

Contents

Introduction	ix
The Stages	1
Stage 1 Interpretation of the Question	5
<i>Introduction</i>	7
1 Revealing the structure	9
2 A practical example	15
3 Learning to analyse	22
4 The three-step technique – Steps 1 and 2	27
5 Step 3 – Test your concept	36
6 Brainstorming	42
7 Flexibility	51
8 Using the right ability	56
9 The range of abilities	61
10 Changing our pattern of study	66
Stage 2 Research	73
<i>Introduction</i>	75
11 Reading purposefully	78
12 Processing the ideas	83
13 Note-taking for analysis and structure	94
14 Remembering your notes	101
15 Note-taking for criticism and evaluation	108
16 Organising your retrieval system	118
17 Organising your time	124
18 Your own personal timetable	132

Stage 3 Planning	139
<i>Introduction</i>	141
19 Planning that makes a difference	143
20 Editing and ordering your material	151
21 Planning for the exam	160
22 Revising for the exam	166
Stage 4 Writing	171
<i>Introduction</i>	173
23 Getting your own ideas down	176
24 Introductions	182
25 Paragraphs	187
26 Conclusions	197
27 Style – Simplicity	203
28 Style – Economy	215
29 Working with evidence	225
30 Plagiarism	233
31 Referencing and bibliographies	240
Stage 5 Revision	253
<i>Introduction</i>	255
32 Preserving your best ideas	258
33 Revising the structure	262
34 Revising the content	267
Conclusion	278
Bibliography	280
Index	281

The Stages

This book is not just about the actual writing of essays; it's also about the various stages you need to go through to produce a good essay, and about the ways in which this can improve your learning. Once you've worked your way through it, you'll find you have an invaluable guide that you can keep by your side as you write your essays, to give you answers to problems as they arise.

► **Why write essays?**

If you understand the value of doing something, you normally find you're more confident and positive about tackling it. So, what are the reasons for writing essays?

- **It forces you to organise your thinking and develop your ideas on the issues**

In one sense writing is *the* crucial step in the process of learning a subject, in that it helps you to get to grips with the new ideas. Without this it's difficult, if not impossible, to know clearly just how well you've understood the subject.

- **Feedback**

In the same way, it also provides you with the opportunity to get feedback from your tutor, not just on how well you've understood the subject, but on how well you've communicated this, and where your strengths and weaknesses are, so you can concentrate your energies more effectively.

- **Revision material**

If you've planned the essay well, so that it's got a clear structure, you'll find, when it comes to preparing for the final exam, that the plan itself is just about the most important revision material you have. It shows you how you've come to understand the topic, and how you've organised the ideas. As such, it is the one thing that

you will be able to recall and use most effectively under timed conditions. In fact many students who plan well use just these clearly organised thought patterns as their only revision material.

Writing an essay, then, is a valuable opportunity for learning, which ought to be approached positively. If you hide behind the text, just paraphrasing or copying what you've read, without processing those ideas and making them your own, your tutor will rarely see you, your abilities, or your problems, and you will never glimpse the extent of your abilities, or just how much you understand.

► **The five stages**

For any essay to achieve high marks it's essential to go through five distinct stages:

- 1 Interpretation of the question
- 2 Research
- 3 Planning
- 4 Writing
- 5 Revision

If you omit any of these or just rush them, certain familiar problems will emerge in your writing: irrelevance, weak structure, insufficient evidence and examples to support your arguments, lack of fluency between paragraphs, inconsistent arguments, and many others.

It's also as important to separate each stage, so that you leave, say, at least a day between each of them. Of course, it may not always be possible for you to do this. You may have a number of competing obligations that leave you only a few days to complete the essay. On these occasions the skills you'll learn in this book to manage your time will help you cope more effectively. They will also help you organise your time so that with most pieces of work you can in fact find sufficient time between each stage. Not only does this allow you to return to your ideas fresh, so that you're able to see which of them needs to be edited out, but you will also find that your ideas and arguments have developed in the meantime.

