

Essay Writing

Learning Development Service

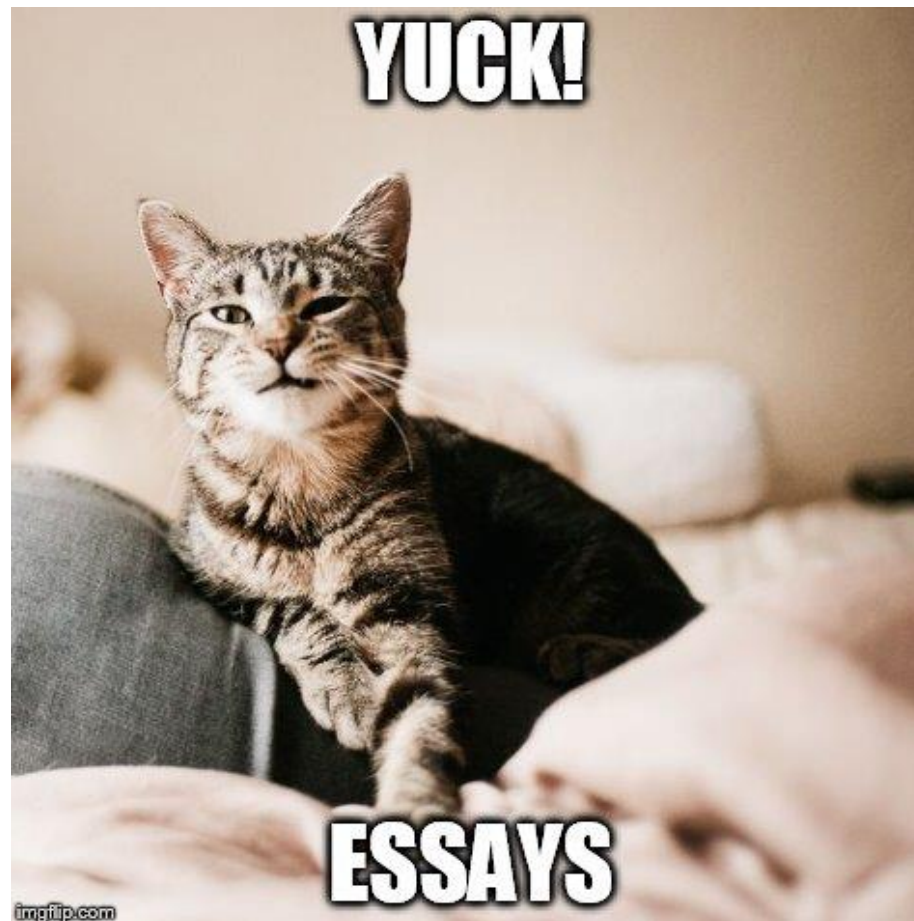
22nd of October 2015

Leonie Maria Tanczer, MSc.

LDS Workshop Series

- Week 2 – 8th October 2015 **Independent Study & Time Management**
- Week 3 – 15th October 2015 **Literature Search**
- **Week 4 – 22nd October 2015 Essay Writing**
- Week 5 – 29th October 2015 **Referencing**
- Week 6 – 5th November 2015 **Critical Reading and Writing**
- Week 7 – 12th November 2015 **Presentation Skills**
- Week 8 – 19th November 2015 **Literature Review**
- Week 9 – 26th November 2015 **Dissertation and PhD Proposal**
- Week 10 – 3rd December 2015 **Study Skills & Exam Preparation**

Most of you ...



What this workshop will cover:

8 Stages of Essay Writing

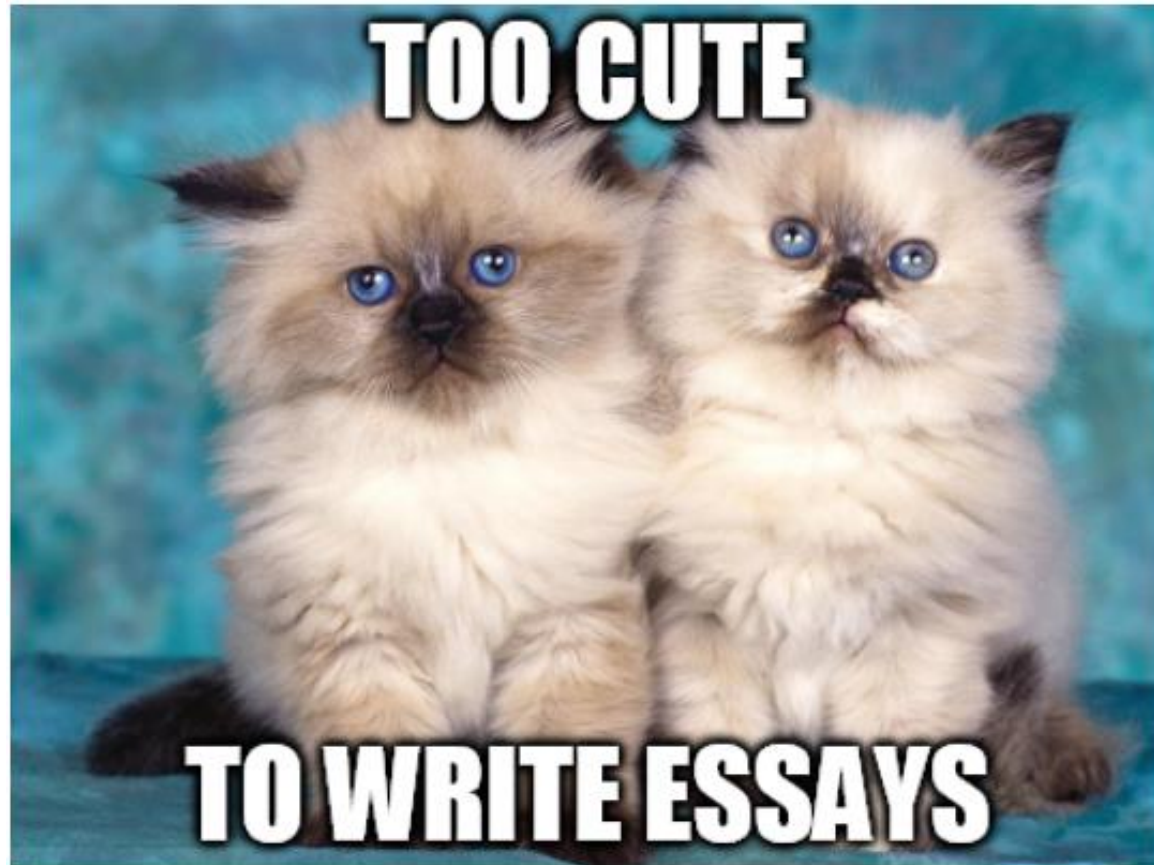
1. Understanding the question
2. Research for your essay
3. Reading skills
4. Forming an argument
5. Planning essay
6. Writing your essay (draft)
7. Edit
8. Proofread

The Essentials

Learning

Development

Service



Essay = Opportunity

- Helps you to organise **your ideas** on a given topic
- You can **deepen and broaden your subject-knowledge** (beyond the material covered in the course)
- You can **explore a topic** in detail
- Helps you to develop your **writing skills**
- You can **engage** with critical debates about your subject
- Opportunity to start **preparing for exams**

What attracts good marks?

• Lowest Marks

- Weak structure
- Missing thesis statement
- Shows little research
- Mostly descriptive
- Considers only one point of view
- Poor English



• Better Marks

- Good, logical structure
- Appropriate use of paragraphs
- Evidence of comprehensive background reading
- Answers the question
- Develops an argument

Essay Writing

- **Time needed** for each stage, do not leave to last minute
- What do you **not feel confident** about when writing essay writing?
- **Feedback** indicates what need to work on
 - Use **feedback to help you improve** (marks and comments)
- Check at end of workshop if you have **actions you can take** to work on your essay writing skills



8 Stages of Essay Writing

1. **Understanding the question**
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Understanding the Question

- Read the question very carefully – underline the **key words**
 - These will tell you what the marker wants you to do and will require you to read and re-read the title
- **Keep the title in front** of you as you research, plan and write
- Feedback from lecturers **“did not answer question”**

