



Assignment Guide

The 5 Step Method

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What is 'The Five Step Method'?	2
Step 1: Understand the Question	3
Step 2: Research and Gather	4
Where do I start my research?	5
How can the Knowledge Centre help?	5
Research Material	5
Training & Support	5
Library Guides	5
Step 3: Plan the Structure	6
Create a Paragraph Plan	6
Word Count	7
Step 4: Write and Reference	8
First Draft	8
Paragraphs	8
Referencing	8
Step 5: Proofread and Edit	10
What is Proofreading?	10
What to check when proofreading	10
Flow	10
Clarity	10
Accuracy	11
Techniques for proofreading	11



Introduction

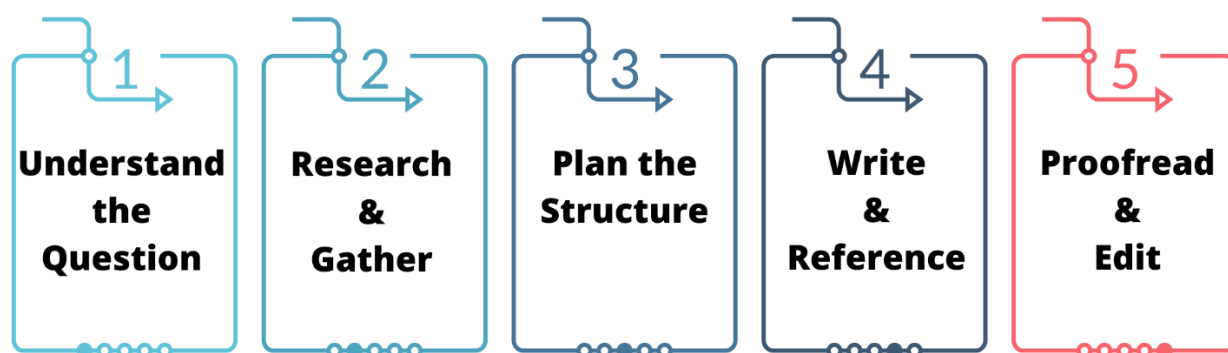
The IMI Knowledge Centre Assignment Guide aims to guide you through the writing process whilst considering style, structure, and content. Though we do our best to help support you in the process it must be remembered that this is just a guide and that full responsibility for submitted assignments lies with the individual participant.

Writing an assignment is a process, one that contains several steps. The steps compiled here intend to lead you through your assignment and give you a sense of direction. In your assignment, you should weigh up the evidence and arguments of others and contribute your own.

You are expected to investigate the state of an issue and present your position based on the evidence of your research. To do this, you need a plan to direct you. Use 'The Five Step Method' detailed in this guide to get you there.

What is 'The Five Step Method'?

The Five Step Method is an easy-to-follow series of steps that help you to plan and structure your assignment. The steps are:



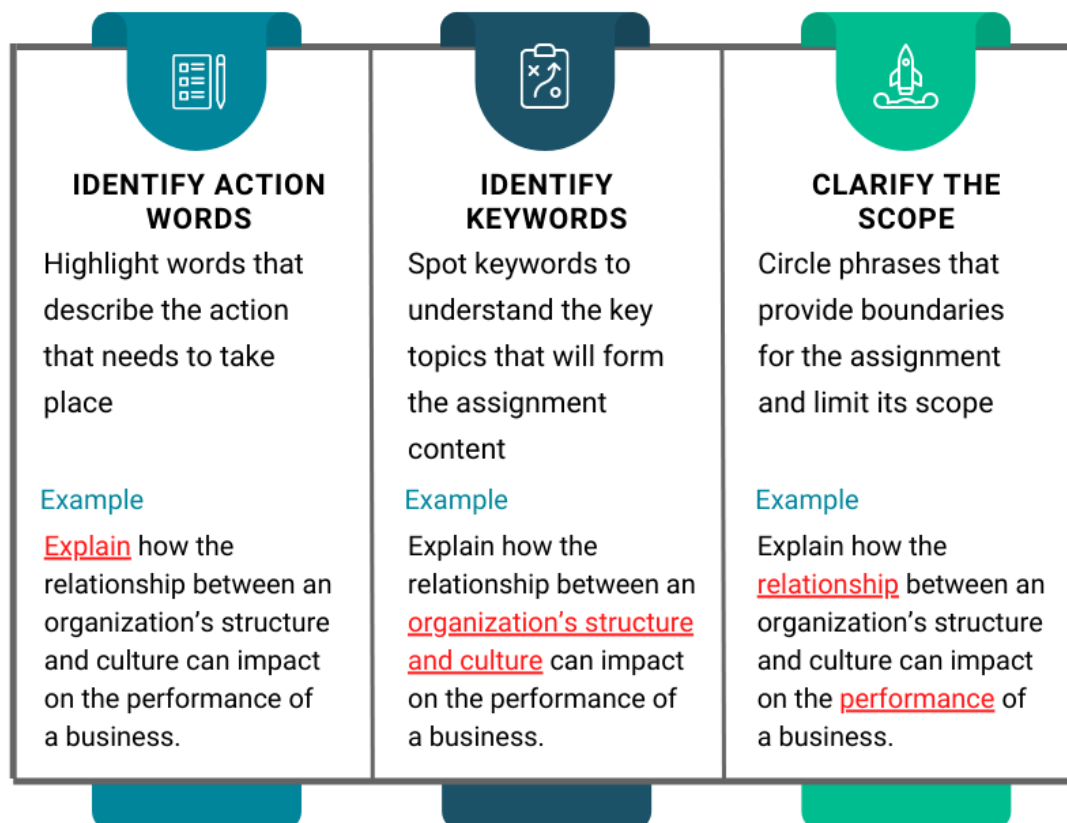
The aim of this guide is to help you implement the Five Step Method and break down any reservations you may have in approaching an assignment by offering you techniques and guidance on each of the five steps.

You are not expected to read the whole guide all at once, rather dip in and out at each stage of your assignment to ensure that you are staying on track.














Step 1: Understand the Question

The first step to producing a successful assignment is to understand the question being asked. Identify the key demands of the assignment by first reading the question through more than once. Then read it again and apply the following:

Understanding the Question



Action words can come in a variety of forms each with their own requirement.

-  Analyse: break down the topic into constituent parts and critique them.
-  Argue: make a case for something using examples and evidence, drawing a conclusion
-  Assess: weigh up the value or importance of something
-  Comment: explain something, giving a brief judgment with reasons
-  Compare/Contrast: show the similarities and differences between two or more things
-  Define: give a precise meaning with sufficient detail
-  Describe: give a detailed account
-  Discuss: explain and analyse various sides of a topic, arguing the most reasonable
-  Evaluate: explain the worth of something, giving reasons
-  Explore: examine thoroughly from different viewpoints
-  Illustrate: make something clear by giving fully explained examples
-  Outline: give a broad description of the main issues of a topic
-  Review: make a general survey, noting key features and examining their value

Step 2: Research and Gather

Now that you understand what is being asked of you the next step involves researching and gathering academic materials to help support your writing. This involves looking at textbooks, journal articles, websites, blog posts, case studies and a variety of other sources as you are expected to show evidence of wide research.

All the information you use in your assignments should be analysed closely to make sure it is scholarly, appropriate and demonstrates you understand the topic. You need to exercise critical judgement by identifying relevant sources and theories and judging the value of their research in relation to your own.

To ensure that you are going about your research in the right way you should first take time to reflect on the following questions:

- 1 What kind of material will I need?
- 2 Where can I search for suitable sources?
- 3 How do I carry out a search?
- 4 What limitations if any should I apply?
- 5 Which search terms should I use?

IMI library staff have created a checklist to help you evaluate articles you come across during your research. You will find it on our website <https://library.imi.ie> and at the end of this guide.

Where do I start my research?

There are two sources of information for your academic research:

- IMI Knowledge Centre: the full catalogue of the Knowledge Centre can be found on our website <https://library.imi.ie>. Here you can search and find across a large collection of books and eBooks on the topics of business and management.
- UCC Library Catalogue: accessible via your Canvas online learning environment the UCC catalogue will give you access to a wide variety of peer-review journals and eResources.

