

# Essays

## The Writing Process

Writing is a long and winding process. In managing this process, there are certain steps that you can take every time you begin an assignment. These steps will help to maximise your efforts and make meaning out of the chaos and disorder that often appears when first embarking on any assignment.

One of the most comprehensive and sophisticated assignment tasks you will find at university is essay writing. What follows are some guidelines on how to go about essay writing. However, the steps outlined have general application for almost any other assignment that you will be given.

**Think about topic** It is essential that you interpret the topic correctly. This can be achieved by brainstorming to generate ideas, and then formulating a point of view, even if it is a very rough one. Some people have found that reading around the assignment topic, by looking up some of the key words in their course materials and textbooks or glancing through relevant readings in their study guide, is helpful in familiarising themselves with the question.

**Research topic** Start your research by reading your study guide, text book, and lecture notes (if lectures are available). Then look in the library, or access the online catalogue, to see if there are other useful materials, but only look at information relevant to the topic. However, to do well in an assignment, it is not always necessary to have references outside your course materials. For 100 level papers, 3-5 references may be enough to do well, as long as you explain the ideas thoroughly and relate them effectively to the essay topic. **Sometimes, course co-ordinators may specify the minimum number of references expected in the assignment instructions.** Also, remember that you will be marked on what you write, not what you read. So try to look at everything you read in terms of whether it is worthy of summarising on paper. Simply writing something down in your own words will help clarify your understanding of the topic.

**Plan your essay** Now that you have made notes and summaries on the essay topic, you should be in a much better position to decide on the type of position or argument you are going to back up or argue in your essay. With your argument in mind, write down the main points that support it. Make sure they are in complete sentences, and arrange them in the order that best supports your stance. These sentences can function as an essay plan. Each sentence represents a paragraph in your essay.

**Write your essay** Remember, writing often does not come easily. Be patient and start with getting your ideas down on paper. After the first draft, you can work on refining them. If you have already made summaries and notes, the process of writing your essay may be easier. However, if you are having difficulty, **try writing some headings** that are relevant to the essay topic – perhaps they summarise each of the main points you want to make – or perhaps they are just words that have some relevance to the topic. Under each heading start summarising information from one book or study guide reading.

Suspend the need to connect your writing to other readings or parts of the essay. Just write. Trying to control the way your essay will look and its structure early on can waste time because, as you write more and read more, you end up developing groups of information that you can link together due to similar features they have in common. However, doing this at the beginning is difficult as you cannot see the overall picture since you are just starting out and your knowledge of the essay topic has not had sufficient time to develop. Uncertainty at the beginning is perfectly acceptable and

normal. Once you are more familiar with the issues, it becomes easier to work out the main themes or sections and even the order to place them. What is important though is writing down information in your own words, so that you have something to show at the end of your reading and analysis.

### **Revise your essay**

Look over your essay to make sure that you have answered the essay question.

Have you stuck to the topic?

Have you left out anything vital?

You may have to revise your essay several times before it effectively addresses the topic and question.

**Try to leave yourself at least 24 hours** between finishing your first draft and revisions. This will allow you time to distance yourself from the topic and reflect on it with a critical eye. It is also really useful if you can access someone independent who is not doing the course to have a read over your assignment to see if it makes sense. If they understand it, then your marker should understand it. Take note of anything this external person does not understand, because it may suggest that you need to clarify and explain details further. Providing such extra detail can only reinforce what you know and understand to the marker.

### **Edit your essay**

You should check for errors (punctuation, spelling, grammar), bad sentence structure, jargon, slang etc.

Is your presentation OK? Can it be improved?

Is the referencing correct?

## **The Importance of Planning an Assignment**

Overall, writing university assignments takes a lot of time. Often, people do not do as well as they would like because they have not allocated enough time to give justice to each of the stages outlined.

Ideally, four weeks is a good amount of time to allocate for the preparation, planning, writing, and revising of an assignment.

In the first week, you may be just figuring out what the actual assignment topic means and then reading through some course material to get a broader view or a more in-depth view of the issues. During this first week, you may also evaluate what course materials are useful for answering the assignment and what you can leave out. You may also, of course, choose to look in Massey library's Kea catalogue to see whether there are any other useful materials.

Remember, **if you are an extramural**, you have to **factor in extra time** for the delivery of library books, as well as the time it takes for the completed assignment to reach its destination. Hence, rather than the four weeks mentioned above, six weeks may be a more realistic time frame, so initial delay is unwise.

Once you have been able to prioritise the most useful resources for your assignment, Week Two may involve reading to make notes and summaries. By the end of Week Two, you may have half your summaries complete, allowing you to finish them in Week Three. During these weeks, you may also begin to develop a firmer idea of your argument or point of view in response to the assignment topic.

At the start of Week Four, you may be in a good position to write an introductory paragraph, a Conclusion, as well as construct a Reference List. The last few days before you submit it may give you time to check spelling and grammar as well as get someone you know to read it through to ensure that it is understood by someone independent. The next section provides advice on how to interpret assignment topics.

## Interpreting the Topic

- In order to get good grades, you must be able to interpret an essay topic accurately.
- You also need to stay on track – essay writers often waste words on background or side issues instead of directing their entire essay to answering the question.
- There are 3 things you need to look for when interpreting an essay topic:

|                |                                   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Command</b> | - tells you what to do            |
| <b>Topic</b>   | - the general area of discussion  |
| <b>Focus</b>   | - the specific area of discussion |

Universities *should not be* run like businesses. **Discuss**

↑                    ↑                    ↑                    ↑

topic                focus                topic                command

For this essay topic, the general area of discussion is universities being run like businesses. The specific area of discussion is whether or not it is OK for universities to be run like businesses. The command word “discuss” means that you are to “investigate and present the different aspects of a problem or subject and come to some conclusion.”

- You can also turn the statement into a question. This sometimes makes the topic easier to understand.

*Should* universities be run like businesses?

All you need to remember when writing your essay is to answer the essay question directly.

- A list of the most commonly used command words or instructions and their meanings is presented on the next page.

Essays are one of the hardest assignment tasks to get a handle on. They require more than presenting what has happened in a field of work. Typically, they involve you constructing a debate around the different arguments in favour of or not in favour of a particular issue. It is often a good idea to imagine yourself as a lawyer when thinking about how you are going to write your essay. As a lawyer, you have to be able to persuade and convince the jury of your point of view, while also acknowledging the opposition’s arguments, but then downplaying them in some way by mentioning their weaknesses or disadvantages. By highlighting the weaknesses in arguments that oppose your point of view, this functions to strengthen the merits of your argument. It is always good to be aware of alternative views, interpretations, and evidence surrounding an assignment topic and to acknowledge them in your assignment. However, this does not necessarily mean that you have to agree with these views. At least, by mentioning them you show the marker that you have read widely, you are well informed on the issue, and you are not biased in your position.

