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During College

During College

Organising your work

There are things you and your Mentor or Tutor can do to help you manage your work:

- Ask for printed notes or handouts. Especially if you find it hard to take notes.
- Make sure that you have a timetable that is up to date and easy to understand. You can ask your Mentor or Tutor to help you with this.
- Ask your Tutor to let you know in plenty of time if there are any changes and agree how you want to be notified e.g. by text.
- Ask for a set of rules at the start of the course e.g. how to hand in work. If you do not understand something, ask your Mentor or Tutor to explain it to you.
- Make sure that you have a plan and you know when you have to complete tasks. Plan your meetings with your Tutor so you can go over things – you may not need to carry on having a weekly meeting once you have got used to college.

Organising your work

- Make sure that your hand in dates are clear and written in a diary, you can set reminders on your phone.
- It is hard to prioritise work. What can help is to make a to do list each week and rank each task – the most important being first etc. This may take some practice and you may want to ask your Mentor or Tutor for some help at first. You may want to use an app such as Evernote to keep your to do lists and reminders.
- Try to organise your work. Using an e portfolio may be the best way to work so that you have it all in one place – you may also find colour coding any course material and work helpful.
- If you require any additional support, let your Tutor/Assessor know and they will be able to let you know what support is available. For example, there may be Essential Skills workshops you can book on to.
- You may also find it helpful to have a different colour file for each subject at home but bring in a cardboard folder to college. If your cardboard folder is the same colour as your 'home' file then it is easier to organise your work as you can put any loose papers in your cardboard file at college and sort them out at home.
- If possible print the on the same coloured paper for a task e.g. homework is always on green paper.

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Organising your work *continued . . .*

- If you require any additional support, let your Tutor know and they will be able to let you know what support is available.
- College organises study skills sessions these can be really useful ask your Mentor or Tutor if there are any you could attend.
- A tick sheet for work that needs to be completed can be really useful – ask your Tutor/Assessor to support you in this way.
- For independent work, make sure that you have understood what the Tutor/Assessor expects and when they want you to complete the tasks. It can be useful to create a timetable to plan how and when you will complete the work.
- We all make mistakes and sometimes you will in your work. It is hard not to get upset but the Tutor/Assessor will understand and give you practical help on how to get it right next time.

Understanding the task

It is important that to do your best you understand what you are expected to do.

- If you find the question difficult to understand ask your Mentor or Tutor to help you break it down into manageable sections. Using flow charts can be really helpful.
- Ask for the instructions to be in writing as it may be difficult to remember verbal instructions especially if you have to concentrate on something else whilst the Tutor is speaking.
- Ask for the clear limit of what is expected of you in an answer and that the task is very specific e.g. rather than 'write everything you know about the 1st World War' ask for the question to be worded to narrow down the response and answer the questions e.g. 'give the 10 main reasons why the 1st World War started'.
- Ask your Mentor or Tutor to make sure that the Training Provider knows if you need extra time to complete a task.

More detailed advice can be found under the **Answering questions, Essay Writing and Exam preparations** sections of this guide.

Answering Questions

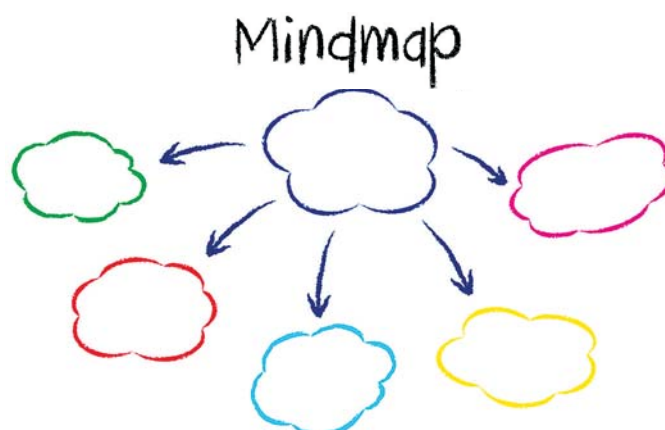
Sometimes a question looks really hard and it's difficult to know where to start. These are some tips on how to approach questions. Not all of them will work for you and they work best when you have time to think about it. If you get used to techniques like these you will find it easier to find answers when you have less time such as in exams.

