



Assignment Writing and Presentation Guide

MLA Style

MLA Style to be used for all citations and works cited.

***Note:** In 2016 the eighth edition of the MLA Handbook was published. This Style Guide is under review. Until it is updated, please check [here](#) for an overview of changes to the handbook.

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ASSIGNMENT WRITING AND PRESENTATION

There are three major areas to be considered when preparing an assignment at tertiary level. These are content, format and referencing.

1. Content

When writing a formal assignment it should not be written in point form but should follow a series of logical steps.

Here are some tips for writing a top scoring essay:

Answer the essay topic

The first step is to make sure you understand the topic and identify the main points to be answered. In particular, note terms such as outline, describe, discuss, contrast, compare, analyse, what or why, and present the information accordingly.

Organise ideas logically

Collect data from various sources and present the information in logical steps so that it is easy for the reader to follow your ideas. Link ideas together and ensure that you show clearly how the information presented relates to the overall topic. Do not just take slabs from various references, place them in sequence, and then add a conclusion. Make frequent use of *transitional phrases* to help keep the reader informed of the direction you are taking.

Be aware of potential traps with web based material

If accessing websites, ensure that the material is from a reputable site. For example if you are researching diabetes care, a Google search will bring up a wide range of sites some of which look reputable. The following two examples show what may appear as a result of a search. Both are titled Diabetes Australia but are quite different with the first one being of unknown origins (no detail is given on the site and this should make you suspicious) but the second is a professional association and is therefore more likely to have reliable information.

Diabetes Australia

Learn What Foods Affect Your Blood

Sugar. We Are On Your Side!

(<http://www.diabetes-symptoms-and-supplies.com/diabetes/diabetes-supply.html>)

The above site is NOT as reliable as the following example but both are titled similarly.

Diabetes Australia

Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) [http://www.adea.com.au/...](http://www.adea.com.au/)

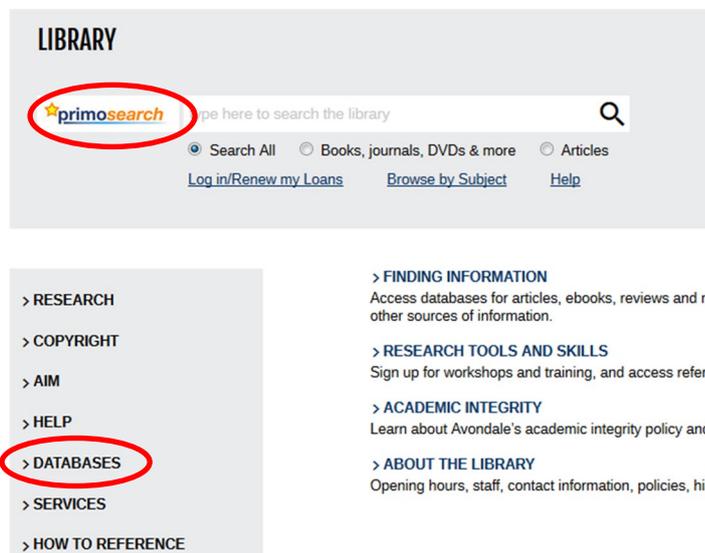
Dietitian's Association of Australia

(<http://www.daa.asn.au>. Diabetes Centre)

Be well informed

Read widely. Look at both sides of any issue, and avoid bias. Choose the material you include carefully and make sure it is relevant to the topic. As a rough guide, a 2000 word assignment should contain a reference list of at *least* seven sources, using both books and current journal articles, if possible.

There are a number of options for locating relevant information for your study. This includes not only websites and PrimoSearch (the Library Catalogue), but also databases, which require you to use your student log-in and password. Remember that PrimoSearch also accesses material from most of the databases and will retrieve book titles as well as journal articles.



On the library homepage select either Primo Search or, for a more detailed search, select individual Databases to find information.

