

An **essay** is a piece of *formal* writing which discusses a particular issue, situation or problem. Therefore, it is a **discursive** (=discusses different ideas) piece of writing.

An **article** is a piece of writing about a particular subject for publication in a newspaper, magazine, leaflet or brochure. Those that are printed in newspapers and magazines typically present an opinion or balanced argument concerning social/ environmental issues, describe a place/ event/ experience, provide information, etc. Those that are printed in leaflets and brochures provide information, describe and/or advertise a company/product/service, offer suggestions, etc. Therefore, articles can be **descriptive**, **narrative** and **discursive**, but we will concentrate on discursive articles here.

Differences between essays and discursive articles:

Purpose:

An essay is usually written for examination point of view, they are asked to be written as part of school or college assignment. An article is written for publication in a newspaper, magazine, leaflet or brochure.

Target audience:

The target audience for essay writing are specialists, while the target audience for articles is everyone.

Tone:

The tone used in essay writing is educational and analytical while the tone in article writing is conversational.

Content:

The content used in essay writing is almost always focused and specialized while that in article writing is always generic. For example, if you were to write an essay on mobile applications, it would focus on the technology in detail or even the sociological impacts of mobile applications. However, if you were to write an article related to mobile applications, it would most probably contain where to find them, how to choose them or even which ones are new.

Another important difference between the article and essay is that the essay contains quotations from various authors and experts. On the other hand, an article does not usually contain quotations from experts and authors.

Length:

In general terms, articles are shorter pieces of writing than essays; therefore, they tend to have shorter paragraphs than essays. In essays the paragraphs and sentences tend to be long and complex.

Style:

An essay is written in formal style, therefore, it should be **printed** (not hand-written), you should use **formal vocabulary** (words of Latin/French origin, single-word verbs, formal linkers as “consequently, furthermore, for this reason...” and avoid phrasal verbs and colloquial expressions), you should use **formal and impersonal structures** (passive voice, long and complex sentences, and avoid using the first person singular) and you should **avoid strong language** (such as “I know/ I am sure/ I firmly believe”) or **the imperative**, and in terms of punctuation, you should use **full forms of verbs** and should **avoid the use of exclamation marks**.

Articles can be formal, semi-formal or informal in style depending on the target audience and on where the article is going to appear. Generally speaking, you shouldn't use over-personal or over-emotional language or simplistic vocabulary in articles. Besides, you shouldn't talk about yourself, since you are writing for the general public, not for a circle of friends. Your opinions are only interesting to other people if you can make them amusing, justify them or explain them.

Structure of essays/ discursive articles:

1. **A title:** which suggests the main topic of the essay/article. It should be brief and attract the reader's attention.

- You can present a question: *Is learning English really necessary today?*
- You can present the topic in a short statement: *The role of the monarchy in Britain today./ Laughter can improve our health.*
- You can address the reader directly (especially in articles): *What you need to do to be successful.*

2. **An introduction:** state the topic(s). You can use some techniques to attract the reader's attention:

- Address the reader directly (especially in articles): *If you take time to train your dog, it will learn to obey you.*
- Begin with a question: *Is it true that a dog is man's best friend?*
How practical or beneficial is cycling when compared to other means of transport?
Did you know the boat was one of the first forms of transport?
- In essays, you can include a quotation (e.g. a sentence taken from a book, play, etc) and mention the name of the person who said/wrote it: *As George Orwell wrote, "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others".*

- You can start with interesting statistics: *Home workers have grown from 150,000 to over 12 million in the past 5 years thanks to the wonders of the computer.*

Your personal opinion can only be provided in the introduction in "opinion essays/articles".

3. **Body paragraphs:** where the subject is developed in detail.

You should start each body paragraph with a topic sentence which introduces or summarizes the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence should be followed by supporting sentences which justify the argument presented in the topic sentence, by giving examples or reasons. You should use linking words to present your justifications, such as: first of all, what is more, for example, because, since, in particular, etc. Remember also that a paragraph always consists of more than one sentence.

Example:

Travelling by train has a lot of advantages (**topic sentence**). First of all, it is comfortable as trains are spacious so there is plenty of room to walk about. What is more, trains are convenient. For example, you do not have to take any food or beverages with you, because most trains have a restaurant. Finally, when you travel by train you reach your destination fairly quickly (**supporting sentences**).

To help you in the body paragraphs, when considering a topic you may refer to the **discussion clock**, which will help you think of ideas since it helps you examine a topic from various viewpoints.

As far as health is concerned, allowing cigarettes to be advertised is extremely damaging...

From a personal/ psychological standpoint, it may be argued that the individual faces such problems as depression, anxiety and attempted suicide...

From an economic viewpoint, popular sports create jobs for a large number of people in addition to generating income for the state.

As for the artistic/educational aspect, allowing children to express themselves more freely would help them to develop their creative talents.

With regard to educational matters, the use of computers gives students a chance to increase their knowledge.

4. **A conclusion:** which summarizes the topic and/or offers an opinion.

