

Prepare for Exam Success: C1 Advanced self-access learning

Writing Part 1 – the discursive essay

Lesson summary

The topic of this lesson is **technology**. In the lesson you will:

- review the format and focus of the Writing Part 1 paper
- research a topic online in English
- make notes on useful ideas and vocabulary to help you write a discursive essay
- learn useful strategies for planning, writing and reviewing your written work.

Get to know the exam: Writing Part 1

The C1 Advanced Writing paper has two parts. Part 1 has only one task, which you **must** answer. You will:

- ✓ be given the topic of an essay and a set of notes consisting of 3 bullet points and 3 quotes
- ✓ be asked to choose two of the bullet-pointed ideas to write about
- ✓ need to give an opinion and support it with reasons
- ✓ need to write between 220 and 260 words
- ✓ have 45 minutes to complete each writing task (90 minutes in total for the Writing paper).

Top exam tip! Make sure you answer all parts of the question.

Underline the key points in the question before you start. Only write about two of the bullet points and stick to the word count. Make sure you know what 220 to 260 words look like in your handwriting; you don't want to waste time counting words in the exam.

Your essay will be assessed according to these four criteria:

Assessment Criteria¹

- **Content** –how well the task has been completed; for example, has all the important information been included in the piece of writing?
- **Communicative Achievement** –how appropriate the writing is in terms of genre; does the text communicate the ideas appropriately and effectively to the target reader?
- **Organisation** –the way the text is organised; for example, are the ideas presented coherently and are they connected through the text across sentences and paragraphs?
- **Language** –vocabulary and grammar; for example, is there a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures and how accurately are they used?

¹ © UCLES 2020 - get more information about the Assessment Criteria for Writing here
<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/286979-improve-your-english-checklist-c1.pdf>

Top tip! Use the P.O.W.E.R. process to write your practice essays:

P = Prepare - Do your research, narrow down your topic, brainstorm ideas.

O = Organise - Choose your best ideas, write a plan or outline of your essay, think about paragraphing.

W = Write it!

E = Edit your work. Check carefully for errors or unnecessary repetition.

R = Review and Reflect - When you practise for the exam, have someone else check your work too and think about what you can improve on next time.

You are now going to work through a series of steps that will guide you towards planning and writing a successful essay.

In this lesson, you decide on the topic, and conduct online research to help you plan the points you want to cover and write about in the essay.

Step 1: Prepare to write - choose and research your topic

Doing research on different topics and making your own writing practice tasks is a great way to build your vocabulary and confidence on common topics in the exam, including those you feel less confident about.

Read, think and complete the following tasks:

1. Are you a technophobe or a technophile? Do you think the following are beneficial or dangerous to society? Why?

- artificial intelligence
- social media
- the Internet
- online learning

2. Choose one topic from the list above that you find interesting, and use the Internet to research it in English, e.g. social media. This topic will be the subject you will write about in your essay today.

Essay title: **The impact of [your topic] on society today.**

- Make notes in English on **one** of the areas a) to e) below.
 - a) how the topic (e.g. social media) has influenced society
 - b) benefits
 - c) drawbacks
 - d) ways to improve it
 - e) ways that the government could help improve it
- Find at least **three** points related to your chosen topic e.g. three benefits
- Write down any vocabulary or phrases that could be useful in your essay.

Useful links:

www.google.co.uk

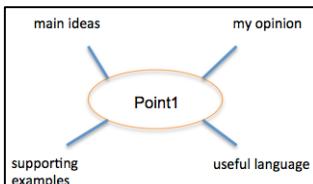
www.wikipedia.org

www.bbc.co.uk

www.theguardian.com

www.wired.com/magazine/

Top tip! Make notes using a mind map



Many people find it helps them organise their thoughts and generate new ideas if they make notes in the form of a mind map like this.

Give it a try and see if it works for you.

3. Now, we will create a Writing part 1 practice task.

In your essay you will:

- expand on 2 of the 3 points you made notes about in Exercise 2 with an explanation, examples and opinions.
- say which of the two points you think is the most significant and why.
- write using a formal or neutral style as if for a teacher or university tutor.
- write 220 to 260 words.

Step 2: Organise your ideas - make a paragraph plan

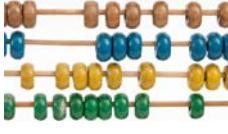
Writing the outline plan is an important step and you should not miss it out in the exam. Spending 5 to 10 minutes collecting your thoughts and organising them in a logical way, will help you fully answer the question and write a coherent and cohesive essay.

1. Make a paragraph plan in your notebook using your ideas from Step 1 and the suggestions below.

Introduction	Essay title: The impact of [your topic] on society today. Reflect on the essay title and the topic Briefly describe the topic you have chosen to write about How can you grab the reader's attention? What is your general opinion on the topic?
Paragraph 1	Point 1 – review the notes you made in Step 1 and choose your most convincing ideas for the essay. Can you justify why this point so convincing?
Paragraph 2	Point 2 – review your notes and choose your best argument. Think about how your second point adds to, or contrasts with Point 1. How can you make this clear to the reader?
Concluding paragraph	What do you feel is the most important fact or opinion you mentioned and why? What do you think the future holds in relation to this topic? How can you leave the reader with something to think about?

Step 3: Write

Use the notes you made as you prepared your paragraph plan as a guide to help you as you write your first draft. Try the following strategies to give you a feel for what it is like to write a timed essay.

	Time yourself. You are aiming to plan, write and edit your essay in 45 minutes. Don't worry, it's OK if you need to practise more than once to achieve this.
	Count your words. You need to know what 220 to 260 words looks like on the page and in your writing.
	Well done! You've worked hard. Give yourself a break!

