

Formatting your essay

When you submit your essay (assignment) for marking, there is a set format you must follow. There may be some small differences in format that your own lecturer may request of you, so make sure that you read and follow the instructions in your subject learning guides carefully. Following are some basic guidelines for you to follow:

1. Basic essay structure
2. Guidelines for using headings

1. Basic essay structure

❖ Title page

The title page should contain: name, student number, unit title/number, question title/name, due date, unit coordinator, word count. You do NOT have to decorate the page (e.g. graphics, photographs) unless you are asked to by the lecturer.

📌 **On the computer – use your 'Font' & 'Paragraph' tools to work on the lay out.**

❖ Margins

Margins - minimum 2.5 cm, maximum 3 cm all around.

📌 **On the computer – use the 'Page Layout' tool to set up your margins.**

❖ Paragraphs

Double **or** 1.5 space throughout except 'long quotations' (more than 30 words), which should be single spaced and indented, without quotation marks (see ASO factsheet: Quoting authors).

Leave 1 blank line between paragraphs **or** indent the first word (not both).

📌 **On the computer – use 'Paragraph' > 'Line spacing' for 1.5 OR double spacing.**

❖ Font

Use a plain serif (e.g. Times New Roman) or sans serif (e.g. Arial) font. A serif font is easier to read. Suggested sizes are 12 for the text and 14 for headings.

DO NOT change fonts in the course of writing the essay.

📌 **On the computer – use 'Font' tools to select font, colour and appropriate style.**

❖ Pagination

Put numbers in line with the right margin at the top or bottom of each page.

Centre the number of the first page of chapters or appendices at the bottom. It is also acceptable, although less common, to centre all page numbers. Pagination is best done with Header and Footer.

📌 **On the computer – use 'Insert' > header or footer > insert your name, student number, assignment number/topic, page (you can change font, size and position of information by going 'home' and using the font and paragraph tools)**

❖ Appendices

Appendices may precede or follow the reference list.

Each appendix must start on a new page.

Appendices must be numbered—A,B,C or 1,2,3.

(see ASO fact sheet: Appendices)

❖ Reference list/bibliography

Go to [ASO fact sheets](#) > Referencing section. Select Author date: The reference list.

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2. Guidelines for using headings

Headings are **signposts** that focus the reader on the most important content in a piece of writing. Provided that they are well structured, headings make longer pieces of writing easier to write and easier to read (for the marker). Look at headings systems in your unit reading material and you will get a 'feeling' for their structure and suitability. Follow these rules:

1. Use headings only where allowed or required. An increasing number of academic discipline areas allow or require the use of headings. Check with the unit coordinator.
2. Headings and subheadings allow the organisation of material to make it more manageable and speed up the location of specific information.
3. Use **minimal** or **maximal** capitalisation, although the use of only minimal capitalisation is becoming more frequent in academic writing.
4. Headings are captions, not sentences, so use only internal punctuation, such as commas, colons, or semicolons.
5. Headings are usually left justified.
6. Decide on a hierarchy of headings and use it consistently throughout your work. Most student work requires no more than 3 levels of headings.

Level 1: Major headings – will be larger type and bold with extra space above and below.

The oncology ward: Nuclear radiation and client care

Level 2: Subheadings will be bold and the same size or slightly larger than the body of the text with extra space above and below.

The effects of radiation on living tissue

Level 3: Subdivisions under subheadings will be bold or italicised, not both.

Implications for normal cells

NOTE: All the above points are subject to course and faculty requirements. See Unit Outlines for specific guidelines.

Capitalisation styles

When you write headings, you should use a 'Capitalisation style'—either *minimal* OR *maximal* and stick to this style.

Maximal (Headline style). The first letter of every important word should be capitalised. The first word after a colon is **always** capitalised.

The Oncology Ward: Nuclear Radiation and Client Care

Minimal (Sentence style). Capitalise the first word, any other word that would normally take a capital, and the first word after a colon.

The oncology ward: Nuclear radiation and client care

For more detailed information on using headings correctly, go to the ASO website. Click on Academic skills online and select from the academic writing online workshops USING HEADINGS
<http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/>

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