



Academic Writing for Postgraduate Assignments

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Centre for Learner Success (CLS)



This session looks at:

- Steps for writing an assignment
- Breaking down assignment questions and identifying tasks
- Note taking for assignment purposes
- Reading academic texts
- Paragraph structure
- Essay structure
- What to include in:
 - Introduction paragraphs, and
 - Conclusion paragraphs

Steps for writing an assignment?

- Analyse the assignment question
- Brainstorm the topic
 - key questions that need to be answered?
- Find and choose sources (see [“how to find information on your topic”](#))
- Read and take notes
- Prepare outline
- Write first draft and get feedback
- Review and edit first draft, second draft, third draft...

Sample assignment question

Assignment 1: Essay

Due date: 28 March, 2013

Word limit: 1500 words

Learning outcome: 3

Weighting: 20%

See [CTL workshops](#) & [OWLL](#) for other formats

See [Assignment Planning link on OWLL](#)

Keep to the word limit!

Use to help you understand assignment requirements

Tells you how much this assignment makes up your overall grade

In order to prevent workplace bullying, organisations need to look beyond issues of individual personality and examine how underlying organisational factors can contribute to the problem. Critically discuss.

Take note!

You need to refer to at least **15 academic sources** in completing this assignment.

Make sure you use this!

Recommended source:

Griffin, R.W., & Moorhead, G. (2012). *Organizational behavior: Managing people and organizations*. South Western/Cengage Learning.

In order to prevent workplace bullying, organisations need to look beyond issues of individual personality and examine how underlying organisational factors can contribute to the problem. Critically discuss.

Step 1: Identify the topic

- *What is the assignment about (broad topic)?*



**Workplace
bullying**

In order to prevent workplace bullying, organisations need to look beyond issues of individual personality and examine how underlying organisational factors can contribute to the problem. Critically discuss.

Step 2: Identify the focus

- *What do I include on this topic?*



In order to prevent workplace bullying, organisations need to look beyond issues of individual personality and examine how underlying organisational factors can contribute to the problem. **Critically discuss.**

Step 3: Identify the task

- *What do I have to do in the assignment ?*





Identifying the task

‘Critically discuss’

- Following a statement/quotation, implies judgement.
 - For example:
 - Do you agree or disagree with the statement? Why?
 - Do you agree partially? Why?
- Present a critical discussion
 - Cover competing ideas/perspectives and findings on the topic
Where do researchers agree/disagree?
 - Strengths and limitations of suggested ideas?
 - Are there gaps in available research on the topic?
- Come to a conclusion on the problem. *Does the evidence in the literature support the statement?*

In order to prevent workplace bullying, organisations need to look beyond issues of individual personality and examine how underlying organisational factors can contribute to the problem. **Critically discuss.**

Does the evidence in the literature support this statement?

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Brainstrom topic before you start searching

https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/library-services/research-services/literature/literature_home.cfm

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🕒 Hours | Ngā Hāora

Monday, July 22, 2019 Next Day

Albany Library	8:00am – 12:00am
Manawatu Library	7:30am – 11:30pm
Wellington Library	8:00am – 11:00pm

[More Hours Information](#)

Brainstorm the topic



What are the key questions that need answering?

- What is workplace bullying? Definition(s) *Define your concepts*
- Why is it a problem? *Explain significance of problem: Effect on individuals/ organisations/society – evidence from literature*
- How can individual personality contribute to workplace bullying?
- Is a focus on these factors sufficient to prevent workplace bullying? Why?/Why not?
- Can organisational factors contribute to workplace bullying?
Which factors? Why? How? Do they work in combination?
- Given our understanding of the factors, how can workplace bullying be prevented?
Are there examples of successful implementation of measures?

Key words/phrases for Library search?



