

## Guidance For TMAs

### ***Preparation***

1. **Make sure that you read the question thoroughly before you begin** and keep going back to check it as you progress through your work.
2. Highlight the key points in the question to make sure you don't miss any of them
3. Look out for clues in the question such as "describe", "compare" "explain", these will help you with your answer.

<i>Account for</i>	Explain, clarify, give reasons for
<i>Analyse</i>	Resolve into its component parts. Examine critically or minutely.
<i>Assess/Evaluate</i>	Determine the value of, weigh up. Make an appraisal of the worth/validity/effectiveness of something in the light of its truth or usefulness
<i>Compare</i>	Look for similarities and differences between, perhaps reach conclusions about which is preferable and justify this clearly.
<i>Contrast</i>	Set in opposition in order to bring out the differences sharply
<i>Describe</i>	Give a detailed account of
<i>Examine the argument that ..</i>	Look in detail at this line of argument
<i>Explain</i>	Give details about how and why it is ...
<i>Illustrate</i>	Make clear and explicit, using carefully chosen examples
<i>Justify</i>	Show adequate grounds for decisions or conclusions, answer the main objections likely to be made about them
<i>Outline</i>	Give the main features or general principles of a subject, omitting minor details and emphasizing structure and arrangement structure and arrangement
<i>Summarise</i>	Give a concise, clear explanation or account of presenting the chief factors and omitting minor details and examples

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4. **Answer the question that is being asked.** You may write a brilliant piece, but if it doesn't answer the question you won't get any marks for it no matter how hard you have worked.
5. Look at the marks allocated to each section/question, this will give you an idea of what is expected.
6. Check the word count allocated. If none is given for a section then I won't be checking when I mark, but be sensible look at the marks allocated and use your judgement on what is expected.
7. Prepare a plan before you start writing - this is particularly important if you are going to hand write your assignment. Use techniques such as spray diagrams to gather your thoughts and then organise your ideas into a logical flow before you start writing.
8. If you are not sure about anything ask. I can't give you the answer to the TMA, but I can point you in the right direction.

## Presentation

1. You should always include your name, PI number, course and TMA number in each piece of work you submit. Ideally this should be on every page. In a word processor document, it could be in a header or footer.
2. Think about numbering your pages - its easier for me then to check that there's nothing missing when I receive your assignment and to make sure I don't miss anything.
3. Use a consistent style throughout your work. Headings of the same level should be in the same size and style of font. Font style and paragraph format should remain the same unless there is a good reason for changing it e.g. inserting a quotation.
4. Use clear headings. Each subsection will probably need a subtitle.
5. Use bullet points or numbered lists to list key points or ideas. This saves on the word count and presents an easy to follow layout.
4. If the TMA asks you to use a report format try to present data in a tables. You can also use tables for text sometimes - this can be a good way to present action plans, for example.
6. Always show your working if the question involves a calculation. If the final answer is wrong you may still pick up some marks. Even if you give the correct result, you will normally only be awarded full marks if you show your working.
7. Please keep font size to a minimum of 12. I find it very difficult to read anything smaller
8. Try and leave wide margins (about 3 inches is usually OK) - it leaves me more room to write in my feedback.

## Referencing

1. When you base your work on material written by other people you should include a section giving your references. This allows the person reading your work to check back to the original work and prevents you being accused of copying (plagiarism).
2. If you quote the text directly from another work, you should put it in quotes and cite the reference e.g. Alexander [2001] states "I have based the following suggestions on my own experiences", giving the full details of the text in the references section at the end of your work.
3. Your references section should give details of the author(s), year of publication, title, edition and publisher. As you can see in the examples below this is done in slightly different ways according to the source of the information, but as long as your references are clear, they will be acceptable for this course. For a good guide on how to cite references, see the OU library website page <http://library.open.ac.uk/help/helpsheets/cite.html>

Some examples:

Beattie, R.B. (1995), "Everything you already know about EIA (but don't often admit)", *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, Vol 15, pp 109-114

Ison, R. and Blackmore, C (1998), T860 Block 2 "*Exploring the context of environmental issues and formulating problems and opportunities*" The Open University, Milton Keynes

PRe Energy Consultants, "*Life cycle assessment (LCA) or Ecobalance : an introduction*"; available from <http://www.pre.nl/lca.html> [Accessed 5 May 2004]

## Check your work

1. Try to finish your TMA a couple of days before it is due in, put it aside for a day, then come back and read it through again. This will give you chance to clear your mind before your final read through and will help you to pick up any mistakes you have made. It is very tempting to send the TMA off as soon as you finish, but this can often lead to marks being lost through silly mistakes that are quickly spotted after a break.
2. When you are happy that you have done the best you can and answered all parts of the question, send in the TMA and have a celebration. You can have another celebration when you get it back and are happy with your marks!

## Acknowledgement

Quite a lot of this guidance is based on material produced by Hilary Cunningham-Atkins, an OU tutor who teaches on T171 and A170. Her permission to reproduce and adapt it is gratefully acknowledged.