

Write Right

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UWTSD Psychology: Academic Study Skills

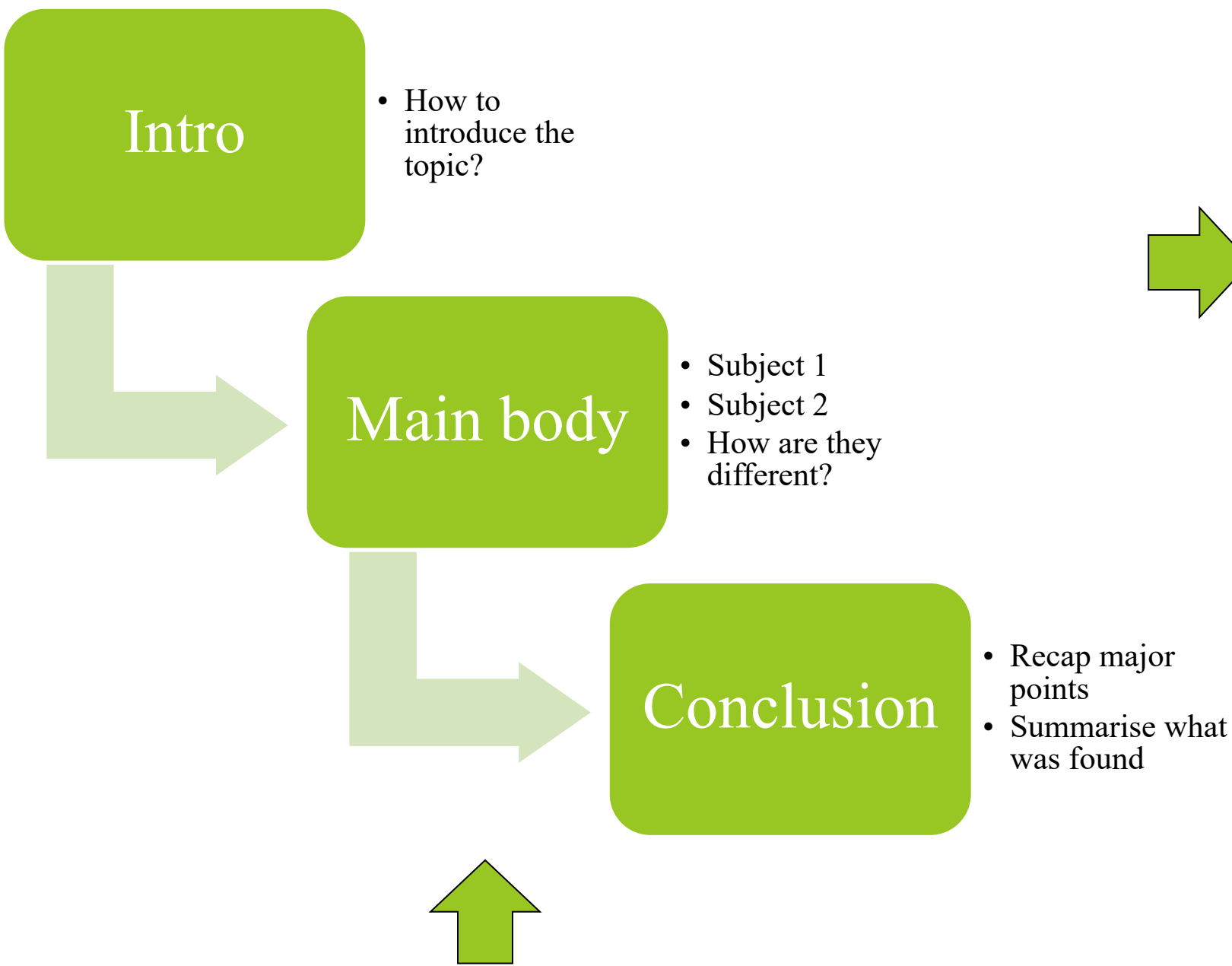
What does that mean?

