

SUPER  
QUICK  
SKILLS

# Super Quick Advice

Tried and tested tips from  
the Super Quick Skills authors



 Sage

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# Take great notes

tips from **Mal Leicester**  
and **Denise Taylor**

## **Why is note-taking an important skill for students to master?**

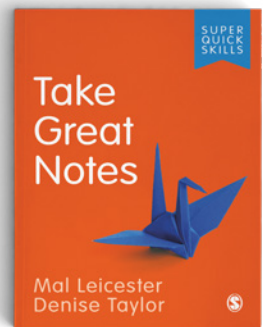
Great notes help you to understand, organise, and remember your studies, produce better assignments, and do efficient revision.

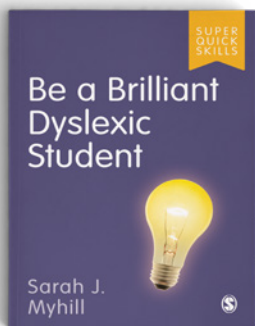
## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

The most common mistake is not redoing your notes each time you take some. When you return to your notes you need to find they are clear, easy to read, and organised. Another mistake is not recording the source of the notes – for example, the lecture title or the details of the bookmark or paper being referred to.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve how they take notes?**

The top tip is to remember three purposes of your note-taking. You need to produce a record of your learning, good material for your assignments, and an aid memoir for your revision.





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# Be a brilliant dyslexic student

tips from **Sarah Myhill**

## **Why is it important for dyslexic students to make the most of their strengths?**

Students with dyslexia will all have strengths but often due to difficulties with academic study growing up they don't acknowledge these strengths. Think about what you're good at, what you enjoy and see if you can use your strengths to help with tasks that you find more difficult. Work smart.

## **What's the most common mistake dyslexic students make when studying?**

Not breaking down overwhelming academic tasks, like reading load and writing assignments, into small manageable chunks. Use physical aids and colour where possible, such as small post-it notes, highlighters, and essay planners. Colour is your friend.

## **What top tip would you give to dyslexic students when it comes to studying?**

Get the 'big picture' or 'preview' of your reading, writing, organising of your life or any task before going into the detail. For example:

- Flick through and get the big picture of a whole book – look at its content page, introduction, and conclusion – before reading in more detail.
- Plan the outline of your essay and paragraphs before writing in more detail.
- Get a large wall planner for the whole year and attach it to your wall to work in combination with your phone and/or laptop.

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# Think critically

## tips from Tom Chatfield

### **Why is critical thinking an important skill for students to master?**

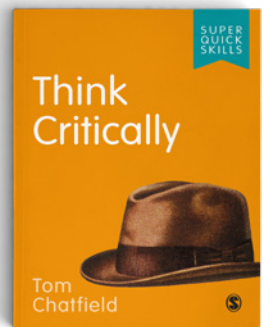
We're constantly deluged by ideas and information, today, as well as by other people's arguments and beliefs. Critical thinking is vital in this context – because it offers tools for evaluating claims, seeing through bad arguments, and building up our own understanding with confidence.

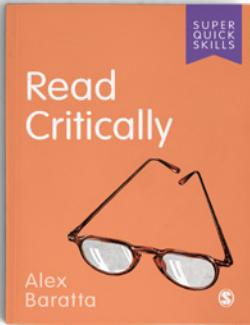
### **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

It's easy to feel rushed and pressured by the sheer weight of information that's out there – and to assume that you should always be working through mountains of material, fast. You can end up feeling overwhelmed, distracted, and bewildered at the same time.

### **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their critical thinking?**

Slow down. Engage with work selectively and strategically. Don't try to read everything: focus on understanding over information. Try to create a calm, uncluttered workspace – and some calm, uncluttered time in each day when you're not multitasking and can think clearly.





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# Read critically

## tips from Alex Baratta

### **Why is critical reading an important skill for students to master?**

Most of the points awarded to your assessments are usually based on how well you analyse the subject you're discussing, and analysis is all about being critical.

### **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Students spend too much time on their assessments simply referring to, if not cutting and pasting, lecture notes/class handouts/the lecturer's words – this should be used as a springboard to develop your own argument. In short, telling us what you've already been told in class does not show criticality; telling the reader what you think about what you've been told or read does.

### **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their critical reading?**

Whatever aspect(s) of the text seems most important to you, from a paragraph to a single sentence, make a note of this and then ask yourself this basic question: *what does this mean to me?* That's the starting point for being critical.





