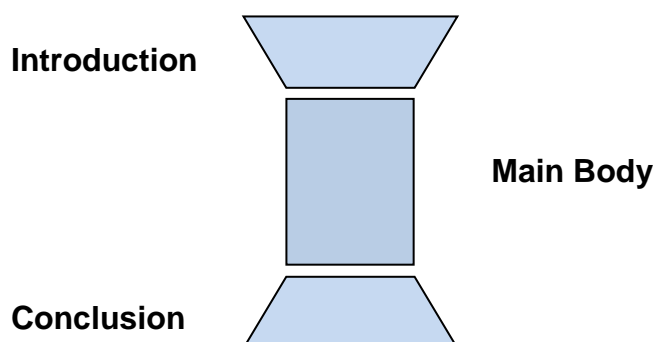


## Essay writing from the [English for Uni](#) website

At university, one of the most common forms of writing is the academic essay. The purpose of an essay is to help you to discover more about a topic and in the process develop a number of important skills. Such skills include text analysis for a range of different arguments and perspectives and the development of the various elements of structured writing which should be found in an essay.

In other words, in an essay you are required to write a reasoned analysis of the issue or issues in question, drawing upon a range of external sources to help you support your position.

An essay is a highly structured piece of writing, and to produce such an ordered piece of writing requires you to consider a number of elements. The overall structural elements follow a typical pattern:

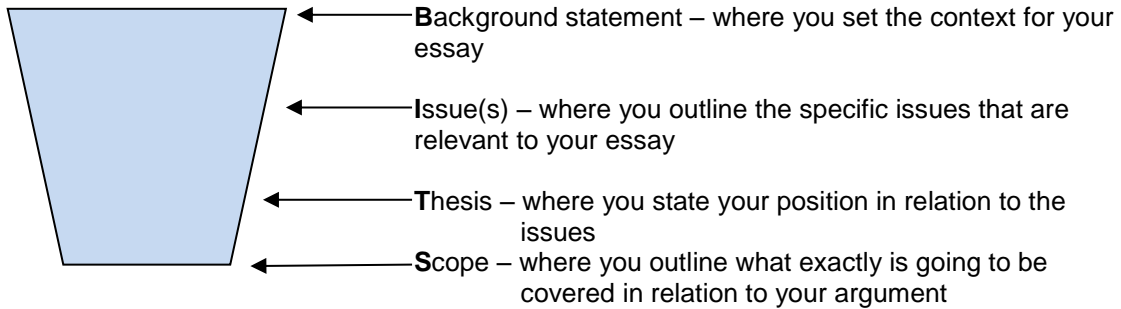


Writing a good essay can be compared to baking a cake—if you do not mix the appropriate ingredients in the right quantities or order, and do not follow the required processes, then the end result will not be what you hoped for!

So, writing a good essay involves following rules to help you achieve the desired result. The following example is based around a 1000 word discussion essay.

## The parts of an essay

### Introduction



Thesis and scope are sometimes combined to form one or more sentences known as a *thesis statement*. In that case, the introduction might follow a BIST structure rather than a BITS structure. The thesis statement often comes at the end of the introduction, although it can be written earlier. There is no set model for an essay, but the English for Uni website presents one popular way to do it.

### Main Body



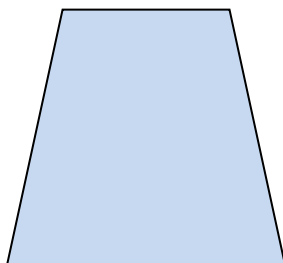
Each paragraph should focus on one idea only.

The idea can then be developed in a number of ways, such as through explanation, evaluation, exemplification or incorporation of research data.

Your paragraphs should be balanced – keep to the rule of no less than 3 sentences per paragraph.

Your paragraphs should link together – use connective words, both within and between paragraphs, to keep a sense of cohesion and linkage.

### Conclusion



Your conclusion ties your essay together. It should normally:

Begin with a link to the preceding paragraph.

Restate your thesis and summarise your principal points.

End with a broad statement relating to the significance of your argument.

A conclusion is not normally longer than an introduction.

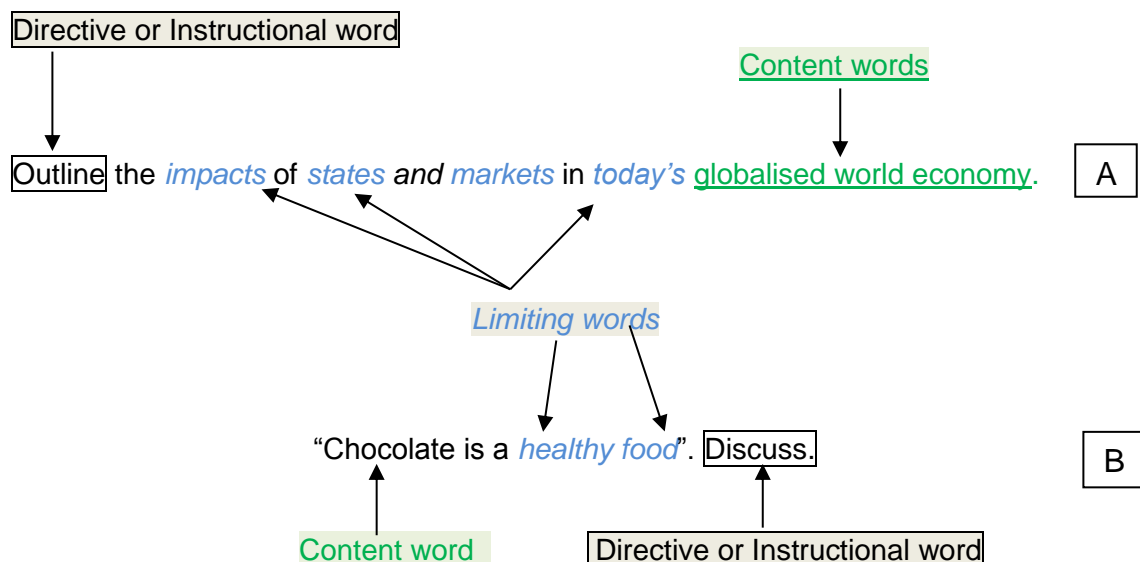
## Topic/Title



When you receive an essay question, it is important for you to analyse it very carefully in order to understand what exactly the specific aim of the question is. To do this, you need to break down the question into its component parts. Most essay questions will contain these three elements:

- Content/Topic words – those words which give the subject of the essay
- Limiting/Focus words – those words which provide a narrower scope for the essay
- Directive or Instructional words – those words which tell you how to approach the essay

Look at these sample essay titles from A) Economics and B) Nutrition:



If we take **B** as an example, then to answer the question fully would first involve looking closely at the directive word **Discuss** and analysing its exact meaning:

<b>Discuss</b>	Present various points and consider the different sides. This is usually longer than an explanation, as you need to present evidence and state which argument is more persuasive.
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So, to answer this question, in your essay entitled:

"Chocolate is a *healthy food*". Discuss."

you would need to:

- consider a number of points in relation to the title
- balance your points between supporting and opposing positions
- consider which of the positions is the most persuasive and explain why

You also need to consider the length of your essay – in a 2000 word essay you can cover substantially more points than in a 1000 word one! This example is based on a 1000 word essay.

In relation to **Content words** your focus is clear – chocolate!

In relation to **Limiting words**, you need to consider what *healthy food* actually means.

A good way to expand your vocabulary is to look at the Academic Word List <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/> (developed by Averil Coxhead at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand). The uefap website (<http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/selfram.htm>) also has very useful lists of words found in particular subjects, such as mathematics, business and health science.

### Directive or Instructional words

There are a number of directive words, or instructional words as they are sometimes called, which have specific and recognised meanings in relation to essay writing. These directive words tell you what to do in your essay, so it is important to understand the exact meanings of these words to help you answer the question properly. Some common directive words include:

Analyse	Look at something in depth, examining the details.
Argue	Give reasons for why you agree or disagree with something and show that you understand different points of view.
Assess	Compare different points and see if the argument or information is true or persuasive.
Compare	Show the similarities between two sets of information or arguments. 'Compare' often appears with 'contrast' in essay questions.
Contrast	Show the differences between two sets of information or arguments. 'Contrast' often appears with 'compare' in essay questions.
Criticise	Evaluate an argument or a text to see if it is good. 'Criticise' does not mean you have to be negative.
Critique	Evaluate an argument or a text to see if it is good. 'Critique' does not mean you have to be negative.
Define	Explain the meaning of a word or a term, especially in the context of your essay. You can use a dictionary definition if it's helpful, but remember that the word might be used in a particular way in the subject you are studying.
Describe	Give details about something.
Discuss	Look at the different sides of an argument and say which is more convincing.
Evaluate	Look at the strengths and weaknesses of the material and give your final opinion of it.
Examine	Look at something in detail and consider its strengths and weaknesses.

Explain	Help your reader to understand more about something by giving relevant details.
Illustrate	Give examples to make something clearer.
Interpret	Help your reader to understand more about something and provide your own perspective if necessary.
Justify	Give reasons to explain what you think about a subject.
Outline	Give a broad explanation of something without too many details.
Prove	Show if something is true and demonstrate how you reached that conclusion.
Review	Look at something in detail and give your perspective on it.
State	Put your ideas or arguments clearly.
Summarise	Pull everything together and present it clearly without using too much detail.

