EXAM INFORMATION & INTRODUCTION | WRITING PART

At the writing part of the exam, you will need to write either:

• an opinion essay

• a for-and-against essay

• a solutions to problem essay

• a letter of complaint

• a letter of application

⚓ **IMPORTANT** The information in this document is only written with the aim of giving you some suggestions on how to tackle the writing part of the exam in an efficient way. The model answers provided are in no way the only possible ones that might get a high score. They should only be used to have a better understanding of how you could approach certain tasks that might come up at the writing part. Allow yourself to be creative and imaginative but pay attention to how you organise and express your ideas.

WRITING | GENERAL ADVICE

Below you can read a few general pieces of advice that aim to help you to get a higher score at the writing exam:

• You will be able to select the topic that is closest to your interests, that you feel the most confident about. Therefore, make sure to spend some time to understand each task offered as an option and choose the one that you feel is the easiest for you to discuss / write about.

• Do not jump straight into writing your essay or letter. Instead, spend some time (approximately 10 minutes) generating ideas and organizing and structuring them into a logical order. Make sure you plan carefully and divide your points into paragraphs. This will save you time in the long run.

• Use a range of linking words and discourse markers to create interesting sentences and guide the reader through your answer.

• Make sure to leave enough time at the end (approximately 10 minutes) to read what you've written and check your work for grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes.

• Try to use a range of vocabulary and structures throughout.

• You should try to write an essay / letter of about 250 - 350 words. Try, as far as possible, to stay within this range, as writing a shorter piece could mean that you lose some marks and leaving out important information or examples, while writing too much might lead to diversions and an overall confusing structure.

PART I | ESSAYS

ESSAYS | GENERAL ADVICE

If you choose to write an essay, it is very important to plan and structure your ideas carefully before putting them down to paper. Below, you will find a few tips and suggestions on how to structure and plan your essays in general.

Suppose you are faced with the following task:

> *Online shopping is gaining popularity these days but some people believe that it is overrated and problematic.*

Your essay in response of the above example task will depend on whether you'll be required to state your opinion, write a balanced essay (i.e. discuss both sides) or to suggest some solutions to the problematic aspects of online shopping. In general, however, trying to structure your ideas in the following format should help you in formulating your ideas clearly and logically:

A Introduction

The introduction should consist of about two to four sentences and provide a general framework for the essay. Here are some suggestions:

• Sentence 1: Describe the background to the situation / topic and /or describe the current situation, *e.g. Nowadays, many people prefer to shop online than to go shopping in traditional high street stores.*

• Sentence 2: State the problem, the controversy or the argument, *e.g. However, online shopping has its own set of problems.*

• Sentence 3: Briefly outline both sides of the issue and/or give your own opinion (depending on the question type and what you include in the body of your essay), *e.g. While some people enjoy the convenience of internet shopping, others worry about not getting what they ordered and issues of privacy.*

B **Main body**

The main body should consist of two to three paragraphs, each making a point relevant to the argument / discussion. Here are some suggestions:

• Write a topic sentence that expresses the main point of your paragraph, *e.g. Internet shopping seems better suited to certain products than others.*

• Write one or more sentences to explain and / or provide evidence to support the point in the topic sentence, *e.g. You cannot test drive a car or try on a suit if you purchase one online, but when it comes to plane tickets, books, or music, a traditional store cannot provide much added value.*
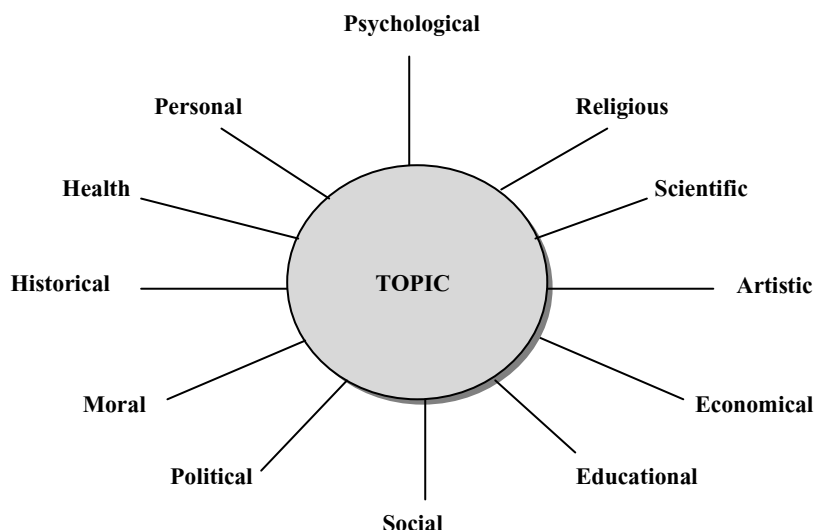
- End your paragraph with a sentence that summarises the paragraph and ties it to the topic sentence and the question, *e.g. Online shopping is ideal for items that do not need to be seen in real life, tried on or tested, and shoppers are more likely to take advantage of the internet when your purchase these things.*

