

Presentation and style

Check what your department prefers:

- Text layout – double-spaced with an extra line space between paragraphs

Chen's (2006) study used a smaller sample group of 114 hospital patients aged over 65 years of age, selected by accidental sampling. Accidental sampling compromises a specific group and only those available at that time are selected; this sampling method provided the study with the required range of patients for its research as the patients used gave a variety within their target group (Parahoo, 2006).

The study evaluated a wide range of factors, to evaluate the risk factors associated with malnutrition. Research was taken using a face-to-face interview by a trained nurse within 48 hours of admission. The evaluating factors were: age, oral health, cognitive status, visual/hearing impairments, medication use, social economic status, functional status and social support, depressive symptoms and nutritional status. The results showed that risk factors to malnutrition were higher medication intakes, female gender, lower functional status and higher depressive state.

- Margins (top and bottom) – usually approx. 2cm (use the 'Header/Footer' as space to add module code details etc, and for page numbering)
- Margins (sides) – usually approx. 3cm on left and 2.5 on right (may be more for longer assignments such as dissertations which may need binding)
- Font choice – use a simple sans serif font such as Verdana (used throughout most this handbook) or Arial
- Font size – Verdana and Arial are slightly larger sized fonts so 11 will be large enough (as used here). Times New Roman (a serif font) is smaller and so usually needs to be in 12.

Academic Conventions

First person or third person?

First person

- Reflective writing will probably allow you to talk more about your personal experiences – e.g. for some Counselling courses, Nursing and Midwifery, Social Work, Teaching etc (practice-based courses)
- You can use words like 'I' 'me' 'my'
- It is a good idea to use a recommended reflective cycle to help organise your reflections about your actions and experiences (e.g. Gibbs, 1988)
- Make sure you do not spend too much of your word limit just telling your reader the story of what happened ('what' and 'how')
- Allow enough space to talk about 'why' you felt that way ('significance' – see 'Start Thinking Critically')

Third person

- Most academic writing will be written in the third person because it is less subjective
- You should avoid words like 'I' 'me' 'my'
- Try 'This essay focuses on ...' rather than 'I will focus on ...'
- Academic writing in the third person stops the essay being too personal – any other student could have written the same essay using these sources

Avoid contractions

- Write in full words like 'did not' and 'is not' (rather than didn't, isn't etc.)

Avoid conversational phrases and metaphors

- We do not always realise how often we use phrases that are common in conversation or the number of metaphors or clichés we use to explain our thoughts. Leave out or rephrase these sorts of words and phrases:

Phrase	What to do	How to do it differently
sort of / kind of	Avoid	Unless you want to say 'a bit' or 'slightly'
you know	Avoid – your reader does not know unless you give them some evidence	
gonna		use 'going to'
to the bitter end	Avoid	Try 'until the end of...'
that wasn't the half of it because...		'that was not the whole issue because...'
lots of stuff	Be more explicit	try 'lots of...' and identify what you are discussing