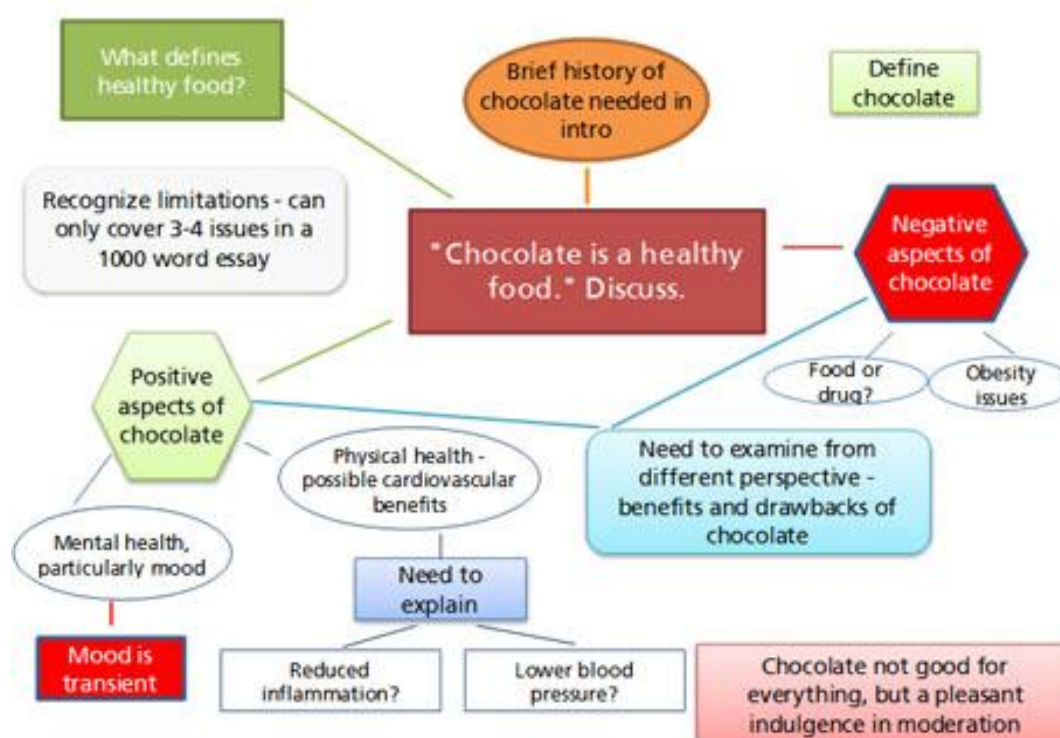
## Brainstorming

What is brainstorming?

Brainstorming, the generation of thematically related ideas, is an important ingredient in the earlier stages of planning your essay. Brainstorming allows you to produce ideas, based around a central concept or focus, which can be expressed in the form of a mind map.

When doing a brainstorm for an essay, remember that this is an idea generation technique. Those ideas don't need to be put into any particular order or categorisation at this first stage—these can come later.

Here is a possible brainstorm for the [chocolate essay](#), done in the form of a mind map:



Note that the central focus (the essay question) has several boxes linked to it which represent the writer's first ideas. They are in no particular order at first, but then the writer attaches connections, out of which further considerations and connections develop. A brainstorm like this is *organic*; it does not necessarily stop growing - you can add, remove or reorganise it as you wish. If you like to put more system into your brainstorm, use a step-based model such as the following:

### 👉 Step 1

*Time yourself for the first draft of your mind map*

Set a fixed time for this drafting from your base topic/question and stick to it.

### 👉 Step 2

*Look critically at your draft*

For example: Can you see what has potential? If so, extend it, perhaps with possible examples and/or connections. Are there any imbalances? If so, try to make appropriate balances (with examples and connections) whilst ensuring you are still sticking to the essay question.

### Step 3

#### *Think about ordering*

Start thinking about the ordering of your ideas. What are primary and secondary ideas? Which issues might you tackle first in your essay and why?

### Step 4

#### *Anticipate readers' needs*

Are there any words and/or phrases that might need explaining? If so, when is the best time in the essay to do this?

### Step 5

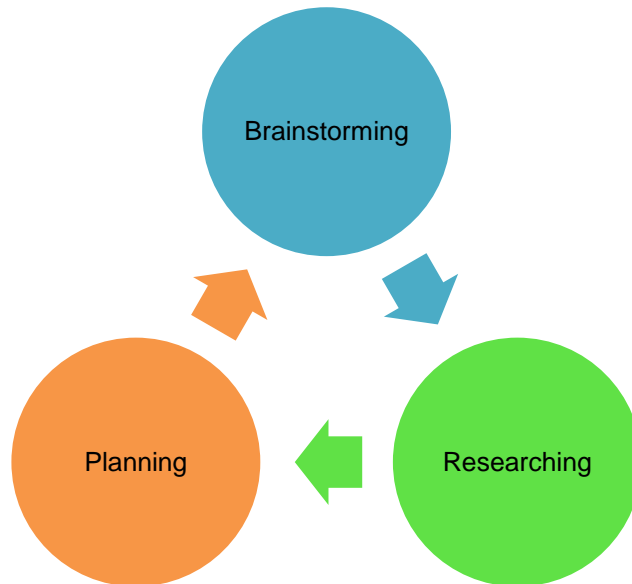
#### *Move*

Reflect upon your brainstorming. Once you are happy with your brainstorm you can use it to inform the development of the next stage of your essay writing preparation—planning your essay.

## Researching for your essay

Once you have done some brainstorming, it's time to get researching!

Brainstorming helps you to see what you know about the topic. Researching will give you more depth. Brainstorming, researching and planning are cyclical, which means that each process helps the other processes and you might want to do each process more than once.



Remember that an academic essay requires academic sources.

Finding what you want takes time and it takes effort. The best place to start (assuming you haven't already been given a prescribed reading list!) is by using an academic database. If you are not sure how to use a database, then book an appointment with your *subject librarian* at your institution.

Another option is to use an internet academic search engine such as Google Scholar. This is the example we are going to use. NB Make sure you are logged in to the library at your educational institution, so that you can use the full database capacities linked to Google Scholar.

You need to enter **keywords** to begin with. For the [chocolate essay](#), one of the first associations we thought of was **chocolate** and **mood**. If we enter this word combination into Google Scholar it will look like this:





chocolate and mood

Articles  include patents  Case law

This will take you to a webpage which lists a number of relevant articles. An example of this can be seen below.

These are the first three articles on the webpage, so if you want to find out more then click on the links:

**Chocolate and Mood**  
GB Parker, HL Brotchie - *Chocolate and Health*, 2012 - Springer  
Abstract It is accepted that **chocolate** has a hedonistic appeal to most people; based on sight, colour, preparation, memories of past **chocolate** experiences, texture and taste. Yet many people are attracted to **chocolate** for other reasons, frequently suggesting that it ...  
Cited by 1 Related articles All 6 versions Cite Save

**Immediate effects of chocolate on experimentally induced mood states**  
M Macht, J Mueller - *Appetite*, 2007 - Elsevier  
In this work two hypotheses were tested:(1) that eating a piece of **chocolate** immediately affects negative, but not positive or neutral **mood**, and (2) that this effect is due to palatability.  
Experiment 1 (48 normal-weight and healthy women and men) examined the effects of ...  
Cited by 80 Related articles All 8 versions Web of Science: 34 Cite Save

**Mood food: chocolate and depressive symptoms in a cross-sectional analysis**  
N Rose, S Koperski, BA Golomb - *Archives of internal medicine*, 2010 - archpsyc.jamanetwork.com  
Background Much lore but few studies describe a relation of **chocolate** to **mood**. We examined the cross-sectional relationship of **chocolate** consumption with depressed **mood** in adult men and women. Methods A sample of 1018 adults (694 men and 324 women) ...  
Cited by 49 Related articles All 14 versions Web of Science: 15 Cite Save

[PDF] from synergyprograms.com  
Full Text @ Uni Adelaide

Full Text @ Uni Adelaide

[PDF] from researchgate.net  
Full Text @ Uni Adelaide

The second article has been cited 80 times, suggesting it is highly valued. If, say, you think the second article looks promising, click on it and follow the instructions on the database. You will then see the abstract:

Press this if you want to download the full text.

Press these if you want to see other relevant articles.

The screenshot shows a ScienceDirect article page. At the top, there are navigation options: 'Download PDF', 'Export', 'More options...', and a search bar. The article title is 'Immediate effects of chocolate on experimentally induced mood states' by Michael Macht and Jochen Mueller. The abstract is visible, describing two experiments on mood effects of chocolate. On the right, there are sections for 'Recommended articles', 'Citing articles (37)', and 'Related reference work articles'. A callout box points to the 'Download PDF' button. Another callout box points to the 'Recommended articles' section. A third callout box points to the abstract text. A fourth callout box points to the 'Article level metrics' section, which shows an Altmetric score of 23.

Reading the abstract helps you decide if the article is useful or not.

Once you have located the abstract there are a number of things to consider. Read the abstract and ask yourself if the content of the article is likely to be relevant to your essay.

- a) If yes, click on the pdf. This will take you to the full article which you can then skim read the article quickly to decide if it is relevant.
- b) If no, then you have a choice. Either click on the links to other related articles or go back to Google Scholar and then choose another article to skim read.

If you do not find what you are looking for, then you need to change your **keywords** search.

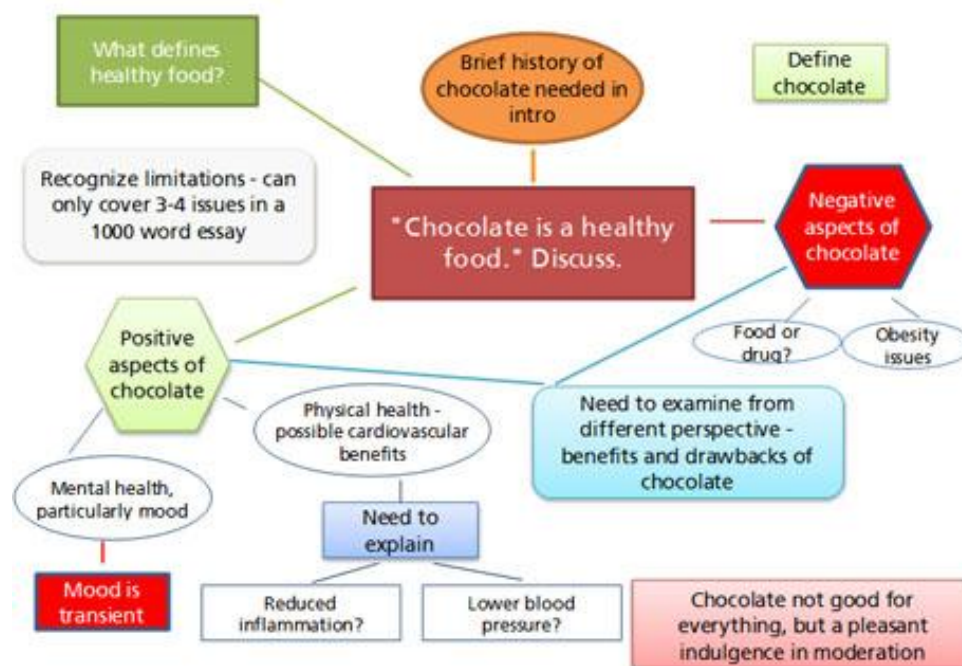
When you have found what you think might be useful make a note in your plan at the appropriate place.

