Writing an Opinion Essay

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1 - Prewriting

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1. **Understanding rubric / instructions**

    ➢ To plan your essay you need to **understand the instructions**.

    ➢ Read the rubric carefully and **underline the key words/phrases** which help you decide what you will write about.
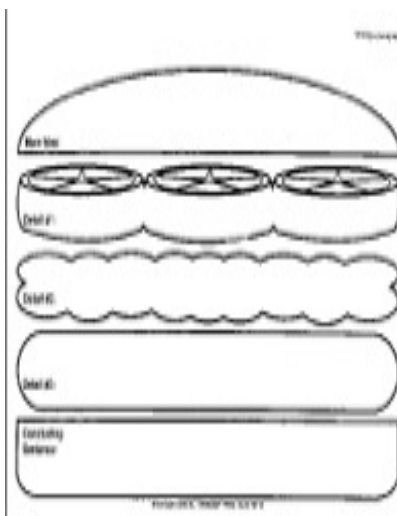
2 - Brainstorming

➢ Step 1: **Think** about your topic and write down any **ideas, words and phrases** related to the topic. Don't evaluate your ideas. **Just write**.

➢ Step 2: Decide whether you **agree or disagree** with the statement.

➢ Step 3: **Group** your ideas, **crossing out** any irrelevant ones, and put them in a **logical order**.

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2 – Writing

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➢ An opinion essay is a **formal** piece of writing, therefore you can't use informal language. It requires your **opinion on a topic**, which must be stated clearly and supported by reasons or examples.

➢ An opinion essay should consist of:

▸ An **INTRODUCTION,** in which you **introduce the subject** and **state your opinion clearly**.

▸ A **MAIN BODY** with 3 or more paragraphs: in 2 or more paragraphs, you present your opinions/viewpoints. **Each paragraph presents a separate viewpoint supported by reasons/examples**. In the last paragraph, you give **the opposing viewpoint, also supported by reasons/examples**.

▸ A **CONCLUSION**, in which you **state your opinion again** using different words.

➢ You should write all-developed paragraphs joining sentences with **connectors and linking words/ phrases**. These make your writing more interesting to the reader, and easier to understand.

➢ Each paragraph should start with a **topic sentence,** which should state clearly what the paragraph's **main idea** is.

➢ The sentences that follow are called **supporting/secondary sentences** and they provide **examples, reasons, justifications, and/or evidence** to support the topic sentence.

➢ We normally use **present tenses** in this type of writing.

Techniques for BEGINNINGS and ENDINGS:

⊠ The **first paragraph** may:
  - **address the reader directly**. (*Are **you** aware of how information technology has revolutionised the way we work?*)
  - **ask a rhetorical question** (*Isn't it amazing how many children are now capable of logging on to their PCs and surfing the net?*)
  - **start with an interesting quote**. (*"A.I. holds the key to the future."*)
  - **make reference to a strange scene or situation**. (T*he complete disappearance of the workplace may be a reality sooner than we would expect.*)

⊠ The **last paragraph** may:
  - **end with an interesting quote**. (*"Without the past the pursued future has no meaning."*)
  - **end with a rhetorical question.** (*What will they think of next?*)
  - **give the reader something to consider**. (*Perhaps the world would be a better place if everyone knew how to use a computer.*)
  - **state a personal opinion.** (*In my opinion, intelligent computers won't be available in the near future.*)
  - **end with a recommendation.** (*As regarding deforestation, we shouldn't play with fire.*)

3 - Editing

➢ You should always **revise** your piece of writing before handing it in.

  In order to do this, you should make sure that:

♦ you used the appropriate number of paragraphs.
♦ you wrote all-developed paragraphs and took out irrelevant information.
♦ you provided enough examples, details, reasons and evidence.
♦ you did not repeat the same words, phrases, expressions, etc.
♦ you used linking words.
♦ you used complete sentences and the words are in the correct order (i.e. subject, verb, object, etc).
♦ you used the correct grammar and punctuation.
♦ there are no spelling errors, etc.

Opinion Essay

> **1. Here is an opinion essay based on the writing tips and techniques previously presented. Read it and label the paragraphs with these headings:**

Summary and writer's opinion	Opposing viewpoint and reasons	Viewpoint 1 and reason
Introduction and opinion	Viewpoint 2 and reasons	

Will life be better in the future?

Can you imagine doing your shopping without having to leave the house or working at home rather than going to the office? In my opinion, life in the future will be much more pleasant than it is today. ¶ 1

To start with, there will be many improvements in the field of medicine. Scientists are confident that cures for diseases such as cancer and AIDS will have been found. Therefore, the lives of thousands of people will be saved. ¶ 2

In addition to this, new technological breakthroughs will make our lives easier. Computers will be able to perform more time-saving functions, transport will be faster and more efficient and new inventions will continue to help us carry out daily tasks with ease and comfort. ¶ 3

On the other hand, there are those who believe that life the future will not be so trouble-free. We will have used up the world's natural resources, therefore our planet will be on the verge of destruction. What is more, some fear that pollution will have increased due to problems such as deforestation, and that acid rain will only have been made worse. They do not consider, however, that modern technology can solve environmental problems as well as less pressing ones. ¶ 4

All in all, I feel that life in the future will definitely be better. We are all searching for ways to improve our lives and we can only look ahead in order to do this. ¶ 5

> **2. Scan the text and do the following tasks:**

a) Identify the verb tenses used in this opinion essay and explain why.
b) Identify the techniques used to begin and end the essay.

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c) Circle the connectors/linking words that have been used.
d) Underline the topic sentences used in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4.

Adapted from *Successful Writing Intermediate and Proficiency*
by Virginia Evans, Express Publishing
and *Explorations 1 Workbook, OUP* (www.oup.com/elt)

2. Finally write an opinion essay on the following topic:

"We shouldn't be so dependent on computers."

Don't forget to...

⊠ ... brainstorm for ideas and plan the composition in advance: List all the arguments FOR and AGAINST.

⊠ ...Write all-developed paragraphs joining sentences with connectors/linking phrases.

⊠...to start each paragraph with a topic sentence.

⊠ ...to apply specific techniques to begin and end your essay.