



Writing

Essays, notes, sketches



Outline of today's lecture

- The importance of writing
- Properties of a good essay
- The writing process
 - How to improve your writing skills
 - General hints

[Why be a good writer?]

Scientific reports/documentation
(developers)

Proposals for money (management)

Research papers

Master thesis (!)

[Your goal should be..]

The most information in the least amount
of reading time 😊

[What is an essay?]

- Definition (Wikipedia):
"An **essay** is a short work that treats a topic from an author's personal point of view, often taking into account subjective experiences and personal reflections upon them."
- Purpose
 - To inform/persuade

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[How to write an essay - different approaches]

1. **Traditional**
Beginning – middle – end
2. **Argumentative**
For instance: find an author you disagree with, contrast him/her point by point
3. **Compromise**
Thesis - anti-thesis – synthesis
argument – counter argument – balanced view (dialectics)

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[What is a structure?]

- An **introduction** at the start
- A **conclusion** at the end
- The **other stuff** in between.

[Introduction]

- You need a **solid introduction!**
- The introduction may contain
 - something about how you have **interpreted** the question,
 - a **thesis** (an argument) which you are going to illustrate or explore in the body of the essay.

[The introduction]

- **Purpose:** make the reader want to actually FINISH reading your paper!
- **Precision** – let the introduction be relevant to the content of the paper!
- **Proper length**
- Try to make it 'catchy', without losing the precision

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[Essay: Before writing the introduction]

What is the

- Topic?
- Importance?
- Background?

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[Establish your constraints!]

- Audience (basic skills, interests)
- Format (layout etc.)
- Mechanics (grammar/punctuation)
- Politics
- The purpose of the document

[And before starting writing..]

Broad and deep research is essential!

[Conclusion]

- You may save the **'findings'** of your exploration to the end ->
 - *Introduce the question at the start*
- You need a **conclusion** *which is the logical consequence of everything that has gone before.*

[The Conclusion]

The good essay has developed a number of related issues which the conclusion ties together.

[Exercise in class: Mini-writing]

- Find arguments pro and con:
- **Pornography on the Internet**
 - Write down your conclusion.
 - Remember: Give the premise(s) = arguments
 - Draw a conclusion based on that premise (those premises).

[]

- The Essay Structure

Two dull kinds of essay structure

The one that is not well enough organised:

1. Definition of the thing
2. Some stuff about the thing
3. Summary

The one that follows a formula:

1. Introduction, saying that we will discuss the thing
2. Three arguments in favour of the thing
3. Three arguments against the thing
4. Summary of the above

Five really awful ways to begin an essay

Why have baked beans become so popular in Britain?':

- "The question of why baked beans have become so popular in Britain is an interesting..."
- "The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'baked beans' as..."
- "In this essay I will explore the question of why baked beans have become so popular in Britain..."
- "The Penguin English Dictionary defines 'popular' as..."
- "The Collins English Dictionary defines 'Britain' as..."

Why are these awful? Because they are so predictable, uninspiring and limp.

Rules of thumb for essay writing

- **Answer the question.**
- Use a clear, **logical structure**
- Give your **own analysis**, not a mere description.
- A **fresh, original** approach
- **Clear, consistent** references
- Base your essay on **relevant reading and research.**
- Argue your case, with **your own point of view.**
- **Show evidence of independent thought.**
- Try to avoid formulas, clichés, and the obvious approaches.

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Organising your notes

- **Organise** your **material**
 - A flow from one argument to the next in a logical order.
- Each part should **build on the previous parts**
- The argumentation should **lead the reader to your conclusion**

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[Some hints on content]

- The more analysis, the better
- Good style
 - No superfluous words
 - Proper punctuation
 - No spelling errors (!)

[A good approach]

- Look through your notes and identify some **themes**
- **Structure** your essay around consideration of those themes
- **Structure** the analysis of each theme so that the essay builds up towards the conclusion.

[Analysis]

- **Describe** something before you give an **analysis** of it.
- Only **include as much description** as is needed for the analysis to make sense.
- Give a **clear, coherent** and **consistent analysis**, supported by **evidence**.
- Don't just repeat what books or papers say – write your own analysis
- *Show your awareness of other people's analyses, with references!*

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[Some hints on content]

- **The more analysis, the better**
- **Good style**
 - No superfluous words
 - Proper punctuation
 - No spelling errors (!) Use a spell-checker.

