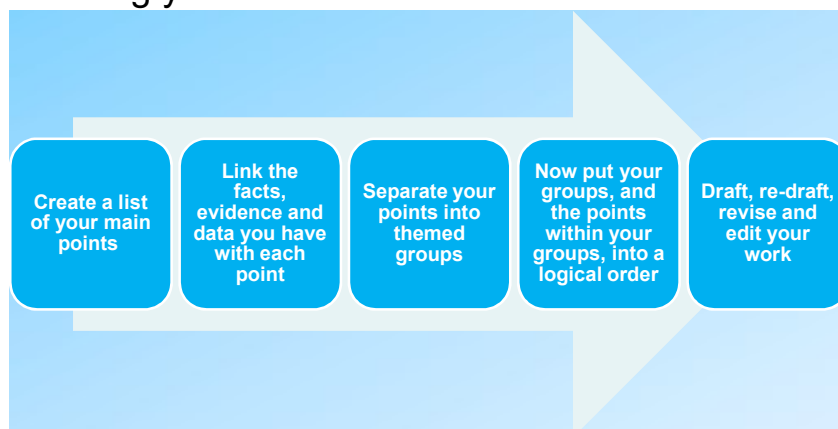
How?	Example
Make your unattributed (not referenced) assertion at the start of paragraphs followed by evidence, findings, arguments from your sources	<b>To date there is no well-established tool to measure</b> divided attention in children. <b>Current methods used</b> to assess divided attention <b>usually involve</b> a variation of the CPT with an additional task included e.g. counting or listening to auditory stimuli (Salthouse, 2003).
Explicitly tell your reader what the connections are between sources	Smith (2009), <b>however takes a different</b> approach...
Explicitly tell your reader what the connections are between sources/evidence and your main assertion	Netzer's argument <b>challenges the term</b> 'renaissance', as it displays repeatedly the use of classical imagery during the medieval period, <b>therefore illustrating that</b> canonising a chronological period can be disadvantageous as characteristics of the term
Using language to show your strong agreement/disagreement/cautious agreement with sources	Smith's (2009) findings show a <b>clear...</b> A <b>serious weakness</b> with this argument is... The research <b>suggests...</b>
Include 'so what' summary sentences (evaluative sentences) at the end of paragraphs	This shows <b>that it is detrimental to strictly categorise</b> chronological periods with artistic genres, as many art historians suggest different movements were taking place in separate geographical locations at the same time.

## What order?

Ask yourself

- What do I want my overall message to be?
- Where does the reader **need** to start? (do not include too much unnecessary background)
- How does each point and each paragraph relate to the next?
- Where do you want the reader to end up?

## Planning your structure



## Plan your essay in paragraphs - does it flow?

It's better to pick a few key points and analyse them in detail, than lots of points only dealt with superficially!

### Introduction

Background: Both embedded and unilateral journalists were used in Iraq (include some numbers). More embeds were used as seen as more likely or able to get the truth. However, since there has been a lot of debate about whether the reporting was objective - both faced challenges to get the real story.

Embedded journalists may be too close to the military unit where they are based to report objectively. Use example from Jones (2012)

But - embedded journalists do have unprecedented access to the front line so they are reporting real time war and seeing things first hand - so arguably more able to report the truth. Evidence - research by Samuel (2007), Shayla (2010), Roberts (2010)

Unilateral journalists get access to different perspectives and are less likely to build personal relationships so may be more objective. (Cohen, 2009) (Sycamore, 2010)

But - unilaterals are sometimes obscured from the truth and are not given access to the troops so their reporting may end up bias against the troops (examples from Sycamore, 2010)

### Conclusion

## Structuring different types of essays

Essay type	Example	Possible structure
<b>Discursive</b>	Discuss the most likely causes of asthma in children.	Identify and discuss each key cause in turn such as genetics, pollution and lifestyle. Weigh up the available evidence deciding if one cause seems more likely to cause asthma than another.
<b>Analytical</b>	How does traffic pollution contribute to the asthma in children?	Focus on one aspect in detail, break down into component parts. Each paragraph may deal with a different aspect of how traffic pollution relates to asthma in children focusing on the strengths and flaws of the available evidence and data.
<b>Evaluative</b>	To what extent is it likely that traffic pollution is a significant cause of asthma in children?	Start with discussion about traffic pollution as a cause of asthma in children. Then consider other factors and make your own judgement about whether the evidence suggests traffic pollution is more significant than others.

