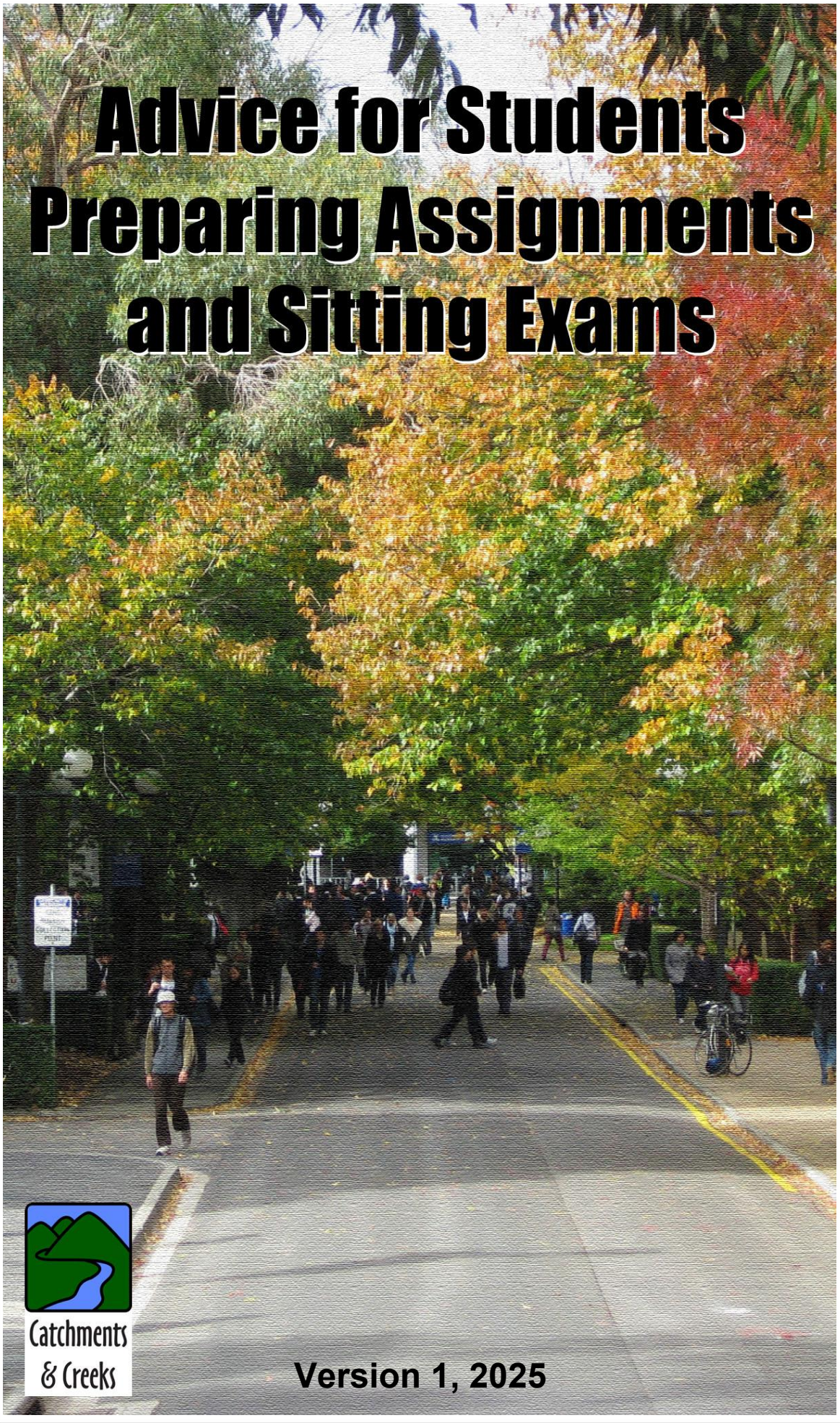
Advice for Students Preparing Assignments and Sitting Exams



Catchments & Creeks

Version 1, 2025

Advice for Students Preparing Assignments and Sitting Exams

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About the author

Grant Witheridge is a retired civil engineer with both Bachelor and Masters degrees from the University of NSW (UNSW). He gained his 40 years work experience in the fields of hydraulics, creek engineering and erosion & sediment control, during which time he has worked for a variety of federal, state and local governments, as well as private organisations.

During the years 1995 to 2009 Grant worked part-time for Griffith University in Brisbane, where he presented lectures in coastal engineering, construction site erosion and sediment control, and engineering design.

Grant's tertiary education consisted of 5 years of undergraduate studies (4 years full-time, 1 year part-time), and 4 years of part-time post-graduate studies. It is through these 9 years of university studies, and 15 years of part-time lecturing, that Grant has gained his insight into the ins and outs of managing assignments and exams.

Contents

Introduction

The world is not short of people telling us how to set our value system. Some tell us that 'family' is the most important thing in our life, while some tell us that 'love' is the most important thing. For others it is 'friends', and for some it is a good 'wine', or a good 'book'. Parents often tell their children that the most important thing is a good 'education'.

All of this suggests to me that 'Nirvana' must be: you having a wine with friends to celebrate the completion of your tertiary degree, before ending the day with a good book, in the company of your lover, interrupted only by a welcomed phone call from your family.

That said; there is no way that I am going to tell you how to rank your priorities. That is your business. But, if you want to get the best out of your time in tertiary education, then high on your priority list should be a belief in respecting others.

I can understand why universities encourage students to respect fellow students and university staff. However, I do not agree that this respect should be elevated for the higher ranking university staff. When we reduce our values to the point of 'grading' our level of respect based on the authority of the person, then ultimately we are degrading the 'value' of our respect.

You are free to like or dislike anyone, you are free to communicate or not communicate with anyone; but please, I ask, never think that you are better than another person, or that you deserve better than another person.

Respecting other people includes respecting their right to have their own beliefs and their own customs, even if you firmly disagree with those beliefs or customs. Respecting other people means voicing your disagreement without violence, anger, or hatred.

University life is a melting pot of ideas and beliefs, but let it be a melting pot without the burning fire that builds disrespect.

When you are at a university, 'showing respect to others' means:

- not thinking in terms of 'us' and 'them'
- not thinking that you are better than others
- not thinking that you deserve to be there more than someone else
- not thinking that you deserve to be there more than a foreign student
- not thinking that you deserve to be there more than a 'rich kid'
- not 'ordering' people to do things, but asking people if they could do things
- not thinking that the system owes you
- not thinking that the lecturers are there to serve your needs
- not talking down to administration staff just because they don't have a university degree
- not talking down to administration staff, full stop!