Ideas are organic. Hardly ever are they the complete and finished article the moment you grasp them, like products on a supermarket shelf. They grow and develop over time. So, for example, returning to

your plan after a day or two, you will almost inevitably discover new ideas, new evidence and new ways of developing your arguments. You're also likely to see a more sensible and logical way of ordering your ideas.

And the same goes for all the other stages. Each time you return to your work after leaving it to lie unattended for a while, you will find your subconscious has worked on the ideas, restructuring them, answering questions that you weren't sure of, and critically evaluating the arguments you've read in your texts.

But, be reassured, this is not an endless, confusing process, in which your ideas are thrown up in the air each time you return to your work. Within a short time, after revising your plan a couple of times, you will realise that it's ready and you can begin writing. The same is true of your interpretation of the question, your research and the revision of your work. You will know when enough is enough. It may take three or four essays before you feel confident about your judgement, and during these you will have to rely on your tutor's judgement, but it will come.

Stage 1

Interpretation of the Question

INTRODUCTION

Often, and for the best of motives, our problems in essay writing begin the very moment we are given the question. Anxious to get on with the work and not fall behind, we skip the interpretation stage and launch straight into our research. As a result, we read sources and take notes without a clear idea of what's relevant, beyond some very general idea of the subject of the essay. Then finally, after hours of toil, tired and frustrated, and no clearer about what we're doing, we're left with a pile of irrelevant, unusable notes.

Yet, just an hour or two interpreting the question would not only have saved us this wasted time, but would have given us a clear idea of what the question is getting at and a better understanding of what the examiner is looking for in our work. And even more, it would have given us the opportunity to get our own ideas and insights involved at an early stage. Without this our work can seem routine and predictable: at best just the re-cycling of the ideas that dominate the subject.

So, what should you be looking for when you interpret a question? All essay questions tell you two things: the structure your essay should adopt for you to deal relevantly with all the issues it raises; and the range of abilities the examiner is expecting to see you use in answering the question.

► Structure

Take the first of these: the structure. In the following chapters you will learn how to unwrap the meaning and implications of the question, so that, before you go off to do your research, you will have prepared for yourself a clear structure of the issues that the question raises, so you know what you're looking for. In many questions this will develop out of your analysis of the key concepts in the question. Most of us struggle to do this well, but the skills involved can be easily learnt. You will be shown a simple three-step technique for analysing the most difficult concepts.

Once this has been done you will be shown how to brainstorm the question. Again, this is not a time-consuming task, but it will help you to use more of your own ideas and avoid wasting time in your research. Once you've learnt to do this, you will be able to make two important things clear to yourself before you start your research: what *you* know about the issues the essay question raises, and the questions you want

your sources to answer. Without this the authors of the texts you read are likely to dictate to you and you'll find it difficult to distinguish between what's relevant and what's not.

► **Range of abilities**

Then, once you've brainstormed your ideas and know what questions you want your sources to answer, there's just one more thing you need to be sure about before you begin your research. You must be clear about the range of abilities the examiner wants to see you use. Otherwise you may find yourself tackling the essay in a way that doesn't answer the question, and noting information that is irrelevant.

1 Revealing the Structure

In this chapter you will learn:

- how to avoid irrelevance in your essay by carefully interpreting the meaning and implications of the question;
- how to reveal from the question the structure your essay should adopt;
- how to make sure your essay qualifies for the highest marks on offer.

Obviously it's important to realise that you're not embarking on a piece of open-ended research. You're answering a particular question that raises particular sharply focused issues. You must, therefore, be rigorously selective in collecting your material in the research stage, and in planning and writing the essay. You should use only material that is relevant to answering *this* question.

There are times in the research of every essay when you find yourself collecting material that is interesting and so closely argued that you find it difficult not to take notes from all of it, particularly when it's relevant to the wider implications of the topic. But if it's not relevant to the problems raised in *this* essay, ditch it! File it away for other essays, by all means, but don't let it tempt you in this essay. Otherwise it will lose focus and the reader will fail to understand what you're doing and why.

