

Academic Skills

Who are Inspiring Choices?

We support young people as they make decisions about their future education and career.

What we do:

- Run activities in schools and colleges
- Work with young people aged 15 and above
- Opportunities to consider future education options and how to achieve these
- 1 to 1 support
- Organise university campus visits



Aims of the session

- What academic skills are
- How you are assessed at higher education
- Research skills
- How to write academically



Academic Skills

Academic skills are the necessary skills for a student to succeed in higher education. They allow you to study, recall and apply information effectively.

- Time management
- Communication skills
- Research skills
- Academic writing
- Proofreading and editing
- Active listening
- Critical thinking



These are all
valuable skills for
employment too!

Critical thinking

This skill is one of the most important skills to utilize whilst studying at university. Showing critical thinking in your writing gets you the highest marks.

Definition:

The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a conclusion or judgment.

In other words:

From looking at the research, can you evaluate what it means in terms of the essay question you're answering.

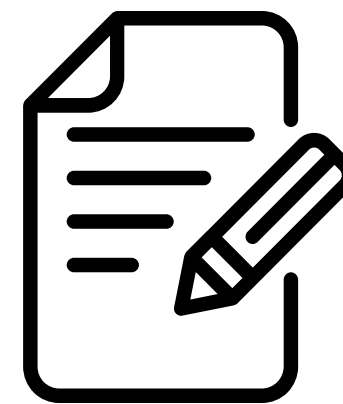
We will be looking at an example later on...

How are you assessed?

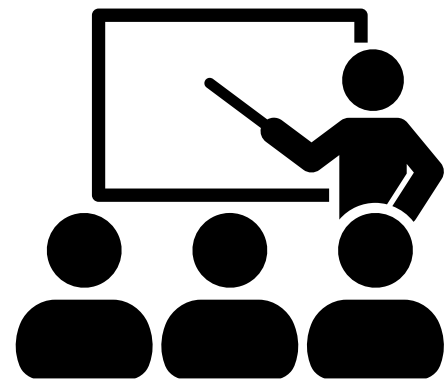
You will be assessed differently based on your chosen institution and course, but these are a few examples:



Assessed essays



Written exams



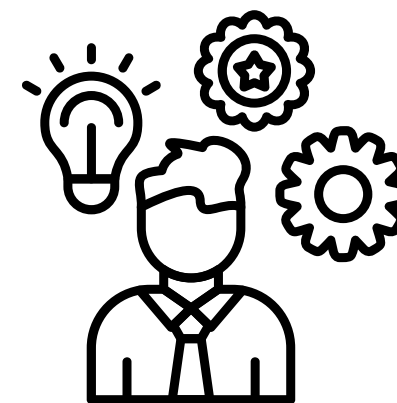
Presentations



Group projects



Coursework



Practicals

Research Skills

For any work during university, you need **research skills**.

Research is the creation of new **knowledge** or the use of existing knowledge. The knowledge, which you gain through research, can be used to further your **understanding** and **generate** your own **new ideas**.

Secondary research → making use of data collected by others; this could be from books, journal articles, and studies.

Primary research → finding and gathering the information yourself through surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc. to answer new research questions.

Introduction to research sites

There are many different research sites on the internet. The sites listed below all can be used for different kinds of research. See if you can match the research site title to the description.

