Academic writing: Getting Started
Student & Library Services
Possible problems you might face with academic writing

• Getting started
• Grammar and punctuation
• Getting the language right – being too informal
• What to write – how to understand the question
• Structure
• Keeping within the word count
• Not having written an academic assignment before or for a long time
• Developing your own voice
Getting started – some techniques

• Free writing
  • Give yourself a set time limit
  • Write/type as quickly as you can with any ideas you may have, in any order
  • If you can’t think of anything to write, repeat your topic or something like, “I’m waiting for ideas to come and they will, I’m waiting for ideas to come and they will,” over and over until they do come
  • Don’t bother about writing sentences, or using correct punctuation, grammar or spelling – concentrate on writing something. If you like the ideas, you can make them into proper sentences later on

• Scribble
  • Scribble ideas fast, in any order – whatever comes into your mind – then rearrange and rewrite

Getting started – some other techniques

• Mind-mapping
  • Get your ideas down in any order and then see if they can be linked

• Bullet points
  • Similar to mind mapping – get all your ideas down, but not in sentences. Once you have ideas on paper, it might be easier to create sentences

• Write by talking
  • Talk out loud and record yourself. Once you have said your ideas it might be easier to start writing them
Getting started – some other techniques

• Mark the paper
  • If a blank sheet of paper scares you, doodle on it – anything to get something on there – it might not be so intimidating

• Write questions
  • Note down all the questions you can think of that might relate to your assignment title and criteria – you can then start to answer them

Resources


