

# Planning essays

Planning an essay can often feel like a circular process. You need to think about the question, plan research, collect materials, think again, and so on. This is a guide to some of the key stages and activities involved.

## Key points

- **Start thinking** about the essay early on.
- **Keep going back to the title** – be clear what is being asked.
- **Ask basic questions** to get yourself started.
- **Organise your time** from the start, in a way that suits your routines.

It helps to make a time-plan that works back from the deadline. Decide where you need to be each week. You need time for enough thinking and researching, and also time for re-reading and re-drafting.

## Tackling the question

- Be clear what the essay title is about – check key terms.
- Clarify main areas of the subject you need to address.
- Question – what do I already know/think about this?
- Make rough notes to help break down the title and think about aspects.

## Planning and carrying out research

- Think of questions to guide your research – Where can I find info on x? What evidence can I find? Where?
- Materials can include books, journals, articles, websites and more.
- Take notes where needed – keep details for referencing later.
- Keep asking: Do I need this? How will I use it?
- Check word limit – how much information can you use?

## Reflect

- Go back to the question – check you have relevant material.
- Have your views/ideas changed?
- Do you need to find more or other material?

## Plan the structure

- It helps to think about the word count.
- Map out the main sections you will have –.order, prioritise.
- Think about main topics for each section: points, examples and references.
- Allow roughly 10% of word count for intro, and same for conclusion.