Science.gov

Google Scholar

ResearchGate

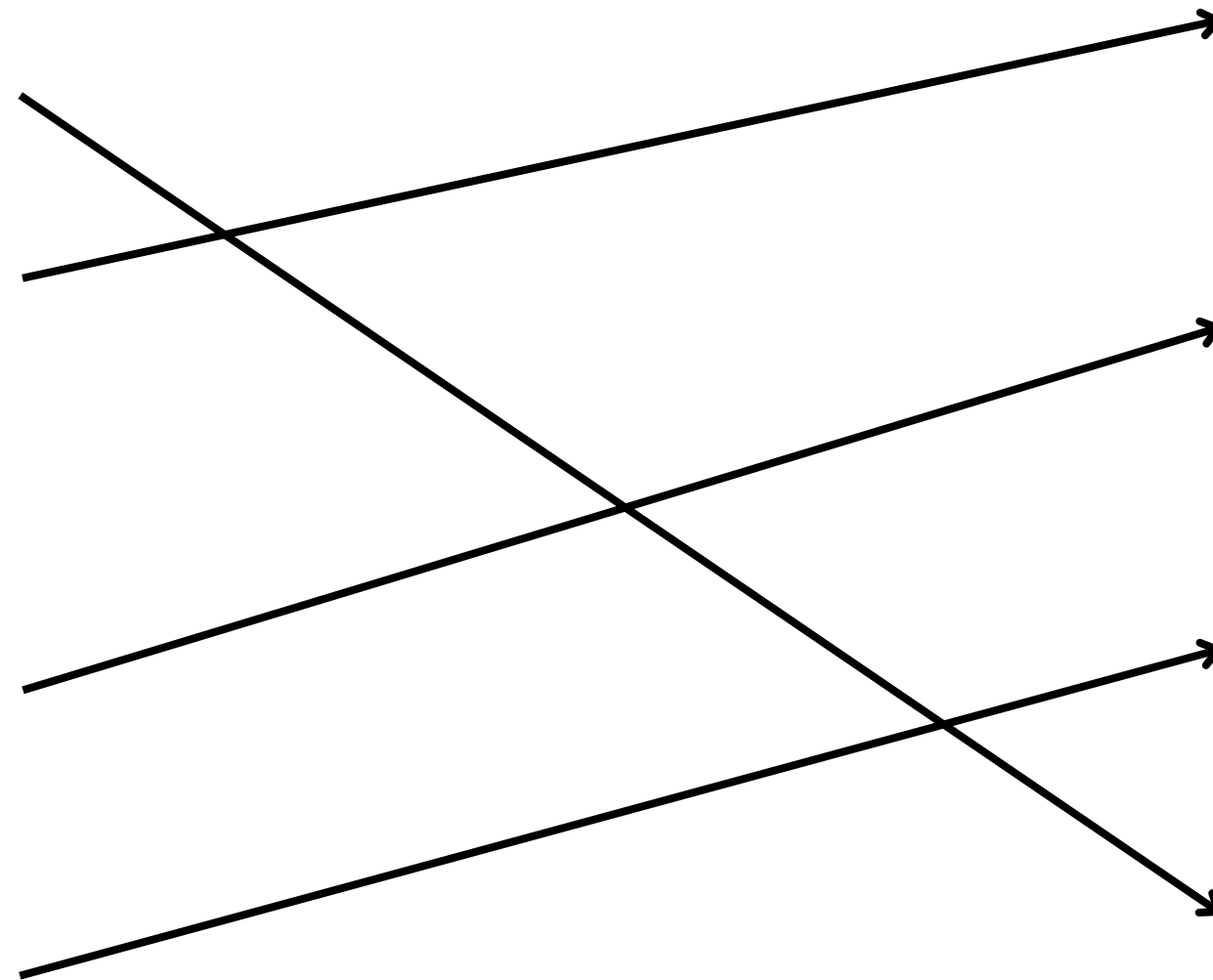
Jstor

A simple way to search for a wide range of scholarly literature

Access a range of scientific information and research.

A digital library of academic journals and books.

An academic social network to connect and share scientific research.



How do you start research?

When starting secondary research, there are many places you can go to find relevant books, articles and studies. **Can you think of any?**

Research sites: an online store of books, journals, articles, etc. for researchers to use and share their own work.

Reading lists: lists that are created by your lecturer to introduce you to a topic, usually split into essential reading and non-essential for further reading.

Online Library: all universities have an online library that students can access for free.

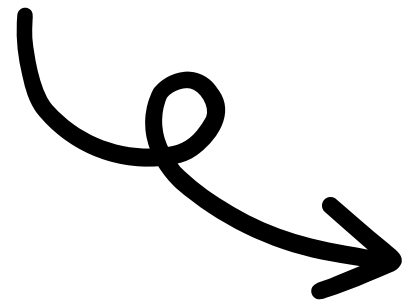
Identifying key themes

It's important to identify **key words** or **themes** at University. It will help you find relevant content when searching through libraries or research sites and answer **essay questions** well.