C   Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes what you discussed and refers the reader back to the main argument in the question. Here you can re-state your point of view, *e.g. As we can see, despite the obvious benefits of online shopping, there are also disadvantages that come with the convenience. However, even though it is not all good, I personally think that the pros far outweigh the cons, and I am convinced that internet shopping will continue to grow in the near future.*

ESSAYS | GENERATING IDEAS

Sometimes you might find it hard to generate ideas relating to a particular topic. In these cases, a useful tool might be the use of a 'discussion clock'. The way you can use the 'discussion clock' is to imagine a diagram, similar to the one shown below:

So you have the topic under consideration in the centre, for example *social networking sites and their effects on people*. Then you would consider the topic from one of the aspects in the discussion clock; take for example, the *social aspect.* In the next step, you should try to think of an idea that relates to the topic from this perspective. For example, you could say that *social networking sites make it easier for people to keep in touch.* If you are writing a for-and-against type of essay, it is then useful to think of an opposing idea to the one you have generated previously, for example, *social networking sites might divert people's attention from their friends in real life, choosing to stay on the phone instead of engaging in face-to-face communication.* This way, you can build up your arguments and counter-arguments for your essays in an efficient way. Keep in mind that the topic might not relate to all the aspects in the discussion clock, it is your task to select the ones that are the most relevant and for which you are able to generate ideas more easily.

ESSAYS | STRUCTURING YOUR ESSAYS

The tables below contain some suggestions on how to organize your ideas depending on what type of essay you might need to write. Keep in mind, however, that you might divert slightly from the recommended structures, as long as you make sure that your essay has a clear and logical structure and that you can link your ideas in a coherent way.

Main Parts	Opinion Essay	For-and-Against Essay	Solutions to Problems Essay
Introduction	Introduce the topic **and state your opinion**	Introduce the topic **without stating your opinion**	Introduce the topic by stating the problems and its main causes / effects
Main Body	In 2 or 3 paragraphs bring arguments and examples that **support your viewpoint** In a separate paragraph discuss an opposing viewpoint and explain why it doesn't invalidate your arguments	Write 2 or 3 paragraphs that discuss one side of the topic Write 2 or 3 paragraphs that discuss the other side of the topic discussed	Write 1 or 2 paragraphs about the problem at hand (optional) Write 1 or 2 / 4 paragraphs in which you suggest solutions and discuss the expected results
Conclusion	Summarize your main arguments and **restate your opinion**	Give a balanced consideration or state your opinion	Give a brief summary and present your opinion on the problem and possible solutions

OPINION ESSAY | MODEL ANSWER & STRUCTURE

> *Some governments today seek to monitor the general public's electronic communications (in the form of phone calls, texts and emails) saying that this reduces crime. Many people oppose this, however, saying it erodes individual freedoms.*
> *Discuss aspects of this debate and give your own conclusion to the discussion.*

Explanation of the task:

This is an Opinion / Personal viewpoint task. You should give your opinion in the introduction, and use the main body to justify this with two or three reasons. The 'concession' paragraph should be one or two sentences, and the conclusion should state your opinion again.

Introduction & personal opinion: spellcheck is useful & widely used but spelling can't be ignored

Second argument & examples: spelling is an important part of language & grammar

Consideration of opposing viewpoint Main idea: software is useful but it is only a supporting tool

Almost everyone uses software to create texts these days, and we all find the 'spellcheck' type features useful. However, it would be unwise for people to completely ignore learning how to spell properly by themselves, for reasons which I will explain here.

Firstly, although we mostly use typing devices, there will always be occasions when we need to write manually or without the support of software. This may be in examinations, which are still mostly handwritten, or when writing letters or notes on paper, or filling in forms. It is essential, for example, that police records or medical notes, which are often quickly completed by hand, are accurately and clearly composed.

Secondly, understanding spelling is an integral part of learning a language and the various ways that it can be used. Most educators would agree, for example, that it is impossible to divorce spelling from grammar and syntax as part of a rigorous approach to literacy.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the whole process of learning and distinguishing different sounds and spellings is a vital part of a child's mental development, involving the complex relationship between hearing, sight, thought and the writing process itself. To say that this relationship is 'unnecessary' is to neglect some of the most fundamental stages in human development which have driven our progress for the past five thousand years, since the era of hieroglyphics and primitive inscriptions.

It is true that the use of software is an invaluable tool, and may well have a role in the process of teaching children to use computers and improving their work accordingly. However, this means that it is a supporting facility, not a replacement for human thought.