### ***Common Key Task Words in Assignments***

**Account for:** To give reasons, explain why something has happened.

**Analyse:** To break the subject up into its main ideas, and evaluate them.

**Assess:** To judge the value of a subject critically.

**Comment on:** To discuss, explain, and give your opinion on the ideas expressed.

**Compare:** To show the similarities and differences between two or more subjects.

**Criticise:** To make your judgement about the views expressed and support your judgement with evidence.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Define:</b>      | To give the meaning of a word term, distinguishing it from closely related subjects, sometimes by examples and illustrations.        |
| <b>Describe:</b>    | To give a detailed account of the characteristics of a subject.  |
| <b>Discuss:</b>     | To investigate and present the different aspects of a problem or subject and come to some conclusion.                                |
| <b>Evaluate:</b>    | To appraise or estimate the worth of something, to some extent an explained personal opinion.  |
| <b>Examine:</b>     | To inquire into, and consider a problem carefully.   |
| <b>Explain:</b>     | To account for a subject's character, causes, results, implications, etc., by clearly stating and interpreting the relevant details. |
| <b>Generate:</b>    | To propose new ideas or new interpretations of available subjects.   |
| <b>Hypothesise:</b> | To propose a supposition which can be used as a basis for testing conclusions.   |
| <b>Illustrate:</b>  | To explain or clarify a problem using concrete examples, diagrams, or figures.   |
| <b>Integrate:</b>   | To draw together in a logical related way two or more subjects not previously related.   |
| <b>Interpret:</b>   | To explain the meaning of something, to make it clear and explicit, and to evaluate it in terms of your own knowledge.               |
| <b>Justify:</b>     | To provide the reasons for your conclusions or for the statement made in the question.   |
| <b>Outline:</b>     | To give the main features or general principles of a subject leaving out minor details.  |
| <b>Prove:</b>       | To show the truth of a statement by argument, experiment, or test.   |
| <b>Relate:</b>      | To establish the connection between one thing and another.   |
| <b>Review:</b>      | To survey and critically examine a subject.  |
| <b>State:</b>       | To describe the subject in precise terms, or set down an exact meaning.  |
| <b>Summarise:</b>   | To make a concise account of the main ideas of a subject or argument, omitting explanatory details and examples.                     |

## Essay Structure

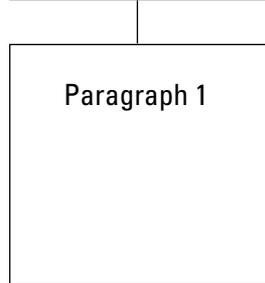
All essays share the same basic structure, although they may differ in content and style. The essence of an essay is an opinion, expressed as a thesis statement or proposition, and a logical sequence of arguments and information organised in support of the proposition.

### Essay Structure

Introduction =  
5% of the total  
paper

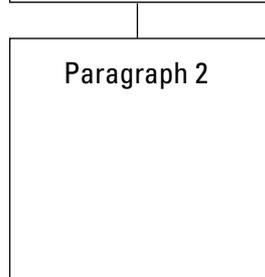
Opening sentences are broad and general, gradually focusing the reader onto the topic and finally onto the proposition.

**PROPOSITION:** Main idea of the essay, summarising the whole point of the essay.



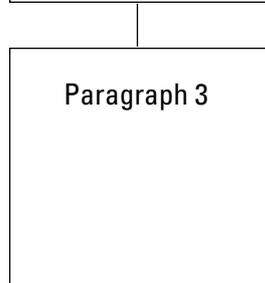
First Supporting Statement (SS1)

Sentences developing SS1 (definition, explanation, evidence, illustration).



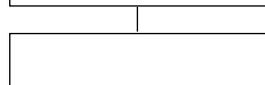
Supporting Statement (SS2)

Sentences developing SS2



Third Supporting Statement (SS3)

Sentences developing SS3



Narrow statement relating to the conclusion from the previous paragraph.

Argument  
Paragraphs

Conclusion =  
5-10 % of  
total paper

Summarising argument leading to final broad statement on the implications or significance of your argument.



## Plans, Introductions and Thesis Statements

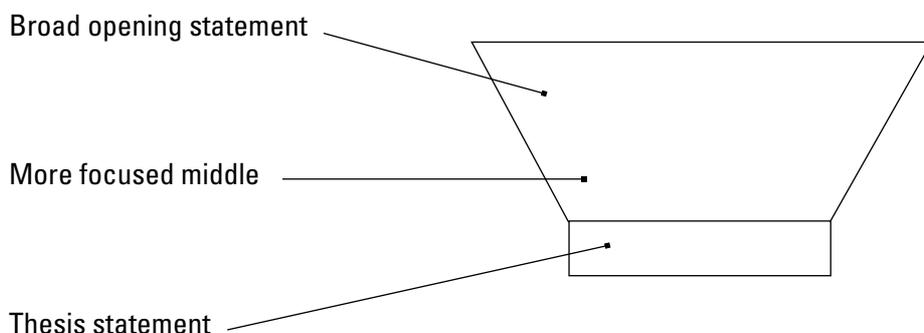
It is really important to plan your essay before you begin writing. Planning will save you time later. It is also essential that you have a starting point to plan from, even if it is in a very rough form. The thesis statement is the obvious place to start from as this is the answer to the essay question. From there you can decide what your essay's subtopics will be and what you want to say about them. After you have a basic idea of what you want to talk about, you can begin to write the essay.

However, when writing an essay, it can also be difficult to come up with a point of view early on, at least until you have surveyed most of the literature. So, instead of developing a thesis statement early on, you may choose to read up on the assignment question and make notes on the relevant concepts, theories, and studies that support different points of view. Once you have been able to make these notes and develop a summary of the issues, you may then be in a far better position to write a thesis statement that accurately summarises the issue and takes into account any divergences in opinion and evidence from the literature.

The notes you have already written will not go to waste because these can be the building blocks for your paragraphs that support your thesis statement. In fact, if you have made really good notes, you may only need a linking sentence between paragraphs to link your argument together in support of your thesis statement. Irrespective of the approach you use, it is important that you have a good structure to your essay. This begins with an introductory paragraph.

