



Argumentation 1 (individual study)

The organisation or structure of a piece of academic writing at university in the UK may differ from academic writing you have done before. Previously, you may have written essays based on compare and contrast or cause and effects models, whereas now you will be expected to write opinion essays which contain argumentation. In these *Argumentation* series of lessons, you will study and practise the mechanics of essay writing through the following stages.

1. Reading a sample essay
2. Analysing the introduction and functions for expressing argument
3. Analysing the body paragraphs and the conclusion
4. Drafting an introduction and body paragraph
5. Peer review of your first draft
6. Editing your draft and adding it to your portfolio

In this first session, you will read a sample essay, in which the writer is asked to express their position on a statement. You will notice how the writer organises information and examples within the text to develop their argument and support their position.

Student focused learning outcomes

By the end of this session, you should be better able to:

- identify an author's position and supporting evidence in an essay

- recognise the stages of an academic essay

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≡ Preparing to analyse an essay

≡ Analysing an essay

≡ Preparing to talk about the essay

≡ Self check

Preparing to analyse an essay

Task 1

Read the description then consider the questions below.

The essay that you are going to read addresses multi-generational living. This is when multiple generations of the same family all live together. This can happen when older people live in their children's homes or when adult children move back to their parents' homes. Many multi-generational homes also include grandchildren.

1

Is multi-generational living common in your country?

2

Have you lived in a multi-generational home? If so, was it a positive/negative experience?

3

What do you think the main reasons for multi-generational living are?

Task 2

Look at the essay title and note down some predictions.

It benefits society when family units living together include the older generation. What is your view on this matter?

Predict:

1

What benefits, if any, you think the author might identify.

2

What problems, if any, you think the author might identify.

After you read the essay, check your predictions to see if they are correct.

Analysing an essay

Task 3

Study the table below. It shows a possible framework for an academic essay.

When you read the essay, you will notice how it corresponds to the sub-stages in the framework.

| | | |
|--------------|------|------------|
| INTRODUCTION | BODY | CONCLUSION |
|--------------|------|------------|

The introduction gives an overview of the context and content of the essay. It contains a series of sub-stages.

| Possible sub-stages | Purpose of stage |
|---------------------------------|--|
| General statement | To introduce the reader to the subject of the essay |
| Definition(s) | To explain any important terms to the reader |
| Position | To present the writer's position on the topic |
| Preview/scope/overview of essay | To explain to the reader what aspects of the topic will be included in the essay |

INTRODUCTION

BODY

CONCLUSION

The main part of the essay is where arguments are presented, then supported with evidence and explanations.

| Sub-stage | Purpose of stage |
|--|---|
| Arguments (presented in different paragraphs – see <i>Writing paragraphs effectively</i>) | To explain to the reader the evidence that supports the thesis, with the most important ideas first |

INTRODUCTION

BODY

CONCLUSION

The aim of the conclusion is to briefly review key points and relate the argument to the real world (no new points or evidence are given in the conclusion).

| Sub-stages | Purpose of stage |
|-------------------|--|
| Summary | To give the reader a recap of the main ideas and restate the writer's position |
| Recommendation(s) | To tell the reader what the writer believes is the best action to take considering the evidence in the essay |

Task 4

1

Read the sample essay below, then check your predictions from Task 2.

2

Read the essay again and note how sections of the essay correspond to the sub-stages in the framework in Task 3.

Please note that the sample essay does not contain any citations, which are a key feature of academic writing.

For the purposes of demonstrating basic essay structure, the citations have been removed. You will see how sources are used to support arguments in future lessons.

It benefits society when family units living together include the older generation. What is your view on this matter?

There has been some talk in political circles that some responsibility for social welfare should be shifted from governments to families. This would involve a reversal of the current trend towards increasingly smaller families and would encourage several generations to live together in extended families. However, this is a dangerous policy that could lead to a variety of social problems, not

only for the elderly people themselves, but also for the families that would have to look after them.

Often, it is the elderly people themselves who are reluctant to live with their children. There are a number of possible reasons for this. The first is that many want to retain their independence. They want to be able to come and go as they please, and to be able to live their lives in their own way and not have to fit in with other people, even if they are family. If they live with their family, they may feel they have lost some control over their lives, even if the alternative is to rely on support services such as visits from nurses or people to cook their meals. Secondly, many elderly people are proud of being able to look after themselves, and would feel shame to be looked after by anyone else, even close family members. In other cases, the children may have moved to a distant city for work or other reasons, and their parents might not want to leave the place, neighbours and friends they know well, to join their children in a city or town where they have no roots.

A further problem is that people in the family, usually women, are likely to have to spend time as carers. A consequence of this can be that they have to take time out from their jobs and working lives, and not only do they lose the income and self-respect that a job provides, but also the ensuing gap in their career may mean that when they return to work, they have lost the opportunity to develop skills that could have led to promotion. This may not be to the benefit of the family or society longer term.

Extended families also reduce the independence of younger family members. A family, especially an extended one, can be a stifling

environment, in that young people can be made to feel that it is their duty to carry out the wishes of their elders, which may not always be in their best interests. This is also against nature: it is a natural tendency for young people to want to leave the parental influence and make decisions themselves. Indeed, many argue, it is only by doing this that a young person can learn valuable lessons in life through making their own decisions and being directly affected by their consequences. Though many of these young people may benefit to some extent from the greater experience and knowledge of their family elders, overall the scope for personal growth of young adult family members may be reduced in extended families.

Promoting the extended family model may also disadvantage those who, through no fault of their own, cannot live in an extended family. For example, if their children live overseas, if there is a family disagreement or if there are simply no children, then for the individuals concerned, this policy fails. No matter what happens, it is essential that government support is available to people such as these.

In conclusion, it is clear that there could be drawbacks for families and the wider society if a return to living in extended families is encouraged. Individuals should be able to choose how they organise their living arrangements, and everyone should have the chance to enjoy the benefits of independent living.

Task 5

Check your answers to Task 4.2.

Introduction —

| Sub-stages | Location of stage |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| General statement | Para 1, sentences 1, 2 |
| Definition(s) | |
| Position | Para 1, sentence 3, clause 1 |
| Preview/scope/overview of essay | Para 1, sentence 3, clause 2 |

Body —

| Sub-stages | Location of stage |
|------------|--|
| Arguments | Argument 1 – para 2, sentence 1 Argument 2 – para 3, sentence 1 Argument 3 – para 4, sentence 1 Argument 4 – para 5, sentence 1 |

Conclusion —

| Sub-stages | Location of stage |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Summary | Para 6, sentence 1 |
| Recommendation(s) | Para 6, sentence 2 |




Preparing to talk about the essay

Task 6

In *Argumentation 2*, you will discuss the essay with your class. To prepare for that discussion, you need to:

- 1 identify parts of the text that reveal the author's opinions.
- 2 identify any problems the author raises.
- 3 decide if you agree with the points the writer makes, and why/why not.

Self check

A photograph of a person's hand writing on a document at a wooden desk. A white mug of coffee is visible in the background. A purple rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'Argumentation 1 - self check'.

Argumentation 1 – self check