2nd Edition

Research and Study Skills
Information for Tutors

Think. Rethink

THOUGHT

Overview

This pack has been designed for tutors of further education students, as well as tutors of students who have recently begun in higher education. Although the activities contained within this pack are primarily intended for students in the further and higher education sectors, it is envisaged that they can also be of benefit to anyone who has an interest in improving their research and study skills.

This second edition of 'Research and Study Skills' builds on the successful first edition ('Information and Research Skills') which was published in 2011 and which has received international interest. The new edition incorporates additional material from Library Services' recently formed Academic Skills Centre including: note taking, critical thinking, time management, paraphrasing and planning and structuring an essay. Activities retained from the previous edition include: getting to know an academic library, Google, searching electronic resources, website evaluation, plagiarism and referencing.

Further information about our Research and Study Skills training programme and how it has evolved can be found in an open access article co-written by Anderson and Bull (2014).

We hope this information pack for tutors and librarians, which is intended to be used in conjunction with the revised student packs, provides all of the information required to successfully deliver training on a wide range of essential research and study skills, both within the UK and abroad.

The Library Academic Engagement Team
Library Services, University of Birmingham. 2014

Reference:
Anderson, L. and Bull, S. (2014) The creation of a university library outreach programme to develop the information literacy of further education students: an interactive approach to support transition. **Journal of Information Literacy**, 8(1): 42-57.
Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/8.1.1853 [Accessed 3 July 2014].

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Library Services

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Research and Study Skills: Research and Evaluation

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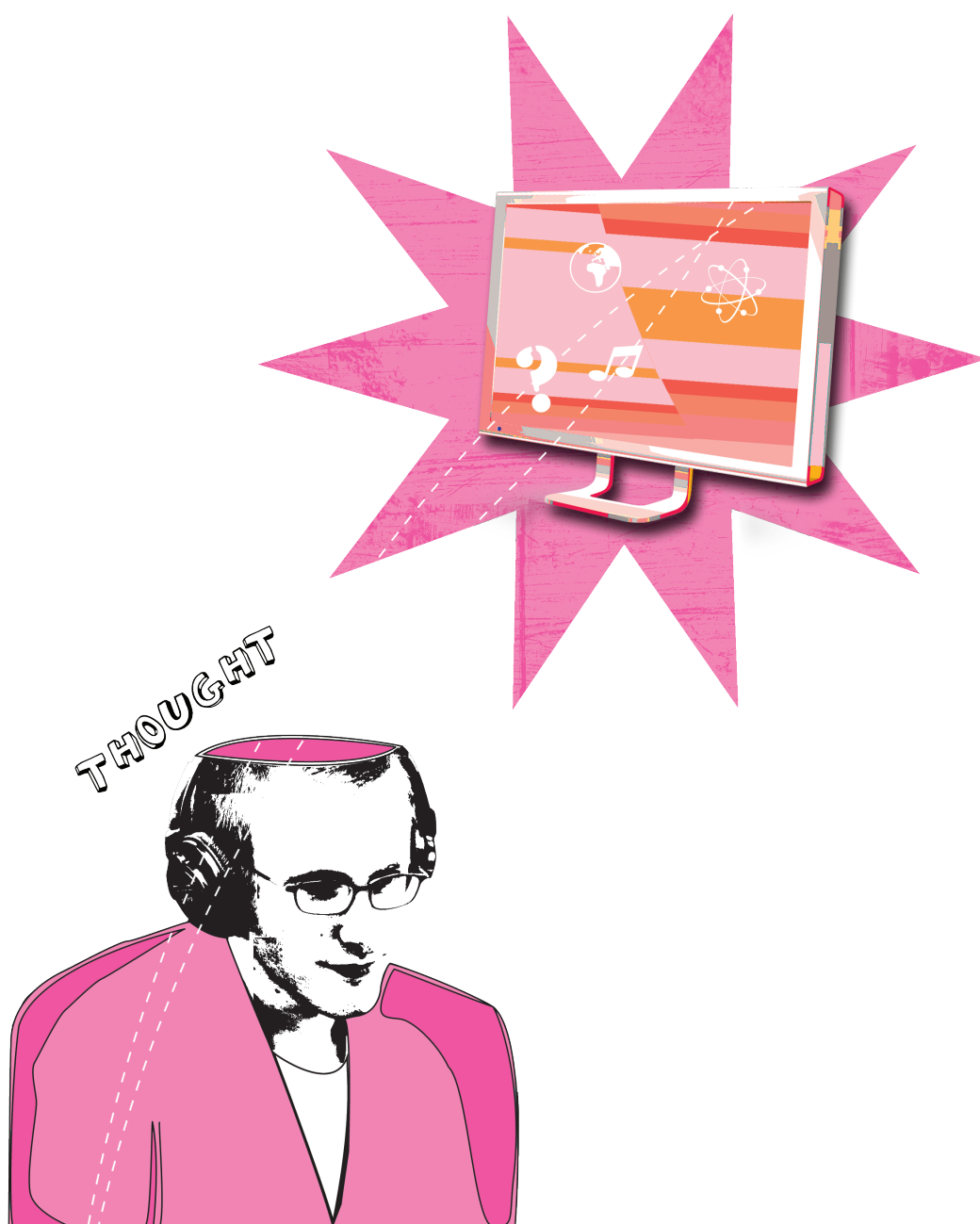
1 Getting to know an academic library

Timescale for the activity

20 minutes (10 minutes for students to complete the quiz, and 10 minutes to go through the answers).

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Recognise that an academic library is very different from a school or college library.
- ☐ Understand the range of resources, services and facilities that an academic library offers.

Background

Students are often overwhelmed by the scale of an academic library and can find it daunting to begin with. They should not feel daunted as there is always lots of help available with using the resources and facilities.

Activity

In order to help acclimatise students to academic libraries the following quiz aims to test their current perceptions against the reality of Library Services at the University of Birmingham.

There are numerous ways in which you can teach this, but the simplest is to ask the students to answer the questions in the space provided within the Student Pack (pages 4–6).

When the students have completed the questions you should then go through the correct answers with them.

Quiz answers:

1. How many libraries are there at the University of Birmingham?
The University of Birmingham has *9 libraries* plus a separate library for Special Collections (The Cadbury Research Library). Details of all of these libraries can be found at: www.birmingham.ac.uk/libraries/info/index.aspx
Post Autumn 2016, after the new Main Library has opened, there will be 6 libraries as three of the site libraries will be incorporated into the new Main Library. Further information about the new Library project can be found at: intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/staff/newlibrary/index.aspx

2. How many books does the University of Birmingham Library own?
2 million – 3 million. At the time of writing the actual figure is 2.7 million books. These books cover a wide range of subjects and support all the taught courses and research programmes offered by the University. Due to the size of the collection it is essential for students to make use of the Library Catalogue to discover what is available as well as to locate items in our buildings. As well as traditional printed books the Library also purchases many electronic books which are available to all of our students 24/7 anywhere in the world.

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1 Getting to know an academic library continued

Quiz answers:

3. Which of the following does the University of Birmingham Library have?

Answer 'Yes' or 'No' to each.

Yes	No	
☑	☐	Books
☐	☑	Cash point
☑	☐	Coffee shop
☑	☐	Computers
☑	☐	DVDs
☑	☐	Electronic resources
☑	☐	Group study rooms
☑	☐	Help
☑	☐	Journals (academic magazines)
☑	☐	Newspapers
☑	☐	Photocopiers
☐	☑	Pub
☑	☐	Study spaces
☑	☐	Wifi

4. How many electronic journal (academic magazines) articles are downloaded every year at the University of Birmingham?
Over 3.5 million. The actual figure increases every year.

Note: You can also expand at this point on what a journal article is and why they are so important to academic research.

5. Over 300 members of full-time and part-time staff work for Library Services at the University of Birmingham. Which of the following do they do?

Answer 'Yes' or 'No' to each.

Yes	No	
☑	☐	Add the books to the library catalogue
☑	☐	Answer questions via an online chat service
☑	☐	Buy books and other materials
☑	☐	Help staff and students
☑	☐	Library development/improvement work
☑	☐	Maintain and pay subscriptions to our electronic resources
☑	☐	Make the books ready for the shelves
☑	☐	Obtain books from other libraries in the world
☐	☑	Offer course advice
☑	☐	Offer support on essay writing and study skills
☑	☐	Provide tours of the library
☑	☐	Repair books
☐	☑	Serve in the café
☑	☐	Shelve books
☑	☐	Train students in how to find information in their subject(s)

2 Note Taking

Timescale for the activity

15 minutes (5 minutes for Activity 1 and 10 minutes afterwards to discuss effective note taking).

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Identify clear and concise note taking.
- ☐ Understand that good note taking should summarise concisely the key points and should demonstrate how related ideas are linked.
- ☐ Appreciate that the approach used in taking notes is a personal preference and often linked to an individual's learning style.

Background

Making notes is an important skill in academia. There are many instances of when students would make notes, for example: during lectures, classes or when reading. We make notes for a variety of reasons. These include:
- ☐ To help us to concentrate.
- ☐ To remember important information.
- ☐ To allow us to process information and clarify ideas.
- ☐ To keep active through multi-tasking.
- ☐ To collect material for assignments.
- ☐ To help revise and prepare for exams.

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2 Note Taking continued

Activity

This activity is designed to allow students to reflect on their current note-taking skills.

Ask students to read the text on 'Inclusive Education' which is included in their packs (on page 8). It is also included in this pack on page 9. Students should imagine that they are Education students who need to read the text in preparation for an exam. They should not be given any guidance but simply told that they should 'read the passage and make notes'. You may like to put some pens, highlighter pens, pencils and paper on the students' desks (although students should be given the choice which of these materials they wish to use).

Students should be given a maximum of 5 minutes to do this part of the activity and should be advised to stop (even if they haven't finished) once the time has elapsed.

Note: It is the style of note taking that students currently use which this activity is seeking and not whether the students can write notes for the entire passage.

Once students have finished the activity, you should discuss with them the different ways of note taking that they have used. You may like to ask students to volunteer examples, or you may wish to look at the three examples on the PowerPoint slides to illustrate three ways that students may have made notes. With the PowerPoint slides, you may like to ask students to comment on the style of notes.

They may come up with some of the following:

Handwritten notes
(PowerPoint slide Handwritten Notes)
- ☐ Notes have been taken on each sentence as if it was read without seeing if it was important or not;
- ☐ Equal emphasis was put on all items of information – ie no critical reflection on the aspects that were more/less important;
- ☐ No abbreviations were used (if the notes are for the student's personal use then abbreviations can save time);
- ☐ Same linear format as the original passage – no linking together of facts and ideas.

Highlighted text
(PowerPoint slide Highlighted Text)
- ☐ No thought has been given to the importance of the content. Everything which *might* be important has been highlighted;
- ☐ The highlighting has kept the note maker busy, but there is no evidence of thought or engagement with the subject;
- ☐ These notes demonstrate a lack of own thoughts, ideas or opinions.

Handwritten notes and highlighted text
(PowerPoint slide Notes and Highlights)
- ☐ Highlighted text: highlighting has been used effectively to clearly divide the text into different sections, with the key focus of each section. identified. Questions have also been asked by the note taker;

2 Note Taking continued

☐ Written notes: The key ideas within each of the themes identified have been summarised succinctly. Linkage between the themes has been made;

☐ These notes reflect key ideas from this passage and suggest that the reader has a clear understanding of the topic and how the concepts relate to each other.