### Introductions and thesis statements

- An introduction should begin with a broad opening statement that establishes the context of your essay.
- For a thorough introduction, you might want to ask yourself, "Who, What, When, Where, How, and/or Why?"
- It is often useful to think about the literature on the topic and indicate how your contribution is related to what others have written. You can include why the topic is important.
- It is really important that your introduction tells the reader where you will be going, so mention what is going to come up in the essay.
- By the end of the introduction, the focus is narrowed down to the thesis statement. (However, sometimes you may wish to begin your introduction with the thesis statement, or use a rhetorical question instead of a thesis statement.)



### **Guidelines for writing a thesis statement**

Try to state the outcome of your analysis, rather than announcing your intention to investigate, as in the case of “this essay will,” “this essay intends to,” or “I will” statements.

- Make sure you are very specific.
- Make sure you are very clear.
- A thesis statement is brief, 1-2 sentences only.
- Make sure your claim is realistic so that your essay does not sound ridiculous, or fanciful.
- Ensure your thesis statement has some significance.
- A thesis statement generally does two things: it answers the essay question and provides a reason or explanation for the answer chosen.

#### *Example*

Essay topic: Do the advertisements targeting speeding drivers work?

Thesis: Although the number of speeding drivers will never be reduced to zero, the advertisements targeting them are having a positive effect because people are taking notice of the gruesome consequences of excessive speed.

#### Sample introduction

Every teenager is thrilled at the prospect of sitting behind the driver’s wheel of a car. At some stage, though, the excitement turns into complacency and bad habits are often formed. Many of these bad habits have little effect on safety. A few, however, such as drunk driving and speeding, are dangerous and a great deal of time and effort is put into getting people out of these habits. Many campaigns, though, are not successful because they are easily ignored. This has not been the case with the campaign against speeding drivers. **Although the number of speeding drivers will never be reduced to zero, the advertisements targeting them are having a positive effect because people are taking notice of the gruesome consequences of excessive speed.**

## **Paragraphs**

In order for your argument to come across clearly, it is essential that your paragraphs are well structured.

- Generally, each paragraph should develop one idea only – referred to as the *controlling idea*. This idea can be summarised in a topic sentence, which may be the first sentence, although it can also be the last sentence of the previous paragraph. The controlling idea should be developed in the rest of the paragraph with relevant factual details, examples, explanations, definitions, or research data.
- Try to ensure that you have **no less than three sentences per paragraph**.
- Sentences within the paragraph should be well linked so connections between them are obvious. Be careful to avoid sentences that may be too long. Ideally, a **sentence** should be **no longer than three lines**.

However, there is no lower limit on how short a sentence should be – as long as there is a subject (e.g. it, the theory, she, Smith) and a verb phrase (run, speak, accept, agree, disagree, have disagreed, will accept), the sentence is complete.

- Paragraphs should be arranged in a logical sequence and should also be well linked.
- Connections can be made **between sentences** and **between paragraphs** by using *signposts* or transitional words and phrases to indicate change, comparison, or agreement.

### Highlighting a point

|                                      |                  |               |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Importantly, ...                     | Indeed, ...      | In fact, ...  |
| More importantly, ...                | Furthermore, ... | Moreover, ... |
| It is also important to highlight... |                  |               |

### Changing direction and creating comparisons

|                   |                      |                              |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| However, ...      | In contrast, ...     | Conversely, ...              |
| Nevertheless, ... | On the contrary, ... | Unfortunately, ...           |
| Rather, ...       | On one hand, ...     | On the other hand, ...       |
| Compared to...    | In comparison, ...   | Another perspective holds... |

### Adding another point

|                  |              |                                 |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| In addition, ... | Further, ... | Another point to consider is... |
| Secondly, ...    | Thirdly, ... | Also, ...                       |

### Adding a similar point

|                |               |            |
|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Similarly, ... | Likewise, ... | Again, ... |
|----------------|---------------|------------|

### Summarising

|                      |                   |                              |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Finally, ...         | Lastly, ...       | In conclusion, ...           |
| To conclude this..., | To summarise, ... | In summary, ...              |
| In sum, ...          | Overall, ...      | The three main points are... |

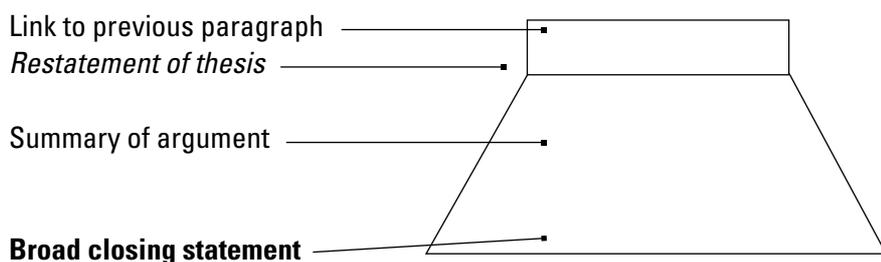
- Signposts tell the reader
  - What is going to be said, what is being said, and what has been said.
  - How the main ideas support the thesis.
  - How each group of ideas follows from the one before.
- Signposts make your writing flow more smoothly and make it easier to follow.
- More signposts are provided within the section on Techniques for putting authors' ideas in your own words (see page 16).

### Example

Incorporation offers several advantages to businesses and their owners. **For one thing**, ownership is easy to transfer. The business is able to maintain a continuous existence even when the original owners are no longer involved. **In addition**, the stockholders of a corporation are not held responsible for the business's debts. If the XYZ Corporation defaults on a \$1 million loan, **for example**, its investors will not be held responsible for paying that liability. Incorporation also enables a business to obtain professional managers with centralised authority and responsibility; **therefore**, the business can be run more efficiently. **Finally**, incorporation gives a business certain legal rights. **For example**, it can enter into contracts, owning property, and borrowing money.

## Conclusions

- Conclusions round off your essay. They remind the reader of all your main points and explain the significance of your argument.
- The concluding paragraph of an essay should include:
  - A narrow statement relating the conclusion to the preceding paragraph.
  - A restatement of the proposition or thesis statement.
  - A brief summary of the main points made in the essay.
  - A final, broad statement on the significance of the argument, and, if appropriate, its implications.
- Your conclusion should not just be a list of the points you have made.



### Example

By promoting a caring atmosphere in schools, teachers can reduce the likelihood of bullying. Above all, teachers need to inform themselves and the rest of the school community so that together they can develop a policy to discourage bullying. By educating themselves about bullying, teachers and parents have the knowledge to set up effective programmes and structures both within the classroom and for the whole school. Furthermore, by removing the opportunity for children to bully, providing children with a stimulating environment, and giving them the tools to deal with conflict appropriately, teachers can reduce children's inclination to bully. **Although bullying will never be fully eradicated and must be dealt with as soon as it occurs, increasing awareness of the problem is making schools a safer and more enjoyable environment in which children can learn.**

## Strategies for Organising Points in Assignments

In understanding how to organise and structure the points you want to make in an assignment, it is worthwhile demonstrating several different patterns to use for an essay, which could easily be adapted for other assignment forms.