When I was studying for my engineering degree, the students divided into the usual groups consisting of the live-in college students, the Asian students, the eastern European students, the Arabic students, etc. That is fine, people can form any friendship groups that they wish. But what I am asking of you is that you actively stop yourself from thinking of these groups as an 'us' and 'them' situation. Respecting people starts by acknowledging people, and greeting people when you see them, even if the greeting is not returned.

If you find that walls are being built between different groups, then make it your mission to find the door, but always knock first. I used to tell my students that *'if the door is locked, climb through the window'*.

Remember; it is not censorship for a university to ask you to be respectful, non-racist, and non-sexist. You may have the 'right' to be rude and hurtful, but what should stop you from being rude and hurtful is your respect for others, even if that respect is one-sided.

'Power' is a measure of your strength and influence. 'Strength' is a measure of how you control your power. You may have the power to disrespect people based on their background, but do you have the strength to treat them with an even-hand.

Introduction

Griffith University

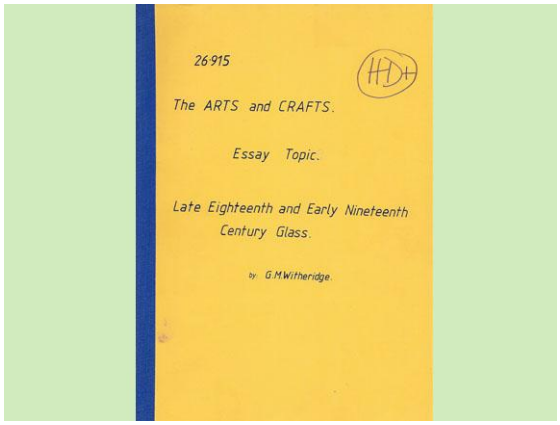
Introduction

- At one point in my career I was a lecturer in the school of environmental engineering at Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland.
- During one of my lectures, the discussion changed from environmental engineering to advising my students how they should approach the preparation of assignments and their exams.
- From that discussion grew this publication.

Question

Who is your client?

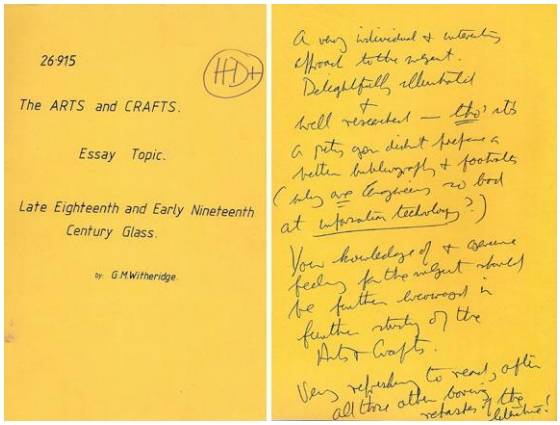
- I asked my students if they could tell me who their client is while they are at university.
- If the aim is to be 'client focused', to look after your client, to focus on your client's needs and wants, then who is your 'client' while you are a student?
- Is it yourself?
- Is it the person keeping you fed (which could still be you)?
- Is it the head of the school?



Aiming for that high assignment grading

Knowing who your client is

- While you are at university, you should consider that your client is:
  - the person marking you assignment
  - the person marking your exam
  - the person marking your oral presentation
  - the person marking your thesis.
- It was not a difficult question to answer, but none of my students that day were able to give me that answer!



Make the marking process easy to do

How do you look after your client?

While you are a student, I would hope that your priorities incorporate the following:

1. Respecting all students, teachers, the support staff, and the institution (even if you don't like them).
2. Acting without violence.
3. Being true to yourself and your goals.
4. Making it easy, if not enjoyable, for a person to grade your work.

What is your ‘client’ wanting from you?

Question

Your choice

- When you attend any form of tertiary education, such as a university, YOU have a clear choice as to what your focus is going to be—is it:
  - to focus on gaining knowledge?
  - to focus on gaining the highest grades?
- Neither option is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’.
- It is your free choice, but note that your choice could affect your future.

University of NSW

My experience at the University of NSW

- While I was an undergraduate, my focus was solely on gaining knowledge.
- Getting high grades was just a bonus.
- In my third year I was having a lot of trouble understanding one particular subject.
- In the end, I chose to fail the subject, and repeat it the following year, which affected my grades, but it gave me the chance to really learn the subject.

Gaining knowledge

If your focus is on gaining knowledge

- If your focus is on gaining knowledge, then I have the following advice:
  - use your time at university to ask as many questions as you want answers—at a university, asking questions costs you no extra money, but once you graduate, the same questions can cost you thousands
  - don’t be so focused on finishing your degree in the shortest period of time—why not take five or six years to complete a four-year degree.

Gaining a degree with honours

If your focus is on gaining high grades

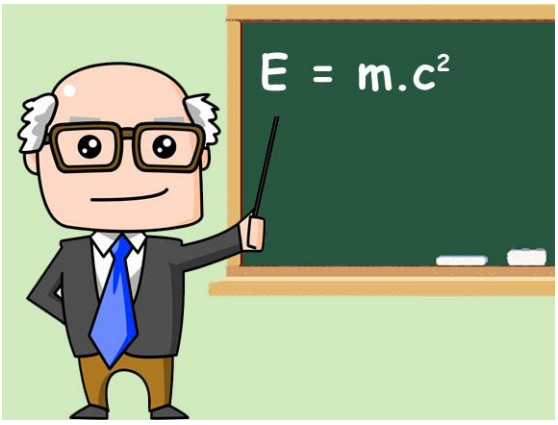
- If your focus is on gaining high grades, then I have the following advice:
  - focus on giving the university what they want from you
  - make it easy, if not enjoyable, for your ‘clients’ to follow your workings, and mark your exams and assignments
  - show your client what they want to see.
- REMEMBER; in most cases, ‘honours’ are based on your grades, not on how long you took to get those grades.

What does your 'client' want from you

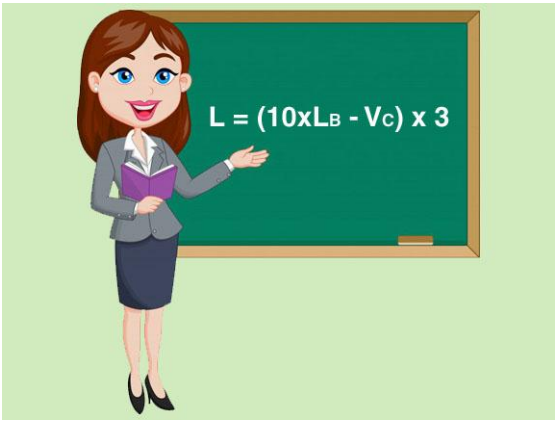
The question

Who is your client?

