

Academic Writing

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Session aims

- ❑ To discuss expectations of academic writing in Higher Education
- ❑ To gain an overview of the main elements of academic writing:
 - argument
 - understanding the task
 - reading with intent
 - paraphrasing
 - essay structure
 - paragraph structure
 - style and presentation



IS NOT:

a selection of facts strung together until a word limit is reached!

Academic Writing in HE

IS:

A written demonstration of your ability to ASSIMILATE, ANALYSE, AND COMMUNICATE about a body of information.

Shows your ability to CONSTRUCT AND SUSTAIN AN ARGUMENT BASED ON EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS.

Essays as argument

Persuade your reader that a reasonable person would accept your conclusion on the **basis of the evidence you provide.**

Engage in **critical discussion** around the topic.
Develop breadth & depth of knowledge.

Weigh evidence **and arrive at a conclusion.**

More than just answering a question.

Think: Why?
How? Says who?



... with reference to literature!

Demonstrate:

Analysis and validation

you have read widely

gained nuanced insight into the available literature

considered the broader implications of the literature for your essay



Multi-dimensional nature of learning & problem-solving!

How do you do so?

What knowledge & skills do you need to write an academic essay?

1. Question/Task analysis (action words)

- Analyse, explore, explain, evaluate, show, demonstrate, reflect

2. Subject knowledge (research & reading)

- Good online and library search skills
- Finding books, journals, policies and other evidence

3. Reading and note-taking

- Read smart
- Take good notes to work from

4. Planning

- Plan to bring together your reading with the question/task & analyse

5. Writing

- Coherent sentences
- Editing & proofreading skills
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation & correct references



Another key skill:

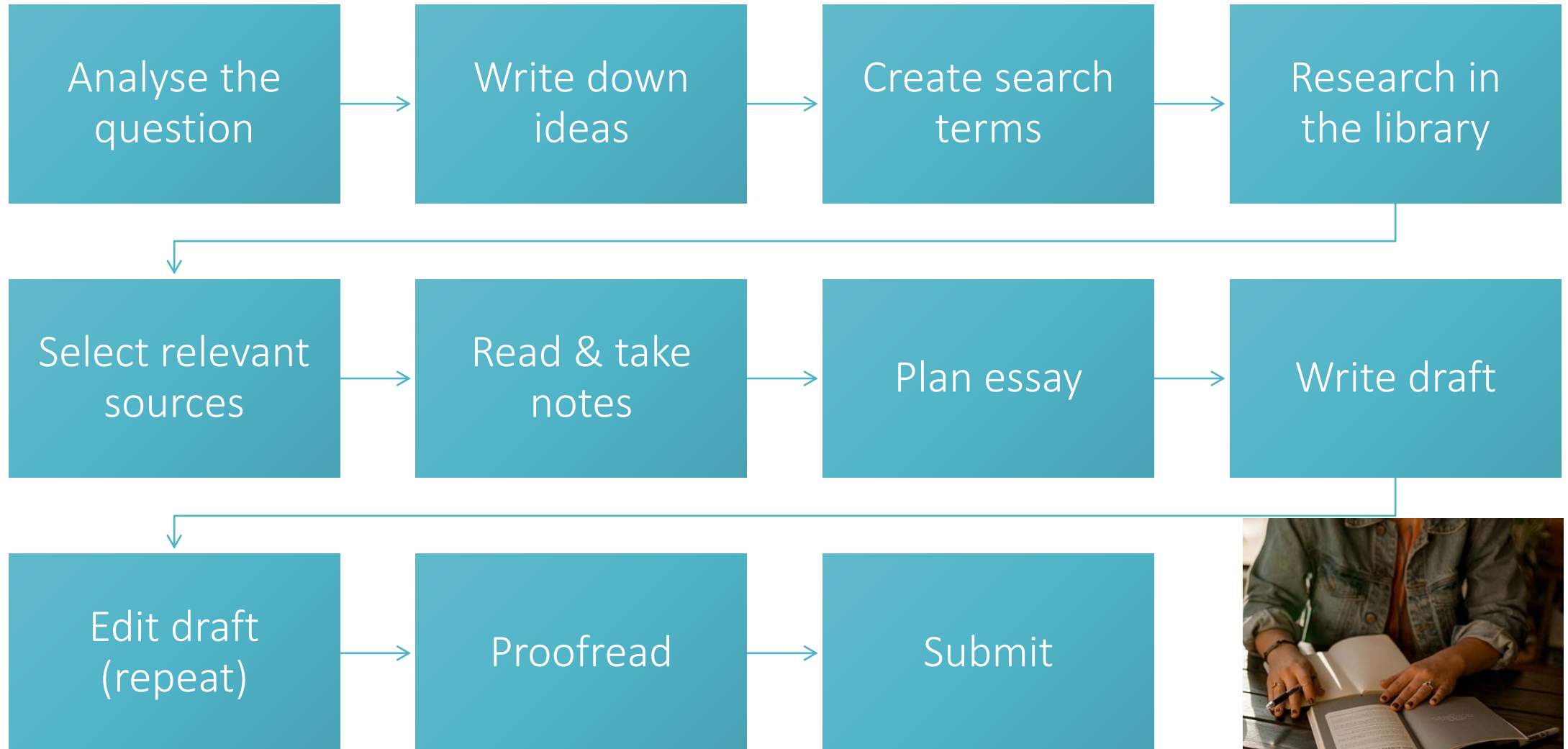
TIME MANAGEMENT

- start your reading now
- develop your knowledge

DO NOT LEAVE IT TO THE LAST MINUTE!



Writing your assignment - process



4 key elements of essay writing

Understanding the question/task: INFORMED RESEARCH

Planning your essay: STRUCTURE

Writing it out: PARAGRAPHS

Using your sources: PARAPHRASING

Understanding the task – KEY TIPS

Read the assignment title **slowly** to yourself **three times**

Underline words which guide you on the subject information you need

Underline other significant words which guide you on the approach or task involved

Write the title out and try to **work out how many topics there are within it**

Identify any **words you don't really understand** and examine them

Write the question out more fully **in your own words**

What are the **central questions?**

What topical issues does it refer to?

Discuss the assignment with someone else if you can

How does the title link to what you have read or heard in lectures? What else does it ask about/for?

Tasks/questions can be broken down:

Instruction words: What are you to do?	Interpret these words properly!
Topic words: What is the topic?	This will clarify the context of the discussion you'll need to construct
Focus words: What is the aspect of the topic?	This will help to give you a more specific focus
Limitation words What restriction is imposed?	This will limit your discussion

Which is which in your task?:

BOJAN'S JARGON BUSTER :



Analyse

break something down into its parts, examining each part, and noting how the parts fit together

Argue

use a series of statements connected logically together, backed by evidence, to reach a conclusion

Assess

Decide the importance of and give reasons for

Classify

identify the types or groups of something, showing how each category is distinct from the others

Compare and contrast

point out the similarities and differences between two or more subjects

Critically evaluate

Weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which opinions, theories, models or items are preferable

Criticise

point out mistakes or weaknesses and indicate any favourable aspects of the subject of the question (a balanced answer)

Define

explain the meaning of a term using denotation, connotation, example, etymology, synonyms, and antonyms

BOJAN'S JARGON BUSTER :



Describe

explain the traits of something, such as size, shape, weight, colour, use, origin, value, condition, location, and so on

Discuss

Investigate or examine by argument; sift and debate; give reasons for and against; examine the implications

Evaluate

decide on the worth of something by comparing it against an accepted standard of value

Examine

Look closely into something

Explain

tell what something is or how it works so that others can understand it

Explore

Examine thoroughly; consider from a variety of viewpoints

Outline

Give the main points/features/general principles; show the main structure and interrelations; omit details and examples

