



# The Learning Centre

UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL

# Academic Writing Workshop

## Part I



Kassandra Savage, JCU Reconciliation Action Plan

Welcome

Outline of the day

Before I start, I would like to acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as the first inhabitants of this country and pay my respects to the traditional owners and Elders, past and present, of the land on which we stand today, the Djabugay (japurkai) the Yirrijandji (irrikandji) and gimuy yidinji (goomeye yidinji) people.

In the spirit of reconciliation, I also acknowledge the valuable contribution that Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to make to James Cook University and the broader community.

# Your friendly presenters

---



- Rachel Barber, Learning Advisor
- Maddie Bornschlegl, Learning Advisor
- Nick Roberts, PASS Leader
  
- Scott Dale, Liaison Librarian
  
- Maureen Healey, Peer Advisor

# Overview of the day

---

- Purpose of an essay
- The writing process
- Researching
- Critical note-taking
- Integrating evidence
- Referencing
- Editing and proofreading
- Assessment Task sessions

# Writing LibGuide

- <http://libguides.jcu.edu.au/writing>



The screenshot shows the 'Writing LibGuide' page on the James Cook University website. The header features the university logo and 'Library and Information Services'. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'The First Thing', 'Writing process', 'Sample Essay', 'Writing resources', 'Reading smarter', and 'Finding resources'. Below the menu, there's a search bar and a 'Chat' button. The main content area has a large graphic that says 'Writing at an academic level -- Essay Skills Workshop --'. To the right, there's a 'Need Some Help?' section with three staff members listed: Sharon Bryan (Liaison Librarian), Kylie Bartlett (Learning Adviser), and Claire Swift (Liaison Librarian).

# Feedback

Rate both your confidence and ability in relation to your Academic Writing skills:

<b>BEFORE</b> completing the workshop	<b>Very low</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Ok</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Very high</b>
Confidence					
Ability					

Rate both your confidence and ability in relation to your Academic Writing skills:

<b>AFTER</b> completing the workshop	<b>Very low</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Ok</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Very high</b>
Confidence					
Ability					



# Academic Writing Genres

---

- Essays
- Information reports
- Scientific reports
- Annotated bibliography
- Literature review
- Reflective writing
- Poster
- Wikis
- Blogs
- Discussion board

In the academic world we talk about the different types of writing as writing genres – these are some of the more common genres that you may encounter while studying an undergraduate degree at university.

We'll be focusing on essays in academic writing, as a way to look at the writing process, although different subjects may require that you submit your writing in different formats or genres, - report, annotated bibliography...

Basically the functions of writing, and the process that you need to go through, are the same across the genres. Only the structure or format in which you present things may be different.

Most of the writing process is the same, there are some differences in structure that we'll look at in the break out sessions after lunch.



# Why we write



So, why do we do it?

Essays are a powerful learning tool, not a way of testing you.

The purpose of writing at university is to learn something! And then to show your lecturer that you've learned something!

Essays aren't meant to see how much you know, but to give you a chance to expand your knowledge. They force you to do some independent learning, by giving you a topic and making you "fill in the blanks" using your own research and synthesis.

To help you prepare for your essay and use it to learn:

# Why we write

Ask two questions



What should I **learn** as a result of doing this essay?

- Look in your Subject Outline under:
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Assessment Task Description
  - Assessment Criteria
  - Marking Rubric

**ASK:**

**What is this essay supposed to do?**

What should I be learning as a result of doing this essay (your Learning Outcomes in the Subject Guide can help with this, as can the marking rubric you should get with the assignment)

# Why we write

## ASSESSMENT TASK 1: DESCRIPTION

As part of your academic and professional communication skills, it is essential that you are able to demonstrate how to write an essay that meets the requirements of a quality academic paper. Therefore for this assignment, you are required to write an essay describing the process and structure of an effective academic paper.

Your discussion will need to include the following elements:

An introduction

- What is your topic?
- What do you plan to do in the body of your essay?

Body of the paper where you will describe and **discuss**:

- What an academic essay is – definition
- The purpose of an academic essay - why are academic essays used?
- How an academic essay is structured – what are the essential elements?
- Presentation – how is an academic essay presented and why?
- What are the possible outcomes if the skill of academic writing is not used properly?

A conclusion

- What was covered in your paper?
- What are your conclusions about what you discovered?

Referencing

- **In text referencing:** Your essay must have accurate in-text referencing that matches the sources of literature in your reference list
- **Reference list:** A minimum of one text book, one journal and one credible website, i.e. government, professional organisation or university website. Please see rubric for how this section is marked.

## What is this essay supposed to do?

Check your subject outline – assessment task, marking criteria,

Ultimately, check your Learning Outcomes in the Subject Guide – these are the overall learning aims for your subject.

