



Researching to writing: some practical pointers

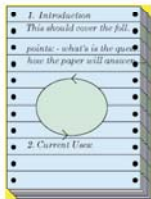
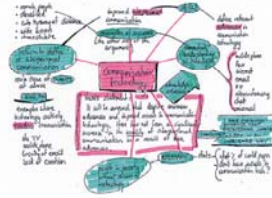
- **Take a library tour** as early as possible. Learn how to access computer information on library holdings, call numbers, etc., how to use the CD ROM and online databases, and where the journals relevant to particular subjects are in the library.
- **As soon as you receive a list of assignment references** or course reading, sit down in the library and computer search the necessary call numbers. This way, you save time and can access books earlier than others.
- **Investigate the possibilities of other university libraries.** You may not be able to borrow, but you can certainly read, photocopy and study in these places. This may prove a useful strategy when there is pressure on resources for a particular assignment.
- **Always record the call number** of any source you read in your notes, even if you don't use it immediately in an assignment. Include the title, name of the author, date and page numbers. Such a practice is invaluable when you need to access that information later.
- **Learn the art of correct quotation**, citation and bibliography (references) as early as possible. Learn how to copy any direct quotations accurately, but even more importantly, how to paraphrase ideas borrowed from other sources (i.e. by using your own words).
- Before starting to write an assignment, check that you **understand the faculty and/or departmental requirements** for the assignment.
- Don't depend on your textbooks as your sole source of information when writing an assignment, as they often represent fairly generalised ideas about the subject matter of your field. Be careful too of books or journals over 5 years old, especially in fields such as computing. The most current information can usually be found in recent **academic journals**. On the other hand, this advice is not meant to dissuade you from reading older, classic texts in your discipline.
- **Take care too when using newspapers as a resource** - journalistic expression is not the same as academic writing, and newspapers often 'promote' in the guise of disinterested information. This is particularly true of materials accompanying a new product/idea/technology.
- Finally, if you are not good at referring to a diary, make sure you have a **list of dates for all assignments** in a very visible location at home - on the wall above your desk, beside your bed, anywhere clearly visible in your room. Remember, assignments are often due at the same time. **Forward planning is essential.**

Planning the Assignment



1. Analyse the topic:
What is it asking?
What is the purpose of the task?

2. Brainstorm:
What do I already know?
What have I read?
What Ideas questions do I want to research?
Which authors might be interesting / valuable?



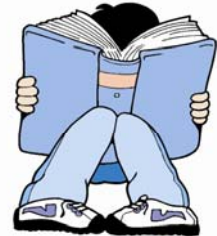
3. Plan your time:

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Work back from the due date to plan time for: research, drafts, editing.
Take account of other work due.

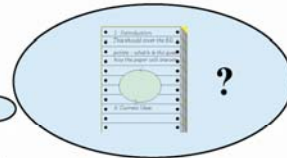
4. Construct a rough plan:
What are my main points?
What other ideas are worth including?

5. Start your preliminary research:
Revise lecture notes, main text books

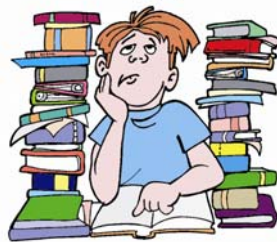


6. Revise your plan

7. Begin researching:
Keep your topic in mind
Focus your research on relevant texts
Record your findings



8. Revise your plan:
Consider the relationships between ideas
Select key points from sources



9. Start writing:
Keep your topic in mind

10. Make several drafts



11. Edit / proof read final draft:
Follow formatting requirements
Check for grammar, coherence, flow

12. Submit