



# Assignment planning

Completing an assignment gives you an opportunity to build on the information you have received in your course and to demonstrate what you have learned. However, it needs careful planning in advance as it often takes much longer than you expect. Allow plenty of time for *all* the steps outlined below:

## 1. Check your Course Outline and course site

The Course Outline and course site should include a description of the task, information about the due date and usually some suggested readings. Make sure you follow all the requirements as stated in the Course Outline, the course site and feedback forms if available, as these will be applied when your assignment is marked.

## 2. Understand the task

Analyse and understand the task in detail. This includes identifying key words within the task so that you know exactly what you need to do to complete the assignment. Make sure that you have considered every part of the task. Expectations may vary depending on the type of task (e.g., essay, oral presentation, report etc.).

## 3. Develop a rough plan

Develop a rough plan for the assignment and how you will approach it or what possible directions you could take. Using visual techniques such as constructing a mind map may work well for you.

## 4. Search for sources

Find relevant sources by searching the library catalogue and databases. Use a variety of sources and remember that most often you are required to use peer reviewed academic sources. Avoid Wikipedia and Google because you need reliable, academic sources. Using sources like these may be okay to gain some general background information on a topic but they are not acceptable as academic sources for your assignments.

## 5. Read and take notes

Read with a purpose. Start skim-reading sources to make sure that what you read in detail is going to be useful for the assignment task. Read and make notes using your own words from a variety of journal articles and books, and include complete in-text references beside the notes so that you know where you found ideas that you are using. It's also a good idea to compile the reference list as you go.

## 6. Revisit your plan

Think about your response to the task and add any ideas to your plan for the assignment. If you need to form a position in response to your task, this is a good time to do it. You might also consider your scope of discussion (what you are including and what you are not including) and the structure of your assignment.



### **7. Write a rough draft**

Write a draft of the assignment from your plan and notes, and be sure to include the in-text references and reference list at the end of the assignment. Remember that you can always edit this later – it doesn't have to be your final version.

### **8. Reread; rethink; revise; rewrite**

Re-read and revise your draft (as many times as you can). If necessary, re-read relevant sections of the sources in more detail to help you expand any ideas. It is important that you give yourself enough time to reflect on what you are writing and make sure that you are answering the question. Redraft the assignment so that it clearly presents your ideas to the reader and has a good "flow".

### **9. Edit for your final version**

Edit your assignment for typing, spelling and grammar errors (this includes for oral presentations or PowerPoint slides that may be a part of your assignment response). Ask yourself: Have I met all the requirements of the assignment task? Is my response clear? Remember that redrafting and editing takes almost as much time as the drafting your first version, so plan to leave enough time for steps 6-9.

### **10. Compile any appendices and prepare the reference list**

If you have been preparing the reference list as you do your assignment, this stage should only involve checking details. Otherwise, you will need to prepare the entire reference list at this stage.

### **11. Proofread**

Proofread the final version of your assignment. Check for spelling, typos and grammar mistakes one more time. You can use the spelling and grammar check function in Word but remember that it will not always pick up every error. It is helpful to ask someone else to read your work to make sure it makes sense. Make sure you allow time for this important step - getting the grammar and spelling right can gain you some easy marks.

### **12. Submit your assignment**

Make sure you follow the instructions on the learnonline pages for the course for submitting your assignment. Then congratulate yourself for completing the task.

<p><b>Remember:</b> Trying to complete an assignment in one night is next to impossible, so plan the above steps carefully and don't leave it to the last minute!</p>
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