




**Where do I begin?**  
**Researching, structuring and writing**  
**coursework assignments**  
by  
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**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- properly plan and research coursework assignments.
- structure assignments and use appropriate language throughout.
- include evidence in an assignment in a structured and easy to read format.
- properly reference sources and avoid plagiarism.



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**Before you get stuck in ...**

  
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## What does the examiner want?

➤ Before you even start your research into the question, you need to understand:

- the assessment guidelines and instructions, which include the marking criteria with weightings. For example, the Advanced Diploma gives 50% weighting towards application and analysis.
- whether there are standard templates you need to be using for your answer. Look at any model answers provided.
- the wording of the question so that you know what exactly it is the examiner is looking for.



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## Understanding the question

➤ You need to look for certain key words in the question. Below are some examples.

- Compare and contrast
  - explain similarities and differences
- Account for or comment on
  - explain why something happens and the reasons
- Discuss or evaluate
  - look at the main arguments and provide advantages and disadvantages



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## Research and planning



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## Don't panic!

- When you first see the question and when you look at the suggested readings lists, don't panic!
- Don't go straight to the books - think to yourself:
  - What do I know about the topic already?
  - What areas do I know least about?
  - What are the arguments or main points likely to be?
  - What type of publications are likely to help me (e.g., journals or books etc.)?
- Following this process also helps to trigger your critical thinking skills.



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## Reading strategies

- It seems obvious but ensure you read the contents page and look in the index for key words. Is the text relevant?
- Different writing styles suit different people. Pick a selection of texts and randomly select some paragraphs. See which best suits you.
- Use skim reading techniques to check that the text does have the information you are looking for. Make a note of relevant sections for further reading.
- Let's try: skim read the text you have been given - does it deal with the effect of *breach of warranties* and *conditions*?



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➤ Think about which texts you read first from any reading list. For example:

- Textbooks
- CII study texts
- Journals

➤ Which would you start with and why?



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➤ Try to get a good grounding with the more basic texts and then move on to the more challenging journals.

➤ Use skim reading techniques to check that the text does have the information you are looking for. Make a note of relevant sections so you can return to read them in detail.

➤ Set yourself achievable goals.



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### Making notes

➤ Making notes is more effective than simply highlighting lines of text.

➤ It's important that you distinguish between whether your note is a direct quote or a paraphrase. More later!

➤ Think about how you structure and organise your notes and keep references as you go.



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➤ Think about developing a key for yourself for when referring back to text that you have read:

- ! - Important point
- !! - Very important point
- \* - This also relates to something else
- ? - Need to check by reading or asking a question
- ?! - I disagree with this point
- @ - Look up on the internet



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## Use a template for your reading notes

Issue	Detail	Source
Classification of terms in a contract of insurance	There are two types of terms in the contract – conditions and warranties.	Doctrines and Principles of Insurance Law p.217



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## Reflection

- When you have finished your reading, think of the following:
  - What is my viewpoint on the subject and did my reading change this?
  - Has the reading given me sufficient examples and evidence to include in my work?
  - Is there anything else I need to research?



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## How to find laws – statutes

- Because of the nature of our common law system, finding laws can be particularly time consuming and frustrating and so here are some tips.
- In print:
  - *Halsbury's Statutes of England & Wales* – arranged by subjects and has annotations
- Online:
  - [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) – shows subsequent amendments
  - [www.bailii.org](http://www.bailii.org) - doesn't show subsequent amendments



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## How to find laws – cases

- [www.supremecourt.gov.uk/decided-cases/index.shtml](http://www.supremecourt.gov.uk/decided-cases/index.shtml)  
(press summary and judgments available)
- [www.bailii.org](http://www.bailii.org)
- [www.iclr.co.uk](http://www.iclr.co.uk) – The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for England & Wales (has the latest case summaries and an alert subscription)



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## Structure



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- There may be templates provided for your answers – check!
- The structure will very much depend on the type of assignment you are being asked to complete. But there will always be an introduction, a main body and a conclusion.
- Think of a thesis statement for the introduction (what's the main argument/point) and link this to the conclusion.
- In this section we are going to look at how to structure paragraphs so as to present information coherently and effectively.



