DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 423 507 CS 013 272

AUTHOR Haisman, Gilbert
TITLE SWOT: Study without Tears. For University, Polytechnic and Senior Secondary Students.
INSTITUTION New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington.
ISBN ISBN-1-877140-09-0
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 97p.
AVAILABLE FROM New Zealand Council for Educational Research, P.O. Box 3237, Wellington, New Zealand.
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Guides - Classroom - Learner (051) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Information Skills; Internet; *Learning Strategies; Notetaking; Secondary Education; Student Needs; *Study Habits; *Study Skills; *Test Wiseness
IDENTIFIERS Learning Starters

ABSTRACT

Noting that research shows that sound study practices increase chances for academic success, this booklet is intended to help secondary and postsecondary students improve their study methods and take charge of their learning. After an introduction, the first section discusses planning for success (goal setting and organizing a study space). The following section discusses how to find information quickly (setting a purpose before looking for information, books, libraries, and the Internet). Next, the booklet discusses what to do when a student does not understand new facts or ideas. It then elaborates effective ways to learn new information (getting an overview, setting a purpose, making up questions, talking it through, learning the language of a subject, variety and repetition, note-making, and reading skills. The last section addresses earning higher marks (writing skills, writing essays and assignments, oral presentations, and making the most of examinations). (RS)

SWOT

study without tears

Gilbert Haisman

getting organised
taking charge
staying motivated
using new technologies
learning difficult material
writing great assignments
note-making
learning by questioning
speaking well
listening actively
examination tips
getting better marks

SWOT

study without tears

for university, polytechnic and
senior secondary students

by Gilbert Haisman

NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
Wellington 1997

New Zealand Council for Educational Research
PO Box 3237, Wellington 6000, New Zealand

ISBN 1-877140-09-0

First published as *Swot: Study Without Tears*, by Peter Jackson, Neil Reid, and Cedric Croft, in 1982. Reprinted in 1984 and 1987.

This fully revised edition, written by Gilbert Haisman, published 1997.

Distributed by NZCER Distribution Services, PO Box 3237, Wellington, New Zealand.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Sylvie Haisman, Kamala Patel and Bev Webber, who contributed invaluable ideas, advice and criticisms and were a pleasure to work with. Thanks too, to Dr Penny Moore of The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and Cedric Croft of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research who read the manuscript and offered a number of ideas, corrections and criticisms notable for their substance and common sense. Also, to Ali Carew for her perceptive editing and Lynn Peck for her excellent design..

Gilbert Haisman
Paekakariki

Contents

INTRODUCTION

'What if I can't understand?'

'I'm afraid of not being able to keep up with the work.'

'What if I'm just not good enough to succeed?'

Many students feel like this, at least some of the time. This book is designed to help you overcome such fears and succeed in your studies.

The ideas work. Successful students, as a group, differ from less successful students in a number of ways: they are better organised, have clearer goals, ask more questions, discuss study topics more with fellow students, and have better essay-writing and examination techniques. Research shows that sound study practices do increase your chances of academic success, as measured by examination marks and grades.

This book is intended to help you achieve that success. Of course, some of the study methods in this book will work better for you than others. You need to become an expert on what works best for you, and what you find most enjoyable and satisfying. *You* must take charge of your study.

A note on vocabulary

In this book:

- *Study* means any activity that helps learning.
- *Revision* refers to the memorising of course material for an examination.
- *Subject* means a field of learning such as biology, business studies or geography.
- *Topic* or *unit* means a block of information covered within a course of study.
- *Tutor* includes 'teacher', 'lecturer', 'seminar leader' and 'instructor'.
- *Resources* include books, videos, articles, course notes, monographs — any source of information used for learning.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

'I spend half my time looking for stuff in this huge mess of paper.'

'People come around for a chat; they think because you're home you're not working.'

'I'd love a break, but I have to work through the weekend because I mucked around all week.'

You'll find you study more effectively if you know what you want to achieve and organise yourself to achieve it. This will help you feel motivated to study.

Setting your goals

To achieve your goals, you first need to decide what they are, and then plan how to reach them. One way to set goals is to decide where you want to end up, and then work backwards to set some action steps.

Long-term goals

First, picture yourself in your ideal career. Do you see yourself as a manager, musician, engineer, salesperson, social worker, farmer, technician, hairdresser, sports coach or doctor? Your chosen career is your *long-term goal.*

Medium-term goals

Second, select the course or courses of study that will help you reach your long-term career goal. You may need to complete an apprenticeship, a law degree or a diploma in hospitality. Achieving this is your *medium-term goal.*

Planning your career and choosing courses of study are major steps. Discuss your goals with counsellors, heads of department, tutors, graduate students and people who work in your chosen field.

Short-term goals

Third, choose the subjects you need to study in order to reach your medium-term goal, and find out how you will be assessed. Do you have to sit an examination or is the subject internally assessed? What marks do you need to get? The goals you set for each subject are your *short-term goals*. The rest of this book is designed to help you reach them.

Collect course information

Collect information about your course as soon as possible. Almost all courses provide notes about the topics to be studied, arrangements for classes and tutorials, and details of assignments, tests and examinations.

In particular, make sure you thoroughly understand how you will be assessed. This may mean photo-copying recent examination papers (provided the current year's examinations will follow the same pattern) and asking for information about what will earn high marks in assignments.

Organising yourself

Setting up a place to study

It is important that you enjoy being in the place where you study. If you live in a slummy student flat, find a sunny corner, get a desk and a comfortable chair, buy a pot plant and put up some posters. If you are the only student in a large family and a smallish house, consider negotiating with a friend, relative or neighbour for the use of a quiet space. If you have young children, you may need to make a study area in the corner of a family room, which you can use when the children are asleep or at school.

You could also use a library, get together with friends who are serious about study, or ask your tutors or guidance counsellors for ideas. But get a place you enjoy working in, and be prepared to spend some time and a little money in setting it up.

Points to bear in mind:

- *Light*

  Natural light is best, so put your desk near a window if possible. Make sure the sun doesn't shine in your eyes or directly onto the page. For artificial light, use a 75-100 watt central ceiling light, and a 40-60 watt shaded desk-lamp. As with sunlight, make sure the lamp doesn't shine in your eyes or directly onto the page. Eye strain can be caused both by excessive glare and by insufficient light.

- *Fresh air*

  Fresh air will help you to stay awake and alert. Keep a window or door partly open, and take a walk outside from time to time, leaving the room open so it will be aired.

- *Temperature*

  Use an electric fan in summer, and a heater or extra clothing in winter, to maintain a comfortable temperature. If you are cold and cannot afford a heater, wrap yourself in blankets and rest your feet on a hot water bottle.

- *Noise and interruptions*

  It's hard to concentrate in a noisy environment. Study in a place that is as free as possible from visitors, television, radio, drunken celebrations, loud arguments, and traffic noise.

Getting the right equipment

Use a computer if you possibly can. It will help you to:

- organise information quickly
- edit and proofread your work more efficiently
- produce easy-to-read notes and assignments
- get quick access to information through the Internet, if you have a modem as well.

Without a computer, you are at a disadvantage compared to students who do have one. More and more courses assume you can use a computer, just as they assume you can read and write.

Using a computer doesn't have to be expensive. Look for good second-hand equipment, or arrange for access to a computer at your school or university, or at a friend's house. You can store your information on inexpensive diskettes.

Scared of computers?

If you have never used a computer, the thought of doing so may fill you with terror. This is natural, but quite unnecessary — if you can read this book you can quickly learn to use a computer. You will soon wonder how you ever survived without one.

If you know nothing about computer word-processing, seek help. Ask your friends, counsellors, or tutors where and how to get started. If they confuse you with technical terms, remind them that they need to begin at the very beginning. Shop around for a good book — the *Dummies* series is excellent.

Setting up a filing system

You will be dealing with large amounts of information in your courses. If you are badly organised you could spend up to 10 per cent of your time searching for notes, photo-copied articles and computer files. Over a year of full-time study, that 10 per cent could add up to four 50-hour weeks. So get organised.

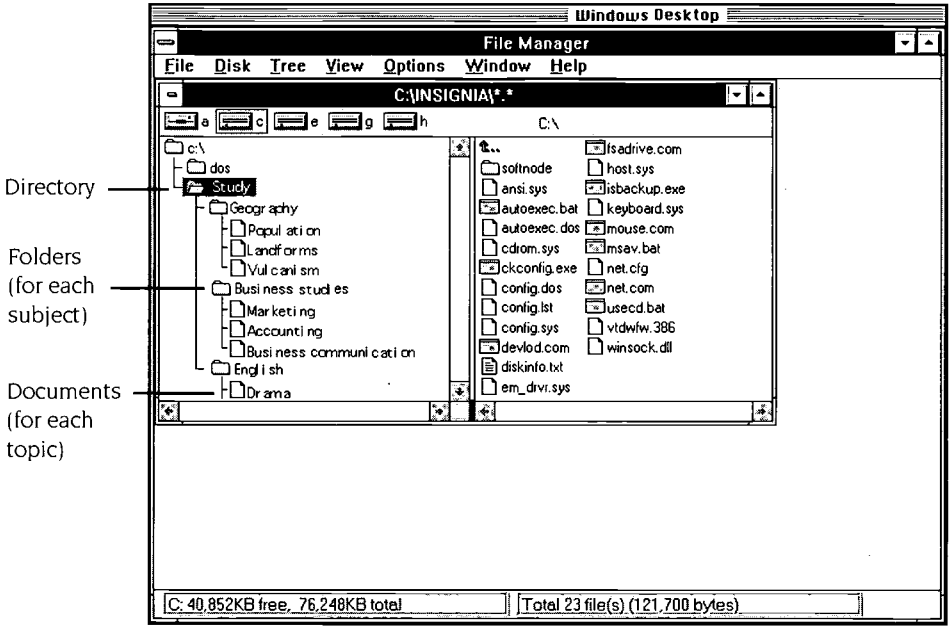
Design your filing system to suit your own needs. The example on the next page might give you some ideas. For this system you will need ring-binders, diskettes for the computer, vertical files, and shelves and/or boxes to store books, ring-binders and a box of diskettes.

Diskettes

Don't worry if you know nothing about computers — filing 'documents' on a computer is as simple as using a ring-binder. Ask someone to help you.

Use diskettes (and your hard drive if you have your own computer) to store computer 'documents' containing work-in-progress, reference material and completed notes and essays, organised into 'folders' or 'directories' by subject. Regularly copy each document onto three separate back-up diskettes, to guard against corruption, theft or loss.

Here is an example of a student's computer filing system:



Ring-binders

Use these to store paper documents such as hand-written notes, photo-copied articles, and computer print-outs (also known as 'hard copy'). Like your computer folders, these will contain work-in-progress, reference material and completed notes and essays. Have one ring-binder for each subject, with dividers for each topic.

A vertical file

Use this to store articles and clippings. If you have a filing cabinet, have a section for each subject and a suspension file for each topic. Cardboard cartons are fine, especially if you get a size that fits suspension folders. Again, have a carton for each subject and a suspension file for each topic.

Filing hints

- *Use the same naming system in all your files.* For example, if your Geography course has four sections (Landforms, Population, Historical Geography and Industrial Geography), divide your computer folder, ring-binder and vertical file into the same four sections. Within each section, the topic divisions should also be consistent in all three types of file.
- *File every bit of paper you need to keep* — course notes, copies of tests, course hand-outs, and so on. Label everything clearly. Staple the pages of a document together, and number every page.
- *Use headers or footers* (if you're using a computer) to label every page automatically. This will help you get from the paper document back to the computer document, and distinguish between different versions. For example:

  c:\geog\landform\assign1.doc draft 1 created 24.2.97 page 3

Planning your time

'Don't plan your study, plan your life'

Being in good spirits will help you to study more effectively. So plan your time carefully, allowing for social activities, physical exercise, recreation, cooking and eating meals, sorting out bills, tax and bank statements, as well as studying.

Planning your year

- *Get a year-planner*

  Buy a diary that has a year-planner, or make your own. It should have a square (large enough to write up to 20 words in) for every day of the year
- *Add fixed dates*

  Put in events with fixed dates: examinations, due dates for assignments, field trips, workshops, holidays, family events, your birthday, other people's birthdays, travel, sporting events, rock concerts, and due dates for payment of major bills.

- *Display your year-planner*

  Put your year-planner, or a copy of it, on the wall near your desk. Look at it often, and make changes as needed.

Planning your week

First, make a week-planner as follows:

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
AM 6 – 7							
7 – 8							
8 – 9							
9 – 10							
10 – 11							
11 – 12							
PM 12 – 1							
1 – 2							
2 – 3							
3 – 4							
4 – 5							
5 – 6							
6 – 7							
7 – 8							
8 – 9							
9 – 10							
10 – 11							

Now start adding activities to it. Try using this sequence:

1. *Write in fixed activities*

   Write in things you do at fixed times: lecture and class times, paid work, commuting, eating, family obligations, sports practice, yoga, one or two 'must-see' TV programmes, regular meetings and so on.

2. *Write in mental health activities*

   Reserve time for exercise, family life, entertainment, gardening, seeing friends, walking — whatever keeps you sane. Mental health activities should coincide with times of the day when you usually feel tired. You'll not only feel better afterwards, but also save more of your high-energy time for study.

3. *Set your study times*

   It's a good idea to study just after a lecture or class, while your motivation is high and what you've learned is still fresh in your mind. You'll feel very positive if you go to the library to start work on an assignment right after it's been set. But if you put it off for several days, your initial enthusiasm will soon turn to guilt, worry and anxiety, and the desire to escape these unpleasant feelings by socialising, watching TV or vacuuming the house.

