

# ASSIGNMENT SKILLS

## Why you should start working on your assignment immediately:

- BRAIN: Gets your brain thinking about the topic.
- RESOURCES: Allows you to find resources you may need at the library.
- HELP: Means you have time to ask for help if you need it.
- SAFETY NET: Creates a safety net so you have time in case something unexpected happens.

## Step 1 – Begin with a 15 minute overview.

Read the assignment information carefully (perhaps highlighting as you go) and note:

- When is the assignment due?
- What is the purpose of the assignment?
- What is the assignment asking you to do?
- What presentation format is required?
- Are there any guidelines or directions to follow?
- Are there specific references/resources given?
- Is there a marking criteria? How will the assignment be graded?

## Step 2 – Brainstorm the steps that will be involved.

Think about everything you will need to do for the assignment, this will vary depending on what type of assignment it is. For example:

- Read assignment, make points, do schedule.
- Check Librarian, general research.
- Review. Outline what I need to research.
- List topics /headings to research.
- Establish how to organise research.
- Last pre-research check.
- Start researching.
- Continue researching.
- Finish researching.
- Begin writing draft (a third).
- Write the 2nd third of the draft.
- Write the final third of draft.
- First proof. Second proof. Third proof.
- FINAL format completed.

## Step 3 – Schedule the work over the time available.

- Immediately draw up a schedule, or add to your homework diary, so you can do all the other homework and all the other things, AS WELL as your assignment planning.
- You should add in your other commitments, so your schedule is realistic.
- You may like to leave a good amount of time between finishing your draft, and having the assignment completed for submission. This allows for the unexpected, e.g. some parts of the process taking longer than you expected.
- The schedule is not fixed, you should change it when you don't meet your planned deadline, just make sure you don't rush the last important stage of presentation.

## Step 4 – Ensure you are clear on what to research.

Before you start researching, answer the following questions:

- What do you need to know about?
- Are there main points, concepts, words, or topics? These should be indicated on the assignment question, as well as through your knowledge related to the topic. Write them down.
- What are other ways to describe these key words, phrases or concepts - are there SYNONYMS? This will help when you use search engines or catalogues. Add these to the list of words or phrases from the previous point.
- What do you already know?
- Are you confident you are correct about what you already know? Is there anything you think you should check up and confirm?

## Step 5 – Structure what you need to find out.

- You should now have a fairly good idea of the general direction for your research and how to approach your assignment.
- The next step is to give further structure before you research more deeply. This will make your research organisation far easier.
- You have determined the main headings and sub-headings, but you should also add your own ideas under these headings so you have key words you can use in your searching.

## Step 6 – Decide how to organise the research you collect.

You can:

- Write notes on paper as you research.
- Type notes on a computer as you research.
- Print out relevant pages from online or CD ROM resources. Then highlight and underline relevant information.
- Photocopy or scan relevant pages from books, articles, magazines etc. and highlight and underline relevant information and keep this information in a folder.
- You can also use a mix of these approaches.

## **Step 7 – A few more things before you start researching.**

- LIBRARY: Don't forget the library, you may find more resources there than you realised!
- CITING: Whenever you use words, ideas or images that you didn't create yourself you need to state where they came from, even if it was from a website. Therefore you need to keep notes on your sources as you go as it will be difficult later to find where the information came from.
- BIBLIOGRAPHY: At the end of your assignment you need to include a bibliography that lists all the sources you referred to, and where you got the information. You may not have referred to a specific quote, or used specific words but the source would have helped you understand more about the topic and provided general information.
- TIMELINE: Lastly, check your timeline, are you on track?

## **Step 8 – Research.**

You are now ready to start your research, organise the relevant info, make notes and be prepared to write your assignment.

- Have your sub headings AND the question clearly visible as you research so you maintain a focus on the points you need to research.
- It is better to write notes in your own words as you research (add where you originally got the information from, in case you need to cite later). When you write your own notes, it will make writing the assignment a lot easier.

## **Step 9 – Writing your assignment.**

- Unless told otherwise, assignments can have headings, flow charts, bullet points, highlighting, images and diagrams.
- INTRODUCTION: The introduction should immediately address the assignment question. This should include: what you are going to discuss or describe or explain, the purpose of your assignment, indicating how the question will be answered and get the reader's attention.
- BODY: The body is where you include all your points, ideas, themes, arguments and concepts. You should NOT do this in a day, but over a series of days and sessions (refer to your schedule). Here, all your topics, headings and sub-headings will be developed into written text, with visual images to reinforce points.
- CONCLUSION: The conclusion is where you succinctly reinforce your argument, answer or explanation. It will be the last words your teacher will read before assessing your assignment so you want him or her to finish reading with a strong positive impression.

## **Step 10 – Proofing your assignment.**

- FIRST PROOF: Do the first proof yourself checking the word count, spelling, and grammar. Check that all the visuals have the sources listed. Are the criteria addressed and have you answered the question? Is there unnecessary information or repetition that could be removed?
- SECOND PROOF: Read your assignment out loud and you may find other mistakes you'd missed.
- THIRD PROOF: Ask someone else to have a quick read through your work looking for errors.

## **Step 11 – Bibliography.**

- You should have a list of the references you used. These must go in your Bibliography.
- They need to be listed alphabetically on a separate page at the end of your assignment.

## **Step 12 – Formatting.**

- Presentation can give the teacher a positive impression of your approach, skills, knowledge and work ethic.
- FONT SIZE: don't make the font too small. You want the reader to be comfortable reading your assignment. Double check if your school has a specific writing style guide where font and font size is stipulated.
- PAGE BREAKS: Check where the page breaks are in your assignment. Where possible try and start a new heading, sub-heading, paragraph etc. on a new page.
- ALIGNMENT: Whatever alignment style you use, keep it consistent throughout the assignment. The text should be either justified or aligned left throughout. The exception to this is if you add text boxes or other visual aids.
- PAGE NUMBERS: You should have page numbers on your assignment, and it is quite a good idea to have your name, date and Title as a footnote on each page.
- TITLE PAGE: Make sure you include what the teacher requires on the Title page. If there is no requirement, here is a chance to make an impact. Add photos, images, colour and design. Include the assignment question, your name, class and date. You could even summarise your assignment with a contents page, listing the headings.

## **Step 13 – Submission.**

- How you submit your assignment will depend on the teacher's requirement, and indeed the assignment's format.
- USB: Always save your final assignment on a USB (as a back-up) if it is a digital version.
- ONLINE SUBMISSION: If you are submitting your assignment by email, on a portal etc, you will need to check the file size. You may also like to consider submitting as a PDF file to preserve formatting.
- HARD COPY SUBMISSION: If your teacher wants a hard copy, consider: printing it out on a colour printer, using a slightly heavier paper (eg 100g), placing all pages in plastic sleeves or binding it in a folder.



*So what do you need to do or remember  
about Assignment skills?*



**Enhanced Learning  
Educational Services**  
*"the study skills specialist"*