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# Plan your essay

tips from  
**Phillip C. Shon**

## **Why is essay planning an important skill for students to master?**

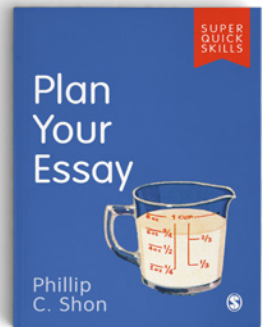
Students often struggle unnecessarily while writing papers. Before you write anything, you should have a clear idea of the structure, argument, and an outline of what you'll write in your paper – plan in advance.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Merely repeating the claims of others, thereby summarizing the work of others. You should be able to articulate a point of critique that leads to the warrant behind a claim you're putting forth in your papers.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their essay planning?**

I'd say you should learn how to read social science texts and emulate the argumentative structure of the readings you have found most persuasive and compelling. You should rehearse your writing by reading through sound arguments and plausible claims.





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# Plan your dissertation

tips from

**Charlotte Brookfield**  
and **Jamie Lewis**

**Why is dissertation planning an important skill for students to master?**

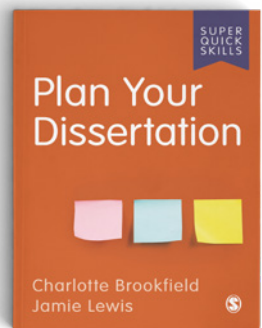
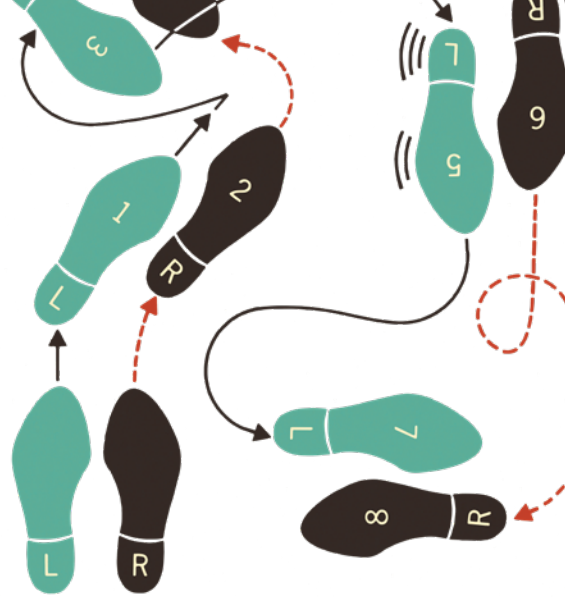
Carefully planning a dissertation can help ensure you complete your projects on time and to a high standard.

**What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

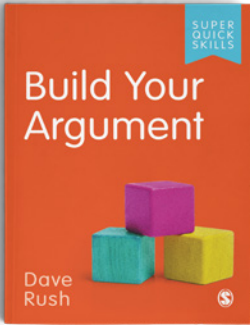
A common mistake is forgetting to allow sufficient time for careful editing and finessing of the dissertation.

**What top tip would you give to students when it comes to planning their dissertation?**

Create your own timetables with time dedicated to your dissertation scheduled in. This will help you plan your time effectively and ensure you meet the deadline.







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# Build your argument

tips from **Dave Rush**

## **Why is building arguments an important skill for students to master?**

University study isn't just about acquiring knowledge, it's about learning how to use that knowledge to answer questions and understanding how that knowledge is applied to the real world. Building argument is also one of the most important skills that you learn at university that will help you in your life outside your studies.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

The most common mistake is not answering the question. When students are given an essay, presentation, or other sort of assignment, they often get distracted discussing the general topic and lose focus on exactly what they're being asked to talk about. It's important to remember that everything you include has to be relevant to the specific question at hand, or it's not helping you to build a good argument or get a good mark.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve how they build arguments?**

Have a very clear idea of what you want to say overall before you start writing or speaking. Try summarising your argument in one or two sentences – and if you can't, that means you need to put some more thought in first.





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# Check that fact

tips from **Sarah Morris**

## **Why is fact-checking an important skill for students to master?**

We all have access to a huge amount of information in our daily lives, but not all of that information is credible or even accurate. Fact-checking can help ensure that you're finding, using, and sharing quality information, that you're making informed decisions, and that you aren't falling for bogus information.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Not doing any fact-checking. It can be easy to get busy, or distracted, or overwhelmed, or rushed, or assume the information is okay. Just taking a few moments to reflect on the information, to read past the headline, or to double-check something before sharing it can make a huge difference and prevent things like misinformation from being spread.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their fact-checking skills?**

Fact-checking is a set of skills that you can develop and improve over time, and the more you fact-check, the faster and better you can get. So, take a few moments to fact-check at least one thing a day, such as something you come across on social media, to practice and refine your skills and to make fact-checking a habit.