How can the Knowledge Centre help?

The library is a great place to start your research.

Research Material

The Knowledge Centre offers access to a large collection of business and management resources including over 10,000 books and eBooks.

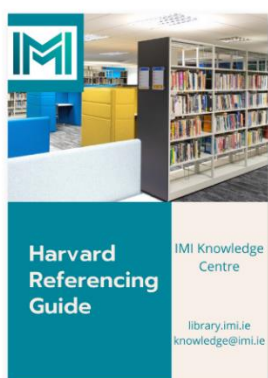
Training & Support

Library staff are available to provide training and support sessions to individuals or groups. This training is offered in person or online. Just let us know the nature of your question or the purpose of the session, whether it's just to learn how use the databases, search for a book, or you are starting into a literature review, and we can schedule a time and format that suits you. Drop in or email knowledge@imi.ie for further information.

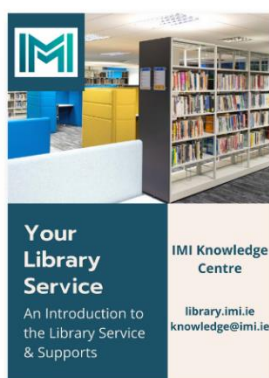
Library Guides

The library has a series of guides on assignment writing on our website <https://library.imi.ie>.

Knowledge Centre guides include:



Harvard
Referencing



Your Library
Service

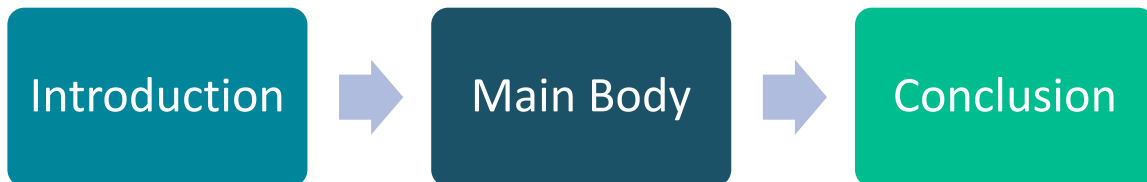





Searching UCC
Catalogue



Step 3: Plan the Structure

Up to now you have figured out what question is being asked and you have gathered the information you need to support your argument. Now you need to make a plan. Each assignment should consist of three parts organised as follows:



-  **Introduction:** sets the scene for the assignment. Here you will give a brief overview of what is going to be said.
-  **Main Body:** the core of the assignment this section will consist of several paragraphs containing ideas, topics or arguments that will answer the question.
-  **Conclusion:** this is when you will summarise your main points. Show how the question has been answered and present your final comments.

Create a Paragraph Plan

To better understand the framework of your assignment, create a paragraph plan and outline what you intend to include in each paragraph. It is also a useful way of ordering and linking your points, ideas, and arguments.

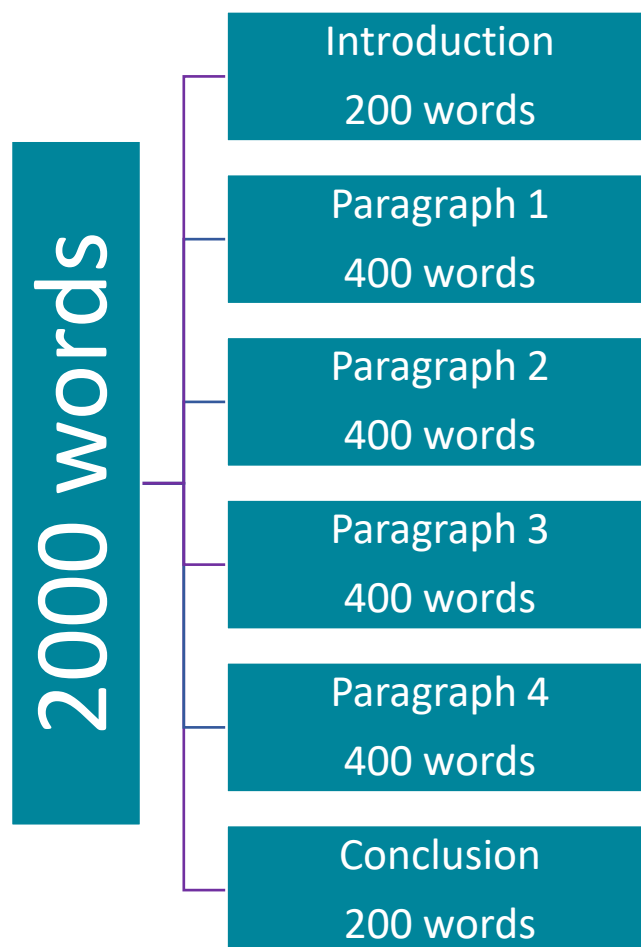
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a roadmap of where the essay is going.• Outline main points without giving away the argument.
Main Idea/Theme/Point 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main point #1.• All main points should include evidence to support the idea/argument/point etc.
Main Idea/Theme/Point 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main point #2.• Links to Main point #1.
Main Idea/Theme/Point 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main Point #3.• Links to Main Point #2.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarise points in the order you made them.• Link ideas/wrap up any loose ends.• Concluding comment.