Sits within the context of your planning your semester so you have time to factor in each stage of the writing process.

# Why we write

Ask two questions



How can I use the essay to show what I've learned?

- Go beyond lecture material. Show:
  - Your reading and research
  - Your own ideas

## ASK:

### How can I use the essay to show what I've learnt?

Take what you have learnt in class, let the research consolidate, expand and change your understanding, then use your essay to show you have aimed for deep knowledge.

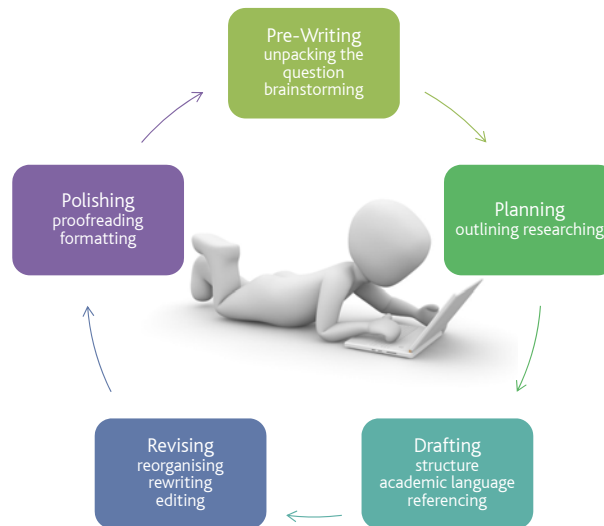
By the time you have finished your essay you should:

Know something that was never mentioned in class or your readings - and be able to argue with someone else about it.

Change your mind about something. Let the research convince you that something you "felt" was black-and-white might have shades of grey.

Be able to show a deeper understanding of the topic than you could get simply by listening to your lectures.

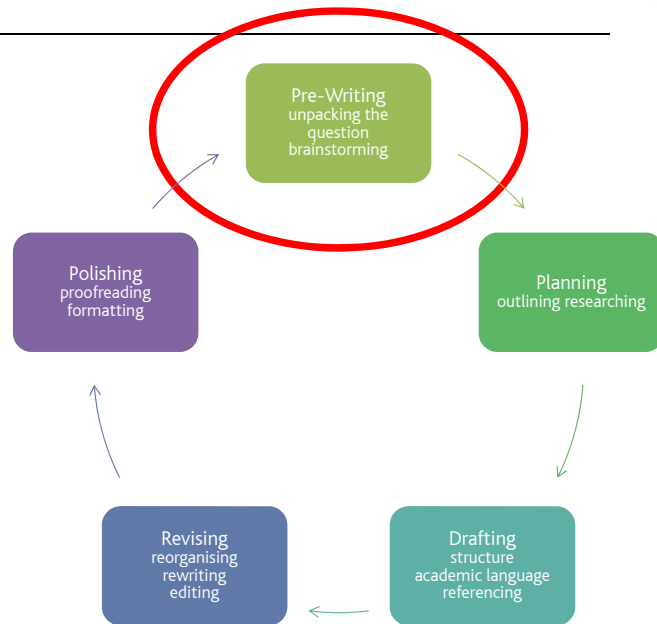
# How we write



There is a process to follow for writing an essay, this is your map to follow and will guide your study activities....

It's a cyclical and an iterative process, not linear, you may find yourself needing to revisit certain stages or totally re-organise your thinking after doing some research and that's ok

# How we write



The first step is to unpack the essay question- what are you being asked to do and what are you being asked to research and respond to?

There are key words in the assessment question which will help you to identify what you need to do and guide your research. These are the task, content and limiting words.

# Unpacking the question

**Task**



**Content**

**Limiting**

Identify the key words in the question,

TASK

CONTENT

LIMITING (Read from LibGuide, show the table identifying words)

**Task words:** These are words that tell you what to do, for example “compare”, “discuss”, “critically evaluate”, “explain” etc.

**Content words:** These words in the essay topic will tell you which ideas and concepts should form the knowledge base of the assignment. Refer to subject specific dictionary or glossary.

**Limiting words:** These words will help you limit the scope of your assignments so that you only discuss those aspects of the topic that have been asked for. Which words limit the subject in some way?

## Unpacking the question

---

Effective communication is considered a core skill in higher education and is usually conveyed through the medium of academic papers and essays. Discuss the process of writing academic essays and critically examine the importance of structure and content.



## Unpacking the question

Effective communication is considered a core skill in higher education and is usually conveyed through the medium of academic papers and essays. **Discuss** the process of writing academic essays and critically **examine** the importance of structure and content.