Problem solve

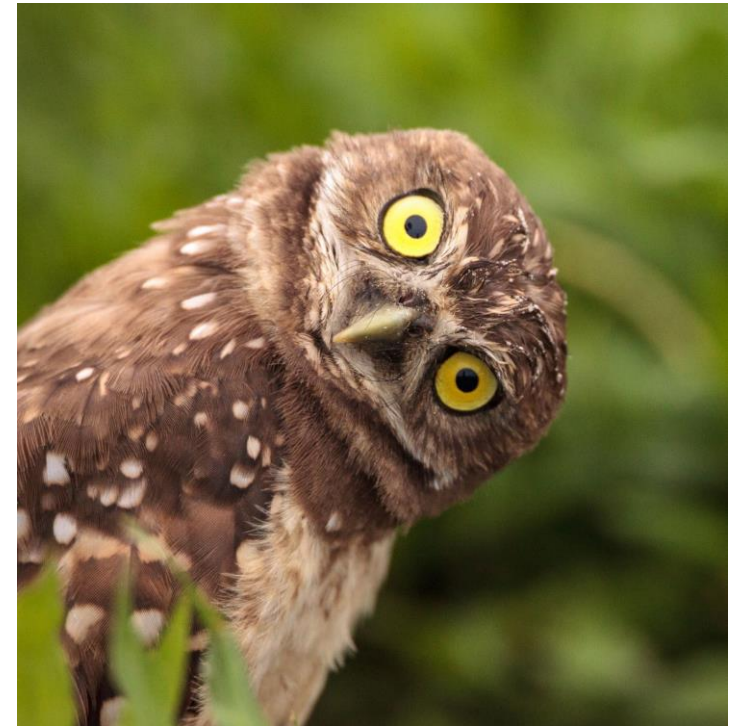
Analyse the causes and effects of a problem and finding a way to stop the causes or the effects

Track cause and effect

determine why something is happening and what results from it

Understanding the question...

... will give you the structure of your essay and keywords for your research!



Reading & Writing

Surface-level processing

- Reading passively
- Without analysing and structuring what you read
- Without criticising or evaluating
- Using lower abilities to recall and comprehend

Description



This is what you are after!!!!

Deep-level processing

- Discuss the author's ideas as you read
- Analyse the implications
- Evaluate them
- Synthesise them into a form that reflect you own way of seeing and understanding

Discussion

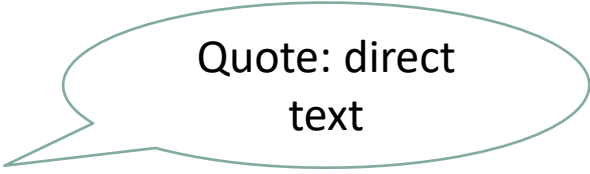
I have loads of good sources... now what?

How do I use them?

- 1) annotate them and write citations and references
- 2) arrange them according to your plan and begin drafting paragraphs (ensure order & development)
- 3) decide how you are going to use them...



... how to use your sources



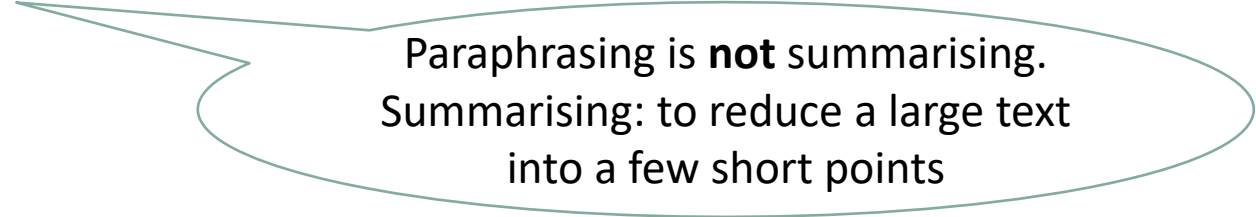
Quote: direct
text

Quote:

‘To express the meaning of writing or speech using different words, often in order to clarify or simplify’ (Godfrey, 2013, p.154).

Paraphrase:

Paraphrasing is often used in academic writing; correct paraphrasing involves the assignment's author rewriting an original text in their own words. Godfrey (2013, p.154) states that the purpose of paraphrasing is to communicate understanding of content in a clear and concise manner.