Comply with the word limit

Make sure you meet the word limit, but do not exceed it. Usually a latitude of 10% either side is allowed. The total number of words is made up of the actual essay itself and does *not* include the title page, abstract, references used in the actual essay, reference list or appendix. Direct quotes are also excluded from this count.

Abstract (or Synopsis): Written on a separate page

You may be asked to include an abstract or synopsis in the assignment. An abstract is a concise and simple statement of the assignment topic and is placed before the actual essay. It usually consists of approximately 120-250 words in length, states the purpose of the essay and provides a clear and brief summary of what is written. As well, it indicates the purpose, direction, main arguments and conclusions of the paper. It is not merely an introduction, nor is it a list of the contents of the paper - it needs to indicate the direction taken, the main themes and the conclusions reached in your discussion of the topic. Remember, it is *not* a proposal but a summary, therefore it is written in past tense.

Many articles and research papers in journals contain abstracts. Read these to help you determine what constitutes an effective abstract. The abstract (or synopsis) is written after you have finished your paper/essay, thus it is a true reflection of the completed work.

Structure the content

The essay should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion:

The introduction

The introduction forms the first paragraph and it should clarify the topic of the essay, define major terms and outline what *will be* presented in the essay. It should be written in such a way that it encourages the reader to read on.

The body

The body of the essay is where the topic statement or question is actually answered. The main points of the topic should be presented in logical order and each point elaborated on separately. Consider the appropriate balancing of main points - at times they may need to be weighted equally within the assignment, at other times some points may need more elaboration than others. Factors such as relevance, word constraints and the purpose of the essay need to be kept in perspective when making such decisions.

The conclusion

The conclusion of the essay constitutes the final paragraph and should bring together, in summary, the major points presented in the body of the essay. The purpose is to sum up and reflect on the information found in relation to the topic, therefore no new ideas should be presented in the conclusion. The conclusion should be a concise statement of meaning drawn from your presentation and should show how it has answered the question. In addition, the conclusion rounds off the assignment, so that it does not finish abruptly. Avoid concluding with a quote.

Formal language

Tertiary assignments should be presented as professional papers; therefore you must take particular care with the use of formal language, punctuation, sentence structure, spelling and tense.

Use formal language and terms in essays, avoiding jargon, clichés and slang. When identifying people in the text of the essay do not refer to them by first name only. Surnames may be used on their own or first names may be used with surnames, if desired. As a rule, write essays in the *third person*, avoiding the use of first and second person pronouns such as 'I', 'we', 'us', 'our', etc., unless the topic asks you to share your own experience. Use *gender neutral language* as appropriate.

Punctuation

Ensure that all punctuation is correct. This also applies to use of punctuation marks when identifying sources and in the reference list. Please carefully follow the guidelines given in the referencing section on pages 11-17 of this guide to ensure that this is done correctly.

Special care needs to be taken with the use of *apostrophes*, especially in relation to their use to depict ownership. Remember to place the apostrophe after the actual owner/s. For example, the pupil's classroom versus the pupils' classroom. Be aware also of the use of an apostrophe in the word it's. It's refers to "it is", whereas, its refers to "the possessive case singular of it", for example 'Hold the book by its spine.' Take care to also differentiate between your (belonging to you) and you're (you are). Do not use contractions such as can't, haven't etc.

Spelling issues

There should be no spelling errors. Use a dictionary or spell check to ensure that spelling is correct. Be consistent - do not mix American and Anglicised forms.

Sentence structure

As a general rule, material in tertiary essays should be presented in complete sentences and presentation of information in point form should be avoided. Ensure that correct *grammar* is used, and check that each sentence contains a *subject* and a *verb* and is constructed as a complete sentence.

Use of tense

Avoid changes of tense within an assignment, and certainly within the one paragraph. Write in the tense that is appropriate to the particular topic. For example, an essay on an historical topic should be written in past tense, where as one which is describing the status quo should be written in present tense.