Finding and using information in readings

- Finding information in a journal article and taking notes
- Using your readings to help you write

We'll be using extracts adapted from Bentley et al. (2012) during this section

Library's list of learning services

See Library Classes (face-to-face and online):

<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/library-services/learning-services.cfm>

Taking notes for your assignment

When researching literature, try:

- Keeping a list of **key questions to be answered** in front of you
 - you're searching for relevant information only
- Taking notes in the margins of journal articles as you read
 - summarise relevant ideas
 - what is the writer doing in the text?
- Making **cross references** to other articles – note similarities / differences across sources
- Collecting notes in a document – keep updating until you have enough information for your assignment



Literature matrix: Note taking method

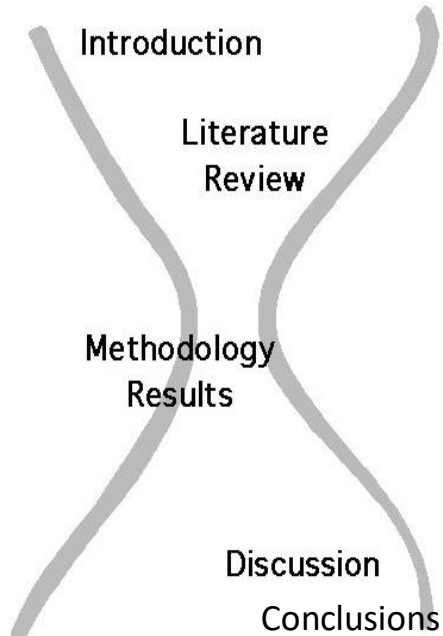


Keep key questions in front of you – you’re searching for relevant information

Key questions	Article	My notes
Definition(s) of workplace bullying	Bentley et al. (2012)	<p>Tips:</p> <p>Ways of reading - Skim through the article by Bentley et al. to see whether it contains relevant information for our assignment. Look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the article title• the abstract• the first paragraph• headings• subheadings & first sentences under them <p>Using direct quotes - Always write them in double quote marks, and note down the page number, so that they are ready easy to find and cite in your own writing.</p>
Significance of problem?		
Individual factors?		
Organisational factors?		
Preventative measures?		

Online tutorials: “[Reading & Notetaking](#)” (with downloadable templates), and [How to keep track of your literature searches](#)

Structure of research articles



The story structure of research:

- There's this important problem or issue...
- and researchers understand some areas of the problem but others need more research
- a specific area requiring more research is this...and it's important because...
- so what we did was...
- and found that...
- which means we now know this
- and the implications of the findings are...

Research article



Articles generally include:

Components

Abstract: Brief summary highlighting reasons for study, methods & findings

Introduction: Significance of topic; brief review of theoretical background & earlier research on topic; reasons for current research

Method: How research was conducted & materials used

Results: Details on findings and statistical tests, with summaries of data in the form of charts/graphs/tables

Discussion: Analysis, interpretations, implications of results

Conclusion: Summary of key findings, implications for the field and suggestions of future directions for further research

Skim through this passage from Bentley et al. (2012, p. 353):

Who should be acknowledged as the author of the bulleted points?

be a result, as well as a cause, of bullying (Zapf, 1999). Some of the specific work environment factors that have been found to be associated with bullying are outlined below.

- Lack of control over work tasks, time and behaviours has frequently been associated with bullying (Browning, Ryan, Thomas, Greenberg, & Rolniak, 2007; Einarsen, 2000; Ferris, Zinko, Brouer, Buckley, & Harvey, 2007; Foster et al., 2004; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001; Rayner, 1997; Zapf, 1999). Removing control by micro-management or excessive supervision can be a form of bullying in itself as it increases feelings of powerlessness in the targets (Vartia, 1996). Lack of control over work is often associated with high workloads, also associated with bullying, and with lack of time control (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2007; Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen et al., 1994; Rayner, 1997).
- Lack of clarity around work roles and goals, and inadequate information and communication are linked to bullying (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen, 1999; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007; Vartia, 1996). Role conflict and role ambiguity can lead to incompatible or conflicting demands and expectations, which in turn can give rise to frustration and stress.

In order to prevent workplace bullying, organisations need to look beyond issues of individual personality and examine how underlying organisational factors can contribute to the problem. Critically discuss.

Sample from an essay on the topic:

Another organisational factor linked to workplace bullying is the workplace environment. For example, Bentley et al. (2012) list a number of environmental factors found to be associated with bullying. These include...

Google: Manchester University + Academic Phrasebank
- provides academic phrases to refer to the literature

Read through this passage from Bentley et al. (2012, p. 354)

In regards to employee selection, one key primary prevention strategy is to use staff selection systems to screen out those with undesirable traits or motives (Blackman & Funder, 2002; Fodchick, 2007; Gardner & Johnson, 2001; Glendinning, 2001) or to select those with desirable qualities such as integrity (Ferris, 2009) or emotional intelligence (Yamada, 2008). However, these approaches need to be treated with care due to their potential for adverse impacts, and all selection methods must be valid and job related.