- We can now go back to the important question: *Who is your client?*
- Your client could be:
  - the person marking your exams, or your assignments, or
  - your partner who is supporting you while you study, or
  - the person paying for your studies.
- Of course, it could also be a combination of all three.



Teacher



Teacher

What does your client want from you?

- Let us assume that your client is the university and the people marking your exams and assignments.
- What they want from you is for you to show them that:
  - you have learnt the lessons
  - you would know how to solve similar problems once you graduate
  - you are able to communicate your answers in a clear fashion, either orally, or in writing
  - you were able to show that you answered each and every part of the question (Note: there is often a second part of an exam question that so many students forget to answer)
  - if you made a mistake, and you are able to recognise your error, then indicate how you would have resolved the error if you had more time
  - and ensure that your logic and approach to the problem is easy for the marker to follow (which indicates to the 'marker' that you would follow such an approach throughout your career).

Fast or slow?

Do you really have to finish a four-year degree in four years?

- Ask yourself: *What is so wrong with taking a longer period to finish your studies?*
- My older brother took six years to complete a four year degree (because he did it part-time), I took five years, and my younger brother took four years—does it really matter?
- Think of how many times in your life you were told to: *Slow-down, and do things properly*.

Understanding what You can Gain from a University Degree

Introduction

Arts faculty

Business executives

Problem solving

Library

Is a degree in Arts really worth anything

- I have to admit that while I was a naive engineering student (and I really was), I looked down upon those students studying the arts—I was so, so wrong.
- Now that some 45 years have passed, and I have spent time as a university lecturer, I have come to realise that there are no 'wasted' university degrees.
- Every university degree will teach you at least two important life lessons: how to research a topic, and how to break a task down into manageable segments.

Does your choice of degree matter

- When I am in conversation with a group of strangers, I can often guess which of them have a university degree—there is just something different in how they answer questions.
- The truth is that a very large percentage of university graduates spend most of their working life not working in the field that they actually studied.
- If you surveyed any group of executives you would find that they had a wide range of university degrees.

What do you gain from a university degree

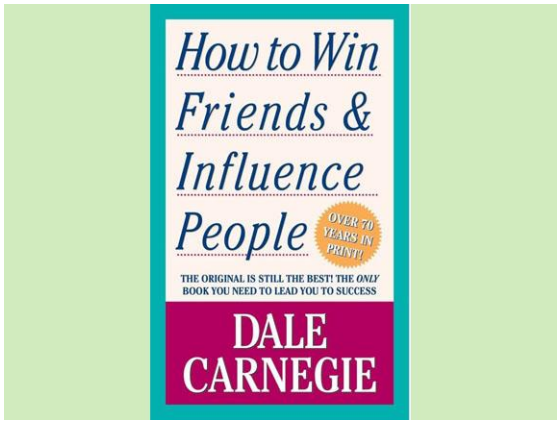
- In my opinion, there are two main things that any university degree will give you:
  - improved problem solving ability
  - experience in researching a topic, including the ability to use a 'library'.
- It does not matter what degree you obtain, you will learn how to break a problem down into manageable tasks, you may look for help in certain areas, you may isolate those tasks that you know you can research, and you will slowly chip away at the problem even if you have never faced such a problem before.
- It does not matter what background a business executive has, or the title of their university degree—if you give them a task, then there will be similarities in the way they approach each problem.
- On the other hand, it is my experience that people without tertiary education are more likely to respond to a new problem by either saying outright that they cannot do it, or they may struggle to break the problem down into solvable tasks (of course this is a massive generalisation).

Communication skills

University of NSW, Sydney

Introduction

- In my first year of university, way back in 1977, we had a lecturer tell us that our success as an engineer will be 20% due to our technical ability, and 80% due to our ability to communicate.
- I asked (of course I did) why the university doesn't teach us the 80%.
- We are tested on communication skills in our oral presentations (if any), but we were not (in 1977) taught much about communication skills.



How to Win Friends & Influence People

Just one of many reference documents

- That lecturer later had a word with me and suggested that if I were interested in the topic, I could read Dale Carnegie's book, *'How to Win Friends & Influence People'*.
- Back in 1977 there were few books like this, but today there are more than you would like to count.
- I read the book, and my assignment grades improved immediately, and I later became President of the university's civil engineering society (by popular vote).

Important lessons

The book's key lessons:

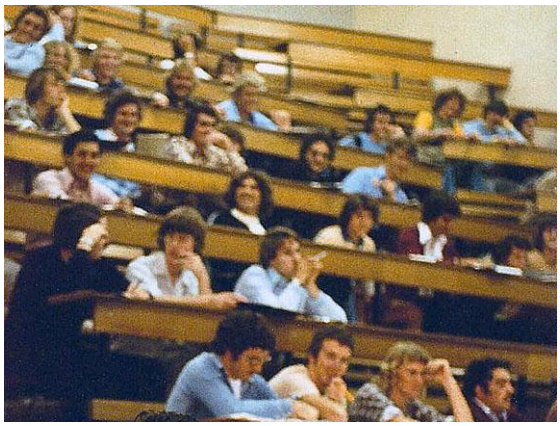
- Take the time to listen to others.
- Show an obvious interest in what people have to say, even if you disagree.
- Remember at least one personal thing about every person you meet; their birthday, their partner's name, their child's name, the suburb where they live.
- If you want someone to do something, then make them want to do it.
- Life is not all about YOU.

Top marks

Applying these lessons to university life

- If you want good grades, then make your lecturer want to give you good grades.
- If you are wrong, or you are about to be told that you are wrong, then try and get in first and declare yourself wrong.
- If you are going to make a mistake, then it is better that you make it while at a university, rather than during your career.
- If you are openly critical of yourself it can take the wind out of the sails of your critics, and you may even have some critics coming to your defence.

The importance or unimportance of lecture notes



My class mates, Uni of NSW, 1978

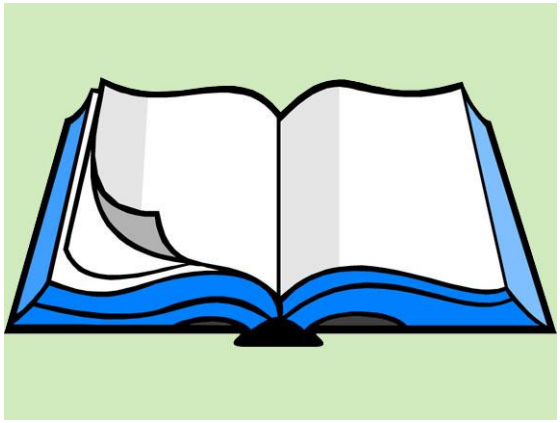
Introduction

- One thing that I believe all students over-estimate is their future use of their lecture notes.
- I was one of those students that tried hard to produce clear-to-read lecture notes that I could use over and over again.
- I did refer back to my lecture notes a few times in my career, but if I graduated today, and with today's Internet access, it would have been most unlikely for my lecture notes to have played any role in my career.

