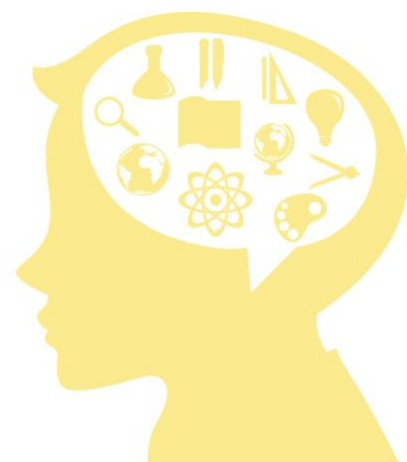




STUDY SKILLS GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Contents

- **Learning Styles**
- **Effective learning**
- **Time Management and Organisation**
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1. Learning Styles

To study you have to be an independent learner. Therefore, it is advisable to think carefully about your learning style and how best you can use your learning strengths to support your academic studies. Use this part of the guide to help you:

Identify different strategies and skills that will benefit you as a learner.

Learning Styles Questionnaire

Tick the response which best suits you.

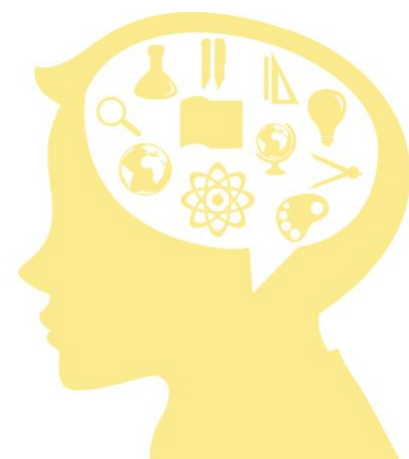
1. Do you usually remember more from a lesson when:
 - a) You do not take notes, but listen very carefully
 - b) You sit near the front of the room and watch the lecturer
 - c) You take notes

2. Do you usually solve a problem by:
 - a) Talking to yourself or a friend
 - b) Using an organised, systematic approach like lists, etc.
 - c) Walking, pacing or some other physical activity

3. Do you remember phone numbers (when you can't write them down) by:
 - a) Repeating the numbers orally
 - b) Seeing or visualising the numbers in your mind
 - c) Writing the numbers with your finger on the table or wall

4. Do you find it easier to learn something new by:
 - a) Listening to someone explain how to do it
 - b) Watching a demonstration of how to do it
 - c) Trying it yourself

5. When you try to remember something do you:
 - a) Try to see it happen in your mind
 - b) Hear in your mind what was said or the noises that occurred
 - c) Feel the way 'it' reacted with your emotions







6. If you don't know how to spell a word, do you:
 - a) Sound it out
 - b) Try to see it work in your mind
 - c) Write the word in several ways and choose the one that looks right

7. Do you enjoy reading most when you can read:
 - a) Dialogue between characters
 - b) Descriptive passages that allow you to create mental pictures
 - c) Stories with lots of action in the beginning (because you find it difficult to concentrate early on)

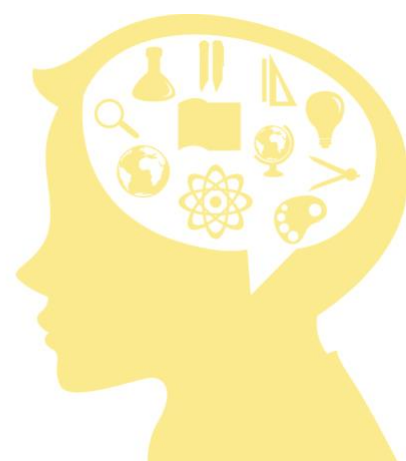
8. Do you remember people you have met by their:
 - a) Names
 - b) Faces
 - c) Mannerisms, movements, etc.