**Task**

**Discuss** means to "consider and offer an interpretation or evaluation of something; or give a judgment on the value of arguments for and against something"

**Examine** means to inspect something in detail and investigate the implications

So, you would need to give a short description of what essay writing is all about, and then offer an evaluation of the essay structure and the way it presents content.

## Unpacking the question

Effective communication is considered a core skill in **higher education** and is usually conveyed through the medium of **academic papers** and **essays**. Discuss the process of **writing academic essays** and critically examine the importance of **structure** and **content**.

## Content

You will often be asked to talk about "the role" something plays or "processes", "importance", "methods" or "implementations" - but you can't really research these things just by looking for those words.

You need to **find the keywords - the most concrete concepts** - and search for those. The information you find about the concrete terms will tell you about the "roles" and "methods", the "process" or the "importance", but they probably won't use those words exactly.

One of the core skills of academic research is learning to **extrapolate**: to find the connections in the information you *can* find that will help you answer the questions which don't have clear, cut-and-dry answers in the books and articles.

So, the core keywords/concepts to research are:

"academic writing"

essays

"higher education"

structure

## Unpacking the question

Effective communication is considered a core skill in **higher education** and is usually conveyed through the medium of academic papers and essays. Discuss the process of writing academic **essays** and critically examine the importance of structure and content.

**Limiting**

In this example, you have two limits:

"higher education" is the industry focus. This could be expanded to include the tertiary or university sector.

Essays - we are concentrating on essay writing as the aspect of communication. Note that this is also a content word. There can be (and usually is) some crossover.

# Unpacking the question

---



Effective communication is considered a core skill in higher education and is usually conveyed through the medium of academic papers and essays. Discuss the process of writing academic essays and critically examine the importance of structure and content.

## Context

# Brainstorming



Many students, after having analysed an essay question, are inclined to go straight to the library and read extensively on the subject. It is only after doing this research that they feel confident enough to start thinking and planning out their answer. Such an approach can be a mistake however, with some students producing a myriad of notes and then finding themselves at a loss about how these notes can be transformed into a coherent piece of writing.

Before you read too much (or if possible, before you read anything), it is a good idea to do as much thinking and planning around the topic as you can. The benefit of this approach is that right from the start you can begin to get a sense of the shape your essay will take. It also means you can be more strategic in your reading, allowing you to search for specific reading materials rather than collecting a mass of material that may ultimately have limited relevance to your work.

Before you start, answer the following critical questions:

What do I already know about the topic?

What else do I want know about it?

How does the title link to what I have heard in lectures or read?

Why is this necessary?

What are the important issues to include?

Are there controversial viewpoints that need to be included?

What type of essay is this? (process essay; cause/effect essay; comparison / contrast essay; argumentative essay).

(read from LibGuide Step 1)

# Outlining

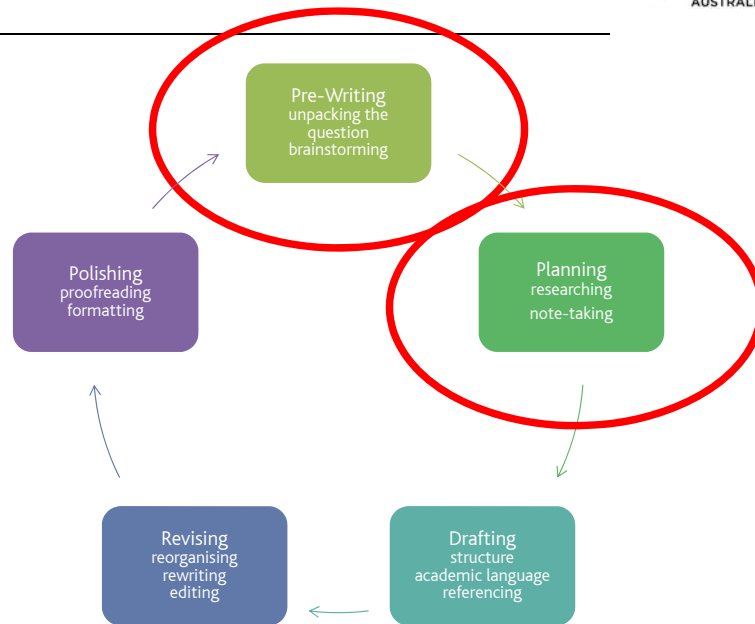
---

- Write down the main ideas you need to include
- Make a rough plan of how you think your essay will be structured



