

How to Write an Essay

Essay writing forms a major part of your assessment in high school, and while it may seem a little daunting at first, there is no need to panic! Follow these steps to help you create an award winning essay.

STEP 1

Analyse the Question and Identify Key Terms

Before starting your essay, you will need to examine the topic given to you and highlight any key terms. For example, your essay topic may be, 'The Internet has had a large impact in today's marketplace. Illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of this trend'.

Using the above essay topic, some questions you will need to answer include:

- What is the Internet?
- What makes up today's marketplace?
- What impact/s has the Internet had on this marketplace?
- What are the advantages of the Internet and what examples show these?
- What are the disadvantages of the Internet and what examples show these?

STEP 2

Research the Topic

Once you have analysed the topic, it is time to start researching. Ask yourself, 'What do I already know?' and 'What do I need to know to be able to answer the essay question?'. The second question forms the basis for your research. It is important to read a variety of sources, such as books, newspapers and journal articles. At this stage you should only highlight any relevant information you come across. Be sure to keep an eye out for any quotes that may support your statements within the essay.

STEP 3

Take Notes

Now that you have read through your resources and highlighted the relevant information, read over the information again and take notes. It is important that you write down all the details of your sources (e.g. author, date, title, publisher, place of publication), so that you are able to reference your essay appropriately and with ease (see pages 130–133).

Do you know how to research efficiently and effectively? Ask your school librarian for advice on the best ways to use the library's resources.

STEP 4

Construct an Essay Plan

You are now prepared to write an essay plan! Start with writing the main topic at the top of your page. Beneath this topic list each main point you wish to make and, under each one, list the facts and information that support it (this is the information you found in your research).

STEP 5

Write Your First Draft

An essay is made up of three parts: the introduction, body and conclusion.

In Step 4 you created the outline for the body of your essay, with each main point representing a paragraph. All you need to do now is write each paragraph in sentence form!

The introduction of your essay should contain an overview of the topic and what you will be covering in the body of the essay. It shouldn't be extensive, but should introduce all your main points. It may seem odd that you have prepared the body before your introduction, but doing so gives you a clear idea of what your essay is about and allows you to create a great introduction!

Lastly, when writing your conclusion, you should relate back to your main points and re-state the answer to the essay question. Your conclusion should not contain any new information.

STEP 6

Revise & Edit Your Draft

Revise your essay, checking that it flows and that your paragraphs are arranged in a logical order. You will also need to make sure that you have answered the essay question and if there is a word limit, you have kept to it.

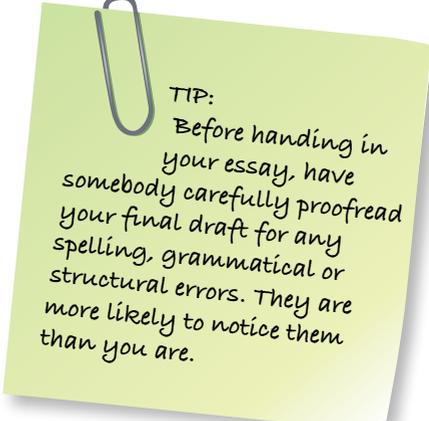
Once you have done all this, put your draft aside for a day or two so that you can read over it again with fresh judgment and make the final necessary changes.

STEP 7

Reference Your Essay and Construct Your Reference List

(see pages 130–133)

By following the above steps, you should have no trouble writing an essay! Remember to always run a spelling, punctuation and grammar check over your work before handing it to your teacher.



TIP:
Before handing in your essay, have somebody carefully proofread your final draft for any spelling, grammatical or structural errors. They are more likely to notice them than you are.

WHAT IS REFERENCING?

When writing an essay or report for assessment it is important to acknowledge all sources of information used within your writing. This act of acknowledgment is known as referencing.

Referencing allows the reader to trace back to all sources unaided, whether it is out of pure interest or to authenticate the information you have provided. It also indicates that you have read broadly, have background knowledge on the topic and that you have relied on credible sources to formulate your work.

WHEN SHOULD YOU REFERENCE?

You must provide a reference each time you quote, summarise or paraphrase another person's ideas, data or theories, as well as when using any graphical representations, including diagrams, images and tables.

Plagiarism, the act of **using** and **not referencing** another person's work, is a serious offence and is not taken lightly.

GENERAL RULES

Rule 1 – Publication Dates

If the publication date is not indicated clearly, insert *n.d.* to indicate that no date was specified. Alternatively, place a lowercase *c* for 'circa' before the date to indicate the date is an approximation.

Rule 2 – Quotations

Using single quotation marks, insert quotations of less than 30 words within your text. Highlight a quotation greater than 30 words by reducing the font size, allowing a line of space above and below the quotation and indenting the quotation by one centimetre on the left hand side.

If you would like to remove words from a quotation, insert three trailing dots where the words would normally appear. You need to ensure that by doing so, the quotation's meaning does not change.



THE HARVARD SYSTEM OF REFERENCING

There are many referencing styles, however the system recommended for most schools is the Harvard System of Referencing, also known as the Author–Date System.

Referencing – Two parts

When referencing your assessment tasks, you need to do two things:

1. Reference within your writing (**the textual reference**);
2. List all the sources you used to write your work at the end of your assessment task (**the reference list**).

1. THE TEXTUAL REFERENCE

Each time you refer to, quote or paraphrase another author, you must include their surname and the year the information was published (e.g. Jones 1984). Page number(s) need to be included each time you quote or paraphrase; they are not required if you are merely referring to a specific work (e.g. Jones 1984, p. 24) or for multiple pages (Jones, 1984, pp. 12-14).

One author

Examples:

'In creating characters, most writers use people they know in everyday life' (Disher 2007, p. 60).

As stated by Disher (2007, p. 60), most writers create characters based on people they know.