Planning each day

Every evening, work out what you will do the next day, for each hour or half-hour of your study time.

- *Be specific.* For example, instead of writing down '2 — 3.30: study', specify WHAT you will study: '2 – 3.30: Make notes on vulcanism from Chapter 2 of textbook'.
- *Be realistic.* Set small achievable goals. Remember that reading and taking notes from complex textbooks can easily reduce your reading speed to ten pages an hour.

When should I study and for how long?

- In general, plan an hour's study for each hour in lectures or class. But all courses are different, so ask your tutors what is needed.
- Study in half-hour blocks, followed by five-minute rests. It can be hard to stay alert for longer periods.
- Avoid studying late at night — most people are too tired to concentrate after 10pm.

- Start each study period with the work you enjoy least — the sooner you do it, the sooner it's out of the way, leaving you with more pleasant activities.

Planning healthy work habits

Relaxation will help you to study more effectively and preserve your health. Long periods of study, especially sitting at a keyboard, must be well managed in order to avoid tension and pain. Poor work habits can lead to occupational overuse syndrome (OOS), a long-term disability which makes it difficult to study, work and live normally.

Advice for preventing or minimising OOS (and other work-related health problems) does vary, but experts commonly stress the importance of the following:

- having a fully adjustable chair which supports the small of your back
- adjusting the height of your chair, keyboard and computer screen so that:
  - your feet are flat on the ground (or on a foot rest)
  - your forearms are level
  - the screen is an arm's length away
  - the viewing angle (for the centre of both the screen and the copy-holder) is 10° to 30° below horizontal
- having a clean screen with sharp, steady images
- sitting straight
- taking frequent short breaks for relaxation, perhaps 5 – 10 seconds every three minutes plus 10 minutes every hour
- stopping work if you have pain in your wrists, forearms or neck
- seeking medical advice without delay if pain persists.

Note that the above advice is not complete, and parts of it may be superseded by new research. Do seek comprehensive guidance on occupational health and safety from your school, university, or an occupational health and safety authority. Make sure the advice covers work habits, workplace design, office furniture, computer hardware, relaxation techniques and health matters — especially the symptoms, treatment and prevention of OOS, eye strain and stress.

Keeping to your plan

Get into the habit of looking at your plan several times a day to make sure you are on target. If you fall behind, learn from the experience. Are you misjudging the time it takes to complete tasks? Or do you need to develop more effective study methods? If so, you will find some helpful suggestions in *Effective ways to learn new information*, on pages 23–44.

Are you erratic?

Many people start off being well organised, but gradually slip into bad habits. They may pull themselves together for a while, and then slacken off again. If you do this, don't worry; you are doing much better than people who are *never* organised, and with determination you will improve.

Working together

If you work well in a group, get together with friends to plan your study, and to support each other in keeping to your plans.

Dealing with problems

If you are having trouble coping — and nobody copes well all the time — don't hesitate to get support from friends, family, tutors or counsellors.

Accentuating the positive

Don't criticise yourself endlessly for what you *haven't* done — congratulate yourself on the good work you *have* done.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

1. Using your course notes and this book, think about and write down:
   - your goals — long-term, medium-term and short-term
   - your plans for where you will study
   - a list of things you need (including a computer and help in using it)
   - a plan of your filing system
   - a year-planner
   - a week-planner.

2. Obtain the best information you can on Workplace Health and Safety, and act on it.

HOW TO FIND INFORMATION QUICKLY

You can save a lot of study time if you know how to find information quickly. This section will help you find what you need in books, libraries and on the Internet.

Setting your purpose

Before you look for information, clarify your thinking about:

- exactly what you are looking for
- why you are looking for it
- how you will use it when you've found it.

Your purpose might be to answer an essay question, get background information or fill specific gaps in your knowledge.

Whatever it is, be as specific as possible. It is better to know that you want to 'Compare and contrast the climates of North and South China' than to start looking for general information about the climate of China. Knowing the precise question, and the nature of the task, will help you compare the usefulness of different sources.

Also, ask yourself how much you already know about the topic. If you know very little, it might be a good idea to start by seeking out resources for complete beginners, or even for children. This will help you bridge the gap between your own ignorance and the more advanced level of other resources.

There is more information on setting your purpose in *Effective ways to learn new information*, on pages 23–44.

Books

Usually, you have to read only part of a book to find the information you need. The easiest way to locate information in a book is to look in the *table of contents* or the *index*.

The table of contents is a list of chapters (and sometimes of sections within chapters) and their page numbers. It is found at the front of the book and is useful for locating general topics within the book.

The index is at the back of the book, and gives an alphabetical listing of specific topics, and the pages on which they appear. Remember that the topic you have in mind may be worded slightly differently in the index. Look under words or phrases that have a similar meaning. For example, if there is no index entry for Economic Recession, try looking under Depression.

Libraries

Most libraries organise their non-fiction books using the *Dewey Decimal System*, in which books (and other kinds of information) are filed in subject order. Within each subject, the books are in alphabetical order by author's surname.

Don't go looking for information by browsing the shelves. They don't contain everything that's available, and looking at the books themselves is a very slow way of finding out their subject matter. Instead, use the catalogues.

Using the catalogues

Library catalogues are lists of everything in the library. Most large libraries have on-line (computer) catalogues, as well as CD ROM, microfiche and card catalogues.

On-line catalogues

Usually, the on-line catalogue is the only catalogue that lists everything in the library. Such catalogues are updated regularly, and can keep pace with new

acquisitions. Some on-line catalogues also list items held by other libraries, which you can borrow on Interloan.

Most on-line catalogues have a 'menu' or computer-screen display that asks you how you want to search for information. Here is one example:

MENU

1. Title

2. Author

3. Subject

4. Keyword

If you want to search by subject, you type '3' and press 'Enter', and the computer displays instructions for searching by subject. For example:

SUBJECT SEARCH

Welcome to Subject Search

Type in your subject and press Enter

You then follow the on-screen instructions, and the computer gives you a list of books available on your topic.

CD ROM catalogues

CD ROM catalogues are stored on compact disks, just like music, and are already loaded onto the computer. They are often more specialised than other catalogues, able to supply lists of publications containing references to a particular person, for example.

Microfiche catalogues

Some libraries have catalogues on microfiche film. To use the catalogue, you sit at a desk in front of a monitor with several folders full of microfiche cards. Each card is like a photographic slide containing a tiny image of part of the catalogue, far too small to see with the naked eye. To view the catalogue you put the card into the monitor, which magnifies it to a readable size.

Each folder of cards will contain the catalogue in a different order. Usually,

one folder will contain the catalogue in order by subject, another by author, and another by title.

On-line and CD ROM catalogues are fast replacing microfiche, but many libraries still use microfiche for viewing the actual text of rare books and old newspapers that are too fragile to be handled.

Card catalogues

Card catalogues comprise cardboard index cards, stored in file drawers. Each card contains the details of a publication. As with microfiche catalogues, card catalogues are stored in several different orders, including by subject, by author and by title. Card catalogues often list only older publications.

Ask for help

There should be detailed instructions on how to use everything in the library, but if you get confused, or just want to know more, ask a librarian to help you.

The Internet

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a global computer network. Very simply, it is made up of millions of computers all over the world that are linked together using modems and telephone lines, thus enabling their users to communicate with one another.

What can the Internet offer students?

The Internet can be a very useful research tool, providing fast access to a colossal amount of information. Among the many facilities it offers, the four most useful to students are *information retrieval*, *bulletin boards*, *on-line conversation* and *e-mail*.

Information retrieval

Through the Internet you can get access to countless computer files around the

world, containing all sorts of information ranging from legal decisions and library catalogues to texts of old books and digitised pictures. For example:

- a history student could get access to British newspapers from the 1920s
- a law student could look up Supreme Court records
- a chemistry student could find out about the latest scientific developments through electronic journals
- a geography student could get access to worldwide weather maps.

Using graphical interface programs such as Netscape, Navigator or Mosaic, you can search for the information you need through addresses such as:

- http://www.nzcer.org.nz
  (New Zealand Council for Educational Research)
- ftp://uiarchive.cso.uiuc.edu/pub/etext/gutenberg
  (Gutenburg Project Archive)
- news://alt.education.research
  (Educational Research for Teachers)
- telnet://pac.cafl.org
  (ERIC search and question facility)
- gopher://gopher.cosn.org
  (Consortium for School Networking Internet Developments)

Bulletin boards

Electronic bulletin board systems provide the latest information on particular topics through on-line services, such as e-mail and on-line conversation. They generally have a particular focus, although a service called *Usenet* is an enormous bulletin board holding about 100 million characters of messages, changing daily, in over 4,000 topic groups ranging from cycling to political arguments.

On-line conversation

On the Internet you can communicate in real time with other users anywhere in the world. This can be one way of exchanging ideas with fellow students.

E-mail

Electronic mail (or e-mail) operates very much like the telephone system or paper mail — once you have an e-mail address you can exchange messages with anyone else on the Net. *Electronic mailing lists* allow you to join group discussions and 'meet' other users. *Mail servers* are programs that respond to e-mail messages and enable you to retrieve all sorts of information.

Do I need to be on the Internet to succeed in my studies?

No. In fact, using the Internet can be a disadvantage for a student. Some of the information on the Net is neither authoritative nor accurate. You will need to evaluate critically any data you access, and record the reference so you can find it again. Also, it is very easy to spend long hours 'surfing the Net', pleasantly distracted by on-line chatting and irrelevant information, while supposedly researching an essay. By contrast, you can usually find what you need at your library in about 15 minutes.

But the Internet can be a speedy and effective research tool, if you know what you're looking for and where to look. It is particularly useful if you find it hard to get to a good library, or if you are doing original research and need access to very specialised information.

How do I get on the Internet?

Free or cheap Internet access is available at many tertiary institutions, some secondary schools and a few large libraries. If you have your own computer and modem you may be able to hook up to your school or university network, and therefore to the Internet, from home. Ask your tutor or the technical staff.

Otherwise, to get on the Internet you will need a recent-model computer, a modem, a phone-line, and an account with an Internet service provider.

Modems

A modem is a device that enables data to travel between computers using a phone-line. It is either a box that plugs into your computer, or a card that slots into the computer.

A phone-line

You can use your home phone-line to access the Internet, but remember that nobody can use the phone while you are on the Net.

An Internet account

An account with an Internet service provider is similar to a telephone account. Different companies offer different types of account. With some you pay a flat fee for unlimited hours; with others you pay a small fee for a limited number of 'free' hours, and are billed for any extra time. It doesn't have to be expensive — you can get very cheap deals by agreeing to certain restrictions, such as having access only during specified hours.

How do I find out more?

Ask your computer-literate friends, or a technician from your school or university. Get a book on the subject: *Internet for Dummies* is an excellent guide.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

1. Visit the library you will be using and:
   - learn to use the on-line catalogue system
   - check out other relevant catalogues (ask a librarian)
   - find out where they store the books and periodicals you will be using.

2. Check with your tutor or course co-ordinator whether Internet access will be valuable for your course. If so, make plans to get access and advice.

WHY DON'T I UNDERSTAND?

'Everyone else seemed to understand it. I felt terrible.'

'I used to just look at the textbook and feel awful, but now I just ask questions and take it one step at a time.'

There are sure to be times when you don't understand a book, lecture, discussion, video or instruction. This can happen to anyone, and it is almost certain that your intelligence will *not* be the reason.

Here are some possible reasons for not understanding new facts and ideas.

Lack of prior knowledge

This is a very common cause of confusion. For example, imagine you come from a distant planet and are visiting a classroom on Earth. The tutor says to you:

'I am now going to gobble-de-gook you in a new gobble-de-gook of gobble de-gooking gobble-de-gooks in your gobble-de-gooks.'

Your failure to understand probably makes you feel ignorant and stupid. However, the reason is simple. You are new to the English language, so you don't know that the tutor is telling you:

'I am now going to instruct you in a new method of tying knots in your shoelaces.'

Your confusion has nothing to do with intelligence. It occurs because the tutor has assumed you know something when in fact you do not.

Information overload

Even when we do understand new information, we cannot take in large amounts of it all at once. If we try to, our heads start to spin and we 'switch off'. Normally, we need time to process the information — to think about it, talk about it, re-arrange it, put it in our own words, or leave it and come back to it later.

Not knowing how to learn effectively

Some students seem to believe they will learn because their tutors will teach them. That is not true. You will learn effectively only by taking control of your own learning — by setting goals, planning your study, asking questions and working out which study methods suit you best.

Distress

It is normal to feel distressed if you can't understand the ideas you are trying to learn, especially if others around you seem to be having no problems. The distress itself can make it difficult for you to learn, so it is important to break the cycle by seeking help.

Cultural and personal factors

You may feel like an outsider at university because your ethnic background, social class or age places you in a minority within the student body. You may have returned to study after a long period of unemployment, family commitments or unskilled work; you may be the first person in your family or community to attend university; or you may suffer from low self-esteem, health problems or stress. All in all, you may feel out of place in your new environment, and this can undermine your confidence and inhibit effective learning.

These problems should soon recede, as you discover that your fellow students are not so strange and different after all, and you begin to make new friends. Initially, you may have to work harder than other students to get the same results. But in the long term, your background and experience may well give you an edge, enabling you to offer different perspectives. In turn, you may gain new insights into your own life, new ways of thinking, and new inner strength.