- **This is how authors demonstrate their critical thinking, propose counter arguments, express notes of caution etc...**
 - **i.e. Express their voice**

Try not to be intimidated by academic text...

The negative consequences of bullying for the target are substantial. At the individual level, targets are likely to have lower self-esteem, more negative emotion, anxiety, stress, fatigue, burnout and depression than non-targets (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Skogstad, 1998; Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). These negative impacts are not limited to the target of bullying. Indeed, negative health effects have also been found among those who have witnessed bullying but have not been personally targeted (Burnes & Pope, 2007; Hoel et al., 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007).

Negative consequences for the organisation are also considerable. Targets of workplace bullying have greater absenteeism, along with reduced job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work motivation (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Burnes & Pope, 2007; Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006; Loh, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2010). Targets are also more likely to leave the organisation (Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casmir, 2004, 2008). Further organisational costs include displaced effort in helping staff cope with bullying incidents, and the costs associated with investigations of ill treatment and potential court action (Rayner & Keashley, 2005).

Try not to be intimidated by academic text...

The negative consequences of bullying for the target are substantial. At the individual level, targets are likely to have lower self-esteem, more negative emotion, anxiety, stress, fatigue, burnout and depression than non-targets

These negative impacts are not limited to the target of bullying. Indeed, negative health effects have also been found among those who have witnessed bullying but have not been personally targeted

Negative consequences for the organisation are also considerable. Targets of workplace bullying have greater absenteeism, along with reduced job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work motivation

Targets are also more likely to leave the organisation
Further organisational costs include displaced effort in helping staff cope with bullying incidents, and the costs associated with investigations of ill treatment and potential court action



Reading to inform our own academic writing development

- Use journal articles in your own discipline as models to help you write academically
- Examine the **structure** and **features** of academic writing
 - structuring paragraphs to develop your argument
 - using and referencing sources

Note: Not all literature is well written and not all journal articles use APA Referencing!



Paragraph structure: 'Rules of thumb'

- Each paragraph should develop **one** main idea
- Approximately 70 - 200 words
- The paragraph should have a **topic sentence** which states the main idea of the paragraph
 - usually placed in the first sentence of the paragraph
- The rest of the paragraph should develop the main idea
 - explanations, reasons, evidence, definitions of terms
- Use **connectors** to link sentences and paragraphs and guide the reader through the text



One main idea per paragraph

Negative consequences for the organisation are also considerable. Targets of workplace bullying have greater absenteeism, along with reduced job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work motivation (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Burnes & Pope, 2007). Targets are also more likely to leave the organisation (Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casmir, 2004, 2008). Further organisational costs include displaced effort in helping staff cope with bullying incidents, and the costs associated with investigations of ill treatment and potential court action (Rayner & Keashley, 2005).

Topic sentence
- main idea

Builds on
main idea

Supporting
ideas:
Examples
Evidence

Use appropriate connecting words and phrases for:

- additional points (also; in addition; furthermore)
- contrasting points (in contrast; however; while)
- result(s) of something (as a result)
- cause of something (one possible reason; one contributing factor)



Writing an essay

What is an essay?

- An essay is an extended, written response to a particular question that outlines the author's position.

Where the author stands on an issue



Your voice guides the argument throughout the essay

And you present your position on the topic, using evidence to back up your statements/claims/arguments

Introduction

- Introduce issue
- State your position

Body paragraphs

- Defend your position
- Each paragraph = evidence based argument

Conclusion

- Restate your position
- Summarise points of your argument



Introduction

10-15%



Set up the context for your topic

Tell the reader about your focus in the essay and what will be included

Each body paragraph delivers on what's been promised

- one main idea per paragraph – usually expressed in first sentence (topic sentence)
- support main idea with evidence from literature
- connect sentences and paragraphs

Anchor each paragraph to the introduction by repeating key words in topic sentences

Conclusion

10%



Come to a logical conclusion

- summarise main ideas
- look to the future
 - significance of what you've found



Essay outline preparation

Assignment topic

In order to counteract workplace bullying and prevent future incidents, organisations need to look beyond issues of individual personality and examine how underlying organisational factors can contribute to the problem. Critically discuss. 1500 words

average words per paragraph

= 150 to 200

So for this essay, start off with a rough plan for ...