First, make sure you understand the question, you can try:-

- **Putting it into your own words**
- **What sort of answer will it be?**
 - A number?
 - Does the number have units eg Kg or Km?
 - Is there a clue in the question eg velocity, mass?
 - A formula?
 - A written description?
- **Make a verbal sketch, jot down:**
 - What are the key facts in the question? How many? How far?
 - What do you need to find out?
 - What kind of problem is it, have I done one like it before? How did I solve that one?
 - Can you simplify the problem? Turn it from words into a formula?
- **Make an actual sketch**
 - Draw little cars or stick figures so you can see how one part relates to another.
 - Do they travel, what direction, is there a timeline?
 - Mark on the sketch what you know, what you can work out and what you need to find out.
- **What information do you need?**
 - What notes or textbooks can help?
 - What theories or formulae apply?

You could try a Mindmap

Put your problem in the centre and put what you know around it. This might help you realise just how much you already know and show up connections you hadn't thought of.



Decide on a strategy

- There will be formulae, tools, methods that can be applied to the kind of problem set. Having worked to understand the question gives clues to the steps to solve it.
- Have you done one like it before, can one of those solutions help?
- In what ways is this question different to ones you've done before? How does that make the way to solve it different?
- Jot down possible methods, what are the advantages/disadvantages of each?
- Make a decision and apply it to test it out.

Having trouble finding a solution

Simplify the problem if you can

- Take away unnecessary details, tease out the essential from the background confusion.
- Make some reasonable assumptions
 - It's a car it can't go faster than
 - the profit in 1 year will be less than the capital.
- Can you think of any real life examples?
That might help to visualise the problem.

Work through step by step, check and present the answer

- Especially with maths and science problems make sure you write out the steps. This helps to check for errors and you may be given marks for method even if the arithmetic has gone wrong.
- Check back over your work.
- Check each step of any calculation for errors.
- Write answers clearly and don't forget to include units eg Kg or Cm.