► Analyse the key concepts

With these warnings in mind it's essential to pin down two things: how many parts there are to the question and what weight you will need to give to each part. With many questions these structural problems can be solved by analysing the key concepts used in the question. Indeed,

in most, if you fail to do this, the examiners will deduct marks: they will expect to see you show that you can analyse difficult abstract concepts and allow this to influence, if not determine, the structure of the essay.

For example, markers for the University of London are told to award the highest marks (70–100%) to those students who ‘note subtlety, complexity and possible disagreements, [which they] . . . will discuss’, while only average marks (40–60%) are to be awarded to the student who adopts a ‘More relaxed application’ of the question, and who ‘follows [an] obvious line . . . [and] uncritically accepts the terms of the question’.¹

Similarly, in the Department of Sociology at the University of Harvard students are told:

Papers will be graded on the basis of the completeness and clarity of your analysis and the persuasiveness of your recommendations. As always, we will be appreciative of well-organised and well-written papers.²

The same emphasis can be found at the University of Oxford, where examiners look for a good analytical ability, to distinguish first class and upper second class scripts from the rest. In the marking criteria it’s only in these two grades that any mention is made of analytical ability, with those failing to display it more likely to end up with lower seconds and below. A first class script should show:

analytical and argumentative power, a good command of facts, evidence or arguments relevant to the questions, and an ability to organise the answer with clarity, insight and sensitivity.³

An upper second class script also displays these qualities, but ‘less consistently’ or ‘to a lesser degree’ than a first class script.

► Questions

To give you an idea of what this means in terms of actual questions, listed below is a selection of essay questions from different departments at different universities around the world. You will see that the answer to each of them hinges upon the same ‘clarity, insight and sen-

sitivity' that we can bring to the analysis of the key concepts in the question.

- Do the narrators of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Great Expectations* speak with the same kind of irony?

(The English Novel, University of Harvard)

- Are there any good reasons for supposing that historical explanation is, in principle, different from scientific explanation?

(History, University of Kent at Canterbury)

- Did the years 1603–4 witness a crisis in the history of English Protestantism?

(History, University of Kent at Canterbury)

- Consider Duncan Kennedy's claim that people who favour casting the law in the form of rules are individualists while people who favour the use of standards are altruists. Do you agree that the debate between rules and standards reflects that sort of deep difference in general moral outlook?

(Law, University of Cornell)

- Hobbes insists that covenants extorted by force oblige. (Sovereignty by acquisition is a good example.) Is his argument consistent with his theory? What problems does his insistence pose for his theory? In your answer, be sure to address Hobbes's account of obligation, in particular the obligation to obey the sovereign.

(Philosophy, University of Harvard)

- 'Mill has made as naïve and artless a use of the naturalistic fallacy as anybody could desire. "Good," he tells us, means "desirable", and you can only find out what is desirable by seeking to find out what is actually desired . . . The fact is that "desirable" does not mean "able to be desired" as "visible" means "able to be seen".' G. E. Moore. Discuss.

(Philosophy, University of Kent at Canterbury)

- 'Authority amounts to no more than the possession of power.' Discuss.

(Philosophy, University of Maryland)

- Is there any important sense in which all men are equal? If so, what is it?

(Politics, University of Maryland)

- Is democracy always compatible with individual freedom?
(Politics, University of York)
- Are concepts of anomie and subculture still of value in the explanation of criminality?
(Sociology, University of Oxford)
- What considerations determine the efficient levels of (a) smoking, (b) immunisation against infectious diseases? Is it practical to achieve these?
(Economics, University of Oxford)
- 'Free Trade leads to a Paretian Optimum.' 'Free Trade leads to unacceptable inequalities.' Discuss.
(Economics, University of Oxford)

► Key concepts

As you can see, no matter what the subject, the analysis of the important concepts is the main focus when we come to interpret questions like these. They may be couched subtly in everyday language, like 'unacceptable inequalities', 'obliged', or 'efficient levels', or they may stand out like beacons warning the unwary not to ignore them, like 'Paretian Optimum', and 'anomie and subculture'. Historians, for example, are fond of using concepts like 'revolution' and 'crisis': seemingly inoffensive and untroubling words. But then, look at the British Industrial Revolution and you find yourself wondering, was this a revolution or just accelerated evolution? Indeed, what is a revolution? Is it all a question of the speed of change? In which case, the Industrial Revolution was more an evolution than a revolution, spread as it was over seventy to a hundred years. Or is it more to do with the scale of change? If this is the case, then there's little doubt that it was a revolution, what with the mechanisation of labour, factory production, the growth of cities and the development of mechanised transport.