10 or 11 paragraphs

A plan for this essay might look like this ...



Paragraph sequence:

- 1: Introduction: prevalence of workplace bullying; definition of bullying; consequences of bullying: individual & organisational
- 2: Current policies & practice often focus on issues with individual employees but research shows organisational factors also very important

3/4 : Factors with individual employees

5/6 : Organisational factor 1

7/8 : Organisational factor 2

9/10: Organisational factor 3

- What is the issue?
- Why is it a problem?
- What interventions can be used address it?
- Strengths/limitations of interventions?

11: Conclusion: combination of interventions needed to address complex problem; future – research and practice

Introduction: Narrow down to specific focus of essay and thesis statement

Prevalence of workplace bullying
Consequences of workplace bullying
Formal definition of workplace bullying



Policy and practice in organisations often focus on issues with individual employees

BUT

Research has identified organisational factors associated with increased risk of bullying

SO

Organisations need to understand these factors in order prevent bullying



This essay discusses four main factors & critically examines measures to address them

General topic area

- Significance of problem or issue
- Definition of concept from academic source



Specific focus

- Focus in this essay?
- **Why** this specific focus?



Thesis statement

- Main point / argument / position



Essay map

- What are you going to do in the essay?
(Indication of structure)



Thesis statement

Possible examples:

Issues with individual employees cannot be ignored in any attempt to analyse and address an organisation's problem with workplace bullying. However, it is crucial that the organisation also recognises and addresses organisational factors (A, B, C and D), which may be enabling and even encouraging bullying behaviour.

Or

This essay argues that while issues with individual employees cannot be ignored in addressing workplace bullying, organisations need to recognise and understand the significant role played by organisational factors in enabling and even encouraging workplace bullying. Four major organisational factors will be discussed, including A,B,C and D...



When do you refer to literature?

1: Introduction: prevalence of workplace bullying; definition of bullying; consequences of bullying: individual and organisational.

Yes



Thesis statement

No

2/3: Factors with individual employees

4/5: Organisational factor 1

Yes

6/7: Organisational factor 2

8/9: Organisational factor 3

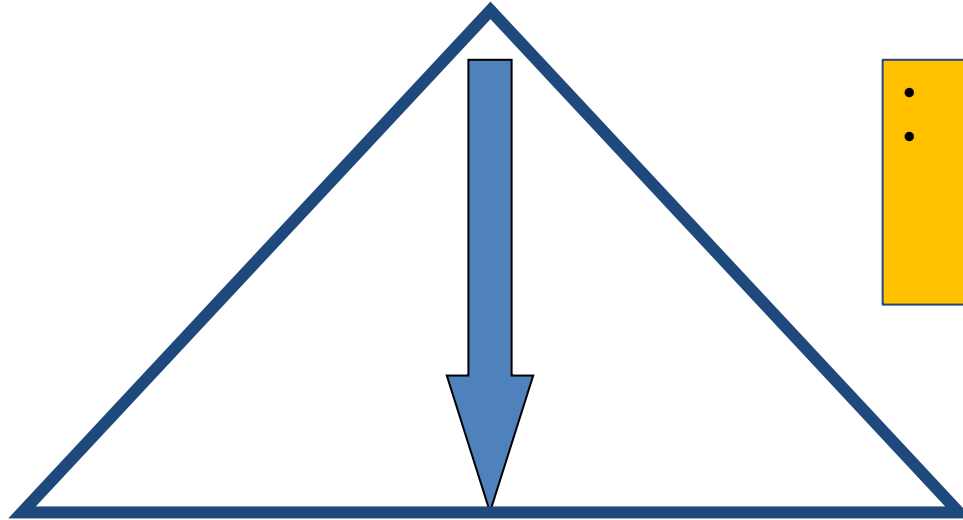
10: Conclusion: combination of interventions needed to address complex problem; future – research and practice

Typically, no



The Conclusion

Restate thesis; Summarise main points made in argument



- Succinctly written
- Don't draw conclusions about something you haven't discussed in essay

Looks to the future: Application of what you've found; further research needed on topic etc.

Sem 1, 2024



StudyUp is a series of online workshops designed to help enhance your writing and study skills.