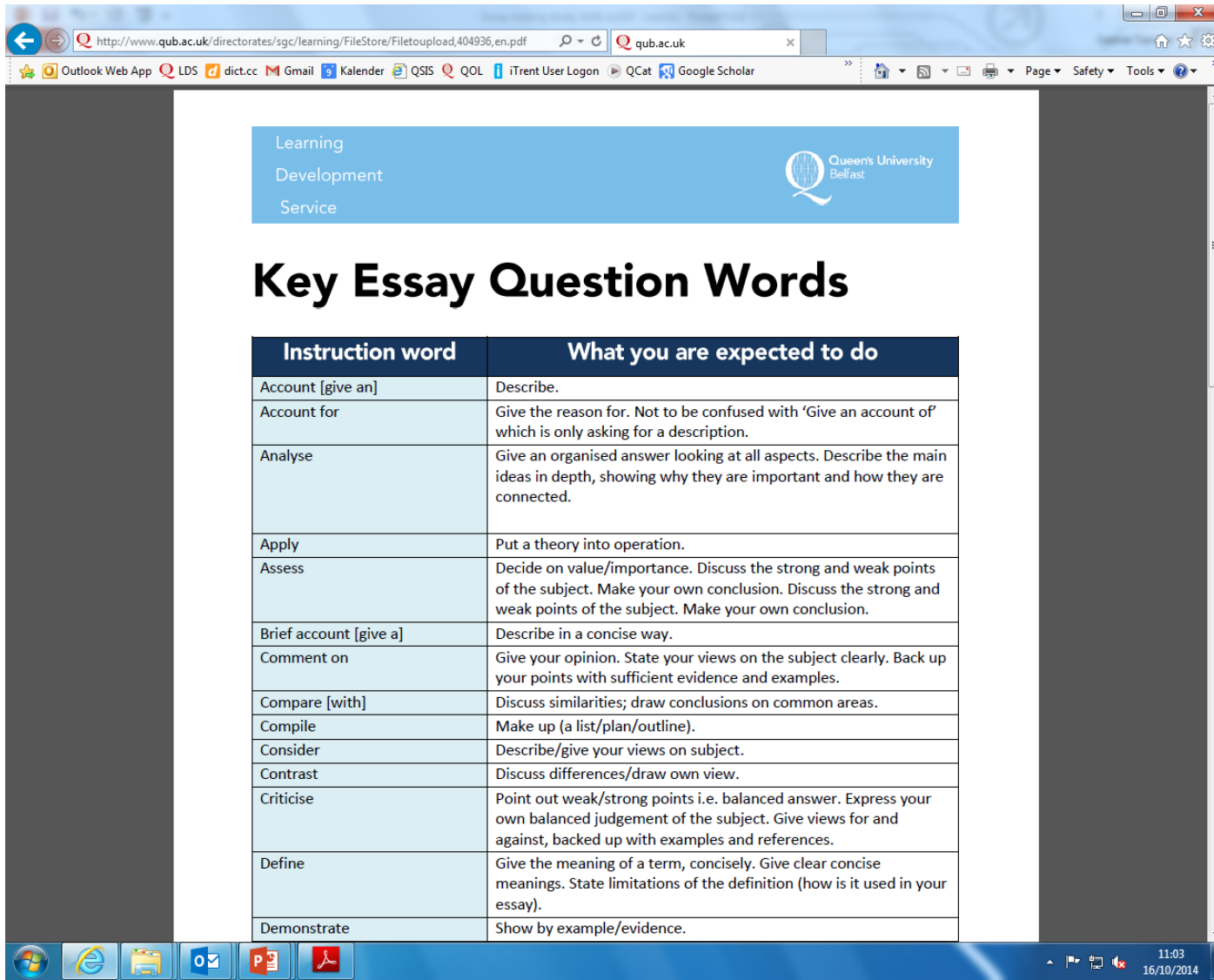
Analysing the Question

“In what ways might terrorism be distinguished from other forms of political violence?”
(School of Politics, 2012-2013)

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from other forms of political violence?”