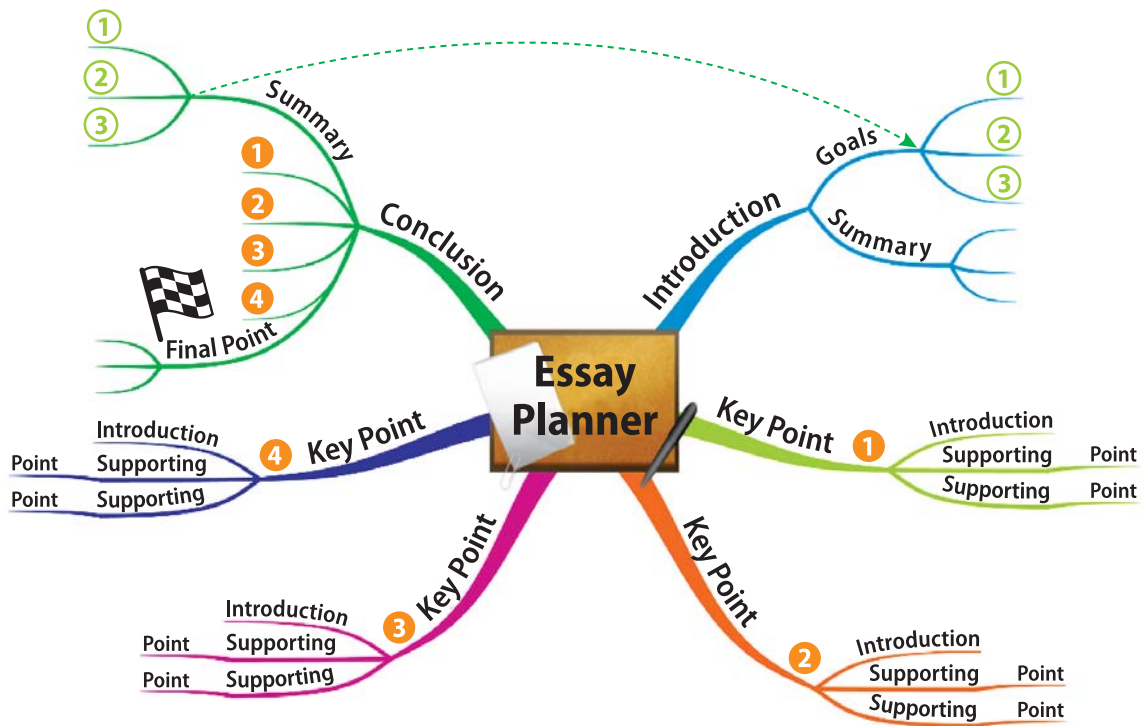
Essay Writing

- An essay is a piece of writing with a particular structure and layout. You may have to write one as coursework or homework or sometimes a short essay forms part of an exam. Sometimes they will have other names such as assignments or reports. There may be specific structures you are expected to follow, this is a traditional essay structure.
- An essay is written in a formal or academic style. This is different from the way you speak or message friends, it is not like a conversation.
- You are expected to stick to the point. Normally you will be given a title sometimes described as "The Question" although it may not be worded as a question. You may be asked to "Discuss" or "Evaluate" or "Explain". Sometimes you will be given a general topic and expected to come up with your own title.

Basic Process

- **How long is it expected to be and when do I have to submit it.**
 - You will often be given a word count for essays. This makes sure they are long enough to cover the question in enough detail and also keeps them down to a sensible length.
 - You may be told “Minimum 2,000 words” if so, you must do that many but probably less than 2,200.
 - It may just say “2,000 words” you do not have to be exact and so plus or minus 10% (1800 to 2,200) would be sensible.
 - Don’t leave it till the last minute to write the essay, you need to submit on time and it should be good work.
 - Make sure you know how to submit it (uploaded to Moodle, emailed to tutor, paper copy handed in).
 - Some assignments have extra instructions which need you to write in a specific font, write the title in a specific way, include a cover sheet, write your name, date in a specific way.
- **Title or Question.**
 - Make sure you understand this, and if you are coming up with your own title that it is fairly specific. For example, the First World War is a huge topic, a particular battle or development of air power is much narrower.
- **Organise your ideas**
 - It is very tempting to just start writing but it is better to put down your ideas on the topic on paper. Don’t try to put much detail just broad areas of how you might approach this. This outline might change so don’t worry if it does. This can be a series of bullet points or a mind map, whatever works best for you. You will end up with a few main ideas and some supporting ideas for each of these.
 - Sort these ideas into an order so you know what you are going to write about, what arguments you are going to use.

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- **Start to write**
 - First thing is a short statement saying what the essay is about, what the point of the essay is and a summary of what ideas you are going to discuss. You will know how to do this because you have put your ideas in order.
- **Then start writing a paragraph for each idea you want to discuss**
 - The beginning of each paragraph will be one of your key points written in sentence form. Then write down each of the supporting ideas or points explaining how they support the idea.
- **Now you can write the introduction**
 - Sounds weird but it is easier to write this paragraph which starts the essay when you have discussed your key points. Because now you know what they are and how you are going to argue it.
 - The introduction gently leads the reader into the topic, why it matters and how you are going to discuss it. At the end of this introduction you can slot in your short statement that you wrote in the first place.
- **Now write the conclusion**
 - The conclusion doesn't have to be long, you have made your arguments. Just review the main points ideally using slightly different words, don't copy and paste. Don't introduce new ideas or more arguments, you've done that.
- **Lastly check it**
 - Run spell checker and grammar checker.
 - Leave it a few hours and then read it all again. Does it still make sense, are you happy with the order, does it all flow, do you need some "transition words" such as "therefore", or "however"? Take a short break, read it all again and you are done.

