



Enhanced Learning
Educational Services
“the study skills specialist”

APPROACHING ASSIGNMENTS



So you are being given lots of assignments? Well here are the top things to know about how to manage assignments effectively at school.

- 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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Enhanced Learning Educational Services Profile

Our Organisation:

Enhanced Learning Educational Services (ELES) is the leading provider of study skills resources in Australia. Since 2001 over 500,000 students across Australia have benefited from our study skills worksheets and workbooks. An Australian business based in Sydney, our clients extend throughout Australia and to international schools overseas. We are committed to helping all students improve their ability to learn and study by providing study skills seminars and resources on the topics students need.

Our Mission:

To provide a worthwhile and effective service to teachers, students and parents, enhancing students' learning skills and abilities through dynamic programs, resources and strategies to unlock the power of the mind and enable greater success at school and in life.

Our Commitment:

As part of ELES' commitment to education, 5% of all gross income is donated to charities that help and assist children.

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APPROACHING ASSIGNMENTS

Throughout school, students are given many assignments to complete, in various subjects. An assignment mostly requires you to:

- research
- identify the most relevant information
- consider your own ideas which will have come as you researched
- determine a way to present your assignment to ensure it is answering the question
- write and present it

All this can seem daunting, particularly if there is no set structure or guidelines for the assignment. It's not a piece of work that can be left until a few days before it is due, indeed you will need to put in many hours of work before you even start writing the final assignment.

Here are some general guidelines to give you structure, because when you have a "road-map" to follow, completing an assignment can be relatively easy. Having structure will make a huge difference.

REASONS TO START WORK ON YOUR ASSIGNMENT IMMEDIATELY

- **GET YOUR BRAIN THINKING ABOUT THE TOPIC:** At the very least, read through the requirements of the assignment on the day you get your assignment. Even if you are not thinking about it directly, your subconscious will be hard at work.
- **FIND LIBRARY RESOURCES:** Although the library may not be your main source of reference, you should drop in soon after receiving the assignment. Reference books, resources and magazines will disappear quickly. It is not a good idea to only use Google!
- **DISCOVER OTHER RESOURCES:** You could also ask your local librarian for any additional direction on where to look for resource material for your assignment. Librarians know how to help people access relevant information, in books, and computer based references.
- **STARTING EARLY MEANS MORE TIME TO EXPLORE & ASK FOR HELP:** Your initial research might be on assignment points you've identified through the library, references your teacher may have given you, school textbooks, and/or general internet search engines. If you start this early, you could find that you don't understand important concepts, or perhaps you need to speak to your teacher to get further clarity.
- **CREATE A SAFETY NET:** Starting your assignment immediately will give you a safety net in case you get sick, or something unexpected happens. You should always have a schedule that allows for the unexpected.



DISCUSS

a. In your own words, explain why you should start your assignments immediately, i.e. as soon as possible after they are given to you.

STEP 1: Begin with a 15 minute overview.

Here is a simple key to unlock the assignment in 15 minutes, and give you an idea of what's required. You should be able to answer the questions below from the assignment information sheet. Once you have the answers to these questions, you can start to plan.

Read the assignment information carefully (perhaps highlighting as you go) and note the following.

- **DUE DATE:** When is the assignment due?
- **PURPOSE:** What is the purpose of the assignment? (e.g. an information report, an exposition, an investigative report, one that requires an hypothesis and evaluation, a recount or summary of facts, an assignment that requires your opinion, or others' opinions, one that requires primary and secondary sources?)
- **FORMAT:** What is the assignment asking you to do? What presentation format is required? (e.g. 2000 word typed essay, 1500 word hand-written essay, report where you need clear headings, bullet points, project, with photos, maps, diagrams, poster, a power point, website, newspaper report.)
- **GUIDELINES:** Are there any guidelines or directions to follow?
- **REFERENCES:** Are there specific references/resources given?
- **CRITERIA:** Is there a marking criteria? How will the assignment be graded?

It is a good idea to ask a relative or friend to let you briefly explain your answers to each of the questions above, just to make sure you can put this in your own words.



b. What is the main purpose of the 15 minute overview? Explain in your own words why you would go through this process and what it would achieve.

STEP 2: Brainstorm the steps that will be involved and schedule the work over the time available.

