

WRITING AN ESSAY

I. Structure

Typical structure of an essay:

Introduction

Argument 1

Argument 2

Argument 3

Argument 4

Conclusion

II. Writing an introduction

The first few sentences should explain and introduce the topic of the essay. The best way to pick your brains is to ask yourself the following questions:

what? when? how? why? where? who? how often?

You can also include:

statistics, undeniable facts, trends

In terms of structure, the first few sentences should naturally lead the reader to the thesis statement. In other words, you should start with general information and then become more specific before you clearly restate the topic. (funnel strategy)

thesis statement = restating the topic

Typical structure of an introduction:

3-4 sentences - funnel strategy
1-2 sentences - thesis statement

Common mistakes:

- Do not include an argument in your introduction
- Do not be judgmental in your introduction - stay neutral
- Do not include your opinion in your introduction - facts
- Do not write: "Now I am going to discuss / talk about..."
- Do not change the topic in your thesis statement

Useful vocabulary for the general introduction:

In recent years, corruption has **dramatically** risen in India.

In our society, many people cannot imagine living without...

It is common knowledge that most people believe in...

There has been much controversial discussion about...

Many people are of the opinion that smoking...

Nowadays, we live in a society which is full of...

It is generally assumed that smoking makes you thin, but...

It cannot be denied that social networks **have a huge impact on**...

Every day we are confronted with new technological gadgets.

More and more often, we hear reports about...

The death penalty **has become a hot topic of discussion** again.

The legalisation of drugs **is still a very controversial subject**.

Recent statistics indicate that...there is a strong tendency...

E-cigarettes are **the latest trend in our society**...

Many experts argue that...

We often read in newspapers about...

It is often stated that...

Useful expressions for the thesis statement

This raises a fundamental question.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of ... ?

Is censorship an effective law enforcement tool or not?

What are the arguments for and against the... ?

In how far can we say that...

Samples

Topic: Social networks and teens. A blessing or a curse? Discuss.

Recent statistics indicate that the vast majority of teenagers accesses social networks on a daily basis. Internet sites like Facebook, Twitter or MySpace have millions of users worldwide and the number is constantly increasing. There has been much controversial discussion about these communities and in how far they have an impact on the lives of teenagers. This raises a fundamental question. Are social networks a blessing or a curse?

Topic: For and against the death penalty

Capital punishment is one of the oldest forms of punishment in the world. Nowadays, 88% of the executions take place in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the USA. The most common methods are the electric chair, shooting, the gas chamber and stoning. In many countries, like for example Luxembourg, Germany or France, the death penalty does not exist. Capital punishment has always been a very controversial subject. So what are the advantages and the disadvantages of the death penalty?

Task 1:

Choose one of the topics below and write an introduction for it.

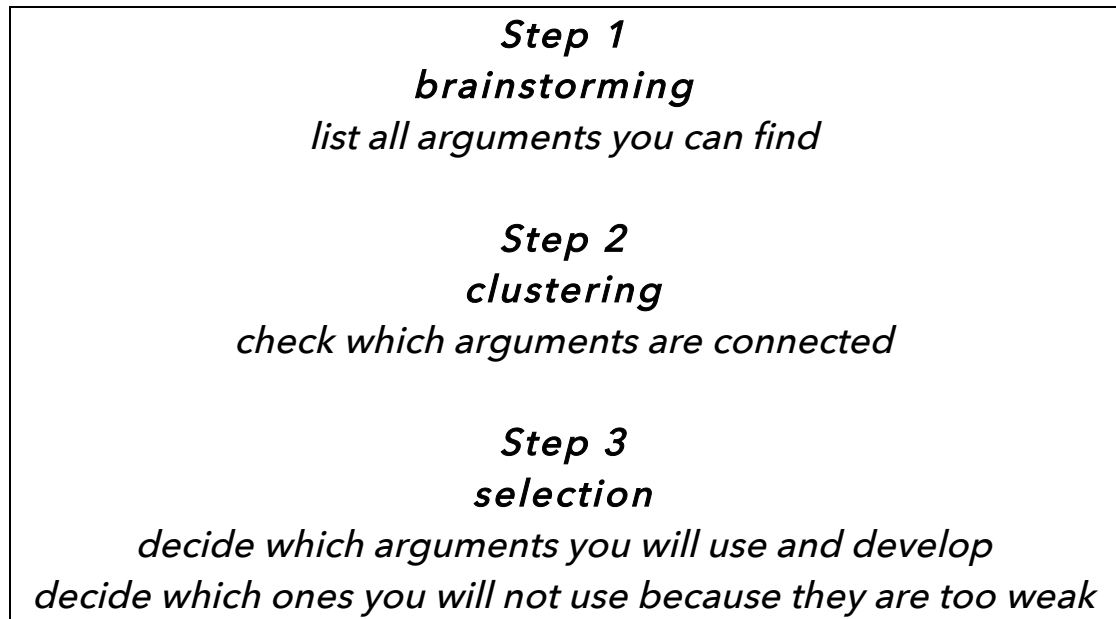
1) "Our privacy is endangered by outside forces but also through our own negligence." Discuss.