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# Find your source

tips from **Gary Thomas**

**Why is finding sources an important skill for students to master?**

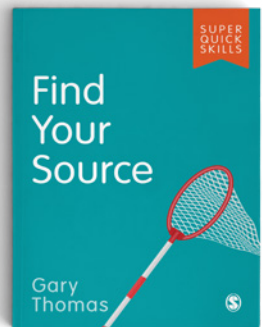
Much of your work will be assessed on the basis of the breadth and depth of your reading, so it's important to know where to find the best literature on your subject. You need to be able to find relevant sources quickly and assess their quality. Work that demonstrates wide reading gets good marks.

**What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

The most common mistake is to rely on just two or three sources – usually those provided by the course tutor. Doing this shows that you haven't really bothered to read more widely and gather different opinions on a topic. Only when you get a rounded view from many sources will you be able to demonstrate the criticality so valued by tutors.

**What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve how they find sources?**

Top tip: Be brave. Start with Google Scholar (which is very simple to use), and then move on to the databases that you'll find on your university library website.





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# Cite your source

tips from  
**Phillip C. Shon**

## **Why is citation an important skill for students to master?**

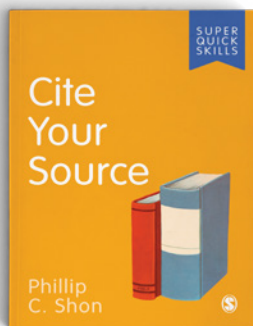
It's good practice to give credit to scholars whose ideas have been used to complete one's paper. Not citing sources appropriately also has the potential to lead to charges of academic misconduct.

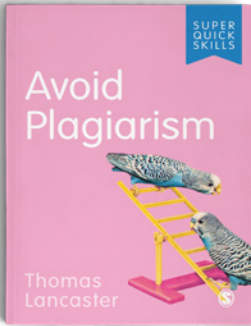
## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

The most common mistake is not knowing what to cite. You must learn the difference between a summary and a finding/argument before you cite your sources using the respective conventions of their disciplines.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their citation skills?**

I'd say that you should learn how to read social science texts first, and then organise your reading into accessible and visual formats so that you don't waste time looking through what you have already read.





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# Avoid plagiarism

tips from

**Thomas Lancaster**

## **Why is avoiding plagiarism an important skill for students to master?**

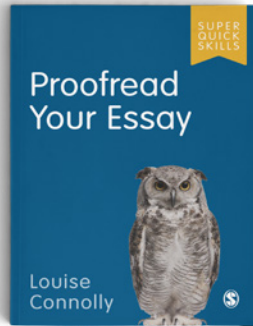
You're expected to write without plagiarism in an academic setting, otherwise, you'll end up with a failing grade and you may be accused of having cheated deliberately.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Copying text straight from an Internet site or another document, without writing it in your own words and saying where the information came from. Even if it's only a sentence or a few words, that's plagiarism.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to avoid plagiarism?**

Rather than copying and pasting text, read the source you're using, think about what it means in relation to your essay or assignment, and then write this by hand using your own words. That way you have to think about the material, and you can make sure it relates closely to what you've been asked to address. By doing this and referencing straight away, you can better avoid plagiarism.



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# Proofread your essay tips from **Louise Connolly**

## **Why is proofreading an important skill for students to master?**

It's easy to underestimate how important proofreading is. Effective proofreading can ensure that the overall quality of your writing improves and also avoids potential misunderstandings. Errors in content, style, clarity, grammar, and punctuation can not only reduce the overall impact of the essay but also cause confusion for the reader.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

A common mistake is not leaving enough time to proofread before the essay has to be handed in. This means that it either doesn't get done or is completed very quickly so mistakes are not identified. The best thing to do is to try and plan out your time leading up to the hand-in date to leave enough time to proofread.

## **What top tip would you give to students when it comes to proofreading their essays?**

Proofread your essay several times and each time have a particular focus, such as spelling and grammar, criticality, clarity, or formatting. It's hard to focus on everything all at the same time, and having a specific focus will enable you to concentrate on and improve particular aspects of your writing and ensure your proofreading is effective.



