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## USEFUL TIPS FOR WRITING A GOOD ESSAY-ASSIGNMENT PAPER

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### 1. **DECODING THE TOPIC'S EXPECTATIONS**

Besides adhering to the general guidelines, important notes, and evaluative rubric of the essay assignment, it is equally essential to thoroughly understand the topic before attempting to write. Identifying the key expectations that the examiner anticipates in your paper is crucial for success. Furthermore, grasping these expectations determines the relevance of your content.

To decode the expectations of any topic, follow these five (5) steps:

- a. Contextually understand every word in the topic.
- b. Consider any introductory statement leading to the main question.
- c. Identify the question mode.
- d. Pay attention to any clauses present.
- e. Break down the detailed components of the question and list them for research—do not rely solely on the overall scope of the topic.

### **Important Notes:**

1. If self-help, following the outlined procedures, does not seem to produce the desired outcome or if the topic appears ambiguous, seek clarification and guidance from your lecturer.
2. You may also consider using AI chatbots like ChatGPT, Gemini, and others to help analyze the question's intent and brainstorm ethically. However, **DO NOT** use AI chatbots to write your essay assignment, as this constitutes academic misconduct and may result in a zero score or potential disciplinary action.

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## 2. SOURCING RELEVANT RESOURCES

After thoroughly decoding the expectations of your assignment topic and identifying key components for research, the next step is to find relevant resources before taking notes and drafting your first version. For Islamic-related topics, exploring the primary textual sources—the Qur'an and the Sunnah—is ideal. However, students, particularly beginners, may need to rely on secondary scholarly work due to a lack of advanced research tools and limited comprehensive understanding of textual evidence. **Do not use a webpage article except it is well-referenced.**

Resources for academic paper writing may include **authored books (print and e-books), journal/magazines articles (print and online), well-referenced webpage articles, newspapers (print and online), blog posts, press releases, conference papers, unpublished dissertations/theses, audio/videos**, etc.

Sourcing relevant resources for your paper might require the following:

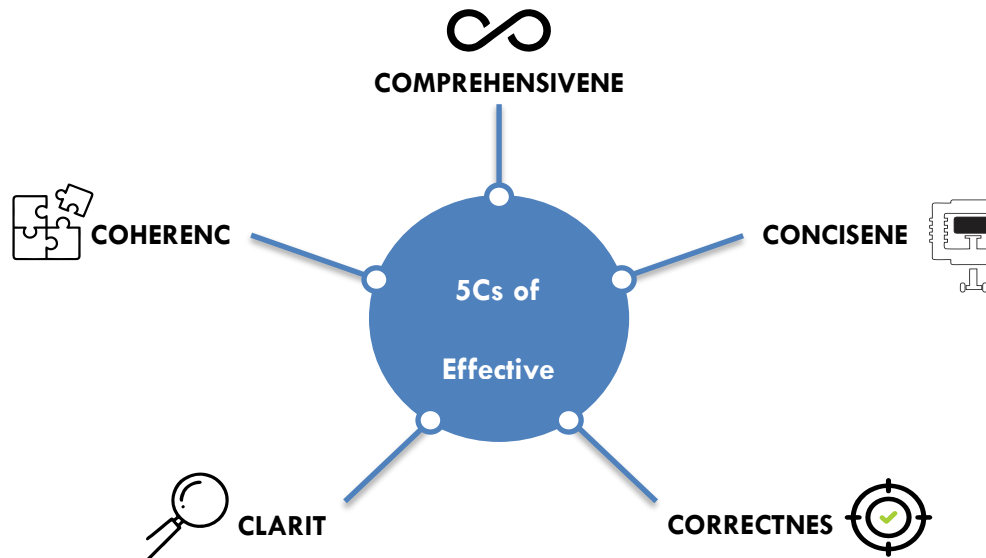
- a. For authored Arabic and English Islamic books (print and electronic), use libraries (physical, digital, and online) to conduct search for key words and related topics from relevant available sources. The IOU libraries (<https://libraries.iou.edu.gm/>, <https://campus.iou.edu.gm/campus/librarybais/library.php>), Darus-Salam Library (<https://campus.iou.edu.gm/campus/mod/page/view.php?id=50554>), Al-Maktabah Ash-Shāmilah (<https://shamela.ws/>), a digital Arabic library, are very rich platforms to explore Arabic Islamic literatures. You may also check other useful websites for Islamic resources in English and Arabic. Some popular English Islamic websites are <https://darpdfs.org/>, <https://kalamullah.com/>, and <https://library.islamhouse.com/en>. As for Arabic Islamic resources, use websites like <https://waqfeya.com/>, <https://www.noor-book.com/>, and <https://ketabpedia.com/vc-product-categories/>.
- b. For other forms of resources like journals, you may use search engines like Google, Bing, etc., to conduct searches using key words and essential components of the topic.

**Note:** Engaging in extensive reading and research will give you an advantage and help in producing high-quality content for your paper.

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### 3. 5Cs OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

Now that you are ready to draft your paper and organize the information gathered from various relevant sources before submission, it is important to remember that a strong paper reflects effective writing. Effective writing, in turn, should embody what I call the **5Cs: Clarity, Correctness, Conciseness, Comprehensiveness, and Coherency**.



**CLARITY:** Avoid overly complex language and entangled sentence structures, as well as ambiguity in expressing your ideas and concepts.

**CORRECTNESS:** Use appropriate language and style, ensuring authenticity in presenting your claims, evidence, and arguments.

**CONCISENESS:** Be concise and balanced in your presentation, avoiding unnecessary verbosity. Adhere to the required word count.

**COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Ensure your paper includes all necessary information without digressing. Maintain a holistic approach and avoid fragmenting data and evidence.

**COHERENCY:** The content of your paper—sentences, paragraphs, and ideas—should be structured logically and flow harmoniously. Maintain consistency with the stipulated guidelines and procedures.

**TAKE AWAY POINT:** Submitting your work for evaluation and grading signifies that you have put in thorough effort and successfully established effective communication with the examiner or grader through your writing. Remember, effective writing is always **purposeful, interesting, and beneficial**.

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### 3. REFERENCING QUR'AN AND HADITH IN APA STYLE

#### A. Qur'an:

If you are using 'Saheeh International Translation' for example, your format will look as below:

- **In-text citation:** {...} (Qur'an 3:65). It should be parenthetical/non-integral citation.
- **Reference list:** The Qur'an [Saheeh International Translation] (2010). Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers.

#### B. Ḥadīth:

If you are citing 'Musnad Aḥmad' for example, the format will look as follows:

- **In-text citation:** "..." (Aḥmad, 1421H, no. 2354) for parenthetical/non-integral citation, or Aḥmad, "..." (1421H, no. 2354) for narrative/integral citation.
- **Reference list:** Aḥmad, M. H. (1421H). Musnad Al-Imam Aḥmad bn Ḥanbal. Muassasah Ar-Risālah.

**NOTE:** If you cite multiple verses from the Qur'an or narrations from a ḥadīth collection like *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, you only need to reference the Qur'an and the ḥadīth book once.