Two authors

Example:

The internet has proven to be an integral tool in many marketing campaigns (Dann and Smith, 2008, p. 35).

Three authors

Example:

Outdoor advertising is an economical medium with a high exposure rate (Lamb, Hair and McDaniel 2000, p. 204).

Four or more authors

Include the surname of the first author followed by *et al.* You will need to include all author names in the reference list at the end of your work.

Example:

'Customer goodwill can be increased by handling customer complaints.' (O'Neill et al. 2009, p. 27)

One volume of multi-volume work

The volume number must be included between the date and page number(s) (e.g. Smith 2006, vol. 6, p. 12). If you are referring to the complete volume, you do not need to include page number(s).

A chapter in an edited work

If you are referring to a chapter in an edited work, include the name of the author who wrote the chapter, not the editor responsible for editing the whole book.

Personal Communications

Examples of personal communications include emails, letters and interviews. They are included in the textual reference but generally not in the reference list due to their inability to be traced.

When referencing a personal communication you must obtain the source's permission, supply their surname and initials, and indicate the type of communication and exact date the communication took place.

Example (email):

On the 12th of March, 2009, G Smith indicated in an email that ...

Two or more publications with the same author and date

If you find that you need to reference work by the same author published in the same year, you can distinguish between the two by adding a lowercase letter to the publication date.

Example:

Previous research by Smith (2008a) indicates a decline in employment which is further supported by studies later that year (Smith 2008b).

Referencing



2. THE REFERENCE LIST

A reference list that details each piece of work must always be included at the end of your assessment task.

LAYOUT

List all references alphabetically by author name or, when there is no author, by title. If there are several references by the same author, list these chronologically from the earliest publication date to the latest. In the case of an author publishing several works within the same year, list these in order according to the lowercase letter you have attached to the publication date.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

The type of information to include in your reference is dependant on the nature of the piece you are referencing. The following section identifies the key components and rules for referencing various types of information sources correctly.

A. Book References

To reference books, include the following items in the order given: author(s), year of publication, title of book in italics, title of series (if applicable), volume number of volumes (if applicable), edition (if not the first), editor (if different to author), publisher, place of publication.

One author

Disher, G. 2009, *Writing Fiction*, Allen & Unwin, Australia.

Two authors

Dann, S. & Smith, S. 2009, *Strategic Internet Marketing*, John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd., Australia.

More than two authors

Calandra, A., Ciavarella, G. & Losonski, F. 2006, *Justice, Money and Markets*, Pearson Education Australia Pty. Ltd., Australia.

An edited work

Record the work under the name(s) of the editor(s) placing *ed.* Or *eds.* Before the publication date.

Barrowman, Fergus (ed.) 2006, *The Picador Book of Contemporary New Zealand Fiction*, Picador Macmillan, London.

A chapter in an edited work

Calandra, A., Ciavarella, G. & Losonski, F. 2006, 'How the Australian Economy Works' in *Justice, Money and Markets*, ed. Moore, Helen, Pearson Education Australia Pty. Ltd., Australia

One volume of a multi-volume work

Guild, H. 2009, *The life and times of Florence Nightingale*, vol.4, *The Crimean War years: 1854-56*, 5th edn, Pegasus Press, Washington, DC.

B. Journal Articles

Include the following items in the order given: author(s), year of publication, title of article (in single quotation marks), title of journal (in italics), volume number, issue number, page number(s).

No author

'Logistics and marketing components of customer service: an empirical test of the Mentzer, Gomes and Krapfel model', 2006, *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, vol. 26, No. 8, pp. 29-42

One author

Rodd, S. 2008 'Packaging as a retail Marketing Tool', *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, vol. 20, no. 8, p. 30

More than one author

Lummusic, R. & Vokurka, R. 2007, 'Defining supply chain management: a historical perspective and practical guidelines', *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, pp. 11-17

C. Newspaper Articles

Newspaper articles are referenced in the same way as journal articles, however, the day and month the article was printed is substituted for volume and issue information.

Packham, B 2006, 'Rain eases bushfire threat', *Herald Sun*, 30 January, p. 2.

D. Encyclopaedia Articles

Encyclopaedia articles are referenced in the same manner as journal articles.

Author unknown

'Healthy Eating' 2001, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol 12, p. 542.

Author known

Wilson, J. 2000 'Plate Tectonics', *The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, vol. 12, pp. 1785-1799.

E. Films and DVDs / Television and Radio Broadcasts

Include the following items in the order given:

- Title of film in *italics*
- Production or recording date (for film or DVD)
- Date of transmission (for television or radio broadcast)
- Format of the recording
- Publisher or name of production company
- Place of Production

Film or DVD:

Gran Torino 2008, motion picture, Matten Productions, USA.

Television or Radio Broadcast:

Today Tonight 2009, television program, Network 7, Melbourne.

F. Electronic Sources

Electronic sources include websites and CD-ROMs.

A Website

Include the following items in the order given: site author, site date (last updated, copyright date or n.d. if no date is presented), name and place of the sponsor of the website, access date, URL.

A website with an author

Hewitt, J 2004, 'Poetry Writing tips', *The Writer's Resource Centre*, viewed 24 November 2005, www.poewar.com/archives/2004/10/24/poetry-writing-tips/.

A website with no author

Page Title, Last update or copyright date, name and place of the sponsor of the website, date viewed, URL in angle brackets (<>)
Human Resources 2005, University of San Diego, San Diego, viewed March 7 2006, www.sandiego.edu/administration/financeadmin/humanresources/.

CD-ROMs

CD-ROMs are referenced in the same manner as books, with an additional insertion of 'CD-ROM' after the date.
Justice, Money & Markets 2004, CD-ROM, Pearson Education Australia, Sydney.