In conclusion, I feel that knowledge of spelling is essential, both for practical reasons and to support the development of a person's mind as they learn to read and write, with all the mental benefits which stem from that. It seems that software is highly unlikely to replace the human mind in this very important respect.

(344 words)

First argument & examples: supporting the opinion: there are still situations in which spelling can't be ignored

Third argument: learning spelling helps mental development

Conclusion: spelling is essential for practical & mental reasons

Comments:

This essay would receive a high score, due to its very well-organised argument, academic style and range of vocabulary.

In terms of the argument, the candidate gives his / her view in the introduction and then explains his / her reasons, with clear signposting ('*Firstly, secondly, finally.*') Simple conjunctions like this are effective as long as the paragraph is fairly advanced. The concession shows that the writer can consider opposing views and accept that they have some validity, while putting his own judgement on it ('invaluable ... but a supporting facility.') The conclusion summarises well in *new* language.

In terms of style, the writer is very persuasive in using outside opinions as evidence ('most educators would agree ... ') and in rejecting the task statement, also showing that he has analysed the task well.

The vocabulary includes some very natural and effective collocations, e.g. *'an integral part of', 'impossible to divorce spelling from grammar', 'a rigorous approach', 'the complex relationship between', 'since the era of...', 'all the mental benefits which stem from that', 'in this very important respect'*

Natural, advanced phrases like this are likely to earn you a few extra points, especially if the structure is also strong.

> *Some governments today seek to monitor the general public's electronic communications (in the form of phone calls, texts and emails) saying that this reduces crime. Many people oppose this, however, saying it erodes individual freedoms.*
>
> *Discuss aspects of this debate and give your own conclusion to the discussion.*

Explanation of the task:

Background & confirmation of the type of task

Supporting information, those who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear

Second counter-argument: very low conviction rate, better to act on specific information

It is admirable that governments seek to reduce criminality, and are prepared to use modern methods to achieve this. **However**, *the arguments on both sides of this particular discussion* (about monitoring private academic correspondence) are by no means straightforward, *as we shall see now*.

On the one hand, those who favour the interception of private digital messages and calls say that only by doing so can criminal messages be tracked and the culprits detained. Indeed, there are many examples of violent and sexual criminals (especially in the USA) who have been caught by these methods.

A further argument is that people with nothing to hide should have nothing to fear from being monitored, and that monitoring is an exercise in public safety, rather like CCTV or having police officers watch a large crowd for potential trouble-makers. Such arguments are persuasive and are often used by media supporters of interception and monitoring.

By contrast, though, other people point to the fundamental breach of civil liberties which this policing activity involves. **After all**, they say, we would not allow the police to search our homes entirely at random, or open our paper correspondence without any reason, purely on the chance of finding something incriminating.

Another counter-argument is the extremely small number of convictions that actually stem from these methods, compared to the overall population. It appears to be true that the security services are most effective when responding to specific information or observations, rather than 'trawling' the entire population's messages in the hope of detecting tiny numbers of criminals.

Overall, I feel that the monitoring of the general population in this way is unjustified, in terms of personal freedoms and the evident lack of effectiveness of such methods. We should urge our police to focus on gaining information through informants and leads from concerned citizens, which would give a higher benefit in terms of conviction rates and consequent public safety.

318 words

Supporting information - monitoring is known to reduce crime, e.g. in the USA

First counter-argument breach of liberty

Conclusion: monitoring doesn't justify loss of freedom; police need to be more focused

Comments:

This essay would receive a high score on the writing part, mostly due to its clear structure and the way the writer reports the opposing views before reaching a conclusion.

The introduction gives some brief background, and confirms that this will be a 'Discussion' essay. The first main body paragraph reports on the 'supporters' of monitoring effectively by using impersonal or third person structures: 'those who favour', 'A further argument is that.'

The 'opponents' paragraph uses similar structures well: 'By contrast', 'though', 'other people point to', 'After all', 'Another counter-argument is', 'It appears to be true that.' These phrases give the essay a very objective, academic tone, which is made even stronger by the well-chosen topic-specific vocabulary, such as: *to detain culprits, potential trouble-makers, fundamental breach of civil liberties, convictions / conviction rates, informants and leads.*

The conclusion feels logical because it summarises and paraphrases the preceding 'opponents' paragraph which the reader has just digested.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS ESSAY | MODEL ANSWER & STRUCTURE

> *The use of phones, tablets and other devices when people are walking in public is causing concern among many commentators. What dangers may arise when people focus on such devices when walking in the street?*
>
> *How could these problems be reduced?*

Explanation of the task:

This is an essay that requires you to discuss some problems related to people's use of phones and tablets in public as well as suggesting solutions to this problem.