If you are struggling with personal problems — and almost everybody does at some point in their lives — do not hesitate to seek help, for example from the student counselling services.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

1. If you do not understand new information, act quickly. Here are some suggestions:
   - Ask questions. The following section suggests ways of doing this.
   - Seek help. The main reason for your lack of comprehension is probably a lack of prior knowledge. Make your tutor aware of the problem so he or she can help.
   - Get a very basic book on the topic, even one written for children.
   - If you cannot act immediately, put a note in your diary to remind you to attack the problem as soon as possible. The sooner you act, the easier it will be to solve.

2. If the problem is emotional, and more than normal nervousness, then seek help immediately.

EFFECTIVE WAYS TO LEARN NEW INFORMATION

'I understood the lecture, but afterwards Jeanette said, "What did you learn from that?" And I thought, "....Ummmm....." I just couldn't say.'

'I used to think you just had to read. Now I sort of quiz the book.'

'I always put it in my own words. I can't learn from copying.'

You might understand new information at the time, but that doesn't necessarily mean you will remember it and be able to use it in an essay or exam. For that, you need to be an *active learner*. This involves taking action that will help you to think and to learn. This section suggests ways in which you can become a more active learner.

The first part contains strategies you can use in all your learning, whether you are reading, listening, writing, watching videos, or taking part in seminars, tutorials, workshops, practical sessions, work experience or field trips. The second part focuses specifically on reading.

Is there a best sequence for learning?

Some steps in the learning process are presented here in a sensible sequence, which you may well use in your own study. In practice, however, you will sometimes find you need to do things in a different order. For example, getting an overview and setting a purpose are normally the first step, but sometimes you may need to learn some new vocabulary before you can take those steps. You will also notice that the different steps overlap. For example, the questions that set your initial purpose can also help you come up with examples, reasons, statistics and quotes to support your main ideas.

Getting an overview

It can be very helpful to get an overview or outline of a topic before you study it. If you can see the topic as a whole, you will understand the parts more easily.

You can get an overview in various ways:

- A book will have 'signposts' — headings, subheadings, pictures, captions, summaries or an introduction — that may give you an outline of the topic.
- Your tutors may begin their sessions with an overview.
- You can ask your tutors questions that will help you get an overview. For example, you might say: 'I'm a little confused — can you tell me what we will be covering in the session?' Or: 'So, basically, we're looking at how tariffs, import licences and subsidies weaken economic growth and therefore lower employment, right?'
- When you finish a class, lecture, article or set of notes, briefly sum up what you have covered.

Setting your purpose

Be clear and specific about *what you want to learn and why.*

Your purpose may be to answer an essay question, collect background information, get answers to likely examination questions, or to solve problems. Whatever your purpose, be as specific as possible. Here are some examples.

CLEAR PURPOSES	WEAK, VAGUE PURPOSES
• To discover to what extent the Second World War had its origins in (a) economic and (b) social problems.	• Find out about the Second World War.
• To discover what a 'biological clock' is, and the ways in which the behaviour of the fiddler crab appears to be governed by a biological clock.	• Make notes about the fiddler crab's biological clock.

Has your tutor given you a purpose?

If your tutor tells you what you will learn from a unit of study, right at the start, this will give you a clear purpose for your note-making and make it easier for you to learn. If you are not given this information, you have a right to ask for it.

Assessment provides purpose

The assessment criteria for your course will tell you what you will get marks for. They usually state that candidates must be able to 'demonstrate a knowledge of .....' or 'demonstrate an ability to .....', or words to that effect.

These criteria will often set precise purposes for your study. For example, if a market research course requires you to 'demonstrate an understanding of market research methods and their role in business planning', then your study is likely to include note-making under the headings: 'Market research methods', 'The value of market research in business planning', and 'The use of market research in business plans: five case studies'.

Essays

An essay topic or question is a purpose in its own right. If your course requires you to complete six essays, then those six topics will direct a major part of your study, shaping both your selection of study resources and the structure of your note-making. The section on *How to write essays and assignments* (pages 47–72) contains many useful suggestions.

Recent examination papers

If your course is assessed by tests or an examination, the questions you are likely to be asked will form a major part of your purpose. Get copies of recent test or examination papers (making sure the course has not substantially changed since the papers were set). These questions, and similar ones you make up for yourself, can be used to:

- structure your note-making
- practise model answers
- revise topics from a variety of angles.

Making up your own questions

Successful students ask questions whenever they study. Questions can help you to:

- set an overall purpose for a study session
- explore, clarify and 'back up' ideas during study
- find the meaning of ideas, facts, phrases and words that puzzle you
- summarise the information you are studying.

As well as questions set by your tutor, and questions from recent tests and examinations, learn how to *make up your own questions*.

Questions that make you think

Questions that make you think usually ask you to use your imagination, so that you reflect deeply on a topic and structure your thoughts. Generally, such questions are more useful in helping you to understand, learn and remember than questions that ask you to recall details or facts. (On the other hand, questions about facts are often essential and can sometimes be thought-provoking.) Here are some examples of *questions that make you think*:

- Why is this concept/issue/event important?
- What problems, errors or disasters are associated with it?
- How does it relate to other concepts/issues/events?
- Who disagrees with it and why?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- What changes, reforms or actions are needed in this area?

Questions that make you think often start like this:

- Why .....?
- How does .....?
- What are the causes of .....?
- What are the results of .....?
- How would I solve .....?

- How would I design a ..... that would help to .....?
- What would happen if .....?
- Which of the following solutions would .....?
- What do I think about .....?
- If I were a (scientist/engineer/entrepreneur/Minister of Education/ US President), how would I .....?

Journalistic questions

Journalistic questions are the 'wh- questions' often used by newspaper reporters:

Who? — the people, organisations, nations, experts involved

What? — the facts, events, changes

When?

Where?

How? — the process, procedure, origins

Why? — the causes, significance, consequences.

Questions about headings

Questions can often be made up by rephrasing the headings and subheadings of books and other resource material. For example, an article on the causes of economic recession may have subheadings on interest rates, capital formation and balance of payments problems. Useful questions from these subheadings might include: 'How can higher interest rates affect a depression?'

Questions about vocabulary

If you don't understand a new word or phrase, you need to ask *questions about vocabulary*. For example:

Economic development in the Third World is held back by neo-colonial structures.'

If you don't know what the phrase 'neo-colonial structures' means, ask yourself:

- What does 'neo-colonial structures' mean?
- What are some examples of neo-colonial structures?

You may find the answers by:

- looking at the *context* of the word or phrase
- knowing the meaning of each *part of the word or phrase* — for example, 'neo', 'colonial' and 'structure'
- looking in the *glossary* — the list of specialised words and their meanings found at the back of some books
- looking in the *index* (also at the back of the book), where you may find a list of the pages on which 'neo-colonial' (or 'neo-colonialism') is mentioned
- *asking* your tutor or a fellow student
- using a *dictionary*
- using a *subject dictionary*.

There are dictionaries of biology, literature, economics and many other subjects, which may be helpful. But do find out whether you need one — some courses will provide a glossary of specialised words and phrases used in the subject you are studying.

Questions about sentences

If a sentence contains an important concept, you may need to explore it and perhaps go beyond the information given by the book or tutor. You can do this by asking *questions about sentences*. For example, here are some questions you could ask about the following sentence:

'Economic development in Erewhon is held back by a lack of infrastructure.'

- Why and how does a lack of infrastructure hold back economic development?
- What changes have occurred in both the infrastructure and the economy as a whole, and why?
- What are the results of those changes?
- If I were setting up a business in Erewhon, what problems would I face, and how could I overcome them?

Tagmemics

Tagmemics are questions that help you to explore a topic systematically, by imagining that it is either a particle, a wave, or lies within a field. The technique was developed by linguist Kenneth Pike.[1]

The topic as a particle, or thing

What is it? What does it look like? What are its features? What is it made of? What are some examples of it? What belongs to it?

The topic as a wave, as something that changes

Where does it come from? How did it start? How and why does it change? What does it do? Why? And with what results?

The topic within a field

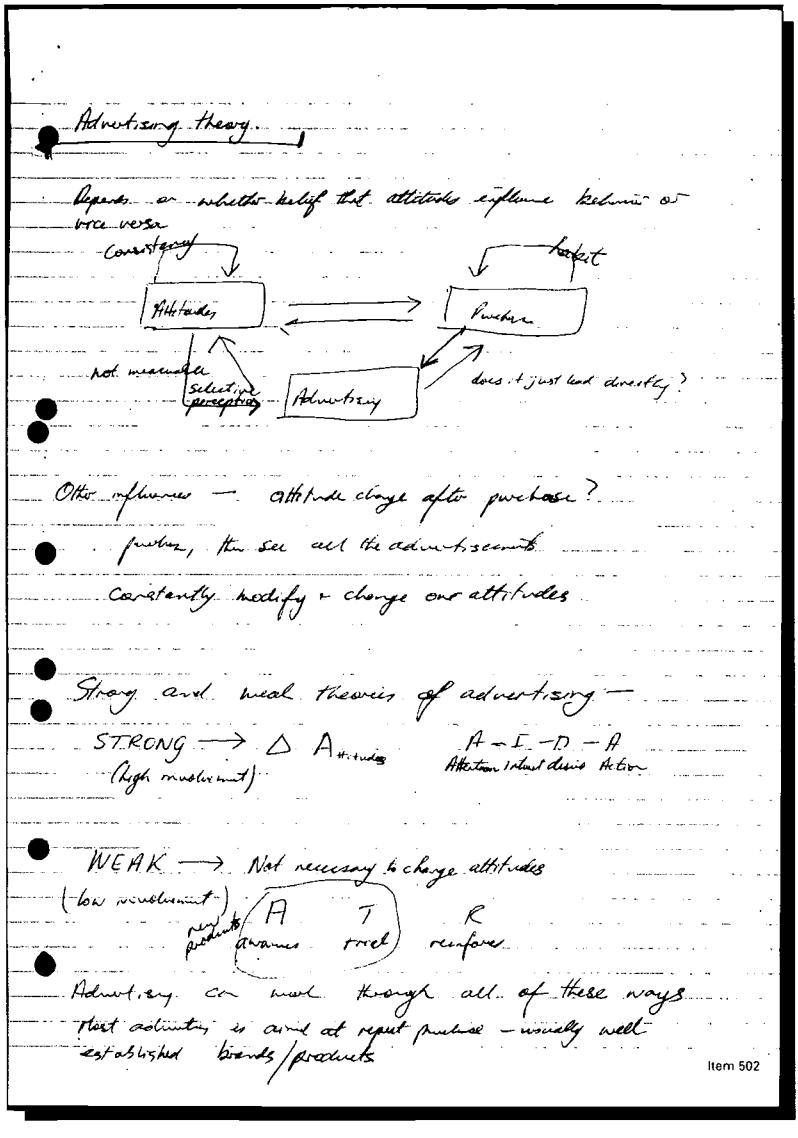
What is its function? How does it fit into a wider pattern? How does it relate to other ideas and concepts?

Talking it through: exploratory language

Exploratory language helps us to explore new information until we understand it. Most commonly, exploratory language consists of talk — in tutorials, class discussions or when studying with friends. People help each other to learn by asking questions and comparing answers. This talk helps us to explore the topic so that we understand it better. Using *exploratory language* is an essential part of being an active learner.

Exploratory language can be:

- conversation
- the stream of words that goes through our head as we think
- written language, including rough jottings, casual diagrams with notes added, experimental drafts or free writing.



Using exploratory language is an essential step in learning.

Exploratory language is usually chaotic. It has abbreviations, incomplete phrases and perhaps errors because the participants are trying to work out what something means. They experiment with different ideas — extending, modifying, rejecting.

It takes time to explore and understand new ideas fully and to shape them properly. Taking that time is essential for effective learning and for writing good essays.

Learning by discussion

Getting an overview, setting your purpose and asking questions are also important when you participate in seminars, tutorials, workshops and discussions. So it's a good idea to prepare for these events by reviewing your course notes and other material, and devising questions to which you want answers.

Other hints:

- Ask questions of other people in the group. You'll not only learn from their answers, but help create an atmosphere of trust and co-operation. You'll also make friends — we all like people who are interested in what we have to say.
- Express your ideas by asking questions instead of making statements. Rather than say 'I think...', you can ask 'Do you think...?' This will encourage people to respond thoughtfully, instead of ignoring you, putting you down or feeling put down themselves.

Learning the language of your subject

Words are central to learning. Even when we learn new ideas by doing or by seeing, we still need words to explain our new knowledge to ourselves and to others.

Science (and other subjects) as a second language

It can be useful to think of a subject as a new language you need to master. Look at a dictionary of science, economics or any other technical subject and you will find many words not used in everyday English.

As we become scientists, economists, social workers, hairdressers or whatever, we enter a community of people who speak a common language. So it is important to learn the language of your subject — the new words and phrases, and the ways in which they are used.

Use the new words

You may quickly forget a new word unless you use it often. Find out how it is pronounced (use the dictionary, or ask somebody), and make a point of using it when talking and writing.

Make your own glossary and learn the words

Put the new words into a glossary. Use a computer file and/or a ring-binder, and list the words alphabetically so they are easy to look up. You may find it helpful to add a sentence showing how the word can be used. Learn these words: they contain much of your new knowledge.

Learn phrases that explain relationships

In most subjects, you need to understand and be able to explain the relationships between facts or ideas. An example of such a relationship is cause-and-effect — the way one fact or trend is caused by a number of other facts or trends. Many students have trouble understanding and explaining such relationships, especially if English is not their first language, or their academic background is not strong.

It is useful to have a list of phrases and sentence patterns that explain relationships between facts or ideas. The list will help you to understand other people's ideas, whether written or spoken, and also to explain your own ideas.

