

Writing an Essay

IGCSE English ■ Topic 8

IGCSE English



What we will cover

- 1 Discursive vs argumentative
- 2 Planning
- 3 Essay structure
- 4 Body paragraphs





Two kinds of essay

discursive

look at **both** sides – for and against, then perhaps your view

argumentative

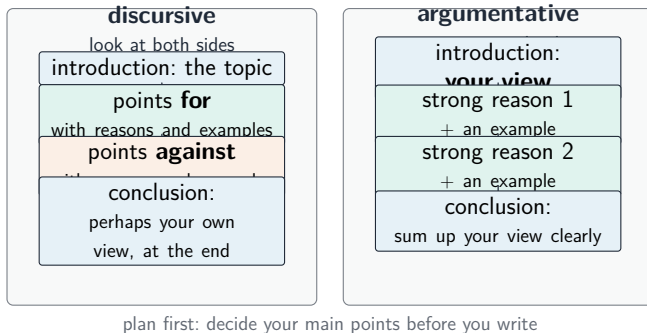
argue for **one** view with strong reasons & examples

Plan first: decide your points & reasons before you write.



Close reading needs quiet attention

Two essay shapes



Two essay shapes: discursive weighs both sides; argumentative argues one view

Discursive essays

- A **discursive** essay looks at both sides of a topic.
- You give the points for and against, and perhaps your own view at the end.

Argumentative essays

- An **argumentative** essay argues for one main view.
- You give strong reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Essay structure

- **introduction** – name the topic (2–3 sentences)
- **body** – one main idea per paragraph
- **conclusion** – sum up; **no** new point

Plan first: points and reasons before you write.



Plan clear points, examples, and a firm conclusion

Body paragraphs



Start each paragraph with the idea, then back it with reasons & examples.

Useful language

Linking words signal your reader where the argument turns.

- **To add a point:** *Firstly... / In addition... / Another reason is...*
- **To show the other side:** *However... / On the other hand... / Some people argue that...*
- **To give an example:** *For example... / For instance... / such as...*
- **To conclude:** *In conclusion... / Overall... / Weighing both sides...*

Body paragraphs, continued

one body paragraph

Firstly, school sport builds real

Playing in a team means you win and
lose together. so

For example, my closest friends are
the players I have
trained with every week since Grade 8.

— **start with the idea**

— (a topic sentence)
then the **reasons**

— behind it

— then an **example**
that makes it real

- Put one main idea in each **body** paragraph.
- Start the paragraph with the idea, then add reasons and examples.

Using linking words well

where they go

use them at the **start** of a sentence, where the reader meets them first

how many

two or three well-placed links are enough for a paragraph

do not overuse one

four *however*s in a paragraph read worse than none

to add

Firstly.../ Furthermore.../ In addition...

to contrast

However.../ On the other hand.../ Although...

to conclude

Therefore.../ In conclusion.../ Overall...

A link tells the reader what *relation* is coming. Using the wrong one – *however* where you mean *furthermore* – is worse than using none.

Exam tips

- Plan for three minutes before you write: your view, two reasons, one opposite view.
- First paragraph introduces the question; each middle paragraph carries exactly one argument.
- Signpost with linking words: First of all, However, On the other hand, In conclusion.
- Give the other side one fair paragraph, then answer it. Balance shows thinking and earns marks.
- The final paragraph states your opinion clearly. Do not sit on the fence.



Worked example – an essay paragraph

Write a body paragraph arguing that students should wear uniform, and handle the other side.

- **Point:** “Uniform reduces the pressure to compete over clothes.”
- **Explain:** “Poorer students are not judged for what they wear, so fewer feel excluded.”
- **Counter:** “Some say it stifles individuality; **however**, students express themselves through what they *do*.”
- ⇒ **one idea per paragraph, the other side answered.**

Answering the counter-argument is what lifts a top essay. Signpost it: **however, although, on the other hand**. One paragraph = **one idea**.

Topic 8 – key takeaways

1

Two kinds

discursive (both sides) vs
argumentative (one)

2

Plan

decide points & reasons first

3

Structure

introduction, body, conclusion

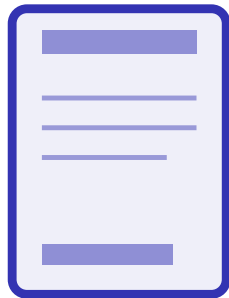
4

Paragraphs

point, then reasons & examples

Check yourself

- 1 Which essay shows both sides?
- 2 How long should an introduction be?
- 3 How many main ideas per body paragraph?
- 4 Should the conclusion add a new point?



Answers 1. a discursive essay 2. short – 2–3 sentences 3. one 4. no