

Writing for Routes: how to get started?

Writing takes patience and time. You will find your own style and structures that work. Yet, it can often be hard to know where to start, so we have put together a few ideas to help you.

Planning

Start by reviewing literature that seems relevant to your question or area of interest. If you are in the sixth form, [Google Scholar](#) is a good place to begin your search. Here you can find work published by geographers and those in other disciplines; sometimes their work is available as a free pdf. You might also want to look at relevant book excerpts by using [Google Books](#). If you are at university, you will have access to a number of more advanced databases such as [Scopus](#) and [Web of Science](#). Make a note of the article/ book title and the key points. Try to find common themes and ideas in the literature that you can draw out to help you structure your writing. You should also reflect critically on what you read by noting any contradictions, inconsistencies or absences that you can highlight in your own writing.

What question?

Your question might emerge from your review of literature, a contemporary issue or simply a topic that interests you. You might set out with a question that forms the basis of your work, but it is also possible for your research or ideas to take you in new, interesting directions that mean your initial question should be revised.

Structure

You might want to structure your essay by exploring different spatial scales (local, national, international), timescales (short term, medium term, long term), or you might find ideas such as analysis by factors helpful (environmental, social, economic, political). The structure of your writing helps you answer your overall question as it shows how you have analysed your thoughts/ data. In the best writing, the structure and the argument complement each other.

Evidence

Drawing on evidence from different sources is key to ensuring you can explain and justify your arguments. In human geography, your own experience can often form the basis of an example. An essay might wish to use personal experiences or an extended example to illustrate a particular analytical framework. It is important that evidence is referenced accurately to allow verification, attribution and further access to information by an interested reader.

Tone

It is typical that work in physical geography adopts the third person. In human geography, writing styles are more varied. For example, writing can be crafted to make the reader *feel* a certain way and writing often takes into account an author's own positionality which is why writing is typically in the first person. When building your argument make sure that it is logical and internally coherent.

Constructive criticism

At Routes we believe that publishing is about the learning process that comes with revising and responding to feedback. Publishing in Routes is hopefully the starting point for your academic career and we are here to help develop and nurture your skills.