Classroom

Taking down lecture notes during a lecture

- Most students do their best to write down notes as fast as they can before the lecturer moves onto the next 'slide'.
- However, there are those students that insist that the lecturer progress only at a speed that would allow them to prepare detailed, multi-colour pen, lecture notes.
- During my time as a lecturer I was asked numerous times to pause while a few students finished writing down the lecture notes.



Lecture notes

My advice

- In regards to lecture notes, I have the following advice:
  - teach yourself to write along a straight, horizontal line while looking only at the lecture screen (i.e. not looking down every few seconds to make sure your hand is still 'on-the-line')
  - when you get home, rewrite the lecture notes with more care—not because they need to be rewritten, but because this process will help you to learn the lesson.

Home library

Disposing of your lecture notes

- I am sure there are many students that have no trouble disposing of their lecture notes, and their text books after they graduate.
- I stubbornly held onto my lecture notes for decades—always in the hope that one day they would be of use.
- I still hold onto those text books that relate directly to my career, but with Internet access, the value of such printed material declines year to year.

Preparing Assignments and Sitting for Exams

Introduction

Examination time

Introduction

- Ask yourself: *What is the purpose of an assignment or an exam?*
- Is it:
  - to get the correct answer; or
  - to demonstrate to the university that you understand the lessons, and that you have developed the skills to be a professional?
- Your task should be to prove that you understand what you are doing.

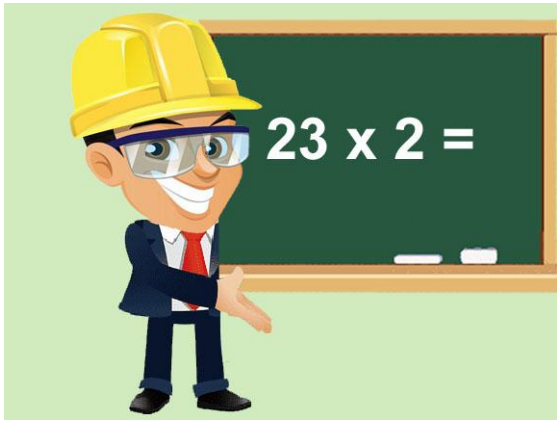
The answer

Getting the right answer

- If an exam question asked you to solve a complex mathematical problem, and your written answer consisted of just writing down the correct answer:

  ‘46’

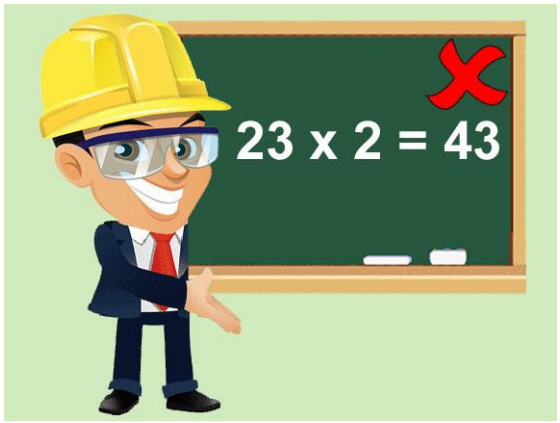
- Would you deserve full marks given that you gave the correct answer?
- Or, should you be given a reduced mark because you didn’t show how you were able to determine such an answer?



The question

Your ‘answer’ should reflect the purpose of the question

- If the purpose of the question was to get the correct answer, then you deserve full marks.
- If the purpose of the question was to demonstrate to the university that you understood the lessons, then your answer would have fallen short of these goals.
- Always focus on demonstrating your skills and your knowledge, not just your ability to get the correct answer.

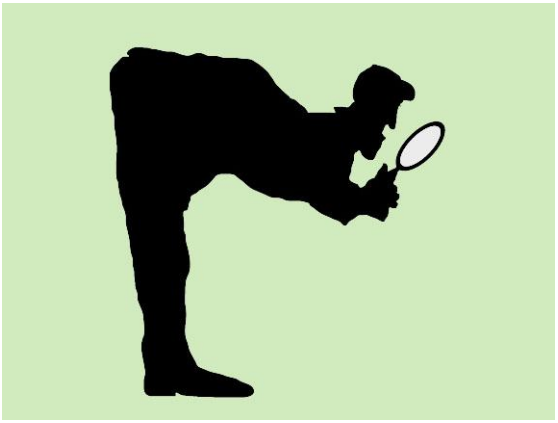


Wrong answer!

What if you make a mistake, or if you just cannot get an answer to the question?

- If you cannot solve the problem, and you write down nothing, then you deserve ‘nothing’.
- However, if you show your ‘workings’, and your method clearly demonstrates that you understand what you are doing, then you should get some marks.
- If you can see where you went wrong, and you add notes to your answer to show the examiner where you went wrong, then you deserve even higher marks.

Understanding what your 'task' really is



Look closely

Introduction

- It could be argued that in primary and secondary school, the aim is always to get the right answer; but in tertiary education, the aim expands to include demonstrating that you are a skilled problem solver.
- You need to demonstrate that:
  - you understand the task
  - you can follow the instructions
  - you use a logical approach
  - you understand how best to present your 'answer'.

Review the problem

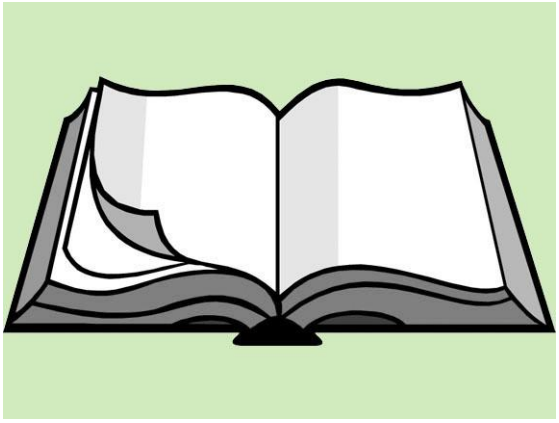
Reviewing the assignment task

- The first things that I would do for any assignment or exam question would be:
  - read the task
  - underline key words in the task
  - underline or circle the required output.
- When you present your 'answer', you need to make sure your 'workings' address each of the key words that you underlined in the original question.
- Then check that you delivered the required output.

