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ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

Compiled by
Dinusha Weerawardane and Paul Byrne



Academic Development and Employability



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Dinusha Weerawardane and Paul Byrne

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Sheila Cameron

GO! with Microsoft Office 365 Excel 2019 Comprehensive
First Edition
Shelley Gaskin and Alicia Vargas

Brilliant Employability Skills
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Dinusha Weerawardane and Paul Byrne

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Seventh Edition
Sheila Cameron
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Academic Development and Employability

Based in the heart of West London's business district, the Claude Littner Business School, is an award-winning business school in the University of West London that is noted for its student-centred and career-focused education.

Business education at the University of West London dates back several decades, and was founded on the principles of innovative application, in response to the need for skills and knowledge that can be effectively applied to solve business and social problems. With the booming West London economy attracting UK and multi-national firms in the post-war era, this need grew ever more urgent. The Claude Littner Business School has carried forward that heritage into the twenty-first century by delivering its unique brand of education that is designed to equip the modern learner with the knowledge and skills that businesses need to solve modern-day problems and to add value to the firm.

The Business School also plays a much wider social role in our community, engaging with various charities to support social and community missions. And while our students are trained in a business context, the application of their learning is all encompassing and has no boundaries. There are two principles that our students and graduates have come to exemplify that we are particularly proud of: first, they have demonstrated the positive impact of applying business solutions to social problems; and, that even in business one's principal purpose is to make a positive impact in the lives of others.

Underpinning our success is a robust and continuously adapting curriculum that seamlessly integrates employability skills with academic development. In this book, Paul and Dinusha have masterfully integrated their own management and academic experience of many years, to create an essential study text to equip students with the skills necessary to gain a competitive edge in achieving career success. A must read for all students, this book teaches employability and academic skills in a harmonious blend and creates a continuous critical conversation across several important paradigms.

Dr Suresh L. Gamlath

Dean,

The Claude Littner Business School

University of West London

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Essential academic skills

An Introduction to Critical Thinking, Academic Writing and Harvard Referencing

By: Dinusha Weerawardane and Paul Byrne

Introduction

In this chapter, you will be introduced to the academic skills and strategies required to succeed in your studies. The chapter begins with an explanation of critical thinking and characteristics you would need to develop in order to become a critical thinker. It then introduces you to academic writing and the application of critical thinking. It will also provide tips on structuring your written work and some key principles to guide you in successful writing at university. The last section of this chapter provides an explanation of the concept of plagiarism and the importance of avoiding it; it will also introduce you to the essential art of Harvard referencing, with detailed examples on how to acknowledge a variety of sources.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the concept of critical thinking and its importance in academic writing.
2. Effectively plan and structure your writing.
3. Critically review and analyse a range of differing viewpoints, stances and arguments in academic texts.
4. Produce written work of a high standard using the appropriate formats to meet the requirements of your course.
5. Develop an enhanced understanding of academic malpractice including plagiarism and how to avoid it.
6. Understand the Harvard style of referencing and develop the ability to correctly cite and reference your sources.
7. Paraphrase, summarise and synthesise from appropriate academic sources.
8. Communicate effectively to various specialist and non-specialist audiences.

1. Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is one of the concepts that you will need to master as you progress through your university course. It has been a skill required by universities since the 1800's when the modern university system was first developed. Today, it is a skill that is needed for all modules and is essentially a transferrable skill that would apply throughout the rest of your career. You can develop the skill of critical thinking through practice and experience, but this is often ignored by teachers as something that students should develop for themselves and as such, the skill of critical thinking is not embedded into a module-based teaching structure. However, it is the single most important skill to develop if you want to achieve high marks in your assessments. It is the very essence of academic writing.

Critical thinking is not about being critical in the sense that it is not about being negative about an issue. Therefore, it may be a misleading word to use, to describe what is essentially the ability to make a well-thought, well-balanced judgement about a topic after examining all aspects of the subject. It is the skill of **analysis** and **interpretation** of information in an **objective** manner. It is the skill of evaluating opinions of others and information systematically and clearly.

Here a couple of definitions from literature which define it in slightly different ways.

According to Ennis (1985 at p.45), "*Critical thinking is reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do.*" So, it is a process where you reflect on the work and ideas of others and form your opinions based on the body of evidence that you have examined.

"Critical thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. It is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed—the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions, when the thinker is using skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context and type of thinking task. (...) Critical thinking also involves evaluating the thinking process - the reasoning that went into the conclusion we've arrived at or the kinds of factors considered in making a decision." (Halpern, 2014 at p.8-9)

Finally, our interpretation of these and many other definitions are that simply put, critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally, to assess the validity of ideas and to understand the logical connection between them. The skill is then to communicate those ideas clearly with evidence in your academic writing.

Here is a simple recipe for critical thinking:

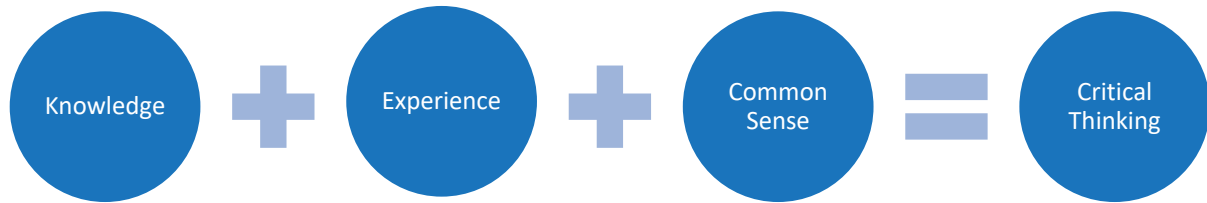


Figure 1: Recipe for critical thinking

Ferrett (1997) defined a set of fifteen characteristics that defined a good critical thinker, and these are listed below:



Figure 2: Characteristics of a critical thinker

Figure 2 shows that you need to have good listening and reading skills as well as a healthy amount of scepticism about what you read and develop the ability to be tentative in your opinions when writing academically. It demonstrates that critical thinking is about the natural ability to question information, including its validity and relevance, and whether there are alternative views or opinions. This is a particularly important skill and of even more importance now where we are inundated with information through the internet much of which lacks validity and can be written by anyone. Therefore, we really need to develop these skills which allow us to question and consider everything we read, and that we then write in a manner that considers the possibility of alternative opinions.

2. Academic Writing

Academic writing is a unique style of writing that is quite different to the styles taught in school and college. It is also very different to the style of writing that employees in the business and finance sectors will use in the course of their work. The style has evolved over many years, and it continues to evolve and develop even today. There are many written and unwritten rules and conventions, some of which we will cover in this chapter. Throughout, we will include some top tips and advice to start you on the journey to develop your skills in this area.



Top Tip #1

Before beginning to write, check and re-check the assessment brief, and ask questions of the tutor as to what is required. Remember who your audience is at all times, and what the tutor wants from you.

Academic writing can be a daunting and challenging process when you first start your academic career. It is a form of communication, where in the academic context, you are trying to convey your knowledge about a subject or topic to an audience who is usually an academic expert in the field and who is charged with the process of assessing your understanding of a particular subject.

Whilst academic writing is different in many ways, it is a transferrable skill that you will need to develop for your professional life after university. Writing and communicating are essential skills in the professions and careers that you enter once you complete your academic studies. If you are capable of writing succinctly and expressing a point of view clearly, that will be of great benefit to your career. Good writers are not as common as we think, and if you can write well, it will increase your confidence and your persuasive skills.

You may be wondering why you need to write academically and use references at university when you have not done this before and may not be likely to write that way in your future careers. It may be argued that writing academically gives you a range of skills that can be adapted to any other form of communication. For instance, it is important to have advanced analytical skills, clarity of thinking, and the ability to develop an argument, communicate concisely and with great clarity. Importantly, you should be able to develop your thoughts and ideas from the work of others and give credit for those ideas. If we give credit to experts in the field and reference their work, then it will increase the numbers of experts who carry out the research that develops our understanding of a subject. It also allows readers of your work to understand which are the ideas that you have developed for yourself and which are the ideas you have generated or analysed using the work of other. It is the analysis and understanding of the work of others that is important in an undergraduate course of study.

**Top Tip #2**

Always get a friend or colleague to proofread your work and check with the tutor to see if they could offer feedback on a draft of your essay or report. They will usually do this if a draft is prepared at an early stage. They will rarely give detailed feedback just before an assessment is due.