9. Are you distracted mainly by:
 - a) Noises
 - b) People
 - c) Environment (temperature, comfort of furniture, etc.)

10. Do you have problems sitting still to read? If so, do you:
 - a) Talk with a friend
 - b) Watch TV or look out of the window
 - c) Fidget in your chair, or can't lie still in bed

Count the total number which fall into the following categories

- a) Auditory (by hearing)
- b) Visual (by seeing)
- c) Kinaesthetic (by touching, doing or moving)





Study Strategies for different learning styles

Auditory

If you are an auditory learner, it means you will learn best by hearing information. Consider making use of sound in the following ways:

- Talk or read aloud to yourself as you learn information;
 - Talk through and/or review information with friends;
 - Record information on to tape or disc to enable you to listen back over information;
 - Ask a friend to read text or lecture notes aloud to you;
 - Have music playing in the background while you read or write;
 - Work in a silent room.
-

Visual

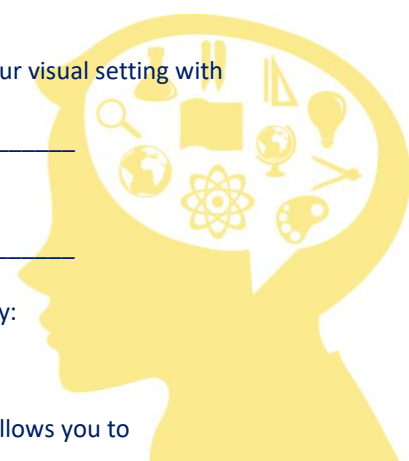
Visual learners often learn best from seeing information presented in diagrams, charts or pictures. Try using some of the following visual techniques:

- Plan work using spider diagrams, lists or tables, pictograms and mind maps;
 - Write down all information;
 - Use coloured pens to highlight important information when reading and to link similar ideas and arguments as you identify them (But only if you are using your own text);
 - Use coloured paper for different modules or subjects;
 - Use large wall charts or planners to organise your work;
 - Try to visualise information and ideas in your mind;
 - Vary the environment or position in which you work as this may create a link between your visual setting with a particular subject area.
-

Kinaesthetic

A kinaesthetic learner will learn best by touching, doing or moving. Try to think physically by:

- Discussing ideas with friends;
- Putting different arguments and ideas on separate pieces of paper when planning essays, allows you to physically organise your answer;
 - Going over information in your mind while walking, jogging or swimming;
- Using colour or draw pictures and diagrams alongside written notes;
- Moving around your environment during independent study time.





2. Effective learning

It doesn't matter how you learn as long as you use the methods which suit you. However, a combination of the use of all the senses is the best way to learn.

It appears that on average you will remember:

- 20% of what you read;
- 30% of what you hear;
- 40% of what you see;
- 50% of what you say;
- 60% of what you do.

But you will remember 90% of what you say, hear, see and do.

Multi-sensory learning can help anyone to enhance the experience of learning and improve recall of important information. Information is received by the brain through the sensory channels. These channels are:

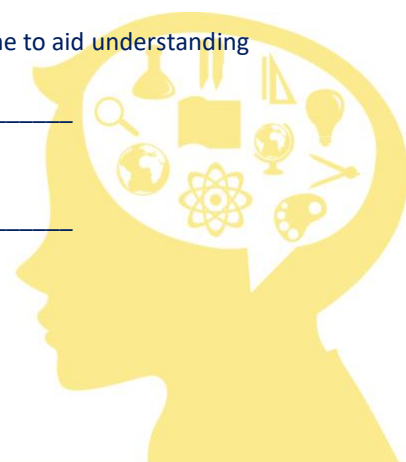
- Visual (seeing information)
- Auditory (hearing information)
- Kinaesthetic (touching, moving or doing)
- Olfactory (smelling and making associations related to smell)
- Taste (what we experience from the mouth and tongue)

Consider how strongly a smell, taste or hearing a piece of music can remind you of a previous situation or event. This is because all your sensory channels have worked simultaneously to link into your emotions to create that experience.

Multi-sensory learning involves activating as many of the senses as possible at the same time to aid understanding and recall.