Identify the key themes in this essay question:

**Modern History
example:**

Which would you say posed the **greatest challenge** to Communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe: the **Hungarian uprising**, the Prague Spring or the Solidarity movement? **Explain your choice.**



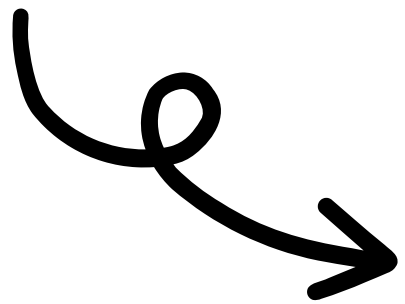
- This is a comparative analysis.
- You need to think about the impact of each movement.
- You need to consider the wider context across Europe.

Identifying key themes

Identify the key themes in this essay question:

**Sports Coaching
example:**

How can the theories and associated behaviours covered in this week's leadership themed lecture, help to inform the coach's leadership and that of their athletes?



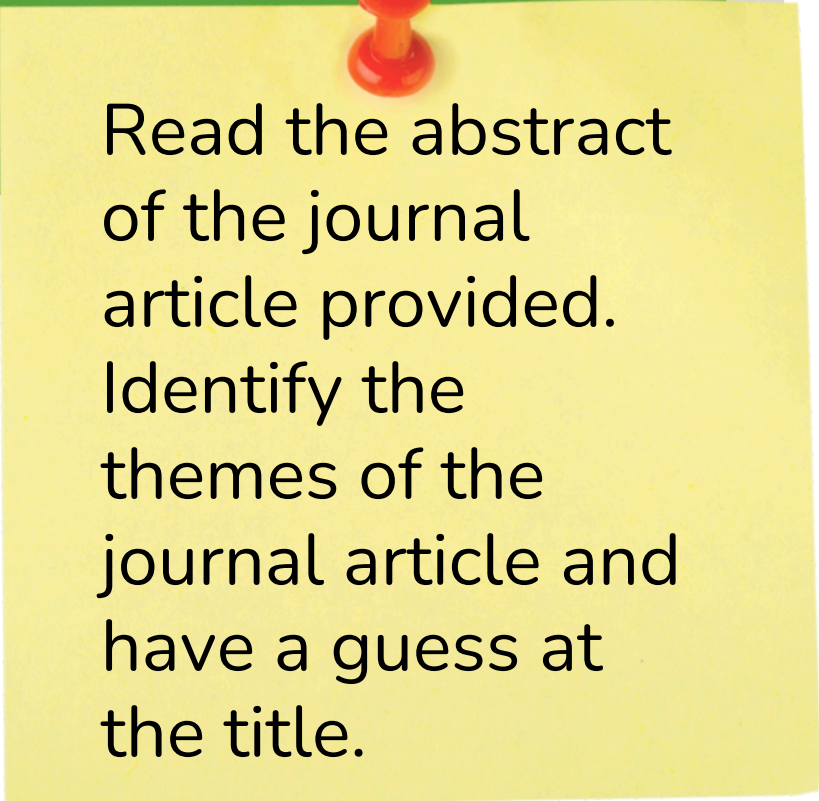
- You need to identify what theories you want to focus on first.
- Think about how this will influence their athletes.
- Think about which sport you want to focus on and how this will affect the leadership style of the coach.

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Activity!

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What is the title?

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Read the abstract
of the journal
article provided.
Identify the
themes of the
journal article and
have a guess at
the title.

What is the title? - Answer

Music Therapy in the Treatment of Dementia

Moreno-Morales, C., Calero, R., Moreno-Morales, P. and Pintado, C., 2020. Music therapy in the treatment of dementia: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Frontiers in medicine, 7, p.160.



Rather than reading a whole journal article, reading an articles **abstract** and finding the **key themes** is a useful skill to have when researching a specific topic.

