

# Writing Workshop

## Overview

- What is good writing?
- Types of writing
- Essays in particular
- Plagiarism
- 10 point plan

## What is Good Writing?

- Communication
  - What?
  - To whom?
  - Why?
- Together, these three factors determine the entire style and structure of the presentation

## Style

- Choose appropriate language and style for your intended reader
  - which tense to use
  - use of adjectives
  - use of maths/equations
  - length of sentences
  - use of technical terms
  - use of paragraphs/sections
  - “reading age” of intended reader
- Formal or informal
- Subjective or objective
- Opinions or fact

## Structure

- Choose appropriate format for the purpose the material is to achieve
  - order of material
  - length
  - sections or headings?
  - abstract / introduction?
  - summary or conclusions?

## But always ...

- Beginning
  - Tell them what you are going to tell them
  - i.e. an introduction – set context/strategy, etc.
- Middle
  - Tell it to them
  - i.e. the main argument(s)
- End
  - Tell them what you told them
  - i.e. a conclusion/summary

## Essay Structure

- Aim – to inform not impress
- Prose
  - Plain and clear English, not florid or pretentious
  - Brief, economical, precise
  - Not dull, abstract or vague
- Structure
  - Simple diagrams that add to the text
  - Key equations but not too many
  - Break up with section headings if appropriate
  - **References**

## References

- Give enough information for reader to be able to find the information!
- Choose a citation style
  - Numeric – bracket[1] or superscript<sup>2</sup>
  - Harvard – author name and year, e.g. (*Probert, 2003*)
- Bibliography at end - either in order as used or alphabetical
- See “Citing electronic and other publications” at <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/library/subjects/resmethods.htm> for examples

## Trustworthy?

- How trustworthy is your source?
  - Printed word is not infallible!
  - WWW much less so!!!
  - See “Evaluating information resources” at <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/library/subjects/resmethods.htm>

- How trustworthy are you?
  - Is the material you are presenting your own or someone else's?
  - Beware plagiarism – even unintentional!

## **Plagiarism**

- Dictionary definition
  - To steal from the writings or ideas of another
- Spratt (1983)
  - “The unacknowledged use of another persons work, in the form of original ideas, strategies, and research as well as another person's writing in the form of sentences, phrases and innovative terminology.”
- UG Handbook p34 for sections on “Academic Misconduct” and “Plagiarism”

## **How to Avoid Plagiarism**

- Give appropriate references to sources you have used
- Give source of any direct quotations and enclose them in quotation marks
- Do not change only one or two words
- Avoid “patchwriting” – express yourself in your own words

## **Essay Assessment**

- Content mark is typically 70% of whole
  - Is the topic appropriately treated and clearly explained? Appropriate level of prior knowledge assumed?
  - Has a wide range of source materials been used? Evidence of research?
  - Is there evidence of clear and original thinking and synthesis of material?
- Style mark is typically 30% of whole
  - Is there a clear structure (introduction, development, conclusion)? Clear flow of argument? Balance of fact v.s. opinion?
  - Good English used .e.g. spelling, sentences, paragraphs, consistency of tense, etc.?
  - Clear presentation? Visually appealing layout, use of figures, headings, fonts, referencing style

# 10 Point Plan

1. Have a strategy – i.e. plan before start
2. Read around the subject
  - ◆ collect your material and note references (including page numbers) of potentially useful material – saves much time later
3. Decide on what is interesting to you and which particular aspects of the subject you are going to present in your essay
4. Sort material into order
  - ◆ Set aside that which is not relevant
  - ◆ Collect additional material to fill gaps
  - ◆ Include figures & tables with captions
5. Decide on your conclusions
  - ◆ What is the argument you are trying to make?
  - ◆ Be very clear at the outset – just one viewpoint or many? Avoid confusing the reader!
6. Decide on the intended readership
7. Write the introduction
8. Decide on sub-headings (if any)
9. Write the essay!
10. Add the references
  - ◆ A specific reference to the source of figures in figure caption is a good idea