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# Polish your academic writing

tips from  
**Helen Coleman**



## **Why is academic writing an important skill for students to master?**

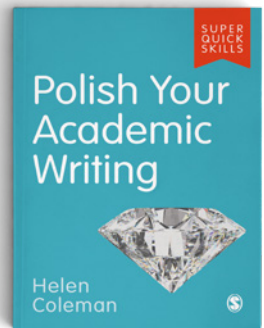
We all make minor errors when we are writing or typing something up, however, these are easily and quickly picked up and corrected through proofreading. It may feel like a really boring, time-consuming task at first, but it does get easier, and it is worth doing as the marks assigned to the professional presentation are easy to gain or lose.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

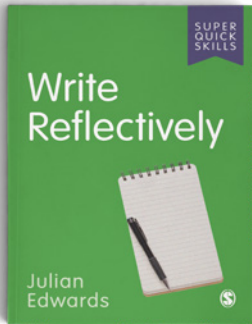
Poor time management. Planning and giving yourself time to polish your academic writing and proofread your work means your marks and your reputation as a serious student will both improve vastly.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their academic writing?**

There are actually two top tips to really ensure success in your work. Plan and proofread, it will likely decrease your stress and increase your marks.







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# Write reflectively

tips from  
**Julian Edwards**

## **Why is reflective writing an important skill for students to master?**

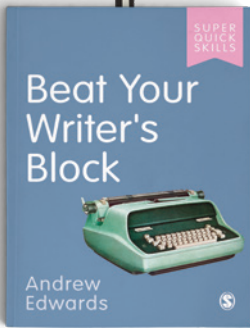
Reflective writing creates lifelong thinking for academic, personal, and professional development.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Not supporting their feelings and emotions with intelligent reasons, sources, and structure.

## **What top tip would you give to students when it comes to writing reflectively?**

Mix expectation with practice, add a pinch of theory to make a theme and then serve up a conclusion about what you've learnt and want to improve in the future.



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# Beat your writer's block

## tips from **Andrew Edwards**

### **Why is beating writer's block an important skill for students to master?**

Overcoming the struggle to write at university is empowering. Knowing that writer's block can be beaten enables you to get the most out of your degree, improve your confidence, and develop your potential to the fullest.

### **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Believing that if you can't write in an academic way at the start of your course then you're not intelligent enough to be at university. You need to realise that writing at university is a specific skill you need to acquire, like learning to drive or play a musical instrument. You don't need to be so hard on yourself.

### **What top tip would you give to students wanting to beat writer's block?**

Keep a journal or a diary - it can be typed or handwritten – and write in it regularly. Writing about your thoughts, feelings, ideas, and responses to materials you encounter is an incredibly useful reflective tool that'll improve your learning. Journal writing also gets you used to writing regularly, rather than just for assignments, and this will help you to keep developing your writing skills.

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# Give great presentations

tips from

**Lucinda Becker**

## **Why is giving presentations an important skill for students to master?**

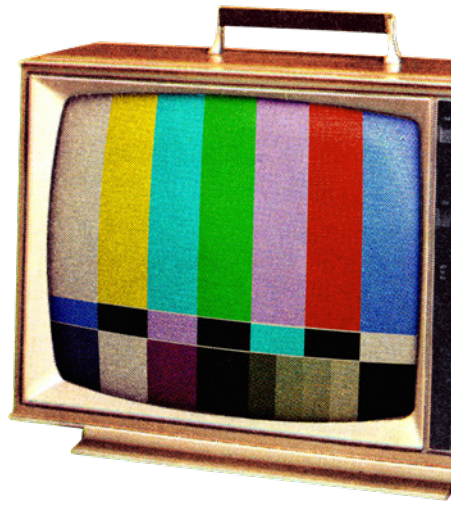
It gives you the chance to shine. You can think on your feet, show off your knowledge, and impress your instructors and lecturers in a way you just can't do in an essay. Then you get to do it all over again when you succeed in a job interview.

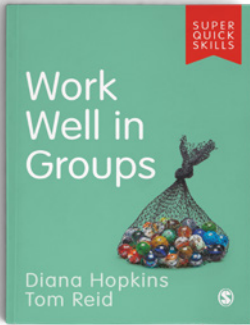
## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Being too nervous to present well, not preparing well enough to show off your skills, and not sticking to time. If you go over the time you've been given, you're showing that you can't control your presentation, everyone feels nervous for you, and you start to lose marks – quickly.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their presentation skills?**

Learn some basic relaxation techniques, prepare well, rehearse at least five times, and then remember the two most important tools you have for success – keep breathing well and smile.