Step 4: Edit – check your work against the assessment criteria

Plan your time carefully. Make time to read and check your essay. Now you have written your first draft, read and review your essay. Think about the four assessment criteria as you check your work.

Assessment Criteria 1. Content

Use this checklist to make sure you completed all of the key elements of the task:

- ✓ I wrote about 2 main points
- ✓ I included my opinion, explaining which point I felt was most significant, and gave reasons
- ✓ I wrote between 220 – 260 words

Assessment Criteria 2. Communicative Achievement

The examiner is checking whether the language in the essay has the appropriate formal, informal or neutral tone. Follow the links to the practice exercises to help you learn more about the differences between formal and informal English.

a. Complete the practice activity about formal grammatical structures **here**. Now check your essay. Did you use some of the same structures?

b. You can find out if a word is formal or informal by following the link to **Cambridge dictionary**. Look up the words in bold in these sentences. Are they formal or informal?

- It costs five **quid**.
- I **reckon** there are some advantages to this.

English Qualifications

c. Are there any words you have used in your essay that you are not sure about? Use the dictionary to check.

Assessment Criteria 3. Organisation

Top exam tip! Clear paragraphing

The first thing the examiner sees when they look at your essay is the paragraphing. Use indents or leave an empty line between each paragraph to make them stand out.

a. Think of a heading that summarises each paragraph in your essay. You don't need to write these headings in the essay; the aim is to check that each of your paragraphs covers a separate topic.

b. Do your ideas flow throughout the text? Are they connected?

- Scan for unnecessary repetition of words - could a pronoun be used instead? Are there synonyms that you could use? The **Cambridge dictionary** and **www.thesaurus.com** are useful resources to check for synonyms and related vocabulary.
- Have you used discourse markers and linking words to connect your ideas and guide the reader? For example: in addition, however, as a result, therefore, on the other hand, furthermore, to sum up.

Assessment Criteria 4. Language

You need to demonstrate you know and can use a range of grammar and vocabulary with a degree of accuracy.

You can go to the **English Vocabulary Profile** and **English Grammar Profile** websites to check that you have used some vocabulary and grammar structures at C1 Advanced level. Note: not all of the grammar and vocabulary you use needs to be at this level.

To search in the **English Grammar Profile**, type in the grammar you want to search for e.g. passive voice, relative clauses, verbs, adverbs etc. and select C1 and C2.

You can also leave the search field blank to see a range of examples at C1/C2 level.

English Grammar Profile Online

verbs Level A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2

You can search for C1+ level words by topic on the **English Vocabulary profile** or check the level of words you have used.

English Vocabulary Profile Online - British English

Search... A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 Select All Search Advanced Search Clear Results

Topic: technology | Part of Speech: - Select -

Hide culturally sensitive words Yes

Results 1 - 16 of 16 Sort by: Base Word Ascending Display # 20

Base Word	Guideword	Level	Part of Speech	Topic	Details
machinery		C1	noun	technology	Details
cookie		C2	noun	technology	Details
installation	SOFTWARE	C1	noun	technology	Details
thread	INTERNET	C2	noun	technology	Details
smart	TECHNOLOGY	C1	adjective	technology	Details

[Back to Top](#)

Study tip

Make your own **Common Errors Checklist**. Keep a record so that you know what areas of language you need to work on.

Typical common errors for most students include:

- ✓ misuse of articles ‘a’, ‘an’ and ‘the’ or no article
- ✓ subject/verb agreement – especially after relative pronouns e.g. ‘The use of social media which **are** **is** preferred…’

Build up your checklist. Check the feedback you get on your writing and add your mistakes to your Common Errors Checklist. Make sure you include the correction alongside the error.

Step 5 – Review – let someone else check your work

Once you have checked your work you can submit your essay to the Cambridge **Write and Improve** website to get immediate online feedback. Note down any corrected errors in your checklist.

Top tip! Find a study partner

Working together with other students is also a really good way to share ideas. If you have a classmate or friend who is also preparing for C1 Advanced, you can swap essays. Use the Assessment Criteria to give each other feedback. Even simple feedback like ‘*I can’t read your handwriting here*’ is good to know before the exam. Don’t forget to tell your classmate what you liked about their essay - so they know what to do more of next time.

Exam Task

Now, use the strategies and tips you have learned to do the Part 1 Exam Task. Choose Option A or Option B depending on how confident you feel.

A: Do the exam task *under exam conditions*. No dictionaries or online research! Give yourself a maximum of 45 minutes to complete the task allowing 5 to 10 minutes for planning at the start and 5 minutes for editing at the end.

B: Write the essay but *take as long as you need*. Do online research and make notes on useful vocabulary. Use a dictionary as you need it. This approach is equally beneficial as it will help you build up your range of vocabulary and ideas related to different topics including those that you are less comfortable with.



Exam task

Your class has watched a documentary about how workplaces can be made more people-friendly. You have made the notes below:

How can workplaces be made more people-friendly?

- light and ventilation
- exercise and breaks
- decoration

Some opinions expressed in the discussion:

"I find it difficult to see my computer screen."

"Our office is so much better with these plants."

"There's nowhere to have a coffee except at our desks."

Write an essay discussing two of the ways that workplaces can be made more people-friendly.

You should explain which way you think is more effective, giving reasons to support your opinion. Write your answer in 220–260 words.

You may, if you wish, make use of the opinions expressed in the discussion, but you should use your own words as far as possible.

2

Step 6 – Reflect – how successful were you?

Now you have completed both writing tasks, reflect on the following and make some notes in your notebook:

- What did you learn that you can use the next time you write an essay?
- What did you do well?
- What do you need to work on?
- Did you make any errors? Note these down and add them to your **Common Errors checklist** with the correction for next time.

² Exam Booster, © Cambridge University Press and UCLES 2018