The workshops are broadcast live from <https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315>

For more information about sessions and **How to Join a Zoom Call** please go to <https://owll.massey.ac.nz/about-OWLL/studyup.php> Please note: the timetable is subject to change



TOPIC	TITLE	DESCRIPTION	DATE & TIME
1	How to manage your time	Learn time management skills to get on top of your studies https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Wednesday 17th July 12-12:45pm
2	How to read effectively for study	Learn strategies to make your reading more efficient and productive as a learning tool https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Thursday 18th July 12-12:45pm
3	Academic Integrity and how to avoid plagiarism	Learn what plagiarism is, why and how students get in trouble for it and how to use ideas or quotes from your research effectively https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Wednesday 24th July 12-12:45pm
4	How to construct a paragraph	Learn how to structure paragraphs effectively https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Thursday 25th July 12-12:45pm
5	How to find information on your topic	Learn some tips on how to find scholarly books and journal articles on your topics https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Wednesday 31st July 12-12:45pm
6	How to write an essay	Learn how to structure, plan, write and review an essay which presents a credible and evidence-based argument https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Thursday 1st August 12-12:45pm
7	How to do critical analysis	Learn how to read more critically and show your critical thinking in the way you refer to evidence and arguments in your assignments https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Wednesday 7th August 12-12:45pm
8	How to improve your memory	Learn strategies to store and recall sets of information for exams and everyday life https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Thursday 8th August 12-12:45pm
9	How to reference	Learn how to format citations and a reference list according to APA guidelines https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315	Wednesday 14th August 12-12:45pm

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StudyUp Postgraduate Workshops

are 60-90 minute sessions which can be accessed via this link:

<https://massey.zoom.us/j/9845684315>



TITLE	DESCRIPTION	DATE & TIME
Academic writing for Postgraduate Assignments	Provides a holistic understanding of writing to assignment questions. Including using and acknowledging journal articles; writing paragraphs and essays, with emphasis on critical analysis	Tuesday 16th July 12 noon-1:30pm
Advanced Literature Searching	This session provides advice on advanced search techniques and how to use a range of databases effectively to ensure a thorough search of literature relevant to your topic	Tuesday 23rd July 12 noon-1:30pm
Writing a Research Proposal	This session examines the content and structure of research proposals	Tuesday 30th July 12 noon-1:30pm
Writing a Literature Review	The organisation and content of literature reviews, with a focus on synthesis and critique of research	Tuesday 6th August 12 noon-1:30pm

CENTRE FOR LEARNER SUCCESS

<https://www.massey.ac.nz/study/study-and-assignment-support-and-guides/academic-support-services/>

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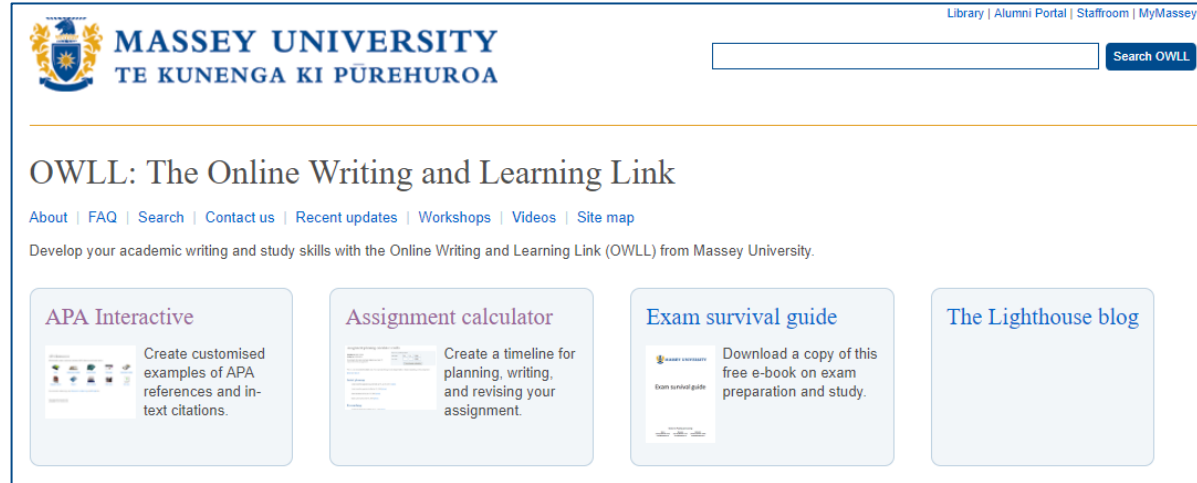
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Online Tools to Develop Writing + Study Skills