Do the same thing for all the points that need academic references to support them.

Remember too that, **during your research, you might discover new issues and perspectives that you hadn't considered before**, thus your original plan might be quite different from the final one!

## Planning your essay

Once you have brainstormed your ideas and done some initial research, start putting them into a logical order as part of the essay planning process. Here is the brainstorm for the chocolate essay again, which you can use to develop the planning process:



Planning or a plan?

In the first instance, it is important to distinguish between **planning** and a **plan**.

- ▶ **Planning** is an ongoing process, from when you receive the essay title to when you submit your final draft.
- ▶ A **plan** is a physical outline of the way you intend to conceptualise, structure and present your ideas.

Plans can be structured/restructured at any time during the planning process.

At this point it is time to write your first plan. However, **do not stop doing research yet**. Why not?

A plan helps you to put your ideas into a form which gives you a **clear direction** for your reading.

Once you have written your ideas up into a plan, you are beginning to **give a structure to the essay writing process** in order to make your argument more coherent.

You might surprise yourself by discovering **you know more about the subject matter than you thought.** This can **help build your confidence.**

Remember that a plan is just that—a plan. It can be modified after you do more research; you might discover some different perspectives or issues you hadn't previously anticipated.

### Example: First plan (linear style)

Title: "Chocolate is a healthy food." Discuss.

#### Introduction

Context for paper – popularity of chocolate.

Issue – whether chocolate is a healthy food is questionable.

Thesis – chocolate may be enjoyable but not healthy.

Scope – (only 4 aspects are covered in our example in order to keep it short)

4 aspects:

Positive: Can have a positive impact on mood

Positive: Possible health benefits for cardiovascular system

Negative: Chocolate can be seen as a drug rather than a food

Negative: Potential correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity

#### Main body

Paragraph 1

Ways in which chocolate can have a positive impact on mood. (I need to find academic sources to support this.)

Is the chocolate + improved mood scenario measurable/transient? (Evidence needed for this.)

Note that the writer has some ideas but wants to find relevant external sources for more

Paragraph 2

Possible benefits of chocolate on cardiovascular health – how much/what type(s) of chocolate have benefit? (Sources needed to help answer these questions.)

Problems with measuring correlation between chocolate consumption and cardiovascular health. (Sources needed to help answer this.)

Paragraph 3

Chocolate best viewed as a food or a drug.

Indulgence or addiction – are the boundaries unclear? (See what external sources have to say on this.)

The writer poses questions. This gives direction to reading.

Medication elements of chocolate? (Readings needed around this issue.)

#### Paragraph 4

The correlation between chocolate and obesity.

(Definition of obesity needed.)

What does the literature say?

The writer begins with a summary of the four arguments.

The writer ends by reaffirming the thesis statement.

#### **Conclusion**

Summary of four arguments presented

Chocolate is not a healthy food, but it is enjoyable nevertheless.

### **Example: Developing an essay plan after research (linear style)**

**Title: “Chocolate is a healthy food.” Discuss.**

#### **Introduction**

Context for paper – popularity of chocolate.

Issue – whether chocolate is a healthy food is questionable.

Thesis – chocolate may be enjoyable but not healthy.

Scope – (only 4 aspects are covered here to keep the example short)

Positive: Can positively impact on mood

Positive: Possible health benefits for cardiovascular system

Negative: Chocolate can be seen as a drug rather than a food

Negative: Potential correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity

#### **Main body**

Paragraph 1 with possible sources

Ways in which chocolate can impact positively on mood. ‘Feel good effect’-

Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006), Scholey and Owen (2013), Macht and

Dettmer (2006) and Macht and Mueller (2007).

Is the chocolate and improved mood scenario measurable/transient? Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006) – chocolate mood effects do not last. Macht and Dettmer (2006) – anticipation effect and more studies needed.

#### Paragraph 2

Possible benefits of chocolate on cardiovascular health – how much/what type(s) of chocolate have benefit? (Sources needed to help answer these questions.)

Problems with measuring correlation between chocolate consumption and cardiovascular health. (Sources needed to help answer this.)

#### Paragraph 3

Chocolate best viewed as a food or a drug.

Indulgence or addiction – are the boundaries unclear? (See what external sources have to say on this)

Medication elements of chocolate? (Readings needed around this issue.)

#### Paragraph 4

The correlation between chocolate and obesity.

(Definition of obesity needed.)

What does the literature say in relation to other causal factors?

#### Conclusion

Summary of four arguments presented.

Chocolate is not a healthy food, but it is enjoyable nevertheless.

### Example: Developed essay plan (linear style)

**Title: “Chocolate is a healthy food.” Discuss.**

#### Introduction

Context for paper – popularity of chocolate.

Issue – whether chocolate is a healthy food is questionable.

Thesis – chocolate may be enjoyable but not healthy.

Scope – (only 4 aspects are covered here to keep the example short)

Positive: Can positively impact on mood

Positive: Possible health benefits for cardiovascular system

Negative: Chocolate can be seen as a drug rather than a food

Negative: Potential correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity.

#### Main body

##### Paragraph 1

Ways in which chocolate can impact positively on mood. ‘Feel good effect’-

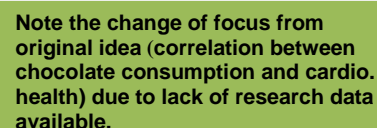
Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006), Scholey and Owen (2013), Macht and Dettmer (2006) and Macht and Mueller (2007)

Is the chocolate and improved mood scenario measurable/transient? Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006) chocolate mood effects do not last. Macht and Dettmer (2006) – anticipation effect and more studies needed.

##### Paragraph 2

Possible benefits of chocolate on cardiovascular health – how much/what type(s) of chocolate have benefit? Can provide heart-friendly flavanols (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002) – helps with blood clotting and is anti-inflammatory (Schramm et al., 2001)

Maximising benefits of chocolate lies in minimising fat levels (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002). Current processes destroy flavanols (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002).



Note the change of focus from original idea (correlation between chocolate consumption and cardio. health) due to lack of research data available.

### Paragraph 3

Chocolate best viewed as a food or a drug.

Indulgence or addiction – are the boundaries unclear? Chocolate contains some biologically active ingredients, but in small amounts (Bruinsma & Taren, 1999). ‘Chocolate addicts’ – negative correlation: chocolate consumption and mood (Macdiramid & Hetherington, 1995) but chocolate cravings sensory rather than addictive (Bruinsma & Taren, 1999).

Medication elements of chocolate? Used in relation to magnesium deficiency in women (Pennington, 2000 in Steinberg et al., 2003). Findings concur with Abraham and Lubran (1981) who found a correlation between magnesium deficiency and nervous tension in women.

Note the narrow focus of medical benefits (i.e. only considering magnesium) due to short length of essay.

Note the findings show that there is no clear relationship between chocolate and obesity – an issue flagged in the introduction.

### Paragraph 4

The correlation between chocolate and obesity.

No specific correlation found in literature (Beckett, 2008; Lambert, 2009).

Typified by Mellor’s (2013) findings – adults showed no weight increase after chocolate controlled diet. Lambert (2009) exemplified that chocolate consumption alone unlikely to precipitate obesity.

‘Chocoholic’ more likely to consume other sweet foods and less likely to exercise as much as others. Chocolate consumption thus marginal in causes of obesity.

### Conclusion

Summary of four arguments presented

Chocolate is not a healthy food, but it is enjoyable nevertheless.



## Writing your conclusion

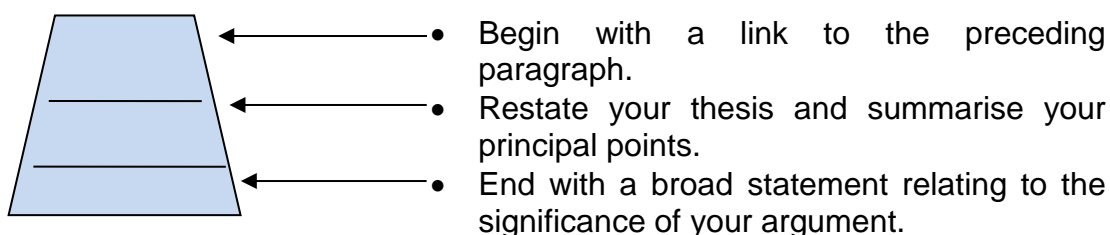
It might seem a little strange to think about writing your conclusion before you write the body of your essay! However, thinking about your final message is an important point of guidance for the rest of your essay. In addition, unless you know where you are going, you can easily lose direction. So your conclusion, in the essay construction process, can function as something like a map. Also, the conclusion is the last thing the reader actually reads, so it needs to be memorable.

There are a number of questions you should ask yourself, such as:

How will everything finish?  
What are you aiming for?  
What final impression do you want your readers to have?

As a reminder, look here at how a conclusion normally functions:

Your conclusion ties your essay together. It should normally:



So, our [chocolate essay conclusion](#) should mirror this pattern.

The conclusion should not just repeat the ideas from the introduction. The introduction includes the background to the essay, the important issues and a thesis statement. The introduction leads your reader into the essay. The conclusion reminds your reader of the main points made in your essay and leaves your reader with a final impression and ideas to think about later.



## Chocolate essay conclusion

Obesity and chocolate consumption seemingly have no proven correlations. Yet, in this essay, many chocolate focused arguments have been presented, including the transient effect of chocolate on mood and evidence that it is as likely to create feelings of guilt as of well-being. Another possible positive dimension to chocolate is a correlation with cardiovascular health. Yet the potential benefits of flavanols in chocolate are currently offset by the high fat/carbohydrate content of most forms of chocolate. Whether chocolate is a food or a drug is also unclear. The literature outlines the chemical properties of chocolate which could help explain some addictive type behaviour, particularly in regards to nervous tension in women, but also there is a strong research focus on chocolate as a sensory-based indulgence. It can therefore be said that chocolate is not a healthy food, but can be enjoyed as part of a healthy and balanced diet and lifestyle.