Paraphrasing is **not** summarising.
Summarising: to reduce a large text
into a few short points

Best advice:

- Only use quotes when absolutely necessary!
- Summaries can be a start but are better used for your own notes when conducting literature search
- Paraphrasing is the way to go!

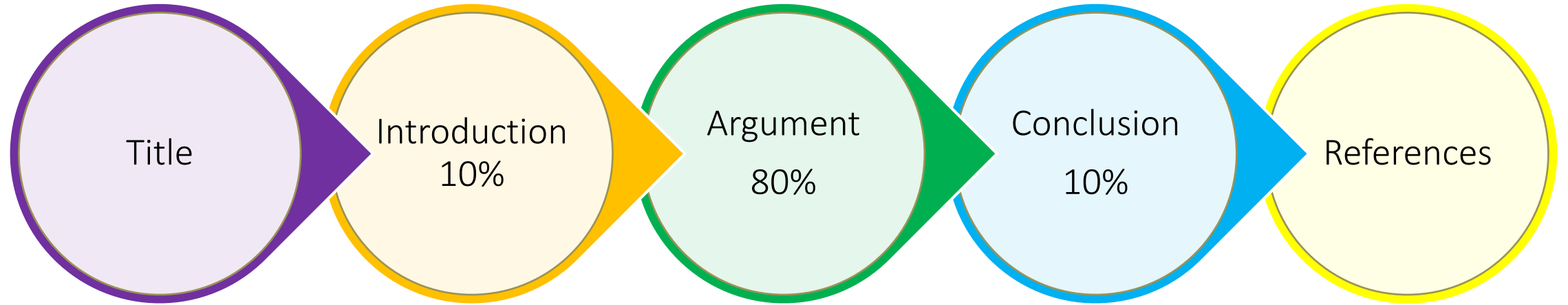
**PARAPHRASING ALSO AVOIDS
PLAGIARISM!!!**



Correct paraphrasing:

- Condenses the source information to **only that which is relevant**
 - is **worded differently**
 - uses a **different sentence structure**

The Structure - planning



Essay Structure

In short: INTRODUCTION

Gives your tutor their first impression of your assignment!

Briefly consider evidence-based practice and critical evaluation of practice.
Identify the pair of articles used.

*Establishes the tone and contains the most important information - your argument
Shows you have understood the question, highlights how you are going to elaborate your argument and which ideas you will focus on
include a 'thesis statement' which articulates the main idea or argument of your essay.*

Write your introduction last – you will know what to write!

“In this essay I will reflect on...” OR “This essay will examine...”



Essay Structure

In short: BODY

Bring out ideas, issues and debates and where you prove your argument

According to your proposed structure in the introduction!

TIP: STICK TO THE PLAN PROMISED IN THE INTRODUCTION!

That is why it is advisable to write the introduction last

Essay Structure

In short: CONCLUSION

Wraps everything up

-without repeating any arguments or introducing new ideas!

“In this essay I have reflected on...”

