



Start writing essays

A student's approach to planning

Jane Van Hool:

Tim Baugh, Leslie Hoose and Beth Lewis are discussing note-taking and planning.

Tim Baugh: Beth, tell us something about the background work you do before you begin to write your essay?

Beth Lewis:

I re-read all the course notes. Erm, as I've read it the first time I've tended to underline and put stars by, and double stars by things that I feel are important. And I input quotes from the course material, and notes that I've marked out, and I normally find loads of others that I've missed the first time, that I was, I was looking through. And, I kind of fit these somewhat into the plan of the list of words that I've initially got from the essay question, although this sometimes means that I put things in more than once, because I'm not absolutely certain which bit of evidence or information is right for which particular part of, of the essay. I nearly always look on the net, and just, it just helps to, even if the information that you find there normally, is already in your studies, it helps to pull out the important bits from the studies that you maybe haven't picked up on, or just reassures you that you have done. And I sort of try at this stage quite often, pull pieces that, that seem to be relevant to an introduction or a conclusion, but I don't write them very clearly at this stage.

Tim Baugh:

And all this is in, in note form on your computer? Or, or on a piece of paper?

Beth Lewis:

Normally directly into the computer yes, yeah.

Tim Baugh:

So how much would you estimate you might end up with, in terms of notes, if you were addressing our supposed essay title, you know, 'Are Blood Sports Cruel?'

Beth Lewis:

Thousands of words, four thousand, maybe more, sometimes. Yes, I wouldn't recommend it (LAUGHS) for everybody.

Tim Baugh:

Why do you say that?

Beth Lewis:

Because of the amount of time that it takes!

Tim Baugh:

Do you write an essay plan?

Beth Lewis:

Yes I do. Very much trying to base it directly on the, on the words of, of the essay question. But quite often it emerges sort of in, in greater detail as I go along.

Tim Baugh:

So you adjust it as you research?

Beth Lewis:

Yes.

Tim Baugh:

What would a plan of yours look like, if we could see your desk?

Beth Lewis:

Well, I think, I mean every essay has to have this, this introduction and this conclusion, so I mean they, they go on initially. The rest of the content tends to very much depend on, on what's being discussed and how the question is phrased.

Tim Baugh:

You've got the basic structure there. What, do you write in, sort of, bullet points or do you have a spider diagram, or, or do you just scribble things on the page, that's what I tend to do, actually, just ...?

Beth Lewis:

From this initial list from the words, and from the information that's asked for from the question, I'll take all the quotes and everything that I've input, and fix them under these, these different headings that have come directly from the question and, and then try and squash it all and, you know.