Link to discussion in previous paragraph

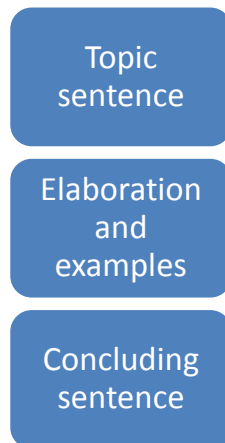
Restatement of main points and reaffirmation of thesis

Broad statement relating to significance of argument

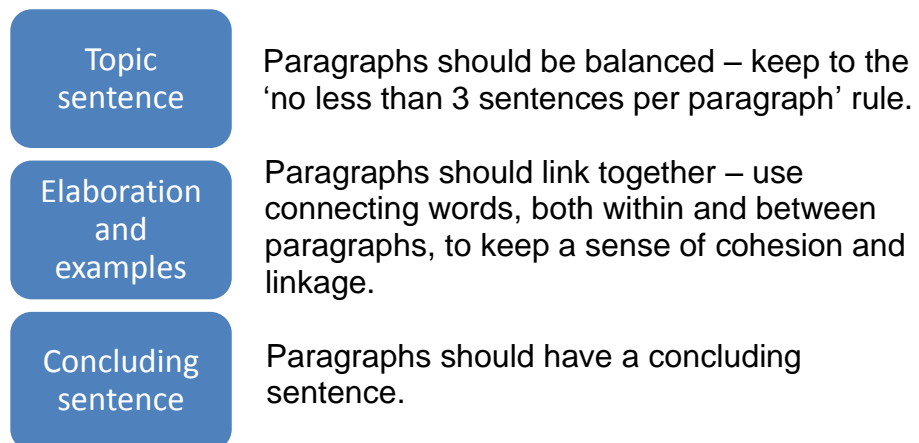
## Writing the body paragraphs

At the heart of your essay lie your body paragraphs. A paragraph is a set of sentences which are based around a single controlling idea.

Typically, a body paragraph will follow the format below.



Each paragraph should focus on one controlling idea only, found in the **topic sentence**. The controlling idea can then be developed in a number of ways: elaboration or explanation; evaluation; exemplification; or incorporation of research data.



Some more detailed explanation:

**1) The Topic Sentence** should unambiguously express the topic of the paragraph and be linked with the overall thesis of the essay. The topic sentence can function as a sentence of transition from the previous paragraph.

**2) Elaboration of the main point** should add more detailed information in relation to the topic sentence.

3) **Examples and Evidence in relation to your point** should provide exemplification and justification of the points made using paraphrases, summaries or direct quotations, all of which need to be appropriately referenced.

It is very important not to do a 'shopping list' of quotations. You must provide linkages through your own **voice**, which helps in the process of evaluation of external sources in relation to the main point of the paragraph.

**Examples and Evidence** can be included in any of the sentences of your paragraph, including the topic sentence, and can question the validity of the main point.

4) **A Concluding Sentence** should echo the main point of the paragraph and function as a bridge to the next paragraph.

Remember to link all the points in your paragraph to the idea in the topic sentence. One way to check if you have done this is to write keywords in the margin for each sentence. If your keywords are related to the topic sentence, your paragraph is good. If there are ideas that are not related, you should remove them.

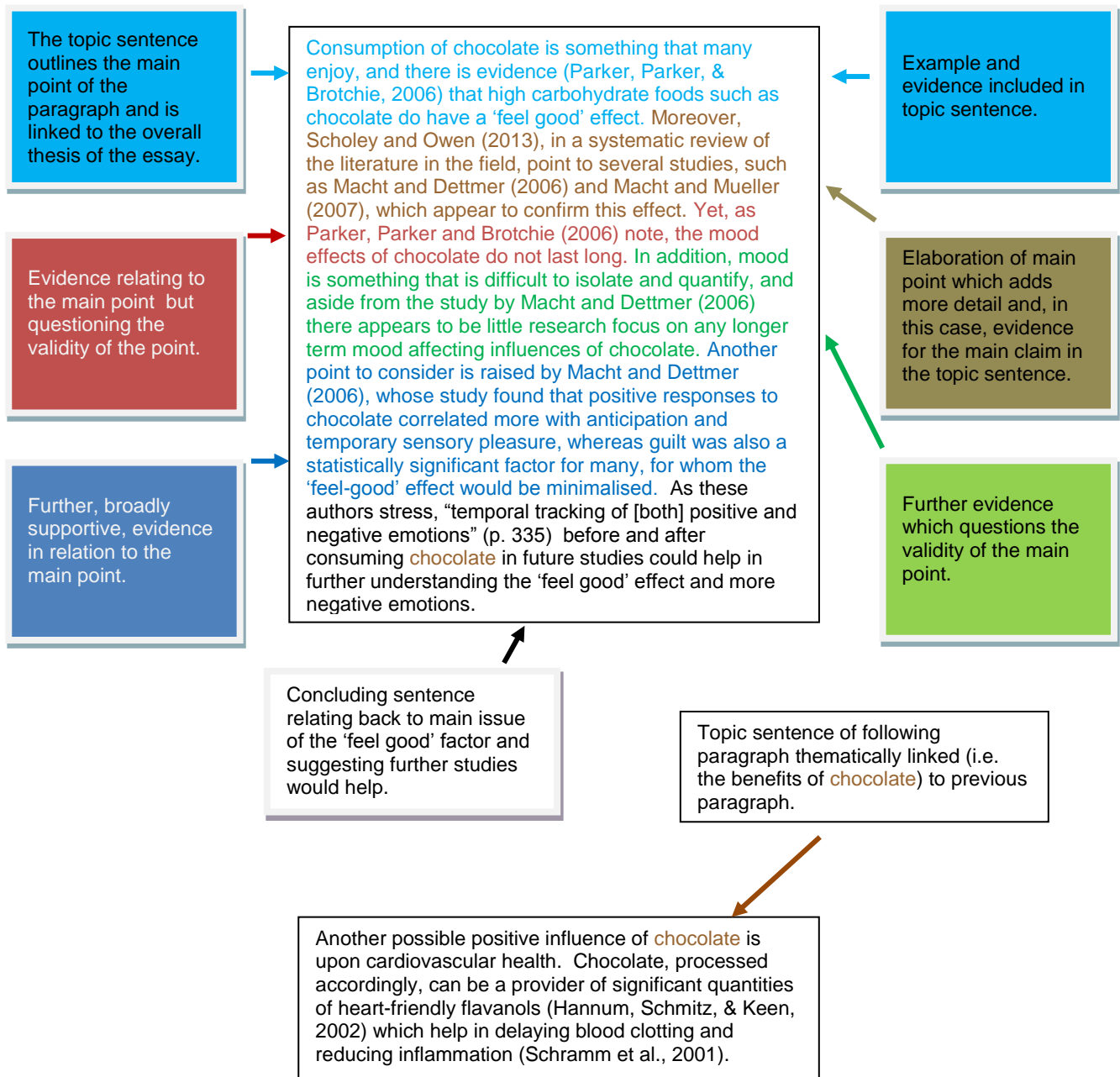
In the following example, the unrelated ideas are highlighted in red:

Paragraph	Sentence Keywords
<p>It has been claimed that chocolate is a healthy food, but in fact it contains a lot of sugar, which can be unhealthy. For example, sugar can cause tooth decay, which can lead to dental problems in later life. <b>Sugar makes chocolate sweet, so it is a necessary ingredient.</b> Too much sugar can also lead to obesity, which is a serious health risk. <b>There is currently an obesity epidemic in many western countries.</b> In addition, sugar contains a high amount of fructose, which is bad for the liver. The amount of sugar contained in chocolate means, therefore, that chocolate, particularly milk and white chocolate, may not be healthy.</p>	<p>Topic sentence – sugar and health</p> <p>sugar and tooth decay (health)</p> <p><b>sweet ingredient – unrelated</b></p> <p>obesity (health)</p> <p><b>obesity in the West – unrelated</b></p>

These unrelated ideas can be removed to make a more coherent paragraph:

It has been claimed that chocolate is a healthy food, but in fact it contains a lot of sugar, which can be unhealthy. For example, sugar can cause tooth decay, which can lead to dental problems in later life. Too much sugar can also lead to obesity, which is a serious health risk. In addition, sugar contains a high amount of fructose, which is bad for the liver. The amount of sugar contained in chocolate means, therefore, that chocolate, particularly milk and white chocolate, may not be healthy.

You can then add examples and references to make your paragraph stronger.



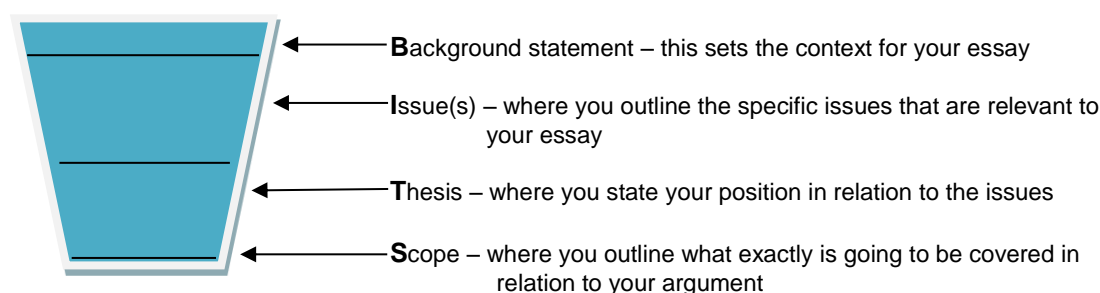
## Writing your introduction

Once you have drafted your main body paragraphs and your conclusion, it is time to draft your introduction!

Writing your introduction last means you are more likely to have a tighter fit between the introduction, main body and conclusion because you already know what your essay will be about.

Let us have another look at the functions of an introduction:

### Introduction



Thesis and scope are sometimes combined to form one or more sentences known as a *thesis statement*. In that case, the introduction might follow a BIST structure rather than a BITS structure. The thesis statement often comes at the end of the introduction, although it can be written earlier. There is no set model for an essay, but this website presents one popular way to do it.

This is one way in which the elements of an introduction are organized. For example, sometimes an essay will begin with a direct quote, out of which the issue in question emerges. The direct quote in such an instance would function as a 'hook' to draw readers into the essay, therefore having a similar function to a background statement.

