You can use the ‘draw’ function in word to ‘check off’ each item. Draw is found in the ribbon at the top of your page between ‘insert’ and ‘design’. It is a fun option.

Legal Essay Checklist

* I have read and followed the assignment instructions, including reviewing all material provided by my teacher.
* I have checked the collaboration code and the word count.

# Research

## Secondary Sources

I have

* consulted legal encyclopaedias to get an overview of my research topic (note this might not be possible for all topics / jurisdictions)
* searched the library catalogue and ebook platforms to find relevant books
* found relevant law journal articles using the databases listed on the Law Library website
* for interdisciplinary research, I have found and read journal articles from disciplines outside of law
* evaluated the literature I located, identified any gaps and revised my searches accordingly
* identified the arguments / counter arguments and debates from the literature
* found commentary on the case law and legislation related to my research question
* drawn from literature that is relevant to the jurisdiction on which my essay question focuses

## Primary Sources

### Legislation

I have

* located the relevant legislation for my research essay, found the relevant Act / Regulation for the jurisdiction on which my essay question focuses and paid attention to specific provisions that are relevant to my research
* checked whether there have been any amendments to the legislation I am researching
* located relevant extrinsic material, ie Bill, Explanatory Memoranda, Second Reading Speech (these types of documents are relevant to Australian legislative research, check whether similar documents exist for other jurisdictions by consulting a research guide on the jurisdiction you are researching)
* used a case citator to find out how the courts have interpreted the legislation I am researching
* referenced legislation relevant to the jurisdictional focus of my research question
* justified any references to legislation from a jurisdiction that is not the focus of my research question

### Cases

I have

* used secondary sources to find the most important cases on a topic
* used a case citator to find out how the cases located in secondary sources have been treated by subsequent courts
* used the advanced search features of a case database to find cases on a topic (ie searched the Key Number system on Westlaw Australia, searched using the catchwords field in case law databases), paying attention to cases heard in higher courts
* evaluated my case law research to ensure I am relying on cases that are relevant to my essay question and the jurisdiction focus of my paper
* read the judgment, understood the reasoning and distinguished between majority and minority dissent in your paper

# Writing

## First Steps

* I have ensured my essay answers the question(s) posed for the assessment.
* My contention is in the introduction and it answers the issue(s) posed by the essay question.
* I've read the primary sources of law that I've cited (and not just relied on secondary descriptions of it).
* I have reviewed the *Guide to Academic Success* (particularly the chapters about writing for law and referencing) and the *Australian Guide to Legal Citation* (4th Edition) (hereby referred to as 'AGLC4').
* I have made a contribution to the broader discussion. (Have I answered the "so what?" question?)

## Argument

* I have communicated an argument (and not just a description).
* Each section makes a substantive contribution to my main contention.
* I have backed up my arguments with logic and citations.
* I have acknowledged and addressed any debates/disagreement on my topic.
* I have provided enough background for each assertion for the reader who is legally trained, but not a specialist, to follow the argument.

## Structure

* My introduction explains the question to be answered or the problem to be considered, explicitly states the argument, and concludes with a "roadmap" that provides the reader with an outline of the argument to follow.
* I have used informative headings and sub-headings throughout my essay.
* Each section has a transition to the next section.
* I have organised my sections in a manner that allows the reader to follow my argument.
* Each key idea flows in order.
* Each paragraph stands for a single key idea. **No** paragraphs are a page long.
* Each paragraph has a topic statement that clearly states the key idea, and every subsequent sentence supports it.
* I have read through the paper to eliminate any (unnecessary) repetition of information.
* I have NOT relied on the prior knowledge of my audience. All references to statutes, cases, concepts, and arguments are explained and their relevance to my argument is explicit.

## Grammar and Style

* I have used a tone appropriate for my audience.
* I have checked every sentence for clarity.
* I have eliminated unnecessary (and often confusing) language. All modifying words and phrases are necessary, specific, and precise.
* All subject-verb combinations agree.
* I have removed legalese, clichés, and colloquial language (for example: I have deleted all use of ‘on the one hand/other hand’)
* I have checked the definition of all new words and ensured I have used them correctly. I have not relied solely on the suggestions from the thesaurus.
* I have reviewed all my transition words (further, however, therefore, thus, etc) and they are correct.
* I have deleted all use of the word ‘besides’.
* I have reviewed the use of all pronouns and ensured the antecedent is clear to the reader.
* I have not used contractions.
* All my quotes are necessary and appropriate.
* I have checked for commonly mis-spelled words (compliment/complement, form/from, judgement/judgment, statue/statute, weather/whether)
* I have used the correct form of the verb, noun, or modifier (analysis/analyse, legislation/legislate)
* I have capitalized words when appropriate (Australian/Indigenous/Chinese, proper nouns, etc)

## Formatting and Citation

* My headings and sub-headings are in AGLC4 format.
* Direct quotes are correctly formatted.
* Every claim, quotation and reference has a citation.
* My footnotes are in AGLC4 format.
* Case names and legislation in the text and footnotes are *italicised*.
* I have formatted all acronyms and short titles correctly (including the use of brackets, single quotation marks, and italics for primary sources of law).

## Finishing Touches

* I am confident that I have identified the most recent legislation, case law and secondary commentary on my topic
* I have represented my research in your footnotes and bibliography
* I have a bibliography that is in AGLC4 format.
* I have included my student number and removed anything that can identify me by name.
* I have inserted page numbers into my document.
* I have used the font size requested by my teacher for my document's body text and footnotes.
* I have made an appointment with the Legal Academic Skills Centre to review the draft of my essay.