How to...

plan your writing

Alternative formats available
If you would like more help and advice on finding information or using any of the resources available in the Learning Centre, please ask a member of the Learning Centre staff.
What is planning and why should I do it?

In simple terms, planning your writing is thinking about what you are going to write in advance. For some types of writing, like an email or a text message, there is no need to put your plan down on paper. For most other types of writing, such as letters, reports or essays, planning is essential because:

- it helps you record your ideas;
- it may encourage you to come up with new ideas;
- it helps you to organise your thoughts;
- it provides a way of checking that you have all the information you need.

What do I need to think about?

The first thing you need to do, before writing anything down, is to make sure that you understand what you are being asked to write about. For more detailed information please read the Learning Centre guides ‘How to... write an essay’ and ‘How to... write a report’.

Once you are sure you understand what you are being asked to do, there are three basic things to consider when you are planning your writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose: why are you writing?</th>
<th>The purpose, context and audience of your writing affects:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It could be to discuss your ideas on a particular topic, or to report your findings from a piece of research.</td>
<td>• the <strong>content</strong>: the ideas and information you write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context: what situation are you writing for?</strong></td>
<td>• the <strong>format</strong>: the layout of your writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It could be an essay for your course, a report for the Managing Director of a company or a letter of application for a job.</td>
<td>• the <strong>style</strong> or language used: how formal or informal you are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience: who are you writing for?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It could be your tutor, other students, the local community or the manager of a business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do I plan my writing?

There are different ways to plan your writing. There isn't a right way to plan; choose the method that you prefer or the method that best suits the situation.

Diagrams, lists and writing frames are some examples of planning methods.

**Diagrams**

Diagrams are a way of planning and organising your writing visually. Examples of diagrams include spider diagrams, mind maps and flow charts.

With *spider diagrams* you can make a note of lots of ideas, in no particular order, to help you organise your thoughts.

(http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/study/Spider.htm#Spidergrams)
**Mind maps** are similar to spider diagrams but tend to show the structure of the subjects and the links between points.

For more details on how to create your own mind maps, have a look at the Learning Centre guide ‘How to... mind map’ or ask one of your Learning Advisors for some advice.

(http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/study/Spider.htm#Spidergrams)
Flow charts are a good way of planning writing that has to show a sequence of events or describe a step-by-step process, like a recipe.

(www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/writing/planningyourwriting/factsheet.shtml)
Lists

Lists are useful for making a brief note of all the different points you want to cover in your writing. Once you have written them down you can then sort them into a relevant order.

**Bulleted lists** are probably the most commonly used list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party poster plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Day and time - 8th November at 7pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Location - college student bar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Events during the evening - try your hand at salsa dancing!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Live salsa band will be there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The evening is free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spanish food to try.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evening is open to everyone, family and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Salsa instructors on hand to answer questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Picture of salsa dancers to make poster eye-catching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(www.bbc.co.uk/skillwise/words/writing/planningyourwriting/factsheet.shtml)

**Sticky notes.** Write one idea on each sticky note and then you can move the different points around until you are happy they are in a suitable order.

This example of a plan for a letter shows all the things the writer wanted to remember to say...
Writing frames

Writing frames can be useful as guidance for writing documents which always include the same kind of information, such as a curriculum vitae (CV). They usually look like tables, which have headed boxes with titles to prompt you with the kind of thing you could write.

An example writing frame is shown on the next page.
### Example CV writing frame

| **Contact details** to include name, address, phone number, email (if you have one). | Hilary Evans  
12 Woodland Walk, Newport  
01633 772233  
hilaryevans@gmail |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal statement</strong> (The things you are really good at, e.g. communicating, problem solving, working as part of a team, etc.)</td>
<td>Working in groups, motivated, organised, good IT skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment history</strong> (most recent first) to include dates, employer, responsibilities, achievements.</td>
<td>McDonalds – Saturday job from December 2010 to date.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Training and education** (most recent first) to include relevant training courses and qualifications. | **Training:**  
Health and Safety course – McDonalds December 2010  
**Education:**  
Key Skills – Application of Number, Communications, IT L2 – college June 2009  
5 GCSEs – school June 2008 |
| **Interests**, but only if it is something really interesting, such as playing regularly for a local team. | Netball team  
Play in a band |
| **References**, usually the names and addresses of two people (not relatives) who would recommend you for a job. | Mr Jones  
Tutor, college  
Mrs Adams  
Manager, McDonalds |

(www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/writing/planningyourwriting/factsheet.shtml)
Finally...

Planning is a personal thing. Different people prefer different methods of planning. Choose which method you think suits you. Your tutor may also have a planning structure they prefer you to use.

Bibliography


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http://www.mobile-barcodes.com/qr-code-software

Take a photo of the image with your phone and your browser will take you to Coleg Gwent Moodle.

Log on with your college username and password to view all of the Learning Centre “How to...” guides.