Planning stage

Think about the outcome that you want to produce

- One of the most common mistakes that I witnessed students make was simply not to complete the stated task.
- An exam question may end with the following words: *'finally, present your answer in the form of a bar chart'.*
- What I would get is a number of students that would do all the hard work, get the correct answer, but never present the answer in the form of a bar chart.



Assignment layout

Think about the layout of your assignment

- If you accept that your 'client' is the person marking your exam, and you accept that your task is to demonstrate your skills, then this means the layout of your 'answer' now becomes very important.
- **Ask yourself:** How can I best show that:
  - I understand the task/question
  - I know how to approach the task
  - I know how to present my answer
  - I know how to present my answer in a way that is easy for someone to follow.

The layout of your assignment

Engineering student

Introduction

- If your 'client' is the person marking your assignment, which could be the lecturer, a tutor, or a PhD student working under the lecturer, then your aim should be:
  - to make the task of marking your assignment as easy as possible for the marker; and
  - if possible, make the task of marking your assignment enjoyable.
- Note: marking assignments is a really, really, really horrible task for a lecturer.

Grant Witheridge, Catch drain design assignment

Given that the actual catchment area is significantly less than the maximum allowable catchment area, the catch drain can be constructed at:

- a flatter gradient (S_{min} < 1.34%) limited by the maximum flow depth of 0.15m; or
- a steeper gradient (S_{max} > 1.34%) limited by the allowable velocity of 0.6m/s.

To determined **flattest** allowable gradient for this catch drain, first calculate the design 1 in 2-year flow rate at the end of the 50m long catch drain.

$Q = C\,I\,A/360 = (0.6 \times 135 \times 0.125)/360 = 0.028 m^3/s$

This design is based on an earth lining.

The minimum channel gradient (S_{min}) can be determined from Manning's equation:

$Q = 0.028 = (1/n).A.R^{2/3}.S^{1/2} = (1/0.04)(0.100)(0.094)^{2/3}.S^{1/2}$

$S_{min} = 0.29\%$

Equation taken from lecture notes of 13/06/25

The **steepest** longitudinal gradient of the catch drain can also be determined from Manning's equation (Equation A16 in Appendix A); however, in this case the drain will be flowing partially full with a flow top width (T) less than 1.0m, and the flow depth (y) less than 0.15m. *(Note, the drain would still be constructed with the same standard overall physical dimensions specified for all Type-A catch drains.)*

For a Type-A drain the numerical relationship between 'T' & 'y' is given in Table 4:

$y = 0.15\,T^2$

and the cross sectional area of flow (A) is given by (Table A30b, Appendix A):

$A = 0.67(T.y) = 0.1\,T^3 = Q/V = 0.028/0.6 = 0.0465 m^2$

Equation taken Table A30b, Appendix A of IECA, 2008

Therefore, the flow top width, T = 0.775m; the flow depth, y = 0.090m; and the hydraulic radius (R) can be determined from (Table A29b, Appendix A):

$$R = \frac{2T^2.y}{3T^2+8y^2} = \frac{2(0.775)^2 \times 0.090}{3(0.775)^2+8(0.090)^2} = 0.058m$$

Two-column layout

Suggested layout of pages

- You can make the task of marking your assignment 'less horrible' by:
  - having neat handwriting, or better still, typing your assignment
  - making it easy for a person to follow your logic/methods
  - dividing the page into two columns (3/4 & 1/4 or similar), then placing easy-to-follow notes in the narrow column to help explain your methods
  - finally, place your 'answer' in the narrow column.

Grant Witheridge, Catch drain design assignment

Given that the actual catchment area is significantly less than the maximum allowable catchment area, the catch drain can be constructed at:

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$$R = \frac{2T^2.y}{3T^2+8y^2} = \frac{2(0.775)^2 \times 0.090}{3(0.775)^2+8(0.090)^2} = 0.058m$$

The maximum catch drain slope is given by rearranging the Manning's equation:

$S_{max} = 100(V^2.n^2)/R^{4/3} = 100 \times (0.6^2 \times 0.04^2)/0.058^{4/3} = 2.57\%$

Say, 2.6 % given uncertainty of soil strength

Therefore, the Type-A catch drain can be constructed at any longitudinal gradient between 0.29% (maximum flow depth) and 2.57% (maximum flow velocity), and still provide the required hydraulic capacity for the 1 in 2 year design storm. It is noted that constructing the drain at the steeper gradient will result in a construction site with maximum drainage capacity.

Typical example of an earth-lined catch drain (Source: Catchments and Creeks Pty Ltd)

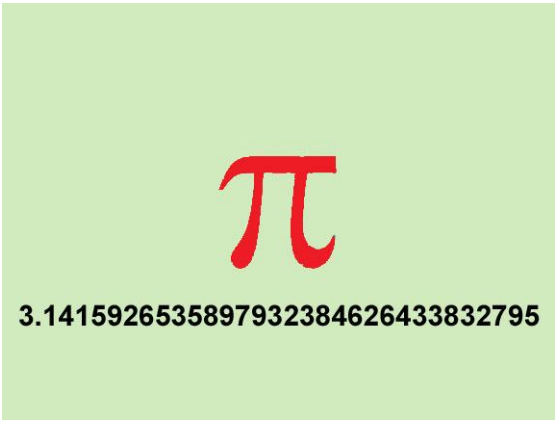
I am unsatisfied with this design.

I would like to consider a grass-lined catch drain, but this design does work for the site, so I will stay with this answer.

Page 4

Example of a two-column page layout that I adopted while still being a student

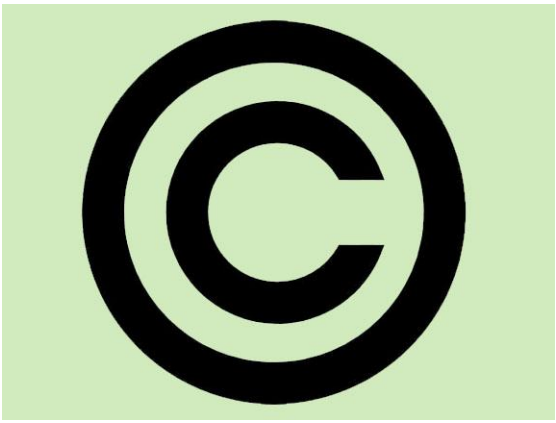
Presenting technical data within your assignment



Pi (π)

Rounding-off numbers

- In the school of engineering, most assignments involved some type of numerical analysis (mathematics).
- Numerical answers usually incorporate ‘fractions’, that may eventually need to be rounded-off to a significant value.
- Many lecturers mark you down if your answer has too many significant figures.
- My advice: Keep unadjusted values in the left column, and then place round-off values in the right column.