1. *Phrases that mean 'Here comes more of the same line of thought'*

   and
   also
   in addition
   moreover

similarly
next
furthermore
at the same time

2. *Phrases that mean 'Here comes the reason for that idea, fact or event'*
   because
   as a result of

3. *Phrases that mean 'We have just mentioned a cause and here comes the result'*
   as a result
   consequently
   therefore
   thus
   resulting in
   leading to
   so that

4. *Phrases that mean 'Here is an opposing idea, or a different line of thinking'*
   in spite of
   however
   nevertheless
   although
   on the other hand

5. *Phrases that mean 'Here is an example or illustration of this idea'*
   for example
   for instance

6. *Phrases that mean a relationship applies only in certain conditions*
   if
   unless
   though

7. *Phrases that mean 'This is what I am going to say, and as we go through it, I'll keep reminding you how far we have got"*

   'The plan has five main features. First, ... Second, ...(etc)'

As you read, notice how professional writers explain their ideas, using connecting words and phrases such as those listed above. This book contains many examples.

Variety and repetition

It is important to look at each topic from different angles and in different ways. This blend of *variety and repetition* will help you learn, and keep your mind fresh.

Study need not be confined to writing essays or preparing for examinations. You may be able to learn through making oral presentations, role-plays, experiments, seminars, displays, publications and radio programmes. These alternative approaches to learning are fun, they encourage different ways of thinking about your subject, and they require the same rigour as conventional academic activities, plus some knowledge of the genre being employed.

Note-making

Note-making takes many forms. At its most basic level, you might jot down a few key words in a lecture or from a book. At the other extreme, you might develop a full set of notes on a topic, in preparation for a range of possible essay questions in a major examination. In the latter case, your notes may go through several drafts, and be structured around a major thesis (a proposition or a statement of the main line of argument), in much the same way as an academic essay.

As you write down information you are likely to use in essays, remember to note where you found it, so you can provide accurate references. *How to write essays and assignments* (pages 47–72) shows you how references should appear. Make sure you have all the information you need — going back to your sources later to find missing details can be very time-consuming and frustrating.

The following suggestions begin with simple note-making, and progress through to the more comprehensive note-making which resembles a full essay plan.

Main ideas and supporting details

Main ideas are central to note-making. However you plan to use new information (making notes, writing essays, sitting tests and examinations, doing an oral presentation or running a seminar), you should structure it around the main ideas.

Supporting details develop and back up the main ideas. Supporting details can include facts, explanations, examples, reasons, statistics, and quotes.

Here is an example:

Main idea: Bad effects of taking drugs

Supporting details: nausea, dizziness, blurred vision, withdrawal, self-absorption, feelings of horror, powerlessness, anxiety, pre-occupation with death.

When you are reading, listening or discussing new information, look for main ideas and supporting details. This will make it easier for you to:

- find the main ideas
- put the main ideas in order
- develop the main ideas.

We will now look at these steps in turn.

Finding the main ideas

You can *find the main ideas* by using exploratory language, and by noting the main points highlighted by your tutors, books and other resources.

Reading

When you are reading, you will notice that almost all paragraphs have a main idea, often contained in a *topic sentence* — usually the first sentence of the paragraph. This main idea is then supported by sentences containing relevant details. Being aware of this structure will help you to find the main ideas.

Lectures, seminars and tutorials

When learning through listening or through discussion, record the main ideas *very briefly* — note-making should help you listen, not stop you listening. Use as many abbreviations as you can without making your notes unreadable.

Other hints:

- Look at the speaker — this will help you concentrate.
- Use your own words — correct spelling and grammar don't matter in lecture notes.
- Make your notes visual — use flow diagrams, arrows, bullet points, thought bubbles, cartoons etc. Visual note-taking is much closer to the way you think than proper grammatical sentences, and is much faster.

Putting the main ideas in order

When you have assembled your main ideas, put them into an order that makes sense to you. This will usually mean doing a second draft of your notes. You might make a list of headings, a list of key questions, or some sentences expressing main ideas.

A consistent system

Different resources on the same subject will arrange their information using different headings and subheadings. However, it is important that your study notes have ONE main way of ordering the information, especially when you need to revise for an examination. For example, it would be confusing to have one set of notes on 'Causes of the Second World War', and another set with separate headings for Social, Political and Economic Causes of the Second World War.

Here are two ways around the problem:

- If you have a set of notes based on the way one book ordered the information, and want to add information from other sources, stay with that order and 'slot in' the other information where appropriate.
- Create your own ordering system, and adapt the information from different sources to fit that system.

Thesis statements

A 'thesis' is the central line of thought in an academic essay. A 'thesis statement' normally appears at or near the beginning of the essay, and the rest of the essay is built around it. Notes can also be organised in this way.

Here is an example of a thesis statement. The essay question asks: *To what extent is high country erosion the result of bad farming practice?* The essay begins:

Introduction	High country erosion can be caused by many factors, including high winds, frequent floods, sparse vegetation and poor farming
Thesis statement	practice. This essay will argue that poor farming practice is the critical cause of such erosion. This is because overgrazing and the development of pastures on steep unstable slopes create the conditions that enable high winds and floods to erode soil that has sparse vegetation. These latter factors seldom cause damage if sound farming practices are followed.

The rest of the essay will develop the main ideas that support the thesis statement. Note that the thesis statement indicates what the main ideas in later paragraphs are going to be.

You will find it useful to construct your notes around a thesis statement in the following situations:

- You are taking notes from a lecture or a chapter in a book which is itself based on a thesis statement. In that case your notes will automatically follow the same pattern.
- You are given an essay question. Your note-making will then include your answers to the question, based on a draft thesis statement. Typically, this statement starts off being quite weak, but improves as you gather more information about the topic, and think things through.
- You are making notes to learn for an examination. A good technique is to make a list of likely exam questions, devise a thesis statement to answer each question, and then do outline notes to support each thesis statement.

On page 41 there is a set of model notes, based on a thesis statement. You will see that the notes are in fact identical to an essay plan.

Developing the main ideas

Once your main ideas are in a sensible order, it is time to develop them with supporting details.

Supporting details can include facts, explanations, examples, reasons, statistics and quotes. Asking questions about main ideas will help you to see opportunities for supporting details. For example, you could ask:

- What does this mean?
- Why is this true?
- Why is it important?
- How can I back this up with examples, statistics or quotes?

You can also develop your main ideas by asking questions such as those listed in *Questions that make you think* (pages 26–27).

Beware of waffle

As you develop your notes, beware of 'padding' and vague generalisations expressed in big words with few examples, facts or details to support them.

It is surprising how often students will write grand-sounding phrases but are unable to explain what they refer to in the real world. For example, take this phrase:

'Neo-colonial structures inhibit indigenous control of resource allocation and development.'

The writer may have a vague idea that some national resources are controlled by a former colonial power, but have no real understanding of what those 'structures' actually are, nor of what 'resource allocation' entails. If you waffle, the reader's comprehension is likely to be as vague as your own, and most tutors and examiners will mark you down for it.

If you find you have written waffle, then ask *Questions about sentences* (pages 28–29) until you work out what you are talking about. For example, the writer of the above sentence could ask:

- What 'structures' am I talking about?
- What features of these structures are 'neo-colonial' and in what ways?
- How do these structures 'inhibit indigenous control'?
- What are the 'resources' referred to?
- Who is 'allocated' what resources, and who isn't?
- What does 'development' of these resources mean in practice?
- What would 'indigenous control' consist of, if it happened?

Another very common form of waffle is the virtually meaningless phrase which serves merely as 'padding'. Examples that spring to mind are 'at this moment in time', 'at the end of the day', 'within its societal context'. You can avoid such waffle by asking yourself: 'What does this add to the meaning?' If the answer is 'nothing', then delete.

Main ideas at a glance

When you go back to your notes later, it is very helpful if the main ideas 'jump out of the page' at you, so you are reminded of them before you start reading.

Think of ways of making the main ideas stand out. Numbered lists or bullet points are useful, because when you come to revise for an examination you can see at a glance how many points you need to learn.

This book uses different methods to highlight its main ideas, and so do the model notes on pages 40–41. Devise methods that suit your style.

Be visual

Your notes will look more interesting, and be easier to follow, if you arrange them creatively, using different visual styles. For example:

- leave lots of white space so the main points leap out at you
- put ideas in clusters
- construct diagrams
- add graphs, tables and sketches
- highlight key ideas with balloons, explosions, sunbursts or highlighter pens

- use different lettering styles on the same page — different sizes, capital letters, italics, outline letters, drop capitals, curly letters etc
- use different styles of bullet points — stars, spirals or sunbursts
- use humour —- jokes, silly slogans and cartoons that illustrate major points
- divide the page up into boxes or sections separated by wiggly or zigzag lines.

Model notes

One common structure, for both notes and essays, is to present:

- an introduction to the issue posed by the title
- a thesis statement (the main line of thought)
- background information
- main ideas that support the thesis statement (each main idea has its own paragraph containing supporting details)
- a conclusion.

The next page has an example of outline notes based on this structure.

THE DANGERS OF PSILOCYBIN, OR MAGIC MUSHROOMS	
Issue	Psilocybin popular
	– as escape from problems
	– mind-altered states
	– claims of heightened awareness
Thesis	Psilocybin too dangerous
	– physical and mental distress
	– mental illness
	– benefits dubious/unproven
Background	Origin and nature of the drug
	– chemical composition
	– like LSD
	– acts on brain
Main idea, with supporting details	Attractions
	– hallucinations
	– auditory distortions
	– heightened awareness (no proof of benefit)
Main idea, with supporting details	Bad effects
	– physical
	– emotional: withdrawal, self-absorption; feelings of horror, powerlessness, anxiety; pre-occupation with death
Main idea, with supporting details	Mental illness
	– psychosis & depression if susceptible
	– need for treatment
Conclusion	Sum up: dubious pros and certain cons
	Wrap up: those who are keenest to use drug may be those most at risk

Thinking critically

As you finish your notes, look at them critically to make sure they are complete, clear, accurate, well-organised, brief and easy to follow. This step takes time, but that time is not wasted as checking your notes is a form of revision.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Have I met my purpose — that is, covered the course requirements, essay question, or all the likely examination questions?
- Have I included all the main ideas?
- Are the main ideas clear at first glance?
- Are the main ideas properly supported with examples, facts, statistics, reasons, results and quotes?
- Do I understand everything, including the exact meaning of all the technical words?
- Is there any waffle?
- Will the notes make sense if someone else reads them?
- Is there anything I can cut out?
- Is there any information in the wrong section or paragraph, or under the wrong heading?
- Can I write anything more briefly, more simply, or more clearly — especially important ideas that will end up in an essay or examination answer?
- Are there ideas that could be put into diagrams, graphs, tables or sketches?
- Do the points I am making agree with each other, or have I contradicted myself?
- Are the main ideas summed up briefly, at the beginning and at the end?
- Are the notes properly labelled, filed and secure so I won't lose them or put them in the wrong order?

A note on reading

Much of what you need to know about 'reading to learn' is covered in the previous sections, especially those on getting an overview, setting your purpose, asking questions, and building notes around main ideas and supporting details.

However, reading to learn also involves some specific skills and methods.

Vary your speed

Different kinds of writing need to be read at different speeds. Very complex writing will obviously take longer to read.

Skim-reading

You don't always need to read every word of every sentence. Skim-reading is useful when you want to get the gist of a text prior to note-making, or when deciding whether the text is useful or not.

Are you a slow reader?

If you move your lips as you read, you are probably reading more slowly than you need to. Ask your tutor to suggest someone who could help you to improve your reading technique.

SQ3R

SQ3R is a study reading technique that can help you grasp new information, make notes, and revise for an examination. The name refers to its five steps: Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review.

- *Survey*. Browse through the material quickly, looking at headings, pictures and captions, graphs, tables, maps or diagrams, and read the introduction and summary. This will often, but not always, give you a reasonable overview of the main ideas you will encounter.
- *Question*. As you come to the heading for each section, turn it into one or more questions, and write them down. For example, for 'Farm and Land Settlement Schemes', ask: What were these schemes? Why were they needed? How successful were they?

- *Read*. Try to answer your questions as you read, by summarising the main ideas and supporting details, or by highlighting or underlining key points.
- *Recall*. Try to write down the answers to your questions and other major points without looking at your notes. But do check your answers against the text — accuracy and completeness are vital.
- *Review*. Read over your notes, or the highlighted sections of text, with your purpose for reading in mind. It can be helpful to summarise your notes verbally or in writing.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

1. Make a poster for your study noticeboard, with the following ideas expressed in your own words with the help of visual aids:

   EFFECTIVE LEARNING OF NEW INFORMATION
   - get an overview and set a purpose
   - ask questions
   - talk it through
   - learn new vocabulary
   - learn and use connecting phrases
   - build notes around thesis statements and main ideas
   - be specific — don't waffle
   - use variety and repetition
   - criticise your notes.

2. Write a page of notes called 'My Ten Wonderful New Study Habits' by going through the book and selecting ideas that are particularly helpful for you.

EARNING HIGHER MARKS

'I used to hate writing essays. I couldn't even start a sentence without a little voice in my head telling me it was bad.'

'I used to try and do it all at once — work out what I thought and write it, plus fix up sentences and spelling and stuff. Much easier when you do one thing at a time.'

In most courses, your marks will depend on how well you write answers to questions, either in essays and assignments or in tests and examinations. This section will help you write in ways that earn high marks.

Writing: a multi-faceted skill

Writing excellent essays and examination answers requires many skills including the ideas we have covered so far — setting a purpose, asking questions, talking through new ideas, learning the language of the subject, finding and developing the main ideas, organising information to support thesis statements, and critical thinking. Writing also requires specific skills which we will now look at.

Worried about your writing skills?