Mock essay: Discuss the social effects surrounding an Act of Parliament.

Imagine you have chosen an Act of Parliament and have identified two main effects, with each effect incorporating several other sub-effects. Paragraphs could be structured around one or more sub-effects that comprise a main effect.

### Introduction

Introduce effects A and B.

### Effect A

1. Sub-effect (1st paragraph in body of assignment)
2. Sub-effect (2nd paragraph)
3. Sub-effect (3rd paragraph)

4. Sub-effect (joined onto 3rd paragraph)

### **Effect B**

1. Sub-effect (4th and 5th paragraphs)
2. Sub-effect (6th paragraph)
3. Sub effect (7th paragraph)

### **Conclusion**

Summarise, and highlight the three main sub-effects, as well as future implications of the Act.

Mock essay: Compare and contrast Smith and Brown's theories about human development.

This question is basically asking you to write about the similarities and differences between two things. Imagine you have read up on both theories, but have found that there are more differences than similarities. Further, within the similarities there are two main features and within the differences there are three main features.

### **Introduction**

Introduce Similarities and Differences

### **Similarities**

#### **Feature A**

1. Example from Smith's theory
2. Example from Brown's theory

#### **Feature B**

1. Example from Brown's theory
2. Example from Smith's theory
3. Another example from Smith's theory that replicates a part of Brown's theory.

### **Differences**

#### **Feature C**

1. Examples of different processes of analysis from each theory.

#### **Feature D**

1. Example from Smith's theory that is not provided in Brown's.
2. Reason why Brown's theory does not include the stage in Smith's

#### **Feature E**

1. Example from Brown's theory that is not in Smith's.
2. Reason why Smith's theory does not include the stage in Brown's.

### **Conclusion**

Summarise, and highlight overall there are more differences than similarities, which may derive from the structural differences between the theories.

Mock essay: Discuss cross-cultural communication issues in business organisations.

Imagine you have identified four main issues, their associated causes, and potential solutions.

### **Introduction**

Introduce the topic of cross-cultural communication and its influence upon business environments. Then briefly introduce the four main issues surrounding cross-cultural communication to be discussed in the essay.

### **Issue 1**

1. Identify and explain nature of problem or difficulty
2. Outline causal factors
3. Describe two possible solutions and briefly evaluate pros and cons of each solution.

### **Issue 2**

1. Identify and explain nature of problem or difficulty
2. Outline causal factors
3. Describe two possible solutions and briefly evaluate pros and cons of each solution.

### **Issue 3**

1. Identify and explain nature of problem or difficulty
2. Outline causal factors
3. Describe two possible solutions and briefly evaluate pros and cons of each solution.

### **Issue 4**

1. Identify and explain nature of problem or difficulty
2. Outline causal factors
3. Describe two possible solutions and briefly evaluate pros and cons of each solution.

### **Conclusion**

## **The Process of Revision**

- Revising occurs when you have finished your draft. It is a good idea to take reasonable breaks in-between drafts, so you can look at your assignment with fresh eyes.
- Here is a revision checklist for essays, which can be adapted for other assignments.

**Key question:** Have I answered the question posed by my topic?

**Introduction** Is my opening broad and interesting?  
Have I followed the funnel shape?  
Is my thesis statement clear?

**Body** Does each paragraph have a topic sentence?  
Have I kept to one main idea per paragraph?  
Are my ideas fully developed?

**Conclusion** Have I summed up my argument effectively?  
Is there a clear re-statement of my proposition?  
Have I given the essay a sense of completion?

**Referencing** Are quotations introduced smoothly?  
Are quotations accurate?  
Are quotations justified as relevant to the topic?  
Is the formatting correct?

**Presentation** Is my essay professionally presented?

**Content** Have I answered all parts of the essay question?  
Is there any information in the wrong section?  
Do the points I am making agree with each other?

Is there any irrelevant information?  
Can I write anything more clearly?  
Are the main ideas summed up briefly?

### **Editing**

Editing is a crucial part of the revision process. Editing involves checking your assignment from the paragraph level right down to the word level, and, even, to individual punctuation marks.

Does your writing make sense?

- You must make sure that your sentences say what you meant them to say.
- Write as simply as possible. Try not to make things more complicated than they have to be.

*It has been posited that a high degree of curiosity proved lethal to a feline.*  
This can be more simply expressed as.....  
*Curiosity killed the cat.*

- Make sure that your reader understands the jargon you use.
- Try to avoid clichés (a word or expression that has lost its impact because it has been used too much e.g. avoid clichés like the plague) because they are boring.
- It is best not to clutter your writing with unnecessary words.
- Try to keep your writing as active as possible.....

*The study was conducted by Smith and Jones (1987).*  
This could be more simply and directly expressed as.....  
*Smith and Jones (1987) conducted the study.*

- Aim to vary your sentence length. Try not to use too many, very long or very short sentences.
- Make sure your writing is formal – avoid personal pronouns (I, we, you), unless assignment instructions advise otherwise.
- Do not try to make your writing overly complex by cramming in long or ‘scholarly’ phrases. **Keep it simple and clear.**

### **Proofreading**

- You must proofread your essay – reading it aloud will help you find errors. You could even tape record yourself as you read and replay the tape to check for sentence and paragraph flow.
- Make sure you take your time when proofreading.
- Check spelling carefully. **DO NOT TRUST THE SPELL-CHECKER.** It cannot pick up where you have used an incorrect word.

I have a spelling checker,  
It came with my PC.  
It plainly marks four my revue  
Mistakes I cannot sea.

I've run this poem threw it,  
I'm sure your please to no,  
It's letter perfect in it's weigh,  
My checker tolled me sew.

### **Layout**

- Layout is important too. Your assignment should look good for your personal satisfaction, but your marker will be grateful if it is easy to read!

### *Hints:*

- Check that spaces between words and lines are consistent.
- Line spacing should be at least 1.5. You need to leave space for the marker's comments. Hence, it's good to ensure you have a 4cm margin on the left hand side for markers to insert comments. Space also makes your essay easier to read.
- Try not to start a new sentence on a new line, unless it is a new paragraph.
- Mark new paragraphs consistently – preferably, leave a line between each paragraph.
- Make sure that your font size is at least 12 point.
- Ensure that your References page is formatted correctly.