<http://www.michelemmartin.com/a/6a00d83451fd2469e201a3fd3e2765970b-800wi>

# How we write



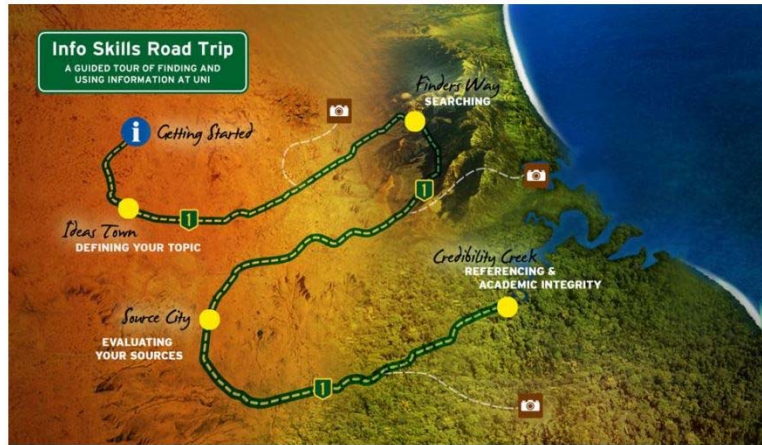
The first step is to unpack the essay question- what are you being asked to do and what are you being asked to research and respond to?

There are key words in the assessment question which will help you to identify what you need to do and guide your research. These are the task, content and limiting words.