## What should be in a conclusion?

- A brief explanation of your main findings or ideas. Synthesise; don't summarise. Show how your separate points have built into one main idea or argument
- Present your conclusion. What is the main message or argument you want your reader to take away? Make sure your conclusion is clearly supported by the evidence presented in the essay
- At the end of your conclusion, move from the specific to the general. Can you set your discussion into a different or wider context?

## Activity 3: conclusion

1. Read the conclusion
2. Can you identify these elements in the conclusion?

# The snag list: checking your structure

## Checking structure

- Summarise main idea of each paragraph in one sentence or take topic sentence from each paragraph
- Paste them into a Word document
- Cut out each sentence (or you can just move around within the document)
- Does the order make sense?
- Re-order - is there a more logical progression?
- If you cannot identify your points, you need to re-write your paragraphs to include clear topic sentences
- Check that the sentences within each paragraph are structured in a logical order

## Further help

### Online resources:

- Skills@Library > Assignments > essay writing
- Skills@Library > Assignments > academic skills > academic writing > structuring

### Useful books:

- Laidlaw Library, Level 1, Skills books (essay writing under E)

### Help in person

- Daily drop-in: <http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-1-to-1-support>
- Workshops ('Planning and preparing your essay', 'Writing academically', 'Building your argument')

## Skills Book Collection

- Located opposite Skills@Library reception, Level 1 of Laidlaw Library
- Includes academic writing, grammar and vocabulary, communication and presentation skills, critical thinking and exam study skills.
- Caters specifically for undergraduates, postgraduates and where English is a second language.



# Introductions Activity

## Examples adapted from student work

**Essay title: Discuss the challenges faced by journalists in seeking the truth and delivering impartial news stories when reporting from the front line of war.**

### Example 1

Journalists report on a wide variety of news stories such as health, crime, politics and business. These stories can involve complex and often harrowing details but journalists must ultimately ensure that they are fulfilling their role as 'truth seekers' and delivering impartial news stories to their audiences. The BBC editorial guidelines for instance state that "News in whatever form must be treated with due impartiality, giving due weight to events, opinion and main strands of argument" (BBC, 2014). Producing objective content and fulfilling the role of 'truth seekers' for each type of news story comes with its own set of challenges. In this essay the focus will be on the specific challenges and objectives surrounding the reporting of war, with a specific view on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000's.

### Example 2

War reporting has been prevalent since the Victorian era, when William Howard Russell's pioneering reports on the Crimean war contributed to the collapse of the government of the time. Considered the forefather of modern war corresponding, "Russell had always crosschecked the facts in his reports and based them on careful interviews with officers, men, and verified witnesses" (Moorcraft and Taylor, 2008, p.9). Since W. H. Russell, more importance has been given to the reporting of impartial and objective information during conflict. The BBC's editorial guidelines state, "At such times, when there may be conflicting information and opinions, and with reliable information hard to come by, we need to be scrupulous in applying our principles of accuracy and impartiality" (2014, p.107). These principles are never more applicable than in the theatre of war, rife with military censorship and government propaganda. However, since the emergence of 'embedded' and 'unilateral' journalists in war reporting, it is important to consider whether the journalist's unprecedented access and proximity to troops and civilians at the front line of war has been at the expense of objectivity. Using the reporting of the Iraq war as a focus, this essay will discuss the challenges faced by embedded and unilateral journalists to act as truth seekers and broadcasters of impartial news stories whilst being so close to the realities of war.



# Signalling Words

Purpose	Words
Add information/reinforcement/show agreement	'furthermore', 'moreover', 'additionally', 'it is also worth noting...'
Comparison-contrast	'similarly', 'in comparison', 'in contrast', 'however', 'and yet', 'although'
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Illustration, exemplification	'to illustrate', 'for example', 'to demonstrate'
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Sequence	'first, second, third'
Distinguishing certainty from possibility	'it is thought that', 'it may be that', 'this suggest', 'one possible explanation'

Adapted from:  
Signal words: <http://web.clark.edu/martpe/signal%20words.htm>

# Different Types of Structure for Different Types of Essays

Below are some examples of essay outlines as determined by different essay structure formats. Topic: Casual factors of childhood-diagnosed asthma.

