Quick Guide
A step-by-step guide to planning your assignments and putting them together

What is in this guide
- A guide to take you through the steps in the process of planning, writing and reviewing assignments
- Assignments step-by-step table
- A week by week Session Planner to help you plan
- Links to other relevant Quick Guides
- A link to Assignment Navigator: Getting started
- Related Quick Guides

Your assignment step-by-step

Planning your assignment
What follows might sound obvious, so obvious in fact that many students don’t do it. When you are studying at university you are expected to be an independent learner. Nobody is going to tell you when to study or when you should sit down and start working on your assignments. You are given information about what you have to do and when it is due. The rest is up to you.

The information in this guide is intended to help you at least have at your fingertips what you have to do and when. This information then helps you map out a plan for what you have to do over a whole session.

This guide also takes you step by step through the process of planning, writing and reviewing an assignment.

Thinking ahead and managing your time
Planning for the assignments you have to do in a session should start on the first day you have access to the Unit Information Guide for a unit. These guides are your roadmap through a unit. They should have in them all the important information you need to work your way through a unit. If you’re like most students the first thing you will look for is information about what assignments you have to do. Don’t just look at what assignments you have to do, use the Session Planner at the end of this guide so that you have a chart of what assignment is due when for each unit you are studying. You can then use this
information to work out how long it might take you for each assignment. Remember that often you will have several big assignments due at around the same time so you need to plan carefully for when you need to start each one. You will get better at this once you have done a few assignments. Until you get used to doing assignments, be realistic. Don’t think that you can research and write a 2000 word essay in one day and do a decent job of it. If you think it will take you a week to do a good job of researching and writing a 2000 word essay, double that time and you will be getting close.

Make sure you keep up with the weekly readings for the topics in each unit. If you do this it will save you time later because you will already have a good store of background knowledge. This will help you refine your research and organise your ideas.

Start working straight away! Don't put things off!

Writing your assignment

When are ready to start working on an assignment follow these steps:

Step 1: Read and analyse and brainstorm the assignment task.

You need to read the assignment question very carefully. Then analyse the assignment task (see Analysing assignment tasks Quick Guide). Work out what the task requires you to do and then brainstorm the topic to come up with some key ideas that you might want to develop in your answer. These ideas will help you with the next step: your research on the topic.

Step 2: Research, read and take notes.

Start finding information, reading and thinking about the assignment. Start with how the textbook, the assigned readings and the lecture/tutorial material might help you to answer the assignment task. Start with sources that give you good background information (like your textbook) and then move to more specific sources (like journal articles) as you refine your research. (see Taking Notes Quick Guide)

Step 3: Map out a plan for your assignment.

Now that you have found enough information, map out a plan to organise that information to fit the way you are going to answer the assignment question (see Organising information for your assignmentss Quick Guide). Your main points should be fairly abstract. You move to more concrete information as you develop your main points. As you organise your information, go back and rethink what is expected of you in the assignment task. Keep monitoring to make sure you are sticking to the task. Read again and think again, and continue to do this until you can begin writing. Try to allocate half of your time to research and half to writing for each assignment.

Step 4: Write your introduction.

When you have organised your information into a chart use this as a plan for writing your essay. Write your introduction first. Your introduction should restate the question, state your thesis (or position) on the question, identify the main points you are going to develop and define any key terms. Your first
paragraph is the most important paragraph in your essay. It should give a clear map for the reader of what they can expect in the rest of the essay.

**Step 5: Now start drafting the paragraphs in the body.**

Develop each main point in the same order as you have introduced it in the introduction (see How to write a good introduction Quick Guide). Make sure each main point is developed in at least one paragraph (see Writing paragraphs Quick Guide) and that each paragraph begins with a topic sentence and goes on to develop or give examples of the information in the topic sentence. Make sure you have correctly cited all the evidence you have used from your research.

**Step 6: Finally, write the conclusion.**

When you come to write your conclusion make sure that it follows logically from the arguments and evidence you have presented. Do not introduce any new information in your conclusion. That’s why it’s called a conclusion. You sum up what you have presented and make a final statement.

You have now finished a draft of your assignment. You aren’t finished yet. There is still a bit of work to do.

**Reviewing and editing your assignment**

Do not submit a first draft. A first draft is never 100% right. Before you submit an assignment check through your assignment to make sure that:

- you have correctly cited all your sources of information and your referencing is done according to the referencing system that the assignment asks for. (If no referencing system is specified use a standard one like APA6 or Harvard and make sure you use it consistently.)
- your reference list is on a separate page, in alphabetical order
- each reference in your reference list has been cited at least once in your assignment
- you have either followed formatting instructions (if given) or you have formatted your assignment so that it looks professional
- you have filled out a cover sheet (if required) correctly
- you have checked through the assignment thoroughly for typos and spelling mistakes
- you have checked your assignment against any checklist or assessment criteria in the Unit Information Guide to make sure you addressed everything that is required, and
- you have given your assignment a final read-through just to confirm that it is ready to submit.
## Assignments step-by-step table

The table below is a summary of the information in the sections above.

| 1 Read, analyse and brainstorm the task | Look for:  
• Content words,  
• Instruction words.  
Use these to work out how you will approach the question. |
| 2 Research, read and take notes | Research the topic. Start broad and sharpen focus.  
E.g.: textbook, book chapters, journal articles, websites.  
Brainstorm and start to refine your ideas. |
| 3 Organise your information and map out a plan | Organise your information into a chart that shows the main points you are going to develop. |
| 4 Draft your introduction | Draft your Intro. Make sure that you have a thesis and have identified all your main points.  
List your main points in order under the draft Intro. |
| 5 Draft your body paragraphs and conclusion | Use your Intro as a plan and develop each main point in turn.  
Write in paragraphs. Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence and uses evidence from the sources you have used. Make sure you have correctly cited each source.  
Remember to paraphrase instead of using a lot of quotes.  
Draft your conclusion. |
| 6 Edit your draft | Go over your draft to make sure:  
• you have answered the question;  
• your Intro clearly predicts what follows;  
• your argument is logical;  
• you have enough evidence to support your points; your evidence is cited correctly; you have a proper reference list on a new page at the end of your assignment; your assignment is properly formatted. |
| 7 Fine tune | Do Step 6 again. If assessment criteria are available, check your assignment against the criteria as a final check to make sure you have ticked all the boxes. |
Session planner

How to use the Session planner

On the next page you will find a Session planner. This will help you plan for what you have to do and when you have to have it done by. Do Steps 1, 2 and 3 well before you have any assignments due, preferably early in the first week of the session.

**Step 1:** Note the unit title or code at the top of the column and then write in the due date, word limit and weighting for each assessment task for that unit in the appropriate box using the session weeks as a guide.

**Step 2:** Repeat Step One for all units you are studying this session.

**Step 3:** Now go back and note when you will need to START each assessment task. Estimate how long it will take to complete each task and then note the start date and draw a line down to the submission date.

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### Session Planner

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**Link to Assignment Navigator: Getting started**


**Related Quick Guides**

Analysing assignment tasks, Organising information for your assignments, How to write a good introduction, Writing paragraphs