Techniques to end your conclusion:

- Use a quotation (in essays): *"Genetics holds the key to the future".*
- Use a question: *What will they think of next?*
- Give the reader something to consider: *Perhaps the world would be a safer and more efficient place if everyone was genetically perfect.*
- A future prediction based on what you have shown: *The next step: The complete disappearance of the workplace.*

THE DISCUSSION CLOCK:



Types of essays/discursive articles:**1. “For and against” essay/article:**

It presents both sides of an issue, discussing points in favour of a particular topic as well as those against, or the advantages and disadvantages of a particular question. Each point should be supported by justifications, examples, and/or reasons. The writer’s own opinion should be presented only in the final paragraph. Therefore, you must not include opinion words (e.g. In my opinion/view, I believe/think...) in the introduction or the main body, but only in the conclusion.

- It should consist of four paragraphs:

1) An introduction in which you present the topic, making a general remark about it, stating that there are both advantages and disadvantages but without giving your opinion.

2) A main body consisting of two paragraphs. In one paragraph you present the points for, with your justifications, examples and reasons. In the other paragraph you present the points against, with your justifications, examples and reasons.

3) A conclusion which includes either a balanced summary of the topic or your opinion. If you provide your opinion, you have to express whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages or vice versa.

- Useful language for the two body paragraphs:

- **To list and add points:** In the first place, First of all, To start/begin with, Firstly, Secondly, Thirdly, Finally, In addition (to this), also, Furthermore, Moreover, Besides, What is more...

To begin with, boats are usually more comfortable than planes or cars.

In addition, boat trips can be very unpleasant when the weather is bad.

Furthermore, boats are often cheaper than other forms of travel.

Finally, boats are a safe alternative to cars and planes.

Besides, television affects the way we think.

- **To introduce examples/reasons/results:** for example/instance, such as, like, especially, in particular, thus, therefore, so, for this reason, because, as, since, as a result, consequently...

For example, a boat ticket usually costs less than a plane ticket.

As a result, it can be more tiring.

- Useful language for the “for” paragraph:

To introduce or list advantages: There are many advantages to..., One of the many advantages of..., The main/first/most important advantage of ..., One/Another/An additional advantage of..., One point of view in favour of..., It is often suggested/believed/argued that..., Some/Many people suggest/feel/argue that..., Some/Many people are in favour of/are convinced that...

There are many advantages to having children at an early age.

One point of view in favour of travelling is that it allows you to meet people from different cultures.

Many people argue that we need advertisements in order to keep up to date with the latest products on the market.

- Useful language for the “against” paragraph:

To show contrast: On the other hand, However, still, but, Nonetheless, Nevertheless, Although, Even though, Despite/ In spite of (the fact that)...

Even though most people nowadays use a computer at work, it will be a while before we stop putting our ideas down on paper.

You can begin the “against” paragraph with the words in capital letters written before (“However, On the other hand...”, etc):

However, travelling by boat does have its disadvantages.

On the other hand, travelling by boat has certain drawbacks.

To introduce or list disadvantages: The main/most important disadvantage/drawback of..., One major disadvantage of..., One/Another/An additional disadvantage of ..., One point/argument against..., Some/Many people are against...

- **Useful language for the conclusion:** In conclusion, To conclude/ sum up, All in all, Finally, All things considered, To put it in a nutshell, Taking everything into account/consideration, As it was previously stated...: All things considered, although there are some disadvantages to travelling by boat, I believe it is a very enjoyable experience.

If you state your **personal opinion:** In my opinion/view..., It seems to me that..., I believe/think...

2. Opinion essay/article:

It presents the writer's personal opinion concerning a topic, clearly stated and supported by reasons and/or examples. The opposing viewpoint and reason should be included in a separate paragraph, together with an argument that shows it's an unconvincing viewpoint. The writer's opinion should be included in the introduction, and summarized/restated in the conclusion.

The first thing you should do is to decide whether you agree or disagree with the subject of the topic, making a list of your points and reasons.

- It should consist of four/five paragraphs:

1) An introduction in which you present the topic and your opinion.
2) A main body which typically consists of two or three paragraphs. In one or two paragraphs you should present your viewpoint(s) supported by reasons, examples, etc. The last paragraph should present the opposing viewpoint with reasons and examples, and you should show that this viewpoint is unconvincing.

- 3) A conclusion in which you restate and/or summarize your opinion using different words.

- You can use the same useful language we saw in "for and against" essays/articles in order to list and add points, to introduce examples/reasons/results, to conclude and to provide your personal opinion.

- Useful language to introduce the other viewpoint (third or fourth paragraph): It is argued that..., People argue that, Opponents of this view say..., There are people who oppose..., As opposed to the above ideas...

3. "Solutions to a problem" essay/article:

In essays/articles suggesting solutions to problems, the problem(s) associated with a particular issue or situation are analyzed and possible solutions are put forward, together with any expected results/consequences. The writer's opinion is mentioned in the conclusion.

- It should consist of four/five paragraphs:

1) An introduction in which you present the problem(s) (just mention them), and its/their cause(s)/effect(s).

2) A main body which typically consists of two or three paragraphs, in which you present your suggestions and results or consequences.

You have to begin a new paragraph whenever you start dealing with each problem. In each paragraph, you should explain the problem and then provide possible solutions (problem 1 - how to solve it, problem 2 - how to solve it, etc.).

- 3) A conclusion in which you summarize your opinion.

- You can use the same useful language we saw in "for and against" essays/articles in order to list and add points, to introduce examples/reasons/results, to conclude and to provide your personal opinion.

- Useful language to introduce solutions: To begin/start with, One way to, Another solution would be, Another way to... would be...

- Useful language to express cause: because, because of, due to the fact that, for this reason...