Activity

Inclusive education – widening participation

Widening participation is a higher education policy introduced by the Labour Government in its 2001 election manifesto. At its simplest, the policy was and is concerned with encouraging and enabling non-traditional groups of students to access higher education institutions through a programme of expansion. Non-traditional students can be defined for example as those who have little or no experience of universities, those from poorer and/or working class backgrounds, black minority ethnic groups, women, older applicants and those with a disability.

The policy's main driver was its attempts to a) increase the numbers of non-traditional entrants into university – the target then was for 50% of young people aged 18–30 to have experienced higher education by 2010, and b) through a range of activities and interventions to meet society's economic and social needs. To widen participation, those activities and interventions have been undertaken in collaborative partnerships with schools and colleges. The first of these was the Aimhigher initiative that was established in 2002. Aimhigher was the national outreach programme for widening participation and it specifically targeted schools, colleges and universities to work collaboratively on raising aspirations and attainment amongst young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Aimhigher delivered a number of programmes including summer schools and masterclasses. Although funding for the Aimhigher programme ceased in 2011, universities continue to provide a range of initiatives that raise aspirations and encourage learners with potential to enter higher education.

The University of Birmingham facilitates a number of schemes within its outreach and widening participation provision including the Access to Birmingham (A2B) scheme and Masterclass sessions. The A2B scheme is designed to help students experience higher education through the completion of a module, whilst the Masterclass sessions provide students with the opportunity to take a class, with expert staff, within the university setting so that they can experience what a higher education institution is like.

3 Google

Timescale for the activity

35 minutes.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
☐ Recall that there are three types of Google (Google, Google Scholar and Google Books) which can be useful in finding information for an academic essay.
☐ Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each type of Google.

Background

Students will probably already be familiar with Google and are likely to use it for finding information on a regular basis. Google was founded in 1998 by two university research students, and it processes over a billion search requests a day. In addition to Google there are also two other Google search engines can be useful if/when finding information for an academic essay: Google Scholar and Google Books.

Google (www.google.co.uk) – this is a search engine which searches over a billion websites.

Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.co.uk) – this is the academic arm of Google. Google have deals with a number of academic publishers and

Google Scholar allows users to search across their content. The results can be a mix of citation details, abstracts and entire journal articles. It also searches across journal articles that university academic staff have written and made freely available.

Google Books (http://books.google.co.uk) – this allows you to search across a number of books that have been made available electronically. Google have worked with a number of large research libraries to scan their books and make them freely available to the world. For some books you will find basic publication details, whilst for others you will discover some or all of the entire book.

3 Google continued

Activity

This activity will demonstrate the differences between Google, Google Scholar and Google Books.

Give the students an example of your choice or ask them to consider the keyword: **Olympics**. Ask the students to enter the keyword into each type of Google in turn and execute the search. For each type of Google they should look at how many results are returned, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of the type of information that is found.

Students should enter their findings into the table provided in their packs (page 12). Students should try to think about this from the point of view of finding information for their essays.

When students have completed this, gain feedback from them on what they have discovered. The table on the following page gives an indication of some of the observations that they are likely to have made.

3 Google continued

Google

We have filled in the table below as if we had asked the students to search for the word **Olympics** but the benefits and drawbacks will apply to the majority of search topics.

Type of Google	Number of results	Benefits	Drawbacks
Google www.google.co.uk	Approx: 59,200,000	☐ Returns the most results. ☐ Searches across a wide range of materials – a range of websites (eg, news, corporate, government, academic), blogs, videos, images etc. ☐ Mostly get through to the entire text of the result.	☐ Hard to find the most useful results amongst the millions that are returned. ☐ No quality control – posts by anybody in the world can be found and many may contain material of a low academic quality.
Google Scholar http://scholar.google.co.uk	Approx: 194,000	☐ The majority of results are of a good academic standard. ☐ Provides easy access to academic research that would otherwise be difficult to freely locate.	☐ Brings back some book results but not all of them (see the number of results for how many books are found via Google Books). ☐ Not always clear if the full item is available.
Google Books http://books.google.co.uk	Approx: 2,010,000	☐ Provides access to a large number of books electronically. ☐ Has some useful refining functionality on the left-hand side. ☐ Books have been through an editorial process which websites may not have been.	☐ Does not always provide the full item. ☐ Sometimes provides most of the item but with some pages missing. ☐ The books are of varying academic quality.

Traditional Google returns significantly more results than either Books or Scholar. Please note that these figures are correct as of July 2014 and are likely to increase in the run-up to the next Olympic Games.

Note: We have interrogated the different versions of Google using the basic search box in each instance. However each form of Google has an Advanced Search – by using this you can find even more relevant results. If you have time, demonstrate the Advanced Search options to students for the three forms of Google that have been considered.

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4 Searching electronic resources

Timescale for the activity

40 minutes (10 minutes to brief students on the ideas of keywords and Boolean logic, 10 minutes for Activity 1 and 20 minutes for Activity 2).

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:

☐ Understand what Boolean logic is and explain how to use it.
☐ Identify keywords in an essay title and think of alternative keywords (synonyms).
☐ Combine keywords using Boolean logic.
☐ Combine keywords using the Google version of Boolean logic.

Background

Very few resources (such as Google, Google Scholar and Google Books) allow you to do a natural language search, such as '*is there a link between violence in the media* and *crime*?' Students need to pick out the keywords for their topic and then link them with *Boolean operators*, such as AND or OR.

Keywords

The keywords in the topic are: violence, media and crime. As well as searching for these keywords, you should also think of synonyms (words with the same meaning). The following table illustrates the idea of keywords and synonyms.

Keywords ➡			
	violence	**media**	**crime**
S y n o n y m s ⬇	fury	television	criminal
	cruelty	film	illegal
	aggression	press	offence

Students should also consider alternative spellings, for example American spellings, such as **color** for **colour**, acronyms such as **TV** for **television**, as well as alternative words, such as **automobile** for **car**.

**4** Searching electronic resources continued

Boolean Logic

Boolean logic was devised by English mathematician George Boole and can be used to combine keywords to effectively search the web: returning relevant results whilst eliminating insignificant results.

There are three main Boolean operators: *AND*, *OR* and *NOT*.

In Google, a **space** is used for AND, **OR** is used for OR and **–** is used for NOT. To search for a phrase put " at the start of the first word and " at the end of the last word (this method of phrase searching also works in Boolean searching). Google will automatically search for synonyms: if you would like Google to search for the exact word you have typed then include a **+** sign (followed by no space) ahead of the word, eg, +car.

AND is used to join search terms when you want *both* terms to be present in a record, so it is used to combine the different concepts in your search. This can be illustrated as follows:

Eg, **media** AND **crime** (when searching Google you could use: **media crime**. Alternatively if you wanted media and crime as exact words you would type **+media +crime** when searching Google).
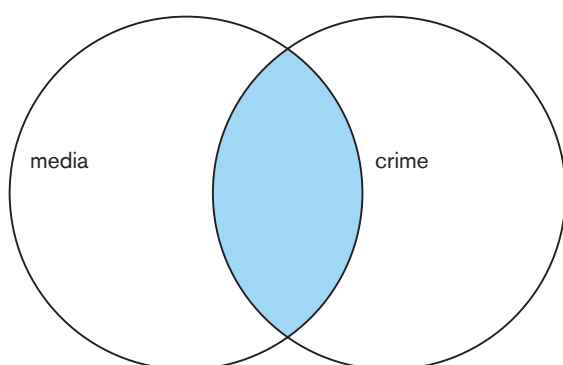
The shaded area represents the articles requested, with both the word *media* and the word *crime* in them.

OR is used to combine synonyms, ie, words with the same or similar meanings. It will find articles containing *either or both* words.

Eg, **media** OR **television** (when doing this search on Google you would use **media OR television**).
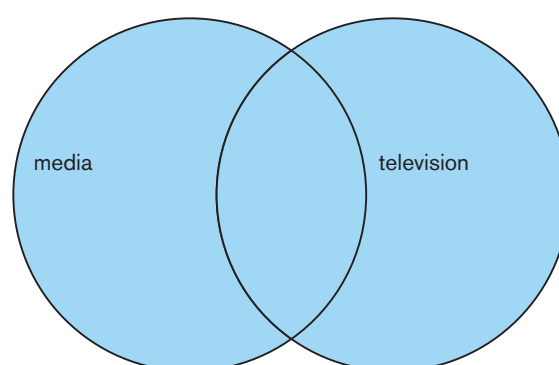
Thus this search finds articles with the word media, or with the word television, or with both words (in the intersection in the middle).

4 Searching electronic resources continued

NOT is used to eliminate concepts from a search. The term following NOT must be *absent* from the item in order for the record to be returned.

Eg, **CFCs** NOT **HCFCs** (when doing this search on Google you would use **CFCs −HCFCs** or if you wanted CFCs as an exact word you would type **+CFCs −HCFCs** when searching Google).

CFCs   HCFCs
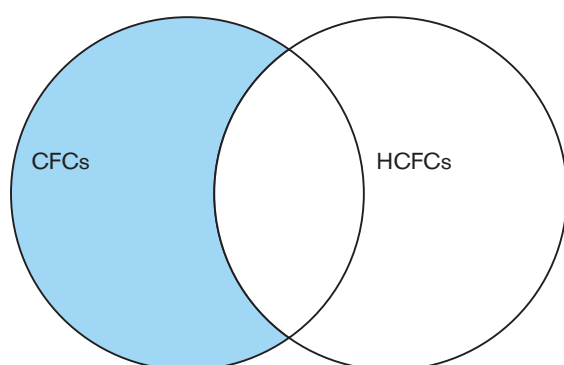
Therefore, this search will retrieve all documents with the term *CFCs*, but will eliminate any which also have the term *HCFCs*.

NB: the NOT search should be used with caution as it may eliminate articles which would otherwise have been useful. For example, the above search would eliminate an article comparing the effects of CFCs and HCFCs which may have contained some useful information about CFCs.

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4 Searching electronic resources continued

Activity 1: Boolean Logic Card Game

This activity will help students appreciate the significance of Boolean logic.

Show slides called 'Boolean Logic' of the Tutor's PowerPoint.

Each student is given one randomly selected playing card ensuring that all of the number 7 playing cards (ie, 7 of Clubs, 7 of Hearts, 7 of Spades and 7 of Diamonds) are distributed. It does not matter if the whole pack is not used or if two packs are used – the number of cards distributed will depend on the size the group.

The tutor will tell the students that each playing card is a web page and that the tutor is now going to perform a number of Boolean searches to see which websites (playing cards) will be found. At the start of the activity all students should be seated and they should stand if they believe that their website (playing card) would have been found by performing that search.

The searches to perform and the results that you should see are as follows:

Search criteria	Result
Can all students with the following cards stand up…	
… number 7	4 students should be standing
… number 7 AND black	The 2 students with the black number 7 cards should be standing
… number 7 OR black	All 4 of the students with the number 7 cards should be standing as well as approx. half the class that had a black card
… black OR red	All students should now be standing
… red NOT picture (Jack, Queen, King)	Students should not be standing if they have a picture card or a black card. Approx. just under half of the class should be standing
… black AND red	No student should be standing as no card is both black and red

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4   Searching electronic resources continued

Activity 2: Identifying keywords and combining them using Boolean logic

This activity will help students identify keywords, think of synonyms and combine words using Boolean logic.