## **Sample Essay I - 800 words**

**Question:** How can schools make the best use of information technology in the classroom?

Topic – schools' use of information technology in the classroom.

Command – how can

Focus – the best use

**Word limit:** 800

**Analysis:** This question requires you to go beyond merely identifying schools' use of information technology in the classroom, in order to develop an argument around how schools can make the best use possible of such technology in the classroom. There may be many uses of information technology in the classroom, and you may wish to acknowledge this in the beginning of the essay. However, the focus of your essay needs to be based on examining and explaining the best usage of information technology. It may be that there are several best methods available. Hence, you could then proceed to explain each of these and how they can be implemented in the classroom. Alternatively, there may be one overall best method amongst a group of very good methods, in which case you will need to highlight why one method is better than the others, and how this method can be implemented in the classroom.

Keywords and phrases which may be useful in searching for information: computers and education, computers in schools, computers in classrooms, internet in classrooms, online technology and education, computer-mediated communication and classrooms, online classrooms, online schools, e-learning.

The following essay includes additional notes in the margin, which identify specific points in the development and structure of the argument, as well as paragraph structure, and APA referencing conventions.

## Essay on how schools can make the best use of information technology in the classroom

Education means considerably more than just teaching a student to read, write, and manipulate numbers. Computers, the Internet, and advanced electronic devices are becoming essential in everyday life and have changed the way information is gathered. How this new technology is utilised in the curriculum and managed by teachers will have an important role to play in widening the resource and knowledge base for all students. Technology affects the way teachers teach and students learn. To make the best use of information technology (IT), schools need a workable plan to fully integrate it into all aspects of the curriculum so students are taught how, why and when to use technology to further enhance their learning.

If a school does not have a clear plan of how and why it wishes to implement IT, then it runs the risk of wasting money. In schools today, nearly all classrooms have access to a computer. However, many schools mistake this as incorporating information technology into

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Comment: General lead into the broad topic by indicating the inadequacy of traditional teaching alone.

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Comment: Narrowing the topic further by affirming the significance of IT for teachers and students.

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Comment: Information technology is followed with its abbreviated form, i.e. IT, in brackets, indicating to the reader that the next time this phrase is mentioned, it will be abbreviated to IT.

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Comment: Thesis statement. Notice how the beginning of the sentence is constructed in such a way as to answer the essay question: "To make the best use of information technology (IT), schools need..."

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: Topic sentence indicating the paragraph is about how schools need a clear plan for implementing IT. This point follows-up on the first point made in the thesis statement: schools need a workable plan.

the curriculum. School staff need to research what IT is available

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: Example backing up the topic sentence.

and what would best serve the school's purpose, not simply

purchase the latest equipment. There should be a policy stating how

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: Statement about what schools need to do in order to develop a plan.

IT is going to assist pupils' development and what teachers want

pupils to achieve (Reksten, 2000). Staff members need to be clear

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: A citation from Reksten to provide additional evidence about how to develop a plan for implementing IT in schools.

about what they want IT to do for them before they can start

incorporating it into their lessons.

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: A summary sentence, which restates the idea in the topic sentence.

The only way information technology is going to be useful to schools

is if all staff members are well-informed and fully supported. It is the

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: Another topic sentence. This may be seen to build on the idea of good planning by ensuring staff are well supported and informed about changes.

principal's responsibility, and should be part of the school's plan, to

ensure that all staff are consulted about the changes, and that the

change is carefully organised. Some teachers may be resistant,

especially if they have not had much experience with computers, so

training teachers is essential in implementing IT into the school

curriculum. Staff members must feel involved in the process of

acquiring technology, and in learning how to operate it, in order for

them to increase their confidence in using IT as a curriculum tool.

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: Backs up the topic sentence by identifying a range of points to be considered.

Teachers are only going to be able to incorporate IT into their

lessons if they are competent users themselves (Reksten, 2000).

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: The final sentence in the paragraph presents further support for the need to prepare teachers well for change by citing the literature.

In addition, teachers need to be aware that IT within the classroom

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: A useful linking word to start a new paragraph, which indicates another relevant point.

is extremely flexible, but that they need to plan what purpose IT

serves in each lesson. The skills a child learns are the important part

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: A third topic sentence, which advances the point that teachers need to plan their use of IT in the classroom. More specifically, this topic sentence indicates that the paragraph will serve to support the point made in the thesis statement about fully integrating IT into all aspects of the curriculum, as mentioned in the third sentence.

of any lesson, and it is the same with technology. IT needs to be used

and understood in all subjects in the same way as the ability to read

is necessary for all subjects, and “must be used across the curriculum, in the same way that a pen and pencil are used in most subject areas” (Ager, 2000, p. 15). The best way to plan the use of IT in the classroom is to approach it as simply a learning tool that is more advanced (and more exciting) than the traditional pen and paper.

nbowker 19/1/06 4:05 PM

Comment: Rather than standing alone, the quotation is integrated into the sentence, with appropriate acknowledgement made, by including the author’s name and year of publication, the page number, as well as speech marks around the quotation.

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: This sentence brings the detail mentioned in the paragraph back to addressing the essay question by focusing on “the best way to...use...IT in the classroom”.

It is vitally important for students to be taught the strategies for using IT. Children also need to be fully informed about the capabilities of IT before being asked to use it. Pupils should be aware that the contexts in which they use IT will change, and they need to know what is the appropriate use of IT and what is not. Whilst it is important that children learn to use IT effectively, teachers must emphasise that IT is not always suitable. For example, personal communication is a better option than an email when thanking someone. According to Apter (1968), the danger is that the “computer dehumanises people and inevitably leads them to act like machines themselves” (p. 58). Teachers must make sure they plan to use variety in their lessons. Too much IT instruction may be just as harmful to a child as not enough.

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: This topic sentence deals with the final points made in the thesis statement, with respect to teaching students how, why, and when to use technology.

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: Another author citation, followed by a quote. Notice that throughout the body of the essay, each paragraph includes one author citation – this is a good formula to use for 100 level papers because throughout each paragraph there is evidence that you have been engaging with the literature when writing the assignment.

The usefulness of IT in the classroom, as with any learning tool, depends on the innovation and imagination of the teacher. It is imperative, though, that the implementation of IT into a school is carefully planned. The current information explosion makes it essential that IT be used extensively within the classroom so

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: This sentence refocuses the essay towards the general theme of how to effectively use IT in the classroom. The sentence acknowledges that the teacher’s skills are central to this.

children know how to use IT appropriately and effectively. Teachers must, therefore, be fully informed about what kinds of IT are available and whether or not they are appropriate for classroom use. School boards and teachers must therefore ensure that all staff have a clear plan about what they want their students to achieve through IT. The appropriate incorporation of IT into the classroom will broaden the minds and skills of students, allowing them to be better prepared for further technological advances.

nbowker 15/12/05 8:56 AM

Comment: The final paragraph functions to reaffirm the points made in the body of the essay, which, in turn, support the thesis statement.