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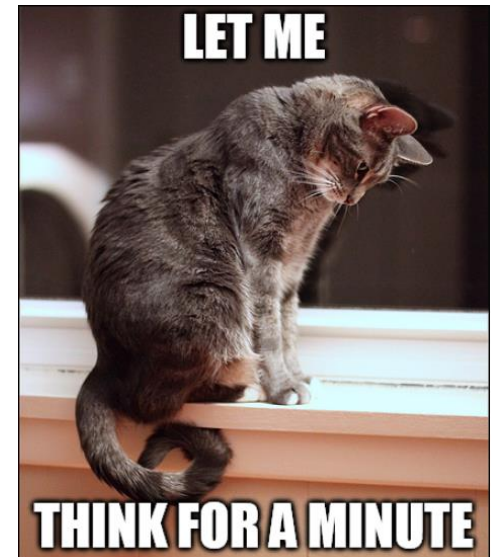


The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/FileStore/Fileupload,404936,en.pdf>. The page content includes a blue header with the text 'Learning Development Service' and the Queen's University Belfast logo. Below the header is the main title 'Key Essay Question Words' in a large, bold, black font. Underneath the title is a table with two columns: 'Instruction word' and 'What you are expected to do'. The table lists various instruction words and their corresponding expectations for an essay response.

Instruction word	What you are expected to do
Account [give an]	Describe.
Account for	Give the reason for. Not to be confused with 'Give an account of' which is only asking for a description.
Analyse	Give an organised answer looking at all aspects. Describe the main ideas in depth, showing why they are important and how they are connected.
Apply	Put a theory into operation.
Assess	Decide on value/importance. Discuss the strong and weak points of the subject. Make your own conclusion. Discuss the strong and weak points of the subject. Make your own conclusion.
Brief account [give a]	Describe in a concise way.
Comment on	Give your opinion. State your views on the subject clearly. Back up your points with sufficient evidence and examples.
Compare [with]	Discuss similarities; draw conclusions on common areas.
Compile	Make up (a list/plan/outline).
Consider	Describe/give your views on subject.
Contrast	Discuss differences/draw own view.
Criticise	Point out weak/strong points i.e. balanced answer. Express your own balanced judgement of the subject. Give views for and against, backed up with examples and references.
Define	Give the meaning of a term, concisely. Give clear concise meanings. State limitations of the definition (how it is used in your essay).
Demonstrate	Show by example/evidence.

Understanding the Question

- Can you **say in your own words** what the essay is asking you to do?
- What **other requirements** have been specified
 - Submission date, word count, font size, covering page etc.
 - **Marking criteria**



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Research for Your Essay

- What do I **know already**?
 - Lecture notes, reading list i.e., module handbook
- What do I **need to find out**?
 - Look at the key words / make a list
- Where will I **get the information**?
 - Library, databases, web search
- Where will I find **appropriate sources**?
 - Decide what information is relevant
 - Discard what you do not need – do not be tempted to quote from everything just to show that you have read widely





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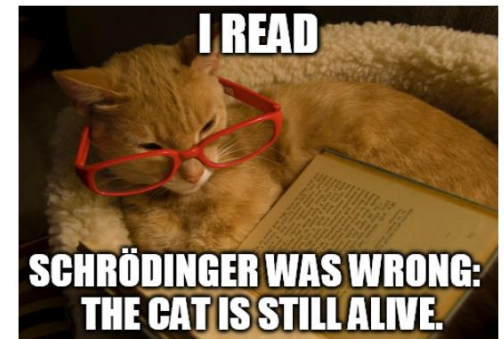
- **Subject Librarian:** Where and what is appropriate material
- **Tutorials:** Ask questions, get clarification
- **Module Handbooks:** Reading lists
- **Lecturers:** In in doubt email query or go to office hour
- **Learning Development Service:** Referencing and critical reading
- **Peers:** What are they doing, reading, writing?

