

11.2.9 An overview of the eight stages

Having considered this eight stage approach to writing in such detail, you can get an overview of the whole sequence in Table 11.1. The second column summarises what you do to complete each stage. Then the third outlines the mental processes involved and indicates how these contribute towards producing a high quality essay. So the table both reminds you what to do and explains how the writing process works.

Table 11.1 The eight stages of essay writing

Stage	What you do	What it contributes
1 Thinking about the essay title	Highlight key words and make notes about them.	Focuses your attention on what you are being asked to do.
2 Planning the writing process	Plan how you will cover the reading and make the time.	Keeps you in control of the writing process, so you cover all aspects.
3 Studying the course content	Highlight and take notes of essay-relevant material.	Gives your studies a creative edge, as you make links between the essay title and your course studies.
4 Taking stock before you start writing	Update plans, gather together essay material and get an overview of it.	Gets your mind sharply task focused and loaded up with all the relevant ideas.
5 Getting ideas written down	Refocus on the title, then 'brainstorm' to get lots of ideas in writing.	Gets ideas out of your head and onto the page where you can examine them and work them up.
6 Organising your material	Group your notes, then sequence them to create an essay plan.	Helps you to arrive at a line of argument for your essay and a structure to deliver it.
7 Drafting an answer	Turn your notes into sentences and paragraphs: a dialogue with your reader.	Translates your notes from 'private' into 'public' language, and from vague links to explicit argument.
8 Reviewing and polishing	Read through, revise and add finishing touches.	Turns raw potential into an attractive read.

The value of breaking writing down into stages

As everyone who has tried knows, it's easy to get stuck when you are writing. You sit and wonder what you are trying to say and how to get yourself moving again. So, it is enormously helpful to think of the challenge of writing as a set of smaller, more manageable tasks, which you can tackle one at a time. Writing becomes less of a mystery and more of an ordinary