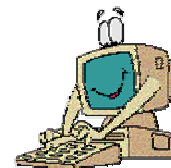


## OPINION ESSAYS

\* Opinion essays are essays in which you present your personal opinion on a particular topic. Your opinion must be stated clearly and supported by justifications. You should also present the opposing viewpoint(s) in a separate paragraph.

You will be asked to write an essay of about 225 words.

\* Stages you should follow to write the essay: **pre-writing, writing & proofreading.**



### 1. PRE-WRITING

1.1. Write an **outline** of what the essay could basically be about. Read the exam rubric carefully. Begin with a blank piece of paper, write your paper's topic at the top and write down everything you can about the topic; omit nothing, and don't stop until you are completely out of ideas. Don't worry about grammar.

1.2. **Brainstorming**: try to get more details. When you are out of ideas here are some questions you can ask yourself to get more ideas for your outline:

- What question(s) must I answer in this assignment?
- Who is the audience for this paper? What are the most important things that my audience needs to know?
- What are a few main points that I want to convey in this paper?
- Are any of these points contradictory or vague?
- Can I refine any of these goals? (i.e. to focus on some aspect).

#### 1.3. **Organization**:

Look at the list of ideas and reconsider the paper's topic; then eliminate those ideas that are not closely related to the topic.

Organise the ideas into paragraphs: e.g. decide which idea provides a decent place to start an introduction, then which ideas can go together in the same paragraphs, etc. Try to arrange the ideas in the order that you would use in your composition.

\* An essay usually contains **three parts**:

1. The introduction: Paragraph 1: **thesis statement** (= main idea: your opinion) + **reasons**
2. The body:
  - Paragraph 2 : **first** viewpoint (topic sentence) **and reasons/ examples**
  - Paragraph 3: **second** viewpoint (topic sentence) **and reasons/ examples**
  - Paragraph 4: **opposing** viewpoint (topic sentence) **and reasons/ examples**
 (The number of paragraphs in the body depends on the number of viewpoints)
3. The conclusion: Paragraph 5: **conclusion**

### 2. WRITING

Write the composition, using the number of words you are told (about 225 words) and taking into account the three stages mentioned before (i.e. introduction, body and conclusion).

#### 2.1. The introduction:

The **introduction** typically consists of one paragraph, in which you introduce the subject and state your opinion clearly. The introduction begins with what is called a "thesis statement", i.e. a sentence or two where you summarise the main point of your paper. A good thesis statement often answers the questions "how?" and "why?"

After the thesis statement, you normally include the reasons for supporting the thesis as you do. This does not mean that the introduction should include every bit of detail you'll write in your composition, but only the main reasons.

**\* Techniques to begin your essay:**

**a. address the reader directly:**

*If you take time to train your dog, it will learn to obey you.*

**b. include a quotation/ direct speech**, i.e. a sentence taken from a book, play, etc. It is necessary to 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".*

**c. include a rhetorical question:**

*Is it true that a dog is man's best friend?*

## 2.2. The body:

In the **body** of your essay you support the thesis statement. This is often done in two or more paragraphs. Each paragraph should present a different viewpoint supported by reasons / examples. Don't forget a paragraph giving the opposing viewpoint supported by reasons / examples.

**\* Writing effective paragraphs:**

-One paragraph consists of more than one sentence. Most paragraphs are at least three sentences long.

-Each time you start a new paragraph you have to indent it.

-Begin every paragraph with a topic sentence, i.e. the paragraph's main idea. The purpose of a topic sentence is to summarise the paragraph's main point, therefore, write this idea as clearly as possible.

-Then, you need to support the topic sentence, i.e. to provide information that develops the main idea in greater detail. In order to do this, you should focus on key words in your topic sentence and try to explain them more fully. Keep asking yourself "how?" or "why?" or "What examples can I provide to convince the reader?" Apart from using examples, you can also support a topic sentence using one or more of these: discuss, compare and contrast, use analogies (e.g. "X is similar to Y because..."), discuss cause and effect...

**Example of a paragraph:** Topic sentence - underlined. (Supporting sentences – in parentheses)

*Travelling by train has a lot of advantages. ( 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.)*

- Beginning a new paragraph: do not make a new paragraph because the one you are working on seems too long. Begin a new paragraph when you begin discussing a new idea.

## 2.3. The conclusion:

In the **conclusion**, which again should consist of one paragraph, you should restate your opinion but using different words.

**\* In the conclusion, you should avoid:**

- Introducing a new idea.
- Focusing on a minor point in your composition.
- Apologising for your views by saying such things as "I may not be an expert" or "At least this is my opinion".

**\* Techniques to end your essay:** the same as those to begin it:

**a. address the reader directly**

**b. include a quotation/ direct speech**

**c. include a rhetorical question**

But you can also:

**d. ask a provocative question**

**e. end with a warning**

**f. universalise (compare to other situations)**

**g. suggest results or consequences.**

## 2.4. While writing, pay particular attention to:

### 1. TENSES:

You normally use present tenses in this type of writing.

