

Sources and websites

Cowen, M., Maier, P. & Price, G. (2009). *Study skills for nursing and healthcare students*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson.

Hurford, Anne (2006). *Study skills for nurses and midwives*. University of Nottingham. Retrieved from <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentsservices/documents/studyskillsfornursesandmidwives.pdf>

A-Z list of available journals - <http://www.library.nhs.uk/booksandjournals/journals/>

CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) Checklists - <http://www.casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists>

FreeMind – free mind mapping software - http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

HDAS (Healthcare Databases Advanced Search) - <https://hdas.nice.org.uk/>

Mendeley – Free reference manager - <https://www.mendeley.com/>

MindMaps Unleashed - <http://mindmapsunleashed.com/learn-to-create-a-mind-map-in-word-heres-how>

OpenAthens registration - <https://openathens.nice.org.uk/>

RefMe – Free Referencing Generator - <https://www.refme.com/>

Study Skills



Library & Knowledge Services

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Introduction

This handbook is designed to supplement the Study Skills Training session and provide you with a quick reference guide for a range of areas such as time management and academic writing skills.

For further help and information, please contact your University library, or your Frimley Health Library.

Wexham Park Hospital
Tel: 01753 63 4857
Email: wxlibrary@fhft.nhs.uk

Frimley Park Hospital
Tel: 01276 604819
Email: fplibrary@fhft.nhs.uk

Referencing

The purpose of referencing is to provide evidence and support your argument, as well as enable readers to locate the original sources. It also helps avoid plagiarism. Remember to:

- Reference the source precisely using whichever referencing system is required for the course/university (e.g. Harvard, APA, MLA)
- When paraphrasing an original source in the text, identify the author and date of publication
- Use quotation marks when using direct quotations in the text
- List all sources used in the bibliography

Referencing software

There is a wide range of reference management software available that can help organise your references and which can be used to quickly insert citations into your text while you are typing. Your university may provide access to a referencing package (e.g. EndNote), but there are also some free applications, e.g.

MENDELEY <https://www.mendeley.com/>
Compatible with Windows Word 2007, 2010, 2013, and Mac Word 2011; requires a software download to PC and installation of a Word plugin

REFME <https://www.refme.com/>
No download required; sources are stored online and a RefME app gives the option to manage references on phone and tablet. NB. RefME for Word is only available with RefME Plus (payment required).

Common referencing pitfalls

- Inconsistent use of formatting
- Insufficient breadth of sources (e.g. not enough articles)
- Citing multiple authors without *et al.*; missing the full stop after *et al.*
- Missing out a comma between author and year
- Citing the title of the book or journal in the text

Conclusion

- Pull together the main points and summarise
- Don't include any new material not already covered

Writing style

There are a few simple strategies to help develop an effective writing style:

Use straightforward language

Try and use short and simple expressions where possible, rather than overly long phrases, e.g.

<i>Instead of...</i>	<i>Use...</i>
Prior to	Before
Subsequent to	After
Due to the fact that	Because
Increase the effectiveness of	Improve
In a position to	Able to
In the course of	During
In regard to	About, concerning

Use short/medium length sentences

- Each sentence should move logically onto the next
- Paragraphs are collections of sentences on the same theme; begin a new paragraph when refining or elaborating the theme

Signal words

Signal words or phrases help navigate the reader through your text; they signal what is to come, e.g. an example, a comparison, a contrast, or a continuing description. Examples include:

Similarly	However
Likewise	Because
In contrast	But
Due to	Therefore
In addition	Finally

Managing your time

It may be helpful to ask yourself some general questions:

- How many hours do you plan to work each day?
- Do you prefer to study in the morning or in the evenings?
- Will you work mainly at the weekends, or do you want to try and keep them free?

It's also a good idea to arrange a dedicated place to study if possible, which is quiet and away from distractions, and where you have all your study materials to hand.

Break your time down into long term, medium term and short term goals.

Setting long term goals

- Look ahead to when your assignments are due
- What do you want to achieve by the end of the year?
- Think about any other commitments over the next year that might affect your study

Setting medium term goals

- Set some time aside to plan the week ahead
- Use a weekly timetable to plan your studying
- Prioritise your study tasks
- Be flexible and adjust the timetable if needed
- Review your timetable at the end of the week to get an understanding of how your time was spent

Setting short term goals

Using each study session effectively:

- Assemble all the relevant materials (books, notes etc.)
- Vary your study tasks, e.g. alternate reading with note-taking
- Think about how long you can keep working effectively and take short breaks
- Review each session: did you accomplish what you planned? Did you try working too long?

You can also effectively manage your time by selective and active reading.

Selective reading

- Try and find out which books in your reading list are the most relevant and focus on these first
- Share out the reading with two or three other colleagues on the same course, and feedback to each other on which books are the most useful
- Note which books and articles are mentioned regularly in the literature
- Use the contents page to quickly check whether the book is going to be relevant

Active reading

- SURVEY** Look at the whole book, chapter or article briefly to get a sense of what it's about
Try to get a sense of the main arguments of the author(s) e.g. by looking in the conclusion section or last chapter
- QUESTION** Decide what is relevant to your work and how much you need to read
Try and make connections with other material you've already read, e.g. is it making the same argument?
- READ** Read with a purpose, e.g. with your assignment question in mind

Note-making from books and articles

There are different styles of notes:

- *Linear notes* – using headings, sub-headings, bullet points etc
- *Diagrammatic notes* – such as mind maps, where you start with a central idea and extend outwards to map connected themes

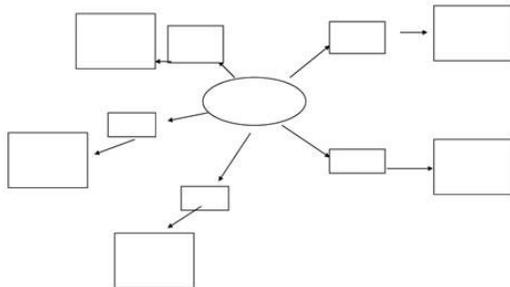


Diagram taken from *MindMaps Unleashed* (2016)

Results	Are the results clearly presented? Do they relate to the data analysis?
Discussion	Is the discussion balanced? Does it follow on from the results and relate back to the hypothesis? Does it draw on previous research?
Conclusions	Are the conclusions supported by the results?
Recommendations	Are any recommendations for future research realistic?
Limitation	Are any limitations of the study identified? To what extent do they limit the study?