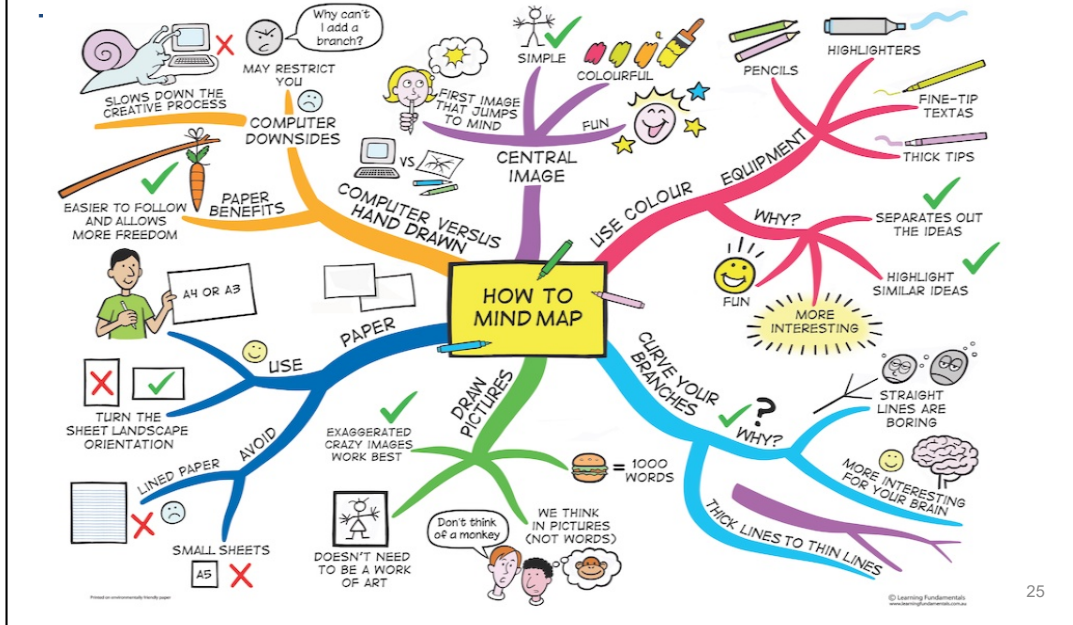


# Researching

Chat

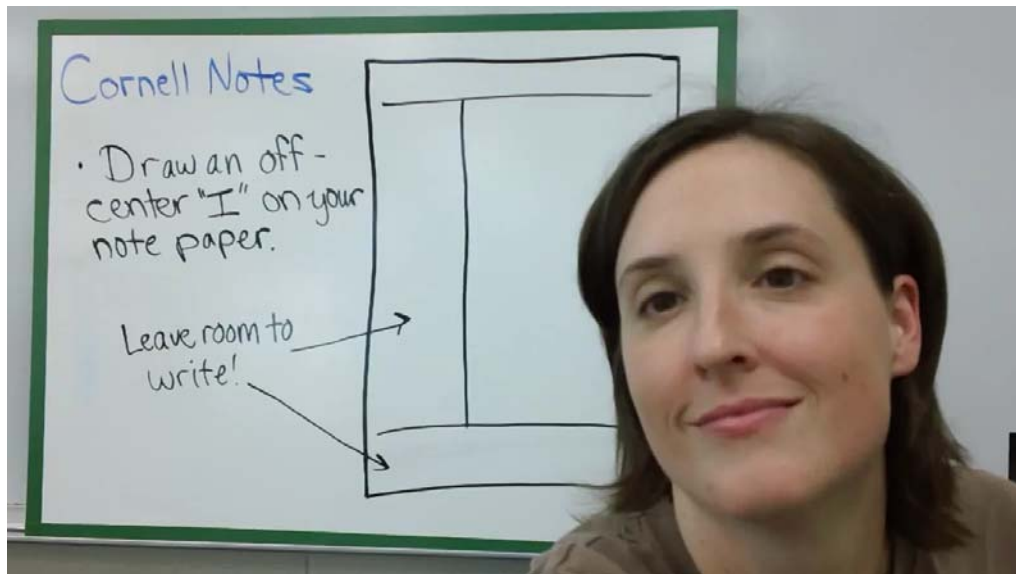


# Note-taking



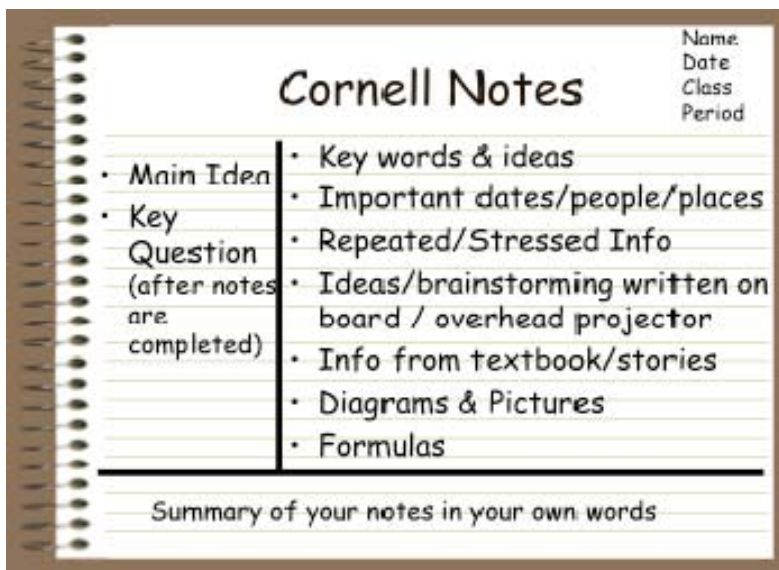
Some people use linear notes – what are they?  
 Some non-linear – what are they?

# Note-taking



The most important thing is that note-taking is active, not passive

# Note-taking



**Cornell Notes**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_  
Period: \_\_\_\_\_

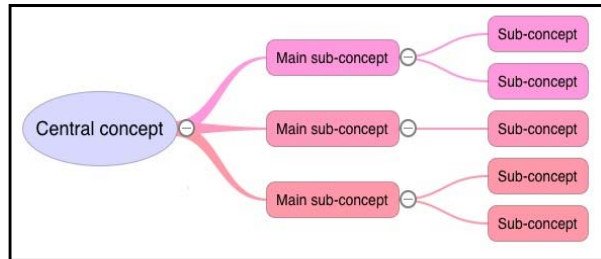
• Main Ideas	• Key words & ideas
• Key	• Important dates/people/places
Question	• Repeated/Stressed Info
(after notes are completed)	• Ideas/brainstorming written on board / overhead projector
	• Info from textbook/stories
	• Diagrams & Pictures
	• Formulas

Summary of your notes in your own words

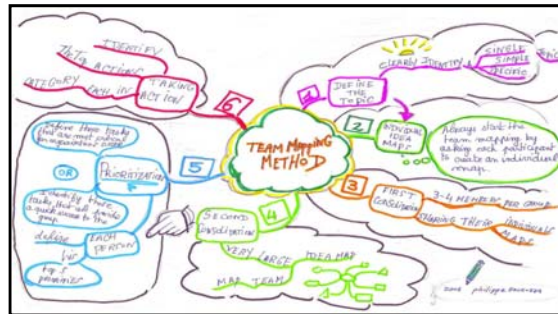
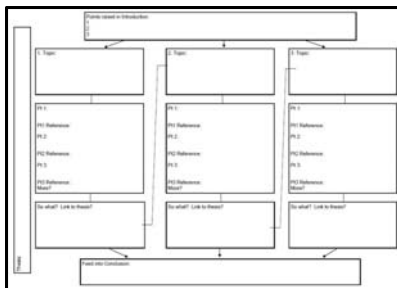
# Mapping ideas



<http://mind-map-software.co.uk/>



<http://www.brain-boosting-tools.com/mind-mapping.html>



<http://ideamapping.ideamappingsuccess.com/IdeaMappingBlogs/2008/03/18/team-idea-mapping-method-idea-map-95/>