Show slides called 'Keywords and Combining' of the Tutor's Powerpoint.

Students will be assigned one essay title: these can be taken from the following list of example titles or can be ones of your own choosing.

1. Is there a link between playing video games and aggressive behaviour in children?

2. How has the use of robots affected the car industry?

3. Do greenhouse gases contribute to climate change?

4. How realistic are hospital dramas on television?

For the essay title assigned, students should write on separate post-it notes the answers to the following points (a)-(d). These should then be affixed to the appropriate places on the template on the following page (which can be printed – and enlarged if required – and stuck to the wall in advance).

(a) Identify the keywords you might use if you wanted to find information to write the essay that you have been assigned.

(b) For each keywords that you have identified in part (a), try to think of at least one other alternative word meaning the same thing (synonym).

(c) How would you combine the keywords to get the best results using Boolean logic?

(d) How would you combine the keywords to get the best results using the Google form of Boolean logic?

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Essay Title

Keywords	Boolean Logic

Synonyms	Google Form of Boolean Logic

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4 Searching electronic resources continued

Searching Activity: Example answers

Possible answers to the Searching Activity. Please note the Boolean logic and Google Boolean logic parts are only suggestions and not an exhaustive list of answers which students may come up with.

Keywords	Synonyms	Boolean Logic	Google Form of Boolean Logic
1. Is there a link between playing video games and aggressive behaviour in children?			
☐ video games ☐ aggressive ☐ children	☐ computer games, arcade games ☐ violent, hostile ☐ boys, girls, teenagers	☐ "video games" AND aggressive AND children ☐ "video games" OR "computer games" OR "arcade games"	☐ "video games" aggressive children ☐ "video games" OR "computer games" OR "arcade games"
2. How has the use of robots affected the car industry?			
☐ robots ☐ car ☐ industry	☐ automated machines ☐ vehicle, automobile ☐ manufacture, business	☐ robots AND car AND industry ☐ robots AND car AND manufacture	☐ robots car industry ☐ robots car manufacture
3. Do greenhouse gases contribute to climate change?			
☐ greenhouse ☐ gases ☐ climate change	☐ emissions, aerosols, CFCs ☐ global warming	☐ greenhouse AND gases AND "climate change" ☐ "global warming" AND CFCs NOT HCFCs	☐ greenhouse gases "climate change" ☐ "global warming" +CFCs −HCFCs
4. How realistic are hospital dramas on television?			
☐ hospital dramas ☐ television	☐ medical dramas, Casualty ☐ TV, media	☐ "hospital dramas" OR "medical dramas" ☐ "medical drama" AND TV	☐ "hospital dramas" OR "medical dramas" ☐ "medical dramas" TV

Note: In Google, a **space** is used for AND, **OR** is used for OR and **−** is used for NOT. To search for a phrase put "at the start of the first word and" at the end of the last word. Google will automatically search for synonyms: if you would like Google to search for the exact word you have typed then include a + sign (followed by no space) ahead of the word, eg, +car.

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5 Website evaluation

Timescale for the activity

30-40 minutes (5 minutes to introduce the topic, 15-20 minutes for the students to evaluate the websites and 10-15 for feedback/discussion).

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Understand the difference between primary and secondary resources.
- ☐ Recall some of the key questions that need to be asked in order to evaluate a website for academic use.
- ☐ Critically evaluate websites.
- ☐ Work as a small team.
- ☐ Feedback key ideas to a larger group of peers.

Background

Students will often use the internet to do their research for academic essays. It is an important skill for students to be discerning and able to identify whether a website is suitable, as a source of information, for use in an academic assignment.

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5 Website evaluation continued

Activity

This activity allows students to compare and contrast and ultimately evaluate four different websites on climate change. The principles of this activity can, of course, be applied to other topics besides climate change. Therefore if you would prefer to use this activity as a template, but to use a different topic that is more relevant to your students, then please feel free. We will, however, remain with climate change for the remainder of this activity.

This activity will require the students to work in groups of 4-5 around a PC.

Ask the students to imagine that they have an essay due in on the topic of climate change the following day. It is now late at night and the only resource they have access to is the internet. They find the following four websites on the topic:

☐ The Royal Society – **http://royalsociety.org/ Climate-Change**
☐ Greenpeace – **www.greenpeace.org.uk/ climate**
☐ Department of Energy and Climate Change – **www.decc.gov.uk**
☐ Wikipedia – **en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Climate_change**

The students need to spend five minutes looking at each website in turn. The students should use the questions on the *Website Evaluation Checklist*, which is included in the Student Pack (as well as on page 24 of this pack), to help them

to decide the plus and negative points of each website. They should record their findings in the *Website Evaluation Table* (also found in the Student Pack).

Note: Students can sometimes spend a disproportionate amount of time looking at the first website listed; it is useful at five minute intervals to ask them to move onto the next website. You may want to point out to students that they are to evaluate the quality of the information on the website and not how aesthetically pleasing it is!

It is useful to speak to each group as they are working on this activity to keep them on track and to ask them searching questions to probe their thinking eg, Do you think the website is biased, and if yes, why? Do you think the people that produce this website are experts on the topic? Do you think the website is up-to-date enough?

When the students have looked at all four websites and have a few plus and negative points for each one it is then time for the small groups to report back to the whole class. There are a number of ways in which this can be done, but one way which works well is as follows. Start with group one and ask them to feedback on the plus points of website one. When they have done this ask the rest of the class if they have anything further to add on the plus points of that website. Then ask group two to feedback on the negative points of website one, again opening the discussion to the rest of the class when they

5 Website evaluation continued

have finished. Repeat this process until you have looked at the plus and negative points of all of the websites. A list of some of the possible answers can be found below:

The Royal Society – http://royalsociety.org/Climate-Change

Plus Points:
- ☐ Written by scientific scholars (see the *About us* section of the website) – therefore the information should be unbiased and is backed up by scientific evidence and theories.
- ☐ Links to useful *Policy reports and statements*, some of which are written at an introductory level (eg, Climate change: a summary of science).
- ☐ Links to in-depth reports on the topic that are fully referenced and written by experts.
- ☐ Information spans back over a number of years.

Negative Points:
- ☐ A limited number of documents are published every year (this is because they spend time on carrying out research ensuring that the information is as accurate as possible before publication).
- ☐ This website is not updated very frequently with information specifically about climate change.
- ☐ Covers a mass of other scientific topics besides climate change.

Note: Students may complain about the look of the site and the fact that it is so text heavy. It is important to remind them that it is the content of the site that is important and that at University level they will be expected to read many lengthy text documents.

Greenpeace – www.greenpeace.org.uk/climate

Plus Points:
- ☐ Regularly updated.
- ☐ Can give a very broad overview of the topic and issues surrounding climate change.
- ☐ Links to some in-depth documents on the topic.

Negative Points:
- ☐ Very biased – its main agenda is as a campaign website (look at the language that is used and how the topic is represented).
- ☐ Some of the information is very simplistic and not of a suitable quality for an academic assignment.
- ☐ Not all of the claims that are made are supported with evidence (so how do we know they are right?).
- ☐ Not scientific experts in the field.

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5 **Website evaluation** continued

Department of Energy and Climate Change
– www.decc.gov.uk

Plus Points:
- ☐ Regularly updated.
- ☐ Covers a wide range of aspects of the topic from the political to the scientific.
- ☐ Links to lots of useful documentation including official statistics, legislation and publications.
- ☐ The whole site is solely on this topic.

Negative Points:
- ☐ The people in charge of the Department of Energy and Climate Change are politicians rather than scientists (see *About us*).
- ☐ There can be a risk of bias due to this being a government run website, so it may reflect the views of the current government rather than those of the scientific community.

Wikipedia – en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change

Plus Points:
- ☐ Regularly updated - click on the 'View History' tab to see when the article was last edited.
- ☐ Provides an easy to understand overview of the topic.
- ☐ Provides a useful list of notes, references and suggestions for further reading. A good Wikipedia article should have links to references throughout the text providing details of where they got their source material from.
- ☐ The 'Talk' tab shows the discussion that Wikipedia editors have when creating the entry – can help to highlight areas for debate on the topic.

- ☐ This article does not have an 'Edit' button. This means that only those that have proven themselves as being good Wikipedia editors can make changes to this article. It is unusual for a Wikipedia article to not have an 'Edit' option but this is sometimes the case for controversial topics to stop those with extreme views on the topic from constantly editing the article to reflect their view point.

Negative Points:
- ☐ Encyclopedic level of entry – in academia references to encyclopedias such as Wikipedia are frowned upon. They are considered to be acceptable starting points for finding information on a topic but if students need to reference them in their essays it indicates that they have not read widely enough on the topic as they should be able to reference more in-depth items on the topic (books, journal articles, primary sources etc) in order to support the points they make in their essays.

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Website Evaluation Checklist

	Notes
Is it related to your essay?	☐ When you search the web you will get thousands of results. Stick to the ones that are directly related to your essay topic and do not get distracted! ☐ Consider the country / countries that this information refers to and only use if it is appropriate to your topic.
Who produced the website and the material within it?	☐ Anybody can post material onto the web. It is important to identify the author or organisation and check their credentials. The 'About Us' section of a website can be useful for checking these details.
Is the material on the website primary or secondary?	☐ Primary material – is first hand information produced by the author / organisation eg, data from their experiments, photographs, maps etc. ☐ Secondary material – uses, interprets, evaluates, criticises and / or comments on primary material eg, a newspaper article that comments on the results of an experiment. ☐ Example – The novel Harry Potter is a primary source as it was created from the mind of its author – J.K. Rowling. The book Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter by Elizabeth Heilman is a secondary source as it analyses the Harry Potter novels. ☐ Secondary material cannot exist without the primary material and involves third party interpretation (which could be inaccurate). A good secondary source will always take you to the primary material which allows you to check the interpretation and come to your own conclusions.
Is the material up-to-date enough for your essay?	☐ Check when the web page was last updated (you can often find this information near the bottom of the page or look for clues within the text). It is not uncommon for people to publish material on the web and then not remove / update it. ☐ Some topic areas change more rapidly than others, for example the law changes daily as new legislation is released so a website that has not been updated since 2010 may be very out-of-date!
Is the material biased?	☐ Check to see if the website gives a balanced viewpoint. Websites are created by individuals or organisations that wish to promote their own point of view. This may (intentionally or unintentionally) lead to bias. Consider why the web page has been written. ☐ Look at the way the material has been written and the language that has been used. For example is the language sensationalist? Check to make sure that all claims are backed up with appropriate primary / secondary material. ☐ It is good practice to use a variety of sources of information so that you can see (and assess for yourself) all points of view on a topic.

6 Critical Thinking – Arguments

Timescale for the activity

35 minutes (10 minutes for Activity 1,
15 minutes for Activity 2 and 10 minutes for Activity 3)

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:

☐ Understand what arguments are.

☐ Understand why good arguments are required
    in academic writing.

☐ Be able to analyse simple arguments, identify the premises
    and conclusions and present them in the standard format.

Background

These activities will help students to gain a better understanding
of arguments and how to break them down into their constituent
parts. By doing so, it becomes easier to see the logic behind
the conclusions offered, and to identify and critically analyse
the evidence offered in support.

6　Critical Thinking – Arguments continued

Activity 1

This activity will help students to think what is meant by 'argument' in academic terms as opposed to its everyday meaning. Split the students into small groups or pairs and ask them to write down on page 22 of their student packs the different meanings of the term 'argument'. Give them four minutes to do this and then ask them to feedback to the rest of the group.