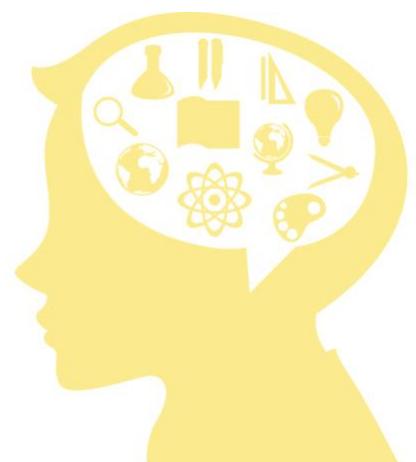
Other study tips for effective learning

- Remember to take regular breaks.
- Create or choose an environment which suits your learning needs:
 - limit noise and distraction;
 - room temperature is not too hot or too cold;
 - comfortable seating arrangement;
 - good lighting.
- Break large tasks into smaller manageable chunks.
- Eat regularly and drink plenty of water.
- Use technology to help you:
 - Personal Computer;
 - Tape, digital or minidisk recorders;





- Assistive software.

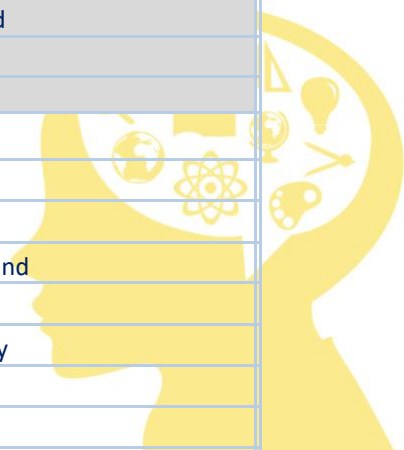




3. Time Management and Organisation

Misuse of time is probably the most common form of sabotage that students use to undermine their attempts to study. However, planning your time makes you think about it strategically and, even if you have to alter your study plans, you will benefit from having previously defined your tasks and prioritising your activities.

Common Time Problems	Possible Solutions
Are you disorganised and frequently misplace things?	Organise your learning space. Take control of where you work and you can then control how you work. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep a clear desktop• Place pens, pencils etc in a desk tidy or jar• Organise your notes by using a separate ring binder for each subject• Use coloured dividers to separate notes into date order• File handouts with the appropriate lecture notes
Put off doing coursework and assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a diary or wall planner to clearly mark assignment deadlines for every module• Start tasks sooner rather than later• Be realistic about how long things will take and set appropriate time slots for specific tasks e.g. planning an essay will take longer than reading a short extract• Break tasks down into manageable parts and allow time to tackle some of it every week
Easily distracted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiate study time with friends so that they know when you are not to be disturbed• Be aware of the times of day you can learn and concentrate• Set clear start and finish times for each study session• Take regular short breaks
Over commitment and leaving things to the last minute	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try not to over commit your time• Plan social time into your week and mark clearly in a diary or wall planner• Prioritise tasks; do the most urgent tasks first





Study / Revision Planner

Week beginning / /

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday





4. Studying by reading

To improve reading comprehension the SQ3R technique is recommended. Applying SQ3R will slow you down when reading but with practice you can establish good, productive habits which will improve your recall and comprehension. Remember, effective reading is not fast reading.

Survey

Skim the whole book or relevant chapter to get an overview of the text. This will provide your brain with a frame of reference for the information it will be receiving.

Question

Is this really the information you need? Are there any words, technical terms or phrases that you do not understand? Check unknown meanings at this stage to avoid a break in your concentration when you read the full text.

Read

Read slowly and be aware when your concentration goes. Read in short bursts with frequent short breaks if necessary. Try to visualise what you are reading or close your eyes and picture the layout of the page.

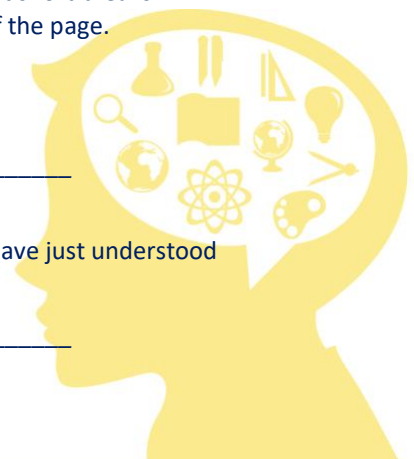
Recall

Stop at the end of each paragraph or page and say out loud, in your own words, what you have just understood from what you have just read. This will help monitor your comprehension of the subject.

Review

Take notes. Note taking is an active form of memory and ensures you make a connection with what you are reading and understanding.