Here are ten key principles which will guide you in successful writing at university:

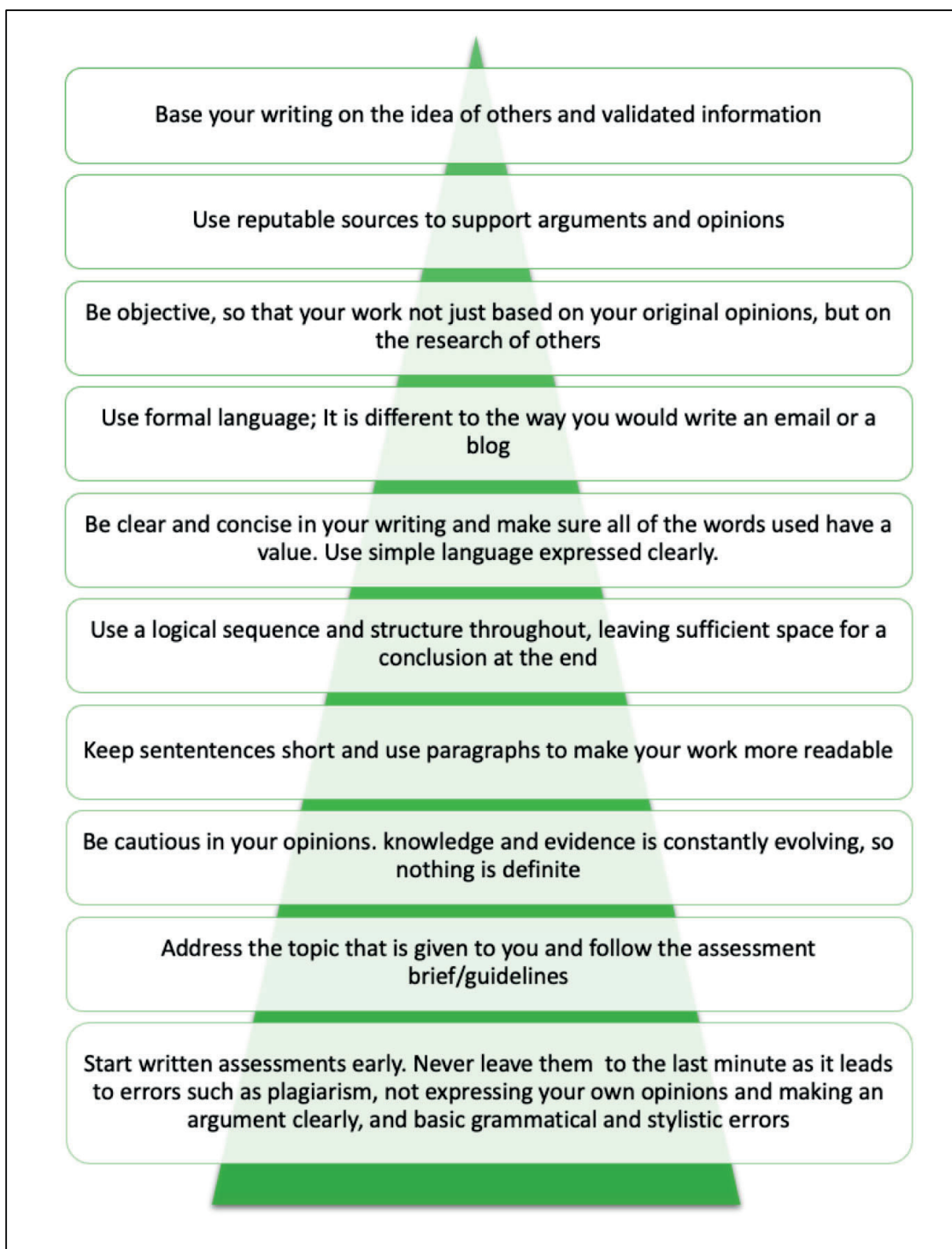


Figure 3: Ten principles to guide successful writing

2.1. Developing academic writing and some of the conventions required

Academic writing has some similarities to the other forms of writing you may have used in college or school and may indeed have some of the same characteristics of the types of reports and papers you would need to produce in a business environment regardless of your professional role. However, academic writing involves a whole range of stylistic conventions developed over many years that you would need to familiarise yourself with as you progress through higher education. Indeed, when you first start writing at university, you will find these styles unusual, complicated, and different, and you may question why they are in place or required.

The differences between academic writing and the way we write in other situations are increasing as we become less formal in our other methods of communication such as text messaging and blogging. Academic writing should be different to the speech and language we use every day. Therefore, it can be hard to adapt to this way of writing and it is an area that you will develop with practice in your first years in higher education.

This table should act a quick reference guide to assist in ensuring that you follow some of the important conventions, and it can be used as a checklist, once a draft is prepared, to review before submission. It details some of the most common “do’s” and “don’t’s” of academic writing. These are just some of the most common errors that occur in academic writing particularly in the first years of a course.

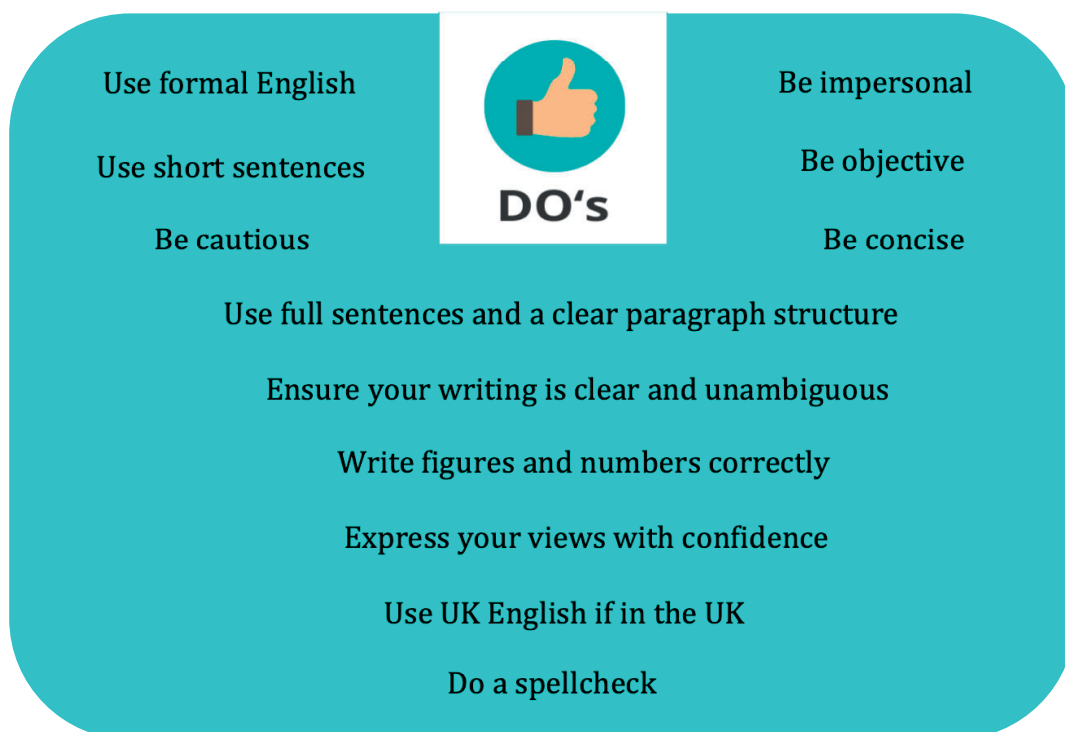


Figure 4: The Do's of Academic Writing

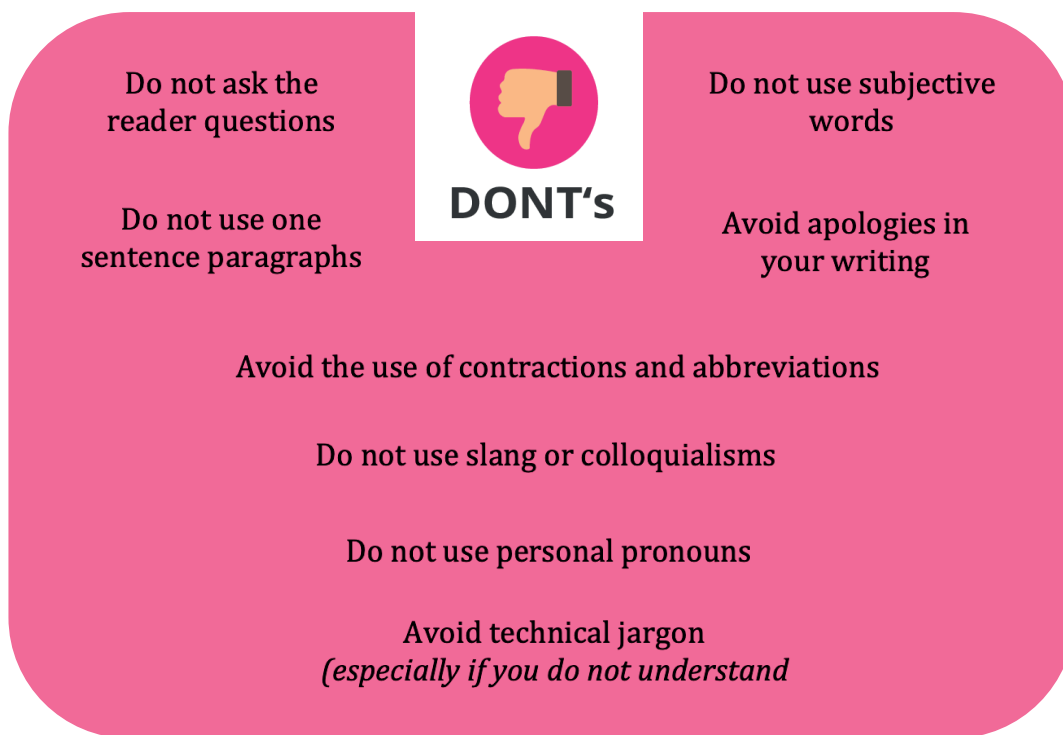


Figure 5: The Don'ts of Academic Writing

2.1.1 Using formal English

Here are some examples of informal language and some alternative ways of conveying the same information.

"The writer is *out of order* when he suggests"

An alternative would be to say.

"The writer suggested xxx, but an alternative view would be ..."

"These findings need to be taken with a *pinch of salt*".

An alternative:

"These findings are not supported by other research".

2.1.2 Avoiding contractions and abbreviations

A **contraction** is when two words are merged into one. Avoid the use of contractions as they are informal and should always be avoided in academic writing, unless quoting from an author directly.

Examples of contractions include “Don’t”, “Won’t”.

In academic writing, you should say, “do not” or “will not”.

Abbreviations should also be avoided.

Avoid using “E.g.”, “I.e.”, “etc”.