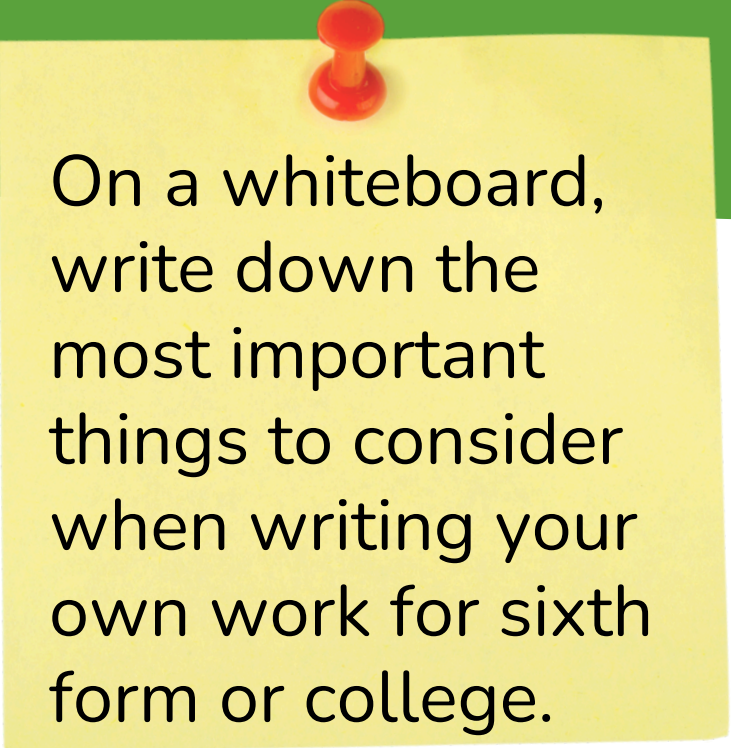
It'll save you a lot of time!

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Activity!

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What makes a good piece of writing?

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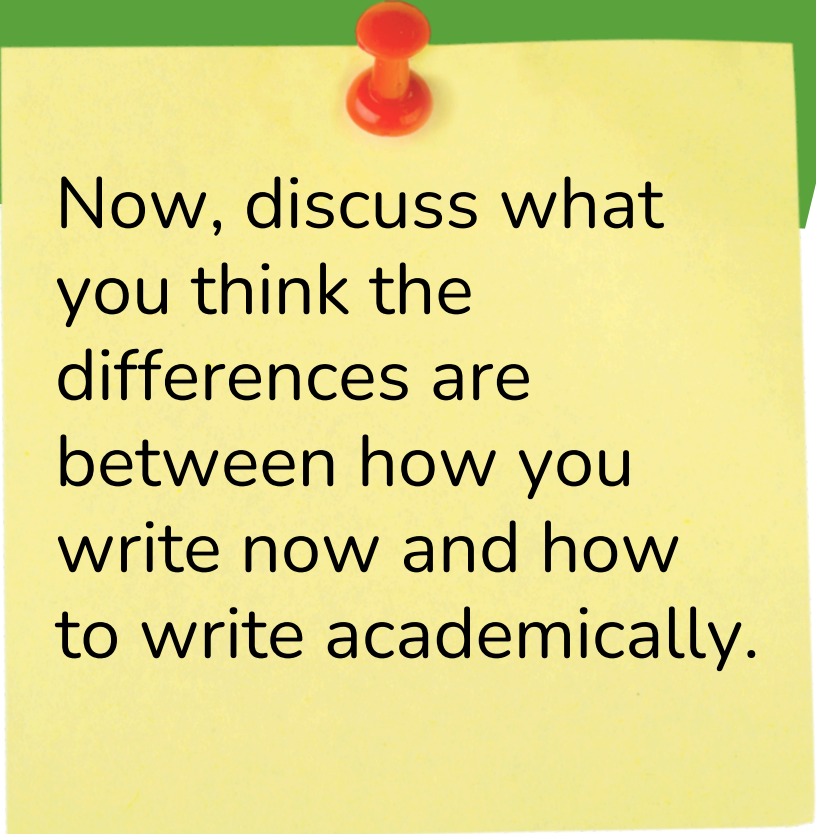
On a whiteboard,
write down the
most important
things to consider
when writing your
own work for sixth
form or college.

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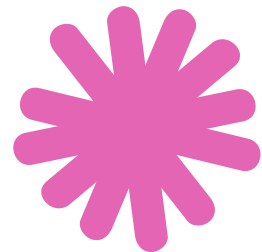
What makes a good piece of writing?

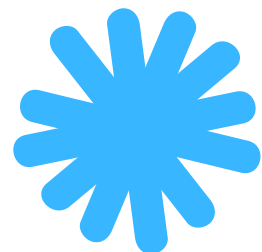
A yellow, rectangular sticky note with a red pushpin at the top center, containing a paragraph of text.