Students will come up with their own definitions of what constitutes an argument – a row, a disagreement, a misunderstanding, a fight etc. Some will uncover a more accurate definition and should be encouraged to share with the group, others honing the definition still further until a consensus is reached.

Suggest to students that they note down on page 22 of their packs how an academic argument differs from the ideas that they thought of. Go through the basic definition of an argument with the students.

The basic definition of an argument is as follows:
1. a set of CLAIMS, or STATEMENTS (that which can be true or false)
2. one of the claims is called the CONCLUSION, the remaining are called the PREMISES
3. the premises are intended as offering REASONS to believe or accept the conclusion
4. That's it!

6 Critical Thinking – Arguments continued

Activity 2

This activity enables students to identify the premises and conclusions in an argument.

An argument is made-up of a set of statements. One of these must be a **conclusion** that the writer (or speaker) wants the reader (or listener) to accept, while the other(s) are offered as **reasons (premises)** as to why the conclusion is correct. If this doesn't happen, it's not an argument.

Talk through the following example with the students (using the Tutor PowerPoint slides called Critical Thinking):

> 'You should join your local gym. Regular exercise is key to losing weight and staying healthy, and local gym memberships are cheaper than ever!'

Here, the argument is simple. The speaker is recommending that the listener join their local gym – this is the argument's conclusion. There are two reasons offered to support this: regular exercise is key to losing weight, and local gym memberships are cheaper than ever. These are the argument's premises.

Ask the students to work in pairs to identify the premises and conclusions for the examples they have on page 24 of their packs. They need to underline the premises and circle the conclusions. Ask the students to feedback their answers and then use the 'Critical thinking' slides from the Tutor PPT to make the following answers clear to the students.

> **Answers:**
>
> **Conclusion**   Premises
>
> **1.** You enjoy talking and socialising with others. (You should get a job that involves dealing with different people.)
>
> **2.** Beans are cheap. (We had better eat beans on toast for dinner) – we are short of money this week.
>
> **3.** There's lots of snow forecast for later on. (You should stay home from work today) – the police have advised everyone to stay off the roads.
>
> **Note:** Emphasise that the conclusions do not necessarily appear at the end.

6 Critical Thinking – Arguments continued

Standard Format

A good way of making an argument clear is to rewrite it in the standard format.

Rewriting arguments in the standard format is the next step on from identifying the premises and conclusions. Use the Tutor PPT to talk the students through the following example:

> 'We should not test cosmetics on rabbits, which are conscious animals. This causes them pain and stress, and we should not inflict pain on any animal with consciousness.'

Once we quickly identify the conclusion and premises, it looks like this:

Conclusion   Premises

We should not test cosmetics on rabbits, which are conscious animals. This causes them pain and stress, and we should not inflict pain on any animal with consciousness.

Presenting this argument in the standard format makes it easier to understand, and looks like this:

(Premise 1)
We should not inflict pain on animals with consciousness.
(Premise 2)
Rabbits are conscious animals.
(Premise 3)
Testing cosmetics on rabbits causes them pain and stress.

(Conclusion)
We should not test cosmetics on rabbits.

The premises have been separated out onto different lines in order to make them clear. The conclusion always sits at the bottom. Note that the order of the premises has been changed to highlight the logic of the argument.

By writing arguments in this way, it is often easier to see when premises don't support the conclusion offered, even when this appears to be the case when you first read the text.

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6 Critical Thinking – Arguments continued

Activity 3

This activity encourages students to rewrite arguments in the standard format, making clearer the premises and conclusion and highlighting the logic that informs it.

Split the students into pairs or small groups and ask them to look at the following arguments and to put the premises and conclusions into the correct boxes on page 26 of their Student Pack.

Take a look at the following arguments and rewrite them in the standard format:

1. She must be at home. She is either at school or at home and the teachers say she's not at school.

Answer:

(Premise 1)
She is either at school or at home.
(Premise 2)
The teachers say she is not at school.

(Conclusion)
She must be at home.

2. If the Council wants to build a toxic waste dump here, they should compensate those who live in the area. They are known to cause various health problems to people living close by. These people did not choose to live near a toxic waste dump.

Answer:

(Premise 1)
The council wants to build a toxic waste dump here.
(Premise 2)
Toxic waste dumps are known to cause various health problems to those who live near them.
(Premise 3)
The people living close to the toxic waste dump did not choose to do so.

(Conclusion)
Those living near the proposed toxic waste dump should be compensated, should the council decide to build such a facility.

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Research and Study Skills:
Academic Writing

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1 Video of Library Services at the University of Birmingham

🕐 Timescale for the activity

10 minutes (5 minutes to watch the video and 5 minutes for any comments/discussion).

✅ Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Recognise the key services and facilities that an academic library, such as Library Services at the University of Birmingham, offers.

➕ Background

Library Services has created a short video outlining the range of facilities, resources and services that we can offer to our students to assist with their learning and research whilst at the University. The students who contributed to the video were studying at the University during the 2009-10 academic year and between them represent a range of the subjects that are available. This video is relevant to prospective students as well as 6th form students interested in finding out more about the size and scale of an academic library.

Activity

Play the video (the video lasts for 4 minutes and 28 seconds): this can be accessed via either:
www.birmingham.ac.uk/libraries/index.aspx
or **http://youtu.be/MWXlAAmf2ME**

Please note that from Autumn 2016 some of the spaces shown in this video will no longer be available. This is due to the opening of a brand new technology-rich Main Library. Full details of the new Main Library project can be found at:
intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/library/newlibrary

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2 Time Management

🕐 Timescale for the activity

25 minutes (14 minutes for Activity 1 and 11 minutes for presentation or further discussion)

✅ Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Understand the importance of time management as an essential life skill.
- ☐ Recognise 'time stealers'.
- ☐ Consider a number of time management techniques and strategies including prioritisation and SMART goals.

➕ Background

Time Management is an essential skill. Good time management allows students to keep control of all of their work and social activities. It allows them to prioritise and complete activities to deadlines, for example handing in essays on time or revising for exams. Managing time effectively results in students feeling less stressed and consequently more able to plan their studies and achieve good grades.

Time management presentation

(PowerPoint slides on time management)

For the 'So is this you' slide ask the students if they recognise themselves in any of the speech bubble comments.

For the 'Importance of time management slide' explain to the students that time management is a skill that they need not only whilst studying but also within any future work place. Inform them that good time management will allow them to make the decisions that they wish to make and to stay in control of their own diaries/lives rather than always having to react to the latest fast looming deadline. If students can stay in control of their study schedules then they should be able to leave themselves with enough time to be able to edit and proof read essays before submission.
As a result students will produce essays with fewer mistakes because time has been allowed to plan, structure and write in a clear and concise manner. Being more in control of their assignments will reduce anxiety and stress. This session offers tips and practical activities to improve time management skills.

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Prioritise

Discuss the idea of prioritisation with the students. It is not enough to work hard and be well organised if their time is spent on non-urgent or unimportant tasks. To be effective students need to be able to decide which tasks are important, and of those which are urgent, and to focus on those. This is called **prioritisation**.

If you have more than 25 minutes to run this activity you could spend an additional five minutes here asking students how they currently prioritise their work and if they have any techniques for doing this.

A tool students could use to help them to prioritise is the to do list. Writing a to do list involves noting down all of the tasks that need to be completed. Each task should not be too large. For example, instead of listing 'revise for exams', list 'revise the seven pillars of Islam for the religious studies exam'. However, it is not enough to just list all of the tasks; students need to be able to identify tasks in order of importance, prioritising those tasks that need to be completed by a certain date. It can be difficult sometimes knowing just what to prioritise, and using 'The Four Ds' might be useful.

The Four Ds.

Do – these are the tasks that you really need to be done within the short-term future. For example hand in an assessed essay on time.

Dump – these are the tasks that do not *need* to be done, for example baking cakes.

Delay – these are the tasks that do need to be completed at some point, but do not have a deadline in the short-term future and so could be left to be completed a week or two later, for example booking train tickets for a journey that you will be taking later on in the year.

Delegate – these are the tasks that others could be asked if they could help with, for example walking the family dog.

Activity 1

Split the class into groups, no larger than 5 students per group.

The students will be able to find the following scenario in their student packs:

> Tomorrow you start your first day on a work experience placement at an accountancy firm, based in Birmingham City Centre. You need to arrive there by 8.45am. Your school is closed today because of a local election but open for a teacher training day. The time is now 11.45am and you and your brother are at home and have only a little money on your person.

In their packs, students will have details of 17 tasks which they need to consider before they start their work experience at 8:45am tomorrow. They should be asked to allocate the tasks under the Do, Dump, Delay and Delegate headings as they think most appropriate. Students should arrange the items under the 'Do' heading in a timeline order in which they would complete them.

2   Time Management continued

Give the students 7 minutes in which to complete this task. Then get each group to feedback and look at which tasks they have allocated under each heading.

The packs that are given to each group should contain the Do, Dump, Delay and Delegate headings and details of the 17 tasks (the headings are given below and can be photocopied, the tasks are given on the following page).

Each heading and task needs to end up on a separate sheet of paper. There are several ways that you can reproduce these details for the student packs, including: printing each out, laminating and then cutting to size. Alternatively the headings and tasks can be printed onto magnetic paper, cut to size and used on classroom whiteboards (assuming they are magnetic!).

DO

DELAY

DUMP

DELEGATE

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2 Time Management continued

Type out the following tasks using a large font size and ensure that each group will have all of the tasks in their Activity 1 pack.

1. You have just been informed by text message that your new mobile phone is ready for collection.

2. You need to go into school to drop off your project before 2pm. (45 minutes)

3. Your cat has an appointment at the vet for 6pm. (1 hour and 45 minutes)

4. You need to buy a black skirt or trousers so that you have something suitable to wear at the work experience tomorrow. (45 minutes)

5. You notice that there is a stain on the jacket you intended to wear with your skirt/trousers. Take it to the 3 hour dry-cleaners which close at 4.30pm. (25 minutes)

6. You need to get to the cashpoint. (15 minutes)

7. Your best friend has just split from her boyfriend and plans on coming round tonight. (2 hours)

8. You promised your neighbour to mow her lawn. (15 minutes)

9. Sudden email alert – The accountancy firm have given you a small task to prepare for tomorrow. (2 hours)

10. You have a piano lesson at 5.30pm (45 minutes)

11. You are training for a charity half marathon. You have been told to prepare by running 45 minutes a day.

12. You promised your mum that you would tidy your bedroom and buy the ingredients for this evening's meal. (1 hour)

13. You need to pick up two books that you ordered from your local library. (45 minutes)

14. Your dad is at home for lunch because his work meeting was cancelled. (30 minutes)

15. You have a parcel to pick up from the Royal Mail Centre. It closes at 12 noon. (10 minutes)

16. Text alert – Your sister is reminding you that you promised to help her with her GCSE maths re-sit exam paper after school. (50 minutes)

17. Your very, very hot date from last night has just text you to arrange another date…

There is no 100% right or wrong answer but here are some comments on each item:

DO

2. You need to go into school to drop off your project before 2pm. (45 minutes)
This should be on the 'Do' list as it is something important that has to be completed that day.
This needs to be done fairly early on in the time line as it has a 2pm deadline.