Table adapted from Hurford (2006)

Academic writing skills

Answering the question

- Read the assignment guidelines carefully to understand what is required
- Distinguish between the broader topic area and the specific question that you will address
- Gather the necessary information first and let the research inform your writing
- Plan the essay using linear notes or a mind map
- Check that you are using sufficient and appropriate examples
- Attempt a first draft, then re-draft as necessary

Introductions

- State the aim of the assignment
- Give an overview of the essay and topic area
- Define the specific context of the essay and the main points to be discussed

Structuring an argument

Most essays are an attempt to build an argument that will convince the reader of the author's point of view. The main argument will often be based on a number of supporting arguments, which are dealt with in turn along with any supporting evidence, leading towards the main conclusion.

Critiquing a research paper

When research evidence is published, the journal in which it appears does not automatically indicate the trustworthiness or relevance of the paper. Articles should still be critically appraised so that the reader can reach his/her own judgements. There are a number of tools and checklists to help with appraisal.

CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) approaches research in 3 steps:

1. **Is the study valid?** i.e. is it unbiased?
2. **What are the results?** e.g. how much uncertainty is there about the results?
3. **Are the results useful?** i.e. how does the evidence apply to your question?

The CASP website provides a number of checklists to help appraise different types of evidence (systematic reviews, RCTs etc.): <http://www.casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists>

In addition, it is helpful to consider the following questions:

Title	Is the title concise, informative and relevant?
Author	Does the author(s) have professional experience? Are they appropriately qualified?
Abstract	Does the abstract clearly indicate the research problem and summarise the study?
Introduction	Is the research problem clearly established?
Literature review	Are there enough sources? Are key papers noted? Is it up to date? Is a theoretical framework identified with a balanced evaluation of the literature? Is the need for the study established?
Hypothesis	Is the hypothesis clearly stated and realistic?
Method	Is the methodology clearly stated and appropriate to the research question?
Population / sample	Is the population specified? Is the sample size clearly stated and appropriate? Is the sampling frame generalisable to the population?
Data analysis	Is the analytical approach appropriate to the type of data collected? Does the data validate the hypothesis?
Ethics	Has informed consent been sought? Has confidentiality been ensured and the data secured?

Finding & accessing information sources

Library

Contact the trust or university libraries for:

- Book loans
- Print journals
- Reference materials
- Services (e.g. document supply, training)
- PCs and study areas

Internet

Use the internet to access online resources such as:

- Databases (Medline, CINHALL etc.)
- Online publications (e.g. eJournals and eBooks)
- Other online resources (e.g. UpToDate)
- Websites of Professional Bodies
- Patient information sites

OpenAthens Accounts

To access many of these online resources, you will need an OpenAthens username and password. Go to <https://openathens.nice.org.uk/> to set up an account.

Searching the Databases

You can access the main databases via the NICE Healthcare Databases Advanced Search (HDAS) page: <https://hdas.nice.org.uk/>

Before searching, it is sometimes useful to break down your topic area / research question into separate terms using a strategy such as PICO:

- PATIENT/PROBLEM** The patient group or problem you are interested in
- INTERVENTION** The specific intervention/treatment/diagnostic test you are investigating
- COMPARISON** If applicable, another treatment you are comparing your intervention with
- OUTCOME** The outcome you are interested in

In HDAS, select the most relevant database from the list, enter your first term and click **Search**.

SEARCH TIPS

- PHRASES** Use inverted commas when entering phrases e.g. "frozen shoulder"
- PROXIMITY** Use ADJ1 to find results where the terms appear next to each other in any order, e.g. **bone ADJ1 fracture** finds results with *bone fracture* and *fracture bone*
Use ADJ2, ADJ3 etc. to adjust the number of words in between
- WILD CARDS** Use * at the end of a word to search for all words with the same stem, e.g. **pregnan*** will return results with the words pregnant, pregnancy or pregnancies
- OR** Use OR where you want either term included in your results, e.g. **oestrogen OR estrogen** will return items with either or both terms
- AND** Use AND when you want both terms included in your results, e.g. **cancer AND chemotherapy** will only return items with both terms
- THESAURUS** The thesaurus button (next to **Search**) can be used to find the subject headings used for indexing articles in the database; this helps you find articles that use synonyms for your chosen term

As you carry out further searches with different terms and subject headings, they are added to the search strategy as separate lines, and you can combine the results of each line to create new search rows and combine or narrow your results.

Accessing full-text articles

When viewed, the results are displayed further down the screen. If an article is available in full-text with your OpenAthens password, there will be a hyperlink in the article description.

If there is no link, it means that there is no access. If you still want to read the whole article, please contact the library with the details and they will try and obtain it for you elsewhere.

Accessing eJournals

You can also check to see if a particular journal is available with your OpenAthens password. Go to <http://www.library.nhs.uk/booksandjournals/journals/> and sign in with your OpenAthens password. Enter the journal's name in the search field. If available, the journal and direct link will appear e.g.

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