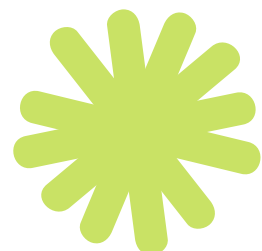
Now, discuss what you think the differences are between how you write now and how to write academically.

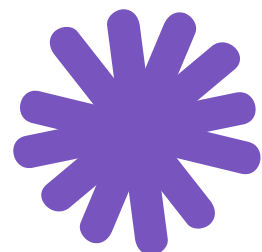
Academic Writing

Academic writing is an important part of university and something students are expected to master. You need to include:

 **Clear structure** – plan out what you’re going to write and what your argument is.

 **Evidence** – make sure to have quotes and references to back up your argument.

 **Critical thinking** – analysing and evaluating your sources to develop a strong argument. Question and compare your research.

 **Formal writing** – use formal language and subject-specific terms.

Proofreading and editing

Proofreading and editing are also a big part of academic writing! Don't underestimate their importance.

- Identify any spelling or grammatical errors.
- Ensure your argument is clear and identify where to develop it further.
- Improves your critical thinking skills.



Universities strongly recommend that you declare if you use any AI software for proofreading and editing.

Be careful not to become too reliant on AI though!

Referencing

Referencing is when you acknowledge a source which you have used in your work to support your argument.



The referencing system you use will depend on the subject your studying and institution.

For example, Archaeology usually uses **Harvard**, which looks like:

Last Name, F. N. (Year). Title. Edition. Editor Last Name, E. F. N. (Ed.). City : Publisher.

Or Bloggs, J. (2025). *The Book of Inspiring Choices*. 1st ed. Smith, W. (Ed.) York: Inspiring Choices.

Using Artificial intelligence (AI)

Acceptable

- Initial research into a topic, idea, or concept to gain an overview.
- Sections of text can be pasted into a AI tool and be asked to summarise the content.
- Getting ideas on how to present work.
- Formatting a reference list.

Unacceptable

- Students generating an entire assignment and passing it off as their own work.
- Submitting content generated by AI without correctly presented acknowledgement and citation of the source(s).

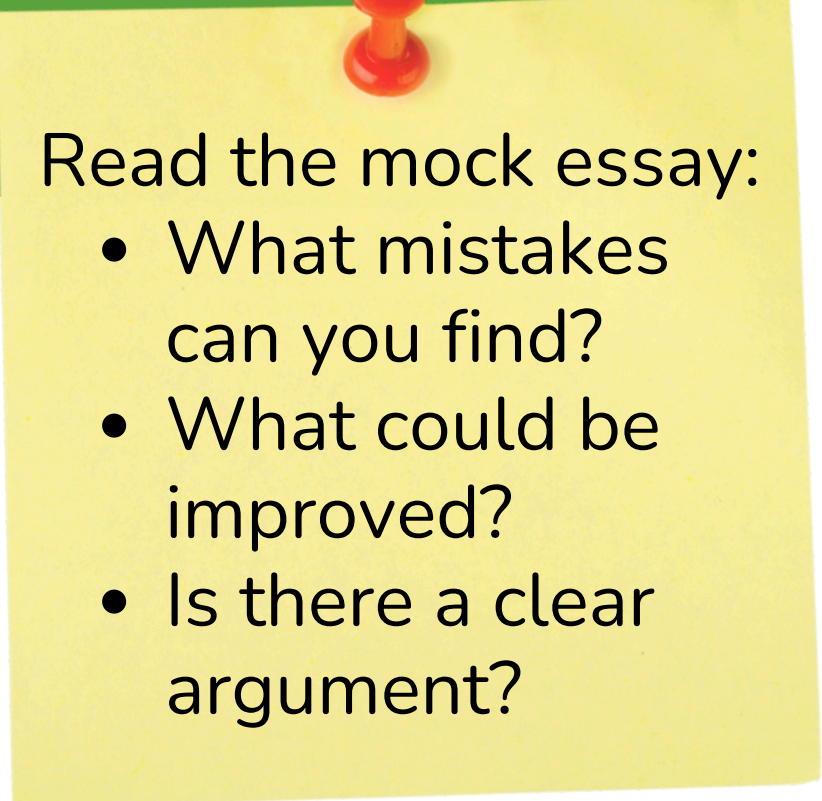
Using AI irresponsibly could result in academic misconduct - you could fail a class or even have your studies terminated completely!

