



***Enhanced Learning
Educational Services***
“the study skills specialist”

IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS



Writing is a skill that crosses most subjects. Having strong writing skills will help you save time and be more effective in your work.

- You should read each point and **highlight the key phrases** in that point.
- Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.
- You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.

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1. IMPROVING YOUR GENERAL WRITING SKILLS

There are a number of different types of writing and they all require different types of skills but there are also general things you can do to improve your overall writing skills. Looking for key words, headings, and terms in bold or italics that refer to information you need.

- **WRITE AS OFTEN AS YOU CAN:** Make an effort to write regularly: newsy letters and emails to friends, letters to the editor, articles for school newspapers, a journal or just experimental different types of writing for different types of audiences.
- **READ AS OFTEN AS YOU CAN:** Read as often and as widely as you can from as many different sources as possible. Think about what you read from a writer’s perspective. What were they trying to achieve, how did they try to do this and did it work?
- **EXAMINE DIFFERENT STYLES:** Look for unusual approaches to writing, different styles or structures and the variety of tones and rhythms used.
- **NOTICE DETAILS:** Start taking more notice of funny things that happen in life, things around you or little details about life. Good writers notice things and give detail about things that happen.
- **RE-READ:** Always re-read what you write looking to see if you have expressed yourself clearly after each revision.
- **EDIT:** Think of writing as a process, multiple drafts is a part of writing and it is OK to write and re-write.



- **TAKE SUGGESTIONS:** Be open to suggestions, criticism and feedback and don’t take it personally!
- **SET UP A WRITING ROUTINE:** Write! Write on a regular basis, establish a routine and write regularly.
- **NOTE INTERESTING WORDS:** Take note of interesting, unusual or different words in your reading. Write a list of these words or tuck them away into memory so you can include them in your writing. Increasing your vocabulary gives you more tools to write with.



a. Have you tried any of the techniques above for improving your writing skills? Have you tried any other techniques?

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2. UNDERSTANDING ESSAY QUESTIONS

- **READ THOROUGHLY:** Always read the question thoroughly to the end. Many students just focus on parts of the question and make assumptions about what the question is asking.
- **HIGHLIGHT:** Read the question with a highlighter in hand and highlight key words and important parts of the question.
- **KEY WORDS:** Look for the key words and think about what these mean.
- **TOPIC WORDS:** What are the 'topic' or 'directional' words in the question ie what is the question actually about?
- **GUIDELINES:** Are there guidelines that help you create boundaries in your writing, whether it be related to specific time periods or areas to discuss?
- **CLARIFY:** Do you need to clarify with your teacher what the question means?
- **DISCUSS:** If you get the opportunity, discussing the question with some friends can also be a good way to get the ideas flowing and to raise issues you may not have considered.



b. have you ever had any problems in understanding essay questions? Do you follow these steps when you are given an essay to help you understand the question?

3. PLANNING ESSAYS

A) BRAINSTORM IDEAS:

- So many students rush straight into writing without taking sufficient time to generate and organise their ideas. This is essential for all types of writing, not just essay writing.
- Don't discount the value of 'thinking' time. Once you are clear on what the essay is asking of you, take some time to really think about your views and ideas.

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