Instead opt for, “For example”, or “For instance”

2.1.3 Guidance for using acronyms

Acronyms, particularly standard ones, can be used after the full title has been written. The first time you use the term, introduce the acronym within parentheses after the full term.

For example:

“The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is the leading organisation representing the views of business in the UK. The CBI also provides training and support for its members ...”

2.1.4 Being impersonal

This is a key difference between academic writing and other forms of writing. Avoid personal pronouns such as “I”, “We” and “You”.

Instead begin sentences and paragraphs in impersonal ways such as:

“It can be seen that ...”
“This report will examine ...”
“It had been found that ...”

2.1.5 Being objective

Avoid using subjective words such as: “Nice, wonderful, worthwhile”.

The reader may have a different understanding of the meaning and a different understanding of the values you are implying.

2.1.6 Being cautious

In academia, with its great emphasis on research, we write as if nothing is for certain.

Use words such as:

“Appears to, seems to, tends to, possibly, seemingly, might indicate, apparently, generally....”

Use phrases such as:

“In some cases, this ...”
“The evidence suggests that ...”

2.1.7 Being concise

Edit out unnecessary words. Try and make all of the words in your report or essay, count.

Here are some examples of unnecessary words:

"A famous entrepreneur who lived in Canada called Joe Bloggs set up a well-known business called Acme Enterprises way back in the 1950s".

This might be more concisely written as:
"Joe Bloggs founded Acme Enterprises in 1955."

2.1.8 Using full sentences

For essays, try to avoid lists of points and incorporate them into full grammatically correct sentences. Note that in a report, bullet points are often used and may be encouraged depending on the context.

Shorter sentences which convey just one idea are preferable to longer and more complex sentences. One way to guide you in sentence formation is to have ideally one verb (action word) and no more than two verbs in a sentence.

2.1.9 Expressing your views with confidence

Avoid apologies in your writing and asking the reader questions or telling them what you think. In academic writing for university, your audience is the markers/assessors of the assessment. They would not want to be told what to think or asked rhetorical questions.

2.1.10 Writing figures and numbers correctly

Here there are some simple guides for writing numbers in an academic essay or report.

Numbers below one hundred are written out in full, for example:

Sixty-one per cent
Nineteen members
1000 people

However, if you are using numbers for statistical work then you may use:

61%
20 degrees
£300

2.1.11 Using UK English

This can be a challenge as many computers default to the use of (US English). It can be helpful to set your proofing language to English (UK) in your settings.

2.2. Paragraphs

Before we look in more detail at how to draft reports and essays, it is important to think a bit about how to write paragraphs well. They are effectively the building blocks used in all forms of academic writing and would be the difference between a successful assessment and an unsuccessful one. Paragraphs are not just big chunks of text. They are logically constructed sentences around a central idea. It is like a mini essay with a beginning, middle and end. Each paragraph should have just one main idea in it, which is then described or explained. A good paragraph should have three main elements which make it effective. This should be applied to all paragraphs in academic writing.

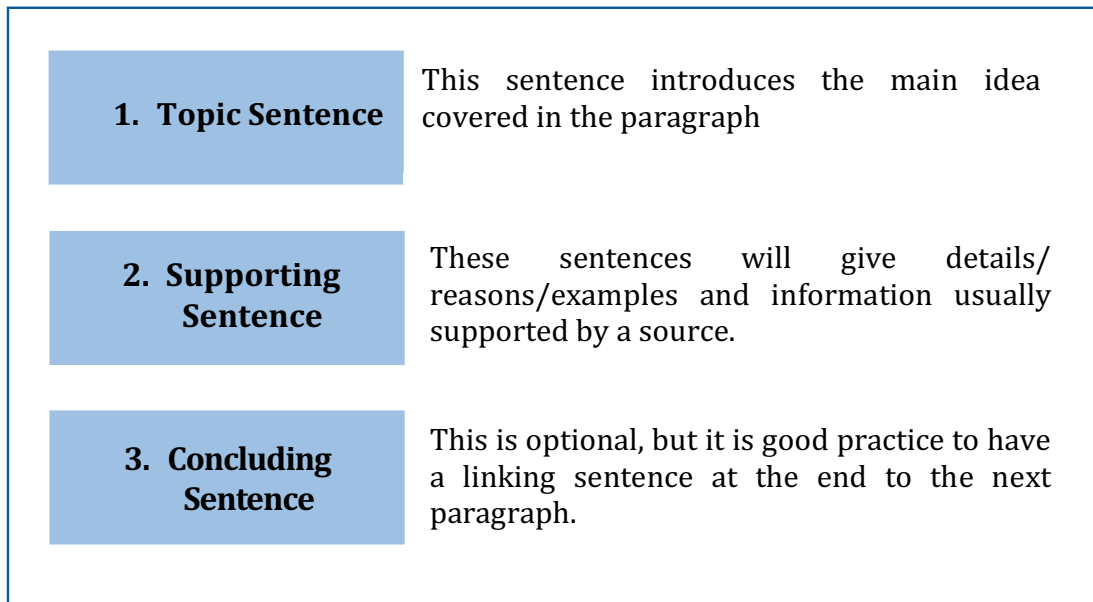


Figure 6: Guide to structuring a paragraph

We will now examine each of these areas in more detail.

A **topic sentence** is one which introduces the main idea in the paragraph. It is the central claim, idea, or problem of the paragraph. The sentence can take several different forms.

- **Tells the reader what to expect in the paragraph:**
“The research on the effect of smoking indicates that it causes lung cancer”.
- **A statement that will be supported by evidence:**
“According to Cancer Research UK (2018), lung cancer accounts for 21% of all cancer deaths”.
- **Makes a clear statement of belief and then goes on to elaborate:**
“Cessation of smoking is the most beneficial way to reduce the incidence of lung cancer”.

The second part is the **main body**. Here the aim is to support the main topic point using evidence or examples and explain and analyse the points made. This part of the paragraph is normally 4-6 sentences maximum.

The third element is the **link sentence** which draws or encourages the reader to continue reading the next paragraph.

Examine the fictitious example below to see how the three parts can be incorporated into one paragraph:

Topic Sentence

Lung cancer is one of the main causes of cancer for both men and women in the UK.

Main Body:

Evidence / Example /
Analysis / Explanation

According to the Cancer Research UK (2018), it accounts for up to 21% of all cancer deaths. This figure is similar to other developed nations where rates vary between 20% and 25%. Allemani *et al* (2018) stated that lung tumours were the poorest of all tumour types with survival rates of between 10% and 20%. This may occur since it can take longer to identify a lung cancer tumour and treatment outcomes are much better when there is early identification of the tumour.

Link

One of the reasons as to why it takes so long to identify a tumour is because the symptoms are common amongst smokers who do not identify the symptoms as an issue for them early on.
(*This could lead to a paragraph about the symptoms next*)

Remember, all paragraphs should have a purpose in the essay or report and must relate in some way to the title and the ideas you have been asked to address. They should flow well from one sub-topic to the next. The tone should be academic in nature and in most cases, should include a citation or even two to support the case you are making. The sentences within a paragraph need to relate to each other; the paragraphs too need to be related to each other in some way. Transition words such as 'in addition', or 'furthermore' and the like can create links from one to the next. Paragraphs should be complete so that there is enough information for the reader to understand the points being made.

2.3. The difference between an essay and a report

In general, there are two forms of academic writing most used in the higher education sector to assess knowledge and understanding of a topic. These are reports or essays. In addition, there is an increasing use of reflective assessments but here we will examine the difference between an essay and a report. They have different rules and structures with a common thread of using simple, clear sentences and paragraphs with one idea consisting of 4-6 sentences.

In business-related degrees, it is increasingly common to use reports to assess understanding of a subject. The aim is to replicate the skills that will be used in the workplace and not just in academia. However, reports in universities still need to apply the conventions of academic writing as described earlier on in the chapter, which means that they would be different in style and tone to the reports that would generally be produced in a business context. The skill, however, is an important transferrable skill and many of the elements of report writing are applicable to any context.

The different elements required for an essay and a report are included in the diagrams below. If you are in any doubt as to what is required of you for an assignment, then you should ask your tutor. It is good practice to always check what the intended receiver of the report wants from you as it is always essential that you follow the assessment criteria. It is also worth checking exactly what needs to be included or not included in the report so that you are clear on what you need to do.

