

Assignment Writing Steps

1. Analyse your assignment instructions

- To ensure your assignment is relevant and well-structured, spend some time to understand what you are required to do:
 - Focus on the topic(s), instructional words and other important words in your assignment instructions.
 - Create a plan or mind map of the sections of your assignment.
 - Outline the topics and sub-topics within each section.

2. Compare assignment instructions with marking guide

- The marking guide elaborates on the assignment instructions. Use the marking guide to:
 - work out how many words to write for each section and
 - check and confirm that your plan or mind map covers all the parts of the assignment question.

3. Analyse to decide what information is needed

- The assignment instructions and marking guide tell you the type of information needed e.g. New Zealand or international information, or historical, recent or current information.
- Decide what sources of information are suitable. Most assignments require academic information from textbooks and journal articles.
- Check how many sources are required, if stated.
- Use your topic(s) and sub-topics to form search questions such as *what, who, why, when, where and how.*

4. Decide on ways to find your information

- Your class materials and recommended readings often provide an overview and explanation of your main topics.
- Use the index and contents pages of your textbook(s) to locate pages with the topic(s) or key terms.
- Primo Library Search enables you to find resources available at Ara Library.
- The Ara Library Catalogue has books with general information to help you understand the topics you are researching.
- The Ara Online Resources and Databases contain resources such as peer-reviewed journal articles with more specific and current information that you may also require.

5. Evaluate information

- How relevant is the information to key topics and concepts in your assignment? To find out, use your search questions to survey your reading materials and to scan for relevant information.
- To gain an overview, the parts you should read first are the introduction and conclusion, and any summary or abstract.
- Is the information reliable. objective. accurate and recent?

6. Read for Useful information

- Use in-depth reading and critical reading skills to identify useful information:
 - As you read develop your assignment plan or mind map by adding points to the key concepts.

7. Take notes & organise your information

- As you read, take notes of relevant and important information which will help to develop and support the ideas for your assignment.
- Group your notes under the topic and sub-topic headings of your plan or mind map.
- Record the details of all sources of information you are using, because you will have to reference them.

8. Draft your assignment

- Use your assignment plan to write the information you have found into paragraphs, using your own words (that is, paraphrasing).
- For each paragraph, write a topic sentence which states the main idea of the paragraph.
- Develop this idea with supporting sentences that provide explanation and examples.
- Check your drafts by referring closely to your assignment plan and marking guide.
- Ask questions such as: Have I missed out anything important? Have I included irrelevant information? Have I paraphrased well? Do I have only one main idea for each paragraph? Do my ideas 'flow'?
- Edit and rewrite as required.

9. Reference your sources of information

- It is important to follow the required APA referencing style to provide:
 - in-text citation (acknowledging the authors of the ideas you used **within** your assignment)
 - a reference list (give details of information sources at the **end** of your assignment).

10. Produce the final copy of your assignment

- Leave some time to rest and reflect before you proof read.
- Check to ensure correct content, structure, spelling, grammar, punctuation, referencing, and formatting.

11. Examine your marker's feedback

- Marker feedback is very important because it helps you to understand:
 - where and why you did well, and
 - where and why you need to improve.
- Apply what you have learnt from your assignment to future assignments, to constantly improve your thinking and writing skills.

- **For more information on each assignment writing step, refer to other Learning Services handouts.**
- For information on different types of assignment refer to: *Essay Structure, Reports, Literature Review, & Annotated Bibliography* (on Learning Services' website / Moodle site).

- **Effective time management** is important. Set and keep to your own additional deadlines for each assignment writing step. This helps you to complete your assignment before the deadline given by your tutor. Refer to these hand outs:
 - Timeline for an Assignment (on Learning Services' *Academic Skills Support* site on Moodle, under section 13).
 - Organising Your Time
- Make an appointment early at Learning Services if you are not sure about any of your assignment writing steps. A Learning Advisor will help you to develop your writing skills.