- Annotate your text with your own notes;
- Label or reference key chapters and pages;



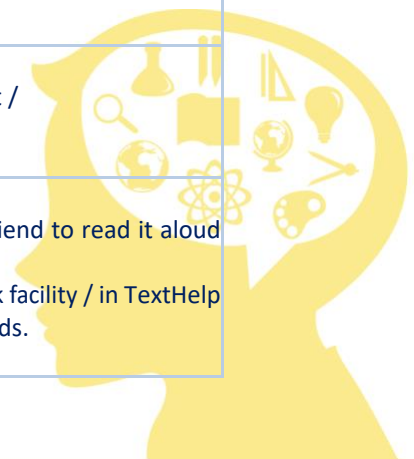


- Underline or highlight key words or facts on each page;
- Use coloured highlighters to identify the different arguments;
- Summarise out loud and then make notes using your own words;
- As you find the answers to questions, write them down.

5. Studying by making notes and answering questions

- The key is not to copy down chunks of text from a book or your notes. Your aim is to make clear notes using a few of your own words.
- Be selective. Write down the main subject and important headings before you start.
- Write down a few questions based on these or use past tests or exams.
- Highlight the important key words and phrases needed to answer the questions.
- Write down the key words and phrases and then learn these.
- Take Blank sheet of paper and write down the key words and phrases you have learnt
- Expand these notes to complete the circle and answer the question(s).
Many learners, particularly those with dyslexia, may experience the following difficulties when reading. Some suggested solutions are given in the following table.

Problem	To alleviate the problem
Glare from white paper or text blurs, distorts or jumps about	Try using a coloured acetate or coloured plastic folder over the text to remove glare.
Print size makes it difficult to concentrate or focus on reading	Use a photocopier to enlarge text / Scan text onto a PC and enlarge
Difficulties understanding a particular section of text	Read the section aloud / Ask a friend to read it aloud to you / Scan text into PC and use read back facility / in TextHelp Read & Write to listen to the words.





6. Examination preparation

Failure in examinations can be attributed to exam nerves or as a result of the negative effects of stress. However, it is usually poor preparation and planning which results in exam failure. It is therefore important that you take control and organise your time and employ strategies to ensure better performance in examinations.

Revision

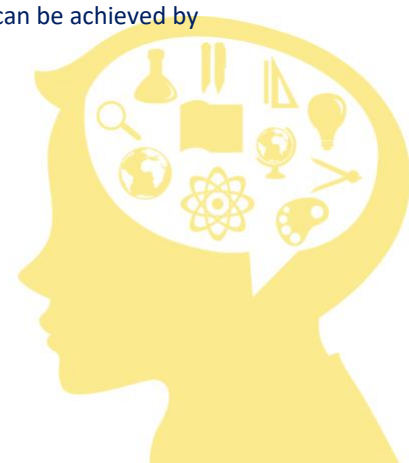
Getting started:

- Draw up a realistic revision timetable – this should include some social time to allow you to relax;
- Organise your notes by module or topic – if you have followed advice in the Note Taking Section (below), you will find getting started on revision easier;
- Decide what topics to revise;
- Use past exam papers to guide your revision;
- How many questions do you have to answer for each paper?
- Use past papers to practice writing answers to exam questions;
- Be positive about your learning;
- Ask teachers for help or to clarify information if necessary.

Memory

Recall of information is essential for successful performance in examinations. Better recall can be achieved by time management of study periods and regular over learning.

- Try to keep concentrated study to no more than 40 minutes at one time;
- Take regular short breaks;
- Over learning is essential for recall of information:
 - **After each break spend 10 to 15 minutes reviewing work covered in the previous study period**
 - **Review again after 24 hours**
- Be aware of when your concentration slips – it may be shorter than 40 minutes;
- Find a quiet place to work to avoid being distracted during revision periods;
- Make sure you drink plenty of water to keep your body hydrated and eat regularly.





Try one of the following techniques to help make information memorable

- Use multi-sensory methods – write it, say it, see it, hear it;
- Use Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review, when reading through text;
- Summarise key information onto one page using coloured paper;
- Use mind maps;
- Put key information into poster format and stick on your wall;
- Use coloured pens to highlight important facts, to link ideas or to separate arguments;
- Use technology – TextHelp Read & Write programme allows you to hear and read information simultaneously;
- Record your revision notes or answers onto to tape or disc. Hearing the information may help you to remember it;
- Group revision – you may find it helpful to spend some time revising with friends.

