Concise guidelines on academic writing

(Always check your module handbook and the assignment brief or ask your lecturer if in doubt, as assignments can vary widely)

(1) **Introductions** can make your writing clearer by:
- interpreting the assignment title
- establishing the importance of the topic and focusing in on the issue
- giving some background or context
- presenting the intention of the writer
- defining the terms used
- mapping out the assignment – making the structure explicit to the reader

(2) **Conclusions** can be used to:
- summarise the ‘answer’ to the question, showing how it has been answered
- spell out the writer’s point of view
- point out the limitations of the scope of the assignment
- draw out the implications of the discussion, analysis etc.

(3) **Signposting language** is useful to:
- orientate the reader to the content and approach you have taken
- make the structure of your argument or investigation explicit
- make clear how sentences/paragraphs/sections fit together
- make the communication of complex ideas clearer

See [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/) for a bank of phrases to use for signalling and signposting in your writing, and [http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm](http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm) Select ‘paragraphs’ from the left-hand menu and ‘signalling’ from the tab at the top

(4) **Paragraphing** is crucial to clarity and effective organisation of ideas. Paragraphs help your reader because as a general rule, each paragraph contains one main idea, which is expanded, supported and developed.

(5) **Referencing** is compulsory for:
- all use of other people’s work, whether as quotations, summaries, paraphrases
- quotations – which need to be indicated with speech marks and the page reference given
- diagrams, graphics, maps, images and statistics you have used or cited in your work
- internet sources as well as books, articles etc.
Academic Style involves:

- using language which is precise and concise
- using technical terms which relate to your subject of study
- supporting your ideas with evidence
- referencing information which comes from your reading
- avoiding language which is emotive or subjective
- avoiding slang expressions and colloquialisms
- avoiding contractions
- avoiding generalisations