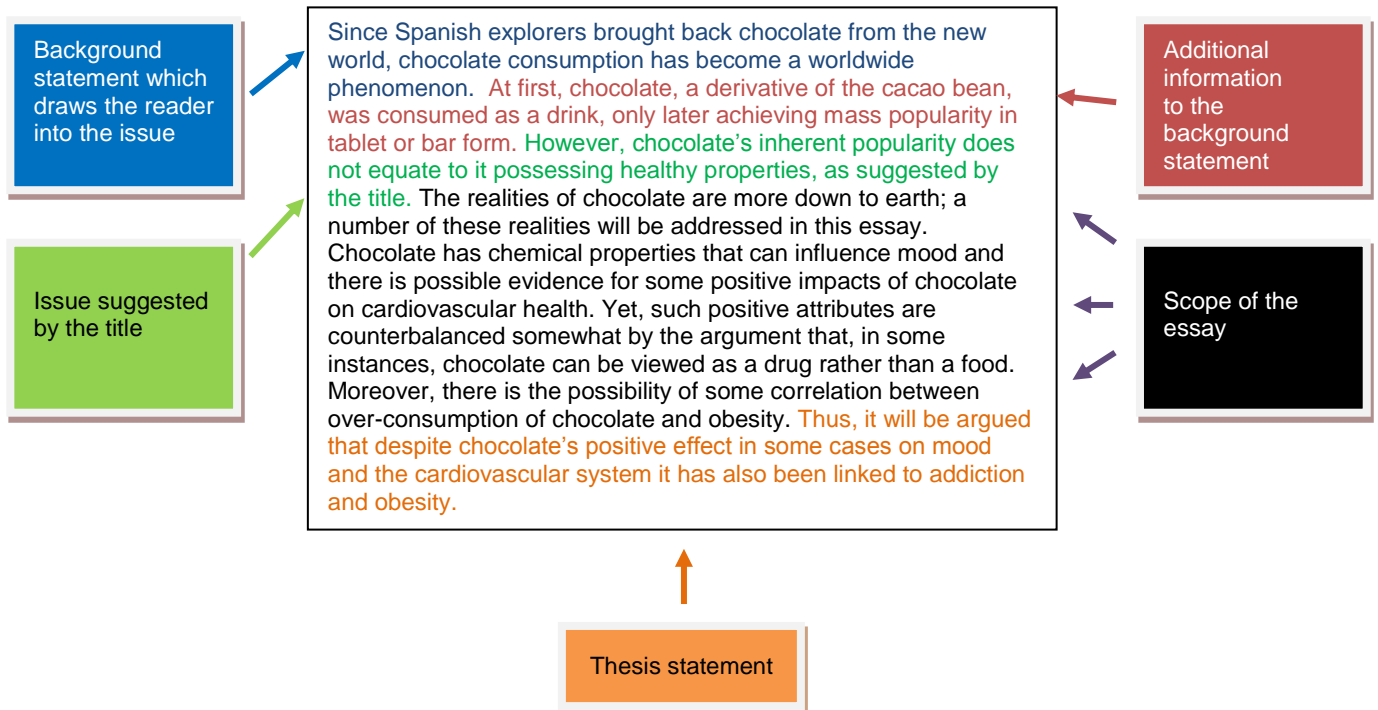
Sometimes, particularly in the case of a very short essay, the background statement will be by-passed and the essay will begin with an issue.

Essays also sometimes begin with an issue, outline the scope and then move on to end the introduction with the thesis statement.

It is important to remember that there is not a fixed ordering for the introduction, though the **BITS/BIST** patterning is a very common one, which is why it is modelled for you as an example.

## Example introduction

“Chocolate is a healthy food”. Discuss.



## Writing references for your essay

When you are writing an essay you will need to include references to external academic sources. This is done for a number of reasons.



Why do we need to reference in academic essays?

- To show respect for other people's ideas and work
- To clearly identify information coming from another source
- To distinguish an external source from your interpretation or your own findings
- To support your own arguments, thus giving you more credibility
- To show evidence of wide (and understood) reading
- To avoid being accused of plagiarism, which includes copying another's work, paraphrasing or summarising without acknowledgement, colluding with others and presenting either identical or very similar essays

The whole issue of [plagiarism and academic integrity](#) is a very important one in academic writing.



What does referencing include?

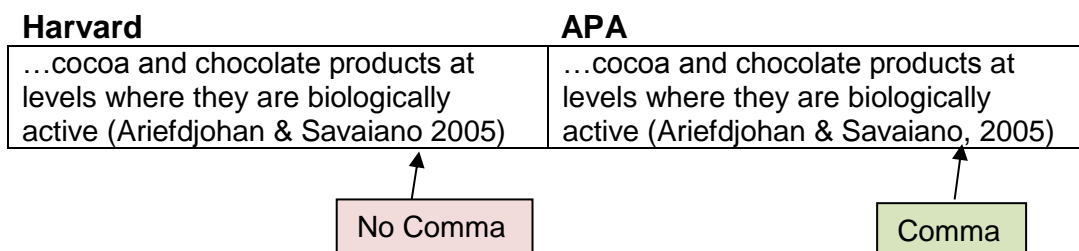
- In-text citations, which can take three forms:
  - Paraphrasing, where you keep the original author's ideas intact, but just change the wording
  - Summarising, where you summarise the whole of the author's work, rather than one particular aspect
  - Direct quoting, where you take a word-for-word copy of a short extract from the original author's work, and include it in your essay, making use of quotation marks and page numberAll of these need a reference in the text.
- A reference list at the end of your essay, which includes details such as:
  - Author(s)
  - Date of publication
  - Title
  - Publisher and place of publication (for books)
  - Journal name, volume and issue (for journals)
  - Internet address or doi (digital object identifier) for electronic sources



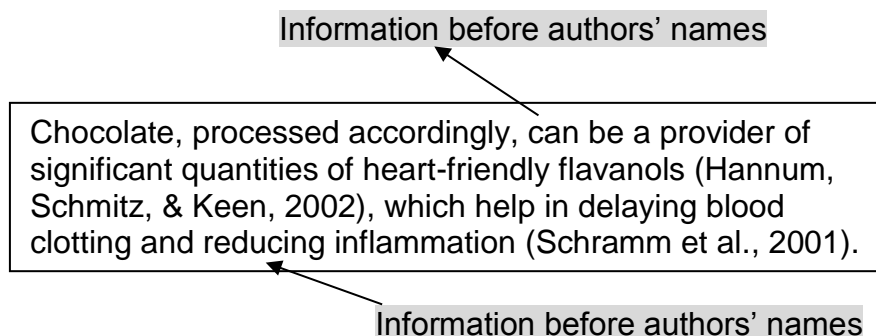
Referencing is integral to academic essay writing and shouldn't be viewed as an 'add-on'. When you are referencing, always use a referencing guide to help you ensure 100% accuracy.

When determining whether or not to incorporate a particular reference in your text, it is also important to consider the credibility of the source. Normally, when writing an essay at university you will be expected to use only academic sources. The link on the English for Uni website to [Source Credibility](#) will help you to determine whether an external source is academic or not.

The [chocolate essay](#) uses the [APA](#) style of [referencing](#), which is easy to distinguish from the Harvard Author-Date System as the **in-text citation** format is different:

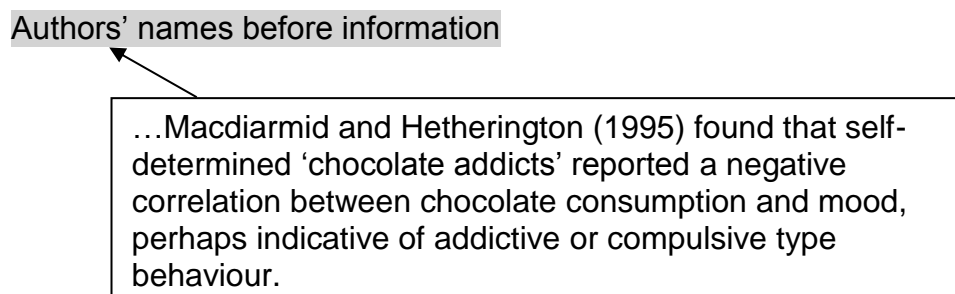


When you are writing an essay and including external sources, more often than not you want the reader to focus on **what** is said rather than **who** is saying it. In this instance the information comes before the author. For example:



Such citations are called information-centred citations.

When the focus is more on **who** is saying it then the citation is written like this:



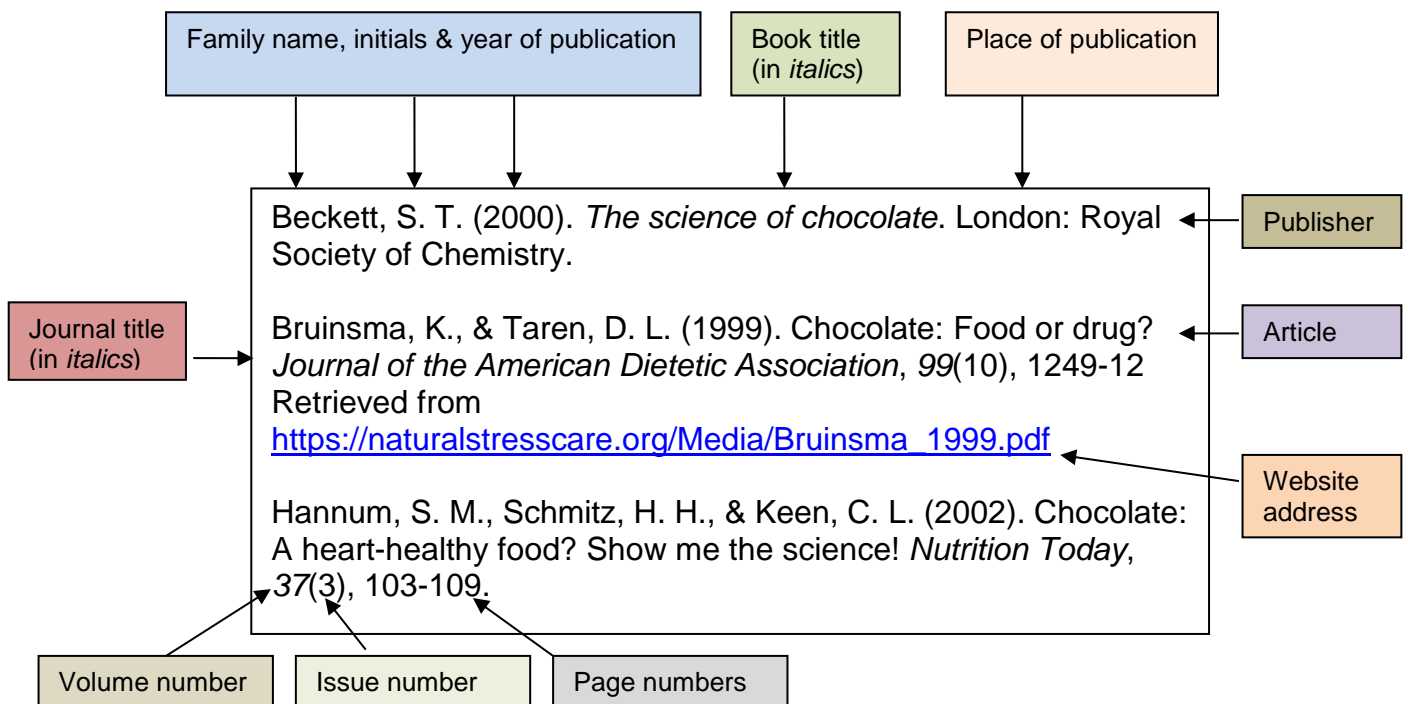


Such citations are called author-centred citations.

