Dr Judith Marshall

Common essay-writing errors (Level 4)

Do not include your name in the document – anonymous marking system used

Title not centre-aligned

Introduction too brief

Poor definitions – may be due to poor sources used

No signposting

No logical order to the essay

Lack of empirical evidence to support your statements

Lack of in-text referencing – including studies, theories, definitions…

Lack of acknowledgement of secondary sources (…cited in, …)

Names of theorists/researchers used at beginning of each new paragraph (not 'He…')

Lack of explanation – detail missing

'Studies show' / 'Research has found' – Which studies? What research?

Relevance of evidence not explained

Superficiality / vagueness

Relevance of essay content – make your points clear

Confusion – be clear about approaches/theories/models/concepts

Unbalanced discussion

Do not use 'prove'/'disprove'

Do not use contractions – e.g. don't; can't; it's

No connecting sentences to link paragraphs – breaks up the fluency of the essay

Conclusion – briefly summarise each approach/argument

Include title at top of essay

Do not use subheadings

Poor in-text referencing – check for accuracy and presentation

No indication that evidence taken from a secondary source (e.g. '…in Gross, 2010')

Page numbers for all quotations (not necessary for other essay content)

Spelling errors – use spellcheck and read through your work

Grammatical/sentence structure errors – read through your sentences to ensure they make sense

Isolated sentences

Confused tenses

Use of ‘we’, ‘us’, ‘our’, ‘you’ etc. – write in the third person

Use of contractions – aren’t, didn’t, weren’t. Should be: are not, did not, were not

Unacceptable / unsuitable sources – peer-reviewed psychology sources only, unless instructed otherwise

Use of informal phrasing – use formal/academic phrasing

Incorrect word choice – check word meanings when paraphrasing

Wrong text format – must be Times New Roman, font size 12 with 1.5 line spacing

Unusual/unacceptable spacing (e.g. large gaps in the text, e.g. between paragraphs)

Avoid use of headers

Overly-long sentences – likely to impede clarity of meaning