

Essay Planning

A plan outlines the points you are going to make, each of which will be expanded into a paragraph. It also has brief information about the content that will be used to support and provide evidence for each main point. The word limit helps you know how many main points and how much detail to include.

Steps in planning an essay

- Think about the essay question and marking criteria carefully to understand it fully, and then brainstorm ideas to decide what you need to find out. As you undertake your **research and reading** you will identify the points which are of greatest relevance to the topic.
- Put the chosen points in some **logical sequence**. At this stage you should be starting to formulate a **basic response to the topic**, even though your ideas may change later. Try to arrange the points so that they form a common-sense discussion. Be prepared to rearrange your plan to include new material as you read more information and increase your understanding of the subject.
- All the **major points need to be supported by evidence**. Plan where it would be appropriate to use brief quotations or paraphrases from your sources. These will provide the evidence that supports the discussion. (Remember to include references).
- At all stages of planning an essay, and when writing it, **keep a printed copy of the essay question and marking criteria where you can refer to it readily**. Keep asking yourself: Is this point relevant to the topic I have been asked to discuss? If in doubt, be prepared to discard plans and formulate new ones.

Planning will give you an overview. It:

- Gives you a clear idea of whether the points you have selected are relevant and sufficient to develop an informed discussion.
- Indicates whether you have enough content to support a point and if further research is necessary.
- Reduces the likelihood of repetition.
- Gives you the opportunity to check with your tutor that the approach and content you are planning is on task.