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Reading Skills

- **Scan:** Is material relevant, why?
- **Take details** for referencing: Referencing software
- Use **critical reading sheets**
 - Summarise the **key points**
 - What **evidence** is being used
 - Write down “juicy” **quotes**
 - Relate to **other material** you have read
 - What are **limitations**
- Read when you find you **concentrate best**



Author(s):	
Title:	
Publication Date:	Access Date:
Source:	Location:
Keywords:	
Important points, notes, quotations	
	<u>Page No.</u>
Connections to other author(s) or source(s):	

Author(s)/ Source	
Title	
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Date	Access Date
Publisher or Journal	Place
Volume	Issue Number
Author's position/ theoretical position	
Essential background information	
Overall argument or hypothesis	
Conclusion	
Supporting reasons	
1.	5.
2.	6.
3.	7.
4.	8.
Strengths of the line of reasoning and supporting evidence	
Flaws in the argument and gaps or other weaknesses in the argument and supporting evidence	

8 Stages of Essay Writing

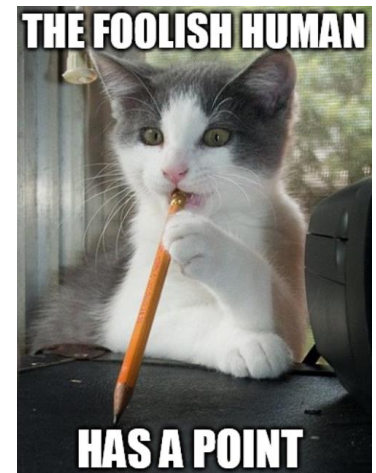
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Forming an Argument

- Taking a **step back** from your reading and notes
- **Focus** on the question
- Do you have a **strong argument** to make, based on relevant **evidence** (your reading material)
- Can you **summarise verbally** your argument, **sub-arguments** and key points
 - E.g., gender pay gap in industry due to (a), (b), (c) etc.

Help with Forming Arguments

- **Giving your views**
 - Talk about the things you want to mention in your essay
- **Listening to others** in tutorials
 - How does your lecturer or peers make a point?
- **Reading** existing publications
 - How do they establish their argument and structure their paper?
- **Questioning assumptions**
 - Ask questions i.e., Why?