Much the same could be argued for a concept like 'crisis'. Again it appears to be inoffensive and untroubling; that is until you ask yourself, what do we really mean by the word? It comes from the Greek, *Krisis*, meaning a decisive moment or turning point. So are we really justified in arguing that the years 1603–4 were not only a time of serious challenge to Protestantism, but also a decisive turning point in

its history? Whatever your answer, you now have a structure emerging: on the one hand you can argue that it was a time of serious challenge to Protestantism, but on the other you might question whether it really was a genuine turning point in its history.

The same analysis of concepts and arguments can be found in just about every subject. In politics there are concepts like freedom, ideology, equality, authority, power, political obligation, influence, legitimacy, democracy and many more. Do we really harbour not a single fear of ambiguity when we use such a large and important concept like freedom, or was Donovan Leitch right when he admitted in the sixties that, 'Freedom is a word I rarely use without thinking'? What do we mean by legitimacy and how does it differ from legality? And when we use the word 'democracy' do we mean direct or indirect democracy, representative or responsible, totalitarian or liberal, third world or communist?

In literature what do we mean by concepts like tragedy, comedy, irony, and satire? Indeed, it's not unusual to find universities devoting complete courses to unravelling the implications of these and others like them: concepts like class, political obligation, punishment, revolution, authority and so on. In the following course outline, the concepts of punishment and obligation, and the distinction between law and morality, are central concerns that run throughout the course. Entitled 'Moral Reasoning – Reasoning In and About the Law', it is part of the programme at the University of Harvard:

How is law related to morality? How is it distinct? Do we have an obligation to obey the law? What, if anything, justifies the imposition of legal punishment? These issues, and related issues dealing with the analysis and justification of legal practices, will be examined using the writings of philosophers, judges, and legal theorists.⁴

Take just about any course at any university and you will see the same: that many of the challenges we face are questions about concepts. For example, the Philosophy Department of the University of Southampton describes its Philosophy of Science course in the following terms:

This course examines concepts of evidence, justification, probability and truth, in relation to scientific explanation, causality, laws of nature, theory and fact; the distinctions between science and pseudo-science, as well as between science and metaphor, are among the topics explored. Examples

illustrating the philosophical argument will be drawn from the histories of the physical, biological and social sciences.⁵

► **Qualifying for the highest marks on offer**

Syllabuses like these indicate the importance of key concepts both in the courses you're studying, and in the essays you're expected to write. By analysing them you not only give your essay a relevant structure, but, equally important, you qualify for the highest marks on offer.

If, at this stage, you don't acknowledge the significance of these concepts by analysing their implications, you will almost certainly fail to analyse them in your essay. This will indicate not only that you haven't seen the point of the question, but, more seriously, that you haven't yet developed that thoughtful, reflective ability to question some of the most important assumptions we make when we use language. It is as if you're saying to the examiner that you can see no reason why these concepts should raise any particular problem and, therefore, they deserve no special treatment.

► **In the next chapter**

In the next chapter we'll look at a particular concept and show how you can prise it open to reveal its implications. In so doing you'll see how you can capture more of your own ideas and insights.

Notes

- 1 *General Marking Instructions* (London: University of London, 1987).
- 2 Peter V. Marsden, *Sociology, 25: Introduction to the Sociology of Organizations* (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Harvard, 2000).
- 3 *Greats Handbook* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2000), p. 46.
- 4 Michael Blake, *Moral Reasoning, 62: Reasoning in and about the Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Harvard, 2000).
- 5 *What is Philosophy?* (Southampton: Department of Philosophy, University of Southampton, 1986), p. 16.

