**Opinion Essays**

**Structure of the Opinion Essay:**

**Introduction** – introduces the topic and state your opinion clearly

**Body** - consists of three or more paragraphs each presenting a separate viewpoint supported by reasons/examples

**Conclusion** – summarizes/restates your opinion using different words

**Useful Language**

**То express opinion:** I believe, In my opinion, I think, In my view, I strongly believe, I see it, It seems to me (that), As far as I am concerned, I am (not) convinced that..., In my opinion/view …My opinion is that …, I (firmly) believe …, I (definitely) feel/think that, I am inclined to believe that ……

**То list points:** In the first place, first of all, to start with, Firstly, to begin with

**То add more points:** what is more, another major reason, also, furthermore, moreover, in addition to this/that, besides, apart from this, not to mention the fact that

**То introduce contrasting viewpoints:** It is argued that, People argue that, There are people who oppose, Contrary to what most people believe,

As opposed to the above ideas

**Tointroduce examples:** for example, for instance, such as, in particular, especially

**To conclude:** To sum up, All in all, All things considered, Taking everything into account.

**Task 1**

**Read the following models and answer these questions:**

a) Which is an "advantages and disadvantages" argumentative essay?

b) Which are the advantages and disadvantages mentioned?

c) Which is an argumentative essay expressing opinion?

d) How is each viewpoint supported?

Finally, give the paragraph outline

**Computers: A blessing or a curse?**

Almost every home, office or school has a computer of some kind these days. Many people feel that these machines are now an essential part of our lives, but how necessary are they really?

One of the main advantages is the time that can be saved by using a computer. This is especially beneficial in the workplace, where employees can do their work far faster than they could in the past. In addition to this, computers can be educational and fun. From a very young age children can gain basic computer skills through programmes that allow them to learn, draw, paint and play. In today's technological world, this knowledge can only help them in the future.

However, there are various negative aspects to using com­puters. Many jobs have been lost due to the fact that computers can do a lot of tasks more efficiently than humans. This has led to high unemployment in many countries. What is more, computers can actually cause health problems. Endless hours in front of a screen can cause eye strain and headaches, which are serious side-effects.

To sum up, it seems that computers are a useful addition to our fast-moving world of high technology. However, it must be remembered that they are here to serve us – not to replace us.

**Computers are a necessity. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.**

Computers play an important role in the lives of most of us today, whether we realize it or not. Some people, however, are beginning to ask if we really need them. In my opinion, computers have become a necessary part of modern life.

In the first place, computers can save a lot of storage space. Storing information on computer disks is one of the most efficient ways of keeping data. One computer disk can hold the same amount of information as several books.

Furthermore, computers save everyone a lot of valuable time. Stored information can be found at the touch of a button, whereas searching for it manually takes much longer. Therefore, our every-day lives are made easier - from going to the bank to doing the shopping.

Nevertheless, there are those who claim that computers are unnecessary and make our lives more complicated. They argue that in the past we managed very well using other methods and that we have become too dependent on computers. However, they fail to consider that the time saved by using computers for repetitive tasks enables us to use our own time more creatively and productively.

All in all, I strongly believe that computers are a useful tool. They have changed our lives for the better and there is no reason why we should not make them work to our advantage.

**Task 2**

**Topic Sentences**

**Read the following sample essay on recycling and fill in the topic sentences given below.**

A. Many people argue that the actual process of collecting and recycling materials is expensive and unnecessary.

B. To start with, it is very important for people to realize the damage that our rubbish is doing on the environment.

C. Another important reason is that many forests are being destroyed due to paper being wasted.

**Recycling is important. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.**

Saving certain recyclable materials and taking them to recycling centers has become part of the daily routine in many homes. In my opinion, this should be encouraged for a number of reasons.

\_\_\_\_ 1 Our towns, rivers and seas are becoming more and more polluted with household waste. This could easily be prevented if people took the time to sort, save and recycle their rubbish.

\_\_\_\_ 2 Hundreds of thousands of trees are unnecessarily cut down to make paper products. Again, by recycling the paper that we would otherwise throw away we could reduce this wastage

\_\_\_\_ 3 They say that special machinery is required and that many people have to be employed to operate it, thus making recycling more expensive than simple waste disposal. They forget, however, that recycling both creates jobs and is beneficial to the environment.