4. You need to buy a black skirt or trousers so that you have something suitable to wear for the work experience tomorrow. (45 minutes)
This should be on the 'Do' list as it is important to look presentable for work experience. It should perhaps have already been done by now. It would also be difficult to delegate to someone else as you may need to try on the item of clothing to ensure it fits. Needs to be done fairly early on in the time line depending on what time the shops close. If they are thinking of a late night shopping centre (for example the Bull Ring Shopping Centre in Birmingham does not close until 8pm) then they could possibly multi-task here and combine it with seeing their friend who has just split up with their partner. The friend could help to give an opinion on the clothing whilst they listen to their romantic woes.

5. You notice that there is a stain on the jacket you intended to wear with your skirt/trousers. Take it to the 3 hour dry-cleaners which close at 4.30pm. (25 minutes)
This needs to be done before 1.30pm on the 'Do' list as it takes three hours for the items to be cleaned. Did the students also consider setting aside time to collect the garment later on in the schedule? It could possibly also be delegated to either the dad who visits for lunch or the brother.

6. You need to get to the cashpoint. (15 minutes)
This needs to be on the 'Do' list as the scenario states that they have little money on their person and they will need cash for buying a new skirt/trousers and paying for the dry-cleaning. They may also need bus/train fare to get to the work-experience the following day.

7. Your best friend has just split from her boyfriend and plans on coming round tonight. (2 hours).
Depending on how heart-broken the friend is this could possibly be delayed. They need to consider if this friend is really a time-stealer, and are they someone who is always taking up their time in an emotional crisis. If this is a good friend and they are genuinely distraught then the students may wish to add this to their 'Do' list towards the end of the day. The students will have had an active day and so relaxing with a friend at the end of the evening may not be a negative thing. They should be aiming to get a work and life balance.

Comments continued

DO continued

9. **Sudden email alert – The accountancy firm have given you a small task to prepare for tomorrow. (2 hours)**

It is very important to get this done so this should be on the 'Do' list. We would not recommend that the students do this late on their timeline in case it is actually more involved than originally expected and also because they may wish to have a few hours away from the work so that they can review and not be completing it when they are too tired.

14. **Your dad is at home for lunch because his work meeting was cancelled. (30 minutes).**

The student does need to stop for lunch at some point during this hectic day in order to give them the energy to carry on with all of these tasks. Dad may also be able to help with some of the tasks for example buying the ingredients for the evening meal.

DUMP

10. **You have a piano lesson at 5.30pm (45 minutes).**

If possible it may be best to delay or dump the piano lesson for this week, but this may not be an obligation that they can get out of; for example if the piano tutor is expecting the payment for that lesson.

11. **You are training for a charity half marathon. You have been told to prepare by running 45 minutes a day.**

This could be on the 'Dump' list. In an ideal world they would do this every-day but considering the number of things to be done missing just one day's worth of training for a charity run should not be a big problem. Again they could consider multi-tasking and ask their friend who has just split from their partner to go with them.

Comments continued

DELAY

1. You have just been informed by text message that your new mobile phone is ready for collection.

To have received a text message implies that they already have a working mobile phone and so would not require the new phone urgently. We would expect to see this item in the 'Delay' column.

8. You promised your neighbour to mow her lawn. (15 minutes).

This could probably be delayed or if it needed doing urgently delegated to the brother who also has the day off school.

13. You need to pick up two books that you ordered from your local library. (45 minutes).

There is no indication that the books are needed urgently so this could be delayed to another day.

15. You have a parcel to pick up from the Royal Mail Centre. It closes at 12 noon. (10 minutes).

There is no indication that the parcel is needed urgently, and the majority of the time you know what is contained within a parcel that you are having delivered (as you may have ordered it) so this could be delayed to another day.

16. Text alert – Your sister is reminding you that you promised to help her with her GCSE maths re-sit exam paper after school. (50 minutes).

This depends on when the re-sit paper is due to take place and if anyone else in the family could help with this. If the task can't be delegated and the re-sit exam is tomorrow then this would need to be done today. If the re-sit was not happening for a few weeks then this could be delayed.

17. Your very, very hot date from last night has just text you to arrange another date…

As they only saw the date last night, another date could be delayed until later in the week when they are less busy.

DELEGATE

3. Your cat has an appointment at the vet for 6pm. (1 hour and 45 minutes)

This could be 'Delegated' to either the brother who is also home all day or to the dad if they speak to him at lunch time.

12. You promised your mum that you would tidy your bedroom and buy the ingredients for this evening's meal. (1 hour)

This purchasing of the ingredients does need to be done by somebody so it may be worth delegating this to the brother who is also off from school that day.

2 Time Management continued

Time Stealers

Tell the students that it is easy to unwittingly become the victims of time stealers. They need to be aware of the things that can steal their time and ensure that they manage these, so that they make time for them within their schedule (as friends and family are important – it is about getting the correct balance between work and social life).

- ☐ Friends – depending on their schedule they may not always be able to go to every social activity they are invited to. They need to learn how to prioritise the important events (eg birthday parties) in their lives and how to delay the other ones (trips to the cinema) for a time when they have less work to complete.
- ☐ Family – they need to ensure they have a quiet or private study space where they can focus, eg a library, without interruptions from family members.
- ☐ Romance – they need to schedule in time for romantic partners and romantic partners should understand and give them space if they have important work commitments.
- ☐ Jobs – They need to consider when taking on part-time jobs how many hours per week they can work for and still leave enough time for study and social commitments – they need to consider this when applying for jobs or when accepting additional hours.
- ☐ Social Media – It is easy for anyone to think that they will spend just a moment or two to check Facebook and Twitter updates. In reality, they will often spend longer than anticipated especially when responding to those updates or alerts. Suggest that students check social media and emails at specified times during the day or when they have accomplished a certain task for example once they have written 500 words of an essay.

2 Time Management continued

Create SMART Goals

Using the SMART technique can help students really consider their tasks, what is involved in each task and how long it will really take to complete it.

☐ **S**pecific – students need to be specific eg. instead of 'I'm going to revise this afternoon', they should say exactly what they are going to revise, for example 'I'm going to revise the first two acts of Hamlet this afternoon'.

☐ **M**easurable – they need to ensure it is something they can measure, for example 'I'm going to write 500 words this morning for my politics essay'.

☐ **A**chievable – It has to be something they can achieve; do they have the correct resources, time and equipment to achieve the goal?

☐ **R**ealistic – they should not say 'I'm going to write 12,000 words today' (which is unrealistic), they should say 'I'm going to write 1,000 words of my essay today' (which is a more realistic goal).

☐ **T**imely – they need to ensure they know the time-line of when all of the smaller components of the activity need to be completed by so that they can finish them ready for the deadline.

The key is to:

☐ Work SMARTer – set SMART goals.

☐ Prioritise tasks – students need to work out what is most important and when the deadlines for those tasks are – consider creating a list.

☐ Schedule time – perhaps draw up a timetable – very useful for when planning revision.

☐ Manage their time stealers – especially family, friends, social media, computer games and television programmes for example and arrange specific times to accommodate 'stealers'.

☐ Manage interruptions – interruptions occur when people know where you are so students should consider their work space. Libraries are good places to study because it is harder to be interrupted or use mobile phones – library protocols. Studying at home can be more problematic where interruptions and distractions can abound. Advise students to let people know they are studying and turn off mobile phones and Facebook/Twitter alerts.

☐ Avoid procrastination – They need to stop worrying about what pen or notebook they want to use and just get on with the task in hand. It will be less stressful for them in the end.

☐ Organise and manage their work space – if they keep their work in order it will be easier for them to focus on the task rather than trying to find a document somehow related to it.

3 Plagiarism and when to reference

Timescale for the activity

Total time: 15-20 minutes.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Recall what is meant by plagiarism.
- ☐ Consider different scenarios and judge in each case whether or not they would be classed as plagiarism.
- ☐ Consider different scenarios and judge in each case whether or not a reference would be required.

Background

Plagiarism is taken very seriously at university level, be it intentional or unintentional plagiarism. In essence, plagiarism is a form of cheating because the plagiariser is effectively taking credit for someone else's work. Students can sometimes fall into the trap of unintentionally plagiarising and this session aims to highlight all the different forms of plagiarism to help students avoid this. At best plagiarism can lead to assignments needing to be re-written and/or marks deducted. At worst, plagiarism can lead to expulsion from the university.

Universities have many ways of detecting plagiarism. As well as the expertise of the academic staff who mark the work, most universities will also use plagiarism detecting software such as Turnitin.

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3 Plagiarism and when to reference continued

Activity

To start you may like to read out the following definitions of plagiarism:

☐ *'Plagiarism is passing off someone else's work, whether intentionally or unintentionally as your own.'* Carroll, J. (2002) **A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education.** Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

☐ *'The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft.'* **Oxford English Dictionary** (2006) 3rd ed. [online]. Available from: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/144939 [Accessed 6th May 2014].

Ask the students to complete the plagiarism quiz which they will find in the Student Packs (see page 10). When they have completed this, go through the answers with them. Some explanatory text for each answer is also provided.

Note: in the quiz we frequently refer to the word 'credit'. In the case of academic writing this would usually translate into 'marks': ie, gaining credit means gaining higher marks.

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1. It is the day before your assignment is due to be submitted. You contact an online essay writing service, who later that day (for a fee) emails you an essay that meets your requirements. The next day you submit this essay. Is this plagiarism?

Yes ☑ No ☐ Unsure ☐

This is clearly plagiarism because you have paid someone to write the assignment for you. You are then submitting someone else's work and claiming it as your own.

2. You have been asked to submit an essay on Romeo and Juliet and your cousin emails you her old essay on that topic for which she received a high mark. You make a few alterations and add a few new ideas. You submit this essay. Is this plagiarism?

Yes ☑ No ☐ Unsure ☐

This is plagiarism as you are effectively re-submitting your cousin's assignment and claiming it as your own. You haven't credited your cousin for the work that you have copied and therefore regardless of how much or how little you have copied it will still be deemed as plagiarism.

3 Plagiarism and When to Reference continued

3. In your essay you discuss your own thoughts on banking bonuses. Do you need to reference?

Yes ☐   No ☑   Unsure ☐

These are your own thoughts; you are not relying on the thinking of others. Therefore this isn't plagiarism. The only time when this could be plagiarism is if the student had already used these same ideas and wording in another piece of graded work and they had not acknowledged this. This is called auto-plagiarism.

4. You are writing an assignment about the British Constitution and you state that the Queen is the Head of State of the UK. Do you need to provide a reference for this?

Yes ☐   No ☑   Unsure ☐

Strictly speaking you don't need to reference this as it is common knowledge (ie, something that the majority of people will know). However if you do reference this you will not be penalised, but a reference in such instances is unnecessary.

5. You include a table of data or a picture from another source. Do you need to reference?

Yes ☑   No ☐   Unsure ☐

Just because this is a table of data or an image, it doesn't exclude it from the referencing process. For example, if you included a table of data in your work and didn't reference it, the conclusion the reader would come to is that you had generated the data and created the table yourself. If you didn't generate the data or create the table you would be taking credit for someone else's work. The same can be said to be true for photographs, images, pictures, figures etc. Including a reference will also enable the reader to locate the primary data for themselves.

6. You paraphrase in your essay Richard Dawkins' views on natural selection from one of his popular books. Because you are not directly quoting you don't put quotation marks. Do you need to reference?