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Activity!

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Time to edit!

A yellow rectangular sticky note with a red pushpin at the top center, containing a list of three bullet points.

Read the mock essay:

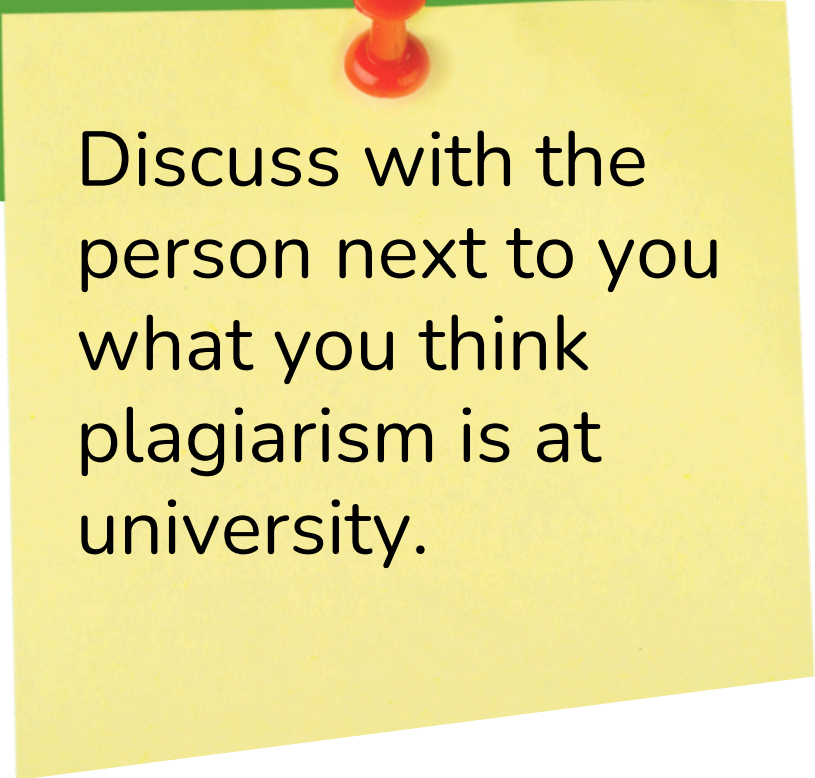
- What mistakes can you find?
- What could be improved?
- Is there a clear argument?

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Activity!

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What is plagiarism?

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Discuss with the
person next to you
what you think
plagiarism is at
university.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when you copy someone's work or use their ideas without properly referencing it.

- Your chosen institution will have their own guide on what is considered plagiarism.
- Universities take this very seriously – it could result in academic misconduct.
- Learn how and when to properly cite or reference to avoid plagiarism.
- Universities will have plagiarism checkers for you to put your work through before submission.



Primary Research: Qualitative vs Quantitative

Qualitative

- Answers why questions
- Observations, words and symbols
- Observe and interpret

Interviews, focus groups,
and observations.