Exam Preparations

Subjects in colleges will be assessed in a range of ways: perhaps coursework, perhaps projects, perhaps practical tests. Many also include exams. These are not something to be afraid of they are a chance to shine and show what you know.

Before the exams

When and where will they be taking place.

- You will get an “Exam timetable” this will tell you what exams you have, when they will take place and in what room.
- If you have any special arrangements such as using a laptop, extra time, reader, your own room check with staff that these are in place. This may mean that you are in a different room or building from the one on the time table.
- The time and date will always be the same as everybody else.

Plan your revision

- It helps to create a plan of what you need to revise and when you plan to do that.
- Your time is limited so decide on what topics need more work and allocate more time to them. Don't ignore topics that you are comfortable with. Also allocate some time to them as they may be where you get the most marks.
- Be realistic in your planning - think hard about when and where you are going to do all this revision.
- Above all don't spend too much time on the plan. It's no good getting to the exams with a detailed plan having done very little revision.

Getting to the exams

- Make sure you know where you need to go, how long it will take to get there and what time you need to be there. Allow plenty of time, it is no good rushing and arriving anxious out of breath and worried right at the start of the exam. The exam will not be delayed for you, if you are late you will still finish at the same time, there will not be any time extensions.

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What do I take?

- You may get instructions on what you can take in to the exam.
- These are typical arrangements, your college may differ. Check with your Tutor what you will be allowed to take in.
- See through pencil case or a plastic bag for pens pencils, rulers etc. (this stops students writing crib notes on the pencil case).
- Water bottle either without a label or strip off the label (check if you are allowed water).
- Only an approved calculator (some programmable devices are not allowed, you could program in crib notes).
- Either check if there is a clock in the room (normally there is) or wear a watch (smart watches will not be allowed). You will not be allowed to have your phone with you, even switched off.

Some things to ask

- Can I go to the toilet during the exam/assessment?
- Can I get up and walk around if I need to? (usually no if you are in a big room, if you have your own room, probably yes).
- Can I talk to myself if that helps me concentrate? (again usually no if you are in a big room, if you have your own room, probably yes).

During the exam

- Exams have a number of questions to do in the time available. You should have plenty of time to do the work. Try to divide your time equally and fairly between questions. Allow a maximum of 25% difference. If you have allocated 20 minutes per question try not to go over 25 minutes as you will need to make up the time on other questions.
- If there are 5 questions to do, and you are happy to answer 4 and not sure of the 5th, do the 4 you are happy with first. Only then look at the 5th question.

Appendix 2 – Student Action Plan /Check List

During College

College can be fun, exciting, and it can be hard work. In this section we'll cover some of the things to remember, who are the people there to help you, and what help you might need to do well in college. Here are a few questions to consider and answer whilst you're in college;

Circle your answer to this question

Do you have your lesson timetable?..... YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Are you keeping it somewhere safe so you don't lose it? YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Are you able to manage the workload? YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Have you made a schedule to help you organise your assignments? YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Do you know where you can go to take breaks? YES or NO

Where?

.....

Circle your answer to this question

How are you going to get food for lunch?

- College canteen
- Packed lunch from home
- Shop in or near to training/work

Circle your answer to this question

In the event of a fire alarm, do you know where to go? YES or NO

Where?

College environments can be overwhelming, finding ways to manage anxiety and sensory overstimulation might help you cope when it is getting too overwhelming. These questions will help you think of ways to manage the sensory environment in training and work;

Do you struggle with noise? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with lighting? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with smells? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with tastes? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with texture/touch? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Tick which ones you will use

Sensory soothing method	
Noise cancelling headphones	
Sunglasses or coloured lenses	
Scarf to cover nose if smells are too strong	
Stress/sensory toys	
Weighted clothing	

There will be a team of people around you to help you out.

Remember to ask for help when you need it.

Fill in the people who are available to help you in training and/or work;

My course tutor

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

Learning support assistant

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

Learner coach/mentor

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

Support worker

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

When you're in college there are people to help you, but they first need to know how they can help you. Can you make a list of the things that you might need help with when you are in college?

Answer in the box