Beginning a piece of academic writing can be confusing and even overwhelming to many. An effective way to make the task feel more manageable is by breaking it down in to simpler sections and where better to start than the start. When being asked to write something academically, there will often be several keywords that suggest exactly how the piece should be written. These keywords have a tendency to be words such as; Contrast, Compare, Describe, Discuss or Explain. While it is possible that other keywords are used, these main few serve as an example of something that is critical in the way the writing is approached. Should the question that has been set ask for a topic to be discussed then the writing can be a general overview, however, should it ask that two subjects be contrasted and compared, then the writing should be focused on bringing to light the key elements of both subjects and how they are different to the one another. Once identified and understood these keywords can assist in tailoring the research and planning to be more effective and to be better understood. This kind of tailored planning and research can lead to an enhanced understanding and having a knock-on affect to making the word count seem more achievable as well as hopefully adding more quality to the content.

How am I supposed to do that?

Planning and even more so, sticking to a plan can be a challenging task. Each individual is different and will prefer to do things in ways unique to them however as a generalization, when beginning academic writing, there has to be some kind of plan in place. Some may prefer to do a lot of work in large blocks and others may like spacing work out to allow a more consistent balance of workflow and free time. (The table at the end of this section is an example of how a spaced out and balanced work plan for the first week of creating a piece of writing may look). Understanding and implementing a plan that is unique to the individual will help to improve productivity and allow a consistent build up of quality information instead of a rushed block of words. A common problem once a plan is drawn up is sticking to it. Surprises may sometimes intervene, or the plan doesn't go as expected so it can be important to allow for extra time at a different period of the plan to add some flexibility and a layer of comfort that time isn't running out. Planning isn't only about time though and creating a rough structure for the piece of writing will aid in research and writing. Knowing what order to address topics and how they could link together can really add to the potential quality of a piece. (An example of a basic plan can be found above the table).

Don't forget to reference correctly to avoid plagiarism.



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
08:00 – 09:59							
10:00 – 11:59		Planning -				Writing	
12:00 – 13:59			Research			Writing	
14:00 – 15:59	Planning – What does that mean?	Planning & Research		Writing – Its time to make that research flow	Writing		Editing and Formatting Time to start the second draft?
16:00 – 17:59			Research – Breaking it down				
18:00 – 19:59							
20:00 – 21:59							

Taking breaks is okay and can often help to reassess when stuck.

Where would you even find something like that?

Finding reliable and quality information can be a difficult thing to do and it may feel like a very daunting task to some. In an age when the internet is so prevalent, and information is available to consume and create with just a few clicks, it can be hard to find reliable and accurate information. When looking for reliable information, some good places to look are; Libraries (especially those that belong to academic institutions), web pages of official organizations (for example, The British Psychological Society for searches within the field of psychology), recognized academic journals and Google Scholar. When inspecting to see if a piece of information is relevant or not, its worth looking to see where it originally comes from and who it was produced by.

But there's too much information

Once the relevant information has been found it can be difficult to digest and search through to find the specifics needed. As is a common theme amongst preparing to write something within academics, breaking it down is a useful approach. Asking questions such as;
Who? – Who wrote the information or performed the study?
When – How recent and how relevant is the information?
Where? – Where was this information collected?
Why? – What did they aim to achieve when creating this study or piece of writing?
How? – How did they go about collecting the information? Did they do it reliably or are the methods used questionable?
What - What was the result of the the study or piece of writing?
These are just a few examples of how it is possible to break down large pieces of information into more digestible and relevant pieces to be used in writing. This is also useful information for referencing.

Does it sound okay?

Using the right language is key to a quality piece of work and can elevate a standard piece of work into a better received one. Knowing who and what the piece of writing is being created for is a crucial step into understanding the way to word sentences. The way a piece of writing flows together can be extremely important to a reader so making smooth transitions between paragraphs and linking similar or connected topics can be very impactful. Re-reading, multiple drafts, spellcheck and asking for someone to proofread are all useful methods and tools to ensure wording and flow of text is to a good standard.

Does this look right?

Formatting is a very influential part of writing and can affect first impressions, the ability for work to be well read and understood and even the marks awarded when under assessment. Some may prefer to set the parameters of their formatting from the beginning and maintain it as they go along. Others may prefer to get the information done and worry about how it looks later on. The format of the work can often include font, font size, paragraph layout, title pages, titles, subtitles and more. Formatting for referencing is typically also very important and when under assessment can cause a loss of marks if not done correctly.

Don't be afraid to seek advice from others but make sure you ask reliable people.