



Assignment Kit

Assignment Title

Module

Due

Length

How to Use

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Checklist

Tasks	Time Estimate	Date to be completed
Understanding task demands		
Understanding question or title		
Brainstorming ideas		
Determining what information is required and how to get it		
Gathering information, making notes		
Creating outline structure		
Organising notes		
Organising thoughts/reflecting		
Writing first draft		
Revising draft(s)		
Writing up references		
Final draft		



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The Question

“The most important thing is to demonstrate that you **understand the question** and show how you are going to answer it” - TCD Lecturer

Steps to Answering the Question

1. Underline the key words
E.g of circled question
2. Explain the answer in your words, what are you being asked to do?
3. Jot down the main points that you need to address
4. Have you got a balance between descriptive and critical writing?
E.g. of two types of writing.



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The Question

Write your question in the box below:

Break the question down into the necessary parts to answer:

Now write in your own words what you are being asked to do.

Example: “this question is about....., it deals specifically with ... and the main points I need to address are.....)

What do you already know about the subject?

“High marks go to students who demonstrate critical thinking” - Lecturer

Def. - examining and judging analytically and without bias

It can be useful to use prompt questions to develop your critical thinking - Who? What? Where? When? Why? & How? Questions

Who are the main authorities in this field?
What do they say?
Where do they agree?
Where do they disagree?
What is the latest thinking on this subject?
What do I think?
What evidence supports or contradicts my thoughts?

What critical thinking is not?
Biased or one-sided views
Adhering to views regardless of evidence
Emotional arguments not supported by facts
Description vs. exploring context, investigating and explaining.

Generate your own ideas in relation to the question.

My initial thoughts

Evidence for

Evidence Against

Any conclusions or observations at this point?



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Gathering Info

Reading, analysing, and gathering information and synthesising your ideas.

5 Things to Do when Reading

1. Set time limit for each source
2. Always know why you are reading it e.g. how it contributes or pushes forward your position.
3. Keep a note of each article, is it relevant? If you're not sure if it's relevant try to skim read and draw out the main points to work out as quickly as possible if it is of use.
4. Take breaks to prevent reading on autopilot
5. Use your own words when taking notes to support understanding and avoid paraphrasing

How do I keep track of everything?

You can use a table like below to track what you've read and what's its main points are.

Source	Relevance	Ideas generated	Comment on value
Murray (2010)	Argues for Welfare State	Apply to Irish economy	Very useful

Your turn now

Use the table below to track what you're reading. You can start off with a few sources and add more detail as required.

Source	Relevance	Ideas generated	Comment on value
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Referencing?

There are many styles of referencing, check your course handbook to find out which one is used in your area. Most likely it will be Harvard or APA. For more info on referencing check: <http://www.tcd.ie/Library/support>

Tool: Endnote is a tool freely available to students which helps keep track of references see: <http://www.tcd.ie/Library/support/endnote>

Making good notes poses a challenge

1. Skim read text first to see how relevant it is.

Things to Do when Note taking

2. Reading the abstract, summary and conclusions (e.g. of a journal article) can often be enough to give you a sense of the content.
3. Close the book or put away the article and see if you can summarise the main points.
4. Write down the main points (index cards can be useful as they help you to be concise) and flesh out the detail.
5. Remember the purpose for taking notes—e.g. to summarise information, help with understanding and clarity of thought.
6. If you find yourself mindlessly copying down text, stop and take a break and ask yourself why you are taking the notes and how your notes will contribute to your essay.
7. Try to make your notes as memorable and meaningful as possible, for example using diagrams, pictures and abbreviations.
8. Keep your essay topic in mind when you are taking notes.

Note taking methods

1. Cornell Method
2. Mindmaps
3. Method 3
4. Method 4

Cornell Two-Column Notes	
Keywords:	Notes:
	Types of Matter
Solids	I. Solids A. Have a definite shape B. Have a definite volume
Liquids	II. Liquids A. Do not have a definite shape B. Have a definite volume
Gases	III. Gases A. Do not have a definite shape B. Do not have a definite volume
Summary: (Insert summary of lecture after class.)	



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Your turn now

Writing and Drafts

Outlines are essential to writing great essays—they help you structure your thoughts and arguments. Think about them as blueprints for your essay. They separate planning and thinking from writing—so when you sit down to write your essay you have a clear plan to follow.

Introduction
 -define context and scope of question.
 -outline your position and the points or arguments you are going to address

Topic 1
 State why it is important and how it links to the question.

Subtopic or point.....

Subtopic or point.....

Topic 2
 - How does it link to point 1?
 - Is it an alternative perspective?
 -Is the flow of your points logical?

Subtopic or point.....

Subtopic or point.....

Topic 3, 4 etc
 -Giving supporting evidence
 -Building up your argument
 -Showing a clear line of reasoning without bias.

Subtopic or point.....

Subtopic or point.....

Conclusion
 -Pulling together the strands of your argument.
 -What are the implications of what you have found?
 -Do you have any recommendations?

Over to you

Your position in relation to the question

Introduction

Main Section

Topic 1 (main points)

.....
Topic 2 (main points)

.....
Topic 3 (main points).....

Conclusion



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Writing and Editing

5 Things to Do when Writing

- 1. Think about Writing as an attempt to be as clear as possible with the least words. (Remember your word count is valuable).**
- 2. The first time you can focus on getting the content down.**
- 3. The second time re-order the focus, clarify and lose words.**
- 4. Pick one section, one subtopic and say I will write this paragraph in only 5-10 sentences.**
- 5. If you are having problems you might want to return to your outline and be more specific.**



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Your turn now



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Feedback & Action

It's important to capture feedback and set actions based on the comments you have received about the essays you have submitted. This way you can improve your writing style and monitor your progress with each assignment you submit, making sure you capture the learning each time. This booklet should help you to identify the areas where you need to improve e.g. data collection, critical thinking, note taking, outline, writing style or time management.

Questions to ask about your essay
Does my essay address the question in the title?
Does my essay address the main arguments in relation to this issue?
Have I given a strong conclusion and evidence to support my arguments?
Have I mentioned the main references and cited any references of importance mentioned in my lecture notes?
Have I used the correct format and referencing system?
Is my essay written in language that is easy to understand?
Does my essay address the main arguments in relation to this issue?
Final Checklist
Is the word count correct?
Are my spellings, grammar and sentence structure accurate?



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Your Turn Now

Feedback.

What mark do I honestly feel my essay deserves?

Checklist

Mark my essay got —

Feedback

Action—

What am I going to do differently next Time?



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