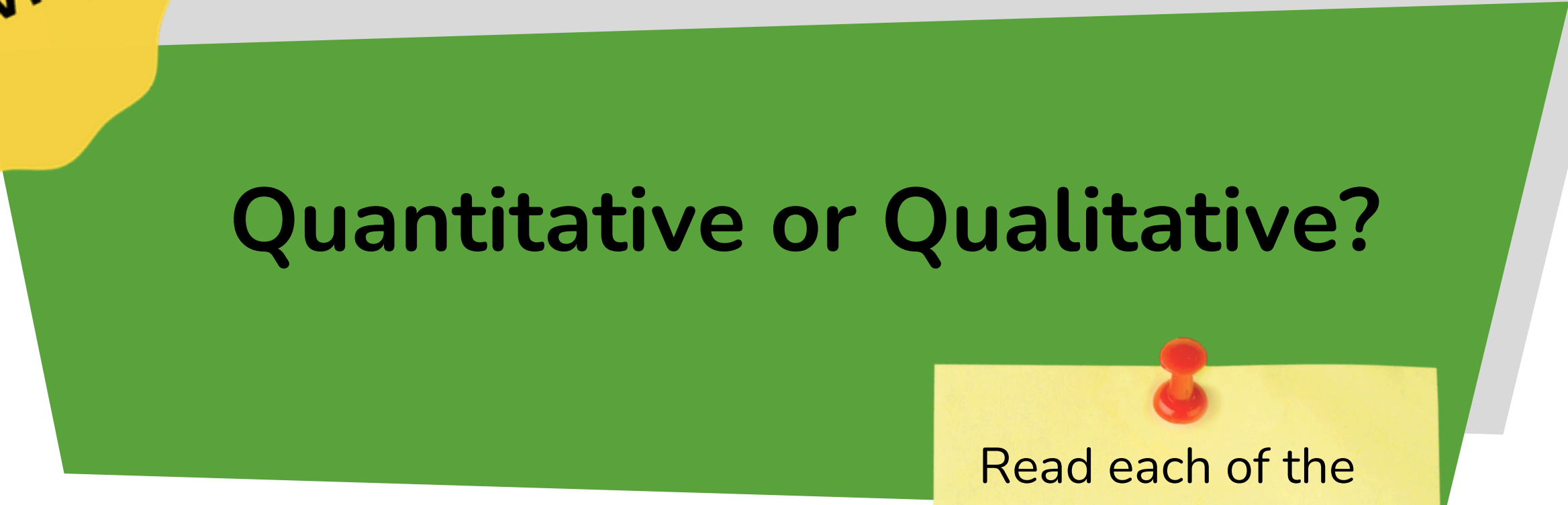
Quantitative

- Answers how much/ many questions
- Numbers and stats
- Measure and test

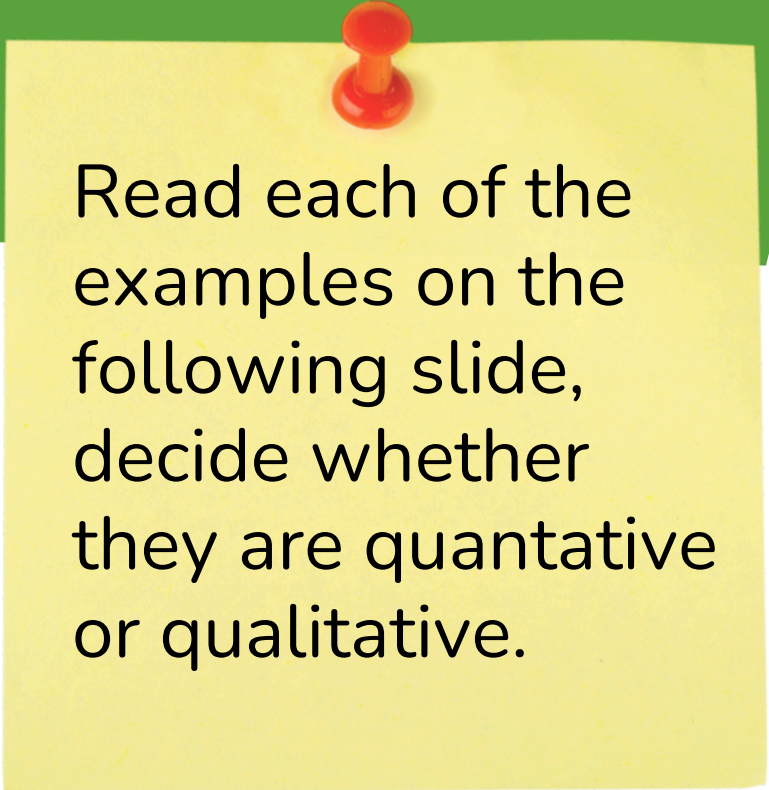
Surveys and experiments.

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Quantitative or Qualitative?

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Read each of the
examples on the
following slide,
decide whether
they are quantative
or qualitative.

Is it quantitative or qualitative?

Qualitative

Robin conducts a one-to-one interview with an author to find out about why they wrote their book.

Quantitative

Charlie creates a survey to ask 100 people how many times a week they use the bus.

Qualitative

Rowan runs a focus group to gather feedback on the launch of their new website.

Top tips

- Get used to drafting and redrafting.
- There are guides online for commonly used academic phrases and words.
- Ask someone to read over your work before submitting.
- Take advantage of your tutors and ask for clear feedback.