Many students are worried about their writing skills, and find essay writing the most difficult part of their study. The following comments may help.

No writing talent?

You don't need outstanding writing talent to get top marks for assignments and in examinations. Many leading scholars and well-known authors cannot write very well, and spend weeks and months with their editors and proofreaders. You will get by, and even do very well, if you know the subject, have reasonable intelligence, can make yourself understood on paper, and develop a few good writing habits. You do not have to be perfect.

Been criticised in the past for your writing?

If so, you may still be a better writer than you think. Perhaps you did not fully understand the topics you were writing about. Your writing cannot be clear and well-structured unless your understanding of the topic is thorough and your thoughts well-organised.

Never been taught?

You may have gone to a school where the basics of essay writing were not taught. If so, you may have a fear of the unknown. Be assured that good writing skills can be developed quite easily, over time.

English is your second language?

Do not panic if your written English contains many errors. Many tutors will not penalise you too heavily for poor grammar and punctuation, provided you can be understood. But it is still important to work on your writing skills.

Your background has affected your writing ability?

You may have grown up in a home where there weren't many books, or in the company of people who did not value and practise advanced literacy skills. This may mean that your academic writing is relatively weak, despite your intelligence.

Does writing really matter?

Yes it does. Many of the basic skills of academic writing are closely related to the thinking skills needed for any form of intellectual achievement.

How to improve your writing

Your development as a writer requires more input than this book can provide. Almost all students will find a course in academic writing very valuable, both for improving their writing skills and for their general intellectual development. Wide reading is also essential.

If your writing is seriously weak, ask your tutor where you can get help. Many tertiary institutions have learning assistance programmes.

How to write essays and assignments

1. Start immediately

If possible, begin work as soon as your tutor gives you the assignment. If you do, you will feel in control and pleased with yourself. If you put it off, you will start to feel guilty, tense and worried, which will feel so awful that you might put it off even more.

2. Read the question

This may seem obvious, but many students do not follow this essential piece of advice. For example, the essay topic might be:

'Compare and contrast the climates of North and South China.'

Many students will see that question, and then not answer it. Some will describe the climate of China. Many will describe climatic differences between North and South China. Those who read the question properly will 'compare and contrast'; that is, they will describe *both the similarities and the differences.*

The marks earned by these three groups will depend on the marking system used. Under a strict system, students who don't answer the question will get no marks, no matter how well they write. Those who write about differences but not similarities will lose half the possible marks before they start. But the students who answer both parts of the question will probably pass, even if their knowledge of the subject is only average.

Underline the key words and number the tasks

To make sure that you *do* answer the question, first underline the words that tell you exactly what the question is about. For example:

'Compare and contrast the climates of North and South China.'

Second, number the tasks. In this case there are two:

(1) Compare and (2) contrast the climates of North and South China.'

You are now much more likely to answer the question and stay on the topic.

Make sure you understand every word in the question

Here are some key 'task words' that are often used in essay questions.

KEY TASK WORD	MEANING
define	give the exact meaning of
analyse/examine	look closely at and give the essential points of
compare and contrast	give the main similarities and differences between
illustrate	explain by giving examples
describe/discuss/explain	give the main points, in detail, of
outline/review/summarise	give the main points of
trace	give a step-by-step account of the development of

3. Write the way good writers write

Most professional writers tend to:

- have a place in which they enjoy working
- keep to strict schedules
- have an audience in mind when they write
- spend a lot of time planning, gathering information and organising their ideas, although they often revise these plans
- expect to write several drafts, often changing the content as they do so
- seek comments on their drafts from readers and from an editor.

Pre-writing, writing, editing and proofreading

Good writers see pre-writing, writing, editing and proofreading as four quite distinct tasks. *Pre-writing* is planning and research. *Writing* is a creative process, requiring a free-wheeling confidence and enthusiasm; it can be destroyed by

worrying about errors and weaknesses. *Editing* removes those weaknesses so that the writing is clear, accurate and logical. *Proofreading* eliminates errors of detail, rather than of overall meaning.

Writer's block

Many leading writers have trouble getting started on a writing task. They may have a crisis of confidence, or decide they are burned out and have nothing to say. Perhaps they can't decide how to approach the task, or feel tired at the thought of all the re-writing and editing they will have to do, so they decide to have a cup of coffee, ring a friend or go for a walk instead. Others simply freeze up, their mind a blank.

Here are some suggestions for overcoming writer's block.

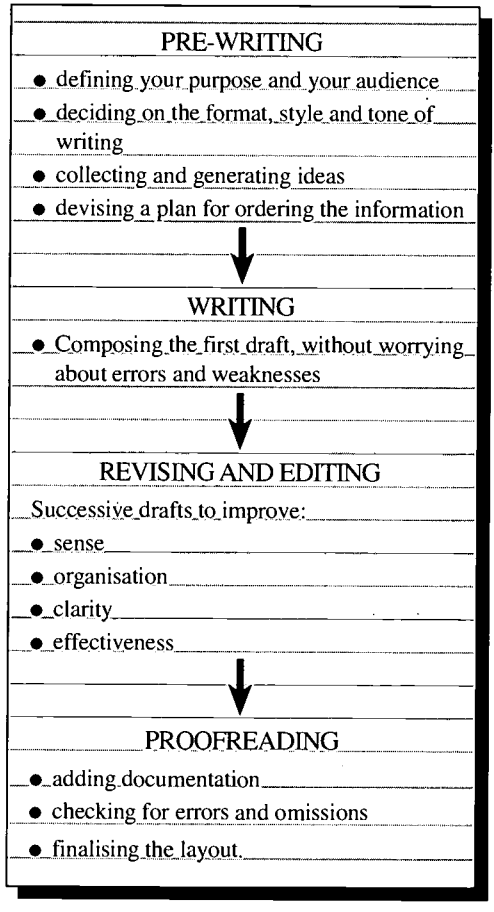
- *Use your speaking voice.* Many people have trouble expressing themselves on paper, but have no problems doing it verbally. One way around writer's block is to imagine yourself talking to a friend about the topic, then writing down what you hear yourself say.
- *Free writing.* Another common technique for overcoming writer's block is *free writing*.
  - Write whatever comes into your head.
  - Write fast.
  - Don't think about whether the writing is any good or not. Just keep going.
  - If you run out of ideas, keep writing anyway. Write nonsense, repeat your last sentence, get off the subject, be facetious, turn your ideas into cartoons and diagrams — but keep going.

Many people find that free writing not only removes their writer's block but can even produce new ideas and insights.

Note that free writing, without concern for errors and writing standards, is akin to using exploratory language, as described in *Effective ways to learn new information* (pages 23–44).

The writing process

The following diagram illustrates the steps in the writing process. (Note: while most writers will do most of these things most of the time, no two writers work in exactly the same way, and few would always keep strictly to this or any other sequence.)



We will now go through the process again, but from the point of view of a student writing an academic essay.

Pre-writing

Pre-writing activities are essential: they help you to understand the topic and decide how you will answer the question.

Note that these pre-writing activities are similar to those suggested in *Effective ways to learn new information* (pages 23–44). They include:

- defining your audience
- developing a thesis statement
- doing a plan based on your thesis statement, summarising the main ideas and supporting details.

Defining your audience

Who will be reading your assignment? Usually the audience will be your tutor, but sometimes you will be asked to write something for a specific audience, for example an article for a newspaper or an academic journal, or a piece for younger readers.

The audience will influence your choice of format, style, tone and content. For example, writing about drug problems in a letter to the editor of a daily newspaper will call for an informal style, and for content the average person will understand. By contrast, writing an article on the same topic for a medical journal will involve a more formal style and more technical content.

Think about your audience, and write accordingly. Study examples of good writing for the audience you have in mind, and write in a similar style. Your tutor may provide examples of appropriate writing. If not, ask for guidance.

Developing a preliminary thesis statement

The thesis statement has already been explained in the section on note-making. However, it is so important that we will run through it again.

> Excellent essays almost always have a central line of thought which answers the question, and which the rest of the essay supports.
>
> This central idea is called a *thesis statement*, and it normally comes at or close to the beginning of the essay.

Sometimes you will already have made well-organised notes about the topic, with a thesis statement that directly applies to the essay question. But usually your notes, although relevant, will need to be adapted to meet the specific requirements of the essay topic. For example, your notes might be on the 'Causes of the Second World War', but the essay question might be:

'Would the Second World War have taken place if Hitler had not led Germany?'

Here is an example of a thesis statement, in answer to that question:

This essay will argue that the Second World War would not have taken place without Hitler or a leader like him. However, he could not have led Germany into war if the German people had not felt aggrieved because of economic suffering and past political humiliation, and been prone to express their grievances in line with the militaristic traditions of the time.

Do not worry if your first attempt at a thesis statement seems weak. That is normal, even for experienced writers. The important thing is to have one — even if you know it will change as you learn more and think things through. It is quite common for the final thesis statement to be devised very near the end of the writing process.

Doing a plan

Sometimes your plan will already have been done, if your notes were built around a thesis statement that matches the essay question.

But usually you will need to devise a new thesis statement and build a plan around it. This involves taking the main ideas from your notes, re-phrasing them to fit the thesis, and putting them in an order that best supports that thesis. Remember it is quite normal for a plan to be amended during the revising and editing phase.

Here is an example of an essay plan built around a thesis statement. *Note that it is exactly the same as the outline notes on page* 41.

ESSAY TOPIC: DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE DRUG PSILOCYBIN, ACCOUNT FOR ITS POPULARITY, AND ASSESS ITS BENEFITS AND DANGERS.	
PARAGRAPH ONE	Psilocybin popular
Introduction	– as escape from problems
	– mind-altered states
	– claims of heightened awareness
Thesis	Psilocybin too dangerous
	– physical and mental distress
	– mental illness
	– benefits dubious/unproven
PARAGRAPH TWO	Origin and nature of the drug
Background	– chemical composition
	– like LSD
	– acts on brain
PARAGRAPH THREE	
Main idea	Attractions
– supporting details	– hallucinations
	– auditory distortions
	– heightened awareness (no proof of benefit)
PARAGRAPH FOUR	
Main idea	Bad effects
– supporting details	– physical
	– emotional: withdrawal, self-absorption; feelings of horror, powerlessness, anxiety; pre-occupation with death
PARAGRAPH FIVE	
Main idea	Mental illness
– supporting details	– psychosis & depression if susceptible
	– need for treatment
CONCLUSION:	Sum up: dubious pros and certain cons
Re-state thesis and main ideas in new way. Add fresh significance.	Wrap up: those who are keenest to use drug may be those most at risk

With this planning completed, you are ready to start writing.

Writing a confident first draft

'I just get stuck in. I write fast, I don't let myself stop and correct anything, I just write as fast as I can.'

'I psyche myself up. I say: "Wayne, you're a brilliant writer. You are fantastic. You'll be famous for this." Then I write a whole load of rubbish, but at least I've soon got something lively down on the page to start working on.'

Many professional writers produce first drafts that are full of errors, omissions, confusion, and poorly developed ideas. This is because writing a first draft, even with a plan, is akin to the exploratory language discussed earlier.

First draft writing is not quite 'free writing', however, because you still need to follow your plan. But if new ideas pop into your head as you write, don't hesitate to include them.

Keeping to the topic

One way to keep your essay on track is to start the essay, and/or sections of it, with sentences that re-phrase the question or instruction. For example:

Essay question: Describe the nature of the drug psilocybin, account for its popularity, and assess its benefits and dangers.

Opening sentences (for different sections of the essay)

The features of psilocybin are ...

Psilocybin is popular because ...

The benefits claimed for the drug are ...

The dangers are ...

You will probably change these sentences during later editing, but using them in early drafts will help to ensure that you keep to the topic and answer all parts of the question.

More writing tips

- *Use your ordinary speaking voice*

  If you find it easier to communicate verbally than on paper, imagine you are telling someone the answer to the question and then write down what you would say, slang words and all. Sure, you will need to tidy it up later, adding technical words and making grammatical sentences, but at least you will have got started with a draft that makes some sense. (It is when we try to think in 'book language' or jargon that is new to us that we get confused.)

- *Leave lots of white space*

  Write double-spaced, with big margins, and on just one side of the paper. This makes it easier to cross bits out later, add sentences, and cut and paste, and still be able to follow what you have done.

- *Don't stop writing*

  Don't stop if you get stuck on a particular point, can't think of the right words, or suddenly realise that a sentence belongs somewhere else. Instead, leave a gap, or write a sarcastic comment, but *keep going* in your ordinary speaking voice. You'll be able to fix the gaps and the rough bits in the revising and editing phase.

Revising and editing

It is normal for professional writers to do several drafts. With a word-processor, you can amend your first draft as often as you like, and can choose either to store just the one 'current version', or to store each version as a separate document. If you choose to do the latter, remember to keep track of your various drafts by numbering them and by including the date as a header or footer on each page.

Many of the criteria you will be using when revising and editing have already been covered in the section on note-making, and are summarised in the following checklist:

- Have I met my purpose? That is, have I answered all parts of the essay question?
- Have I included all the main ideas?
- Is each main idea clearly stated in a topic sentence?
- Is each main idea properly supported with examples, facts, statistics, reasons, results and quotes?
- Is there any information in the wrong section or paragraph, or under the wrong heading?
- Do I understand everything, including the exact meaning of all the technical words?
- Do the points I am making agree with each other, or have I contradicted myself?
- Are there ideas that could be put into diagrams, graphs, tables or sketches?
- Is there any waffle?
- Is there any irrelevant information I can cut out?
- Can I write anything more briefly, more simply, or more clearly?
- Are the main ideas summed up briefly, at the beginning and at the end?