Index

- abilities
 - range of, 8, 56–9, 61–5, 178–81
 - unlocking, ix–x, 51–4, 55, 63, 125–6, 132, 177–81, 258–60
 - see also* patterns of study; thinking skills
- active voice, 218–20, 271–2
- analysis
 - getting started, 16–21
 - need for, 9–14, 22–3, 278
 - three-step technique, 27–41
- appearance, 275–6
- authorities
 - challenging them, 61–3, 278–9
 - effects of being tied to, 66–8, 118, 121–3, 177–8, 192–5, 237–8
- bibliographies, *see* referencing
- books
 - using them effectively, 78–81
- brainstorming, 42–53
 - importance of, 43–4, 54–5
- clichés, 213–14
 - see also* jargon; words; writing
- cognitive skills, 63–4, 178–81, 192–5, 228
 - see also* thinking skills
- concentration, 109–10, 125–6, 128–9
- concepts
 - analysis of, 9–14, 22–3, 27–41, 278
 - forming, 27–35
 - open and closed, 15–16
 - testing, 36–41
- conclusions
 - and taut, cohesive essays, 198, 265–6
 - thought provoking, 197–202, 265–6
- confidence, 42
- creativity
 - keeping the editor at bay, 176–7, 255, 258–61
 - staking your claim, 43
 - see also* brainstorming; ideas; pattern notes
- criticism and evaluation
 - four-step technique, 110–17
 - how to, 108–17
- devil’s advocate, 110–17, 178–81
- discussion
 - in essays, 177–81, 197–8
 - in seminars, 53–4, 108–9, 119–20, 127–8, 162–3
- economy, 215–24
 - see also* simplicity; style; writing
- editing
 - the essay, *see* revising the essay
 - the plan, 142, 151–9
- essays
 - irrelevance, *see* relevance
 - learning from them, 1–2, 278–9
 - structure, 9–14, 143–4, 151–2, 182–5, 187–9, 230–1, 263–6, 278
- evaluation, *see* criticism and evaluation
- evidence
 - improving use of, 195–6, 225–32, 264–5
 - overstating and understating, 225–8, 230–1, 264–5
 - and paragraphs, 195–6
 - relevant and specific, 264–5

- selective use of, *see* thesis statements
- showing rather than telling, 230–1, 264–5
- too much of, 230–1, 264–5
- types, 226–8
- see also* readers
- examinations
- assessing abilities, 56–65, 192–5
 - avoiding panic, 166–70
 - examination technique, 160–5, 168–70
 - revision for, 1–2, 66–7, 95, 101–7, 122–3, 160–8
- examiners, 144
- see also* marks
- fallacies, 84–5, 110, 114, 179
- flexibility, 51–5, 67, 78–80, 94, 106, 118
- fluency, 117, 160–1, 176–7, 187–8, 222–4, 255–6, 258–60, 262–3, 274–5
- reading aloud, 262–3, 274–5
 - see also* ordering ideas; topic sentences; transitions
- ideas
- helping them develop, 2–3, 54–5, 279
 - using your own, 7, 22–3, 31, 42–55, 108–9, 118–23, 258–60, 278
 - see also* creativity; pattern notes; thinking skills
- imagination, 53, 177–8
- see also* brainstorming
- index card system, 122–3, 152, 246–7
- instructional verbs, 56–60
- interpretation of questions, *see* questions
- introductions, 143–4, 176–86, 263
- essay structure, 183–5, 263
 - interpretation of the question, 182–3
 - simple formula, 182, 185–6
- irrelevance, *see* relevance
- jargon, 211–12
- see also* clichés; words; writing
- journal, 121–2, 279
- learning
- active, 83–4, 125–6, 162–3, 238
 - importance of needs, 69, 162
 - passive, 61–2, 66–8, 83, 108–10, 192–4
 - processing, 83–95, 132–8; deep level, 76, 83–4, 125–9; surface level, 76, 83, 109–10, 118, 127–8, 162, 193–4
- linear notes, 52–3, 94–100
- advantages of, 145–50
 - examples of, 90–2, 96–9, 146–9, 153–6, 191–2
- logical indicators
- effective use of, 208, 222–4, 264
 - losing the reader, 207–8, 189–91
- marks
- earning the highest, 14, 39, 42, 169, 184, 226–7
- memory
- improving, 83, 85–6, 96, 99, 101–7, 125–8, 160–70
 - trusting, 103–4
 - see also* learning – active
- mind
- helping it self-organise, 85–6, 92, 104, 119–22, 127–8, 133–5, 161–3, 258–60
- mnemonics, 164–5
- needs, *see* learning
- notebook, 54–5, 121, 222, 279
- notes
- abbreviations, 102–3
 - the appropriate strategy, 94–5
 - clear structures, 66–7, 76, 85, 94–100, 193
 - consolidating, 106
 - of criticism and evaluation, 108–17
 - knowing what to leave out, 7, 55, 66–7, 101–4
 - recalling them, 76, 94–109
 - record of your own thinking, 76, 103–4
 - verbatim, 66–7, 108–9
 - see also* linear notes; pattern notes
- opinion
- and conclusions, 197–8