Copyright

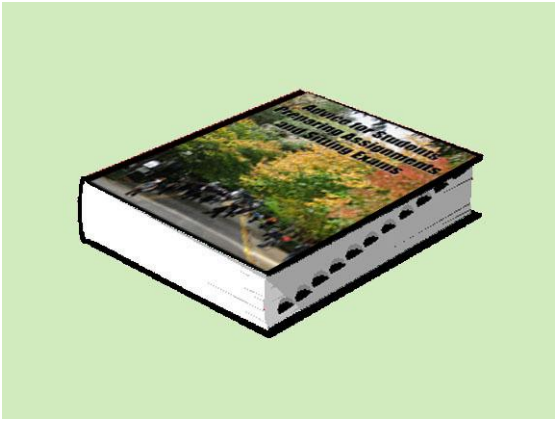
Use of copyright material

- The legal use of copyright material varies from country to country.
- In Australia, it is legal to use limited amounts (fair dealing) of copyright material for non-commercial, educational purposes.
- However, all students need to be aware that once they leave university, the legal use of copyright material changes.
- In Australia, copyright is automatic, it does not have to be declared on the material.

Examiner

Consider the likely marking process

- Some lecturers give clear guidance on the grading for each part of the assignment.
- My advice:
  - underline key words, or key tasks in the assignment question
  - assign likely grades to each of these key tasks
  - adjust your efforts according to the percentage grade each task will give.



Assignment

Presenting your final answer

- If it’s at all possible, try to incorporate text from the written assignment into your conclusions, or final answer.
- Make it clear that you are addressing each of the key tasks.
- If you feel that it is going to be useful, incorporate a text box after your final answer that includes your notes on any problems you had, and any concerns that you had for any part of your answer (i.e. critique your own answer—make it clear that you recognise the issues).

Problem solving

Finally, I would like to point out that when it comes to solving assignment problems, it is important to reflect on the idea that there are usually four types of solutions that can be explored when looking for ways to manage any problem, these solutions are:

(i) remove yourself from the problem

(ii) remove the problem from yourself

(iii) change the outcome of the problem

(iv) change your response to the problem.

These problem solving options can be universal in their application, for example, if you find yourself being confronted by an aggressor in a pub, then your options are:

1. Walk away and find another pub.
2. Have the aggressor removed from the pub.
3. Try to reason with your aggressor.
4. Verbally accept your aggressor's position. If the aggression continues, then don't reply with any opposing position; don't fuel the anger. If the aggressor strike first, then don't strike back—that only gives the aggressor reason to defend themselves, which escalates the fight.

The same method of problem solving can be applied to the management of problems with fellow students. For example, if you are involved in a group assignment, and someone is not 'playing' fair, then your options may be:

1. Approach the lecturer to get yourself onto another team.
2. Approach the lecturer to have the problem student placed on another team.
3. Find a way to incorporate that person's input such that it doesn't affect the final results, or have each student declare their position (their point of view) at the end of the assignment.
4. Choose not to care that someone on the team is not pulling their weight. Ultimately, that is not your problem. You should be focused on doing your 'bit' correctly, and not worrying about other people not making a fair contribution. In other words, change YOUR response, not theirs.

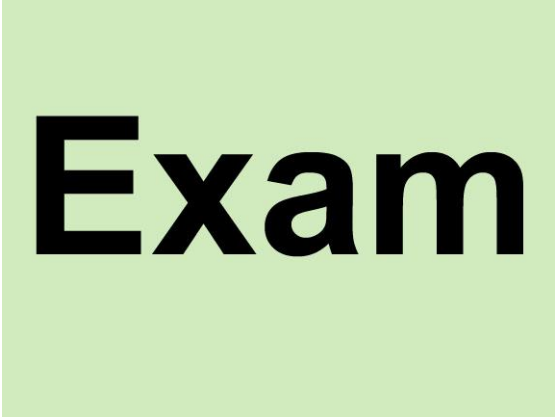
Similarly, if the assignment is presenting you with a 'problem' that needs to be solved, then your options may be:

1. Unfortunately, it is difficult to remove yourself from solving that particular problem, unless you change your class/subject/degree.
2. If the 'problem' is affecting other people, then you could also look for ways of removing the problem from these people. This could mean solving the problem, or moving the problem away from the people.
3. You can look for a way of allowing the problem to continue, but ensuring that the outcomes generated by the 'problem' no longer affect anyone.
4. You can change your lifestyle, or that of other people, such that you can live with the problem. In other words, change your response to the problem.

The outcomes may not always be realistic, but it is important to remember that the aim of such a problem solving process is to encourage lateral thinking. To force people to think of solutions that may not at first appear obvious, but eventually can turn into a solution that not only solves the problem, but also saves you stress, time or money.

Your assignment can start with you stating the four possible options, then your reasons for focusing on your final solution (i.e. show your 'marker' that you had an open mind, and that you thought about the problem before diving into your solution).

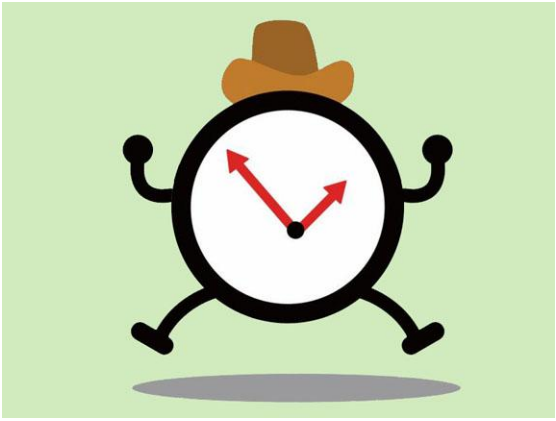
Advice to students sitting exams



Exam time

Introduction

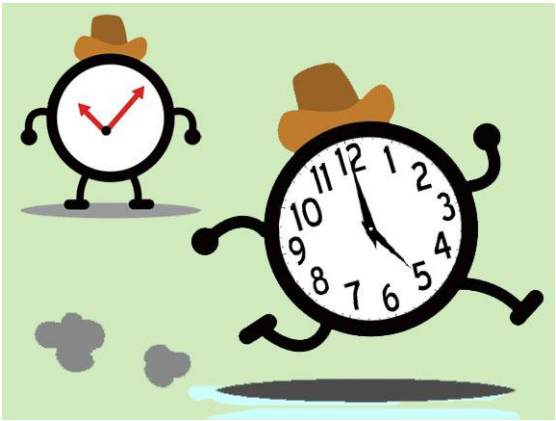
- As a professional in the real world, you should start any task by thinking about your approach, and planning your tasks.
- So, why not approach your exams in the same professional manner.
- It is a 'fool' that starts writing the moment the examination time commences.
- Stop, note the assigned marks for each question, read the questions carefully, and circle the outcomes that each question requires.



