

Write Right

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What's the point of assignments?



There are a number of ways in which written assignments help students progress their learning.....

If you understand the usefulness of completing assignments, you may begin to regard them as challenges to be enjoyed.



1. Assignments Are Opportunities For:

- Helping you think deeply about a topic
- Clarifying and consolidating your knowledge of a topic
- Displaying your knowledge
- Identifying gaps in your knowledge or understanding



2. Assignments help students progress from simply absorbing information to developing competency in articulating key concepts



3. Organising your thoughts

To write about a topic you have to organise your thoughts and make connections between different ideas, concepts and debates.



Chart or map out what you understand to be the key issues that the essay needs to address.



4. A Workout For Your Brain

Your brain needs exercise!!



Assignments require brain activity and are a useful way to strengthen your mental agility.

Assignments: The Real Story




- What can your assignment tell about your understanding of a topic?
- What are lecturers looking for in your assignment?
- What are lecturers hoping not to find in your assignment?

What can your assignment tell about your understanding of a topic?

In an assignment you can show :


1. You understand the topic – this is vital

2.  Therefore, writing an assignment that wanders off the point suggests a possible gap in your knowledge because you are not addressing the core topic of the assignment.

What are lecturers looking for in your assignment?

But your lecturer is looking for more than a surface understanding of a topic (descriptive level)

Describe
↓
Explain
↓
Critique

 Example

Essay Title:
"An Illusion of Change? The role of policy in the delivery of mental health services in Ireland"

To grasp the point of this essay, you need to know some vital details (this will reveal your level of engagement with the topic) :

1. The national mental health policy is titled 'A Vision for Change'
2. Irish mental health policy was revised and changed in 2006 – outline key details
3. A Vision for Change maps out a new rights-based approach to service provision and updates the structures and theories which should inform practice. You must ask – is it achieving its goal?

Describe → Explain → Critique

Levels of knowledge you can display in your essay

1. **Descriptive Level** – important to showcase your grasp of the essential facts/concepts/ideas, etc BUT not enough to achieve good grades
1. **Engagement with the topic and the relevant literature** – allow your assignment to reveal the extent of your reading. Include references to the key writers or theorists but also don't hold back and include references to other literature sources you have consulted when preparing for your essay when it is relevant to do so. **Make it interesting.** 😊 📌
1. **Organisation** – structure your essay to demonstrate that you know this topic well enough to present your points in a logical, properly ordered sequence

Levels of knowledge you can display in your essay

4. **Reveal the debates** – most topics give rise to debates between different theorists. Display your knowledge of these debates if relevant to the essay title.
5. **Evaluate** the usefulness of key ideas – always keeping to the topic you are asked to address
6. **Critically interrogate** one or more key points – what do you think about the issue, the debates, the gaps in knowledge, etc.



Key Points

- Your essay should **display your knowledge** of a topic but this is not the same as writing everything you know about a topic into the essay.
- A good essay will take a particular set of key points and address them in the essay.
- Through these key points you can display your knowledge of relevant theorists, readings and other relevant documentation.

Preparation



- Think about **the title** and the different ways in which you could approach the topic you are asked to write about
- **Brainstorm** relevant topics, ideas, theories that you could include
- Revisit the recommended **readings** and any other relevant reading to remind yourself of key issues
- **Take notes** as you read and make sure you are clear which notes are direct quotes as you will need to reference these properly if you insert them into your essay.
- **Devise a final list of points** that you want to address in your essay.

Content

- Comprehensively **address the topic** of the essay – look carefully at the title and what you are being asked to address in the essay.
- Stay with the main focus of the essay and **don't wander**
- Display your knowledge of **relevant reading**
- Sections should **flow** easily from one to the next and the whole essay make sense when you read it as a whole document
- Follow a **logical structure and should have 3 main parts**:
 - Introduction – where you introduce key points that will be covered in the essay and also outline the structure of the essay.
 - Main Body of the Essay – should follow logical sequence of Section Headings
 - Conclusion

Presentation

- Structure – use section headings and sub-headings (map out the structure before you write the first word)
- Neat presentation
- Edit, edit, edit
- If in doubt about referencing, citations, grammar, quotations, anything – check it out



Presentation

- Presenting ideas and arguments in written form is a skill
- It can be learned!
- Be patient but persistent
- Practice writing every day OR look at a book you enjoy reading and note how the writer uses the written word to convey ideas, meaning, arguments, etc
- Note important terminology; build your vocabulary; keep a word diary

Presentation and Editing

- Aim to produce work that is **nicely presented**– insert title, then use headings and subheadings in the different sections
- Use **spellcheck** and also proof read for mistakes, including grammar mistakes
- Properly **identify and reference direct quotes** and make sure these are not too long
- Reference correctly and ensure that all texts referenced in the essay are listed in the **References section**
- Stick to **one form of referencing** and don't mix different conventions
- In the Reference section, list publications alphabetically by author.



Style

- Make the text as readable as possible
- Read back over your work and think about how you could improve your phrasing, use of language and sentence structure
- Make sure the reader will easily understand what you are writing.

What lecturers do **not** want to see

- Rushed work
- Weak or absent structure
- Sloppy presentation, poor editing
- Plagiarism
- Regurgitated lecture notes
(the saddest day in a lecturer's life!)
- Really short bibliographies



Originality

- **Write in your own words.**
- When you paraphrase make sure to indicate the source of your ideas
- **Beware of plagiarism** and follow the instructions in your handbook to ensure you avoid plagiarism in your essay. More information available for students on the www.tcd.ie website.
- Your work will be submitted through turnitin.com which is a plagiarism detection tool. Plagiarism is considered to be a serious breach of academic discipline and may incur serious penalties if detected.

Writing Routine

- What is your writing routine?
How can you make it easy to get your work completed?
- Put writing times in your diary and stick to your writing plan
- Write in an environment that is conducive to helping you focus on your work
 - Remove distractions such as screens
 - Select a quiet place
- Save drafts and back up either in cloud or by email
- Finish each session with a shortlist of what you need to do next – that way you won't waste time trying to figure out where you left off at the last writing session

Getting Started

- Write!
- Write!
- Write!

Don't put off sitting down to get started on your essay. Do a little every day, and it will get done.

Be on time with your submission and save yourself from lots of stress.