### 2. LINKING WORDS: USEFUL LINKING WORDS AND STRUCTURES:

This is a useful list of expressions and linking words that you can use to write your essay.

**1. To list your viewpoints you can use:** Firstly/ First of all/ In the first place, Secondly, Thirdly, Finally... *Finally, everyone knows that smoking is extremely bad for one's health.*

**2. To add more points on the same topic:** Furthermore, Moreover, Also, In addition (to this), Besides (this)...

*Dogs are also very useful in police work.*

*Besides, dogs are very useful in police work.*

**3. To give examples:** for example/ for instance, such as / like...

*For instance, / For example, by running or swimming three times a week you feel younger and live longer.*

*By taking regular exercise such as / like running or swimming you feel younger and live longer.*

**4. To introduce the opposing viewpoint (contrast):** however/ nevertheless/ but, although, on the other hand ...

*Seatbelts are known to save lives, however, / nevertheless, / but many people refuse to wear them.*

*Although seatbelts are known to save lives, many people refuse to wear them.*

**5. To state personal opinion:** In my opinion / In my view / I think that / I believe that / I agree that/ with, I disagree that/ with...

*I think that people should be encouraged to use public transport in the city.*

**6. To list advantages/ disadvantages:** One (dis)advantage of ... / Another (dis)advantage of... / The main (dis)advantage of ...

*The main disadvantage of having your own business is that you have to work long hours.*

**7. To express cause:** because/ as/ since, therefore/ for this reason...

*The BBC decided not to show the programme because / since / as it would upset too many people.*

*The programme would upset too many people; for this reason / therefore the BBC decided not to show it.*

**8. To express effect/ result/ consequences:** therefore, as a result, as a consequence, consequently, for this reason, so... *She won a scholarship therefore, / consequently, / as a consequence, / as a result, / for this reason, / so she was able to continue her studies.*

**9. To express purpose:** to (+ infinitive), in order to (+ infinitive). (NOT "for to")

*They locked the door to stop us from getting in.*

**10. To express condition:** if, unless...

**11. Relative pronouns:** who, which, whose, that, where...

**12. To conclude:** In conclusion/ To conclude, To summarise/ To sum up/ In summary, Taking everything into account, All things considered, ...

*Taking everything into account, / In conclusion, / To sum up, / All things considered, no one is likely to find a cure for the common cold in the near future.*

## 3. PROOFREADING

When you finish your composition you should evaluate different aspects:

1. Make sure you stick to the **question**.

2. Evaluate the **layout**:

- Is the first sentence of every paragraph indented? Have I kept the margins?

3. Revise **content** and **organization**:

- What is my thesis? Is my thesis coherent? Is the thesis included in the introduction?

- Do my paragraphs follow this main idea? Do they have topic sentences? Do they have more than one sentence?

- Does the conclusion summarise my paper in a different way from the introduction?

4. Revise **grammar**:

- Keep the verb you use in the same tense.
- Keep agreement of nouns and verbs in number, etc.

5. Revise **vocabulary**:

- Have I used slang or colloquial language? (If you have, change it!)
- Have I repeated words? (If you have, change them!)
- Have I used a wide variety of linking words?

6. Revise **spelling, capitalization and punctuation**.

- Have I used punctuation and capitalisation correctly?
- Is the spelling correct?
- Have I used contractions? (If you have, change them!)

7. Revise **style**: essays have a rather **formal** style. Therefore, you should use:

7.1. **Formal vocabulary**: words of Latin/French origin (e.g. *incorrect* instead of *wrong*...), formal linking words/ phrases (e.g. furthermore, therefore, however, consequently, for this reason...), single-word verbs (e.g. *continue* instead of *go on*).

Don't use colloquial expressions/idioms or phrasal verbs.

7.2. **You can use the first person** in this type of essay because you have to give your opinion. (In other types of essays (for example, the *for and against essays*, you can't use the first person)).

Example:

*Although there are some disadvantages to travelling by boat, I believe it is a very enjoyable experience.*

7.3. **Formal structures** (passive voice, subordinate clauses...). Don't use imperative sentences.

7.4. **Formal punctuation**. Therefore, don't use exclamation marks (!), dashes (-), parentheses (), or contractions (~~wouldn't~~ but would not).

Example:

Instead of using parentheses: *You can read a good book (only in long journeys).*

You can write: You can read a good book, although this is only possible in long journeys.

Finally, don't write your ideas using numbers but words (Firstly, Secondly, etc):

Example:

~~1. You can read in the bus.~~

~~2. You can listen to music.~~

~~3. etc.~~

You are not writing a shopping list, this is a composition!