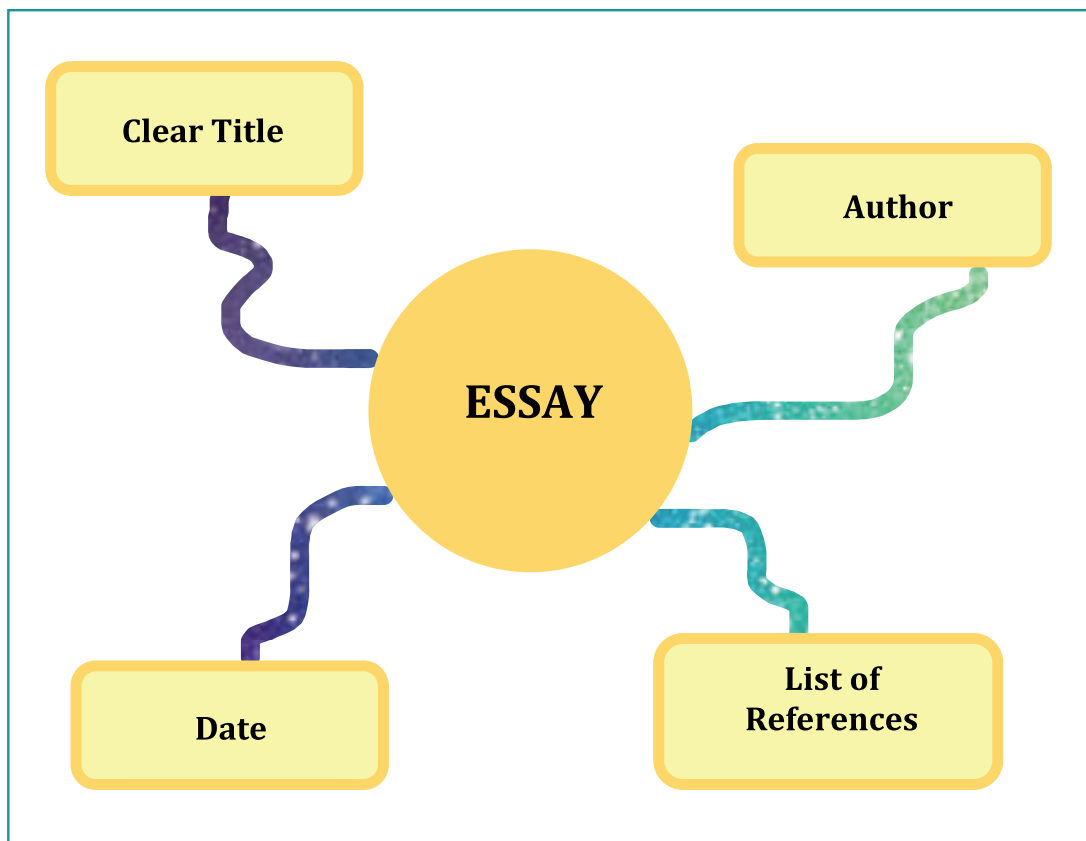


Figure 7: Elements of an Essay



Figure 8: Elements of a Report

In summary, the main differences are that an essay does not have an executive summary, a contents list, headings or sub-headings, or bullet points and is continuous prose throughout, broken up by the skilled use of paragraphs. Each paragraph would make one key point, and most will have an academic source with some evidence of analysis or critical thinking.

A report will start with a cover page and may include an executive summary. It will usually have a table of contents if it is longer than 3 pages. It may also contain headings, sub-headings, charts, and diagrams and may use bullet points. This will be examined in more detail later in the chapter.

Both forms of academic writing will have a clear title, details of the author and the date written. Most importantly both will have academic sources throughout which are analysed using a critical thinking process, and a reference list at the end. The use of paragraphs is also key to success, along with clear and correctly constructed sentences.



Top Tip #3

Design a professional cover page at the start of your academic career. Put some effort into it, so that it creates a great first impression. This cover page should contain important information such as your student ID number, the module name and code, and assessment title. You can then use that cover page for all assessments in the rest of the course and just adapt the information accordingly.

2.4. Structuring an essay

An essay is the purest form of academic writing. It is the style of academic writing that is most unlike the forms of writing used in other educational and work contexts. It is a very formal way of writing and its rules and conventions have remained unaltered for many years. It is characterised by its lack of headings, bullet points and other tools used to make it easy for the reader to understand and follow. Therefore, the writer must show enormous skill to keep the reader engaged with the work.

It is important that you develop a plan and structure for your assignment, prior to commencing writing. It is common for authors to use tools such as mind mapping, essay outlines and the preparation of drafts. At the start of your academic journey, it is worth exploring each method of planning to see which one is the most suitable for you. Increasingly, the use of mind mapping has become more popular as it is an effective way of deconstructing the question into its various elements and helping to judge what the assessor is hoping to receive once the work is submitted.

There are generally three main ways in which students begin writing an essay and these methods can be equally applied to report writing.

1. The first is to do some reading, data collection and gathering of some references to include in the essay. In this case, the author would read a wide range of sources and make notes of information that may be relevant to the assessment. To do this successfully, it is imperative that the sources are all recorded correctly and retained for inclusion in a reference list if they are used. Often, during research for the essay, the author may find some useful information, but forgets to record where it came from, which can lead to frustration, time wasted and possibly plagiarism as described later in the chapter.

2. The second method is to do the opposite and to start to develop the essay first, with its structure and then look for material that supports the argument. This may help you to become more selective in your research, but it can mean that you miss out on valuable material and the possibility of including both sides of an argument. Including both sides can be a valuable way of demonstrating to the assessor that you understand the topic and can form a balanced view, having considered all aspects of the argument.
3. The third method is a combination of the first two where the author does some reading first and then starts to write and construct the essay. Thereafter, they find additional sources to enhance and support their argument.

**Top Tip #4**

When reading to prepare for an essay, make sure you keep careful notes with the full reference and assess the material to ensure that it is relevant, up to date and of academic value. To help do this, it is important to examine the question that is set in the assessment to ensure that you are answering the question that is required of you. Deconstruct the question before you start. Many marks are lost when the writer does not address the question that was set for them.

An essay should not have any headings. It will have a cover page when writing for university as the assessor would wish to know who has written the assessment and what the assessment topic is. It is worthwhile designing a professional cover page to create a great first impression. A great first impression can lead to a phenomenon called the 'Halo' effect, often referred to as the 'physical attractiveness stereotype' and the 'what is beautiful is also good' principle. It means that initial perception of one quality, leads to biased judgments of other qualities. Therefore, if the first impression of the essay or indeed report is good, then it is more likely that the assessor will view the rest of the work more positively. This is particularly important in an essay where the remaining structure may be relatively unattractive in terms of style and layout.

On the **cover page**, make sure the title is the title given exactly. There is often an implied question in the title which can be subtle and if a different title is used, then the assessor may not feel that the author has addressed what was asked. The cover page should be professional in nature and well designed.

The essay itself is then broken down into a series of paragraphs in a logical sequence.

The first paragraph should always be an **introduction**. This should expand on the essay title, so that the reader understands what the essay will examine, the methodology or approach that will be used and previews the points that will be covered. It is important that the introduction does not just restate the essay title but expands on it in some way. It can also include any background information which may be summarised in the introduction. If there is a lot of background required, then it might be worth including this as a separate paragraph. Again, as it is the first paragraph that the reader will look at, make sure it is well-written and it will encourage the assessor to use the halo effect positivity in marking the work.

The **main body of the essay** is next. In this section, there will be a series of paragraphs which will address the points needed address the essay title/topic. In these paragraphs, you would need to make your argument and support it with sources and some analysis or some critical thinking. Ideally, there would be one or more source in each paragraph, as outlined earlier in the section on writing paragraphs. Ideally, all paragraphs would be of a similar length, with at least one line space between paragraphs to make it easier to read and indeed easier to mark. Ensure that the spacing between paragraphs is consistent throughout the essay. As a general guide, the main body of an essay would usually be around 70% - 80% of the word count for the essay.

Finally, there should a **concluding paragraph**, which briefly looks at what has been covered in the main body of the essay and shows how the discussion links to the essay title and any implied question. It may be a summary of your perspectives on the topic given and should provide a nice ending to the work. A poor conclusion is like reading a good book with the last chapter missing, where the reader would feel a real sense of disappointment. Many students run out of words at this point and have very short or ineffective conclusions which really needs to be avoided, as the conclusion is the result of all the work that has gone into the essay and the research and analysis that was undertaken.

There should be a **list of references** on a separate page. In an essay the references should be labelled with either 'References' or 'Bibliography' at the top of the page. The reference list should be written in alphabetical order of the authors surnames and follow the Harvard referencing conventions described later in this chapter. It is important that all the references and indeed the whole text are in the same font and same font size throughout as it is not a good idea to give the impression that they have been copied and pasted from another place. Generally, the list of references is not included within the word count, but this should be checked with the tutor/assessor.

Essays rarely have appendices, unless specifically requested by the assessor. Essays should be written in a formal style but with simple clear and professional language. The author should avoid using jargon, colloquialisms, or complex language. Concise writing is strongly encouraged so that each sentence counts, and it makes it easier for the reader to follow and understand. Avoid the use of lists, bullet points, pictures, or diagrams unless necessary and then take advice from the tutor/assessor.

The essay should have an abundance of citations or quotes looking at all sides of an argument or addressing the implied question in the essay title, with an equal abundance of analysis or critical thinking. Before the work is submitted, it should be proof-read by someone else with knowledge of the topic to ensure that grammatical and spelling errors are removed but more importantly, that there is a balance of good academic citations and critical thinking. Remember that the assessor wants to know what your opinions and ideas are in relation to the subject area. They would want to see some analysis and a considered and well-thought-out conclusion.

**Top Tip #5**

Avoid the use of a thesaurus if possible. Try to use English words that you are comfortable with. It is increasingly common to see students use a thesaurus to find different words either to make their work more professional or to try and avoid plagiarism. Assessors often find it difficult to understand what message the author is trying to convey as the meanings of words in a thesaurus can vary according to the context in which it is used. If this is happening a lot in an essay, the work can become incomprehensible and disjointed. This is one of the most common reasons for low marks in an academic essay/report.

2.5. Structuring a report or case study

The use of reports as a form of assessment in business-related programmes is becoming increasingly common as universities and colleges move to make courses as relevant to the business world as possible and promote those employability skills that are key to a long and successful career. There is an increasing emphasis on employability readiness in all academic institutions and therefore report writing is one of those essential skills needed for the future.

However, there are some differences between the requirements of a report for study and those required in a business environment. For example, in the workplace you are unlikely to be set a word count when asked to produce a report and the expectation would generally be to produce reports that are concisely written. Additionally, the level of emphasis placed on referencing would not be the same in the business environment and it is unlikely that you would be expected to follow a referencing format. You may of course be expected to give credit to others for ideas presented but in a different way.