- substitute for evaluation, 195
- suspending judgement, 177–81
- too much, 195, 197–8, 225–8
- see also* evidence
- ordering ideas, 142, 152–9
- organisation, 77
- notes, *see* notes
- retrieval system, *see* retrieval system
- time, *see* time; timetable
- paragraphs
 - development, 192–5, 264
 - evidence, 195–6, 264–5
 - and introductions, 187–8
 - see also* introductions
 - length, 188–9
 - linking, *see* logical indicators; topic sentences; transitions
 - a simple formula, 188–96
- passive voice, *see* active voice
- pattern notes, 94–5, 145–6
- advantages, 52–4
- examples of, 19, 34, 46–9, 115–16
- more creative work, 52–4
- see also* creativity
- patterns of study
 - developing the right abilities, 61–5
 - integrating new skills, x, 69
 - need to change, 51, 59–60, 62–3, 66–71, 118, 124–31
 - see also* flexibility
- plagiarism
 - avoiding, 2, 44, 67–9, 105, 108–9, 122–3, 193, 234–9
 - causes, 234, 237–8
 - definition, 233
 - recycling opinion, 67–9, 233–4
 - six-point code, 236–7
- planning
 - for examinations, 142, 160–7
 - in examinations, 160–1, 168–70
 - how to, 143–59
 - importance of, 141–5
 - rehearsing the arguments, 141–2, 145–50, 158–9
 - strengthens weaker points, 144
 - for taut, cohesive essays, 183–5, 187–92, 263–6
 - see also* introductions; logical indicators; topic sentences; transitions
- processing, *see* learning
- project box, 123
- punctuation
 - creating rhythms of speech, 205–8, 214
- questions
 - incomplete answers, 10–14, 145
 - interpreting, 7–8, 108–9, 182–3
 - see also* analysis; brainstorming
 - range of abilities, *see* instructional verbs
 - structure, 7–8, 9–14, 16–17, 42
 - typical, 166–8
- readability, 215–17, 225, 230, 268–72
- reading
 - an aid to writing, 203
 - for analysis, 83–5, 94–100
 - authors hijacking your thinking, 43–4
 - for comprehension, 84
 - for criticism, 84–5, 108–17
 - inefficient reading, 67, 78–82, 105–6, 108–9, 125–9, 133–5
 - previewing, 7, 43–4, 108–9
 - purposefully, 75–6, 78–82
 - scanning, 51, 80–2
 - skimming, 80–2
 - slow, 67
- readers
 - empathetic responses, 225, 230
 - losing their trust, 267
 - losing them, 9, 42–4, 143–4, 151–2, 160–1, 182–4, 187–8, 205–8, 222–4, 263–5, 269
 - thinking for themselves, 177, 201, 216, 230
 - see also* evidence
- referencing, 240–51
 - acknowledging uncited sources, 245–6
 - bibliographies and reference lists, 246–51
 - endnotes, 242
 - footnotes, 241–2
 - impressing the examiner, 68
 - in-text, 243–5