2) "Are books out-dated in the age of the internet and e-readers?" Discuss.

III. Writing an argument

You need to find arguments that express your opinion. You can only write in favour of something, only against something or balance your arguments. However, you need to write the arguments from an objective perspective. It is the choice of arguments that explains your position. You are only allowed to express your opinion with "I" in the conclusion.

How do I plan my arguments?



Activity

Topic: Social networks and teens. A blessing or a curse? Discuss.

Brainstorm:

Put all the ideas you can find onto the blackboard.

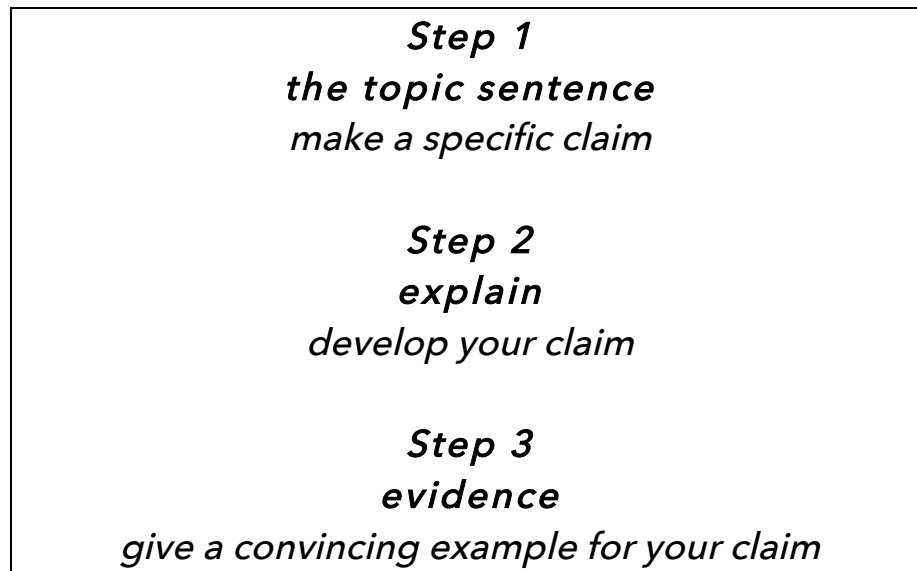
Cluster:

Which ideas are part of the same argument?

Selection:

Which 3 arguments are the most convincing?

Typical structure of an argument:



Common mistakes:

- Do not repeat the same idea over and over again.
- Do not simply describe a problem, analyse it.
- Do not oversimplify and generalise like the yellow press.
- Do not use anecdotes or silly examples to support your claim. (facts)

Coherence:

The best way to convince your reader is to logically connect your ideas.

(→)	(←)	(=)	(others)
<i>First of all,</i>	<i>On the other hand,</i>	<i>As a result,</i>	<i>because</i>
<i>Moreover,</i>	<i>However,</i>	<i>As a consequence,</i>	<i>since</i>
<i>In addition,</i>	<i>Nevertheless,</i>	<i>Hence,</i>	<i>although</i>
<i>What is more,</i>	<i>...but...</i>	<i>Thus,</i>	<i>even though</i>
<i>Furthermore,</i>	<i>Nonetheless,</i>	<i>This entails that...</i>	<i>that is why</i>
<i>Likewise,</i>	<i>In contrast,</i>	<i>So...</i>	<i>due to (+noun)</i>
<i>Also,</i>		<i>Therefore,</i>	<i>For example,</i>
<i>Similarly,</i>		<i>Consequently,</i>	<i>For instance,</i>

Task 2:

Stick with the topic you chose for task 1. Write one complete argument.

IV. Writing a conclusion

What do I include in my conclusion?

Step 1

brief reminder

very briefly remind the reader of your main ideas in different words

maximum 2 sentences

do not write a complete summary

Step 2

personal opinion

express your opinion with "I" and "my"

Step 3

a new moment

finish your essay with one of the following ideas

- suggest a solution to the problems addressed

- talk about possible consequences and implications

- predict what might happen in the future if we do not address the problem

- finish with a powerful quotation

Common mistakes:

- Do not simply summarise all the ideas from your arguments.

Conclusion signal

Your conclusion has to begin with a conclusion signal. Choose your weapon:

All in all,

To sum up,

In conclusion,

To summarise,

To conclude,

In short,

Task 3:

Stick with the topic you chose for task 1. Write a conclusion for your essay.

NOTE: Check the essay evaluation sheet to help you understand how teachers evaluate your essay.