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Don't wander off the subject

- Answer the question, and only the question.
 - **NB!** Keep checking that you are remaining on track throughout the essay.
- If there is something interesting that you want to include, but which is of dubious relevance to the main argument or theme of the essay, put it in a *footnote*.

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- Gather material first, don't just start writing!
- Plan ahead – don't rush!
- Be aware of your **style**
 - Strong sentences
 - No spelling errors (!)
 - Proper punctuation
 - Avoid ambiguity
 - How personal?

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[Avoid ambiguity]

- Pronoun – what does 'this' refer to?
- Commas
- 'Its' and 'it's'

[Example – 'false advertising']

Introduction

Man has since the beginning of time attempted to acquire a greater control over his environment. Man's need for better control over his environment has increased greatly since World War II. This need for control is evident in all technological settings, including the welding field.

[A better approach..]

This paper describes a new inertial navigation system that will increase the mapping accuracy of oil wells by a factor of ten.

The new system uses three-axis navigation that protects sensors from high-spin rates. The system also processes its information by Kalman filtering (a statistical sampling technique) in an on-site computer.

[Yet an Example - Introduction]

It's no surprise that the age we are in today is called the Information Age. This is due to the fact that the Internet has given most people access to unimaginable wealth of information. As with any other new technology people will find ways to use it for their benefit. One area that has experienced growth is plagiarism due to Internet usage.

[Mistakes - ambiguity]

If you receive an e-mail titled "Win A Holiday," do not open it. It will erase everything on your hard drive. Forward this e-mail to as many people as you can. This is a very malicious virus and not many people know about it.

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[More ambiguity]

In meeting the staff of the Parks Department, the greatest problem was that of water leakage.

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[And even more ambiguity]

Man Killed When Truck
Hit by Train Identified

*Headline in The Capital Times
Saturday, September 23, 1996*

[The Use of Sources]

Use the Internet — but with care and discrimination.

Academic Journals	The Internet
Peer reviewed (proves accountability, reliability)	Reliable, if ending is .ac, .gov, .org (Careful with .com)
Review: a timely, thorough, meticulous process	Readable for lay people, popular, undemanding, fast produced information
Tone: different view points, balanced arguments	Extravagant, over-emphatic, sweeping, vague statements
Citations, references, bibliography	No back-up by published items, only what is "said"

[Plagiarism]

- **Definition: *'Using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information'***
- **Actions that are similar to plagiarism:**
 - **Stealing**
 - **Fraud**
 - **Hiring someone to write your paper**
 - **Faking, imitating, replicating**

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[Academic dishonesty]

- **Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty:**
 - Willful and intentional fraud and deception for the purpose of improving a grade or obtaining course credit
 - **Remember:** As a student you have the full responsibility for the content and integrity of all academic work submitted

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[Recent Examples]

- **The Sudbø scientific fraud**
- In January 2006 it was revealed that his October 2005 submission to ***The Lancet*** was based upon fraudulent patient data.
 - ***The Lancet*** is one of the oldest and most respected peer-reviewed medical journals in the world,
- The whole patient material was fictional.

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[Motivation to commit scientific misconduct]

- Why?
 - For instance:
 - Career pressure
 - "Knowing the right answer"
 - "The ability to get away with it"
- *wikipedia*

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[Don't cheat]

- **Plagiarism** – using other people's words and ideas without acknowledging where you got them from – is regarded as **an enormous sin**
- Make sure that you have got perfect references!

[How to avoid plagiarism]

- **Footnotes, references, and bibliographies**
- **Quotations** : direct words of the original author, use quotation marks
- **Paraphrase, summarise**: stating someone else's ideas in your own words

[Sources]

- ESSAY- WRITING - THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE - by David Gauntlett (1998, revised 2000, 2001).
- University of Leeds: Institute of Communication studies
<http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/> - Study materials

[Next week]

Tuesday: Bring your mini-essay!
Discussions.

Friday: The Internet. Read Chapter 3.

The week after: Ethical theory. Guest lecture. (?)