But remember, the fundamental difference between writing notes and writing essays is that *notes are for you to read, but essays are for other people to read.* The following suggestions will help you to revise your essay so that other people will find it clear, easy to read and convincing.

Re-writing so that your writing makes sense

An essay often means one thing to the author but something else to the reader. When *you* read what you have written, you tend to see what you *meant* to write. However, the words themselves may convey quite a different meaning.

There are various ways to overcome this problem.

Ask a friend to read your essay

Ask a friend to read the text and tell you what each paragraph means. If they get

it wrong, explain it to them and listen to how you explain it — your spoken words will be a good starting point for re-writing.

Read your essay slowly, for meaning

As you read, check the meaning of every sentence and every technical word, asking yourself what the words really mean. If you skim-read you will assume the words mean what *you* mean, not what *they* mean.

Read the essay aloud

Run your finger under each word as you read it aloud. You will then hear if there is a word missing, or if something doesn't make sense.

Aiming for clarity

Here are some suggestions to help you write so that you can be understood.

Write as simply as possible

The best writers use plain words and make their points briefly.

Use words with specific, concrete meanings

English has many words that label broad categories of facts and ideas. These words have their place, but it is often better to use words with more specific, concrete meanings.

For example, take the sentence:

'Social structures can prevent upward mobility.'

That sentence, by itself, is very vague. '*Social structures*' could mean many things: the class system; nepotism; large gaps in income between rich and poor; or attitudes, laws and customs that disadvantage youth, women, migrants or Christians. Similarly, '*upward mobility*' could refer to attaining greater wealth, higher social status, more political power, more economic independence, or higher educational qualifications.

The rule is to say exactly what you have in mind, rather than smother your thought with grand-sounding phrases with vague meanings.

Avoid spurious jargon

Spurious jargon (not to be confused with legitimate technical terms) is an extreme form of the previous problem. Some fields, especially management and the social sciences, have become infested with technical words that have been borrowed from other subjects and then misused.

A prime example is the word 'parameters'. It has a precise mathematical meaning, but is often used as a vague and pretentious substitute for a number of plain words with specific meanings, such as 'principles', 'policies', 'guidelines', 'range', 'boundaries', 'decisions', 'aims', 'concepts' and 'ideas'.

Other examples of spurious jargon include 'conceptualise', 'infrastructure' and 'paradigm'. These words should be used only in contexts where they have precise meanings. Otherwise, keep to plain words. The following list suggests some alternatives:

conceptualise: use 'think', or (if you are indeed referring to inventing ideas which make sense of many facts and ideas) 'theorise'.

infrastructure: give examples (for example, banks, roads, the legal system), and use 'infrastructure' as a handy shorthand label only when the concrete meaning you intend is already clear.

paradigm: if possible, use words like 'pattern', 'assumption', 'values', or 'way of thinking', depending on your meaning. If you are indeed referring to a whole pattern of thought, assumptions and values of far-reaching significance, then by all means use 'paradigm' as a useful shorthand, providing you have explained, very explicitly, what you are talking about.

Avoid cliches

Avoid cliches such as 'at the end of the day', 'level playing field' and 'from a management perspective'. Such over-used phrases sound tired. Many are also examples of spurious jargon or waffle.

Remove unnecessary words

You will add sharpness and vigour to your writing if you use:

- 'classroom' rather than 'classroom situation'
- 'because' rather than 'for the reason that'
- 'innovation,' instead of 'new innovation'.

Use active rather than passive verbs

For example, write 'The laboratory tested the sample' rather than 'The sample was tested'. This, too, will give your writing energy (and also reveal *who* did the testing).

Turn nouns into verbs

Many words can be expressed either as nouns ('naming words') or as verbs ('doing words'). If you have a choice, use the verb form, as it tends to make your writing more concise and vigorous. For example:

noun form: 'Excessive rain can cause the erosion of hillsides.'

verb form: 'Excessive rain can erode hillsides.'

Keep related elements together

This rule applies to almost all non-fiction writing.

- In a book, the ideas that belong together are grouped into chapters.
- Within a chapter, ideas that belong together are grouped into paragraphs.
- Within paragraphs, ideas that belong together are put into the same sentence.

Closely related elements should also stay together within a sentence. For example:

'The economy is not, due to high interest rates, an unfavourable balance of payments and low levels of savings and investment, growing.'

Separating 'The economy is not' and 'growing' has made the sentence clumsy and the meaning unclear. Put them together and see what happens:

'The economy is not growing, due to high interest rates, an unfavourable balance of payments, and low levels of savings and investment.'

Vary your sentences

Add freshness and energy to your writing by varying the length and construction of your sentences. Experiment with sentences until they feel better. Any set of ideas can be written in many different ways. For example:

> 'Effective writing is simple, plain and varied. It uses words with specific, concrete meanings, and often employs the active voice.'
>
> 'Simplicity, plainness, variety, concrete words, and the active voice — these are key features of effective writing.'
>
> 'How can you make sure your writing is effective? The answer is straightforward: make it simple, keep it plain, add variety, use the active voice, and choose words with specific, concrete meanings.'

Use short sentences, sometimes

Short punchy sentences will add emphasis to key points, but only if they contrast with longer flowing sentences. Short sentences are generally easier to write, and often, but not always, easier for the reader to understand.

Link your ideas

A good essay has a series of signposts, which tell the reader:

- what is going to be said
- what is being said
- what has been said
- how the main ideas support the thesis
- how the supporting details relate to the main ideas
- how each group of ideas follows from the one before.

Study these links in the following essay.

***ESSAY TOPIC*: DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE DRUG PSILOCYBIN, ACCOUNT FOR ITS POPULARITY, AND ASSESS ITS BENEFITS AND DANGERS.**

Topic/Issue

Thesis

The use of psilocybin, an illegal drug known in Western countries as 'the magic mushroom', has become widespread among drug-users since the 1960s. It appears to be popular among people keen to escape the problems of their ordinary lives and to experience mind-altered states and, it is claimed, heightened awareness. This essay will argue that the drug not only has dubious and unproven benefits, but is very dangerous: the high risks of serious physical and mental distress, and long-term mental illness, are ample reason not to experiment with it.

Background information

In the 1950s, anthropologists rediscovered an ancient cult in Mexico, centered on the use of a mushroom whose hallucinogenic properties were believed to have religious or magical significance. In later studies, the mind-altering chemicals in this mushroom were isolated and named psilocybin. The chemical composition of the drug (a member of the psychotomimetic group of drugs whose effects mimic the mental illness known as psychosis) was found to resemble that of LSD, or lysergic acid diathylamide; it acts on certain receptors in the brain to change the user's moods, thoughts and perceptions.

Main idea (attractions of the drug) with supporting details

For some users, the mind-altering features of the drug are attractive, despite the dangerous side-effects. For example, some users report hallucinations, including vivid colours, surreal landscapes and creatures, and whimsical distortions of body image. Severe auditory distortions also occur: sounds can appear to be hollow and far away, or to increase in intensity — for example, an approaching footstep can sound like thunder. Some users claim to experience a heightened awareness of emotion, accompanied by insights into love, God, their own character and that of others.

However, the evidence for these benefits appears to be confined to exceptionally vague generalisations by people whose lives seem to lack direction, achievement and fulfillment.

Main idea (frightening physical and mental effects) with supporting details

On the other hand, many users have been frightened by the physical and mental effects of the drug. For example, they report nausea, dizziness, sweating, shivering and blurred vision. Users typically become withdrawn and self-absorbed. Nightmarish sequences are common: there are many reports of feelings of horror, powerlessness, anxiety and a pre-occupation with death. These symptoms increase in intensity for around four to five hours, after which they rapidly diminish.

Main idea (mental illness) with supporting details

Sometimes the symptoms do not go away, but may become a long-term mental illness. Researchers warn that psychotic reactions, depression and other exacerbations of psychiatric illness can be suffered by people with a prior disposition to mental problems. Drug-free recovery with supportive counselling will be required.

Conclusion: sum up thesis and main ideas.

People tempted to join those who use psilocybin should weigh up these dangers against the attractions and alleged benefits of the drug. The dangers — the horrific physical and emotional experiences, plus the risk of long-term mental illness — are well documented. The benefits, given the lack of evidence for any meaningful 'spiritual' benefit, seem confined to satisfying a possible curiosity about escaping from ordinary life into mind-altered states. These states may be either vivid or horrific. The gravest danger of the drug may be that the people who most want that type of escape may also be those who are most susceptible to the mental illness it can trigger.

Wrap up with a thought-provoking angle.

Note how 'signposts' are used to link the ideas in the essay.

The essay announces 'what will be said'

This is done by a *thesis statement*, which introduces the main ideas. The thesis is that magic mushrooms are dangerous. However, the thesis statement goes beyond that. It has 'signposts' in the form of *key words* that tell you what the main ideas are going to be. Here is the thesis statement, with those key words underlined:

> This essay will argue that the drug not only has dubious and unproven benefits, but is very dangerous: the high risks of serious physical and mental distress, and long-term mental illness, are ample reason not to experiment with it.

The essay announces 'what is being said'

The *topic sentences* (a) remind the reader what the thesis statement said, and (b) signals how the paragraph relates to the thesis. This is done by picking up key words or phrases from the thesis statement and repeating them in the topic sentences. Thus, there is a paragraph whose main idea is the claimed benefits or attractions of the drug, another whose main idea is the bad physical and mental effects of the drug, and another whose main idea is the risk of long-term mental illness — all words or phrases that appeared in the thesis statement.

Thus the structure of the thesis statement is also the structure of the essay. This makes the essay more coherent.

The essay reminds the reader 'what has been said'

The conclusion re-states the thesis and main ideas, but in a new way. The ideas are now presented as factors in a personal choice about whether to use the drug.

Also, note that the conclusion 'echoes' the introduction. The essay begins by mentioning the popularity of the drug; this is 'echoed' in the first sentence of the conclusion, which refers to 'people tempted to join those who use psilocybin'.

The conclusion adds a new significance to what has been said. Note how the last sentence takes two previous ideas (using drugs to escape, and the danger of mental illness) and joins them in a way that intensifies the thesis.

The essay tells the reader 'how the supporting details relate to the main ideas'

This is done very simply, by the use of the phrase 'for example'. Other useful connecting phrases are listed on pages 32–34.

The essay tells the reader 'how each group of ideas follows from the one before'

For example, one paragraph ends with 'These symptoms increase in intensity for around four to five hours, after which they rapidly diminish', and the first sentence of the next paragraph 'echoes' the reference to symptoms by stating 'Sometimes the symptoms do not go away but may become a long-term mental illness.'

Such links between paragraphs give writing a 'flow', and gently steer the reader from one idea to the next.

The essay uses connecting phrases

The essay uses a number of connecting phrases such as 'however', 'also', 'for example' and 'despite'. The purposes of these 'connectors' are explained on pages 32–34.

Linking: a checklist

As you check drafts of your essay, ask yourself whether you have told the reader:

- what is going to be said
- what is being said
- what has been said
- how the main ideas support the thesis
- how the supporting details relate to the main ideas
- how each group of ideas follows from the one before.

The final draft: documentation and proofreading

Documentation

Writers of academic essays, articles or books often use other people's ideas, and frequently refer to research evidence to back up their own ideas. Great care is taken to tell the reader where these ideas and information came from. This is done for reasons of honesty (it is not acceptable to present other writers' work as if it were your own), and so that interested readers will know where to find the material you have referred to. This acknowledgment is known as 'documentation'.

There are two aspects to documentation: quotations and citations.

Quotations

A writer will quote another writer's words because the ideas are (a) authoritative, (b) particularly well-expressed, or (c) so controversial that care must be taken not to misrepresent them.

You can quote the other writer's sentences in full, or integrate parts of them into your own sentences. Either way, the writer's words must be in quotation marks (or indented if longer than two or three lines), and *exactly* as in the original. There are only three ways you can change a quoted passage:

- by omitting some words you don't feel are relevant to your purpose (being careful not to alter the author's meaning in the process), and leaving three dots (...) to show ellipsis
- by substituting or adding a word or phrase in square brackets, in order to clarify part of the quotation
- by adding '[sic]' after an incorrect word or phrase to show that the error was in the original.

You can also paraphrase the other writer's words — that is, re-write them to suit your sentence structure and writing style — provided you acknowledge the source, and are careful not to misrepresent the author's meaning.

The following examples show (1) a passage quoted in full,[2] (2) a partial quote integrated into a sentence, and (3) a paraphrase of part of the passage. In all three cases, the source is acknowledged using the author-date system.

'A consistent finding reported in the research literature is that sound study habits are significantly related to academic achievement and that study habits can, in part, explain why some low ability students achieve comparatively well in school while other, apparently more able students, achieve comparatively poorly.' (Jackson, Reid and Croft, 1979:1)

A knowledge of study skills helps. For example, Jackson, Reid and Croft (1979:1) found that 'sound study habits are significantly related to academic achievement'.

For example, Jackson, Reid and Croft (1979:1) found there was a significant correlation between sound study habits and academic achievement.

Citations

The above examples not only used the other writers' words but also 'cited' their source. Citations tell the reader five things:

- who wrote the quoted passage, thought of the idea, or collected the information referred to
- what book, article or other source the passage, ideas or information came from
- who published it
- when it was published
- on what page(s) the passage, idea or information is to be found.

Sources can be cited in three ways: in the body of the text, in a footnote, or in a numbered list of references (endnotes) at the end of an article, chapter or book. As well, there is often a bibliography — a list of all the writer's sources, arranged in alphabetical order by author's surname, situated at the end of the text.

There are a number of different conventions used for citations. Ask your tutor which system is used on your course.