Try and achieve a balance between both types of in-text references in your essay writing.

## Reference list

In the **APA** style of referencing, the reference list has certain conventions that you must also follow. Here are some examples from the [chocolate essay](#):



### Tip

Don't make referencing something you do just as an editing or proofreading activity. Include your in-text citations and reference list as part of your first draft.

An excellent website to help with your APA referencing is the APA interactive tool at Massey University. <http://owl.massey.ac.nz/referencing/apa-interactive.php>

## Redrafting your essay

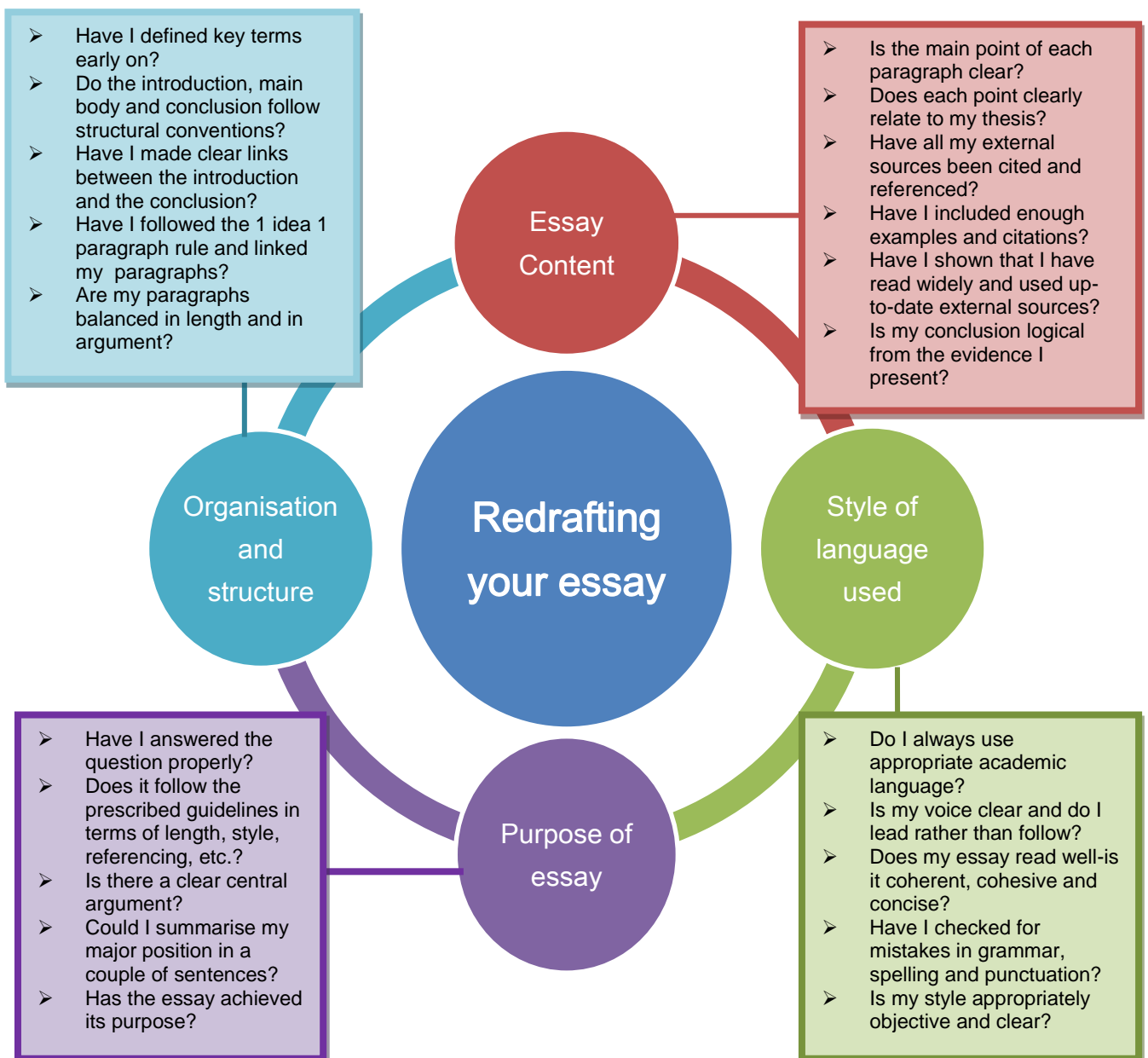
Now that you have completed the first draft of your essay it is time to take another detailed look at your draft. Leave yourself enough time to do this. For a 1000 word essay you need at least three days to redraft your essay.

Tip  
Always save each draft as a separate file; then you can see how your essay develops and improves.

This process is a vital part of writing your essay and is one that is undergone by professional writers in the development of their work.

But at what levels do you need to re-engage with your work?

Click on the 4 smaller circles in the figure below to find some examples of the sorts of questions you should be asking yourself:



The questions suggested above are just some of the questions you need to ask yourself. It is often a good idea to create your own checklist.

Now let's have a look at how the writer of the chocolate essay redrafted their original introduction:

Early draft

Too much detail in the opening sentence, so the reader is not immediately drawn in.

At first, chocolate, a derivative of the cacao bean, was consumed as a drink, only later achieving mass popularity in tablet or bar form, yet today consumption has become a worldwide phenomenon. However, chocolate's inherent popularity does not equate to it possessing healthy properties. The realities of chocolate are more down to earth; a number of these realities will be addressed in this essay. Chocolate has chemical properties that can influence mood and there is evidence for some positive impacts of chocolate on cardiovascular health. Yet, such positive attributes are counterbalanced by the argument that, in some instances, chocolate can be viewed as a drug rather than a food. There is the possibility of some correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity.

I need a clearer link to the title here.

A connector to link the two sentences is necessary.

Overstating the case – my position needs to be softened.

I haven't included a clear thesis or scope in my introduction.

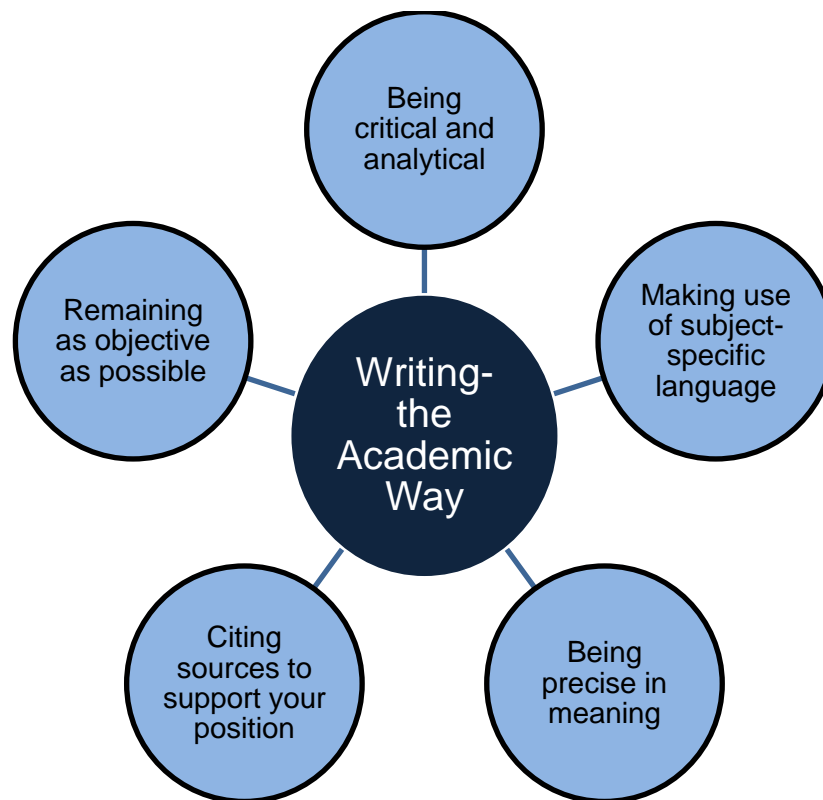
Now compare the above with the final draft:

Since Spanish explorers brought back chocolate from the new world, chocolate consumption has become a worldwide phenomenon. At first, chocolate, a derivative of the cacao bean, was consumed as a drink, only later achieving mass popularity in tablet or bar form. However, chocolate's inherent popularity does not equate to it possessing healthy properties, as suggested by the title. The realities of chocolate are more down to earth; a number of these realities will be addressed in this essay. Chocolate has chemical properties that can influence mood and there is possible evidence for some positive impacts of chocolate on cardiovascular health. Yet, such positive attributes are counterbalanced somewhat by the argument that, in some instances, chocolate can be viewed as a drug rather than a food. Moreover, there is the possibility of some correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity. Thus, it will be argued that despite chocolate's positive effect in some cases on mood and the cardiovascular system it has also been linked to addiction and obesity.

Take your time and be careful when redrafting—it will be worth it!

## Incorporating your own voice

When you are writing an academic essay you are normally required to write in an 'academic' way, but what exactly does this mean?



Your lecturers will want to see evidence of 'you' in your writing, not just a string of citations; they want to hear your 'voice' as they read your essay. Putting your voice in your academic essay is a big step along the road to good essay writing.

Imagine your essay as a kind of story. You are the principal storyteller, the **internal voice** of the writer, leading the reader through to your conclusion. During the story, there are different 'voices' that appear from time to time. These are the **external voices** (citations) that add substance to your story, providing detail and support for what you are saying and sometimes even giving an alternative perspective. The external voices can be divided into two categories in your essay: the direct external voice of an author, which takes the form of a direct quote, and the indirect external voice of an author, where you take the ideas of the author but put them into your own words.

