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3

Nurture a great piece of writing into being

Craft your writing with care

How does this help?

Although the knowledge base that informs each piece of student writing is important, so too is the quality of the writing. All too often, students submit rushed assignments, crowded with information but without sufficient crafting. They could improve their grades by taking more care over how they order and express their knowledge and thought, paying attention to their use of language. To do so would usually require more than one draft. The right words might not come straightaway. The final piece might need to be teased and cajoled into being and polished many times so that it flows well and its ideas are well articulated.



Considering your response

If you tend to submit a rushed piece of writing or first draft, consider taking a more 'nurturing' approach. Even if you are not engaged in 'creative' writing, you are engaged in a creative process. A well-crafted piece of writing will convey your knowledge and ideas to best advantage.



See also Ways 12, 26, 28, 34



Do I ...?

1. Do I put thought into how, exactly, I am using language when writing?

Yes No

2. Do I treat every word I write as worthy of my attention?

Yes No

3. Do I craft each piece of writing as if it were a potential piece of art?

Yes No



To do. I will ...

Shape its destiny!



Encourage it into existence

Your first words on the paper or screen start to bring a piece of writing into being. Write your first thoughts and take it from there.

Cherish it!

Value and take pride in your words. Select and combine them with care, rephrasing sections until your piece is the best possible for the time available to you.

Craft your piece

Don't just race through it, throw down words, copy from others or submit a first draft. Treat it as a potential work of art – to be styled, crafted and polished.



Weed it!

Remove anything that gets in the way of your message coming across clearly.

Make it feel treasured!

Give it your time and attention. Let it know you care!

Feed it!

Find great material to use within your written assignments and to stimulate your ideas.



9

Master the conventions

Become familiar with the conventions that apply to writing in your subject

How does this help?

Whether you are writing an assignment or for an employer or charity, there will be particular expectations or conventions that apply. Academic writing is characterised by such conventions as accurate and precise use of language and distinct methods of referencing all sources used. It uses particular structures depending on whether it is an essay, report or case study. There will also be stylistic features expected within your subject, too. Writing in the sciences differs from that used in humanities, arts and social sciences.¹ Unless you are on a course that explicitly encourages innovative writing styles, then become well informed about the styles and conventions that apply.

Considering your responses

If you are not familiar with all of the conventions that apply to the type of assignment you have been given, this is likely to lower your grade. To excel in writing for your course, follow its conventions.



See also Ways 10, 17, 19, 26



Do I ...?

1. Do I know the general characteristics of academic writing?
Yes **No**
2. Do I know the writing conventions that apply to assignments for my course?
Yes **No**



Find out more

See Cottrell, S. (2019).
*The Study Skills Handbook*¹



To do. I will ...

Do it in (the right) style!

Identify ✓ which item in each of the pairs below is more typical of the expectations for your course.

<input type="checkbox"/> Objectivity	<input type="checkbox"/> Subjectivity
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't use 'I'	<input type="checkbox"/> Do use 'I'
<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid referring to personal experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Draw on your experience
<input type="checkbox"/> Stick to facts	<input type="checkbox"/> Be imaginative
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep description to a minimum	<input type="checkbox"/> Use detailed description
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't reveal your feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss your feelings
<input type="checkbox"/> Cite all sources	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't cite sources

Read more about it

Find out more about common features of academic writing and the reasons for different academic writing styles.¹

Check how it's written

Follow advice given for the course. Notice the style and key features of writing used in books and journals that your tutors recommend.

Ask why

If you don't understand the logic behind conventions required of you, ask. The answers can help clarify the philosophies that underpin the subject and course.

Check your draft

Check it follows conventions as expected.^{1,2}



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