The two most common systems are known as American Psychological Association (APA) and Modern Language Association (MLA).

APA *Book Reference (Author-date system)*

In this system, the author's surname, the year published and the page number are stated in the text, and the other details are provided in the bibliography at the end in alphabetical order.

This system is very common in the social sciences. Here are two examples, adapted from an unpublished thesis:[3]

> Perl (1979:33) reported that 'Writers know more fully what they mean only after having written it'.
>
> My interest was also stimulated by reading the report of Johnson et al (1993:57) where it was argued that creative writing belongs in every classroom because 'the creative impulse is central to the development, understanding and application of knowledge'.

The bibliography will contain the full details of each source referred to. Note the difference between a book reference (the first item below), and an article reference (the other two items). The title of the publication is always either underlined or in italics.

> Bibliography
>
> Cope, B. and Kalantis, M. (1993). The Powers of Literacy. A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing. Falcon Press.
>
> Johnson, J., Holcombe, M., Simms, G. and Wilson, D. (1993): 'Writing to Learn in a Content Area'. Clearing House. Vol 66 No 3: pps 155-158.
>
> Perl, S. (1979). 'The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers'. Research in the Teaching of English. Vol 13 No 4 (Dec): pps 317-336.

MLA *System (Footnotes and Endnotes)*

In this system, quoted passages, ideas or information are followed by a reference number in superscript. To find the source, the reader goes to the bottom of the page, or to the end of the article, chapter or book, and looks for the footnote or endnote with that number. For example:

> The school should provide Internet access through a 'dedicated' computer. It should be at least an IBM compatible 386 or MacIntosh LC with at least 500 megabyte hard disk drive, running

on Windows 3.1 or higher, with at least 4 MBs of RAM.[1] A modem will be required that talks to the telephone line at a baud rate of at least 9600 bits per second.[2]

Otherwise, to get on the Internet you will need a recent-model computer, a modem, a phone-line, and an account with an Internet service provider.[3]

The footnotes or endnotes for this passage might look like this:

1. Graham Wagner, 'A Beginner's Guide to the Internet', ***set:*** *Research Information for Teachers* 2(5), 1996, p2.
2. ibid.
3. Gilbert Haisman, *SWOT: Study Without Tears*, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1997, p18.

Again, note the difference between an article and a book reference. The term 'ibid' tells the reader that the reference is *exactly* the same as the one *immediately* preceding it. If for some reason you later insert another reference between the two, make sure you replace the 'ibid' entry with the full reference to avoid confusion.

The importance of acknowledging sources correctly

The academic world sets great store by accurate citations. Check your sources carefully and proofread your references to make sure they are absolutely correct. All details — capitals, full stops, commas, brackets, italics, underlining, quotation marks, initials — must be exactly the same as in the model you are following. Make sure you use a model provided by, or approved by, your tutor.

Proofreading

In this book, 'proofreading' means doing a final check for any errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling and layout.

This book cannot provide a comprehensive guide to proofreading. However, the following hints may be useful.

Proofread at least twice

Few students can produce error-free essays without at least two complete proofreads.

Proofread for specific purposes

It is difficult to correct your punctuation, grammar, spelling and layout all at once. If possible, do a separate proofread for each purpose.

Read your essay aloud

Read your penultimate draft aloud, moving your finger under every word as you say it. Read slowly, and take a breath only when a full stop, semi-colon, comma or question mark tells you to pause. Take care to say the whole of the word, especially the last syllable.

This has three benefits:

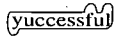
- You will often *hear* when you have:
  - missed a word out
  - put the wrong word in
  - written the same word twice
  - used a wrong word ending (for example, 'analyse' or 'analyses' when you meant 'analysed').
- You will *hear* when the punctuation is wrong. For example:
  - you will want to pause for a breath (or because a new idea has come up), but find there is no full stop or comma telling you to do so, in which case you put one in
  - you may find that an incorrect punctuation mark is making you pause without reason, in which case you remove it.
- Your mind will stay on the job. Proofreading takes intense concentration, and it is just when your mind wanders that you tend to miss an error.

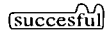
Read backwards to check the spelling

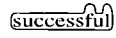
Many professional proofreaders not only look at each word separately, but make their eye travel from right to left over each word. (Some read whole documents

backwards, from bottom to top.) Reading backwards helps you to see every letter, whereas reading normally you may recognise the word as a whole, and fail to notice an incorrect letter.

Some mistakes are quite difficult to spot, especially if the word still has its usual shape and the letters seem to make the right sound. For example:







The first two versions each have one incorrect letter. The mistake in the first one, however, is much easier to pick up because it (a) changes the shape of the word and (b) obviously makes the wrong sound.

Don't trust the spell-checker

Computer spell-checkers pick up spelling errors very efficiently, but they don't tell you when you have put in a wrong word. For example, the phrase 'take a load off your mind' could be typed as 'take are lode of yaw mined', and the computer wouldn't pick up the errors.

(You too may find it hard to pick up these 'substitutions'. Did you spot that 'off' became 'of' in the second version? Errors in little words like these are often the hardest to detect.)

Check the layout

A good layout is important. One reason is psychological: not only will you get satisfaction from handing in an attractive document, but your tutor will be grateful that your essay is easy to read.

In an academic essay, the main things to check for are readability, attractiveness and consistency. Some hints:

- Check that spaces between words and lines are consistent.
- Mark new paragraphs in a consistent manner. You may decide to leave a blank line between each paragraph, or to indent the first word. Choose one method and keep to it throughout.

- Highlight your headings in restrained ways. Putting a heading in larger font is usually sufficient. Highlighting in more than one way — for example, by using a large font, bold type, underlining and italics all at once — is messy, unnecessary and considered to be in bad taste.
- Highlighting text within a paragraph should be both rare and restrained. The use of italics is sufficient to highlight a word, and devices such as bullet points should be used rarely, if at all. (This book makes frequent use of highlighted text and bullet points, but that is because it is an instruction manual rather than an academic text.)
- Put a page number on every page except the first one.

The final proofread

The final proofread should consist of:

- reading the text aloud once more
- running the spell-checker through it again
- checking the layout again.

Remember that any further editing changes made after these steps may introduce new errors.

Handing it in

Staple the pages together in the correct order. Include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your tutor, course and assignment, and the date of completion.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

Make up your own checklist for essay writing, to use on your next essay. It could be a series of questions, like those on page 56, and should be based on the writing process.

PRE-WRITING

-
-
-
-

WRITING

-
-
-
-

REVISING AND EDITING

-
-
-
-

PROOFREADING

-
-
-
-

78

Oral presentations

Writing a talk, lecture or speech is like writing an essay — similar methods and structures are used. A typical structure, in outline, might be:

- introduction and thesis statement ('what will be said')
- main ideas ('what is being said'), with supporting examples, facts, illustrations, quotes and statistics
- conclusion ('what has been said').

Pre-writing

- Collect and generate ideas (using the methods outlined in *Effective ways to learn new information* on pages 23–44).
- Define your purpose. What message or impression do you want people to take away from the presentation? What are some ideas for a tentative thesis statement?
- Define your audience and style. What do people already know about the topic? What will interest them? Should you speak formally or informally?
- Do a plan, based on your thesis statement and main ideas. Remember to tell your audience 'what will be said', 'what is being said', and 'what has been said', as explained on pages 60–64.

Writing

- Compose the first draft or two. Make up spoken sentences in your head, then write them down. The introduction, thesis statement and conclusion should be written in full; the rest can be in key words and outline notes. Don't worry about errors and weaknesses at this stage.
- Try out dramatic opening 'hooks' — humorous anecdotes, amazing facts or startling quotations. These are often more acceptable in speech-making than in written essays.
- Do a time check to make sure your talk will fit into the time allowed.

Revising and editing

- Improve the clarity, sense and organisation of your draft, and its use of signposts, linking and connecting phrases (refer back to *How to write essays and assignments*, on pages 47–72).
- Add charts, slides, pictures and other visual aids, if appropriate.

Polishing and rehearsing

- Finalise and memorise the opening and closing sequences.
- Make cue cards.
- Rehearse. Practise speaking naturally and directly to the audience, with a clear voice, varied expression, free hand movements, eye contact, and enthusiasm.
- Do a final time check.

There are many types of oral presentation. Find out what is appropriate for your course, and get examples of excellent presentations in the required genre.

Giving your presentation

How you make your presentation is just as important as your preparation for it.

Before you speak

- Relax — you will speak better if you are at ease. Your audience will sense this and be at ease as well.
- Acknowledge the audience by smiling at them and making eye contact.

Beginning to speak

A few light-hearted introductory comments can help. Keep them short and related in some way to your main presentation.

Introduction

This is where you tell your audience what you are going to talk about. You might

like to present your three or four main points on an overhead transparency. Make sure the print is big enough to be read at a distance.

Involve your audience from the beginning. Use 'you' when you are speaking. Explain how the content of your presentation will be relevant to them. Explain how you will deal with questions.

Main ideas

This is where you give the main content of your presentation. It will help you get your message across if you:

- keep to your three or four main points
- give clear examples to support your main points
- use short sentences
- use repetition
- relate the ideas to your audience's interests and experience.

Conclusion

This is where you remind your audience what you have said, by briefly summarising your main points.

Discussion and questions

Always allow time for discussion and questions. People like to talk about their experience and knowledge. If you are chairing your own presentation, make sure you keep people to the point and don't let them talk for too long. If several people join in the discussion, it is helpful if you summarise what they have said at the end.

Answer questions directly and briefly. Make sure the questions are relevant to your presentation. If you are not sure what the question means, always ask for clarification.

Handouts

Audiences always appreciate handouts. If you can, have a single-page summary of the main points of your presentation and give it out at the end.

Making the most of examinations

Being assessed by examination means you need to memorise information and be ready to use it to write instant answers to questions you have never seen before.

How can you best prepare yourself for this challenge? Most of the answer, of course, lies in the skills we have already discussed: being able to learn new information effectively, and to write essays that answer the questions set.

In addition, you need *specific examination skills and methods*, such as those described below.

Start on Day One

The best time to start preparing for an examination is on the first day of the course.

Find out everything you need to know. When is the examination? How long will it be? What topics will it cover? How many questions will there be? What kinds of question — essays, multiple choice, or short answers? Will there be a choice of questions, or will you have to answer them all? Is it an 'open book' examination? Are you allowed a calculator? Is there anything else you need to know?

A vital point: make sure you study and revise only those topics that will be in the examination. Studying anything else is a waste of time. (Some students do make this basic error.)

In some examinations, you will be asked to select questions on different topics from a range of options. You will encounter instructions such as:

> **INSTRUCTIONS**
>
> Please read carefully
>
> Candidates must answer FOUR questions. These must include ALL parts of the COMPULSORY question in **Section A**, plus:
>
> - ONE question from **Section B** (Physical Geography)
> - ONE question from **Section C** (Historical Geography)
> - ONE question from **Section D** (Economic Geography)

82

You won't know the questions before the examination, but you will know that you have a choice. Decide in advance which topics you will choose and study only those. Make sure you are studying enough topics to meet the requirements — if you have to answer four questions, you will need to study more than four topics in case one or more of them does not come up.

Set up a revision schedule

Plan to revise material throughout the course, in small but regular blocks of time. This is better than relying on intensive revision just before the examination. You will be revising class-work when it's fresh in your mind, instead of months later when you may have forgotten what it means. This early preparation will reduce your stress level and make the final revision more effective.

As you get close to the examination, use your week-planner to work out what you will study and when.

Learn what you don't know

Always concentrate on learning what you don't know. You will get much higher marks if you learn all the necessary material to a good standard, rather than being an expert in just one or two areas.

Use a variety of revision methods

Practise writing answers to essay questions

Get hold of some recent examination papers, making sure that the course has not changed substantially since the papers were set.

Get to know the questions. Each year's questions will be different, but they usually follow a pattern. What types of question turn up often? Ask your tutor how the examination will be marked — what are marks allocated for?

Write the best possible answers to these practice questions. Use all your notes and books, and take as much time as you need. Ask your tutor to mark your answers, and to suggest ways you can improve your marks.

When you feel you know the material, try sitting a mock examination. Time yourself and make everything as much like a real examination as possible. You could even use an old examination paper you haven't seen before.

SQ3R

One useful revision method is SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review), which was explained on pages 43–44.

Memorise key sentences

Good essays are built around thesis statements and other main ideas. It is a good idea to develop some excellent sentences expressing the main ideas you have studied, and to memorise them. In the examination, you may have to modify the wording to suit the questions that come up, but you will still be presenting well-developed, clearly expressed ideas.

Summarise in key words

Try summarising your notes on each topic, using key words. As you learn the information, you can reduce the number of key words. Here is an example of a paragraph expressed as key words.

FULL PARAGRAPH	*KEY WORD SUMMARY*
Many users have been frightened	EFFECTS
by the physical and mental effects	Physical: nausea, dizzy, sweat, shiver, blurring
of the drug. They report nausea,	Mental: withdrawn, horror, powerlessness, anxiety, death
dizziness, sweating, shivering and	Symptoms: increase 5 hrs, then drop
blurred vision. Users typically	
become withdrawn and self-	*Once you have memorised the detail, your key words can be*
absorbed. Nightmarish sequences	*reduced further:*
are common: there are many	Symptoms
reports of feelings of horror,	– physical
powerlessness, anxiety and a pre-	– mental
occupation with death. These	– increase/drop
symptoms increase in intensity for	
around four to five hours, after	*By the time your key words for a whole three-hour examination*
which they rapidly diminish.	*are on one sheet of paper (see next section) you might write only:*
	Symptoms

Put all your key words on one page

The key words for all topics in a three-hour examination will probably fit onto one page, if you include only thesis statements and main ideas.

