

Assignment Steps

1. Unpack the assignment task

- What kind of assignment is it? (essay, scientific report, business report, reflective journal...)
- What is the topic of the assignment?
- What lectures/tutorials/readings does this assignment relate to?
- What are the instruction words? (do you have to discuss/explain/evaluate/argue...?)
- Is there just one assignment task, or are there multiple parts?
- What are the assessment criteria for this assignment? What is the word limit?

See the [**Analysing the Question guide**](#) for more detailed advice.

2. Make a research plan

Begin by brainstorming what you already know about the topic, then think about what you will need to find out.

Here are some general suggestions:

- What do I already know about this topic?
- Has anything been said about this topic in lectures or tutorials?
- What theories are relevant to this topic?
- Does the topic relate to any real-life situations?
- Make a list of questions and/or subheadings to guide your research.

3. Find and evaluate information

- Start with your Unit reading list (in your Unit Outline or on MyLO) - are there chapters or articles that relate to the assignment topic?
- Use your research plan as a guide for finding more information on the topic.
- Search the Library catalogue to find books.
- Search the Library databases and/or Google Scholar to find journal articles.
(See the [**Library Subject Guides**](#) for more detailed advice on database searching.)
- Skim read to quickly get an idea of the main arguments, themes, or ideas. Is the content relevant to your assignment? How will it help you to answer the assignment question?

At university, you need to read reliable and authoritative information sources. Some questions to ask are:

- What audience is this aimed at? It may be too simple for your purpose, or too specialised.
- When was it published? Do you need the most up to date information?
- Are the authors reliable? What are their qualifications? Are they affiliated with a reputable institution, publisher or organisation

4. Read and take useful notes

- Record the details from each source for referencing.
- Try using a note-taking template. It may help you read more effectively.
- Avoid writing down direct quotations. Instead, explain the idea in your own words.
- After you finish reading an article, try to write a summary of the main point/argument in one sentence. Then write another sentence on how that point/argument relates to your assignment question.
- Use your notes to identify similarities and differences in what different writers say about the topic.

See the **Effective Notetaking** and **Managing your Reading Load** guides for more detailed advice.

5. Plan your writing

- What is your answer to the question(s)?
- Work out how you are going to organise the points you want to make.
- Arrange your notes so that you can see the evidence you will use to support each point.
- Do you have all the information you need? (If not, loop back to stage 3)
- Make sure you follow the structure required for the type of assignment (essay/report/journal...)

6. Write a first draft

- Follow your plan to get your ideas on paper
- Don't edit as you go – just write and keep writing.
- Try to write from your notes without looking at the original sources. Use your own words, not long quotations.
- If you get stuck, move on to the next point in your plan and write about that.

7. Edit and rewrite

- Try to leave at least a day between finishing your first draft and beginning to edit.
- Think about your reader – is it easy to follow the logic of the assignment?
- Ask a friend to read your essay and tell you if any parts don't make sense.
- Read your work aloud – your tongue will find awkward phrases that your eyes just skim over.
- Grammar and spelling checkers may help to show you where there are errors.
- Check your referencing carefully. Make sure you are following the correct referencing style, and all citations in your text are included in the reference list at the end.
- Check the assessment criteria again – does your work meet all the requirements (including word limit)?

See the Library's **Referencing Guide** for more advice on referencing styles