Word Count

Creating a paragraph plan will also assist when it comes to managing your word count. Typically for any assignment the word count can be broken up as follows:

- Introduction – 10%
- Main Body – 80%
- Conclusion – 10%

This means that a 2000-word assignment becomes more manageable broken down as:



Step 4: Write and Reference

This step involves taking all the work that you have done up to now and putting it all together.

First Draft

You are now ready to begin writing with some sense of authority so start with a first draft. The order in which you write your assignment is up to you, you can start with your introduction first or you may want to start with the main body, each can inform the other.

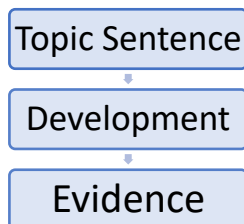
It is suggested that you should always write your conclusion last. A conclusion is made up of a summary of what you have written and is the place where you will tie all the ideas and arguments together. You cannot do this without having written the rest of the assignment first.




Paragraphs

Your assignment will be made up of a series of paragraphs as discussed in the Plan the Structure step. A paragraph generally covers one topic at a time. You may at times need to use more than one paragraph to discuss a larger topic; in this case a paragraph may contain one aspect of the topic.

Using a simple formula can help to build structure and avoid paragraphs that are too long or too short. The formula may not fit every occasion and can be adapted to fit your own work, but it is important to keep in mind the three elements.

A Simple Formula for Constructing Paragraphs



-  **Topic Sentence:** Introduces the topic of the paragraph.
-  **Development:** Shows the reader, you can analyse, criticise, discuss, and evaluate issues.
-  **Evidence:** Using your research, show evidence for your view.

Referencing

Academic writing requires authors to support their argument with reference to other published works or findings. Referencing is how you give credit when you use material or



ideas that are not your own. References establish the credibility and transparency of your work, they demonstrate that you have spent time finding, reading, and thinking critically about material.

- ✚ It is standard practice to include references in all assignments at third level education. If you are using someone else's work, you must acknowledge that fact and avoid plagiarism.
- ✚ You need to identify any documents by citing them in the main body of your text (known as in-text citations) and referencing them at the end of your work in the bibliography.
- ✚ Failure to do this is considered **an act of plagiarism (passing off someone else's work/ideas as your own)** and will be dealt with by the programme director on a case-by-case basis.
- ✚ It is useful to reference and start creating your bibliography while you write. By doing so you will be able to keep on top of the task and avoid the burden of it all at the end.

At the IMI the Harvard Referencing Style is used. A comprehensive guide to Harvard Referencing, compiled by IMI library staff can be found on our website at <https://library.imi.ie/harvard-style>. It will list all you need to know about referencing a wide variety of sources as well as offering some tips on good referencing practices.