Business reports are generally structured into a corporate template or style depending on the organisation and its business culture. This may be different to the requirements of a report for a piece of academic writing which we will explore here. However, there

are many similarities, particularly around how the report is professionally presented, structured and the need to follow a logical sequence. Additionally, both forms of reports are likely to require some form of conclusion and often a set of recommendations.

We will now examine the different elements of an academic report.

2.5.i. Cover Page

This may also be referred to as the Title Page. The page should be very professional in layout and design. There are many templates available that can be used to design a good cover page and for an academic assessment it should generally contain the following information:

- There should be a title which is descriptive so that the reader knows instantly what the report is covering. The title may be given as a part of an assessment brief or there may be some autonomy in choosing the title of your choice.
- It should show the author of the report and their role and title. In academic reports this may just be the name and student ID.
- It may show the intended recipients and the date it was produced. In an academic context, this may be the date of submission and the name of the module that the assessment relates to or possibly the name of a tutor.

2.5.ii. Executive Summary

This is a summary of the whole report. It is used extensively in business where authors want to provide a summary report for executives, managers, or board members so that they do not have to read the full report. It is a summary of everything that is written and differs from a conclusion. It can be described as the highlights of the report. Therefore, it should refer to the problem or issue, the main arguments and evidence, and a summary of the conclusion and any recommendations.

Executive summaries are not included in the table of contents and are generally excluded from the word count requirements for an assignment. For academic reports, it is normally a formal requirement, but it is always worth checking with the assessing tutor as to whether it is required. If in doubt, the best advice is to include one. The length of an executive summary can vary depending on the length of a full report. However, it should be long enough to summarise the entire report and still be sufficiently brief so that the assessor would still want to read it and can easily see what the whole report has addressed. A common error in submitting reports is that the executive summary is often too short and relates almost entirely to the conclusion and recommendation. Executive summaries are put at the beginning of a report, after the title or cover page but are always written last.

NB: Sometimes, the words 'executive summary', 'abstract' and 'synopsis', can be used interchangeably. However, abstracts are more commonly found in academic journals, theses and published work. For most undergraduate reports, it would be an executive summary.

2.5.iii. Contents Page

All reports which are longer than 3 pages or 1500 words should include a table of contents. The contents list should show all major and minor section headings and should be numbered with the page number. This makes it easier for the person reading the report to refer to the part they want to read. It makes it easier to cross-reference and it aids the marking of the report. For the reader, it provides an indication of what the report will cover in its entirety. For the author, it ensures that the report flows in a logical sequence and that all areas are addressed.

It is perhaps worth noting here that both academic reports and reports used in a business context have page numbers. Government and legal reports often number each paragraph. For academia, it is standard practice to label the sections of the report rather than number each paragraph, but if in doubt check the requirements with a tutor.



Top Tip #6

Use an automated table of contents to enhance the professional look of your report. To do this, you would need to format your headings first. It is amazingly easy to do this; there are plenty of online tutorials and support articles with clear instructions.

2.5.iv. The Introduction

The introduction to a report is very similar to the introduction to an essay but often includes more detail. It should describe what the report is about and inform the reader of the issues covered in the remainder of the report. Many assignments leave this section too short. It should include the following elements:

- Why is the task or subject important?
- What was the task or subject of the report?
- What was the method used for research?
- What is the main argument?
- On what evidence is it based?
- What are the implications?

2.5.v. Main Body of the Report

The main body of the report comprises all the sections of the report between the introduction and the conclusion and recommendations. It should not be labelled as 'Main Body', but the headings and sub-headings should relate to the material included in each section. As previously described, it should include lots of good paragraphs which are consistent in style and length. The main body should address the report title in detail and break down the topic into sections looking at the arguments, the evidence, and any methodology.

It is important that all the points in the report should be covered, and it is good practice to start with a list of sections that need to be included. Sometimes this can be aided by using the marking grid or marking outline that the assessor is going to use to help define the sections in the main body of the report. For example, if the assessor is grading a report and, in the grading template, or in the assessment brief, they ask for a SWOT analysis and an environmental analysis using another framework, then these should be sections and sub-sections used in the report, and they should be addressed in the same sequence.

Remember to use plain English that is easy to read and understand but professional at the same time and ensure that it is clear and concise. Remember to use the same font throughout the whole report and use a professional font type that would be used in a business setting. Keep paragraph spacing consistent and check the page breaks to make sure it fits neatly onto the pages. The alignment of the report should be checked, with 'Justify' being the recommended alignment. Different font types, sizes and colours in a report looks unprofessional and may indicate to the reader that the work has been copied from another source, which is not the impression that the report should convey.

In a report, it is acceptable and encouraged to include graphs and charts to show data and information. It is an effective way to help the reader to understand complex information in a brief and straightforward manner. If the report includes charts or graphs from another source, then they should be cited in the main body and referenced fully at the end of the report in the same way as other written material. It is important to note that if using graphs, charts, or diagrams, they need some form of analysis or interpretation so that the assessor can see that you understand and have interpreted what has been shown.

The key to a good main body of a report is to use lots of headings and sub-headings and to make sure that the report title and requirements are fully addressed in this section. Paragraphs should link together and follow a logical sequence. One of the common mistakes seen in academic reports is that the topic is not fully addressed, and the report is written based on what the author has found in terms of sources, rather than what the report requires. It is important to find and use information that supports the report aims rather than adapting the aims to meet the information that has been discovered.

**Top Tip #7**

Consistency is key. Font type, size, colour, spacing and alignment should all be consistent throughout the report. Your assessment brief may specify certain requirements, so look out for those details if given.

2.5.vi. Conclusion

The conclusion to a report is particularly important. A good conclusion often distinguishes good reports from average ones because it leaves a lasting impact. The conclusion is the logical outcome of the arguments you have made in the main body of the report.

There should not be any new information in the concluding paragraph, so in general, there will not be citations in this part of the report. It is a chance for the author to demonstrate their understanding of the topic and to draw together the areas covered. An assessor reading a report should not be “surprised” when they read the conclusion as it is bringing together the information provided previously and importantly, it is addressing the title of the report and any implied questions that the assessment requires. In some cases, the conclusion includes recommendations but here, we will look at them as separate sections.

2.5.vii. Recommendations

The recommendations should flow from the conclusion. However, there is some debate as to whether the conclusion and recommendations should be included together or put in different sections, and whether the recommendations should be written before or after the conclusion. Generally, the more logical sequence would be to include the recommendations after the conclusion. One way to address the question of whether to have a separate section for recommendations is to ask the assessor what they require. If that is not possible, we would recommend that they are done separately.

Recommendations are the actions that the author would suggest in the light of the conclusion. They should be sensible and realistic. The number of recommendations will vary according to the topic of the report and the length and detail that is required for the work. The key to a good set of recommendations is that they relate back to the report aims and objectives, and that they are of sufficient quality to show the reader that you have analysed the issues in detail.

Where possible, recommendations should be prioritised in order of importance or relevance, and this is one area that distinguishes good reports from mediocre ones. Ensure that recommendations are clear and easy to identify, and this can be done by numbering them or using bullet points and making sure there is a space between each recommendation. If a particular recommendation requires a set of actions, then the actions should be summarised with the recommendation. In many instances, a table may make it easy to describe the recommendation with a list of actions after it as shown in the example below. Where possible the recommendation should start with an instructional word or an imperative verb. For example, “Provide”, “Instruct”, “Investigate”, “Develop”, “Do not”.

Example:

Recommendation		Actions
1	Use an agency to outsource recruitment functions within the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR to develop a service specification describing which parts of the HR function will be outsourced within 2 months. • Management to work with the HR management to identify key performance indicators and targets for an agency to deliver. • HR to tender the services required through a formal tendering process within 6 months. • The Finance team to develop a costing to look at the costs/saving of outsourcing services.
2	Develop a staff development team within the HR team to aid retention and to help deliver the organisation's aims and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Manager to meet with the recruitment team to review roles and developmental needs. To redeploy staff to a staff development team. • Facilities team to identify a suitable space for staff development. • Operational board to identify key areas for staff development within each division in the organisation.

2.5.viii. References and Appendices

There should always be a reference list (or a bibliography) included at the end of the report, which should be on a separate page after the recommendations, using the required academic format or referencing convention. It is important to note the difference between a '**List of References**' and a '**Bibliography**'. A list of references includes sources to which you have actually referred in the piece of writing, whereas a bibliography would also include sources which you may have read but have not actually cited in your work. Unless otherwise specified, a list of references should always be included, but never both a list of references and a bibliography. Usually, undergraduate, and postgraduate assignments, undergraduate research projects and postgraduate dissertations would all require a list of references, while doctoral theses (approx. 60,000-80,000 words) would require a bibliography.

There may be instances, particularly involving case studies or reports with detailed recommendations, where it may be more appropriate to include a bibliography rather than a list of references. This is because you may have read more sources than those cited to identify the recommendations. If you are not sure which one to include, then it is best to check with your tutor/assessor.

It is not unusual to include appendices at the end of a report. An appendix is supplementary information or documents which may be too big or too detailed to include in the main report. Examples may include, a copy of a questionnaire used to collect information, statistical formulas, financial statements, or full reports with additional tables or diagrams that are not sufficiently important to be included within the main report. In the body of the report, you should refer to the appendix so that the reader is directed to find the additional information if they wish to read it.

Usually, any content in an appendix would not count towards the word count for the assessment. However, it should not be used as a means of circumventing the word count because the marker would at once see that it is longer than was required; they may also consider that including additional information without analysis or interpretation does not add any value to the report. An appendix should each be labelled individually and should be included within the table of contents. Generally, the convention is to label each one with either letters or Roman numerals and most authors tend to avoid labelling appendices with numbers as they may have used numbers in the main body of the report.