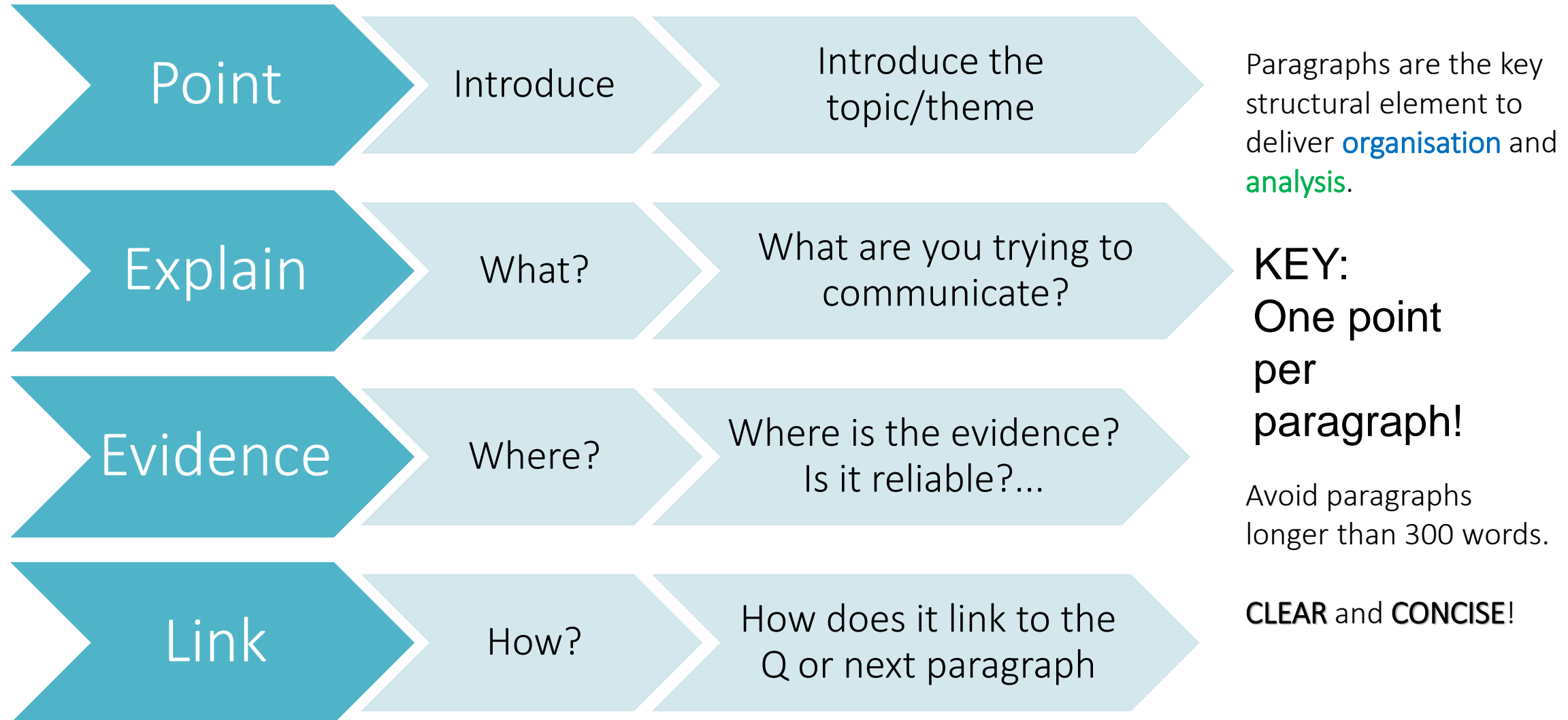
OR

“This essay will analyse...”

1. Answer any question set in the title
2. Link back to introduction
3. Summarise the main points
4. Give a sense of an ending

The main body of your essay is composed
of
PARAGRAPHS!

PEEL paragraphs for structure



Example paragraph

[Point] When evaluating the effectiveness of prescribed therapy, it is important to consider patients' experiences regarding treatment (Alisson, 2023, p. 286). **[Explain]** In particular, whether the therapy is effective in relieving pain. **[Evidence]** A longitudinal study commissioned by the National Pain Foundation (2016) collecting data from over 5,300 patients found that drugs approved by The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) are not as effective as one might think. Firstly, there are only three drugs which have been approved by the MHRA in and these are: XXXXX, YYYYY and ZZZZ (FDA, 2014). Secondly, the study found that overall patients are dissatisfied with the effectiveness of these drugs with 60% saying XXXX does not help, 61% saying YYYYY does not help and 68% saying that ZZZZ does not help. **[Link]** This dissatisfaction is not to be taken at face value though, as a significant section of patients admit to 'follow their own intuition over the medical advice given' (Boehnke, 2019).