<b>Discursive</b>	<b>Discuss what are the most likely causes of asthma in children.</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Definition – what is asthma?</li><li>• How it is measured in populations (incidence and prevalence)</li><li>• Scope of essay (i.e. children are 15yrs and younger, trends since 1976, global studies and data but focus predominantly on Europe)</li></ul>
<b>Main Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehensive and broad identification and discussion of different potential causal factors and correlating evidence:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Genetic/health</li><li>• Diet and nutrition</li><li>• Wealth/poverty</li><li>• Environment/pollution</li><li>• Home and lifestyle</li><li>• Psychological</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identification of overall trends or patterns and the likelihood of any particular issue as a significant causal factor, giving explanations and possible future implications</li></ul>

<p><b>Analytical</b></p>	<p><b>Why has there been an increase in the prevalence of asthma in children?</b></p>
<p><b>Introduction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of asthma and how it is measured</li> <li>• Brief overview of current global trends in prevalence</li> <li>• Scope of essay (i.e. concentration on environmental causal factors, particularly focusing on diesel exhaust pollution, studies/data used)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Main Body</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and discussion of data trends of the prevalence of asthma in different populations, highlighting differences between expectations and actual figures. Identification of links between these and with other relevant data i.e. population movements, economic growth, traffic density – and exploring why this might be the case.</li> <li>• Description of trends – rise in incidence and prevalence in UK from 1976 to 1993, fall thereafter</li> <li>• Comparison with global incidence and prevalence</li> <li>• Most likely causal factors – environmental, nutrition, lifestyle and exposure to particulate matter</li> <li>• Data on traffic density and positive correlation between this and asthma incidence and prevalence – identification of key trends and discussion of validity</li> <li>• Identification of any contrary evidence or alternative explanations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of overall trends or patterns and the likelihood of any particular issue as a significant causal factor, giving explanations and possible future implications</li> </ul>

## Evaluative

To what extent is it likely that traffic pollution is a significant cause of asthma in children?

## Introduction

- Definition of childhood asthma
- Scope of essay (global studies from cities in both developed and developing countries, measuring the incidence of cases of wheeze and asthma in children and links with high-density traffic pollution from diesel exhaust)

## Main Body

- Brief discussion of the most likely causes of asthma, focusing primarily on air pollutants and particulate matter with justification, analysis of correlative data and examination of whether studies showing global positive relationship show sufficient evidence to suggest a strong causal link.
- 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, identifying any gaps. Examination of collection methods (i.e. self-reporting) and likelihood of bias.
- Alternative possible explanations – hygiene hypothesis, geographical link between: places of residence with high pollution, to poverty and malnutrition.

## Conclusion

- Repetition of significant correlative evidence found in different areas globally certainly links pollution and asthma but does not prove conclusively that it is the main causal factor, and further research would be required to show that it was this, rather than the effects of poverty and lifestyle, that was the most significant factor.

# Conclusions Activity

Examples adapted from student work

**Essay title: Discuss the challenges faced by journalists in seeking the truth and delivering impartial news stories when reporting from the front line of war.**

## Example

During the Iraq war, embedded and unilateral journalists played important but different roles in reporting the realities of war to the public at home. Whilst there was some lack of objectivity in the reporting of particular news events by some journalists, the evidence suggests that diverse approaches were taken in the overall reporting of the Iraq war, and that events were covered from a number of different perspectives. Therefore, whilst individual journalists may not always be objective, reports from different embedded and unilateral journalists, when taken together, offer media outlets a broad perspective of events. Further consideration is needed of the role of editors in putting together and reporting these news stories to the public, and whether that impacts on the objectivity of war reporting.





# WORKSHOPS

Full details of all our workshops are available online and can be booked by visiting the website:

<http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-workshops>

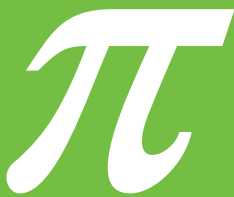
## 1-TO-1 SUPPORT



You can request to see a learning advisor for 1-to-1 support to help you develop your academic skills on topics such as academic writing, reading and finding information. You can also discuss assignment feedback.

1-to-1 appointments take place in the Laidlaw Library and last up to 30 minutes. If you need to make any special arrangements to help you access this service please let us know. To request an appointment, please use the online request form found on our 'Help in person for taught students' webpage.

## MATHS



1-to-1 support and advice is available at our maths drop-in sessions. Our experienced tutors also encourage students to work on their maths problems in small groups.

During teaching weeks:

**Mondays - Thursdays, 13:00 - 16:00**  
Footsteps Room, Level 1, Laidlaw Library.

Please check the website for times during non-teaching weeks.

## ONLINE RESOURCES



Our tutorials and resources are designed to give students an overview of the core skills for successful study.



<http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills>



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## ACADEMIC SKILLS WORKSHOPS

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### 1-TO-1 ACADEMIC SUPPORT

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

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### MATHS SUPPORT

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Find us on Level 1 of The Laidlaw Library in the Skills Zone

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Call us on 0113 343 4096 or email [skills@library.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:skills@library.leeds.ac.uk)

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Visit our website <http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills>

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Have a look for our take-away materials available to pick up in the Laidlaw Library

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