- reasons for, 240
- systems for citing, 240–51
- relaxing, 128–9, 133, 136
- relevance, 9, 42–50, 52–3, 78–9, 143–4, 151–2, 182–5, 187–8, 192–6
 - see also* questions
- retrieval system
 - organising it, 54–5, 106, 118–23, 279
 - and your own insights, 54–5, 118–20
- revising the essay
 - checklists, 265–6, 268, 272, 275
 - by ear, 262–3, 274–5
 - five-stage strategy, 262–77
 - preserving your best ideas, 258–61
 - purposeful, 260–1
 - separating editor and writer, 176–7, 217, 231, 255, 258–61, 278–9
 - style, 268–75
 - unnecessary material, 268–9
 - see also* appearance; readability; sentences; words
- revising for the exam, *see* examinations
- rhythm, *see* punctuation
- right answers, 63–9, 177, 192–5
- routines
 - taking stress out of studying, 124–5, 127–9, 133, 135–6, 167
 - working at the right time, 125–6, 133–5
- Semmelweis, Ignaz, 24, 27, 36
- sentences
 - clearer, 205–8, 215–22, 267–72, 274–5
 - long sentences, 205–7, 269
 - losing the reader, *see* readers
 - varying length, 206–7
 - see also* writing
- simplicity, 203–14
 - see also* economy; style; writing
- stages of essay writing
 - separating them, 2–3, 133–5, 255, 258–61
- stress, *see* routines
- study, how to, *see* patterns of study
- style, 203–32, 268–72, 274–7
 - and clear thinking, 206, 211–12, 215–17
 - seven practical rules, 217–32
 - see also* economy; simplicity; writing
- synthesis, 42–50
 - see also* brainstorming; ideas; thinking skills
- thesis statements, 177–81
 - selective use of evidence, 178–80
 - suspending your judgement, 177–81
 - using all your abilities, 177–81
 - see also* thinking skills
- thinking skills
 - creative thinking, 118–23, 177–81
 - inconsistent arguments, 84–5, 110–17, 189–91, 195
 - using more of them, 56, 61–71, 124–38
 - see also* learning
- time
 - finding more, 75–6, 127–8
 - length of each study session, 135–6
 - organising, 124–38
 - Parkinson's Law, 127–8, 133, 135
 - when you work best, 124–6, 132–5
 - see also* ideas; learning; relaxing; routines; stages of essay writing
- timetable
 - need for, 124–31, 237–8
 - planning it, 132–8
 - separating the stages, 134–5
 - be specific, 135–6
 - variety, 134–5
- topic sentences, 143–4, 187–92, 264
- transitions, 187–92, 222–3, 264
- understanding, 1–2
- universities
 - compared with schools, 59–65
- vocabulary, 211–14, 217–18, 220–2

- words
- choosing the right ones, 211–14, 217–24, 269–71
 - rely on nouns and verbs, 220–1, 270–1
 - replace prepositional phrases, 222
 - unnecessary words, 215–17, 220–2, 268–72
 - see also* clichés; jargon; writing
- writing
- adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, 220–2, 270–1
 - avoiding the passive reader, 177, 188, 201, 216–22, 225, 230–1, 264–5, 268; *see also* readers
 - clearer sentences, *see* sentences
 - clichés, *see* clichés
 - confusing words and phrases, 205–8, 211–14, 216–17, 268–72; *see also* economy
 - more creative writing, 255, 258–60
 - fluent prose, *see* fluency; ordering ideas; topic sentences; transitions
 - grammar, 267
 - heavy unreadable prose, 203–24, 268–72, 274–5; *see also* readability
 - improving style, *see* style
 - jargon, *see* jargon
 - more interesting prose, 119–23, 177, 198–202, 225, 230–1, 258–60
 - making it clearer, 145, 151–2, 160–1, 203–8, 211–24, 262–72, 274–5
 - paragraphs, length, *see* paragraphs
 - plagiarism, *see* plagiarism
 - putting it into your own words, *see* plagiarism
 - rhythm and punctuation, *see* punctuation
 - talk in print, 176–7, 204–8, 211–14, 262–3, 274–5
 - thesis statements, *see* thesis statements
 - unnecessary words, *see* words
 - words – choosing the right ones, *see* words