Postcard Feedback

- Your feedback is anonymous (no need to write your name) and helps us to develop and improve our sessions.
- If you can't think of any improvements, please write 'nothing' for question one.
- There are no right or wrong answers, please answer honestly about what you think.
- If there are any questions you really don't want to answer, it is okay to leave it blank.
- If you have any questions, please ask us.

What others have said:

“I enjoyed learning about the different research materials and how uni libraries operate.”

Find out more

Check out our website, and follow us on social media!



inspiring-choices.co.uk



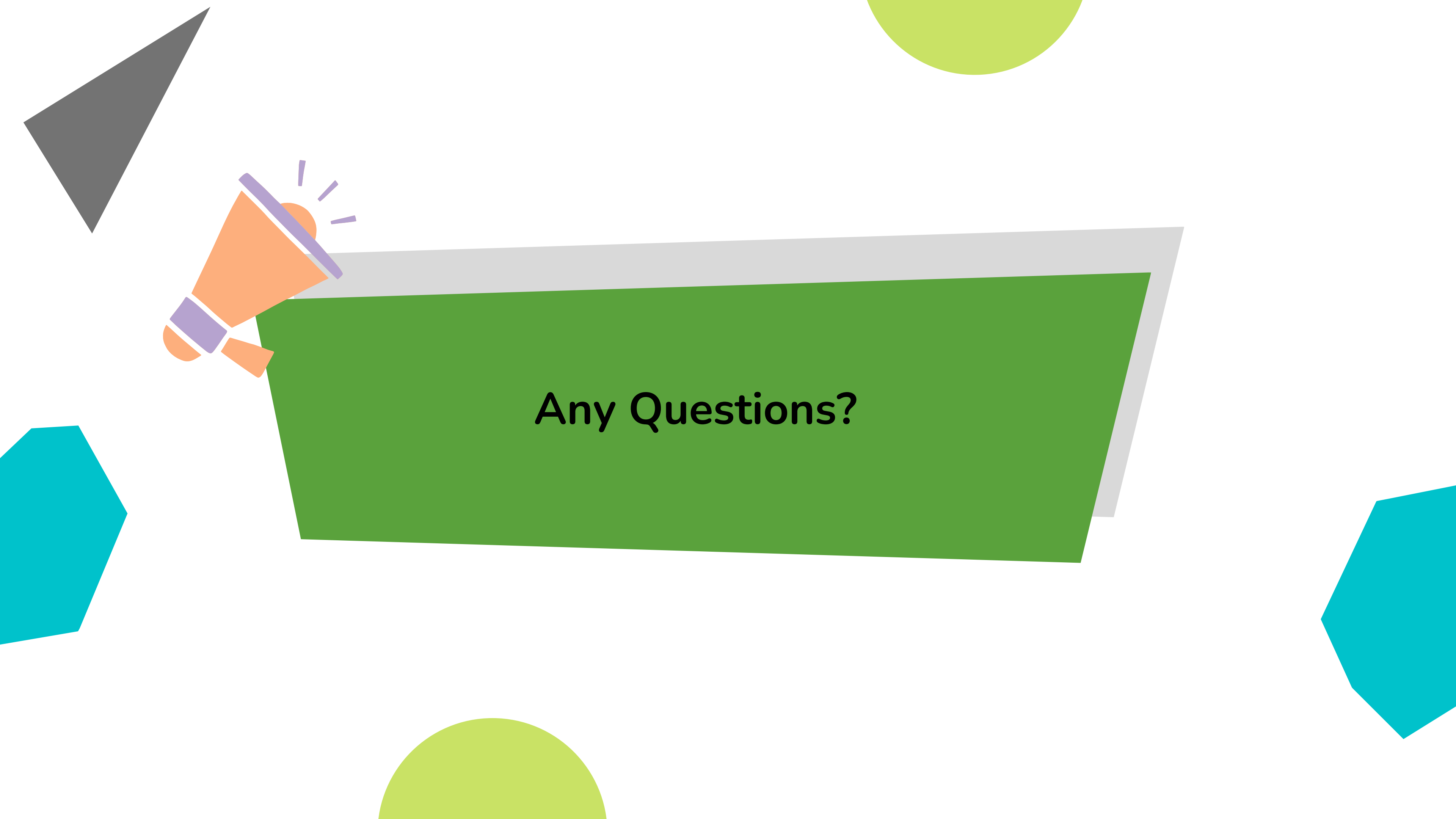
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Any Questions?