All points considered, I strongly believe that people should be made aware of the benefits recycling can bring, and should be encouraged to participate in programmes that will help create a cleaner world for everyone in the future.

**Task 3**

**Supporting Ideas**

**Read the following sample essay and list the viewpoints and supporting arguments mentioned. Then, give the paragraph outline.**

**Physical Education should be taught in schools. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.**

Physical Education has been a part of the school curriculum for years, and I believe that it should remain so for a variety of reasons.

In the first place, offering Physical Education is vital for children who have neither the time, nor the opportunity to do sport elsewhere. Physical Education is especially beneficial for children living in crowded cities who do not have space to play. Doing sport at school gives them the opportunity to exercise and get rid of their excess energy. In addition, team sports develop children’s social skills encouraging them to work as part of a team and to cooperate with others.

On the other hand, some parents feel that Physical Education should not be a compulsory subject as not all children enjoy or are good at sport. These parents forget, however, that all children can benefit from physical activities and doing sport will give them the chance to improve their skills and their health.

In conclusion, I believe that Physical Education is an important part of every school curriculum since physical activity helps children to keep fit and stay energetic and alert.

**Task 4**

**Fill in the gaps with the most suitable word:**

1. A and B despite C although D moreover

2. A In addition B Also C Nevertheless D In contrast

3. A In B For C About D With

4. A Firstly B The first C The one D Initially

5. A future B present C beginning D past

6. A told B heard C spoken D suggested

7. A Therefore B However C Moreover D Despite

8. A reason B view C argument D opinion

9. A then B as C and D too

10. A In contrast B To sum up C At last D Fourthly

**The death penalty cannot be defended. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.**

Some countries still have the death penalty, …………………………..(1) it no longer exists in Britain. ……………………….(2), after a particularly violent murder, British people sometimes call for it to be brought back. ……………………………(3) my opinion, the death penalty cannot be defended for a number of reasons.

………………………………(4) and most important reason is that one can never be entirely certain that the accused person is guilty. In the ……………….(5), people have been sentenced to death and later it is discovered that they were completely innocent.

It is often …………………..(6) that the death penalty prevents crime and that the risk of death acts as a deterrent. ………………………….(7), many serious crimes are caused by a sudden and very powerful emotion. In these cases, the individual is not thinking sensibly and does not stop to consider the risks.

One final ………………………(8) against the death penalty is that is sets a bad example. The laws of society should reflect its values. If it is wrong for one individual to murder another, …………………………(9) it is also wrong for the state to execute an individual.

………………………………….(10), I believe the death penalty cannot be defended. There are other ways of punishing criminals and these ways should always be tried.

**Task 5**

**Comment on the essay, answering the following questions:**

Does the essay include all the points asked for in the question?

Does each paragraph have one clear topic?

Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence (TS)?

Does the writer use linking words and phrases to make the meaning clear?

Does the introduction give the reader an overall idea of the essay?

Does the conclusion summarise the whole essay and make a personal comment?

**Task 6**

**Write a brief summary of each paragraph in the spaces below:**

Introduction:

Paragraph I:

Paragraph II:

Paragraph III:

Conclusion:

**Task 7**

**Write an outline of an essay of your choice depending on the interests and material covered with your group.**

**Argument 1. Example:**

**Argument 2. Example:**

**Argument 3. Example:**

**Task 8**

**Write your essay. Make sure that it has an introduction, 3 paragraphs - each of them focusing on an argument, and a conclusion.**

**Having written your essay, please use the following checklist:**

**Yes No**

1. The essay consists of 5 paragraphs
2. The introduction states clearly what the essay will be about
3. There is a Topic Sentence introducing Paragraph 1 of the Body
4. Argument 1 is developed using supporting ideas/examples
5. There is a Topic Sentence introducing Paragraph 2 of the Body
6. Argument 2 is developed using supporting ideas/examples
7. There is a Topic Sentence introducing Paragraph 3 of the Body
8. Argument 3 is developed using supporting ideas/examples
9. The conclusion summarises the main points and makes a personal comment
10. There are linking words/phrases
11. Each sentence has the following word order: Subject Verb Object

**Task 9**

**Read at least two essays on the same topic written by your colleagues and comment on them, using the checklist above.**

**ESSAY HIGHLIGHTS**

**Vocabulary**

The following **words** are often used in essays which discuss advantages and disadvantages:

Positive points – advantages, pros, benefits, arguments in favour, a positive effect

Negative points – disadvantages, cons, drawbacks, arguments against, a negative effect

**Linking words/phrases**

First of all/Firstly/Second/Secondly/Third/Thirdly/Finally

In addition/Moreover/Furthermore/What is more

So/As a result/Therefore

However/On the other hand/In contrast

In conclusion/To sum up/On the whole

For example/ For instance

such as ……

**Grammar**

**Omission of the definite article**

In essays it is often needed to refer to things in general. For example,

*Most teachers believe that* ***exams*** *have advantages…*

*In addition,* ***exams*** *are an effective way of preparing* ***students*** *for* ***the stressful situation*** *that they may meet in their future working life.*

**Comma Rules**

All the linking words and phrases are usually followed by a comma, i.e.

First, television is educational.

However, there are both advantages and disadvantages to ……….

On the other hand, the disadvantages outnumber the advantages.

In conclusion, although it is the dream of many people to live abroad, it turns out that many people get disappointed.

For example, I saw a computer game where…

… children should be encouraged to take exercise, such as aerobics or swimming..

For instance, I have 65 channels and they all show stupid game shows…

One example of a particularly mindless compute game is …

**Brainstorming**

Every time you start writing an essay on advantages an disadvantages/an opinion essay brainstorm for about 2 – 3 minutes. In case you are asked to write about advantages and disadvantages, think of 3 advantages (plus an example for each of them) and 3 disadvantages (plus an example for each of them). In case it is an opinion essay, you should write, think of three reasons why you have a certain opinion and an example to support each of them. Do not start writing straight away!

**Structure**

**Introduction**: State what you are going to write about

**Body**:

**Advantages and Disadvantages Essays**

1 paragraph - 3 advantages + 3 examples

2 paragraph - 3 disadvantages + 3 examples

**Opinion Essays**

1 par – Argument 1+ an example

2 par – Argument 2+ an example

3 par – Argument 3+ an example

**Conclusion**: Summarise the main points of the body and make a personal comment

ANSWER KEY

**Topics of the sample essays provided in the booklet:**

Computers are a necessity. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.

Recycling is important. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.

Physical Education should be taught in schools. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.

The death penalty cannot be defended. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples.

Experiencing A Live Concert Is Always Better Than Watching It On Television. Do you agree or disagree? Support your opinion with arguments and examples. – ideas provided

**Opinion essays**

**Task 1**

a. Model A

b. Points for: saves time, are educational and fun  
Points against: jobs have been lost, unemployment, health problems

c. Model В

d. Supporting evidence

storing information on computer disks is an efficient way of keeping data - one computer disk can hold the same amount of information : as several books.

stored information can be found at the touch of a button - lives are made easier.

in the past we managed very well using other methods -become too dependent on computers.

Model A

Para 1: states topic

Para 2 arguments for and reasons

Para 3 arguments against and reasons

Para 4 summarizes points of view

Model B

Para 1 states topic and writers opinion

Para 2 1st viewpoint and reason

Para 3 2nd viewpoint and reason

Para 4 opposed viewpoint and reason

Para 5 restates writer’s opinion using different words

**Task 2**

1. B; 2 C; 3 A;

**Task 3**

argument 1: P. E. vital for most children as they have neither time nor opportunity to do sport elsewhere, supporting reason: children living in crowded cities — no space to play — by doing P.E. they can get rid of their excess energy.

argument 2: P.E. develops children's social skills, supporting reason: encourages them to work as part of a team and cooperate with others

opposing argument: Some parents feel that P.E. should not be compulsory.

supporting reason: not all children enjoy or are good at sport.

In the first place: Firstly, To start with, To begin with, etc.

In addition, Moreover, Furthermore, Besides, What is more, etc.

On the other hand: However, etc.

In conclusion: In my view, in my opinion, etc.

Paragraph Outline

Para 1: states topic and writer's opinion Para 2: 1st viewpoint and reason Para 3: 2nd viewpoint and reason Para 4: opposing viewpoint and reason Para 5: restates writer's opinion using different words

**Task 4**

1.although 2.Nevertheless 3.In 4.Firstly 5.past 6.suggested 7.However 8.argument 9.then 10.to sum up