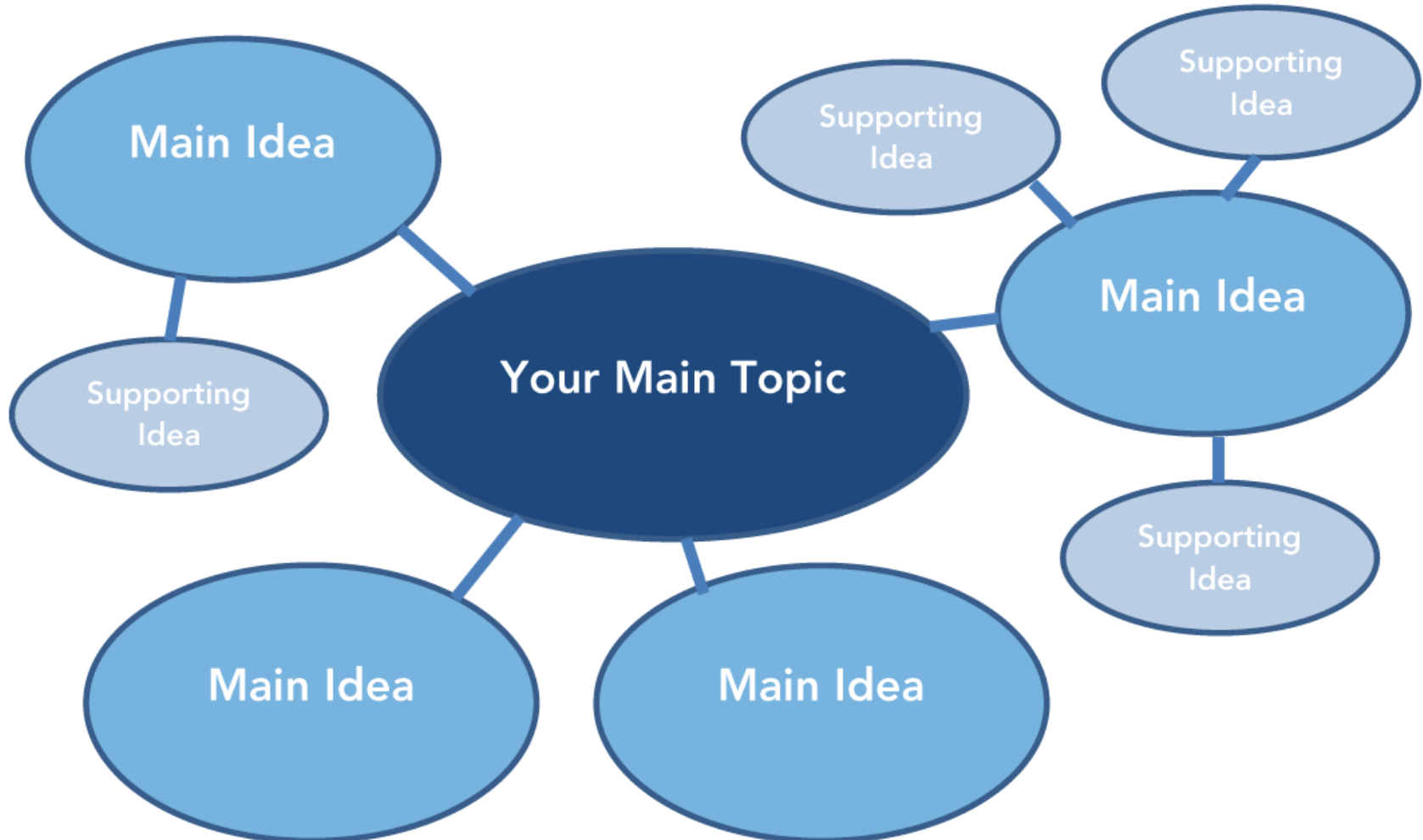
8 Stages of Essay Writing

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Planning an Essay

- Set yourself a **timeframe**
 - When have you achieved what?
- **Structure!**
 - What are the **key points/arguments** you need to include
 - Use **sections and headings** to make a plan
 - make short notes under each section about what you would like to include
 - Decide on the **order** of your sections/paragraphs
 - Can you make a **link between each section**
 - What are you **concluding**

This is an example of a mind map you can use as a reference when creating your own.

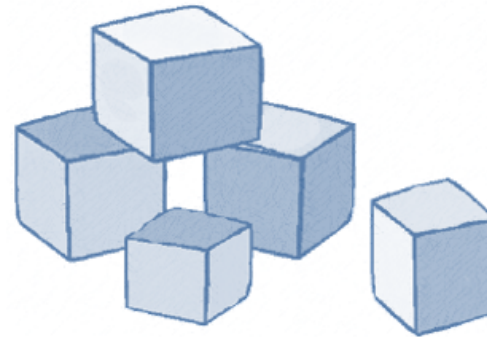


Essay structure

- **Introduction (10%)**
 - Engage the reader by **introducing your topic**
 - **Identify the issues** you are about to explore
 - **Preview** how you plan to answer the question
- **Main text (80%)**
 - Divided into **paragraphs** (1 paragraph = 1 argument!)
 - Paragraph has an Introduction, Main Body and Conclusion
 - **Structure** set out by introduction and approach to question
 - Must **cover everything** you said you would cover in the introduction
- **Conclusion (10%)**
 - **Summarises** your argument and the main themes
 - **Do not present new arguments**

Paragraphing

Paragraphs give your writing structure: each paragraph should cover one idea or aspect of an idea so that every new paragraph marks a pause in the writing and signals a progression in your argument. Well-defined paragraphs that focus on a particular idea improve the flow of your essay and make the central argument clear for the reader.



Like the essay itself, paragraphs have an **internal structure** of an introduction, main body and conclusion. Paragraphs often include:

- An opening topic sentence to express your main point. It may be useful to use 'connecting words' (such as: however, furthermore) or signposting sentences (another point to consider is...) – see pp. our 'Connecting Your Writing' and 'Signposting' help-sheets.
- Supporting sentences to develop and support the main point, give back up points, give examples, provide relevant quotations, comment on the evidence, show the implications, outline opposing theories etc.
- A concluding sentence to show the significance of the point made, indicating how it answers the question and possibly linking these ideas to the next paragraph.