Timed examinations

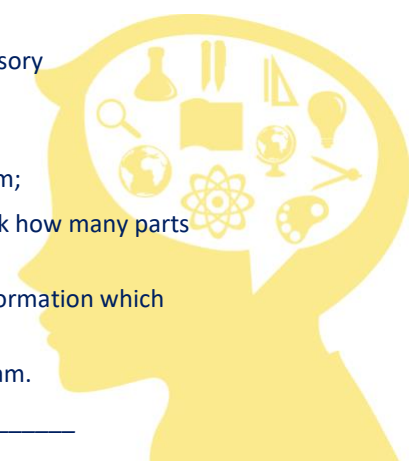
- Make certain you know where all of your exams are being held in advance of the start time;
 - Organise pens, pencils, rulers etc. the night before;
 - Don't let other people panic you and if necessary avoid them.
-

In the exam

- Before you turn over the exam paper, write down key dates, definitions, quotes names or other information you feel you may forget;
 - Read the instructions on the question paper carefully. They will tell you if there is a compulsory question and how many questions you must answer;
 - Scan through the paper and tick all questions you could answer;
 - Calculate the time needed to answer each question and the order you wish to attempt them;
 - Read each of your selected questions carefully underlining key words or phrases. Also check how many parts there are to each question;
 - Plan your answer to the first question and write it. Keep to the plan and avoid including information which is not relevant;
 - Plan your answers for all the remaining questions to avoid panic towards the end of the exam.
-

Remember

- Write in short clear sentences;
- If you forget a word, spelling or chunk of information, leave a gap and come back to try to fill in the detail later;
- Make your writing legible;

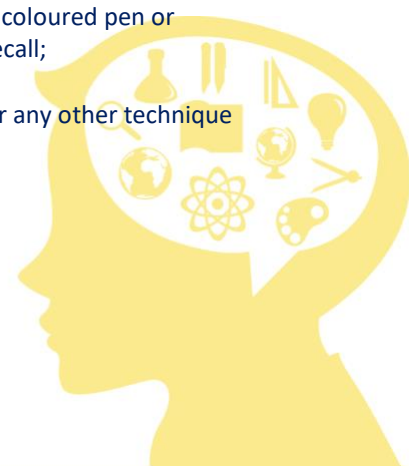




- Less information and evidence is needed in comparison to course work;
- Essays are shorter;
- Allow time for proof reading.

7. General note taking tips

- • Note the date, subject and page number at the top of each page;
- • If you are in a lecture, seminar or tutorial, note the name of the lecturer or tutor;
- If you are making notes when working in a group, note the names of your colleagues in the group;
- It is important to note the sources of your information;
- Use A4 paper. Put different headings for main subject areas on separate sheets of A4 paper. You can then file these notes straight away (or when you have made notes on these sheets you can file them straight away);
- Use the margin. You can put references in the margin, note keywords, indicate if you have handouts on the subject or add information later;
- Leave blank spaces on your page; after each note for example. The 'visual image' of notes and blank spaces may help you remember the information you have recorded. If necessary you can use the space to note information you wish to add later;
- Use a system. Number and/or label your notes with headings and subheadings. Use indentations and bullet points. The visual image you have of your notes may help you to recall the information they contain;
- Try using highlighters to pick out key words and phrases. Write main points with a coloured pen or underline them with colour. Some people draw pictures or diagrams to aid their recall;
- Link related notes by using arrows, lines, brackets, enclosing them in a rectangle or any other technique you find helpful.