2.6. A checklist to complete before submission

The use of checklists can be very useful in helping to eliminate and eradicate some of the simple mistakes that can diminish the quality of a piece of academic writing or reduce the marks that an assessment is awarded. Mutton and Plowden (2016) found that **'Fit to Submit'** checklists were popular because of their simplicity of use and that it was translatable across a range of subject areas. Cousin and Cureton (2012) also stated that student uncertainty about the rules of academic engagement included a lack of understanding about the importance of grammar and spelling and that this lack of social capital makes it difficult if not impossible for students to succeed. Therefore, it can be argued that using a checklist aids student success regardless of academic ability and experience of academic writing.

There are many checklists available to aid submissions and to help eliminate some basic errors. When we discuss the use of checklists with students, we often refer to the concept of 'low hanging fruit'. What we mean is that for every assessment that is completed, there are elements of the marks that are easy to achieve, and a checklist greatly assists in getting those marks. A checklist will help with ensuring that the work is well-presented and fit for the author to read. It does not assist with the actual content and detail of the work. It is also a reminder to the author to proof read work before submitting it for grading.

Fit to Submit Checklist

1	Have you kept to the word count? Marker(s) may NOT allocate any marks to anything over the maximum word limit.	
2	Have you read and understood the assessment criteria? Does your coursework meet the Learning Outcome(s) and assessment criteria? Please refer to the marking grid or rubric if provided.	
3	Have you demonstrated that you can argue critically? Show you have supported your arguments using relevant academic literature; you have presented ideas and information which challenges thinking, and you have offered discussion points which extend your own viewpoint or that of others.	
4	Have you maintained an academic tone throughout your work? Ensure you show a broad range of advanced vocabulary, use relevant terminology. AVOID WIKIs, repetition, unexplained acronyms, contractions, colloquialisms and personal pronouns.	
5	Have you checked that the referencing/bibliography in your assignment meets your course requirements? Have you included all the work you have cited in your work? Your coursework should be well-researched with evidence of reading a wide range of relevant sources employed to support your arguments. Don't just use the module reading list. Focus on the 'quality' and 'relevance' of the sources used.	
6	Is your work clear, concise and logical? Is the grammar correct? Where written, have you proofread your work and used spellcheck software to check your spelling and grammar? It may be useful to ask someone else to proofread the work.	
7	Is your work well-structured and presented? Are there clear links and transitions between points? Where text based, have you ensured that font size, colour, style, line spacing, and margins are appropriate to the work as specified in the assessment criteria?	
8	Have you provided references for all sources included in your assignment? Did you paraphrase the content properly? Failure to do this could result in a charge of plagiarism.	
9	Does the report or essay look professional? Is it business like in terms of presentation with good use of paragraphs and a professional font and a professional cover page.	
10	Have you submitted the assessment ahead of the deadline? On many occasions there may be a reduction in marks for late submissions	

Adapted from UWL Fit to Submit Checklist (2019)

3. Referencing and Plagiarism

3.1. What is plagiarism and why is it important?

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's work as your own, with or without their consent, without giving due credit to the original author. Simply put, if the concept, business model or any other information did not originate from one's own mind, then the original author must be acknowledged. Plagiarism could amount to copyright infringement, theft of intellectual property and is effectively an 'academic crime', so it is not something that should be taken lightly.

The etymology of the word 'plagiarism' stems from the Latin word 'plagiarius' meaning 'kidnapper, seducer, plunderer', and the term 'plagiarism' is believed to have found its way into the English language in the early 17th century (Bailey, 2011). Up until the 17th century, the works of artists and authors were widely copied by each other, but towards the mid-18th century, the focus began to change from mere skill to originality (Turnitin.com, 2019). As the concept of plagiarism began to attract more attention, new laws emerged, such as the Statute of Anne, which was pivotal in the development of modern copyright laws.

With the advancement of computing technologies, however, plagiarism saw a new boom, as the previously laborious task of copying the work of others now became possible at the click of a button, and 'ghost-written' assignments started being freely available to purchase, so even today, plagiarism continues to be an issue in academia.

There are many different types of plagiarism:

Direct Plagiarism

Blatant copy and paste without attribution or indicating it as a quotation, and unethically replicating other's work.

Self-Plagiarism

Replicating or recycling one's own previous work verbatim without attribution, which could also potentially infringe the publisher's copyright.

Mosaic Plagiarism

Bad paraphrasing or borrowing phrases from a source without attribution.

Potluck Plagiarism

Attempting to disguise plagiarism by using multiple sources and tweaking sentences to fit them together without attribution.

Accidental Plagiarism

Neglecting to cite one's sources, misquoting or unintentional paraphrasing without attribution.

(Myers, 2018; Bowdoin College, n.d.)

However, it could be argued that the most serious form of academic misconduct is contract cheating, which takes place when *“a third party completes work for a student who then submits it to an education provider as their own, where such input is not permitted.”* (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), 2020 at p.3). These services are often known as essay mills or essay writing services, but often start advertising their service by offering various forms of ‘help’ for assessments such as proofreading. Students are often targeted via social media or by individuals in and around university campuses. They prey on the anxiety and stress of students and tend to charge relatively high fees to provide a pre-written piece of work or a more customised assignment. However, there are many reports of students being blackmailed at a later stage by these organisations, and the quality of the work advertised often does not meet the quality of work provided.

These services offer plagiarism-free assignments, but it is increasingly easy for academics to spot such assignments and increasing numbers of students are caught cheating in this manner. Assessors, where they have a valid concern, often review other work submitted by the student, or invite the student to a meeting with other academic experts to test the knowledge and understanding of the work they have submitted. Moreover, with the rise of contract cheating, plagiarism detection software is being further enhanced to detect different styles of writing.

Universities take this form of cheating incredibly seriously and it could even lead to expulsion.

There could also be other reasons leading to plagiarism. For instance, cultural differences and attitudes could affect students’ ability to comprehend the significance of plagiarism because the concept may be completely new to them; in fact, it might even be a new concept for the tutors too. In some cultures, rote learning and memorisation are often encouraged, which make it quite difficult for some students to understand the importance of acknowledging the original author; students may also wonder why they need to reference a particular piece of information from a well-known textbook as it is “rather obvious” (Eckstein, 2003; Bloch, 2008).

Correct referencing is important because it demonstrates extensive reading and research across a variety of credible sources whilst acknowledging the original authors; it improves the quality of work and enables the reader to follow up on the references. It is a habit that should ideally be instilled at school level, as that is where the foundation for academic writing is built. However, referencing is not used extensively in many school systems and therefore, it is a skill that needs to be developed at the beginning of your university journey.



Top Tip #8

Remember, it is generally not permitted to use the same piece of work for more than one assignment in university. This would be classed as self-plagiarism.

3.2. Referencing

It is easy to think of referencing as a ‘double-entry’ activity, a concept with which accounting and finance students and business students may be quite familiar.

The ‘**first entry**’ would be the in-text citation, which would go into the body of the essay or report. Here, the only information that would need to be included is the author’s last name and the year of publication, which would be inserted within parentheses (brackets) at the end of each sentence containing information taken from various sources.

The ‘**second entry**’, which is the more detailed version with all the relevant information, would go in the ‘List of References’. Here, information like the author’s last name, initials, year of publication, title of the publication, publisher name and place, and other relevant details would be mentioned. The details would slightly vary depending on the type of publication/source, but detailed examples of how to cite a variety of sources can be found in the table included later in this chapter.

It is strongly recommended to do the referencing whilst writing the piece of work because it would be almost impossible to try and match the sources to the various bits of information after the full essay/report has been written, thereby substantially increasing the risk of plagiarism, and it would also be too time-consuming to do so at the very end.

**Top Tip #9**

Footnotes or endnotes are not used in Harvard referencing. Instead, all the sources are cited within parentheses in the body of the text itself.

Although there are various built-in referencing tools included in word processing applications such as Microsoft Word, it is often safer and simpler to do the referencing manually. This is due to the fact that sometimes the built-in referencing tool may not be of the Harvard referencing style. There are many other types of referencing such as APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), OSCOLA and Chicago to name some, but Harvard Referencing is the most commonly used style in UK business schools, and therefore this chapter will focus on Harvard referencing. Additionally, if you do not have all the elements of information required for the reference, the automated tool would not be able to pick up that citation.

Referencing is an art that is not difficult to master. Whilst it is important to refer to a range of credible sources when writing an academic essay or report, your analysis of those facts and information presented should come out strongly; solely replicating the work of others would only dilute the value and quality of your work.

This quote from T.S. Eliott beautifully sums up the value of referring to various sources, and then sculpting it into something different of your own...

"Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn..."

T.S Eliott – The Sacred Wood, 1920.

3.3. Referencing different sources

3.3.1 Book (print)

In-text citation:

The original author needs to be acknowledged by adding the author's last name and year of publication at the end of the sentence within parentheses.

Example:

Companies can follow different strategies, such as cost leadership, differentiation and focus (Porter, 1985).

Alternatively:

According to Porter (1985), companies can follow different strategies, such as cost leadership, differentiation and focus.



Top Tip #10

The citations would apply per sentence of information extracted from various sources, not per paragraph.

List of references entry:

All the other details about that reference, such as the title of the publication, publisher details etc would be included in the list of references in the following format:

Author's surname, initials., year of publication. *Title of book*. Edition number (if any).
City of publication: Publisher name.

Example:

Porter, M.E., 1985. *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*. New York: The Free Press

NB: The year of publication can be written either with parentheses or without; the key is to be consistent.