**References**

- Ager, R. (2000). *The art of information and communications technology for teachers*. London: David Fulton.
- Apter, A. J. (1968). *The new technology of education*. London: Macmillan.
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## Sample Essay II – 2000 words

**Question:** Discuss the extent to which online users alter their identity

Topic – online users alter their identity

Command – discuss

Focus – the extent to which

**Analysis:** This is quite a difficult question because it is asking you to examine how much people alter their identity online, rather than highlighting the fact that people can change their identity – a potential trap for first-time essay writers. Certainly, it is good at the beginning of the essay, whether in the introduction or the body, to acknowledge that people do alter their identity. However, to actually answer this question, you need to go beyond acknowledging the fact that people do change their identity, and discuss or debate the extent to which this happens and why. It may be that identity alteration occurs in different contexts. For instance, it may be that different groups are more likely to alter their identity than other groups, who do not alter their identity online. Alternatively, some groups may alter their identity to a greater degree than other groups. Answering this essay question requires a thorough analysis and examination of the different variables or factors influencing people's identity construction online.

Keywords used in searching for information: identity, social identity, alter ego, persona, internet, online, chatrooms, IRC, multi-user dungeons, MUDs, computer-mediated communication.

In writing this essay, notes were constructed in my own words from the ideas in books, book chapters, and journal articles surrounding the topic. These notes were then grouped together according to similar ideas and points of view to create topic units, in which I was not concerned about their size as long as they were distinct. From there, it became possible to identify a position or argument on which to base the essay. The introductory paragraph was then written, with a thesis statement crafted which functioned to summarise the ideas in the essay. At this time, a concluding paragraph was also roughly put together. Then the paragraphs forming the body of the essay were polished up from their rough shape and were checked to ensure that they were in line with the thesis statement. Topic sentences were crafted for paragraphs in the body, along with summary sentences rounding off the paragraphs. Finally, the concluding paragraph was elaborated on from its original form, ensuring that it adequately summarised the whole essay, but also managed to move the essay forward to the future. In total, the essay (excluding the Reference List) came to 1895 words, which fits easily within a 2000 word limit.

# Essay on the extent to which online users alter their identity

By Natilene Bowker

The online medium offers many opportunities for people to explore their identity. In particular, text-based communication enables users to present themselves in ways that may not be possible in face-to-face contexts because of the lack of physical appearance cues. Two such online communities, which operate textually, and in real-time, are Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs). IRC offers users access to hundreds of chatrooms on a vast range of topics. Users are identified by their choice of nickname, dissimilar to real life names, in which “users can appear to be, quite literally, whoever they wish” (Reid, 1993, p. 63). MUDs are virtual reality, role-playing environments where users create their own character by selecting a name, a gender including neuter and plural, and a description of their physical appearance (Curtis, 1997). Text-based communication forums offer users unprecedented freedoms for identity alteration through the anonymity of the online medium, which enables users to break free from social norms. However, online users’ capacity to alter their identity is also constrained by gender norms, including gender socialisation differences in risk-taking online.

Research has reported the unprecedented freedom of identity exploration online. Turkle’s (1995) observations on MUDs identified how role-playing allows users to explore various aspects of their identity, as well as the capacity to take on other identities. This included opportunities to explore a wider range of roles than those

nbowker 20/10/05 3:40 PM  
Comment: Very general opening sentence about the broad topic area.

nbowker 20/10/05 3:43 PM  
Comment: Begins narrowing the topic down to a closer focus for this essay. Here, the setting moves from “online” to more specific features, namely, “text-based communication”.

nbowker 21/10/05 4:51 PM  
Comment: These examples indicate to the reader that the essay question is being addressed within the scope of these kinds of online contexts. Hence, the writer is not having to cover all online contexts.

nbowker 21/10/05 4:53 PM  
Comment: The full term followed immediately by the abbreviation is given for each online community. This means that the full term does not need to be repeated in the body of the essay. So, from here on in, IRC and MUDs are used.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:40 PM  
Comment: These final two sentences in the introduction present the thesis statement for the essay. Instead of saying, “This essay will argue...”, it cuts to the chase. Due to the number of aspects involved, the thesis statement has been broken into two sentences, which summarise two distinct positions.

nbowker 21/10/05 4:55 PM  
Comment: Topic sentence for the first paragraph, focusing on the unprecedented freedom of identity exploration online, which was mentioned in the thesis statement.

available in real life, such as experimenting with radically different personae and transcending to a higher power, in addition to adopting multiple characters with different genders simultaneously. Similarly, on IRC users have the ability to take on multiple identities, signified through user nicknames, simultaneously (Reid, 1993). Such activities demonstrate the freedom users have in constructing identities online as the constraints of physical reality are suspended (Calvert, Mahler, Zehnder, Jenkins, & Lee, 2003). This evidence indicates that the capacity for identity alteration online is vast.

nbowker 21/10/05 4:56 PM  
Comment: Evidence from a study is presented to back up the topic sentence.

nbowker 21/10/05 4:56 PM  
Comment: A second piece of evidence is given.

Underlying users' capacity for identity alteration may be the anonymity of online communication. Researchers have argued that users alter their identity because of the anonymous features of the online medium, in which physical appearance cues are unavailable. This allows users to break free of social norms. For instance, Reid (1993) argues that the anonymity "and therefore invulnerability" (p. 403) surrounding one's real life identity enables users to experiment with gender identity norms online by letting go of their social and cultural inhibitions. Literature exists about men and women masquerading as the opposite gender online (Curtis, 1997; Reid, 1996; Turkle, 1995). Consequently, as Calvert (2002) confirms, the anonymity of online interactions enables participants to freely express themselves in ways that are not as constrained by real world expectations.

nbowker 21/10/05 4:58 PM  
Comment: A citation from a further author is used to reinforce the idea that the online medium has unprecedented opportunities for identity exploration compared to real life.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:40 PM  
Comment: Words in the final sentence link back to the same/similar words used in the essay question: "identity alteration online". This helps to bring the reader back to the essay topic, as the essay has moved from specific examples to reaffirming the essay's first line of argument. This sentence confirms that there are opportunities, which also links back to the first part of the thesis statement.

nbowker 21/10/05 5:03 PM  
Comment: Topic sentence moves to a reason for identity alteration. Hence, this is dealing with the why in relation to answering the essay question.

nbowker 21/10/05 5:03 PM  
Comment: Whenever authors are introduced into the sentence, the year follows in brackets.

nbowker 21/10/05 5:04 PM  
Comment: Whenever a quote is used, a page number is also required.

nbowker 21/10/05 5:06 PM  
Comment: A claim is made about the literature, which is then backed up with citations of the literature in brackets. When more than one citation is mentioned, these are added into the brackets after a semi-colon. Note that these references are in alphabetical order.

nbowker 21/10/05 5:07 PM  
Comment: Statement at end of paragraph functions to summarise the points made, which also subtly acts to bring the reader back to the broader topic.

