



## Learning Lists for Science 3

### How To Write Essays

Contents Updated: Wednesday, 03 December 2003

- Value of Essays
- Understanding the Task
- Collecting Material
- Planning the Essay
- Write First Draft
- Rewrite

#### A. Value of Essays

1. Organises thoughts
2. Personal expression—own point of view
3. Diagnostic—discover strengths and weaknesses
4. Important practice for exams
5. Don't treat as a chore—chance to show your ability.

#### B. Understanding the Task

1. Note the precise requirements:
  - general or specific?
  - broad or detailed?
  - objective survey or personal judgments?
  - particular sources of data?
  - purely descriptive or explanations?
  - discussion of implications?
  - applications? etc.

#### C. Collecting Material

1. Purpose essential:
  - promotes effective reading
  - saves time.
2. Ask questions at the outset
3. Ask more questions while researching
4. Start as soon as the essay is given:
  - you will be alert for relevant ideas
  - your unconscious mind will work on the problem. E.Keep a notebook for ideas.
5. Keep a notebook for ideas
6. Sources of information:
  - tutor's references
  - references in books, journals, encyclopaedias, etc
  - library—staff will help
  - informal sources—lectures, tutorials, newspapers, conversations, etc.
7. Record the sources:
  - title, author, publisher, place, date
  - credit sources used (author, date).

## **D. Planning the Essay**

- 1. Select the relevant material:**
  - reject trivial,~obscure, tentative material
  - select enough to support the argument.
- 2. Write an outline:**
  - use creative patterns
  - helps logical sequence (continuity) and fluency
  - saves time wasting, crossing out and re-writing unnecessarily.
- 3. Introduction:**
  - comment on subject and treatment
  - survey background information.
- 4. Main body:**
  - argue through 2 or 3 main ideas
  - support with examples and evidence.
- 5. Conclusion:**
  - summarise the argument
  - what are the firm or tentative conclusions from the evidence
  - review the wider implications, significance for the future, further work, etc.

## **E. Write First Draft**

- 1. Write conclusions first:**
  - gives a sense of purpose
  - gives a clear ending—not a “fadeout”.
- 2. Style:**
  - simple and direct
  - short sentences
  - be concise.
- 3. Layout:**
  - should help the reader
  - reflect the structure of the argument
  - each main idea—a new paragraph
  - illustrations save words
  - distinguish your ideas from others
    - name sources
    - for quotations—“quotation marks”
  - use headings and sub~headings
  - end with a brief bibliography.

## **F. Rewrite**

- 1. Reasons:**
  - more objective
  - fresh approach
  - chance to notice weaknesses
  - chance for criticism.
- 2. Criticise:**
  - ask friends/colleagues to comment
  - check:
    - does it fulfil title?
    - are the main aspects covered?
    - is the depth of treatment right?
    - is it logical?
    - is it well supported with evidence?
    - are there any obscure or pompous phrases?
- 3. Eliminate all weaknesses.**
- 4. Presentation:**

- Essay marking is subjective
  - must create a good impression
  - write legibly—illegible writing can cause the loss of a whole grade
  - examiners/tutors have a lot to mark—make it easier for them.
- use illustrations as much as possible
- be presentation conscious!

## References

- D Rowntree, *How to Study*, chapter 4
- T Buzan, *Use Your Head*, Organic study

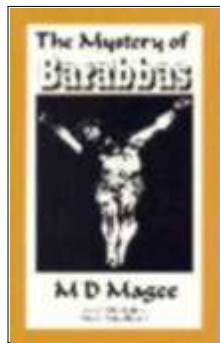
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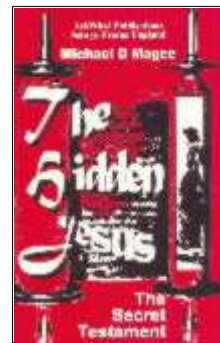
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