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## The structure of a paragraph

➤ Each paragraph in the main body should have the following:

- Topic sentence
- Supporting points (2 or 3 sentences)
- Concluding sentence

➤ Think of the following example, taken from Bailey, S. 'Academic Writing', Routledge: 2011.



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➤ Put the sentences in the correct order and label the type of sentence (e.g., topic sentence):

*Both the USA and Britain have similar rates of about 69 per cent.*

*The rate of home ownership varies widely across the developed world.*

*There appears to be no conclusive link between national prosperity and the number of homeowners.*

*Germany, for instance, has one of the lowest rates, at 42 per cent, while in Spain it is twice as high, 85 per cent.*



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➤ During your research into whether fraudulent claims are more prevalent in developing or developed countries, you have found the following data. Write a paragraph expressing your findings.

- In India, only 5% of household claims are proven to be fraudulent.
- In the UK and USA, about 12% of household claims are proven to be fraudulent.
- In Australia, about 15% of household claims are proven to be fraudulent.



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## Putting your paragraphs in order

- There are two different styles – block and point by point.
- If we use point by point in a compare and contrast style paper, the structure would look as follows:

### **Introduction**

### **Main body**

*Point 1 – similarities and differences*

*Point 2 – similarities and differences*

*Point 3 – similarities and differences*

### **Conclusion**



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- In a block style structure, however, it would look like this:

### **Introduction**

### **Main body**

*1. All the similarities*

*2. Transition paragraph*

*3. All the differences*

### **Conclusion**

- By choosing one of these structures, and following the advice about paragraphs, your work will have clear direction and be organised.



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## Incorporating evidence



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➤ Which of these sentences are you more likely to consider as credible:

- It is estimated that, on average, fraud results in an extra £50 being added to the insurance bill of every UK policyholder.
- According to the Association of British Insurers, it is estimated that, on average, fraud results in an extra £50 being added to the insurance bill of every UK policyholder.




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➤ There are three ways we can incorporate evidence into our writing:

- Summary – this provides the ‘general’ ideas of a piece of text and in a reduced size to the original.
- Paraphrase – this relates to a specific point that the author has made, though it is in your own words and is not necessarily shorter than the original.
- Direct quotation – this is when you use the exact words of someone else.

➤ In each of the above, you must reference. We will look at this in the next section.




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**How to paraphrase**

➤ It is important not to overuse quotes. Remember, the examiner wants to see what knowledge **you** have gained and how **you** apply it.

➤ When you paraphrase, you need to:

- read and understand the text.
- take notes of the main ideas.
- cover the original.
- think of synonyms for key words (you must not change technical terms).
- think about how to restructure.
- write.
- check against the original.

➤ Using the text provided, paraphrase paragraph one.




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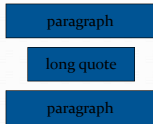
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## Quotations

- Short quotation: exact words placed in quote marks within the sentence.
- Long quotation (30+ words): the quote is indented on the next line:



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## Referencing and plagiarism



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## Why is referencing important?

- Acknowledge the use of other people's work and ideas.
- Help the reader to evaluate the extent of your reading.
- Give your reader information to be able to find your source.
- Avoid plagiarism!!!



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## Read the CII guidance

- There is a clear definition of plagiarism provided in the CII guidance notes. The consequences of plagiarism are also very clear. Let's look at this together.
- Remember, it's not just about copying from published work, you also need to be careful about similarity with co-workers.
- We will now look at the CII's preferred referencing style in the handout provided.



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## Citing laws

- A typical case citation will look like this:  
*Jones v Smith* [1967] 2 All ER 365
- An Act should be cited using its short title.
- Let's do the exercise in the handout.



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*Any questions?*



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### In summary

- Understand the marking criteria and the question.
- Have a strategy for selecting reading material and take appropriate notes.
- Use appropriate structures for the overall work and individual paragraphs.
- Vary how you incorporate evidence.
- Ensure that your paraphrasing is not too close to the original.
- Properly reference any ideas or text that are not yours.
- Don't panic!



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### Thank you and please stay in touch



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