Step 5: Proofread and Edit

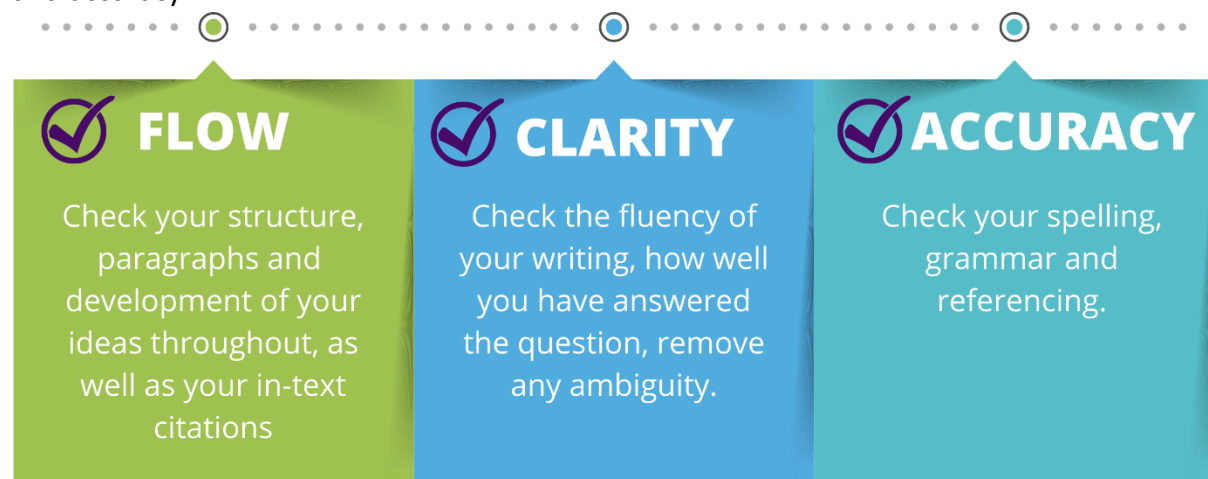
What is Proofreading?

Proofreading is an essential part of the writing process. It is the final step you need to take to ensure that you are communicating your ideas clearly and to ensure that you are fulfilling the goals of your writing.

More than just a spellcheck, it should involve double checking your work against any criteria you have, making sure your references are accurate, your analysis sound, and clarifying and remaining questions or limitations of your work.

What to check when proofreading

When proofreading you will need to check your writing against three criteria, flow, clarity, and accuracy.



Flow

Flow refers to how your work is structured, how well it reads and how coherent your ideas are.

Questions to ask yourself when checking the flow are:

- ✚ Is your argument ordered in a logical manner?
- ✚ Are your paragraphs well structured?
- ✚ Are your paragraphs linked?
- ✚ Are your sentences complete?
- ✚ Are your introduction and conclusion sound?

Clarity





Clarity refers to how easy it is to understand your work, and how well you have answered the question. Questions to ask yourself when checking clarity are:

- ✚ Have you made any assumptions that you have not explained?
- ✚ Is anything unclear?
- ✚ Have you answered all elements of the question?
- ✚ Are there any unanswered questions?



Accuracy

Accuracy refers to whether there are any errors in your work. **A spell checker will not pick everything up!** Questions to ask yourself when checking accuracy are:

-  Are there any typos?
-  Is your writing consistent?
-  Have you referenced accurately?
-  Have you used correct grammar and punctuation?

Techniques for proofreading

It is important that you get the proofreading step right so here are some techniques to help you on your proofreading journey.

Techniques for Proofreading



Reference: Proofreading advice has been adapted from the University of Manchester Library:

The University of Manchester Library (2016) *Better safe than sorry: proofreading your work*.

Available at: https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learningobjects/mle/proofreading/story_html5.html (Accessed 18 May 2022)

Criteria	Considerations	Y/N
Appropriateness	Does the information fit with your course and assignment?	
	Does the information add to or support your research?	
Audience	Is the level of the article appropriate to your needs?	
	Is it readable or understandable to you?	
Scope & Coverage	Does the article address your research to the extent you need?	
	Does it cover several topics minimally or one topic in detail	
Timeliness	Was the information recently published?	
	Is the information current enough for your research?	
Authority	Is the author listed and have they got relevant credentials and experience?	
	Does the author cite sources/include a bibliography?	
	Does the article include an explanation of research methods?	
Bias	Does the article present information in an objective manner, representing all sides of the issue?	
	Is the article's level of objectivity and bias acceptable for your	