Further, the physical distance between IRC participants, combined with the anonymity surrounding users' real life identities, means few consequences exist for acting inappropriately and breaking social norms (Reid, 1993). According to Calvert (2002), the lack of consequences for breaching social norms permits users to explore more about

nbowker 22/10/05 11:26 AM  
Comment: Another topic sentence elaborating on the rationale for identity construction online.

themselves, compared to real life. Indeed, the popularity of experimenting with sexual identity on IRC may be indicative of the proportion of adolescent and young adult users able to safely explore their sexuality without the behavioural taboos of real life (Reid). Also, Calvert suggests how assuming other identities online may offer users, particularly adolescents who are less popular in real life, the chance to gain social importance. Hence, removing the rigid identity boundaries of such factors as age, ethnicity, and gender, which circumscribe behaviour offline, enables the reconstruction of identity online, where the only limits are those created by the users (Reid).

nbowker 22/10/05 11:18 AM

Comment: As Reid has already been mentioned in the paragraph, further references to Reid do not need a year, likewise for Calvert.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:17 AM

Comment: An example is provided demonstrating the benefits of experimenting with identity online for a particular group, and likewise for the following sentence.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:26 AM

Comment: This final sentence rounds off the paragraph by looking at the situation from a broader and more inclusive perspective, which takes into account several variables – age, ethnicity, as well as gender. The word “hence” functions to create an explanation for the events that have occurred.

So far then, the research evidence indicates that text-based communication forums offer users unprecedented freedoms for identity alteration. This is made possible through the anonymity of the online medium, which enables users to break free from social norms constraining offline behaviour. Further, the lack of social consequences for breaking free of social norms, as a result of anonymity in conjunction with the geographic distance between online users, provides additional support for users’ identity alteration online.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:28 AM

Comment: This paragraph serves a very specific function – to summarise the evidence presented so far. This brings the reader immediately back to the first part of the thesis statement, mentioned in the introductory paragraph. This summary paragraph is needed because the argument in this essay is complex as it is organised around two very distinct points of view: the unprecedented freedom surrounding identity alteration online, and the gender socialisation constraints influencing identity alteration online.

Nevertheless, while online users have the capacity to alter their identity and interact as other than themselves, Baym (1998) argues that, in reality, many probably create identities consistent with real life. In support of this, Baym points out how online norms develop out of pre-existing norms within contexts external to online environments. For instance, according to Reid (1993), IRC users consistently prefer being identified under

nbowker 22/10/05 11:33 AM

Comment: This sentence turns the essay towards a different path, which contrasts with the preceding argument. “Nevertheless” functions to emphasise this change of direction.

nbowker 19/1/06 4:06 PM

Comment: Including this author’s idea serves to provide a justification for users’ online behaviour, and, consequently, the preceding examples, which function to support the influence of offline norms. “In support of this” is a useful phrase to tell the reader that back up for the position follows.

one nickname – which is consistent with identifying under one name in real life contexts – as opposed to multiple nicknames.

Other research reinforces the view that online users may also behave much as they do in real life and conform to identity norms common in face-to-face contexts. For instance, a posting to a discussion group about online personae highlighted equal numbers of participants acted the same as real life versus being different (Turkle, 1997). While MUD users can adopt a character as near or as distant from their real life self (Turkle), with neuter, plural, and hermaphrodite choices available, a number of MUDs have restricted gender to male and female only (Reid, 1996). Similarly, Curtis' (1997) observations from a 12-month longitudinal study of LambdaMOO, a highly populated MUD, indicated gender identity comprised the fewest choices available. Further, even when players identified under a non-traditional gender, other users still requested real life gender identity disclosure. This evidence suggests that despite the opportunities for identity alteration, some online users, at least, are choosing to retain offline identity conventions, which constrains their identity construction.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:38 AM

Comment: Another topic sentence, which summarises the evidence presented in this paragraph.

Another study, conducted by Danet (1998), also offers further evidence in support of online users conforming to real life identity conventions. Danet's analysis of gender identities chosen on two MUDs (MediaMOO and LambdaMOO), constituting 1055 and 7308 players, revealed that a majority chose male or female, while only a minority adopted unconventional identities encompassing neuter and gender neutral. Further, far fewer players (3% and 4%) chose to create unique gender identities.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:41 AM

Comment: Another summary sentence, which rounds the paragraph off by acknowledging that while opportunities are available for identity alteration, online users are also following real life conventions.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:44 AM

Comment: This paragraph is made up of only three sentences – the minimum number of sentences required for a paragraph. It is good to have variation in paragraph length. The first sentence functions to highlight the new evidence contained in the paragraph, and, thus, makes distinct the topic of the paragraph.

Although it was not possible to verify the real life gender identity of the players in Danet's (1998) study, Danet estimated, based on current internet user population statistics recording 70% male and 30% female participation, that many male players were likely to be identifying under a female or unconventional identity. In support of males' likelihood to explore identity boundaries, Reid's (1996) survey results of LambdaMOO showed a majority were male (76.6%). Similarly, Turkle's (1997) observations on the MUD, Habitat, revealed that while there was a 4:1 ratio of male versus female real life participants, the ratio of male to female presenting players was actually 3:1, indicating a greater proportion of males altering their gender identity. This evidence also suggests that while some users' may participate in identity alteration, male users may be more likely to do so than females.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:49 AM  
Comment: While the evidence in this paragraph belongs to the study mentioned in the former paragraph, it highlights a different focus of attention: males may be more likely to alter their identity online than females. Consequently, the idea warrants a separate paragraph.