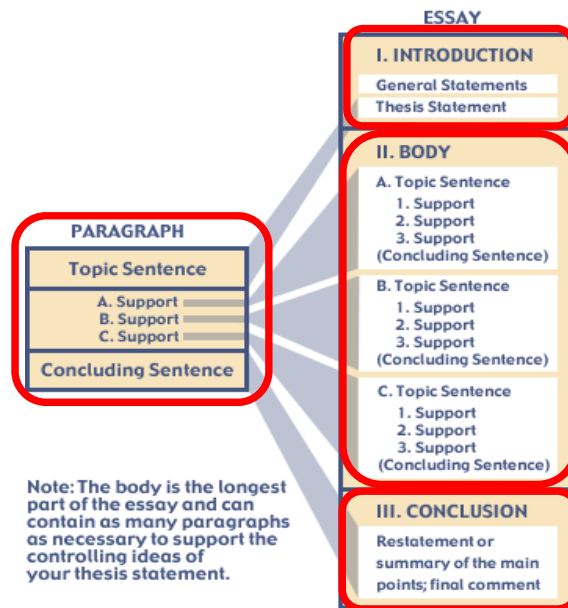
# Academic Writing Workshop

## Part II

# The writing process



# Drafting: Structure



Use your mind map or organised notes to then put together an outline for your essay.

There is a given structure for essays and other text types, which makes it easier to map out your outline.

An essay has 3 parts – intro, body, conclusion, each part is made up of paragraphs.

The intro...

The body...

The conclusion...

Use handouts (Critical essay planner and guidelines, essay blocks) to talk through each part of the essay and then each paragraph



# Drafting: Structure

---

- Introduction
  - Background Information
  - Describe the context
  - General statements
  - Thesis statement  
(main point, direction of essay)
  - Purpose of the essay
  - Signposting the reader

# Drafting: Structure

- Introduction

## General statements

- Attract reader's attention
- Introduce the topic in a general way to orientate your reader to the subject. This provides the context. Keep statements brief.
- Provide background information



## Thesis statement

- States specific topic
- Identifies your position on the topic or question
- Lists the subtopics that will be discussed
- Limits the scope of what will be discussed
- Indicates the pattern of organisation of the essay
- Gives a clear outline of what will follow (how will you answer the question?)

# Drafting: Structure

---

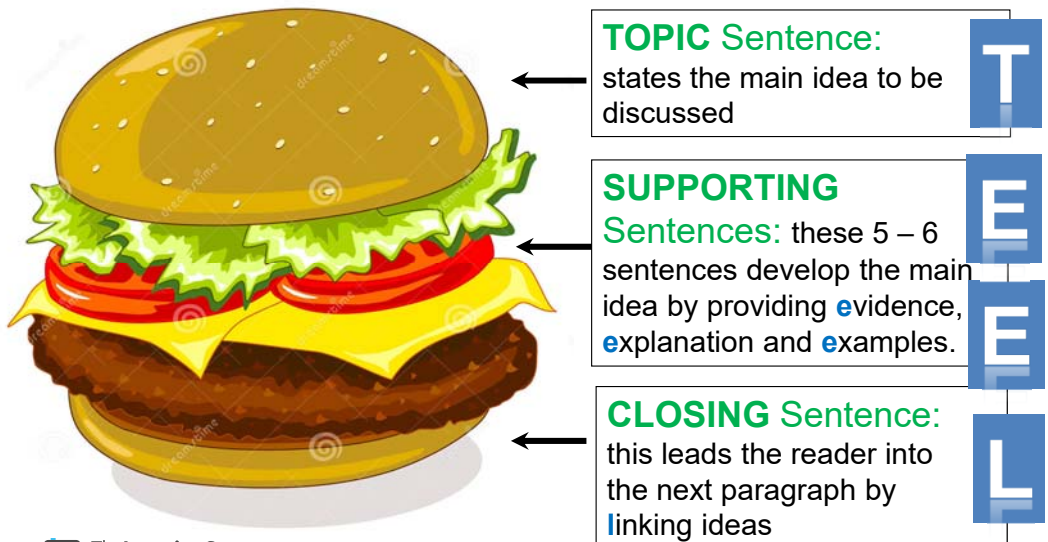
- Body
  - Longest part
  - Consists of multiple paragraphs
  - As many paragraphs as necessary
  - fully develops the argument outlined in the introduction

# Drafting: Structure

---

- Body - What does a paragraph do?
  - Develops one idea:  
A paragraph is a group of connected sentences that develop a single point, argument or idea.
  - Holds together your essay:  
Paragraphs are the building blocks of most forms of formal writing. They hold the main ideas of an essay and connect the essay together.

# Drafting: Structure



Like a juicy hamburger, a paragraph needs two things to hold it all together: a topic sentence and a closing/linking sentence. In the middle of the hamburger is all the juicy detail ie. supporting sentences with details, explanation, evidence and examples.