Yes ☑   No ☐   Unsure ☐

You are using Richard Dawkins' views (rather than your own) and even though you have not quoted word for word you will still need to reference to credit his views: otherwise the reader will assume they are your own views and give you unearned credit accordingly.

3 Plagiarism and When to Reference continued

7. **You and a friend are taking the same module and therefore have the same essay to write. The essay is not to be done as group work. You and your friend write your essays in the library together and end up with very similar essays. Is this plagiarism?**

Yes ☑ No ☐ Unsure ☐

This is called 'collusion' which is a low level form of plagiarism. This is a common form of unintentional plagiarism. For example there have been instances where two people have studied together, shared materials and chatted about the topic. The problem arises when the two students sit down and write their essays and discuss as they do so what they are about to write for each part of the essay. The essays are consequently likely to be very similar in both structure and opinion. Therefore the marker can no longer distinguish whose work they are marking; ie, did all of the good ideas come from student A or student B? Markers need to be able to assess students on their own work and their own merit.

8. **You find a paragraph in a book that supports an argument that you are making in your assignment. You copy this paragraph into your assignment, putting quotations marks at the start and finish and provide a citation. Is this plagiarism?**

Yes ☐ No ☑ Unsure ☐

This is precisely what students should be doing!

Further information on plagiarism and how to reference can be found at: intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/icite

4 Referencing

⏰ Timescale for the activity

40 minutes (10 minutes to introduce the topic and activity,
15 minutes for students to complete the activity, and 15 minutes
to go through the answers).

✅ Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Recall why referencing is important.
- ☐ Use the Birmingham Harvard system to reference a book,
  a journal article and a website.

➕ Background

Referencing is an essential part of academic scholarship. There are
numerous reasons why referencing the material which students
have found, and they go onto use in their assignments, is vital.
These can be summarised as:

- ☐ To acknowledge an intellectual debt to another author /
  to avoid plagiarism.
- ☐ To give supporting evidence to specific facts or claims you made
  in the text.
- ☐ To enable a reader to find the sources that have been quoted.

There are many different ways of referencing. Examples
of referencing styles include: the *Harvard* system (also known
as the *author-date* system) and its many variations, as well as
the *Vancouver* system (also known as the *Numbering* system).
At the University of Birmingham the Harvard system is the official
style which has been adopted, although some Schools prefer
to use other systems (for example the Birmingham Law School use:
The Oxford Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities (OSCOLA)).
Students should always check with their tutor(s) which style they
are expected to use for their assignments.

4   Referencing continued

Activity

The following activity will teach students how to include indicative references (citations) in the body of their assignment as well as how to construct a full reference list at the end.

Imagine that the students have been asked to complete a short assignment on *Particle Physics, Accelerators and the Large Hadron Collider (LHC)*. In order to research this topic they have used the following five works:

Beech, M. (2010) **The Large Hadron Collider: unraveling the mysteries of the Universe**. London: Springer.

Halpern, P. (2010) **Collider: the search for the world's smallest particles**. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

CERN. (2014) **The Large Hadron Collider** [online]. Available from: http://home.web.cern.ch/topics/large-hadron-collider [Accessed 5th May 2014].

Science and Technologies Facilities Council (n.d.) **Large Hadron Collider (LHC)** [online]. Available from: http://www.stfc.ac.uk/646.aspx [accessed 9th May 2014].

Tonelli, G. (2012) The seven months that changed physics: the discovery of the Higgs Boson and its implications for high energy physics. **Europhysics News**, 43 (5): 20-25.

Note: in this course pack we have tried to use resources which are freely available online that you can use as examples. The two books and the journal article can all be found from the following URLs:

http://bit.ly/1oml6U5

http://bit.ly/SwdpAQ

http://dx.doi.org/10.1051/epn/2012501

For the purposes of this activity, we are asking that students reference these items as if they were printed books and journals (in fact if an electronic version of an item is identical to the print version then it can be referenced as if it was the print version – this will avoid typing in lengthy URLs!).

First of all we will consider how to include these references as indicative references in the body of the text. Many people like to use the Harvard system as the indicative reference allows the reader to clearly see the author and year of publication of the information that has been used.

So let's start by showing your students how to put the indicative reference in the text. To do this, display the text on the following page which includes highlighted gaps where the indicative references need to go. The indicative references are placed immediately after where a student has directly quoted from another source (the direct quote should of course have quotation marks around it) or to show where they have got their idea, claim or facts from (in order to acknowledge the intellectual debt). The references are inserted into the text on the following page in the order that they were introduced above. **Note:** you may like to project this text onto a large screen or reproduce onto a large sheet of paper.

Particle Physics, Accelerators and the Large Hadron Collider (LHC)

'Science is all about asking questions and looking for logically consistent explanations of what is observed' (   ). One very topical branch of science is particle physics. Particle physicists study the smallest known particles and to do that they need to use powerful accelerator machines. Halpern (   ) gives a description of some of the key accelerators which have been built and used over the past century. The most recent accelerator to be built is at the CERN laboratory in Geneva and is called the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). The LHC is 27km in circumference and accelerates protons to energies previously unobtainable (   ). The two beams of protons, circulating around the LHC in opposite directions, are forced to collide. Due to their tiny size, this is equivalent to 'firing two needles 10 kilometres apart with such precision that they meet halfway' (   ). Particle physicists from around the world, including at the University of Birmingham, examine the particles produced from the collisions using four massive detectors, the largest being as tall as a five storey building (   ). Tonelli (   ) gives a summary of a recent major achievement of the LHC: the discovery of a new particle which is important in furthering our understanding of the Universe.

4 Referencing continued

When completed the highlighted sections of the text should look as follows. They are in the order in which you will have filled them in on the previous page:

(Beech, 2010, p.1)
Halpern (2010)
(CERN, 2014)
(CERN, 2014)
(Science and Technologies Facilities Council, n.d.)
Tonelli (2005)

Notes:

1) We have used a corporate author for the websites – students will realise later on in the activity why and so no need to draw too much attention to this at this stage.

2) Ideally, when quoting a specific part from a work, the citation should include a page number to help the reader navigate efficiently to the relevant part(s) of the work. For example: (Beech, 2010, p.1).

3) In the cases where the author's surname is needed in order for the sentence to make sense, then the year of publication is the only element which needs to go in brackets (otherwise you would be repeating the author's surname unnecessarily!).

4) Where it is unclear when the material was written/last updated, use (n.d.) – this stands for 'no date' in lieu of the year.

Obviously the indicative reference is insufficient for anyone to go away and find the quoted material for themselves. Therefore we turn our attention to the full reference list at the end of the assignment which will allow readers to find the quoted material for themselves.

There are numerous ways in which students can learn how to do this. In a 30 minute session we would recommend dividing the class up and assigning one of the five items above to each group (see page 46). If time allows you may like each group to have a go at referencing all five items. Students could also do this individually.

Pages 50–52 are in turn dedicated to give all of the information that is required to fully reference one of the three different types of material (book, journal, website) that are included in the exercise.

Note: A fuller guide is included in the Student Pack, but we have found that students stay more focussed on the exercise when they just use the information on pages 50-52 (14-16 in the Student Pack) that is relevant to the item that they are being asked to reference.

4 Referencing continued

Students need to use this information in order to create the reference(s) for the material they have been asked to reference. There are several ways students can feedback to you what they have done, but perhaps the easiest way is for them to type it up and then you project it on a big screen in the classroom. You can then go through the students' attempts one-by-one in front of the whole class and correct, as appropriate, as you go. The fully referenced assignment can be seen on page 53. Note that the references in the full reference list are arranged in alphabetical order of author's surname.

We have found it best to give students a photocopy of the fully referenced assignment as we are going through the students' answers. This is so that they can clearly see what the difference is between a slightly incorrect answer and a perfect one.

4 Referencing continued

Referencing Books

Recipe:
1. Name(s) of author(s)/editor(s)
2. Year of publication (in brackets); if no year put n.d. in brackets (n.d.)
3. Title of book **emboldened**
4. Edition, if not the first
5. Number of volumes, if more than one
6. Place of publication
7. Name of publisher

Example:
Parker, C.C. and Turley, R.V. (1986) **Information sources in science and technology: a practical guide to traditional and online use**. 2nd ed. London: Butterworths.

4 Referencing continued

Referencing Journal Articles

Recipe:
1. Names(s) of author(s)
2. (Date)
3. Title of article
4. Title of periodical **emboldened**
5. Volume number
6. Part number (if used by the journal) in brackets
7. Page numbers in full

Example:
Broida, T.J. and Chellappa, R. (1991) Estimating the kinematics and structure of a rigid object from a sequence of monocular images. **IEEE Transactions on Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence**, 13 (6): 497-513

4 Referencing continued

Referencing Web Pages

Recipe:
1. Names(s) of author(s)
2. Year of publication (in brackets); if no year put n.d. in brackets (n.d.)
3. Title of web page **emboldened**
4. [online]
5. Available from:
6. The web address
7. [Accessed: date the web page was accessed]

Example:
Blakeman, K. (2009) **RBA Business Information on the Internet**
[online]. Available from: www.rba.co.uk/sources/index.htm
[Accessed 2 November 2009].

For Corporate Authors:
These items have no named personal author, but are issued by a
professional body, society, government department or other similar
corporate body. In such cases the organisation is named as if it were
the author (the following examples are for books):

Swedish Trade Council. (1991) **Swedish export directory**. 72nd ed.
Stockholm: Swedish Trade Council.

British Medical Association. (1981) **The handbook of medical
ethics**. London: BMA.

If no date:
Replace the bracketed year eg. (2009) with (n.d.) which stands
for 'no date'.

The fully referenced essay would look as follows:

Particle Physics, Accelerators and the Large Hadron Collider (LHC)

'Science is all about asking questions and looking for logically consistent explanations of what is observed' (Beech, 2010, p.1). One very topical branch of science is particle physics. Particle physicists study the smallest known particles and to do that they need to use powerful accelerator machines. Halpern (2010) gives a description of some of the key accelerators which have been built and used over the past century. The most recent accelerator to be built is at the CERN laboratory in Geneva and is called the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). The LHC is 27km in circumference and accelerates protons to energies previously unobtainable (CERN, 2014). The two beams of protons, circulating around the LHC in opposite directions, are forced to collide. Due to their tiny size, this is equivalent to 'firing two needles 10 kilometres apart with such precision that they meet halfway' (CERN, 2014). Particle physicists from around the world, including at the University of Birmingham, examine the particles produced from the collisions using four massive detectors, the largest being as tall as a five storey building (Science and Technologies Facilities Council, n.d.). Tonelli (2012) gives a summary of a recent major achievement of the LHC: the discovery of a new particle which is important in furthering our understanding of the Universe.

References

Beech, M. (2010) **The Large Hadron Collider: unraveling the mysteries of the Universe**. London: Springer.

CERN (2014) **The Large Hadron Collider** [online]. Available from: http://home.web.cern.ch/topics/large-hadron-collider [Accessed 9th May 2014].

Halpern, P. (2010) **Collider: the search for the world's smallest particles**. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

Science and Technologies Facilities Council (n.d.) **Large Hadron Collider (LHC)** [online]. Available from: http://www.stfc.ac.uk/646.aspx [Accessed 9th May 2014].

Tonelli, G. (2012) The seven months that changed physics: the discovery of the Higgs Boson and its implications for high energy physics. **Europhysics News**, 43 (5): 20-25.