Note taking methods

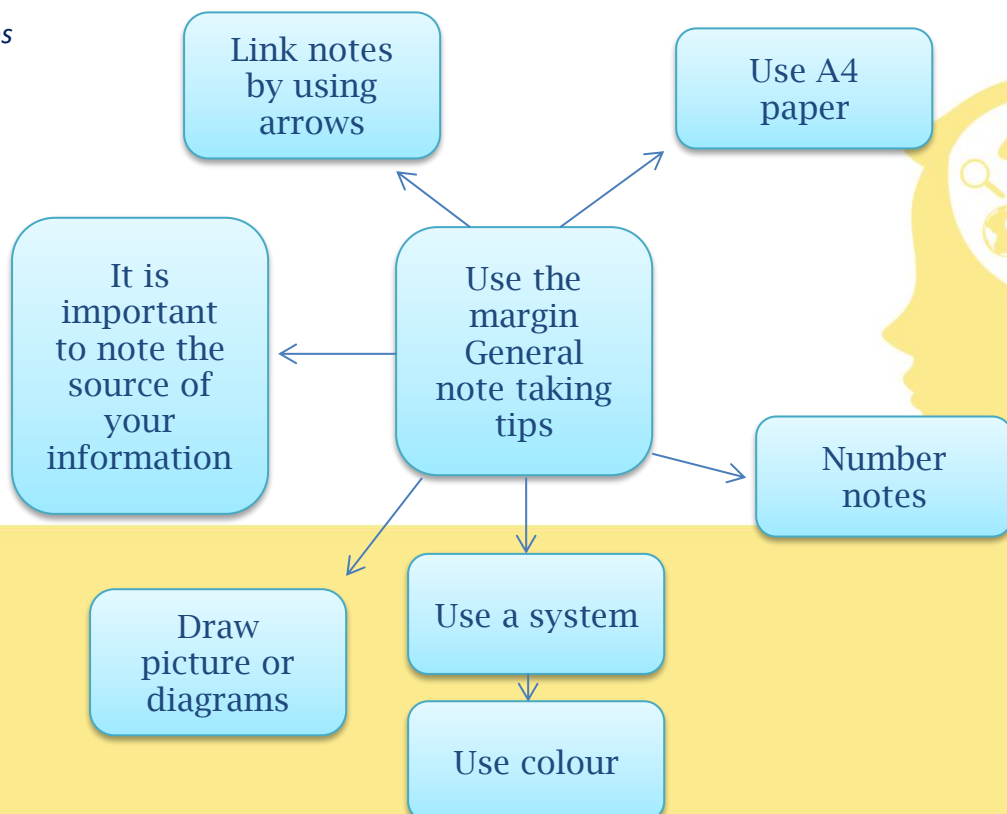
It is important that you choose a note taking method which suits your learning style. Consider whether you prefer linear methods or visual formats such as spider diagrams.

Linear methods

29.8.03	Note taking Mr Smith
	Linear note taking
	use a number strategy
	list key information
	don't try to write down every word
	use abbreviations
	use the margin to make a note of the date
	use the margin to list key words and references

Two column method	Main idea Place the main idea or heading in the left hand column
	write the further details in the right hand column
Subject	

Mind Maps





Organising your notes

- Read through and check your notes soon after you have written them, preferably on the same day. Follow up any points you need to; information you may have missed out or did not understand. Check references and key spellings;
 - File notes as you have made them;
 - Use colour codes: different coloured files for different subject areas, coloured file dividers for sub-sections of a subject;
 - File related information with your notes: handouts, photocopies of journal articles, newspaper and magazine cuttings, and references to notes from different but linked areas of study;
 - Develop a filing system that is easy for you to use and refer to when planning and writing essays, and revising for exams.
-

Useful tip

- Use a visual image or picture on the front of your files/notebooks relating to your topic area. This will help you quickly identify the subject area in the file;

7. Essay Writing

Essay writing is time consuming, may be frustrating and is generally hard work. This section has been devised to help you to develop your essay planning and writing skills.

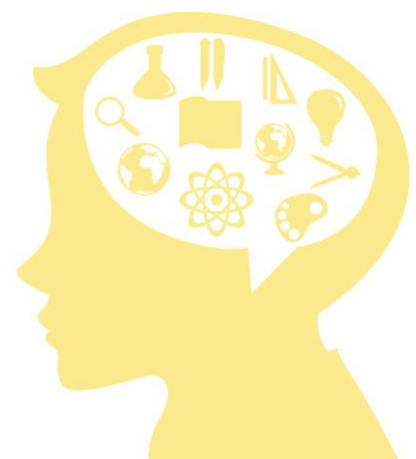
Essay writing requires:

- Analysis and an understanding of the question;
- Research – reading and collating relevant evidence;
- Evaluation to ensure identification of the main arguments has been made;
- Planning – creating a logical structure of information and ideas;
- Writing;
- Referencing;
- Proof reading.

