Chapter 8

Essay or Assignment writing

Many students find essay writing a very difficult task. Trying to organise their thoughts and ideas into an answer is often a struggle. As with tasks we find daunting, they become a lot easier when we are able to break them down into smaller sections. Essay or assignment writing is no different.

All essays/assignments/presentations have 3 basic areas:-

1. Opening/Introduction
2. Main body
3. Closing/Conclusion

Being aware of these three areas initially will help you organise and structure a comprehensive answer. Below is a simple method of planning your essay from beginning to end.

Planning – Choose an appropriate topic and title for your essay that is in line with the course requirements. Make a quick draft of what you intend the content of the essay to be.

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Research – Assemble and evaluate relevant information. Make sure you keep references of any secondary sources that you use as you go along

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Key points for your essay Assemble all the key points for your essay that you have gathered from your research. Create your essay plan from these points

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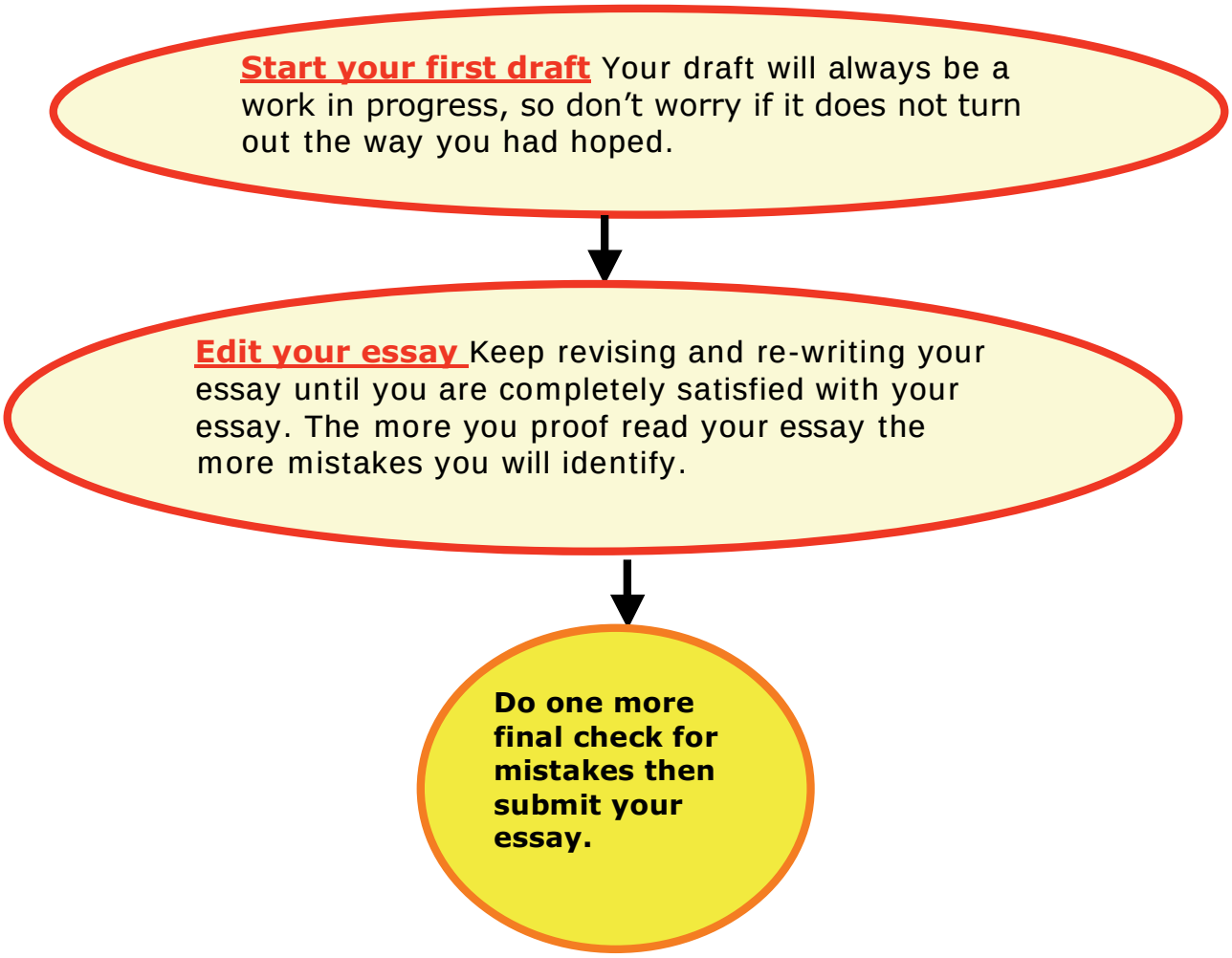

Choosing a topic

Make sure when you are choosing a topic for your assignment that you choose a topic that you are particularly interested in, this will make the writing and research aspect much easier. Also check if there is enough extra reading sources to aid you in answering the question.

In order to get the most out of your assignment, the research work should be of informative value.

Jotting down ideas and some brainstorming may assist in making the most appropriate decision. Using visual mapping can help you identify the topic on which you have the most interest and information.

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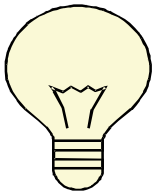
Discussing your essay topic with your peers or lecturer is a good way of making sure that you are on the right track.

Be organised

Some questions to think about before you start.

1. What is the deadline for submission of the assignment?
2. What is the maximum word length allowed?
3. What layout style is required: formal/informal report, footnotes, bibliography, margins, spacing, and reference citations.
4. In terms of structure, what kind of essay is it – Critical/Argumentative/Research Based/a Literature review
5. If an academic supervisor is assigned, how is contact made either by the individual or group of students? And when is the supervisor free to meet you.



Make sure you understand the essay question before you start.

Structuring your essay

Title/question: Every essay has a title or implied question. The complete essay must focus on the title. Refer back to the title as many times as possible throughout your essay

Introduction: This should be a brief introduction into the direction you intend to take the essay. Give a brief explanation of your interpretation of the question, the issues you intend to explore and how you intend to deal with these issues.

Paragraph 1: This section should cover your primary argument in the essay. You should give a brief explanation into the background behind your argument.

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Paragraph 2 and the other paragraphs: Use your second and following paragraphs to make new points to support your original argument. Your first sentence in each paragraph should link in with the previous paragraph. This will help you keep a nice flow to your essay.

Conclusion: You should not raise any new points in your conclusion. This section should be used to summarise your whole argument. State the general conclusions you came up with while answering the question and why these conclusions are so important.

Reference section: This section should include all the secondary material that you referred to in your essay. You can do your reference section in either alphabetical order or in the order in which the references are made throughout your essay.

Bibliography: This section is for all the materials that you read or used in relation to the topic but did not refer directly to in your essay.

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ESSAY STRUCTURE.
Use this template to help you break down your essay into smaller sub-sections.

Essay Question/Title

_____

_____

_____

Key points for Introduction

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Main point for Paragraph 1

_____

_____

Paragraph 2

_____

_____

Paragraph 3

_____

_____

Paragraph 4

_____

_____

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Paragraph 5

_____

_____

Paragraph 6

_____

_____

(The number of paragraphs in your answer depends on the word count you are allowed)

Main points for Conclusion

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

References

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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