2. Format

An assignment should be submitted in a form that makes it a pleasure to read and grade. Untidy presentation and inconsistency in format can reduce the ease of reading the assignment and make it difficult to assess the content. This can result in a reduced grade. The following guidelines should be followed when preparing the final draft for submission.

Abbreviations, numbers and dates

Abbreviations may be used but only after they have initially been identified in full when first used. For example: ...the blood pressure (BP). His BP was subsequently...

Spell out numbers written in one or two words (*sixty-six, two million, sixteen hundred*) but use numerals for more complex numbers (*205, 4½, 1,354*). Be consistent within a sentence however (*only 6 of the 346 samples*). Never begin a sentence with a number.

Spell out centuries (*the nineteenth century*) but hyphenate them when they are used as adjectives (*fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature*). Decades can be written as figures (*the 1970s, the '50s*). Place BC after the year, but AD before it (*357 BC, AD 328*). If you prefer to use BCE and CE, they will both come after the year.

Appendixes

Material which is deemed necessary to support information in the text of the assignment but which is not considered appropriate for inclusion in the actual essay may be included as an appendix. Generally such items as letters, tables, graphs, questionnaires etc. would be placed in the appendix. Appendixes are placed at the back of the assignment, after the reference list. Each appendix included in the assignment must be referred to in the actual text of the essay.

Binding of assignment

Make sure that the pages of your assignment are firmly stapled together, with a title page as a cover sheet (see p. 9 for details of a title page) so there is no risk of pages going missing. The title page should be clearly visible at the front of the assignment.

Capitalisation of words

In titles, capitalise all words except for articles (*a, an, the*), prepositions (*between, against, in, of, to*) and coordinating conjunctions (*and, for, but, or, nor, yet, so*). Only capitalise these words if they begin or end a title, or follow a colon.

Italics

Italicise all titles of books, periodicals, movies, operas, CDs etc. (*The Importance of Being Earnest*). Use quotation marks for the titles of essays, chapters, poems, TV episodes etc. and unpublished works ("Sharks in danger").

Italicise a title within a title that is in quotation marks ("*Wuthering Heights* and Gender Issues") and use single quotation marks for a title that would normally be in double quotation marks when it is in another title requiring quotation marks (eg. for an article about a story you would write: "The Uncanny Theology of 'A Good Man Is hard to Find'")

Line spacing, margins and numbering pages

Typed assignments must be double-spaced. Handwriting is not acceptable. Print on one side of the paper only. The Font should be Trebuchet MS (which is the official font of Avondale College of Higher Education; if you do not have Trebuschet MS then Arial) and Size 11 or a font and size specified by your lecturer. Different sizes, 8-14, may be used in figures.

A margin of approximately 2.54 centimetres all round, on the left and right edges of the page, as well as the top and bottom, is essential. Pages of an essay must be numbered with the number shown at the top right of the paper.

Order of sections

The various sections of an assignment are to be bound together in the following order:

- Title Page
- Abstract (if required)
- The actual essay
- Reference List
- Tables
- Figures
- Appendix/Appendices (if applicable)

Paragraphs

Indent each paragraph. A paragraph is a group of sentences that develops one main point or idea. Generally, the idea is introduced in the key sentence and the successive sentences explain or illustrate the point that the paragraph is making.

Ensure that there is continuity between paragraphs with one paragraph flowing logically on from the previous one. Do not have paragraphs which consist of only one or two sentences. A paragraph should be approximately 100 words in length, although a range of about 50 to 150 words is acceptable.

Photocopies

As a general rule, do not include photocopied material in an assignment. If it is necessary to include such material, ensure that it is referenced correctly. It is usually appropriate to include photocopied material as an appendix rather than part of the actual essay.

Use of quotes

All quoted material must be identified as being quoted.

a. Prose

Where a quote is *shorter than 4 lines* in length include it in the text of the essay in quotation marks. The source of the quote must also be given at the end of the sentence. Please note the placement of the full stop at the end. For example:

Myths are “stories, not bound by rules of accuracy or laws of probability” (5).

