Transcript of ‘How to plan an essay’ video

Stage 5 is to take your ideas and organise them into an essay plan.

This is part of good writing, to speed up the whole process and give the essay direction and precision.

Look at the essay question again: *Discuss how media can influence children. Use specific examples to support your view.* The essay is 1200 words.

First, decide how many stages there are in your argument – how many important points do you want to make? Then divide up a box into an introduction, one body paragraph for each part of your argument, and a conclusion.

Next, figure out how many words per paragraph you’ll need. This depends on the word count (in this case 1200 words) and how many paragraphs you want. Remember: one paragraph to discuss each main point you’re making.

In this example you could have an introduction of 120 words, followed by four body paragraphs of 240 words each and then a 120-word conclusion.

Finally, use dot points to list useful information or ideas from your research notes for each paragraph. Remember to include references so you can cite each idea in your essay.

In all of this, one useful document is the marking rubric (also known as the marking checklist or marking criteria). This indicates what the lecturer’s looking for, and helps you make sure that all the necessary elements are there. In a way, it’s an instruction manual on how to get a good mark.

When you’ve done all of that, it’s a good idea to

1) Check that your evidence tallies with your research notes
2) Check that your evidence properly supports your thesis
3) Check that the thesis statement says what you want it to – and answers the question
4) Make any adjustments to your plan. It should always be free to evolve as you come up with new ideas or do more research.

Doing this well takes planning, time and editing (several times) as you go.

**Here’s the point.** A good essay is never a random heap of facts and ideas. You should always organise your ideas with the overall answer clearly in mind.