Planning your writing to manage your reading

1. Getting an initial plan can help you feel more ready for writing
   - Remember: the main body of your assignment only needs 3-5 ideas/main topics
   - Think about proportioning the word/page count for each section
   - Planning and note-taking strategies can help you manage the urge to read and help you research more effectively

2. Go back to the question: clarify your title / assignment brief
   - Using this, what might your 3-5 sections be about? (key themes, topics, examples to discuss)
   - Do you already have some section headings to follow (e.g. in a lab report)?

3. How many paragraphs will there be for each section? This depends on the overall length of your assignment.
   - Will there be enough space to provide your reader with evidence of breadth and depth? (see ‘The Writing Triangle’)

4. Developing your own question
   - Will you need to identify themes? How much of your word/page count should be used for defining and describing what something looks like and/or how you carried out your research?
   - Will you need to do close-reading or analysis of text(s) or image(s)?

5. Jot down some initial sources that could be helpful for this assignment
   - Remember: think proportionately about how many ideas, sources or pieces of evidence will be needed to support and inform your writing for each section (and within that, each paragraph)
   - Allow space to develop your analysis (discussion of significance of points) in each paragraph

This handout is part of a set: see also ‘The Writing Triangle’ ‘When is enough reading?’, and ‘Tailoring notetaking to manage your reading’

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Mind-map for planning the main sections of an essay proportionately

Central idea (3000)

Theme 1 approx 500-600 words
- Paragraph 1
- Paragraph 2
- Paragraph 3
- Paragraph 4

Theme 2 approx 500-600 words
- Paragraph 1
- Paragraph 2
- Paragraph 3
- (Paragraph 4)

Theme 3 approx 800-900 words
- Paragraph 1
- Aspect A
- Paragraph 2
- Aspect B
- Paragraph 3
- (Paragraph 4)

Introduction (10% of word limit) approx 300 words
- Paragraph 1
- Paragraph 2

Provide context: discuss previous studies and background approx 400 words
- Paragraph 1
- Paragraph 2
- Paragraph 3

Conclusion (5-10% of word limit) approx 200 words, 1-2 paragraphs

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