# Drafting: Structure

---

- Conclusion
  - Summarises/restates the main points
  - Sum up your argument/information with reference to the essay question
  - Reinforce the key message
  - Final statement
  - Perhaps mention wider implications/future directions

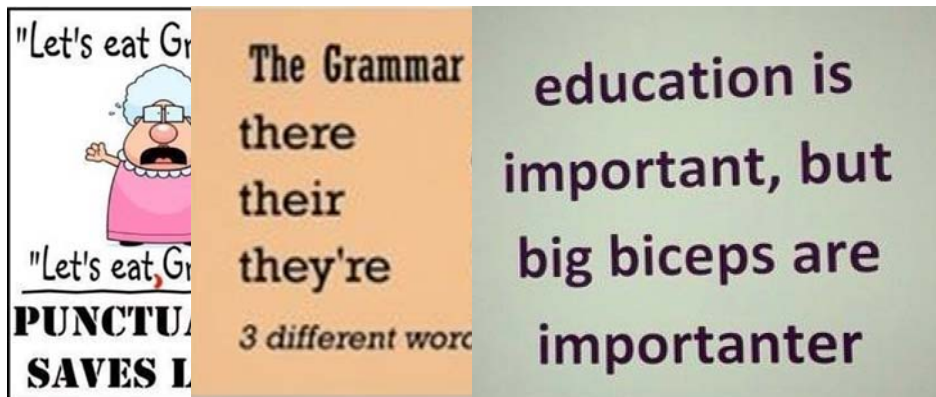
# Drafting

Writing Planner				
Introduction	Body			Conclusion
Introduce topic & provide a context for the essay	Answer the question by developing a discussion			Restate the Main Point
<p>Write a <b>General statement</b> about your topic.</p> <p>Write down your <b>thesis statement</b>. (State specific topic &amp; outline your position on topic).</p> <p>List the subtopics that will be discussed &amp; give a clear outline of what will follow.</p> <p>Indicate your argument or contention about the topic to 'draw conclusions'.</p>	<p><b>Paragraph one</b></p> <p>Topic sentence</p> <p><b>Supporting sentences</b> explain or prove the topic sentence. (Use examples, statistics and quotations)</p> <p><b>Clincher</b> (Summarise the main point of the paragraph)</p> <p><b>Link:</b> Use concluding Sentence (Para 1) or extra intro sentence (Para 2)</p>	<p><b>Paragraph two</b></p> <p>Topic sentence</p> <p><b>Supporting sentences</b> explain or prove the topic sentence. (Use examples, statistics and quotations)</p> <p><b>Clincher</b> (Summarise the main point of the paragraph)</p> <p><b>Link:</b> Use concluding Sentence (Para 1) or extra intro sentence (Para 2)</p>	<p><b>Paragraph Three</b></p> <p>Topic sentence</p> <p><b>Supporting sentences</b> explain or prove the topic sentence. (Use examples, statistics and quotations)</p> <p><b>Clincher</b> (Summarise the main point of the paragraph)</p> <p><b>Link:</b> Use concluding Sentence (Para 1) or extra intro sentence (Para 2)</p>	<p>Relate the essay back to the essay question.</p> <p>Restate the thesis point.</p> <p>Restate most important evidence supporting the position taken.</p> <p>Finish strongly with an original and striking statement. Try to end on a note that is both memorable and logical for your reader. This can be achieved by: making a prediction; suggesting results or consequences; suggesting a solution or making a recommendation.</p>

# Drafting: Academic language

## Sentence level

- Pay attention to grammar and punctuation





# Drafting: Academic language

## Word level

- **Formal** → no slang, idioms or colloquialisms
- **Concise** → choose words wisely, avoid repetition
- **Objective** → no opinionated statements
- **Explicit** → use signaling words, say what you mean
- **Accurate** → use exact figures, dates, names, places etc.
- **Careful** → check the figures, dates names places etc.
- **Credible** → use your literature as evidence for your ideas



Formal – no slang, idioms or colloquialisms

Concise – choose words wisely, avoid repetition

Objective – no opinionated statements

Explicit – say what you mean, don't leave the reader trying to double guess your meaning, use signaling words to indicate to your reader that you are introducing a new idea, or giving an alternative point of view, or concluding an argument

Accurate – use exact figures, dates, names, places etc.

Careful – check the figures, dates names places etc.

Credible – use your literature and sources and research to back up what you're saying, as evidence for your ideas

# Hedging expressions?

---



<http://www.boredpanda.com/dragon-shaped-hedge-topiary-john-brooker/>

## Word level

- Hedging expressions
  - Hedging words enable us to inform our reader of our stance on a topic, while being cautious

It would seem that...

Research indicates that...

Bloggs (2010) suggests that...

It could be the case that...



Being careful also means being cautious about claims that you make in your writing. Remembering that research is ongoing and ideas or evidence can change as a result of that research.