Time

Allocating time for each section

- If 'marks' have been assigned to each question, or section of the exam, then determine how much of the examination time should be allocated to each question based on its percentage of the total mark.
- Once you have used your allotted time for that question, then stop, and write a quick summary of how you would have finished your answer if you had more time.
- If you finish any question early, then move onto the next question.



Stop and think

What to do if you run out of time

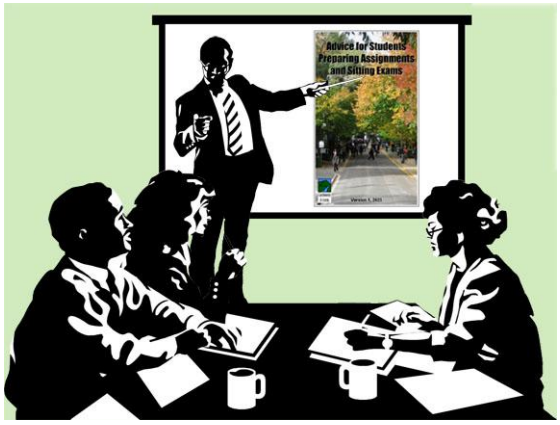
- If you finish the exam early, then go back and complete as many of the incomplete questions as you can—starting with the questions you are sure you can finish.
- If you find you are running out of time on every question, then you will have to sacrifice some of the final questions, and go back and finish those questions with the highest grading.
- I realise that your mind is running at full speed, but take the time to be 'smart' about your approach to the exam.

Acknowledge your mistakes

What to do if you think your answer is wrong

- If you make a mistake, then acknowledge it—make a note next to the mistake.
- Show the person marking your exam that you have the ability to recognise a mistake, and that you know how you should resolve the problem if you had more time.
- Remember: In most cases, your journey to get the right answer is more important than your arrival at that answer.

Oral presentations



Oral presentation

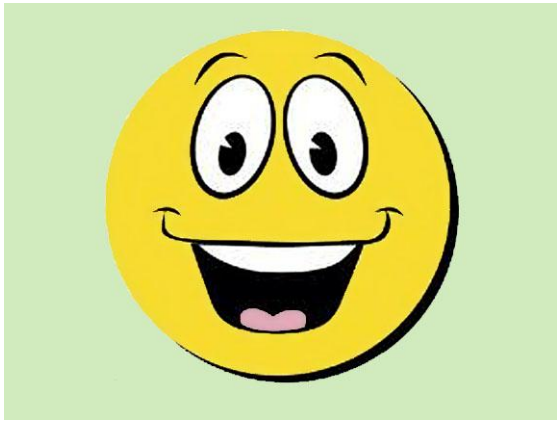
Introduction

- Oral presentations are just another form of an assignment or examination.
- Just like any assignment, the key is to:
  - highlight the key parts of the task
  - investigate the topic
  - plan how the presentation should occur
  - prepare the necessary props.

Don't read from your notes

Don't read from notes

- If at all possible, **don't** read from a set of notes during your presentation.
- If you need to have notes (which are a good idea), then the notes should consist of a list of key words.
- Each of these key words (or diagrams) should be able to remind you of a particular talking point.
- If your PowerPoint slides contain text (sentences) then **don't** read out these sentences, let the audience do that.



Happy face

The use of humour

- If you are a naturally funny person, if you are known for your 'one-liners', then show your audience your funny side.
- However, nothing fails more consistently than a non-funny person trying to tell a joke—just **don't** do it.
- Focus on what you are good at doing, rather than what other people are good at doing—the talk will flow much more smoothly if you stay true to who you are, rather than who you want to sound like.

Your talk

Layout of the talk

- Most talks follow a common formula:
  - tell the audience what you are going to talk about
  - present your discussion
  - then quickly summarise the key points.
- It is OK to stop talking for a few seconds and gather your thoughts—it may seem like minutes to you, but it is a common thing for people to do—just look down at your notes, spot the next key word, then continue your talk.

Helping fellow students

Fellow students

Introduction

- In your future professional career you are likely to be spending most of your time working with others on a common goal.
- You may feel that you are in competition with your fellow workers for the next promotion, but you still need to work effectively with these people.
- The same applies to your time at university.

Teaching others to help yourself

The best way to learn a subject is to teach someone else the subject

- One of the best ways to learn a subject is to help other people to learn the subject.
- The more you help others, the more you help yourself.
- Don't hide your good work from others—become a known source of good information and advice.
- For the nine years that I was a student, all of my work was open-book for anyone to observe and copy.

Learning from fellow students

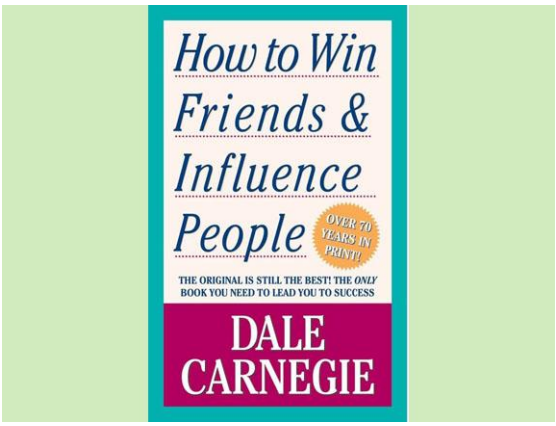
Learning from a fellow student is not cheating

- During my undergraduate years a large group of us were called into the lecturer's office for a 'talking-to'.
- The lecturer was very upset that all of our assignments looked the same—it looked like we were all copying from one person.
- I explained to the lecturer that (yes, I was rather outspoken at university):
  - of course all of our assignments look similar, that is because we had all worked together, teaching each other, we even got together one evening and went through the assignment—with each of us making a contribution.
- The point is; you can learn from the lecturer or tutor, from a library, or a relative that happens to know the subject, but the university somehow believes that it is wrong to learn from a fellow student—that is RUBBISH!
- Of course we should be able to learn from our fellow students, and of course that is going to result in some degree of similarity in your assignment answers.

Isn't this obvious?