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# Work well in groups

tips from  
**Diana Hopkins**  
and **Tom Reid**

## **Why is working in groups an important skill for students to master?**

The reason you're asked to work in groups at university is that you'll develop invaluable interpersonal skills for academic success and your future professional career. By sharing responsibility with others, you'll learn more about yourself, build your confidence, and recognise that individual attainment can be dependent on teamwork.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

The most common mistake students make with group work is not allowing enough time to establish a coherent and functional team dynamic before getting started on the task.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve how they work in groups?**

Listen and respect the views of others  
– you can learn a lot from your peers.





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# Pass your exam

tips from  
**Lorraine Anderson**  
and **Gordon Spark**

## **Why is exam-taking an important skill for students to master?**

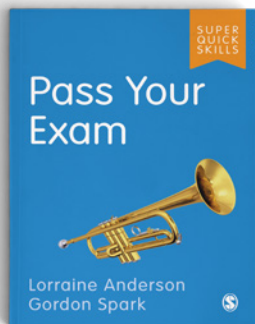
Put simply, in most subjects if you want to get a good degree, you're going to have to pass exams.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

A common mistake is using the same old revision techniques because that's what you've always done. Yet, certain revision techniques, such as rereading and rewriting notes, have been proven to be ineffective. Investing some time in experimenting with different, more active approaches can pay long-term dividends.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their chances of passing their exams?**

Avoid cramming. Get organised, have a plan in place, and start your revision early. Good organisation and time management can reduce stress, allow time to develop more effective approaches to studying, and help you to pass that exam.





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# Write your lab report

tips from  
**Diana Hopkins**  
and **Tom Reid**

## **Why is lab report writing an important skill for students to master?**

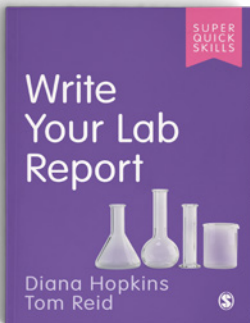
A lab report is a scaled-down version of an academic paper. By developing your lab report writing skills at university you'll be well equipped to succeed as a professional scientist and engineer.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

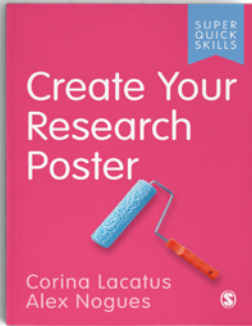
The most common mistake is not demonstrating an understanding of previous research and how it relates to your experiments.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their lab reports?**

Look at model lab reports in your subject area to ensure you understand structure and content requirements before you start writing.







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# Create your research poster

tips from **Corina Lacatus**  
and **Alex Nogues**

## **Why is designing a research poster an important skill for students to master?**

Research posters can be included as an assignment in a course or as part of a dissertation and are often used to present original research at academic conferences and events involving policymakers and the wider public.

Also, learning how to create research posters is a valuable transferable skill which you can take with you into the workplace after graduation.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

The most common mistake is to try to include in the poster every single part of the research process and research output. Effective communication through a research poster requires: (1) deciding which elements of research are the most important and worthy of sharing with others; and (2) learning how to best 'translate' visually these elements into a coherent visual story making up the research poster.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to create a research poster?**

Less is more. Select one focus for the research poster and build a coherent narrative around it.





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# Boost your employability

tips from

**Felicity Becker**



## **Why should students think about boosting their employability?**

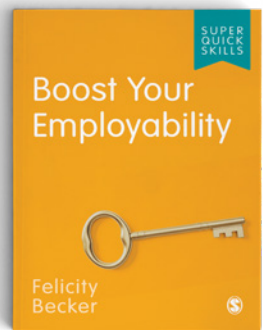
The job market is more competitive than it's ever been and there's such a large volume of graduates entering it each year – you need to stand out. Boosting your employability using the tips in this book will give you the best chance of success in your chosen career.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

There are two common mistakes. The first is starting to do something about it too late. By beginning the process of boosting your employability earlier, you'll find it to be a more positive experience and you'll get much more out of the process. The second is to think that you've got to say 'yes' to every opportunity. Some opportunities aren't worth your time or effort and this book will help you recognise which ones to take up and which to ignore.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to boost their employability?**

My top tip would be to establish goals to help you focus your activities.



