



Overview of essay writing: video tutorial

<http://www.screencast.com/t/2hybfnrDjL>

Transcript

Introduction: Welcome to this overview of essay writing from the University of Reading Study Advice team. It serves as an introduction to the topic and offers links to tutorials within this series, which you can explore in any order. It is designed for you to go through at your own pace and you can pause it at any time.

The essay: So let's begin by taking a closer look at the end product: the essay. What are the markers actually looking for? Understanding this is the key to good essay writing. Which will hopefully lead to great grades and encouraging comments like these.

What are markers looking for: When looking through your essay your lecturers are looking for a number of things for you to display and evidence to them:

Firstly, they want you to evidence that you have understood the topic and the issues within it. If there is a set question, have you answered it and shown understanding of the wider context in which it fits?

Your lecturers are also looking for you to apply your understanding on a topic to the set question, selecting relevant information and the ability to apply relevant theories and examples to support your points of view.

Where applicable, markers are keen to read your original thoughts on a particular topic. They want to hear what your particular take is, rather than just what others have argued in the past.

Finally your markers are looking for valid arguments that are supported by evidence and examples. These arguments should be well structured and

balanced, considering a range of viewpoints.

You therefore need to make it easy for the reader to understand the points you want to make, follow your arguments and appreciate how you have arrived at the conclusion you state. This can be achieved by: ensuring you have answered the set question and have planned out your answer; the use of appropriate evidence; a logical structure and well defined paragraphs; and a clear written style that is void of errors.

All of these have their own tutorials which you can explore in more depth; either as you go through this tutorial, or they can be accessed separately at the end.

Answering the question and planning: Firstly, answering the question and planning. One of the common complaints from lecturers is that students, despite writing lots of information, often fail to answer the question fully and accurately. Irrelevant evidence and examples are added and lecturers comment that students fall into the trap of writing all they know on a topic rather than focusing on the set question.

To find out how to avoid this happening to you, watch our tutorial on ‘answering the question and planning’ by clicking on this link.

Targeted reading and using evidence: Lecturers are also looking for you to use evidence to support your points and to have selected that evidence carefully and referenced it correctly. To find out how to achieve this, watch our tutorial on ‘targeted reading and using evidence’. You can access this now by clicking on this link.

Structuring and paragraphs: Your marker needs to follow your argument and therefore your writing needs to have a clear structure. Arguments should build and take the reader through a logical progression of points. Remember your marker is looking for evidence on how you have answered the set question. The tutorial on ‘structuring and paragraphs’ explains how to structure work effectively to meet this aim.

Clear communication and proof reading: Finally your marker is looking to understand your points and a clear, objective writing style helps with this. Having grammar, punctuation and spelling errors not only makes work difficult to read but can also undermine what you are trying to say, leaving the reader confused and less convinced by your arguments.

For more information on how to write in a clear style and identify errors in your own work, watch our tutorial on 'clear communication and proof-reading'

If you follow the advice within each of these tutorials, you will make the job of the marker much easier ...

...which will hopefully lead to more comments like this, and improved grades