The essay title

Essay titles include key verbs and words which inform you of how the question must be answered. It is therefore important that you understand the question before you begin to write.

- Key verbs are the instructional words which tell you how the question must be answered;
- Key words provide the framework for your answer.





Sample question:

'Discuss the relevance of class in the analysis of recent social movements in Latin America.'

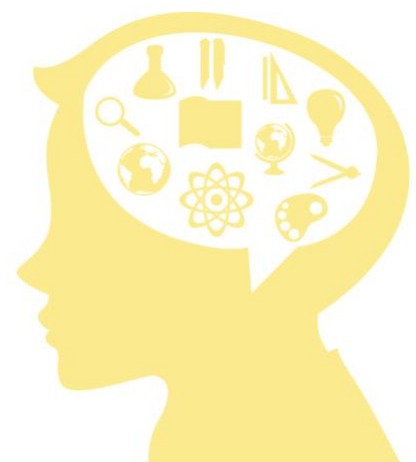
Key Verb

- Discuss. This word instructs you to investigate or examine by argument or debate.

A list of key verbs often found in essay titles is provided on the next page with a description of how each one should be interpreted.

How to identify key words

- The subject word (class)
- Look for place/location (Latin America)
- Look for a time element (recent)

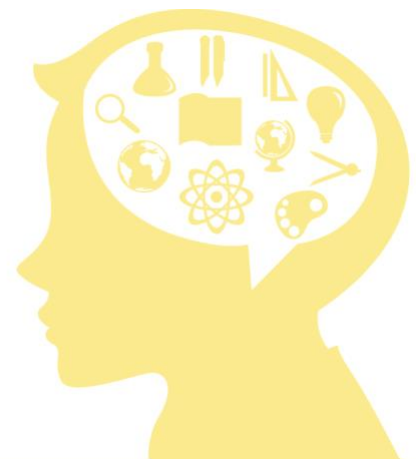




Identifying Key Verbs in Essay Questions

Identifying the key verbs in a question is essential before planning your answer. The following list shows subtle, but important differences between the common key verbs.

- Analyse Break up into parts, investigate.
- Compare Similarities and differences – perhaps reach a conclusion to show your preference.
- Contrast Show differences.
- Define Set down meaning of word or phrase.
- Describe Give detailed account.
- Discuss Investigate or examine by argument or debate.
- Distinguish Show the differences between.
- Evaluate Give your judgement – back by discussion of evidence.
- Examine Look closely into.
- Explain Make plain – interpret. Give reason for something.
- Interpret Make clear – show the meaning of.
- Justify Show adequate grounds for decisions and conclusions.
- Outline Give main features or general principles.
Leave out minor details. Emphasise structure and inter-relations.
- State Present in a brief, clear form.
- Summarise Give a concise account of the main points.
Leave out details and examples.
- Trace Follow the history or development of a topic from point of origin.





Planning

It is advisable to break down the large, complex tasks of producing a long piece of writing into manageable, smaller chunks.

Use the following checklist to help you keep track of your progress.

- Examine the question

This should include your first thoughts, asking yourself what you already know about this topic.

- Re-examine the question

Do you really understand all the terms used and have you highlighted the key verbs?

- Identify gaps

What else do you need to know or to find out before you are able to answer the question?

- Prioritise tasks

How long will it take you to get the information you need? Do you need to work with others or see your teacher to clarify information at this stage? Act now to keep your attitude positive – don't let little snags become reasons for not working.

- Set realistic targets

You will not write a good essay quickly. It is also very unlikely that you will be able to write coherently without a plan. Remember, give yourself enough time to think and organise your thoughts before you start to write.