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Linking words/Signposts

Cause/effect	Comparison	Contrast	Addition	Examples	Conclusion	Time
whenever	likewise	although/but	also	for example	accordingly	as soon as
as/as a result	similarly	alternatively	and/and then	for instance	in brief	at the same time
because	equally	besides/despite	in addition	in other words	in short	as long as
consequently	as with	however/yet	moreover	in effect	in conclusion	at length/at last
hence	compared to	nevertheless	too	in this case	on the whole	meanwhile
since	equivalent to	on the other hand	further	in particular	to sum up	secondly/once
so		on the contrary	furthermore	specifically	throughout	first of all/first(ly)
thus		whereas	again	such as	in all	finally/eventually
therefore		while/whilst	the following	in the case of	overall	initially/next
accordingly		in contrast	what is more	to show that	in summary	after(wards)
until		otherwise	as well as	significantly	to conclude	subsequently
		conversely				henceforth



Don't forget the basics!

WORK ON YOUR SPAG! [Spelling, Punctuation And Grammar]



Importance of communicating good ideas clearly!

Spelling and grammatical errors result in lost marks!

If English is your second language:

- take time to learn and study the craft of writing*
- read scientific literature and study its syntax (sentence structure)*
- develop your vocabulary in general and in relation to your subject*

Practice! The only way to develop your writing skills and vocabulary

STYLE: Grammar And Syntax

Clear, grammatically correct English

- No getting lost in long sentences
- Clear thinking and clear writing are deeply linked!

TONE: Reasoned and Objective

- You are trying to persuade your reader!

Academic English Language Services:

<https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub/academic-language-services>



Manchester Academic Phrasebank



Academic



Introducing work

Referring to sources

Academic Phrasebank

GENERAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

Being cautious

Being critical

Classifying and listing

Compare and contrast

Defining terms

Describing trends

Describing quantities

Explaining causality

Giving examples

Signalling transition

Writing about the past

<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

CHECK IT OUT!

Presenting your essay

Check your module guide for information on presenting essays:

font and size

line spacing

justified left

margins at top and bottom, on left.

first page information

essay title and

student ID number

page numbers, bibliography, references...



Proofreading



Always leave time to proofread your work!

This is the final check for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG).

Language check Tips:

It's best to wait at least a day after finishing writing your assignment!

Use your spell check on screen, but then proofread a print-out!

You'll spot mistakes you hadn't noticed.

Read your work aloud too!

You may see words spelt correctly but with the wrong meaning

E.g.: 'were' instead of 'where'.

Look through to make sure you have used names and terms consistently!



ADDRESS THE KEY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA & ESSAY GUIDANCE

**Found in the Module Handbooks and Assessment tab
on the Blackboard**

What is the marking criteria for your assignment?

Keep it top of mind when you're writing your essay!

Think of it as a checklist – and confirm you have ticked off everything in the list before you can submit your essay!



CONSIDER
FEEDBACK TO
YOUR PREVIOUS
ASSIGNMENTS



Have you made sure you aren't repeating mistakes from the previous work?

Have you taken on board advice on how to improve?

How to use your Feedback



Some further resources

Help on the Learning Skills Hub!



Study ▾

About

International

Research ▾

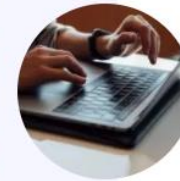
Students ▾

Business



Learning Skills Hub.

The hub has been developed by Learning Developers and Learning & Research Librarians with your needs in mind.



Your Learning Skills Team

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Learning & Research Librarians and Learning Developers

[Essay Writing module](https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub/essay-writing)

<https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub/essay-writing>

Useful skills texts

GENERAL:

Cooper, H. (2016) *Where's your argument? : How to present your academic argument in writing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cottrell, S. (2019) *The study skills handbook*. Fifth edition. London: Red Globe Press.

Godfrey, J. (2013) *How to use your reading in your essays*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Godfrey, J.(2013) *The student phrase book vocabulary for writing at university*. Hampshire, [UK]: Palgrave Macmillan.

Godwin, J. (2019) *Planning your essay*. Third edition. London: Macmillan Education.

Greasley, P. (2011) *Doing essays & assignments essential tips for students*. London: SAGE.

Solomon, G. (2013) *Just write it! How to develop top-class university writing skills*. Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill Education.

EXPLORE DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC LITERATURE! E.g.:

Bottomley, J. (2018) *Academic writing and referencing for your social work degree*. St Albans : Critical Publishing.