Writing Essays

Student Learning Development
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Session objectives

• Focus on writing process instead of product
• Look at the phases of writing
• Explore strategies for starting writing earlier
• Understand the importance of structure to an academic essay
• Review examples
• Learn about some useful writing resources
Essay Writing Phases

- Planning
- Thinking
- Researching
- Writing
- Editing
Planning time frame

• List tasks
  – Preliminaries
  – Gathering Information
  – Organising Information
  – Rough outline
  – Draft 1
  – Draft 2
  – References
  – Proofreading

• Create deadlines
  – _____________________________
  – _____________________________
  – _____________________________
  – _____________________________
  – _____________________________
  – _____________________________
  – _____________________________
  – _____________________________

http://www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/ai/ask/index.php
Planning the assignment

• Requirements
  – Length, Wording
  – Referencing

• Understand the question
  – Breakdown
  – Verbs
Example of Topic

**Examine** the general categories of stressors that can be experienced by an individual at work and **describe** the likely consequences of prolonged stress levels for that individual.

*Examine* = Present in depth & investigate implications

*Describe* = set out main aspects of topic or sequence of things
Analyse the assignment

• Write down in your own words what you think the assignment is asking you to do
• What do you already know about the subject matter?
• What background info do you need to help you complete the assignment?
• How are you going to choose your reading material?
Thinking

- Initial ideas
- Brainstorm
  - Mind maps
  - Lists
  - Drawings
  - Discussion/Audio
  - Post-it notes
- Initial plan!
- Preliminary reading
Outlines are your recipe

What do you want to say?
Structure

planning

writing

Communicating your ideas
Structure

• Introduction
  – outline of essay

• Main section
  – Main point A
    • details, evidence
  – Main point B

• Conclusion
  – summary of main points
  – personal conclusions
I. Introduction
   Definitions of Stress
   Views of Stress
   General Categories of Stressor
   Consequences of Stress

II. Main Point (A) - Views of Stress
   1. Physiological
   2. Psychological
   3. Job Stress
   Summary and identification of categories

III. Main Point (B) - Categories
   1. Organisational
   2. Home-work, Interface, Life stress
   3. Individual
   Evaluation of categories and their impact

IV. Main Point (C) - Consequences
   1. Physical
   2. Behavioural
   3. Psychological
   Summary of impact

V. Conclusion
   Summary of main points and personal conclusions
Reading & Researching

• Use rough **outline** as guide
• Gather information relevant to topic
• Keep good notes
  – Organise content according to outline
  – **Choose** what to include
• Types of **evidence** to support points?
  – Quotes
  – Tables
  – Paraphrasing
Reading & Researching

• Keep references!

• Digest and reflect on information
Continue your thinking!
Writing

• Start writing early
  – extend outline
  – one idea or section at a time
  – get something down!
• Write first, rough draft
• Revise & improve draft
• How many drafts?
Writing to prompts

• What writing have I done and what would I like to do?
• Where do my ideas come from?
• How does what I read compare with my own views?
• What I want to write about next is...
• What do I want to write about next?
Freewriting

- Writing for 5 minutes
- Without stopping
- In sentences
- Private – no external reader
- No structure needed
- Topic related to your research or to a prompt
- Like brainstorming in sentences
What is a paragraph?

- A group of sentences
- What groups them?
- One idea
Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials. Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies. Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests.
Paragraph structure

Students require more recreational time in order to better focus on lessons in class. (TOPIC SENTENCE).

In fact, studies have shown that students who enjoy a recess of more than 45 minutes consistently score better on tests immediately following the recess period. (SUPPORTING SENTENCE)

Clinical analysis further suggests that physical exercise greatly improves the ability to focus on academic materials. (SUPPORTING SENTENCE)

Longer periods of recess are clearly required to allow students the best possible chances of success in their studies. (CONCLUDING SENTENCE)

Clearly, physical exercise is just one of the necessary ingredients for improving student scores on standardized tests. (Transitional sentence)
Model to generate critical thinking

Description

Topic / Issue

What?

When?

Who?

Where?

Why?

What if?

How?

So What?

What next?

Analysis

Evaluation

Learning Development  University of Plymouth
Develop your argument

• Use source material
• Compare and contrast
• Show awareness of complexities
• Show line of reasoning
  – link points
  – central guiding line
• Your conclusions - based on evidence
Structure your argument

- Reasons for and evidence/Reasons against and evidence
- Compare & contrast
- Outline of points, charts, diagrams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction:</th>
<th>Main themes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas to be compare and contrast</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

Why?

• Credit sources of information & ideas
• Reader can locate for further information if required
• Demonstrate breadth of reading & knowledge
Plagiarism ???

- Using someone’s words or ideas and presenting them as your own (Marshall & Rowland, 1998)
- Inappropriate use of ideas from books, articles, internet, or other students’ work

http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism
Sample marking criteria

- Focusing on a topic
- Structuring an essay
- Content
- Formulating arguments
- Presentation
- Referencing
- Evidence of language skills
- Use of learning resources
Editing

- Proof read
  - out loud
  - time out
  - peer
- Write up references
- Final draft
  - presentation
Submit!

- Final deadline
- Checklist
- Feedback
Websites

- http://wrasse.plymouth.ac.uk/ sample essays
- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/ general advice & grammar
- http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk academic phrases
- http://vimeo.com/44666462 paragraphs
- https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/4_writingskills/writing_tuts/linking_LL/linking3.html linking words & phrases
Examples of student essays


Student Learning Development

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Blackboard

Academic Skills for Successful Learning