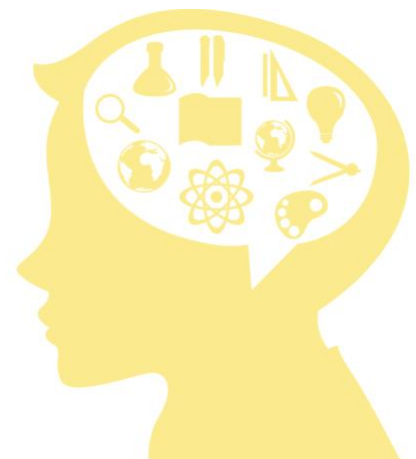
- Complete reading and note taking

Set yourself a deadline for completion of background reading and research. Make sure you take adequate notes and make a note of references for your bibliography or reference section.

- Devise your plan

Use any method you wish to provide yourself with a framework for your writing. Make sure you are aware of word limits. Before you start to write you should have a good idea of the main topic of every paragraph or section.

Remember, do your thinking before your writing.





Essay Structure

Remember, the rule is one idea per sentence and one topic per paragraph. Also keep referring back to your plan to make sure that what you are writing is relevant and answers the question.

Introduction

The purpose of an introduction is to provide the reader with an outline of the main arguments.

- Outline the main theme or premise;
 - State the purpose of the essay;
 - Summarise background information.
-

A Guide to Paragraph Structure

The guide to paragraph structure below may help you to produce a logical flow of information in your written work.

1. Your first sentence should outline the topic of the paragraph.
 2. Then add detail.
 3. Include relevant examples or evidence.
 4. End the paragraph with a brief concluding sentence.
-

Writing Conclusions

- Summarise the main arguments;
- Try not to repeat what you have already written;
- Show how your arguments and/or examples are relevant to the essay title. Make sure you end your conclusion with a strong sentence, giving your final view.





8. Preparing for Oral Presentations

Factors to consider when you are preparing and delivering oral presentations:

Audience

- Who are your audience?
 - How many will be in the audience?
 - What knowledge might the audience already have?
-

Material

Time restrictions shape the content of your presentation. Therefore, divide your information into the following categories:

- Information the audience must have;
 - Information the audience should have;
 - Information that is not essential but which might be useful in addition to main points.
-

Preparation and Speaking from notes

- Write key words or phrases on prompt cards;
- Bullet point main heading and write brief notes beside each point;
- Use coloured card or paper for each main point (colour being a strong visual memory aid);
- Make sure your writing is large and clear.

Finally

- Rehearsal - practice your presentation.
-

How are you going to present your information?

- If you use powerpoint stop talking for a few seconds and give your audience time to read each slide;
- Speak clearly;





- Don't rush or speak too fast. Pause and moderate the tone and volume in your voice;
- Eye contact is important. Therefore, don't be afraid to look at your audience. (tip - look just above their heads);
- Don't stand with your hands in your pockets; fiddle with your hair or any other mannerisms which might distract audience attention.

9. Plagiarism

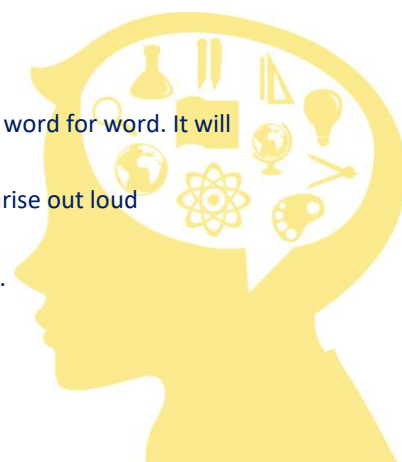
Plagiarism is defined as the unacknowledged use of another person's ideas, words or works either verbatim or in substance without specific acknowledgement.

You might be accused of plagiarism if you:

- Do not correctly reference your sources;
 - Copy the work of others word for word;
 - Use other people's ideas without acknowledgement;
 - Copying another student's work;
 - Using words or sentences from other people's work. Even if you have changed the order it will still be plagiarism;
 - Submit work you have asked someone else to write for you.
-

Tips to help you avoid plagiarism:

- Use your own words, no matter how poor you believe your written skills to be;
- Avoid using too many quotations;
- Accurately reference your sources;
- Do not copy down information word for word;
- Use a different coloured pen to copy quotes or when writing any other information down word for word. It will help you to identify the extent to which you are copying;
- Write your notes in your own words. Read a passage and then cover the page and summarise out loud in your own words, then make your own notes;
- If you omit words from a direct quote indicate this by using three dots inside parentheses.





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