Online Writing and Learning Link - <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/>



The screenshot shows the Massey University OWLL website. At the top left is the Massey University logo and name: "MASSEY UNIVERSITY TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA". To the right is a navigation menu with links for "Library | Alumni Portal | Staffroom | MyMassey" and a search bar with a "Search OWLL" button. Below the header is the main heading "OWLL: The Online Writing and Learning Link" followed by a navigation menu: "About | FAQ | Search | Contact us | Recent updates | Workshops | Videos | Site map". A sub-heading reads: "Develop your academic writing and study skills with the Online Writing and Learning Link (OWLL) from Massey University." Below this are four feature boxes: 1. "APA Interactive" with a description: "Create customised examples of APA references and in-text citations." 2. "Assignment calculator" with a description: "Create a timeline for planning, writing, and revising your assignment." 3. "Exam survival guide" with a description: "Download a copy of this free e-book on exam preparation and study." 4. "The Lighthouse blog".

- [APA Interactive](#)

- [Assignment Planning Calculator](#)

- [Academic Writing Section](#)

- [Referencing Section](#)

OTHER RESOURCES FOR TAUIRA

- **Paraphrasing techniques:** <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/referencing/paraphrasing-techniques.php>
- **Sample assignments:** <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/sample-assignments.php>
- **Dr. Lilia Sevillano’s video tutorial – “The literature review”:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKL2pdRmwc4&feature=youtu.be>
- **Dr. Lilia Sevillano’s video tutorial – “The research proposal”:** <https://owll.massey.ac.nz/assignment-types/research-proposal.php>
- **Unofficial thesis template** (Word doc.): <https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/staffroom/national-shared-services/information-technology-services/help/learning-resources-for-students.cfm>
- **Guide to thesis presentation:** <https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/help-and-instruction/theses/thesis-presentation-guide.cfm>
- **Massey library:** <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/library-services/learning-services.cfm>
- **Library video demonstrations:** http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/library/help-and-instruction/how-to-find/show-me-how-masterlist/show-me-how-masterlist_home.cfm

MORE RESOURCES FOR TAUIRA

- **Manchester Academic Phrasebank:** <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- **List of signposting words/phrases** for referring to sources, describing methods/theories/ideas, comparing/contrasting and critiquing, etc.:
<http://owll.massey.ac.nz/pdf/studyup-essays-2-handout.pdf>
- **OWLL** for a template to help with analysing and summarising sources:
<http://owll.massey.ac.nz/pdf/litreview.pdf>
- **OWLL - APA Interactive / MLA Interactive / Chicago Interactive:**
<http://owll.massey.ac.nz/index.php>
- **UG & PG StudyUp sessions & resources:** <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/about-OWLL/studyup.php>
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- **Academic writing e-book:** <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/academic-writing/academic-writing-e-book.php>
- **Guide to Stream:** <http://owll.massey.ac.nz/stream.php>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON ACADEMIC WRITING

Available from Massey's Library:

- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. M. (2016). *The craft of research*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Burton, L.J. (2010). *An interactive approach to writing essays and research reports in psychology* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Cargill, M., & O'Connor, P. (2021). *Writing scientific research articles: Strategy and steps* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Emerson, L. (Ed.) (2022). *Writing guidelines for business students* (6th ed.). Thomson Dunmore Press.
- Emerson, L. (Ed.). (2007). *Writing guidelines for education students* (2nd ed.). Thomson Learning.
- Emerson, L. (Ed.). (2005). *Writing guidelines for social science students* (3rd ed.). Thompson Dunmore Press.
- Hampton, J., Emerson, L., & Mackay, B. (Eds.). (1999). *Writing guidelines for postgraduate science students*. Dunmore Press.
- Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (1994). *Academic writing for graduate students: A course for nonnative speakers of English*. The University of Michigan Press.
- Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (3rd ed.) The University of Michigan Press.

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Manchester University. (2006). *Academic phrasebank*. <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/index.htm>

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for supervisors*. Routledge.