

Developing your writing skills

First of all think about the different types of assignments you will be required to write

- **essays** – structuring an argument with evidence from literature in relation to specific modules
- **reports** - written in a structured way in response to a need for information
- **critiques** - comparing and contrasting material using critical thinking
- **reflective** writing- taking practice to learning (thinking critically about your nursing practice in relation to what you have learnt in the classroom)

Answering the question

- read the guidelines very carefully to discover what is required
- distinguish between the subject (the broad topic under discussion) and the question (the specific issue your argument will address)
- gather the necessary information (see the sections on note-making and gathering information)- let the research lead your writing
- plan your essay and then ask yourself the following questions:
- does the plan satisfy the demands of the question?
- are all the points listed relevant to the title?
- are you using appropriate examples?
- is there a balance between different topics and sub-topics ?
- at this stage it might be a good idea to check with your tutor that you are on the right track
- attempt a first draft- re-daft if necessary

Introductions

- state the aim of the assignment
- give an overview of the essay and the topics it covers
- define the specific areas examined and the main points to be discussed
- give a rationale if necessary
- include participation in clinical practice if necessary
- use pseudonyms for confidentiality reasons in accordance with Code of Conduct

Example: DN Hypothetical Essay Guidelines and introduction (with thanks to Alexandra Wilson, Nursing Academic Support Tutor)

Students will produce an essay of 3000 words in which they critically analyse healthcare and support issues arising from the module content. These must include psychological and sociological components of care and the ethical issues which arise from this.

The assignment aims to:

- Enable the student to integrate theoretical concepts involved in developing ethical professional practice
- Strengthen the students' knowledge of the context of health
- Develop the students' critical thought in relation to healthcare

Guidelines:

1. Select an aspect of client care you have participated in, giving a rationale for your choice. Focus on one occasion with a particular client. The care must have been delivered safely.
2. Describe briefly the aspect of care with reference to support issues.
3. Critically assess the relevance of psychological and sociological issues in the care given, relating theory to practice.
4. Analyse any ethical issues arising from this and support your argument with appropriate literature
5. Identify elements of learning which can be transferred to future practice
6. Reference according to the School of Nursing policy

Introduction

This assignment will look at healthcare and support issues, with particular reference to the psychological and sociological components of care.

In order to do this, the discussion will focus upon the management of leg ulcers in a community care setting, drawing upon experience gained during clinical practice. Leg ulcer care was chosen because it is a high priority area of care; leg ulcers account for 40,000 cases per year within the community (reference, date) placing a significant strain on local services. Therefore this is an issue likely to affect every newly qualified nurse.

The essay therefore sets out to examine the social context of this problem, the psychological impact of pain management in leg ulcers and the ethical issues arising from the treatment and health promotion aspects of this care.

To illustrate these points, reference will be made to a particular patient encountered in the local community who has suffered with leg ulcers for the past five years. She will be referred to as Mary throughout the assignment in order to maintain confidentiality and comply with the requirements of the Code of Professional Conduct (NMC, 2002)

Structuring an argument

Broadly your task in an assignment is to convince the reader that your point of view is worth considering

Eg- an argument against euthanasia

- *Premise*- the deliberate taking of life is wrong
- *Supporting evidence*- the laws and customs of all cultures, the intrinsic value of human life
- *Premise* – the possibility of euthanasia would undermine the basic relationship of trust and confidence that should exist between patient and nurse or doctor
- *Supporting evidence*- medical and nursing codes, Hippocratic oath, statements by professional bodies
- *Premise* – the availability of euthanasia would reduce the drive to improve standards of palliative care
- *Supporting evidence* –expert testimony, publications by specialists in palliative care
- *Premise*- it would be impossible to legislate effectively and safely for euthanasia
- *Supporting evidence*- the history of attempts to legislate, the impossibility of legislating to cover all circumstances, analogy with misuse of other laws and extension in ways not envisaged by their creators
- *Conclusion*- active euthanasia should not be permitted

(example from Maslin-Prothero p.201)

Note how each of the premises that support the main conclusion are in a sense the conclusions of supporting arguments- so the argument develops to a conclusion.

Conclusions

- Pull together and summarise main points
- Avoid any new material
- Reiterate learning gained for future practice

Developing an effective writing style

You can develop an effective writing style by using a three pronged strategy:

- Use straightforward language
- Use short or medium length sentences
- Use other people

Using straightforward language

the words and phrases in the left hand column can sometimes be replaced by shorter and simpler expressions. Fill in the right hand column with a shorter word or phrase

Accordingly	
Ascertain	
As compared	
At the conclusion of	
At the end of the day	
At this time	
Attributable	
By means of	
Constitute	
Costs the sum of	
Demonstrate	
Despite the fact that	
Due to the fact that	
Enclose herewith	
For the purpose of making	
Furthermore	
In a position to	
Inasmuch as	
Increase the effectiveness of	
In regard to	
In the course of	
In the event that	
Make it possible	
Modification	
Nevertheless	
Notwithstanding the fact that	
Prior to	
Subsequent with	
The manner in which	

Answers on next page

Suggested solutions

Accordingly	So
Ascertain	Find out
As compared	Compared
At the conclusion of	After
At the end of the day	Finally
At this time	Now
Attributable	Due, owing
By means of	By
Constitute	Is, are
Costs the sum of	Costs
Demonstrate	Show
Despite the fact that	Despite, although
Due to the fact that	Because
Enclose herewith	Enclose, here is
For the purpose of making	To make
Furthermore	Also
In a position to	Able to
Inasmuch as	Since
Increase the effectiveness of	Improve
In regard to	About, concerning
In the course of	During
In the event that	If
Make it possible	Enable
Modification	Change
Nevertheless	But
Notwithstanding the fact that	Despite
Prior to	Before
Subsequent to	After
The manner in which	How

Use short/medium length sentences

- each sentence should move logically on to the next
- use signposts when changing subject or introducing a new point of view eg 'however' or 'on the other hand'
- paragraphs are collections of sentences on the same theme- often the first sentence is then refined or elaborate (so a change of direction necessitates a new paragraph)

Linking words and phrases for use in essays

Words for adding to and developing

In addition	adding a further point in an argument or a further piece of evidence in support of the argument
It is also the case	in addition to what has gone before
Furthermore	moving the argument along
Moreover	Further, beyond what has been said
It follows from this that	We can deduce something
It is clear from this that	We can see from what has gone before
Therefore	For that reason
Thence	From that time forward
hence	From this time onward, for this reason

Words for considering other views or evidence

Alternatively	A different point of view
On the other hand	<u>The</u> alternative point of view, approach, evidence
On the contrary	The opposite of what has been said
conversely	The opposite of what has been said
Even so	Despite what has gone before
However	Despite what has gone before
nevertheless	On spite of what has gone before

Use other people

- a way of developing effective writing is to look critically at the work of others and try to work out why you prefer one writing style to another
- access tutorial support for help with grammar punctuation and sentence structure

One final comment- the best writing is clear writing –try not to ‘posh up’ your writing with words you feel sound scholarly and also beware of the thesaurus!