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6. **Writing your essay (draft)**
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Writing your draft essay

- **Start writing:** It is a draft
- **Keep things simple & clear:** Can I follow your argument
- **Follow academic writing style conventions:** Formal, objective, impersonal, cautious, concise, specialist vocabulary etc.
- **Keep referring back to the question:** Is what you are writing clearly relevant?
- **Use references and cite your evidence throughout:** Reference straight away, otherwise you will get lost
- **Use your plan to keep you on track:** Be organised
- **Develop and link your arguments:** Use linking words & stick to the structure

Connecting Your Writing

Developing an argument

Within ONE sentence: so, because, owing to, as a result of

Using TWO sentences: thus, therefore, consequently, for this reason, it follows that, in view of this, moreover, in addition, indeed, in short

To redirect an argument:

Within ONE sentence: but, in spite of, despite, although, even though, whereas, while

Using TWO sentences: however, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary, it has been suggested that, it could be argued that

Addition

and, also, as well as, moreover, further, furthermore, in addition, additionally, next, firstly, secondly etc.

Comparisons

similarly, likewise, in the same way

Contrasts

although, for all that, however, on the contrary, otherwise, yet, but, even so, despite, conversely, alternatively



Critical Writing

Descriptive:

- States what happened
- States what something is like
- Explains what a theory/model of care says
- Gives information



Analytical:

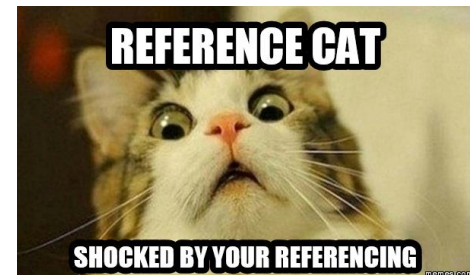
- Explains why what happened is significant
- Evaluates strengths and weaknesses
- Shows why the theory/model is relevant or how it relates to practice
- Draws conclusions

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Edit

- Leave a **bit of time** in between writing and editing
- Put yourself into the **position of the reader**:
 - Has everything been **defined**?
 - Can the reader **follow** your thinking?
 - Can you **summarise** the key point of each paragraph and why it is relevant to your essay title?
 - Is your **language confident**?
 - **Referenced** correctly?
- Read your essay **aloud** & let it be read by **peers**



Introductions

As it is the first thing your examiner will read, the introductory paragraph should demonstrate several things:

- ✓ You understand the question, its background context, and the complexities of its key words and/or phrases.
- ✓ You can clearly apply those terms to the subject matter of the essay (i.e. the chosen author, text, theory, timeframe, etc...).
- ✓ You can summarise your argument clearly and anticipate the main points of your answer.
- ✓ That your essay/argument is worth the read.

The introduction and conclusion should each be approximately 10% of your total word count

Introductions are often comprised of some combination of the following:

Context: Introduce your essay by outlining significant background or contextual information. This prepares the reader to fully understand the approach you take in answering the question.

General Facts and Figures: By drawing upon a striking fact/quotation that addresses the question quite broadly, you can convincingly illustrate your 'take' on the answer. Use facts/quotations that link directly to the key words and phrases. Being imaginative and adventurous with an opening quotation/fact can grab your reader's attention. You should be sure, however, to keep it brief and relevant.

Definitions: Identify the key words in the question and define them. Use dictionaries and (peer-reviewed) encyclopaedias. This shows the examiner that you fully understand exactly what you are being asked to write about.

Reduce Word Count

- If you find that you have written over the word limit, you can reduce it by going back over your assignment and cutting out redundant words and phrases. (28 words)

Reduce Word Count

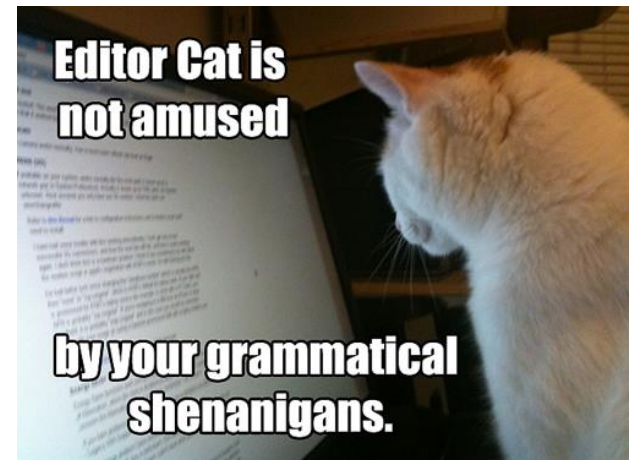
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- If you have written over the word limit, you can reduce it by cutting out redundant words and phrases. (19 words)

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Proofreading

- **What are you looking for?**
 - **Spelling**
 - **Grammar**
 - **Missing words**
 - **Spacing**
 - **Words used inappropriately** or in the wrong context (use dictionary to double-check meanings)
- **Print it out** to proofread your assignment
- Let **others [native speakers] read over it**



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Essay Writing Checklist

Content

- Have you answered the question?
- Have you included all necessary points?
- Is what you have written relevant and is your meaning clear?
- Is your essay of the required length?