Introduction: devices being universally used & brief plan: 2 problems + 2 solutions

As handheld devices become almost universal in our society, the number of accidents related to their use is increasing accordingly, in addition to various social dangers. I will outline two such risks, and also two possible counter-measures we could take.

First problem: accidents due to people being inattentive and supporting it with concrete examples: people, cars, traffic

Firstly, the greatest danger is surely the possibility of people failing to pay attention to their surroundings when they use such items while walking along pavements, public areas and streets. By diverting all their attention (both visual and in most cases mental) onto their device, the users may bump into other people, fall over uneven surfaces, or even step into traffic lanes, with potentially fatal results. A number of deaths among teenagers in the UK, for example is attributable to this cause each year.

Second problem: devices causing anti-social behavior and making people rude

A second problem must be the rather anti-social nature of people focussing all their thoughts on a device, to the exclusion of others around them, who may need help or guidance as much as basic courtesy. The increasingly impolite atmosphere in many public spaces may be well connected to this phenomenon.

First solution: educating people about dangers, e.g. colleges, advertising

Turning to possible solutions, it would be helpful to see a joint initiative between the authorities and mobile phone producers to raise public awareness of these risks. Such a programme could take many forms, ranging from advertising to dedicated classes in schoold and colleges, and could me aimed at both the problem of accident and the unsociable nature of excessive device usage, which would make it very cost-effective.

Second solution: installing warning systems on phones, like on cars

A further solution may be to install warning mechanisms on these devices, which detect when traffic or obstacles are nearby, so that the user does no walk blindly into danger. Such systems already exist in cars to alert drivers to impending trouble or the need to change direction.

Conclusion: both social & physical dangers, suggestions education and warning

Overall, the dangers in this situation are both physical and social. Potential remedies may involve better education, and also enhanced danger detection along the lines already used successfully in motor vehicles.

322 words

Comments:

This essay would receive a high score on the writing part, mainly due to the fact that the candidate has answered the task in an imaginative way, with organization that makes the essay clear and persuasive.

The introduction gives a clear outline of the essay and synonyms of the words used in the task description are well used, e.g. *'counter-measure'* instead of *'solutions'*.

The 'problem' section proposed physical and social dangers, and both are supported by relevant evidence, although the candidate could have given some more concrete examples for the 'anti-social' idea.

The 'solutions' section is quite creative, and the ways of implementing the 'initiative' are clearly explained (*'could take many forms, ranging from advertising to dedicated classes.'*) using *'would'* and *'could'* to show that this is an idea, not a reality. It would be awkward to use 'will' or 'must' in these situations. The writer links between the sentences well.

The summary uses fresh vocabulary to sum up.

The language throughout is advanced, and shows a strong grasp of collocations, e.g. *'potentially fatal', 'anti-social', 'increasingly impolite', 'joint initiative', 'walk blindly', 'impeding trouble'.*

[Your Address]*
[Your City, State, Zip Code]*

[Date]

[Name of Contact Person]
[Title]
[Company Name]
[Street Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear **[Contact Person]**,

[Subject - indicate the product / service addressed in your complaint]

I am writing to complain about **[state the matter, e.g. faulty installation of a product, dissatisfaction with a service, etc.]**

I am dissatisfied with your **[name service / product]** because **[describe the problem(s) encountered]**. I have already attempted to resolve this problem by **[describe attempts and action taken]**. Enclosed are copies of my records **[include copies of receipts, cancelled checks, contracts and any other relevant documents]**.

Unfortunately, the problem remains unresolved. Therefore I am hereby requesting that you **[state the specific action you want - e.g. money back, repair, exchange, etc.]**

I look forward to your reply and resolution to my problems. I will wait **[set a time limit]** before seeking third-party assistance.

Please contact me at the above email address or by phone **[provide a home or office phone number with area / country code]**.

Sincerely / Your sincerely,

[Your name]
[Account number]

Enclosed: **[List the documents enclosed / attached]**

[Your Name]
[Your Address]

[Name of Contact]
[Company Address]

[Date]

Dear Mr / Ms / Mrs [**Contact's Surname**].

Subject: Application for **[Job Title / Position]**

I am writing to you in response to your advertisement for the vacancy of **[Job Title / Position]**, which appeared in the **[Publication and Date or other reference to the job advertisement**].

As you can see from my enclosed resume **[Attach your CV and a research / work project**], my experience and qualifications match the position's requirements.

[BODY: Sum up your previous work experience and explain how that experience related to the job you're applying for. Highlight any competencies that you have gained during that time and how those competencies would benefit the company if they hired you.]

I will be in the area next week and would welcome the opportunity to personally discuss the contribution I can make to your company.

Should you have any queries regarding my application, do not hesitate to contact me on the following phone number / email address: **[Insert phone number / email address]**

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

[Your signature]
[Your name]