“He was obeyed,” writes Joseph Conrad of the company manager in *Heart of Darkness*, “yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect.”

Quotes which are 4 lines or longer in length are to be indented. Quotation marks are not used and the quote is double spaced. For example:

Vaz Dias writes:

We have got together and exchanged ideas, and she is now busy writing a novel on a most exciting subject. She is full of a new enthusiasm, and I hope and pray that the re-emergence of *Good Morning Midnight* [sic] as a radio monologue will give her sufficient encouragement to write a great deal more and come out of hiding. (25)

b. Poetry

Place a single line of verse in quotation marks within your text, using a slash to separate lines of the poem, for example:

Space and time are clearly related in the magnificent image of the opening lines of the second stanza: “But at my back I always hear / Time’s winged chariot hurrying near.”

If you are quoting more than three lines of a poem, indent and double space the poem.

Lewis writes about war poets:

It is the logic of our times,
No subject for immortal verse,
That we who lived by honest dreams
Defend the bad against the worse. (1-4)

c. Drama written as prose

If everything is said by one character and there are four lines or less, treat it the same as a prose quotation, placing your quote in quotation marks with the line number in parenthesis at the end. If you mention the act number you would only give the line number, but if the act number is not mentioned, give both the act number as well as the line number.

In Act 3, Chloe comments on Edward’s actions as “brilliant but unethical” (56).

Chloe comments on Edward’s actions as “brilliant but unethical” (3.56).

Block the quote as you would for a prose essay if there are more than four lines said by one character.

If there are two or more characters, do not use quotation marks and indent. List the names of the characters in capitals and start a new line for each character. Give the line numbers (and act and scene if necessary).

The men in *Trifles* show contempt for females:

COUNTY ATTORNEY. I guess before we're through she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about.

HALE. Well, women are used to worrying over trifles. (29-30)

d. Drama written as poetry (such as Shakespeare)

Use the same guidelines for quoting poetry.

Bassanio is defiant:

SALERIO. My lord, here stays without
A messenger with letters from the doctor,
New come from Padua

DUKE. Bring us the letters. Call the messenger.

BASSANIO. Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones and all,
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood. (4.1.108-113)

Quotes should not be used in excess. They should be reserved for such items as definitions, brief extracts that cannot be expressed adequately in another way, or for special emphasis. As a general guide, quotes should constitute less than 10% of an essay.

When quoting, copy the original wording *accurately* and use the same spelling and punctuation as is used in the original. If there is an error in the original this can be identified in the quote by placing [sic] after the error. When including a quote in the text of an essay, make sure that the sentence is grammatically correct. If it is necessary to include an extra word or phrase in a quote to ensure correct sentence structure, place the word or phrase in square brackets.

If you omit part of the original work within a quote then indicate this with three spaced periods, (. . .) with another full stop added if this is at the end of a sentence or between two sentences.

Plagiarism

Please familiarise yourself with Avondale College policy on plagiarism (see www.avondale.edu.au under information/policies/academic integrity or view the online tutorial at Library>Info Skills>Online Tutorials>Avoid Plagiarism).

You cannot present another's ideas as your own. The reader should *never* be confused or in doubt as to where the information or ideas have been sourced. It is best to reference more often than not.

Usually, it is more appropriate to paraphrase the information into your own words, avoiding plagiarism by identifying the source of the paraphrased material and by providing a page number or paragraph number.

Where instances of plagiarism are established, penalties as outlined in the Avondale Handbook 2011-2012, pp. 34-36 will be applied.

Artificial Intelligence Generators

If a student has permission from their lecturer to engage with artificial intelligence models for a particular assessment task, then they “... should use AI models in ethical and responsible ways that are consistent with their institution’s learning, assessment and academic integrity policies and procedures, and the terms of use of the AI providers” (AAIN Generative AI Working Group).

Title page

A title page is to be placed at the front of the assignment. You must use the template provided by your lecturer.

