

SKILLS FOR LEARNING

GUIDE TO PLANNING YOUR ASSIGNMENT

WHY SHOULD I CREATE AN ASSIGNMENT PLAN?

Planning your assignment can help in several ways. Firstly it focuses you on what the assignment is really asking for. It then helps you create a structure for your assignment, and then guides you through populating that structure. It gives you a timescale to work to which, if followed, will help avoid any last minute rush. By creating and following an assignment plan, your work will be better prepared, written and presented.

WHEN SHOULD I CREATE MY ASSIGNMENT PLAN?

As soon as you get your assignment! Give yourself as much time as you can. Don't forget, you may have more than one assignment to complete at any one time, so start them as soon as you can to avoid even higher workloads.

STEPS FOR PLANNING YOUR ASSIGNMENT

- 1. Analyse the question.** What is it you are being asked to do? Is it an essay? Is it a presentation? Is it a report? Look for the type of activity you are being asked to carry out. Are you being asked to evaluate? Discuss? Compare? Each of these will result in a different final piece of work. Are there multiple sections to the question? If so, make sure you answer each part fully.
- 2. What do you already know?** Try making a list of everything you already know about the assignment subject. Can you identify any areas that you need to work on?
- 3. Start your research.** Identify relevant information resources. Start researching your assignment subject. Stay focused on what you need to know for your assignment. Keep a list of searches you have conducted.
- 4. Read.** When you have started your research, it is also time to start reading through the results. Makes notes, identify which parts are important. Try and spot recurring themes, separate your search results into these themes. This can then form the basis of your assignment.
- 5. Develop a first draft.** You now have a quantity of information about different themes, all relevant to your assignment. You can now write a first draft using the information you have gathered to answer the question set. At this point, it is just a first draft, it does not need to be perfect.
- 6. Second draft.** Read through your first draft. Think how it can be improved. Does it fully answer the question set? Do the paragraphs flow? How does it compare to the word limit set? Do you need to add more? Do you need to cut anything?

7. **The final draft.** Check your work against the assignment brief. Have you answered everything you need to answer? How is the word limit? Is everything referenced? Have you conformed to the standards of academic writing?
8. **Proofread.** It is essential that you proofread your work. Use the spelling and grammar check function in Word but do not rely on it. Proofreading is easier if you print your work off first. You may ask someone else to proofread your work such as a friend or partner but it is not advisable to ask someone who is also doing the same assignment as you or a fellow student on your course.
9. **Print the final copy.** Correct all the typos you found when you proofread your work, print it off and hand it in (or submit it electronically). Check your assignment brief for how you are expected to submit your work.
10. **Relax.** You can now relax for up to 30 minutes before starting on the next assignment.

HELP AND ADVICE

For help and advice on any aspect of assignment planning, please see the Skills for Learning website at <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/skills>.

FURTHER READING

Books offering advice on exam skills are available in the Study Skills collections in the Learning Centres and as part of our e-book collection.

You may also find it useful to look at the **Guide to Proofreading** and the **Guide to Academic Writing** - both are available from the Skills for Learning website.



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