The reader needs to know at all times whose voice they are 'hearing'. They need to know whether the thoughts and words are your **internal voice** or the **external voice** of others, so when you are writing your draft you need to be very much aware of the reader's needs.

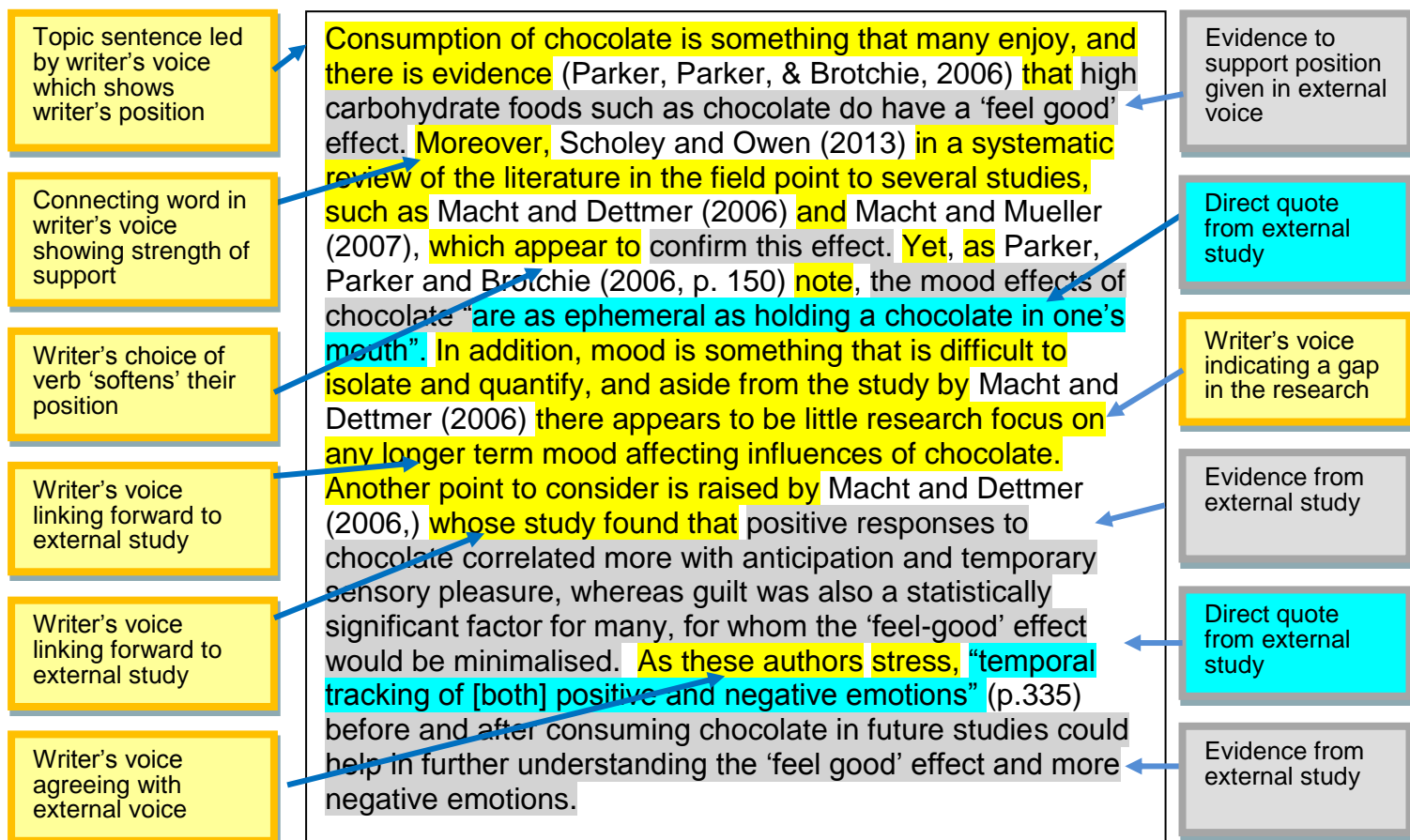
You might be worrying about how you can include your 'voice' and yet still sound 'academic' in your writing when you are writing about a subject area in

which you have little (or no) knowledge. Including your voice does not mean that you should say ‘I think’ or ‘in my opinion’.

Here are some examples of the critical/analytical language that you can use as your own **internal voice** when you present other people’s ideas:

Phrase	How your voice is included
It has been argued (Smith & Jones, 2010) that...	Pointing out what has been said by an external source
As Smith and Jones (2010) note	Showing your agreement with the external source
However, Smith and Jones (2010) fail to address...	Showing that you recognise the limitations of the study
Seemingly, Smith and Jones (2010) have...	Showing you have tentative support for the external source
On the other hand, Smith and Jones (2010) argue that...	Showing that there is a contrast from the previous argument
Smith and Jones (2010) assert that...	Showing that the authors’ position is strong but you are likely to have doubts about it
It has been suggested that...(Smith & Jones, 2010; Brown & Culbertson, 2005; Lloyd & Giggs, 2004)	Showing that you recognise a number of authors have reached a similar conclusion, yet you might/might not agree with it
One advantage of the work of Smith and Jones (2010)	Showing that you are positively engaging with their work

Let’s now have a look at one of the paragraphs from the [chocolate essay](#) to see how the text is an interplay of the **internal voice** of the **writer** and the external voices of other authors. The **internal voice** of the writer is colour-coded in the text in **yellow**, the indirect external voice of an author is coded in **grey**, and the direct external voice of an author is coded in **blue**.



This is a balanced paragraph. The writer 'sets the scene' at the beginning of the topic sentence and so the findings from the studies fit into the writer's context. The writer also links together all of the sentences, using their own voice to lead into content which is provided by the external voices.

Look at the same paragraph re-written, with the amount of the writer's voice substantially reduced:

External study sets the context

Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006) note that high carbohydrate foods such as chocolate do have a 'feel good' effect. Scholey and Owen (2013) point to several studies, such as Macht and Dettmer (2006) and Macht and Mueller (2007) to confirm this effect. Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006, p. 150) note that the mood effects of chocolate "are as ephemeral as holding a chocolate in one's mouth". Mood is something that is difficult to isolate and quantify, and aside from the study by Macht and Dettmer (2006) there appears to be little research focus on any longer term mood affecting influences of chocolate. Macht and Dettmer (2006) found that positive responses to chocolate correlated more with anticipation and temporary sensory pleasure, whereas guilt was also a statistically significant factor for many, for whom the 'feel-good' effect would be minimalised. "Temporal tracking of [both] positive and negative emotions" before and after consuming chocolate in future studies could help in further understanding the 'feel good' effect and more negative emotions (Macht & Dettmer, 2006, p. 335).

External voice for almost half the paragraph

The only part of the paragraph where the writer's voice dominates

The first thing to note is that the writer is not 'in charge' of the paragraph, as an external study sets the scene. The writer for the most part does not connect the findings and so it reads a little like a list. That is something your lecturers do not want to see.

When you are drafting your paragraphs, use a colour-coding system like the one used here. It will help you ensure your academic voice is clear!

The uefap writing website (<http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>) gives more detail on issue of voice in writing and will help you develop your skills in this area even more. It even has an interactive test.

When you get more confident in critically engaging with external sources, you will gradually expand the language of your critical internal voice. The Phrasebank website (<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/critical.htm>) at Manchester University provides examples of some more expressions to use when assessing external sources.

## Proofreading and editing your essay

The terms 'proofreading' and 'editing' are often used in relation to checking your academic writing.

**Editing** focuses on the **big picture elements** such as overall structure, appropriate paragraphing and whether the question has been answered.

**Proofreading**, on the other hand, **has a micro-focus** on the details of your essay, such as formatting, grammar and punctuation.

**Editing**

You need to edit as part of the redrafting process and proofread your final draft.

**Proofreading**



Everybody has their own personal style of editing and proofreading, and no two people edit and proofread in exactly the same way. You need, for example, to focus on the types of errors you commonly make by looking at the marker's comments on your previous work. Looking at markers' comments can help you in the editing process also!

Some people proofread alone; some get other people involved. Having others involved is a really good idea.



Fresh eyes can help you find things you might not otherwise have seen.



There are many considerations involved in the process of proofreading and editing, and not all will be relevant in every case. Below is a visual representation of some of these considerations:





The Purdue OWL website has even more detail on the proofreading process <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/2/>

## Submitting on time

The issue of time management is just as important for the process of essay writing as it is for any other academic task. Students regularly underestimate the time it takes to write an essay, in particular the planning and researching stages.

Before you begin your essay, have a look at the Massey University academic writing planning calculator <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/assignment-planning-calculator.php>

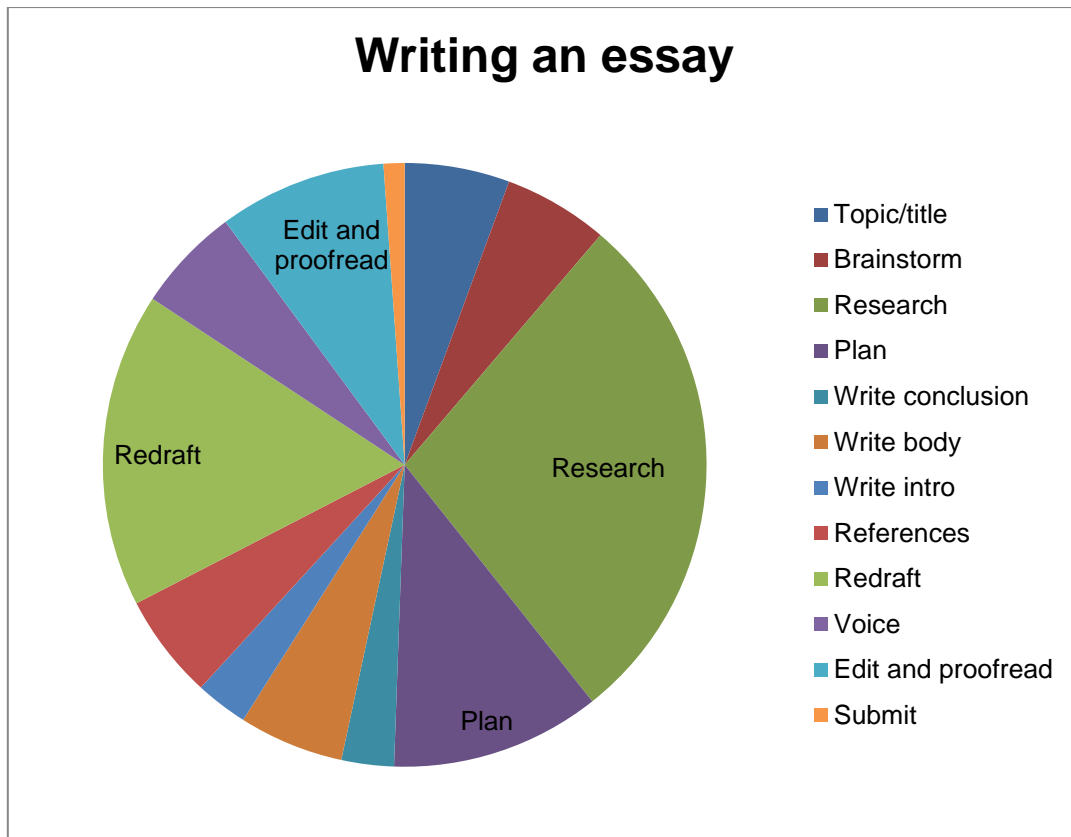
You might be surprised how long the whole process takes!