3. Referencing

Material quoted from another author’s work needs to be acknowledged. Referencing correctly is important for a number of reasons:

- It shows you have read widely
- It provides support for your own arguments
- It shows you understand the issues involved and can critically apply that understanding
- It provides sufficient information for someone to locate the sources mentioned in your paper
- To acknowledge your sources and avoid plagiarism

EndNote and Zotero are programs to assist you with your referencing, or you may prefer to use www.citefast.com

More detailed information on how to reference using MLA style can be found on the library website under [How to Reference](#). The complete MLA Handbook (8th edition) is held in the Reserve Collection.

Tables and figures

These must be referred to in the text of your essay. Do not refer to the ‘table below’ or the ‘figure above’ or specify a page number as these often change with the final printing.

Tables

Refer to tables by their number: e.g. As shown in Table 4, the results were conflicting...

Table number: e.g. Table 1, Table 2 is determined by the order in which that table is referred to in your essay. Do not bold or italicize the table number.

- Write the title directly below the table number, and capitalise each word.
- Give the source and any notes below the table.
- Use lower case letters, not numerals or dot points for each point in the notes.
- Double space all material.

Bibliography vs Works Cited

Remember that a bibliography is a list of everything you have read for an assignment while a works cited list is a list of only the items you have quoted from or referred to in your assignment.

Table 1
Doctorate Degrees Conferred in Selected Fields: United States 1980-2000

Field	1980	2000	% Change	% Male
Biological Sciences	3,636	4,867	33.9	44.7
Computer Science & Engineering ^a	2,747	6,167	55.5	84.4
Education	7,314	6,830	-6.6	35.4
Language & Literature ^b	2,049	2,543	24.1	41.2
Mathematics & Natural Science	3,852	5,124	33.0	74.6

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2002*

(Washington: GPO, 2003) table 280.

^aEnglish language, literature, and modern languages.

^bComputer science and all engineering disciplines.

Figures

Examples: Graphs, charts, maps, drawings or photographs.

Refer to Figures by their number: e.g. As shown in fig. 4 the temperature rose quickly ...

Figure number: e.g. Figure 1, Figure 2 is determined by the order referred to in your essay. Place this BELOW the figure.

Title: Place the title/caption below the figure.

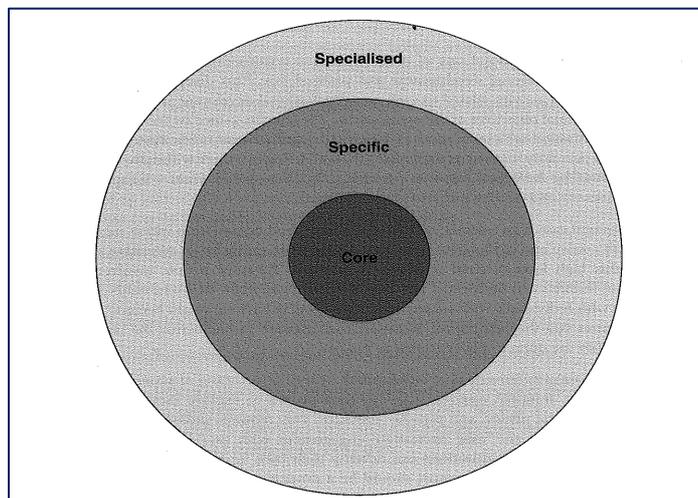


Fig. 1. Training structure for effective organisations. Source: Hanbury, Martin, *Positive Behaviour Strategies to Support Children and Young People with Autism* (Los Angeles: Paul Chapman, 2007; Print; 61).

- All illustrations, except tables and musical scores, are labelled Figure or Fig. Musical scores are cited as Example or Ex. beneath the score, or example or ex. in-text.
- When citing in-text, do not capitalize figure or fig (e.g. see fig. 2)

- List the title/caption beneath the figure, as well as bibliographic information from the source. If bibliographic information is listed below the figure you do not need to repeat this in your reference list.

Works Cited

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