Structure

- Is there a clear introduction, main body of argument and conclusion?
- Is your essay clearly divided into paragraphs with only one main point in each paragraph?
- Are your ideas linked together in a logical order so the reader can follow your argument?
- Have you used enough signposting or linking words?
- Is your argument back up with references and supporting statements?

Spelling

- Use spell checker.
- Read aloud: start at the end of the line and read backwards.

Punctuation

- Read your essay aloud. You need punctuation every time there is a pause or slight drop in your voice. If you get out of breath, your sentence is too long!

Checklist

Step	Rate 0-10	Action
1. Understanding the question		
2. Research for your essay		
3. Reading skills		
4. Making an argument		
5. Planning essay		
6. Writing essay (draft and structure)		
7. Edit		
8. Proofread		
9. Time management		

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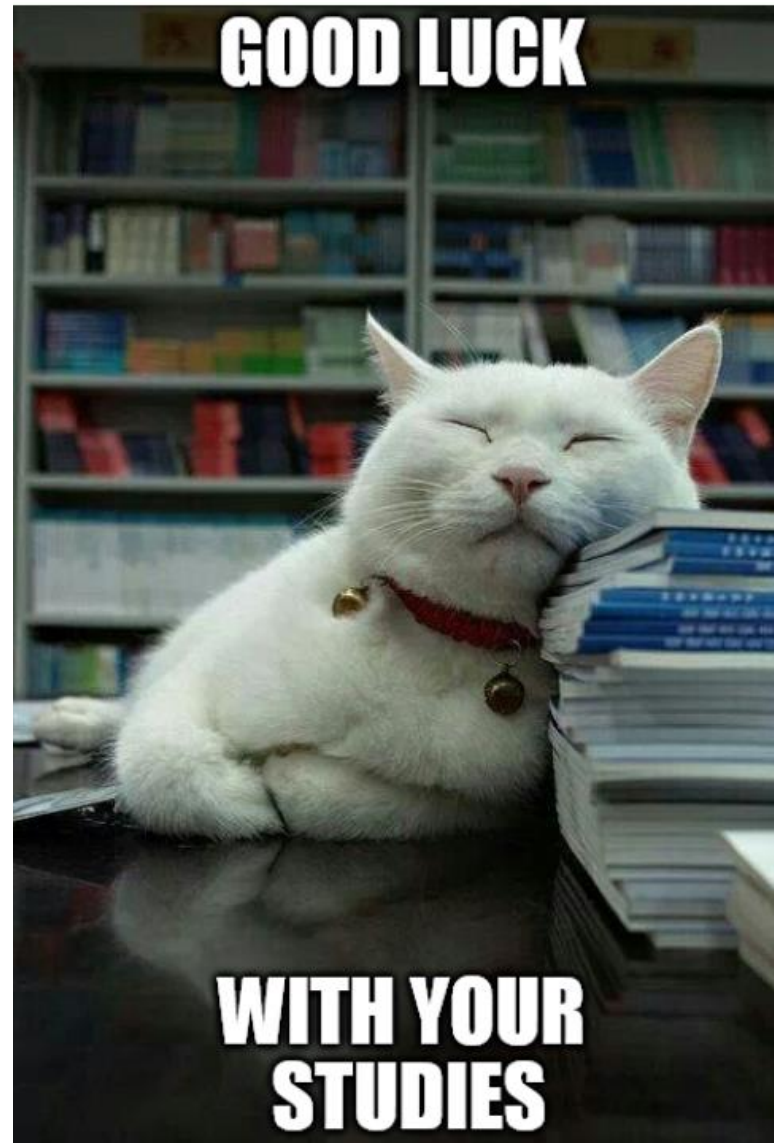


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