

ACADEMIC WRITING TIPS

- **Start early**

Starting your writing assignments early gives you an opportunity to change direction, seek help, and edit your work. Writing at the last minute creates unnecessary pressure and often leads to sloppy work.

- **Understand the assignment**

Make sure you understand the purpose of the assignment and what your audience expects. If you are at all unsure, ask your tutor or the SSSC.

- **Use pre-writing techniques**

Talking with your peers and tutors, making lists, brainstorming, drawing mind-maps and free-writing all are excellent techniques to get thinking about your topic. Also, leave yourself time to let your subconscious work.

- **Focus your research**

Having a clear research question will give you some key words to use in your search for information and save you from wasting time and effort on irrelevant resources.

- **Read as much as possible**

If you already have a wide body of knowledge about your subject, you'll be able to think critically and clearly about the assignment and how it might contribute to your learning.

- **Make an outline**

Outlines are made to be changed, but starting with an outline will help you organise your ideas and stimulate thinking about your purpose and composition.

- **Write several drafts**

Don't let your first draft be your last! Leave yourself time to rest and review your work to look for problems of argumentation, organisation, and coherence, as well as grammar, punctuation, spelling, page numbering, etc.

- **Be coherent**

Coherence is sometimes referred to as 'flow' and is created by having a clear, logical organisation of ideas, with clear indications of how the ideas relate to one another. Using transition words and phrases will help your reader follow your thinking.

- **Check grammar and punctuation**

Professional presentation of your work will keep your reader from being distracted and frustrated by language errors. Ensure that your writing is free from ambiguity and silly mistakes that might change your meaning.

- **Have a clear thesis and conclusion**

Focus your ideas on your position and check that your writing is always coming back to your main point. Tell your reader why your ideas are meaningful in the context of your topic or subject area.

- **Be an ethical scholar**

Give credit to your sources and be sure to use the appropriate referencing format. Understand what constitutes plagiarism and take steps to avoid it.

- **Ask for help**

If you are confused, worried, concerned, upset or unclear about your work, talk to your tutor, course leader, or the SSSC.

For more information:

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