Think about everything you will need to do for the assignment; this will vary depending on what type of assignment it is. For example:


- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Read assignment/make points/do schedule. | • Last pre-research check. | • Finish writing draft. |
| • Check with the librarian. | • Start researching. | • First proof. |
| • List topics to research. | • Continue researching. | • Second proof. |
| • Decide how to organise research. | • Finish researching. | • Third proof. |
| | • Begin writing draft. | • FINAL format completed. |

Immediately draw up a schedule, or add to your homework diary, so you can do all your other homework and other things, AS WELL as the work for your assignment. You should add in your other commitments, so your schedule is realistic.

Allow time between finishing your draft, and having the assignment completed for submission. This allows for the unexpected, e.g. some parts of the process taking longer than you expected.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
21 Assignment given	22	23 Read assign't make points, do schedule.	24 Check Librarian, general research	25	26 STEP 1 Review. Outline what I need to research	27
28 STEP 2 List topics /headings to research	29 STEP 3 Establish how to organise research	30	31 STEP 4 last pre-research check	1 Aug STEP 5 Start researching	2	3 Continue researching -
4	5 Continue researching	6	7	8	9 Finish researching	10 STEP 6 Begin writing draft (write a third)
11	12	13 Write the 2nd third of the draft	14	15	16 Write the final third of draft.	17
18 STEP 7 First proof	19	20 Second proof	21	22 Third proof	23	24 STEP 8 FINAL format completed
25	26 Assignment due					

The schedule is not fixed, you should change it when you don't meet your planned deadline, just make sure you don't rush the last important stage of presentation.

 <p>DISCUSS</p>	<p><i>c. What things will you need to take into account when scheduling work for the assignment? What should you do if you can't stick to the schedule?</i></p>
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STEP 3: Ensure you are clear on what to research and structure what you need to find out.

Before you start researching, there are a number of questions you need to answer.

- **TOPIC:** What do you need to know about?
- **MAIN CONCEPTS:** Are there main points, concepts, words, or topics? These should be indicated on the assignment question, as well as through your knowledge related to the topic. Write them down.
- **SYNONYMS:** What are other ways to describe these key words, phrases or concepts - are there synonyms? This will help when you use search engines or catalogues. Add these to the list of words or phrases from the previous point.

- **KNOWLEDGE CHECK:** What do you already know? Are you confident you are correct about what you already know? Is there anything you think you should check up and confirm?

You should now have a fairly good idea of the general direction for your research and how to approach your assignment. The next step is to give further structure before you research more deeply. This will make your research organisation far easier.

- **HEADINGS:** List all the headings for the different sections and any sub-headings.
- **SECTIONS:** An Introduction, Body and Conclusion are needed in your assignment, just as they are when you write a speech or an essay. The Body will be your main topics and subtopics.
- **INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION:** The Introduction and Conclusion need to respond to the assignment question or statement. These will often be written after you've researched, when you may have further understanding and are able to write succinctly with deeper meaning. But you may also like to consider ideas for both the Introduction and the Conclusion as you are researching.



d. What should you do if you are not clear on what to do for the assignment? Why do you need to have a structure before you start researching?

STEP 4: A few more things before you start researching.

- **DON'T FORGET THE LIBRARY:** Do not dismiss the library for researching: magazines, newspaper articles, library catalogues. A library is STILL a highly valuable resource, especially the school librarian who can also help you to locate digital resources.
- **CITING:** Whenever you use words, ideas or images that you didn't create yourself you need to state where they came from, even if it was from a website. Not citing your source is called plagiarism. You need to cite:

- exact phrases, quotes
- someone else's idea
- maps, diagrams, charts
- interviews, speeches, letters
- pictures, photos, cartoons, any artwork
- facts that are not common knowledge

References

Brown, AL, Bransford, JD, Ferrara, RA & Campione, JC 1983, 'Learning, Remembering, and Understanding', in P Musssen (ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Cognitive development*, John Wiley and Sons, New York.

Commonwealth of Australia 2010. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, viewed 16 July 2010. <<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Pages/overview.aspx>>.

- **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** At the end of your assignment you need to include a bibliography that lists all the sources you referred to, and where you got the information.
 - You may not have referred to a specific quote, or used specific words but the source would have helped you understand more about the topic and provided general information.
 - You should check with your teacher about specific bibliography requirements.
 - The Bibliography should be put together at the end of your assignment in alphabetical order, with the author's name first. If there is no author, the title should be added into the alphabetical list.