

ROUTE MAPS FOR UNIVERSITY ESSAYS

Two students were sitting down at home after a long and tiring class. Their tutor had just finished giving a writing skills class to help them write better assignments.

Kate turned to Johnny and said, “You know, writing assignments are easy. Even my dog can write essays.”

“Yeah, very funny,” replied Johnny, not bothering to look up.

“It’s true,” continued Kate. “I taught her to write my last essay.”

Johnny smiled, “Alright, let’s see her then.”

Kate called for Misty, her Labrador, Alsatian, Foxy, West-Highland Terrier Cross, who jumped up on the chair next to them.

Kate leaned over and put a pen in Misty’s mouth and a piece of paper on the table in front of her.

“Misty, write my Human Development essay about Attachment Theory,” said Kate firmly.

Misty looked blankly at Kate. Nothing happened.

Johnny laughed, “You see, she hasn’t got a clue what you are talking about.”

Kate smiled, “Hey, I said I taught her to write essays. I didn’t say she learned anything....”

When I first heard a similar version of this joke, I thought I was much like the dog in this story. I was given some instructions about how to write assignments and just had to get to it. Sure, I had been ‘taught’ but had I actually learned anything?

The hardest thing about writing tertiary level essays and reports is finding all the information from different sources and organising it into some kind of cohesive whole that makes sense *and* answers the question being asked. This is easier said than done, but over the years, I have developed a planning technique that helps you write assignments and saves you hours of writing time. It is called Essay Route Maps.

An Essay Route Map is a planning technique that is set out on a single A4 page making space for an introduction at the top, conclusion at the bottom, and however many sections you need in between. In each section you can **write location notes to briefly record what you will say and where your information is coming from**. For example, using the essay question as a guide, you might decide your essay will have four sections. While keeping plagiarism rules in mind, under ‘Section 1’ of your Route Map you might take an idea from page 47 of a book by Smith and Jones (2004). Similarly, you might take a direct quote from page 31 of a journal article written by Turner (2006) to put into ‘Section 2.’

These location notes are written into your Route Map at the planning stage so that you can find that source later when you come to write the essay. This way, you will know exactly what information to use for each paragraph (and where to find it again) in sequence from introduction to conclusion. Your essay will be written in no time, and you will be feeling a lot more confident about how to prepare and write essays in the future.

Use the directions in the diagram below as a guide to help you plan your first essay route map.

There is also a handwritten example on the next page.

The Route Map Format

Introduction

Under the introduction, write notes related to the essay outline and where to find that great catchy first quote for your essay.

2 Second Section

Once you know what your main points or sections are, you may be able to break them down into sub-points under each section:

Point 2.1

Point 2.2

Point 2.3

Now you have a clear idea of what you are going to write, and where it will go in your essay. This will direct your research reading to find the appropriate information about each section.

4 Fourth Section

Go to the index of a book and look for the topic. Find the page and skim read the information. If it is relevant to your essay, photocopy the page making sure you include the appropriate reference information. Do not get too held up with reading. At this stage, we are just planning to see if it is suitable or not.

Write the appropriate section number (1,2,3,4) on the photocopy. If you do not need to photocopy the page, tag it with a post-it note with the appropriate section number. Similarly, write the author's initials and page number of the book under the appropriate section of your route map. This helps you easily refer back to the information when you are ready to write.

First Section 1

Your essay question will define how you will structure your layout. There may be three or four main points or sections to it that require further discussion. These form the basis of your essay structure and can be laid out like this, with branches off a centre line.

Third Section 3

When you have found information for each section, you can start writing your essay beginning with your first section and working your way down. You should have books and other information around you with numbered post-it notes sticking out of the appropriate pages. This way you save hours of writing time as all the information you need is pre-planned from following the structured layout of your route map.

Conclusion

Include any points, such as where to find the ideal final idea to leave your reader thinking.

RESEARCH METHODS ASSIGN 2 TOPIC: CHANGES IN ACTION RESEARCH - APPROACH & PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION

- OUTLINE CHANGES IN - PURPOSE ①
 APPROACH ← - DESIGN ②
 - ETHICS ③

④ CHANGES IN RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

- POSITIVISM
 - INTERPRETIVISM
 - CRITICAL THEORY } COMBINE ONE SECTION

use definition by Corey (1953 cited in Johnson '93 p. 47)

DESIGN ②

- ②.1 Kurt Lewin (1946) first person (Kemmis & Teggart p. 73)
 Stephen Corey (1949) (Johnson p. 53)
 Denzin (1978) Triangulation (1994, p. 37) Caro-Bruce & McCreadie

- ②.2 A-R. Today (Kemmis 1988 p. 92)
 Decentralised Education / autonomy

④

- ④.1 POSITIVISM - empirical method the only way (Denscombe, 2003, p. 21)
 ④.2 INTERPRETIVISM - find meaning in everyday experience (Scott & Usher p. 24)
 ④.3 CRITICAL THEORY - critiques, eg generalisations (quote S&U, p. 30)

① PURPOSE

- ①.1 develop curriculum (Capobianco et al. 2004)
 ①.2 Help teachers practical problems - agents of inquiry professional goals (Johnson p. 28) focused investigation (Adams & Slater p. 17)
 ①.3 school enhancement initiatives... Short quote (p. 19 A & S) www.actionresearch.com 3rd paragraph p. 1

③ ETHICS

- ③.1 1950 very little formal guidelines - negotiation, control, confidentiality (Attricher, p. 37) use direct quote p. 45
 ③.2 WELLINGTON 2000 national organisations (p. 91) today.

CONCLUSION

Summarise 1, 2, 3, 4
 finish quote Wolfe, cited in Johnson (p. 29)