Top Tip #11

If it is a first edition book, then the edition number need not be mentioned.

3.3.2 Book (e-book)

In-text citation:

There is no change to the format of the in-text citation.

Example:

Ethical considerations have a considerable impact on the reliability and validity of research findings (Baker, 1994).

**Top Tip #12**

The author might not always be a person; it could even be a company.

List of references:

In addition to the details included for a print book, the web link should be added. The format would be:

Author's surname, initials., year of publication. *Title of book*. [e-book] Edition number (if any). City of publication: Publisher name. Available through: Database name or [University name] library or web link (for freely accessible books). [Accessed on dd-mm-yyyy]

Example:

Accessed through e-resource database:

Baker, T., 1994. *Doing Social Research*. [e-book] 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. Available through: EBSCOhost database [Accessed 12 April 2021]

Freely accessible:

Baker, T., 1994. *Doing Social Research*. [e-book] 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. Available at: <<https://www.findmybook.com/doing-social-research/chapter-1/>> [Accessed 12 April 2021]

3.3.3 Chapter of an edited book

In-text citation:

Some books may be compilations of work/chapters from multiple authors. In such instances, it is the author of that particular chapter or piece of work that should be cited, not the editor of the whole publication. The in-text citation remains the same.

Example:

According to Cameron (2021), learning conceptual skills is an ongoing process.

List of references:

In the list of references, the details of the chapter author as well as the details of the entire compiled publication must be cited in the following format:

Surname and initials of chapter author(s), year of publication of chapter. Title of chapter followed by **In:** Book editor(s) initials first followed by the surnames with **(ed)** or **(eds)** after the last name. Year of main publication. *Title of main publication*. Place of publication: Publisher. Chapter number.

Example:

Cameron, S., 2021. Learning, Reflective Practice and Professional Development. In: D. Weerawardane and P. Byrne (eds) 2021. *Academic Development and Employability*. Harlow: Pearson. Ch.12

3.3.4 Journal article (subscription-based)

In-text citation:

There is no change to the format of the in-text citation.

Example:

It is important to facilitate inclusive teaching and learning support practices (Jabbar and Mirza, 2019).

List of references:

Since this journal article was taken from a subscription-based journal, the web link is not required here. Anyone with the journal name, volume, issue and page numbers can easily locate the article. The format would be:

Author's surname, initials., year of publication. Title of article. *Journal name*. [e-journal] Volume number, (issue number), relevant page numbers.

Example:

Jabbar, A. and Mirza, M., 2019. Managing diversity: Academic's perspective on culture and teaching. *Race Ethnicity and Education* [e-journal] 22(5), pp.569-588.



Top Tip #13

It is a good idea to go through the list of references of any journal articles relevant to your research, because you may find some additional relevant resources here.

3.3.5 Journal / Magazine article (freely accessible)

In-text citation:

There is no change to the format of the in-text citation.

Example:

Professional accounting bodies and accountancy employers have long been emphasising the need to equip accounting students with practical application skills (Miller, 2020).

List of references:

Here, the web link needs to be provided, along with the accessed date. The accessed date is particularly important for online sources because web content is regularly updated and may not continue to be available forever. The format would be:

Author's surname, initials., year of publication. Title of article. *Magazine name*. [online] Any other relevant information like issue and page numbers. Available at: <web link> [Accessed date dd-mm-yyyy]

Example:

Miller, A., 2020. Importance of work experience. *ACCA Global Student e-Magazine* [online] Available at: <<https://www.accaglobal.com/lk/en/student/sa/professional-skills/importance-experience.html>> [Accessed 18-11-2020]

3.3.6 Newspaper article

In-text citation:

In newspaper articles, the name of the journalist writing the article would be mentioned at the top or bottom of the article. There is no change to the format of the in-text citation.

Example:

According to surveys done by Natural England, more than 40% people feel that nature has become more important to their personal wellbeing during the various lockdowns imposed during the pandemic (Briggs, 2021).



Top Tip #14

If there is no mention of a specific journalist who wrote the article, then it would be considered as an editorial article, and the newspaper would be the author.

List of references:

This would be similar to referencing a journal/magazine article. The required format would be:

Author's surname, initials., year of publication. Title of article. *Title of newspaper*. [medium if applicable] Day, month, page number. Available at: <web link> [Accessed date dd-mm-yyyy]

Briggs, H., 2021. Nature 'more important than ever during lockdown'. *BBC News*. [online] 26 April. Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-56889322>> [Accessed 26 April 2021]

**Top Tip #15**

Sometimes, some information like the page number might not be available, in which case it can be omitted.

3.3.7 Annual report**In-text citation:**

The author of a company annual report would be the company itself. This is known as a corporate author. There is no change to the format of the in-text citation.

Example:

Over the last 40 years, P&G US fabric care sales have grown by five times (P&G, 2019).

List of references:

The usual set of details would be included here. The format would be:

Name of the company, year of publication. Title of annual report. [online] Available at: <web link> [Accessed date dd-mm-yyyy]

Example:

P&G, 2019. Annual Report 2019. Available at: <<https://www.pg.com/annualreport2019/index.html#/financial>> [Accessed 12 April 2021]

3.3.8 Blog

In-text citation:

There is no change to the format of the in-text citation.

Example:

The use of mixed media has been shown to develop reflective skills (Arnold, 2020).

List of references:

Again, this is similar to all the other references. However, instead of [online] or [e-book], here we write [blog]. Therefore, the format would be:

Author's surname, initials., year of publication. Title of individual blog entry. *Title of blog.* [blog] Day, month. Available at: <web link> [Accessed date dd-mm-yyyy]

Example:

Arnold, L, 2020. Enabling reflective writing. *Teaching, learning, assessment, technology, higher education and action research.* [blog] 13 December. Available at: <<https://lydia-arnold.com/2020/12/13/enabling-reflective-writing/>> [Accessed 26 April 2021]

3.3.9 YouTube video

In-text citation:

There is no change to the format of the in-text citation.

Example:

You are encouraged to develop your own ideas based on the wider reading that you have done (Modern Librarian Memoirs, 2018).

List of references:

The entry in the list of references would follow the same pattern as always. The format would be:

Screen name of contributor, year of publication. *Video title.* Series title if any. Available at: <web link> [Accessed date dd-mm-yyyy]

Example:

Modern Librarian Memoirs, 2018. *How to avoid plagiarism in 5 easy steps.* Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV2-cmi19sg>> [Accessed 26 April 2021]

3.3.10 Podcast

In-text citation:

There is no change to the format of the in-text citation. It would be the surname of the broadcaster or author, and the year of publication.

Example:

As Gen Z is a tech-savvy generation, they are accustomed to accessing information at the click of a button or voice command, and it is important for businesses to understand them and harness their skills accordingly (Lyon, 2021).

List of references:

The entry in the list of references would include the detailed information. The format would be:

Broadcaster/author's surname, initials., year of broadcast. *Programme title*, Series title. [type of medium] Date of transmission. Available at: <weblink> [Accessed date dd-mm-yyyy]

Example:

Lyon, J., 2021. *Gen Z and the future of accountancy profession*, ACCA Insights: Episode 38 [podcast] 11 May. Available at: <<http://ow.ly/SO9y50EL3S3>> [Accessed 14 May 2021]

3.3.11 Image

In-text citation:

For an image created by the author of the publication:

(Porter, 1979, p.86)

For an image whose creator is not an author of your source:

(Porter, 1979 reproduced in MindTools, n.d., pg.1)

For web-based sources like articles, a page number might not be applicable.

List of references:

The list of references would have the detailed information as usual.

If it is an image found on the internet, then it would take the following format:

Author's surname, year the image was created. *Title of work*. [type of medium] Available at: <web link> [Accessed date dd-mm-yyyy]

Example:

MindTools, n.d. *Porter's five forces*. [online image] Available at: <https://www.google.com/search?q=porter%27s+5+forces&sxsrf=ALeKk01s6SDWvFu6NmN8VXmCH8pOVEDT2A:1620997470162&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjtz4-TnsnwAhVB4eAKHRx8BmIQ_AUoAXoECAIQAw&biw=1326&bih=680#imgsrc=ysL6-luOt6vdHM> [Accessed 14-05-2021]

3.3.12 Secondary source

Whenever possible, the original publication should be cited. If it is not possible to locate the original publication, then the original author's name with the secondary source and page number should be cited.

In-text citation:

Example:

Companies can follow different strategies, such as cost leadership, differentiation and focus (Porter, 1985, cited in Kaplan, 2020 at p.55).



Top Tip #16

Such citations would take up more of your word count, so there's another reason to look for the original source!

List of references:

The secondary source would then be detailed in the list of references similar to how a normal book or article would be referenced.

Example:

Kaplan, 2021. *Strategic Business Leader – ACCA Study Text* [e-book] Wokingham: Kaplan Publishing

**Top Tip #17**

You do not need to have read the original publication in its entirety to reference it. When you want to find out what the original publication was, a simple Google search may give you all the information you need for the reference. However, be mindful that the citation you find might be in a different referencing format, so you may have to adapt it to the Harvard referencing style.

3.3.13 Publications with more than one author

In-text citation:

When there are 2-3 authors for a publication, all the surnames would be mentioned.

Example:

It is important to facilitate inclusive teaching and learning support practices (Jabbar and Mirza, 2019).

However, when there are more than 3 authors, only the first author is mentioned, followed by the Latin words “et al” (which means “and others”) in italics.

Example:

Accounting information helps with the planning and control of organisational operations, and decision-making (Horngren *et al*, 2014).