Researchers have proposed several reasons for males altering their gender identity online. For instance, according to Curtis (1997), males are the most common MUD participants, which leads to a lack of female (presenting) players. This scarcity heightens the novelty of interacting with females online, leading real life males to present as female to gain the same attention. Another prominent reason for males' altering their gender identity is to find out what it is like to be treated as a female. Males are also attracted to the fun in deceiving other males and enticing them into sexually explicit interactions by taking on a female gender identity (Curtis).

nbowker 22/10/05 11:54 AM  
Comment: This sentence states that authors have presented justification. The next sentence backs this up by naming an author who provides such justification for males' gender identity alteration online.

nbowker 22/10/05 11:51 AM  
Comment: This paragraph provides justification for males' identity alteration online.

However, females also alter their gender identity, but typically for a different reason. Due to the proportion of males gender-switching, many females have been required to

nbowker 22/10/05 11:56 AM  
Comment: Topic sentence indicates a change in direction in that it acknowledges that females also alter identity online. This is qualified by the fact that they do so for a very different reason.

“prove” their real life gender. Consequently, many females alter their identity from female to neuter, gender-neutral, or male (Curtis, 1997). Similarly, other research indicates that females alter their identity to avoid harassment, including sexual harassment (Turkle, 1995).

nbowker 22/10/05 12:01 PM

Comment: “Other research” is backed up with the citation from Turkle in brackets at the end of the sentence.

Research investigations indicate that when it comes to identity alteration online, it is not a simple case of observing whether or not the behaviour occurs. Rather, researchers also need to consider the reasons for users engaging in identity alteration, to better understand the extent to which online users actually alter their identity. Indeed, the evidence indicates that males and females may alter their gender identity for very different reasons. While males may do so for a range of reasons, including general identity exploration, gaining attention, and deceiving others, the research suggests that females typically do so to avoid harassment. Furthermore, this contrast in reasons may reflect effects of gender socialisation differences in risk-taking behaviours, learnt in real life, face-to-face contexts.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:15 PM

Comment: This paragraph functions to summarise the ideas mentioned to date, which link into the second part of the thesis statement mentioned in the introductory paragraph.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:24 PM

Comment: This part of the sentence works to support the focus in the essay on explaining why users engage in identity alteration online – so that researchers attain a *better understanding* of the events taking place.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:19 PM

Comment: This clause has been specifically constructed to conform to the essay question – notice the overlap in phrasing in terms of “the extent to which online users [actually] alter their identity”. This helps demonstrate to the reader that the essay question has been addressed.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:25 PM

Comment: This end sentence moves the focus forward by suggesting further justification, through theoretical evidence, to support the second position in the thesis statement.

In support of gender socialisation differences in risk-taking behaviour, underlying gender socialisation theory is the notion that males learn to engage in risk-taking activities by extending behavioural boundaries. In contrast, females learn to stay within appropriate behavioural conventions, maintaining their safety (Spender, 1995). The disorientation surrounding the adoption of masculine identities by real life females, evident in Bruckman (1996) and Reid’s (1996) gender-switching encounter, in contrast to the liberation from the restrictions of gender appropriate behaviour experienced by a

male when gender-switching (Reid), together, may provide some support for the influence of gender socialisation differences in risk-taking online.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:51 PM

Comment: This paragraph functions to provide the link between gender socialisation differences in risk-taking between males and females off line, and males and females' risk-taking in identity alteration online.

Further, the anonymity created by textual communication forums online provides a protective mechanism, reducing social risk. If social errors occur, players can easily log on as another character without redress. Hence, the shield of anonymity relieves players of any accountability for their actions, eliminating the physical consequences of irresponsible and offensive acts (Curtis, 1997). Subsequently, it is argued that those more likely to engage in risk-taking, namely males (Coet & McDermott, 1979), may also be more likely to utilise online environments for identity exploration, including identity alteration, compared to females.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:28 PM

Comment: While this evidence repeats and elaborates earlier evidence mentioned in the first part of the essay supporting the first argument, it also functions here to support the second argument in the thesis statement.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:29 PM

Comment: This citation backs up the statement that males are more likely to engage in risk-taking.

Indeed, the evidence indicates that while males and females may alter their identity online, they do so to different extents. Males engage in identity alteration for a variety of reasons, not least of which includes identity exploration. This supports males' predisposition to engage in risk-taking behaviours as a consequence of their gender socialisation. In contrast, females engage in identity alteration to stay safe, by escaping harassment. In support of such normative behaviour practices online, Curtis (1997) argues that although MUD players may create a character vastly different from how they are in reality, many conform to their real life behaviours and personality.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:30 PM

Comment: This paragraph summarises the second argument in the thesis statement.

In conclusion, the extent to which online users alter their identity is a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, evidence demonstrates the unprecedented freedom of identity exploration online. The anonymity of online communication forums enables

nbowker 19/1/06 4:06 PM

Comment: This topic sentence introduces the concluding paragraph. It manages to bring together the different points of view by highlighting the fact that it is a complex situation.

users to break free of social norms because of the lack of physical appearance cues, which may constrain behaviour in face-to-face contexts. Secondly, the physical distance between users, in conjunction with the anonymous nature of the online medium, means there are few social consequences for breaching social conventions, which offers further support for users to freely engage in identity alteration online. Yet, despite freedom from the constraints of social norms governing online behaviour, leading to increased opportunities for identity alteration online compared to real life, the extent to which online users freely alter their identity may be influenced by the reproduction of gender socialisation norms. Indeed, the literature suggests that males and females' identity alteration may be linked to their gender socialisation differences in risk-taking, leading males to be more likely to take risks in exploring their identity online. This finding has implications for research into cyberpsychology, in which gender socialisation differences may influence other behaviours of online users, beyond just identity alteration.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:32 PM

Comment: These sentences summarise the first argument in the thesis statement.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:32 PM

Comment: These sentences summarise the second argument in the thesis statement.

nbowker 22/10/05 12:34 PM

Comment: This last sentence works to bring the essay forward beyond the immediate essay context to consider the implications within a broader topic setting, namely, cyberpsychology. This movement forward from addressing the essay question is achieved without raising any new evidence.

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nbowker 22/10/05 12:45 PM

Comment: Notice that book chapters make up a significant proportion of the references. There is much less to read in a book chapter versus a whole book.

nbowker 19/1/06 4:08 PM

Comment: Within the references, two more recent (at the time this book was printed) publications have been sourced, which indicates that up-to-date ideas have been found.

- Danet, B. (1998). Text as mask: Gender, play, and performance on the Internet. In S. G. Jones (Ed.), *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting computer-mediated communication and community* (pp. 129-158). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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nbowker 22/10/05 12:44 PM

Comment: Interestingly, while the essay topic focuses on the online medium, no references present online documents. Rather, they have all be sourced from traditional hard copy sources – which may add credibility to the research for the essay because the ideas identified have been peer-reviewed, which is not always the case with online sources.