Communication and Human Interaction Skills

Communication skills



Dale Carnegie

Introduction

- This chapter is based on the work of Dale Carnegie:

  'How to Win Friends and Influence People'

- This book represents one of the first (1936) 'self-help' books, but the advice is still relevant today.
- The publication is also available in various modernised and original audio books.

Don't

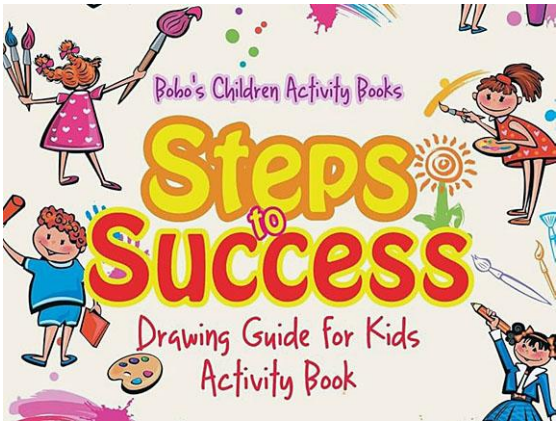
Principle 1

- Don't criticise, condemn or complain.
- This is obviously a very hard rule for university students to accept.
- By its very nature, university life is deeply entrenched in the active debate of ideas, which leads to criticism and complaints, but it is not so much about the action of these words, but rather the fire behind their delivery.
- It is fine to say someone is wrong, but don't incorporate hatred into your speech.

Appreciate

Principle 2

- Give honest and sincere appreciation.
- It is important for you to come to the realisation that YOUR value to society is not devalued simply because you expressed appreciation for others.
- Helping others to stand tall will never make you look small.
- Please don't approach university life with the attitude that you are in competition with all the other students.

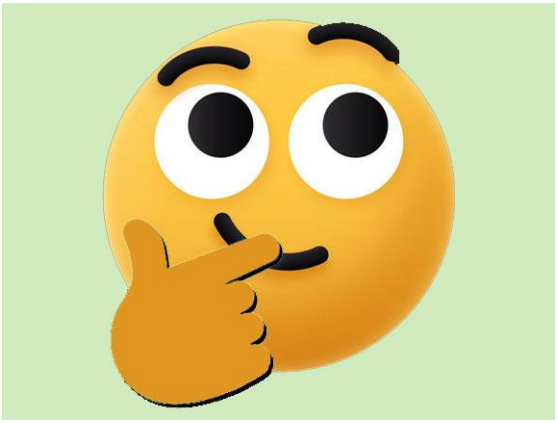


Encourage

Principle 3

- Arouse in the other person an eager want.
- You will be far more successful in your life if you can learn how to get people to want to do a task, rather than climbing to a position where you are able to tell people what to do.

Communication skills



Show interest

Principle 4

- Become genuinely interested in other people.
- A successful communicator will learn at least one thing about each person they meet, and will then use that knowledge to build, in partnership with that person, a common interest in that topic.

Smile

Principle 5

- Smile.
- Good communication starts by greeting people when you see them, even if the greeting is not returned.
- Never forget how much your face is able to communicate your feelings and attitudes to others.

Remember names

Principle 6

- Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
- A successful communicator will learn at least one thing about each person they meet, including their name!

Listen

Principle 7

- Be a good listener, and encourage others to talk about themselves.
- When you meet someone, run a competition with yourself testing how long you can keep quiet, before you need to answer the first question.
- One tip is to challenge yourself to only respond to questions, and not interject just because you think of something that you would like to add to the conversation.

Communication skills

Lift the curtain on a good conversation

Keep the communication channels open

Show restraint and a calm attitude

Strive to be the better person

Principle 8

- Focus on the other person's interest.

Principle 9

- Make the other person feel important.

Principle 10

- End arguments by not arguing.

Principle 11

- Respect the other person's opinions.

Principle 12

- If you are wrong, admit it.

Principle 13

- Begin in a friendly way.

Principle 14

- Get the other person saying: 'yes'.

Principle 15

- Let the other person dominate the talking.

Principle 16

- Let the other person feel it is their idea.

Principle 17

- See the other person's point of view.

Principle 18

- Show empathy towards the other person's ideas and desires.

Principle 19

- Appeal to the nobler motives.

Principle 20

- Dramatise your ideas.

Principle 21

- Throw down a challenge.

Principle 22

- Begin with praise and honest appreciation.

Principle 23

- Talk about your own mistakes.

Principle 24

- Ask questions instead of giving orders.

Principle 25

- Let the other person save face.

Principle 26

- Praise the slightest improvement.

Principle 27

- Help the other person retain their pride.

Principle 28

- Make the other person happy about doing the thing you suggest.

Dealing with difficult people

Angry person

Introduction

- To deal effectively with people, it is important to treat all people with courtesy and respect.
- There should be a consistent approach to how you interact with people, which demonstrates your sincere and fair treatment of all people.

Be professional

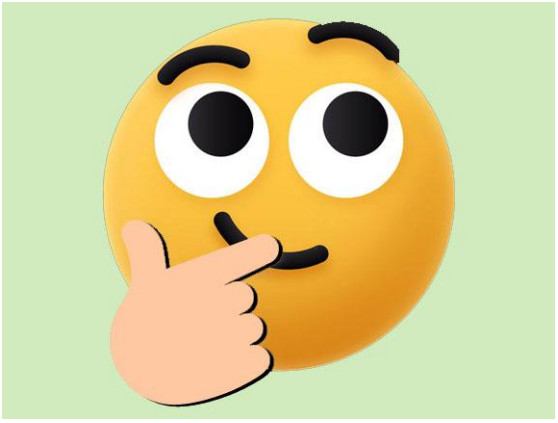
Step 1: Maintain a friendly and professional manner

- Do not argue with an angry person.
- Show an interest in the person's concerns, even if those concerns are aimed directly at yourself.
- Nothing can take the 'wind' out of a lecturer's anger more quickly than you, a student, demonstrating to the lecturer how a professional should behave.
- Start practising the role of being a professional.

Stay calm, and listen

Step 2: Be the person that listens, not the person that returns fire

- Hear the person's comments in full before you respond.
- Avoid trying to correct a person as they speak.
- Most people feel better once they have fully expressed their feelings—and wouldn't you prefer to deal with a person that is now feeling better, rather than one that is still venting.



Acknowledge the problem

Step 3: Acknowledge that a problem exists

- If you are wrong then admit it.
- If you are not wrong, then hold your tongue.
- If the person is wrong about who is to blame, but correct in the fact that a problem exists, then focus on acknowledging that the problem needs to be solved.
- Note: sometimes, taking the blame for something you didn't do can work in your favour.