List of references:

Either way, the list of references would contain all the names.

Example:

Jabbar, A. and Mirza, M., 2019. Managing diversity: Academic’s perspective on culture and teaching. *Race Ethnicity and Education* [e-journal] 22(5), pp.569-588.

Horngren, C.T., Sundem, G.L., Burgstahler, D. and Schatzberg, J., 2014. *Introduction to Management Accounting*. 16th ed. Harlow: Pearson

3.3.14 Multiple publications by the same author in the same year (or multiple web pages from the same website)

In-text citation:

Different pages from the same website, or multiple publications by the same author published in the same year would be differentiated by adding a lowercase alphabet letter after the year.

Example:

Lloyd's Banking Group comprises 13 brands with the key focus being on delivering sustainable solutions to customers (Lloyds Bank PLC, 2021a; Lloyds Bank PLC, 2021b)

List of references:

All those sources are then included in the list of references.

Example:

Lloyd's Bank PLC, 2021a. *Our Brands*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/who-we-are/our-brands.html>> [Accessed 10 April 2021]

Lloyds Bank PLC, 2021b. *Our Strategy*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/who-we-are/our-strategy/our-business-model.html>> [Accessed 10 April 2021]

3.3.15 Direct quotations

In-text citation:

When directly quoting a definition or a particular section of any publication, it is essential to insert the relevant text in italics within quotation marks and include the page number within the citation.

Example:

In the context of education, Kotler and Fox (1995 at p.6) have defined marketing as *"...the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programmes designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with a target market to achieve organisational objectives..."*

List of references:

The list of references follows the same pattern as previously described.

Example:

Kotler, P. and Fox, K., 1995. *Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions*. 2nd ed. London: Prentice-Hall.

**Top Tip #18**

Too many definitions and quotations may adversely affect the quality of your work because:

- (a) This would drive up your similarity scores; and
- (b) You may overrun any word count constraints and be unable to provide a detailed analysis of these facts/information, which is likely to carry a higher proportion of marks.

3.3.16 Unknown author**In-text citation:**

If the author cannot be identified, use **Anonymous** or **Anon**.

Example:

Referencing is considered to be good practice, even in a professional context (Anon, 2020).

List of references:

The usual information would be included in the list of references.

Example:

Anon, 2020. *Complete Guide to Referencing*. [online] Available at: <www.plagiarism.wordpress.com/complete-guide-to-referencing/> [Accessed 19 April 2021]

**Top Tip #19**

This might not be a great source to be used in an academic submission because the credibility and validity could be questioned due to the inability to identify the author. It is therefore advisable to not overly rely on such sources.

3.3.17 Unknown year of publication

In-text citation:

If the year of publication cannot be identified, use **n.d.**

Example:

Referencing is the backbone of good academic practice (Shirley, n.d).

List of references:

The usual information would be included in the list of references.

Example:

Shirley, n.d. Referencing 101. [online] Available at:
<www.referencing.wordpress.com/referencing-101/> [Accessed 19 April 2021]

**Top Tip #20**

The year of publication on a web page may not be immediately apparent. Some web pages may have a 'Last updated' date, which can be used for the purposes of citations. If this information is not there, you can scroll down to the bottom of the webpage, where most reputable websites have a copyright statement with a year, which can be considered as the year of publication.

3.4. Searching for sources

Throughout this chapter we have talked about the idea of using reliable sources for academic writing. A reliable source is one that provides a detailed and well-reasoned theory, argument or discussion based on strong evidence. The key here is that sources used should be based on strong and reliable information. There is a hierarchy of sources that in general lead to better marks. The more reliable, trustworthy, and 'academic' the source is, the more valuable it is.

Here is a ranking of the best forms of sources to use in academic writing:

1. Scholarly or peer-reviewed articles or books 😊😊😊

Written by researchers or experts in the field. These sources will typically include some original research and an extensive bibliography or reference list.

2. Trade or professional articles or books 😊😊

These are generally written by practitioners in a field to impart practice or industry-based knowledge. These are commonly used in the areas of study related to business.

3. Magazines or newspaper articles from well-established newspapers 😊

These are generally written by journalists or authors who have used reliable sources and the work have been vetted and edited by an editor. As a general rule, you should not use sources from the tabloid newspapers where the sources are not always reliable.

4. Websites and blogs 😐

These can be reliable or unreliable, some have lots of misinformation and may make unsubstantiated claims. Simply because someone posts a view does not mean it is reliable.

5. Online encyclopaedia references which can be edited by anyone 😓

Some entries are reliable, and some are not. It is hard to evaluate as the authors are anonymous and hence, there is no way to assess the knowledge or the expertise of the author. These have almost no academic value and if cited, may have a negative impact on the assessment and have the effect of reducing marks and grades. Therefore, these sources should be avoided at all costs.

**Top Tip #21**

The more recent the source is, the better. As a general rule, try to avoid sources which were produced more than 10 years ago.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the concepts of academic skills, critical thinking and referencing. Additionally, we have looked at plagiarism and the importance of submitting work that is your own. We have aimed to provide all the ingredients required to succeed in academic writing, which, when combined with knowledge of the subject matter, should result in the submission of high-quality work, which would in turn lead to good grades and enhanced career prospects. We hope you found it helpful and that you will use the guidance provided in this chapter throughout your academic career, in particular the checklists and the referencing guide.

Test Your Understanding

1. What is the correct reference format for a book?

- ☐ A) *Accounting for Non-Accounting Students*. 9th ed. Dyson, J.R. and Franklin, E., 2017. Harlow: Pearson.
- ☐ B) Dyson, J.R. and Franklin, E., 2017. *Accounting for Non-Accounting Students*. 9th ed. Harlow: Pearson.
- ☐ C) Dyson, J.R. and Franklin, E., *Accounting for Non-Accounting Students*. 9th ed. Harlow: Pearson. 2017.
- ☐ D) Pearson: Harlow. *Accounting for Non-Accounting Students*. Dyson, J.R. and Franklin, E., 2017. 9th ed.

2. What is the correct reference format for a journal article?

- ☐ A) Ivy, J., 2008. A New Higher Education Marketing Mix: The 7Ps for MBA Marketing. [e-journal] 22(4), pp.288-299. *International Journal of Education Management* [Accessed 11 April 2021] Available through: Emerald database
- ☐ B) *International Journal of Education Management*, 2008. A New Higher Education Marketing Mix: The 7Ps for MBA Marketing. pp.288-299. [e-journal] Available through: Emerald database. 22(4). [Accessed 11 April 2021]
- ☐ C) J., Ivy, 2008. *International Journal of Education Management*. 22(4), pp.288-299. [e-journal] A New Higher Education Marketing Mix: The 7Ps for MBA Marketing. [Accessed 11 April 2021] Available through: Emerald database
- ☐ D) Ivy, J., 2008. A New Higher Education Marketing Mix: The 7Ps for MBA Marketing. *International Journal of Education Management* [e-journal] 22(4), pp.288-299. Available through: Emerald database [Accessed 11 April 2021]

3. Which of the following is not an acceptable source for the purposes of academic writing?

- ☐ A) A textbook
- ☐ B) A journal article
- ☐ C) A site like Wikipedia
- ☐ D) An annual report

4. Which of the following statements are true?

- ☐ A) A reference is required when quoting directly from a published source.
- ☐ B) A reference is not required when discussing a published theory in your own words.
- ☐ C) The list of references is arranged in the order in which the resources are cited in your piece of writing.
- ☐ D) Recycling work from your own previous assignments is good academic practice.

5. Which of the following groups of words best describe critical thinking?

- ☐ A) Memorising, accepting, believing.
- ☐ B) Scepticism, examining assumptions, challenging reasoning.
- ☐ C) Imagination, stereotyping, dreaming.
- ☐ D) Personal opinion, group thinking, blue sky thinking.

6. When we use direct quotations, we should:

- ☐ A) Use inverted commas around the 'exact' words of the author followed by the full details of where you found the quote.
- ☐ B) Place the 'exact' words of an author in inverted commas and supply a citation with a page number.
- ☐ C) Paraphrase using different words and use a citation.
- ☐ D) Summarise what the author said and use a citation with page numbers.

7. Which of these rankings apply to the use of academic sources with 1 being the most valuable and 5 being the least valuable?

Ranking	A	B	C	D
1	Scholarly articles	Blogs and Websites	Scholarly articles	Books and Journals
2	Blogs and Websites	Newspaper articles	Books and Journals	Wikipedia
3	Books and Journals	Wikipedia	Newspaper articles	Scholarly articles
4	Wikipedia	Scholarly articles	Blogs and Websites	Blogs and Websites
5	Newspaper articles	Books and Journals	Wikipedia	Newspaper articles

- ☐ A) Column A
- ☐ B) Column B
- ☐ C) Column C
- ☐ D) Column D

8. Which on the following best defines a good paragraph?

- ☐ A) Lots of citations and references in each paragraph.
- ☐ B) No more than 3 sentences.
- ☐ C) Contains a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a link sentence.
- ☐ D) Should have a minimum of two different ideas or concepts contained within it.

9. An executive summary is

- ☐ A) A summary of the whole report.
- ☐ B) Just contains conclusions and recommendations.
- ☐ C) Always included in the Appendices section of the report.
- ☐ D) Never required in a university assessment.

10. Academic writing uses:

- ☐ A) Formal tone
 - ☐ B) Third person view
 - ☐ C) Deductive reasoning
 - ☐ D) All of the above
-

Answers to Test Your Understanding:

- 1. B
- 2. D
- 3. C
- 4. A
- 5. B
- 6. B
- 7. C
- 8. C
- 9. A
- 10. D

List of references:

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