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# Write a brilliant CV

tips from  
**Lucinda Becker**

## **Why is CV writing an important skill for students to master?**

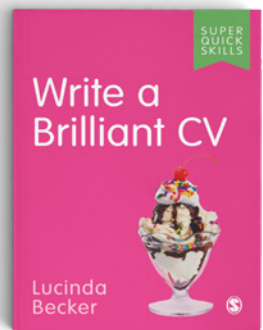
The most important effect of writing a brilliant CV is that you instantly feel good about yourself; this boosts confidence and inspires ambition. A brilliant CV helps you to see how well prepared you are for your professional life and how valuable your skills will be in your chosen career.

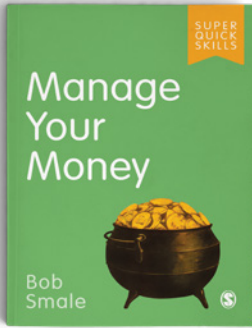
## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Students sometimes believe they must include everything. A CV is a targeted sales pitch, and so it should only include material that screams 'buy me' to an employer. The format must be as brilliant as the content: easy to access, making your material look impressive and selling yourself in every line.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve their CV writing?**

Make every line count, target every word to suit where you want to be, and get to know yourself as a professional. Once you recognise that you're valuable to an organisation, you'll be in a great place to secure the perfect career move for you.





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# Manage your money

tips from  
**Bob Smale**



## **Why is money management an important skill for students to master?**

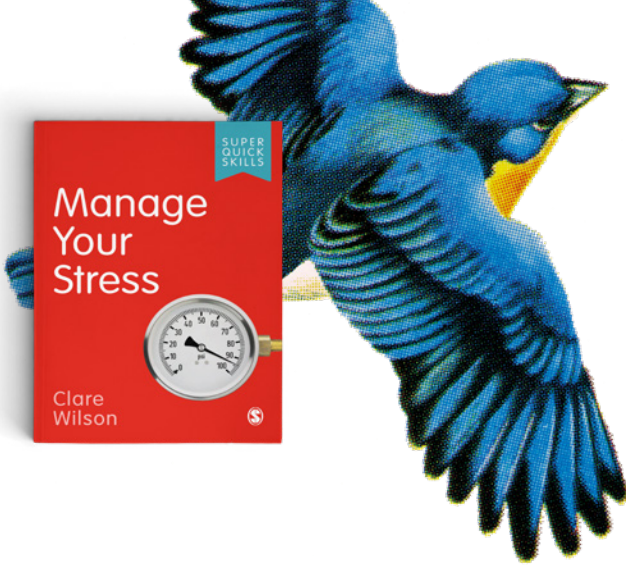
Your money is almost certainly going to be limited, so it's important to make and monitor a budget, including all your income and expenditure plus a contingency for emergencies.

## **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

Not asking for help when they get into financial problems. The sooner you do this, the sooner you can start to resolve the situation and avoid racking up further interest and charges.

## **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve how they manage money?**

Avoid the temptation of spending too much money too soon by sticking to a weekly budget. If you overspend one week, make sure you economise the next.



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# Manage your stress

## tips from **Clare Wilson**

### **Why is stress management an important skill for students to master?**

Everyone gets stressed sometimes. Developing a range of techniques that allow you to effectively manage your stress not only enhances your enjoyment of your degree (and helps you to more effectively study), it will help you in all areas of your life both now and in the future.

### **What's the most common mistake students make in this area?**

The most common mistake is to believe that your stress is a sign of personal failure, that you should be happier and know what to do. You might believe that other students are not as stressed about their studies, finances, missing home, or feeling as lonely as you are. Yet, most students will struggle with stress at some point in their university studies. Stress feels very personal but is a normal reaction to being in new and challenging environments.

### **What top tip would you give to students wanting to improve how they manage stress?**

Ask for help and experiment until you discover what works best for you. Every source of stress at university has been experienced and coped with by thousands of others, so ask them how they coped, and if what they did doesn't work for you, ask someone else. There's absolutely nothing to be ashamed of and everything to be gained by getting help.

# Succeed at university with Super Quick Skills!

- ✓ Build and apply key skills to quickly improve your grades
- ✓ Get instant support and step-by-step guidance when you need it most
- ✓ Making complex topics digestible, you can master one skill at a time
- ✓ Easy to use, with eye-catching images, checklists and activities
- ✓ Pocket sized guides at a budget-friendly price - simply grab and go!

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