5 Paraphrasing

Timescale for the activity

35 minutes (5 minutes to brief students on the importance of paraphrasing and good academic practice, 5 minutes for Activity 1, 10 minutes for Activity 2, 15 minutes for Activity 3).

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Understand what paraphrasing is.
- ☐ Understand the importance of effective paraphrasing as opposed to just substituting words.
- ☐ Identify good academic practice and poor academic practice in a paraphrasing context.
- ☐ Paraphrase a short section of text.

Background

The activities contained in this section will help students to gain a better understanding of paraphrasing and good academic practice.

They will understand that effective paraphrasing helps to demonstrate their own understanding of other writers' arguments. They will also realise that it is poor academic practice to pass off another writer's mode of expression as their own. Paraphrasing is about engaging with a piece of text rather than just regurgitating it.
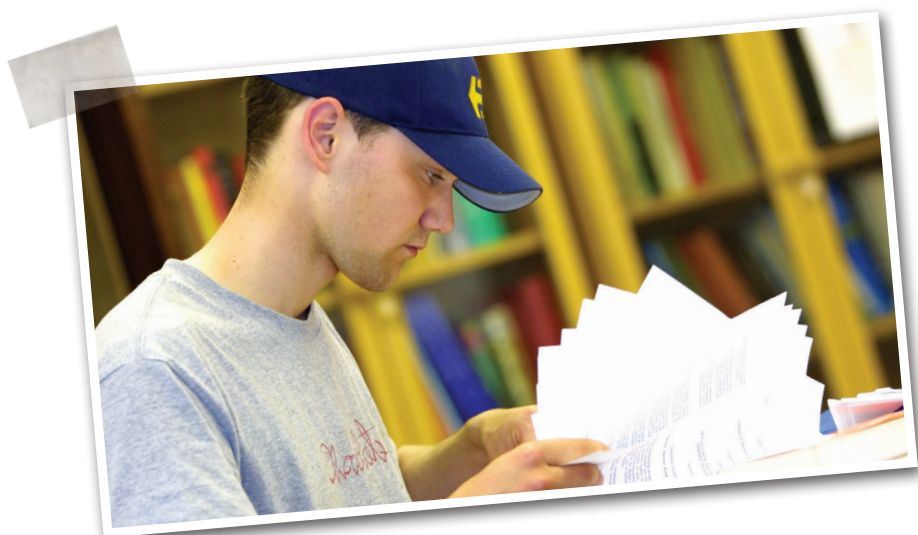
5 Paraphrasing continued

Activity 1

This introductory activity will help students to identify what paraphrasing does and does not involve. Students will be shown some statements about paraphrasing and should decide in their groups whether they are true or false.

True or False…?

1. Paraphrasing means expressing another person's ideas in your own words. **(TRUE)**

2. If you have read something and then expressed it in your own words, you do not need to reference where the original idea came from. **(FALSE)**

3. You should paraphrase a section of text by using a thesaurus to change some of the words. **(FALSE)**

4. You should paraphrase a section of text by expressing it in a different way, highlighting key ideas and getting to the heart of what the writer is saying. **(TRUE)**

5. Good paraphrasing shows that you understand another writer's point of view. **(TRUE)**

This activity should lead into a discussion about what paraphrasing involves and why it is important. Students should be clear that whenever they paraphrase another writer's ideas, they should use entirely their own expressions, and they still need to reference.

5 Paraphrasing continued

This activity gives students the opportunity to practise paraphrasing a piece of text. They should first be familiar with the 'Tips for Paraphrasing,' which they can find on page 27 of their packs.

Tips for Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is often defined as putting a passage from an author into your own words. But what are your own words? How different must your paraphrase be from the original?

The answer is it should be considerably different. The whole point of paraphrasing is to show the reader that you have read and understood another person's ideas, and can summarise them in your own writing style rather than borrowing their phrases. If you just change a few words, or add some bits of your own to an otherwise reproduced passage, you will may be penalised for plagiarism.

You should aim to condense and simplify a writer's ideas, and describe them using different sentence structures and expressions. It is also important to credit the original writer by referencing. You may wish to introduce your summary of their ideas with a phrase such as 'According to Smith (2000)…'

In order to paraphrase well, students must understand the essence of a writer's argument. Here are some reading strategies that may help them to do that:

☐ First gain an overview of the article or chapter by reading the introduction and conclusion.

☐ Then read the document through quickly, to get a general 'feel' for it, scanning for the central points.

☐ When you read through it again, focus on things that are relevant to your essay or discussion.

☐ Ask yourself questions as you read – do you understand the points being made? If not, what is holding you back? Consider the writer's argument. What are they saying? Do you agree or disagree?

☐ Then turn the article over or put it to one side, and try to sum up the writer's argument in one sentence or short paragraph. Do this without looking at the words the writer has used. This will force you to use your own words and will test your understanding of what you have read. You can then check the original text to ensure that you have produced a fair summary of their ideas.

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5 Paraphrasing continued

Activity 2

This activity enables students to consider examples of effective and ineffective paraphrasing.

Ask the students to read an original piece of text – an extract from the University of Birmingham's website – and then show them two different attempts at a paraphrase. Ask them to discuss in groups which is the best example of paraphrasing and why.

Original Text

The University's 250 acre campus was recently listed in the top ten most beautiful universities in Britain by *The Telegraph*. It is a campus that is expanding and improving all the time with our most recent investments being in the planned building of a brand new multi-million pound sports centre, a redeveloped library with a cultural hub and a brand new student hub housed in the iconic Aston Webb building.

University of Birmingham. (2014) **About Birmingham** [online]. Available from: www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/birmingham/About-Birmingham.aspx [Accessed 6th May 2014]

Paraphrase 1

The University's large campus was recently listed by *The Telegraph* in the top ten most beautiful universities in Britain. It is a campus that is growing and developing all the time with its most recent investments being in the planned building of a new multi-million pound sports centre, an improved library with a cultural hub and a brand new student hub housed in the famous Aston Webb building.

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5 Paraphrasing continued

> **Paraphrase 2**
> The University of Birmingham's (2014) website reports that its campus was recently listed in *The Telegraph*'s 'top ten most beautiful universities in Britain.' It goes on to highlight that the campus is being continually developed. Future plans include a new sports centre, a state-of-the-art library and a student hub.

Students should identify that **Paraphrase 2** is a better example of good academic practice, as it acknowledges the original source, summarises key points in completely different words, and gives a sense of what the original paragraph tried to convey. Whenever it needs to use exact words, it puts them in quotation marks. The writer of **Paraphrase 1** has merely changed some of the words, and appears to be passing off some of the original writer's phrases and sentence structures as his or her own.

5 Paraphrasing continued

Activity 3

Paraphrasing Practice

Ask students to read this extract from the University of Birmingham's (2014) website and then attempt to express the key ideas in their own words. Advise them to consider what the main message of the text seems to be. They should then emphasise this in their paraphrased version.

Original Text

The University grew out of the radical vision of our first Chancellor, Joseph Chamberlain. Founded in 1900, Birmingham represented a new model for higher education. This was England's first civic university, where students from all religions and backgrounds were accepted on an equal basis.

Birmingham has continued to be a university unafraid to do things a little differently, and in response to the challenges of the day. It was a founder member of the National Union of Students and the first university in the country to:

☐ Be built on a campus model
☐ Establish a faculty of commerce
☐ Incorporate a medical school
☐ Offer degrees in dentistry
☐ Create a women's hall of residence
☐ Have a purpose-built students' union building

University of Birmingham. (2014) **A Brief History** [online]. Available from: www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/about/history/index.aspx [Accessed 6th May 2014]

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5 Paraphrasing continued

Students may approach this in many different ways. Below is just one example of effective paraphrasing of the text.

The University of Birmingham (2014) emphasises what a diverse and forward-thinking university it has always been. It describes how, thanks to the vision of its first Chancellor Joseph Chamberlain, it was one of the first universities to welcome students 'from all religions and backgrounds.' Since then, it seems it has led the way in other respects. For example, it was the first university in the country to include a medical school, offer dentistry degrees, and have a female hall of residence.

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay

Timescale for the activity

35 minutes (5 minutes to brief students on the importance of planning and structuring an essay, 5 minutes for Activity 1, 5 minutes to discuss essay planning and structuring processes, 15 minutes for Activity 2 and 5 minutes for Activity 3)

Learning outcomes

By the end of this section students should be able to:
- ☐ Identify clear and concise writing.
- ☐ Understand the stages of planning an essay.
- ☐ Follow a basic essay structure.
- ☐ Consider the key elements within the introduction, main body and conclusion of the essay.

Background

The activities contained in this section will help students gain a better understanding of how to plan, research and structure their writing.

The ability of students to structure their essay is important because tutors are looking for a logical order in their writing, so students will need to demonstrate a clear introduction, main body and conclusion.

Student writing, in preparation for university, must follow academic conventions and include correct phrasing and references that are correctly cited.

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Activity 1

This 'ice breaker' activity will help students realise the importance of writing clearly (as well as the importance of checking what they have written). Students will get the opportunity to critically analyse one of the following muddled/ambiguous statements:

1. Drug taking in sport is illegal and many people are concerned about this.
2. Singapore is smaller than London and every other country in Southeast Asia.
3. Schools, parents and the government are amongst those who have been blamed for the obesity crisis and there is much being done to prevent this.
4. People who smoke are significantly more likely to die than people who do not smoke.
5. 50% of the nineteen participants said they had not done any work experience during their time at university.

Ask the students individually, or in small groups, to have a look at these sentences and identify why they are ambiguous or muddled. The main problems with these sentences are as follows:

1. 'This' is an ambiguous pronoun here. Are people concerned about drug taking, or about the fact that it is illegal?
2. 'Every other country in Southeast Asia' implies that London is a country in Southeast Asia.
3. Again, the pronoun 'this' is ambiguous – does it mean that 'much is being done' to prevent the obesity crisis, or to prevent schools, parents and the government from being blamed?
4. Everybody dies!
5. '50% of the nineteen participants' implies that there is a half-person in the study.

If there is time, you might like to ask the students if they can re-write one of the sentences in a clearer way.

Below is some advice about the stages of planning and structuring an essay, which the students also have in their packs. You may wish to discuss it with them, or ask them to read it and discuss it in groups.

Planning an Essay
The *Suggested Stages of Planning* chart (on the following page) provides some guidance on how to go about the stages involved in planning an essay. You may wish to talk your students through this process and discuss the way they currently approach their assignments.

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6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Suggested stages of planning

Break down the different parts of your assignment question. Figure out what the task word means (eg. discuss, argue, describe) and identify specifically what you need to write about. If the question is very broad and general, you will need to decide which aspects to focus your answer around.

Mind map everything you already know about the topic. Try to identify what your instinctive response to the essay question is. Identify some key research questions to guide your further reading

Research! Be sure to keep track of where you have obtained information from as you research. Take effective notes and engage with what you are reading, asking questions and challenging points of view. Be sure to only note down things that are relevant to the essay question. You don't need to include everything you know about the topic.

From your research, identify key points that will help you to answer the essay question. You could pool these together in a mind map, or on a large piece of paper, or a typed document. Then you need to start organising the points. Which points are closely related? Which are counter-arguments? Which follow on from one other? Begin to group your ideas. At this point, you should also decide what the main, overall argument of your essay is going to be, based on the evidence that you have been gathering.