In academic writing, we do this by using hedging expressions...what are they?

Careful – Hedging words

Hedging words enable us to inform our reader of our stance on a topic, while being cautious. Rarely, (if ever), is anything so absolute that we can be absolutely sure there is no alternative.

# Drafting: Referencing



# Drafting: Referencing

- Use your Librarians! – Stephen Anderson and Janet Catteral
- Referencing Libguide

## Referencing: Home

Enter Search Words

This guide will help you identify and use the correct referencing style to ensure clear & consistent presentation of written material.

[Home](#) [APA](#) [Chicago](#) [Harvard](#) [MLA](#) [AMA \(Vancouver\)](#) [Other Styles](#) [Citing in text](#) [Parts of a citation](#) [Formatting tips](#)

[Avoiding Plagiarism](#) [Referencing Resources](#) [EndNote](#)

Referencing - what? why? how? Referencing help


**What is referencing?**  
Referencing is the way that you describe the sources of information and ideas that you use in your assignments.

**Why do I need to reference?**

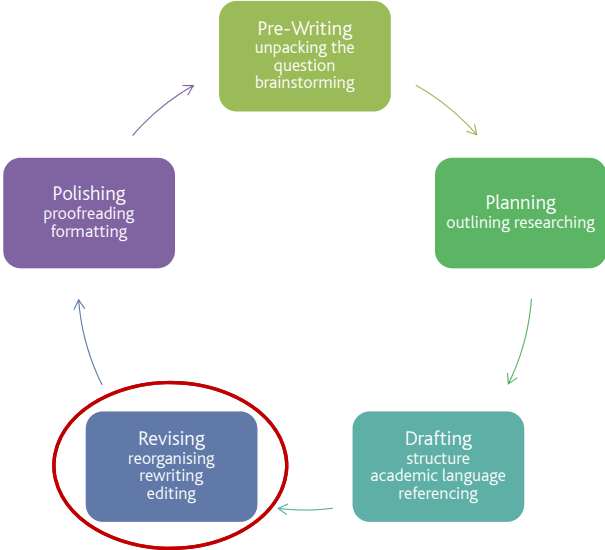
- To indicate where you get your information/ideas from.
- So the reader can verify your sources.
- To avoid **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is when a person tries to present someone else's work as their own. Penalties for plagiarism can include loss of marks, failing a subject or failing your course. *You might like to watch this entertaining video on plagiarism.*

**What do I have to reference?**

Confused? You are not alone.



# The writing process



# Revising

Whole text

Structure – intro, body, conclusion  
Organisation – logical flow of ideas

Reorganise

Paragraph

Structure (Topic, supporting, concluding sentence/s)

Rewrite

Sentence

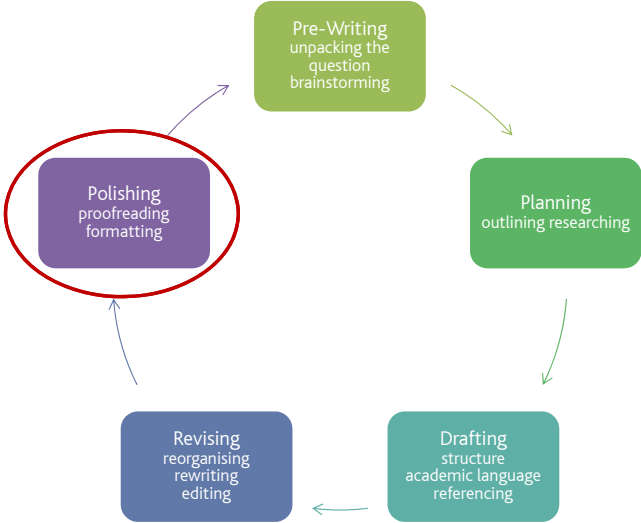
Grammar, Punctuation  
Clear and concise expression of ideas

Edit

Word

Appropriate language –  
formal, academic, discipline specific

# The writing process





# Polishing

---

## The dangers of using a spell checker...

Eye halve a spelling chequer  
It came with my pea sea  
It plainly marques four my revue  
Miss Steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word  
And weight four it two say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write  
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid  
It nose bee fore two long  
And eye can put the error rite  
Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it  
I am shore your pleased two no  
Its letter perfect awl the weigh  
My chequer tolled me sew.

# Polishing

---

- Proofreading
  - Read out loud
  - Swap your work with your peer to proofread
    - Suggest recommendations
    - Be sensitive
    - Refer to marking criteria
- Formatting
  - Check your subject outline for specific requirements

# Additional resources

- [Learning Centre](#)
- [Develop Your English](#)
- [Writing Libguide](#)
- [IRWC](#)
- YourTutor
- Peer Advisors