Memorise this page. This will really pay off in the examination. You will be able to walk in, study the examination paper, select your essay questions, and jot down from memory all the key words you need straight away.

How to memorise

You want to be in a position where someone can mention a topic or give you an examination question and you can recite thesis statements and main ideas from memory. In addition to SQ3R, there are a number of ways of memorising notes.

- *Reciting aloud*

  Read your main points aloud, then turn the page over and recite them from memory. Check to see if you remembered them all. Repeat until you can do it three times in a row without error.

  This technique doesn't need to be boring. Make up tunes, use slang, put on a silly voice, or practise in pairs and turn it into a game.

- *Visual summaries*

  Main points can be expressed in diagrams, clusters, starbursts and sketches. As with notes, see if you can reproduce these from memory.

- *Acronyms*

  Acronyms are words made from the first letters of other words. For example, if your key words for 'the causes of erosion' are de-forestation, rain, over-grazing, wind and steep slopes, use the acronym DROWS to jog your memory.

- *Quizzes*

  You may like to study in pairs. Test each other by asking questions and checking to see if you can recite the main points.

- *Memorise information over several days*

  Read your summarised notes during the day, revise them in the evening (using the above methods), and test yourself next morning. Then test yourself every two days.

Just before the examination

Stay healthy

You will get better marks if you are alert during the examination. Make sure you eat well and get enough sleep, exercise and relaxation in the two weeks before your exams. Don't study hard the night before an examination: just review your notes briefly and get a good night's sleep.

Take everything you need

Make sure you have spare pens and pencils, in case they run out or get blunt. Find out whether you are allowed to bring textbooks, notes, maths tables, formulae, calculators or blank paper into the exam. Don't forget your exam slip, if one is required. And do wear a watch.

Know where and when the exam is, and how to get there

People have been known to go to the wrong place at the wrong time on the wrong day. Just one of these mistakes could mean you waste a year's work.

Get there early

Aim to arrive at the examination room well before the starting time, so you avoid the stress of a last-minute rush and have time to get settled.

Relax

Try to relax as much as possible. Remember, it's not a matter of life and death. It's natural to be a little nervous, but if you think your anxiety level might affect your performance, seek advice from a counsellor or get a book on relaxation. Jokes help.

In the examination room

You have a right to be comfortable

If there is sun in your eyes, or not enough light, if you are too hot or too cold, if the room is stuffy or there is noise from outside, tell the supervisor. Maybe

you could change your seat. Do speak up — it could cost you marks if you are distracted by poor conditions.

Check the time

Ask which clock will be used to time the examination; and check your watch against it.

Get ready

Lay out everything you need on your table.

Read the instructions

Usually, you will get time to read the instructions before the examination starts. Make sure you understand:

- how many questions you have to answer, and how many from each section
- which questions are compulsory
- how many marks each question is worth
- what kinds of questions they are — essay, short answer, or multiple choice
- how you should show your answers (this is especially important if computer-scored answer sheets are being used)
- how you should head up the answer sheets, and where to write your code number (if any)
- whether you need to start each essay question on a new page
- whether you need to leave a margin.

Make a schedule...

It is important to plan your time carefully in an examination, so you don't spend too long on one question and then run out of time at the end.

A good rule of thumb for a three-hour examination is to leave 30 minutes at the end for checking, and to allocate the rest of the time according to how many marks each question is worth. Note down the times you need to begin each new section or question.

For example: if there are five 20-mark questions to be answered in three hours, spend 30 minutes on each question (30 x 5 = 150 minutes), and the remaining 30 minutes on checking.

...and stick to it

Place your schedule where you can see it and stick to the times, even if you have to leave some questions unfinished. You will get far more marks if you attempt all questions, rather than spending a long time on some and missing others altogether. You may have time at the end to go back and finish any incomplete answers.

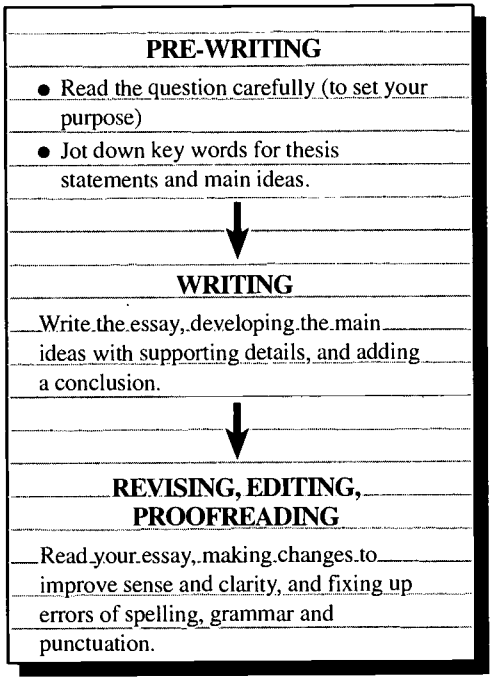
Answer the easy questions first

Skim through the paper quickly, marking the questions that look the easiest. Answer these first and come back to the others later. This will give you confidence.

Answering the questions

Essay questions

Good examination essays have all the features of good writing discussed in *How to write essays and assignments* (pages 47–72). The difference is that writing examination essays is a 'bare bones' version of the normal writing process. The 'bare bones' version is shown on the next page.



Some hints

- *Read the question.*

  Some people walk into an examination room and the first thing they do is write 'READ EVERY WORD IN EVERY QUESTION' in big letters on the exam paper.

- *Answer the question.*

  For example, if the question is 'Describe and account for the problems of ....', and you forget to 'account for the problems', you will fail that question, and possibly the whole examination. That would be a great shame, especially if you know your material really well.

- *Do exactly what the question asks you to do.*

  Use the technique of underlining the key words and numbering the tasks (see pages 47–48), and pay particular attention to key words such as 'compare', 'define', 'account for'. Remember to re-phrase the question in your opening sentences (see page 54).
- *Make your answers the length specified.*

  Do not write three pages when you are asked for a hundred words.

Short answer questions

Some examinations require answers that are only a sentence or paragraph in length. Some hints:

- Read the question (underline the key words and number the tasks).
- Re-phrase the question in the beginning of your answer.
- Have a main idea and add supporting details.
- Read your answer, checking it for sense, for ways you could improve it, and for errors that need fixing.

Objective questions (multiple choice, true or false, etc)

- Make sure you know the right way to answer the questions — does the exam paper tell you to tick the box or to circle the right answer? Record your answer neatly, otherwise the examiner may think you marked another option.
- Read the question carefully. In particular, make sure you note any negatives: for example, 'Which of these is *not*...' or 'All of these *except*...'
- Read all the optional answers, even if you think the first one is correct. There is often an answer that *looks* right, followed by one that *is* right. Often a single word makes all the difference.
- Answer all questions, even if you have to guess an answer — *unless the instructions say that marks will be taken off for incorrect answers*. If you don't know an answer, come back to it when you have answered all the other questions. If you still cannot work it out, eliminate options you think are probably incorrect, and then guess.

Hints for answering mathematical questions

- Write down any formulae you need, as soon as you can.
- If you cannot immediately see how to do a problem, leave it and return to it later.
- Label all working stages clearly, so the examiner can follow them easily.
- Write something in answer to every problem. You may get a mark for writing part of the correct formula, and all marks are worth having.

Practical examinations

As with other kinds of examination, play close attention to the instructions. Mistakes tend to be irreversible in such examinations, so think carefully before you begin.

Near the end of the examination

Use your checking time to:

- make sure you have followed instructions
- check answers for sense, clarity, tidiness, spelling, punctuation and proper numbering — un-numbered questions may not be marked.

Never leave before time. You can always do extra checking, which will improve your marks. Rewrite answers, or parts of answers, only if you are sure you have enough time.

After the examination

When you get your examination papers back, read them carefully. Where did you earn marks? Give yourself a pat on the back for everything you did well. Where could you have earned extra marks? Think about how you can do even better next time.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

On a piece of paper, write the heading 'How I will get good marks'. Finish the following statements with as many main points as you need.

What I will do tomorrow

-
-
-
-

What I will do between now and the examination

-
-
-
-
-
-

What I will do just before the examination

-
-
-
-
-
-

What I will do in the examination room

before I write

-
-
-
-

as I write

-
-
-
-

after I've written

-
-
-
-

What I will do after the examination

-
-
-
-

CONCLUSION

The advice given in this book will help you to study more effectively. However, it is important that the book is seen only as an introduction to study skills, not as a comprehensive or definitive treatment of the subject.

There are two reasons for this. The first is that there is more to learn about learning than is covered here. It is important that you take charge of your own learning by continually seeking new and fresh ideas elsewhere.

The second reason is that study skills are more than just techniques to help you jump assessment hurdles. They provide tools for questioning, analytical thinking, critical thinking and language acquisition. These tools will help you to grapple with the ideas, problems and issues of your subject and, indeed, of any sphere of life you may enter. Study skills, in short, help your intellectual development.

That development is life-long. As you master — and perhaps challenge — the work of first-rate minds working in any major intellectual discipline, you will find that your own mind is being trained in ways that are both subtle and profound. The richness of this transformation cannot be summed up in such glib phrases as 'finding main ideas' or 'supporting thesis statements'.

In other words, this book will have succeeded if it has helped you on your journey towards abilities, insights and values the book itself seldom touches on.

References

1. Young, R., Becks, A., & Pike, K. (1970) *Rhetoric, Discovery and Change*, Harcourt, Brace and World, cited in Holst, J. (1993) *Writ 101: Writing English*, English Language Institute, Victoria University of Wellington.
2. Jackson, P. F., Reid, N.A., & Croft, A.C. (1979) *Study Habits Evaluation and Instruction Kit: Teacher's Manual*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
3. Patel, K. 'Imaginative Writing in Geography Teaching' (thesis in progress), English Language Institute, Victoria University of Wellington.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS FOR TERTIARY STUDENTS

Recognition of Prior Learning: An introduction, Nena Benton

Recognition of Prior Learning is a process which enables relevant and verifiable knowledge and skills, no matter where or how acquired, to be systematically assessed and formally acknowledged so that they can be used effectively for further training. Useful information for anyone making the transition to further education.

NZCER 1995 Price $19.80

Recognition of Prior Learning: Rules, roles and models, Nena Benton

This is the second in a compendium of three books on the recognition of prior learning. It contains a summary of the rules of assessment, examines the mentoring of RPL candidates in some depth, and highlights the role of the facilitator in being aware of all the assessment possibilities.

NZCER 1996 Price $24.75

Recognition of Prior Learning: A personal guide to developing your portfolio, Nena Benton

Making a lifelong habit of documenting gained knowledge and skills can be both rewarding and advantageous. This book takes the learner through the process of portfolio development, step by step.

NZCER 1995 Price $19.80

Available from NZCER Distribution Services
PO Box 3237, Wellington, Fax (04) 384 7933
e-mail: sales@nzcer.org.nz

SWOT

study without tears

Gilbert Haisman

Written for senior secondary and tertiary students.

Learning how to study does make a difference. SWOT provides guidelines and techniques to help students become confident in taking charge of their learning. 'You can do it!' is the underlying motivational message of this book.

The ideas work. Successful students, as a group, differ from less successful students in a number of ways: they are better organised, have clearer goals, ask more questions, discuss study topics more with fellow students, and have better essay-writing and examination techniques. Research shows that sound study practices do increase chances of academic success, as measured by examination marks and grades.

Step-by-step guidelines include:

● getting organised ● setting goals ● using new technologies ● asking the right questions ● assignment writing ● note-taking skills ● active listening ● making oral presentations ● examination tips ● getting better marks

the author

Gilbert Haisman is a freelance writer and editor, and a part-time tutor in academic writing at Victoria University of Wellington. His previous positions include Marketing Officer with ICI New Zealand; Curriculum Co-ordinator at Porirua College; Advisor in Reading Across the Curriculum with the Central Districts Inspectorate of the Department of Education; and Public Affairs Manager for the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. His reviews, short stories and poems have been published in *Landfall*, *Takahe*, the *School Journal*, the *Evening Post* and other periodicals. He is also the editor of *New Zealand Engineering News*.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: SWOT; Study Without Tears	
Author(s): Gilbert Haisman	
Corporate Source: New Zealand Council For Educational Research	Publication Date: February 1997

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following options and sign the release below.

	Sample sticker to be affixed to document	Sample sticker to be affixed to document	
Check here Permitting microfiche (4"x 6" film), paper copy, electronic, and optical media reproduction	"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."	"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."	**or here** Permitting reproduction in other than paper copy.
	Level 1	**Level 2**	

See Over →

Sign Here, Please

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Signature: B A Webber	Position: Manager Planning & Services
Printed Name: B A Webber	Organization: New Zealand Council For Educational Research
Address: PO Box 3237 Wellington New Zealand	Telephone Number: (64) 04 384 7939
	Date: 29/9/97

OVER

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of this document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents which cannot be made available through EDRS).

Publisher/Distributor: New Zealand Council For Educational Research	
Address: PO Box 3237 Wellington New Zealand	
Price Per Copy: NZ$19.80	Quantity Price: Negotiable

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name and address of current copyright/reproduction rights holder:

Name:

Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

THE ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE
ON TEACHER EDUCATION
ONE DUPONT CIRCLE, SUITE 610
WASHINGTON, DC 20036-1186
(202)-293-2450

If you are making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, you may return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Facility
1301 Piccard Drive, Suite 300
Rockville, Maryland 20850-4305
Telephone: (301) 258-5500