Now you need to decide on a logical order for your points. You could write a summary of each point on a separate card or sticky note and physically move them around until you have figured out the best order. You will find your own method, but the key thing is to be aware of the progression of your argument and the unfolding of your line of reasoning. How does each point link to the one before it and the one after it? How will your paragraphs build up your argument?

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

As students start thinking about planning their essays, they may find it useful to ask themselves the following questions and make notes accordingly.

1. Do I understand what my assignment question is asking?
2. What is my instinctive response to the question?
3. What do I already know that is of relevance to the question?
4. What else do I need to find out?
5. What have other scholars written on this topic and do I agree with them?
6. What is the main point I want to argue or get across in this essay?

Structuring an Essay

Once students have finished planning their essay, they would need to start thinking about how to structure it. What should the overall structure look like? What main headings/bullet points would they use in order to organise their essay into an appropriate and logical flow of ideas? The **Essay Structure Checklist**, starting on page 65, provides some guidance.

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Essay Structure Checklist

	Notes
Title	☐ Have you included the title of your essay?
Introduction	☐ Does your essay have a suitable introduction which identifies the topic? ☐ Does the introduction give the reader a plan of the main themes/concepts that you are going to examine in the essay? This plan should not be merely descriptive, but give some indication of analysis. These themes should be mentioned in the introduction in the same order that they are mentioned in the actual essay. It is worth looking back over your draft introduction once you have finished the essay so that you can edit it to match the actual structure of the finished document. ☐ **Suggestion:** Your introduction should be approximately 10% of the word count.
Main Body	☐ Is there evidence that you have read widely on the topic? ☐ Have you put each main point in a separate paragraph (each main point may take up more than just one single paragraph)? ☐ To helpfully signpost the structure of the essay to the reader, make it clear at the start of a new main point what you are about to go on to examine. At the end of the paragraph for each main area paraphrase the main points that have been covered. Ensure that each paragraph is actually answering the question you have been set. ☐ Are the paragraphs linked in a logical manner (ie. does your essay flow from one point to another)? ☐ When you make a point or argument in the essay, or give a factual statement, do you provide evidence that supports it? This evidence will normally be given by referring to research that has been done by others e.g. books, journal articles, websites. This is why it is important to read widely on your topic. ☐ Do you reference clearly, using a consistent referencing style, where you have used the ideas or work of other people? ☐ **Suggestion:** Your main body should be approximately 80% of the word count.

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Essay Structure Checklist continued

	Notes
Conclusion	☐ Does your conclusion address the essay question? ☐ Is your conclusion supported by the work and evidence you have produced in the main body of the text? If the answer you give here contradicts with the evidence you give in the main body of the essay, then you need to either reconsider your conclusion or the evidence you have used in the main body of the essay. ☐ Does it summarise the main points? Your conclusion should not introduce new points or evidence which you haven't mentioned elsewhere in your essay but should be a short reminder of the points you have made in the main body. ☐ **Suggestion:** Your conclusion should be approximately 10% of the word count.
References	☐ Have you used a variety of sources (eg. books, journal articles, websites)? ☐ Have you provided references for all of your sources at the point in your essay where you have used them to provide evidence or to acknowledge where you get an idea from (references in the body of your essay are called in-text citations)? ☐ Are all of the references that you use in your essay shown in the reference list at the end of your essay? ☐ Are all of the references accurate, correctly and consistently formatted? ☐ Is the reference list constructed in alphabetical order? ☐ **Suggestion:** Your references may count towards your word count. Check with your tutor before starting your essay. You may be awarded marks for your referencing – if so, these are easy marks to obtain!
Layout	☐ Is your essay neat and well presented? ☐ Is it in the correct word font and size? You will normally be told what to use at either the start of the course or when given the assignment. Ask your tutor if you are unsure. ☐ Has it been edited, proof-read and written within the word limit? ☐ Have you included your details? Check with your tutor what personal details you need to include; eg. full name or just an ID number to allow for anonymised marking.
Assessment criteria	☐ Does it meet the assessment criteria? ☐ Tutors are marking your essays against a set marking criteria. The marking criteria will normally be given to you either at the start of the course or when you are given an assignment. If you are not given a copy ask your tutor for one. It is vital that you know what criteria you need to meet in order to gain a high level mark.

6   Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Activity 2

Ask students to read the following essay (pages 68-69) and use the **Essay Structure Checklist**, on pages 65-66, to comment on its structure, use of evidence/references, and how well it communicates with the reader.

You could advise the students that a good way to assess the structure of an essay is to try to sum up the point that each paragraph is making in one sentence. If they read these sentences in order, they should be able to follow the narrative of the essay, and identify whether the sequence of the paragraphs needs to be altered. Doing this will also help them to identify whether the writer has tried to make too many points within any one paragraph, and whether each point is addressing the question. Encourage them to comment on whether the writer's overall argument and direct response to the question is clear.

On page 70 are some suggested comments and criticisms to discuss with your students once they have shared their ideas.

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

How serious a problem is childhood obesity in the UK?

The term obesity is defined as 'carrying too much body weight for a person's height and sex' (NHS choices, 2008a). A person is considered obese if they have a Body Mass Index of 30 or greater. In the UK, childhood obesity is growing. 'The number of obese children has tripled over the last 20 years; at least 10% of six-year-olds and 17% of 15-year-olds are now clinically obese' (NHS choices, 2008b.) The change in lifestyle, and need for both parents to have a career, results in children spending less time outdoors and more time in front of the television. Obesity has many impacts on children. It significantly increases their chance of developing 'heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and depression' (NHS choices 2008a). These problems then have a knock on effect on the NHS and affect the image of the UK.

One main health problem that is associated with childhood obesity is cardiovascular disease. Having excess body fat puts extra strain on the heart during normal everyday activity, and lays down fatty deposits in the arteries. A study, carried out by Dr Patrick Tounian, from the Department of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition at the Armand-Trousseau Hospital in Paris, compared the arteries of 48 obese children against those of 27 non-obese youngsters. The arteries of obese children were found to be much stiffer and more damaged than those of their non-obese counterparts (BBC News, 2001). This shows obesity has immediate effects on children's arteries, so even if they lose weight as they enter adulthood, the damage may be irreversible. If childhood obesity carries on increasing, it could eventually lead to a decrease in life expectancy in the UK. This puts an emphasis on the importance of preventative strategies. However corrective strategies are still important: if someone loses weight as they enter adulthood they are likely to have less health problems than if they never lost any weight.

Obesity can have long term mental effects as well as physical effects. Obese white females demonstrate significantly lower levels of self esteem by early adolescence, and obese children with decreasing levels of self esteem demonstrate significantly higher rates of sadness, loneliness, and nervousness, and are more likely to smoke and drink alcohol. This shows that obesity may affect children's quality of life. Their low self esteem could come from bullying at school due to their appearance, and inability to take part in as many childhood activities such as running around in the playground. Later in life this may lead on to more serious conditions such as clinical depression. Additionally, if low self esteem causes adolescents to smoke and drink this will also have associated health problems. Low self esteem may also have an effect on their employment rate; this will impact on the government as they will need to claim benefits, reducing the money available for other areas such as education. However, there may be many obese children who have high self esteem and enter adulthood with good jobs, so we are unable to generalise to the whole population of obese people.

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Type 2 diabetes is largely associated with obesity as people's eating habits cause insulin receptors to become unresponsive. 'It usually occurs in people who are over the age of 45 and overweight... a growing number of cases are being seen in children' (BBC News, 2005). Once the disease has developed it will always affect the person and their quality of life, as they may be unable to join in normal childhood activities. However, it can be reduced by increasing exercise and cutting down on carbohydrates. This is an ethical issue as type 2 diabetes is preventable, by maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle.

The negative effect obesity has on health means that there is a knock on effect for the NHS. 'The overall cost of obesity to the NHS is currently around £1bn, with a further £2.3bn to £2.6bn for the economy as a whole' (BBC News, 2006). The cost is due to an increase in diseases, such as those discussed earlier, which results in increased admissions to hospital, prescription drugs and GP's time. An increase in childhood obesity will have a greater impact on the NHS than that of adult obesity as the child's medical conditions will need to be funded for a longer period throughout their life. It could be argued this large budget could be better spent on other areas in the NHS, rather than obesity which could be seen as preventable. There is also a lot of money being spent on research, looking into reasons and preventions for childhood obesity. Additionally an increase in childhood obesity does not give the nation a desired image of being fit and healthy.

Childhood obesity in the UK is more of a problem now, compared to previous years. There is evidence that it leads to many diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and depression. This then has a financial impact on the NHS. If childhood obesity carried on increasing, and the NHS was unable to meet its demands, it could become a serious problem. It not only affects those with obesity, but also people with other diseases waiting for treatment. Additionally there is an effect on governmental issues, as lower employment rates in obese people causes more money to be given as benefits. This could be prevented by educating children and parents about eating healthily and increasing physical activity, so that childhood obesity does not increase to a point where the UK is unable to cope.

Bibliography

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6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Some comments on the essay: for discussion with students once they have fed back their thoughts

The introduction reads like a series of statements about the topic. It doesn't make it clear that the statements are summarising what the reader can expect from the rest of the essay. There is nothing about the aim or overall argument of the essay. The reader feels as though they are being bombarded with facts rather than guided into a narrative/argument.

There are some good topic sentences at the start of paragraphs, but each paragraph could benefit from a summarising sentence, emphasising how its point links back to the question. The writer seems to be implying that childhood obesity is a serious problem, but this needs to be made more explicit, with 'so what?' sentences such as 'Because of the severe consequences for health, childhood obesity can be seen as a serious problem.'

The writer has not used a wide range of sources, and the sources used are not very academic. There is a lot of reliance on BBC News. Also, the writer sometimes makes assertions without evidence to support (for example, in paragraph 3). However, at times the writer attempts to evaluate or interpret evidence, which shows they are starting to think critically.

The essay discusses some physical consequences of obesity, then some psychological effects, and then returns to physical. Some re-ordering of ideas might have created a more logical structure. There are also some ideas that are tagged on the end of paragraphs but not explored in any depth, such as 'Additionally an increase in childhood obesity does not give the nation a desired image of being fit and healthy.'

The conclusion does summarise some of the points made in the essay, but it also introduces new ideas about ways of preventing obesity. These aren't explored in the main body of the essay, and are also not what the question asks for, so this part feels a little 'tagged on.'

There is no reference in the bibliography to BBC News (2008b) which is cited in the text. All in-text citations need to have a corresponding reference in the bibliography.

6 Planning, researching, structuring and writing your essay continued

Activity 3

This activity can be used as a quick test for students to consolidate what they have learnt in this section.

Students will be given the following 10 words and phrases (on page 42 of their packs) and asked to re-arrange them in the order in which they would do the tasks if they were planning, researching, structuring and writing an essay.

☐ Conclusion
☐ Exploring the question
☐ Introduction
☐ Key points
☐ Main Body

☐ Mind-mapping
☐ Notes
☐ Research
☐ References
☐ Task word(s)

Note: We usually give students 90 seconds to complete this task.

There is scope for some variation in the order that the 10 tasks can be done, but we would expect an order that was something similar to the following:

1. Task word(s)
2. Exploring the question
3. Mind-mapping
4. Research
5. Notes

6. Key points
7. Introduction
8. Main Body
9. Conclusion
10. References

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Edgbaston, Birmingham,
B15 2TT, United Kingdom
www.birmingham.ac.uk