As you can see from the assignment planning calculator, if you only start your essay a few days before the due date, you will have to do things too quickly. You won't even have enough time left for redrafting or getting feedback.

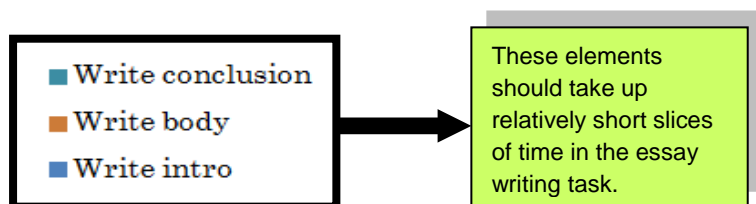
If you think of the essay/cake analogy, you need time to mix all the ingredients properly, or the end result will not be what you want to share with others!

To write a 1000 word essay, ideally you should allow yourself about 3 weeks. This leaves you with enough time for breaks and allows sufficient time for you to pay attention to other aspects of your studies.

Let's have a look at how an essay time management 'cake' could be divided into slices:



You can see that the biggest part of your time is spent on the planning/research elements and redrafting/editing/proofreading elements, which together should comprise around 60% of your time.



Now you have some idea of the time scale involved in writing an essay, you need to be organised so that you can maximise the time available to you. Have a look at another model to see what you also need to consider:



So, writing an essay involves not just the 'ingredients' of the essay process itself, but sound management of the time available to you. Only then can you maximise your chances of producing a quality essay.

## Academic integrity and plagiarism

'Integrity' relates to 'honesty', and academic integrity involves writing in an honest way, so that no one will think you are claiming that words or ideas from someone else are your own. This is very important in academic writing in western countries, and if you do not do this you might be accused of plagiarism, which is a serious offence at university.

Plagiarism means using someone else's words, ideas or diagrams **without acknowledgement**.

Of course, when we write an essay we need to refer to other people's ideas. We gave some of the reasons for this before:

- To show respect for other people's ideas and work
- To clearly identify information coming from another source
- To distinguish an external source from your interpretation or your own findings
- To support your own arguments, thus giving you more credibility
- To show evidence of wide (and understood) reading

Being a good writer involves using other people's ideas to support your work. **However, you should never forget to say where these ideas come from, even if you don't quote the person's exact words.**

Include a reference in the text, where the words or ideas appear, and in a reference list at the end of the essay.

**All the references in the text must appear in the reference list, and all the references in the list must also appear in the text.**

There is a short video clip on plagiarism here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUAIrYV6j4> and a wonderful Plagiarism Carol <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mwbw9KF-ACY> video (click on 'captions' to get subtitles in English).

Another word connected to academic integrity is **collusion**.

**Collusion means that you work with someone else and submit the same or very similar assignments without your lecturer's permission.**

For example, if you and a friend work together on an essay and then submit identical or very similar versions of the essay, one under your name and one under your friend's name, that is collusion. However, if you are doing a group work assignment and your lecturer has asked you to work together and submit the assignment jointly, that is **not collusion**. Collusion, like plagiarism, has an element of dishonesty in it. People who collude do so secretly, as they know that the lecturer would not be happy.

**Tip**

**Any time you are in doubt about plagiarism or collusion, check with your lecturer before you submit an assignment.**

People make genuine mistakes, so lecturers are usually very happy to advise you if you ask them.

## Example essay

### **“Chocolate is a healthy food.” Discuss.**

Since Spanish explorers brought back chocolate from the new world, chocolate consumption has become a worldwide phenomenon. At first, chocolate, a derivative of the cacao bean, was consumed as a drink, only later achieving mass popularity in tablet or bar form. However, chocolate's inherent popularity does not equate to it possessing healthy properties, as suggested by the title. The realities of chocolate are more down to earth; a number of these realities will be addressed in this essay. Chocolate has chemical properties that can influence mood and there is possible evidence for some positive impacts of chocolate on cardiovascular health. Yet, such positive attributes are counterbalanced somewhat by the argument that, in some instances, chocolate can be viewed as a drug rather than a food. Moreover, there is the possibility of some correlation between over-consumption of chocolate and obesity. Thus, it will be argued that despite chocolate's positive effect in some cases on mood and the cardiovascular system it has also been linked to addiction and obesity.

Consumption of chocolate is something that many enjoy, and there is evidence (Parker, Parker, & Brotchie, 2006) that high carbohydrate foods such as chocolate do have a 'feel good' effect. Moreover, Scholey and Owen (2013) in a systematic review of the literature in the field point to several studies, such as Macht and Dettmer (2006) and Macht and Mueller (2007), which appear to confirm this effect. Yet, as Parker, Parker and Brotchie (2006, p. 150) note, the mood effects of chocolate “are as ephemeral as holding a chocolate in one's mouth”. In addition, mood is something that is difficult to isolate and quantify, and aside from the study by Macht and Dettmer (2006) there appears to be little research on any longer term mood affecting influences of chocolate. Another point is raised by Macht and Dettmer (2006), whose study found that positive responses to chocolate correlated more with anticipation and temporary sensory pleasure, whereas guilt was also a statistically significant factor for many, for whom the 'feel-good' effect would be minimalised. As these authors stress, “temporal tracking of [both] positive and negative emotions” (p.335) before and after consuming chocolate in future studies could help in further understanding the 'feel good' effect and more negative emotions.

Another possible positive influence of chocolate is upon cardiovascular health. Chocolate, processed accordingly, can be a provider of significant quantities of heart-friendly flavanols (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002) which help in delaying blood clotting and reducing inflammation (Schramm et al., 2001). Such attributes of flavanols in chocolate need to be considered in the context of chocolate's other components – approximately 30% fat, 61% carbohydrate, 6% protein and 3% liquid and minerals (Hannum, Schmitz, & Keen, 2002). The key to maximising the benefits of flavanols in chocolate appears to lie in the level of fats present. Cocoa, which is simply chocolate minus the fat, is the most obvious candidate for maximising heart health, but as Hannum, Schmitz and Keen (2002) note, most cocoa products are made through an alkali

process which destroys many flavanols. Optimal maximisation of the flavanols involves such compounds being present in cocoa and chocolate products at levels where they are biologically active (Ariefdjohan & Savaiano, 2005).

The biological makeup of chocolate is also relevant in determining whether chocolate is better viewed as a food or a drug, but the boundaries between indulgence and addictive behaviour are unclear. Chocolate contains some biologically active elements including methylxanthines, and cannabinoid-like unsaturated fatty acids (Bruinsma & Taren, 1999) which could represent a neurochemical dependency potential for chocolate, yet are present in exceedingly small amounts. Interestingly, and linked to chocolate and mood, Macdiarmid and Hetherington (1995) claim their study found that “self-identified chocolate ‘addicts’” reported a negative correlation between chocolate consumption and mood. This is perhaps indicative of addictive or compulsive type behaviour. However, as Bruinsma and Taren (1999) note, eating chocolate can represent a sensory reward based, luxurious indulgence, based around texture, aroma and flavour anticipation, rather than a neurochemically induced craving. Yet, it has been argued that chocolate is sometimes used as a form of self-medication, particularly in relation to magnesium deficiency. A study by Pennington (2000 in Steinberg, Bearden, & Keen 2003) noted that women do not generally meet US guidelines for trace elements, including magnesium. This correlates with earlier studies by Abraham and Lubran (1981), who found a high correlation between magnesium deficiency and nervous tension in women. Thus, tension-related chocolate cravings could be a biological entity fuelled by magnesium deficiency. Overall, however, it would appear that the proportion of people using chocolate as a drug rather than a food based sensory indulgence is small, though further research might prove enlightening.

A final point to consider in relation to chocolate is the perception that chocolate is linked to obesity. A person is defined as being obese when their Body Mass Index is greater than 30. The literature on chocolate and obesity has clearly demonstrated that there are no specific correlations between the two variables (Beckett, 2008; Lambert, 2009). This is typified by the findings of Mellor (2013), who found that, over a period of eight weeks of eating 45 grams of chocolate per day, a group of adults demonstrated no significant weight increase. As Lambert (2009) notes, chocolate consumption alone is not likely to cause obesity, unless large amounts of other calorie dense foods are consumed and this calorie dense intake is greater than needed for bodily function, bearing in mind levels of activity. The stereotypical ‘chocoholic’ seems more likely to consume many other sweet foods and be less likely to take exercise than other people, so chocolate consumption is only one possible variable when considering the causes of obesity.

Obesity and chocolate consumption seemingly have no proven correlations. Yet, in this essay, many chocolate focused arguments have been presented, including the transient effect of chocolate on mood and the fact that it is as likely to create feelings of guilt as of well-being. Another possible positive dimension to chocolate is a correlation with cardiovascular health. Yet the



potential benefits of flavanols in chocolate are currently offset by the high fat/carbohydrate content of most forms of chocolate. Whether chocolate is a food or a drug is also unclear. The literature outlines the chemical properties of chocolate which could help explain some addictive type behaviour, particularly in regards to nervous tension in women, but there is also a strong research focus on chocolate as a sensory-based indulgence. It can therefore be said that chocolate is not a healthy food, but can be enjoyed as part of a healthy and balanced diet and lifestyle.

(Word count: 1087. This is within 10% of the 1000 word limit, which is usually acceptable. Check this with your lecturer if you are in any doubt.)

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