

a.m.d.g. **Discursive Essay Writing**

AIM: to explore a topic fully and informatively - OR- to persuade the reader to agree with your point of view on a topic which you have chosen

CHOOSING YOUR TOPIC: It is important to choose a subject in which you have a genuine interest (otherwise your essay may appear half-hearted and mechanical) ; and one which should interest the average reader (otherwise your topic might seem too specialised).

ACHIEVING YOUR AIM: you will only involve/ persuade the reader if you are:

A.- well informed (thorough research is essential)

B.- i- clear thinking and

ii- logical (jumbled ideas are confusing and unconvincing)

C.- reasonable (it is important to acknowledge that other points of view are possible : one-sided arguments are never persuasive)

A. Before writing your essay **research** the topic thoroughly.

Now, select only those facts or details which are **RELEVANT** to your point of view - irrelevant information will distract the reader and weaken your argument.

Include/however, facts which seem to contradict your point of view so that you can dismiss them in your essay

REMEMBER, YOU MUST NOTE ANY SOURCES AT THE END OF THE ESSAY

B. i- You will demonstrate that you are clear thinking in your

PARAGRAPHING.

Once you have selected relevant information you will group related details under topic headings - each of these will form a **PARAGRAPH** i.e. a group of sentences on a common theme held together by the **TOPIC**

SENTENCE (often the first sentence of the paragraph) which will signal what the content of that paragraph will be; and by **LINK WORDS** which will show the connection between the sentences and the development of the thought.

TYPES OF PARAGRAPH

You are likely to use some or all of these types of paragraph in your essay. All are designed to give the reader a fuller, clearer understanding of your argument or topic

1- DEFINITIONS/EXPLANATIONS

This paragraph will identify the subject and scope of your essay, will make clear your argument - or **THESIS** - and define exactly what you mean by key words in the title.

2- ILLUSTRATIONS/EXAMPLES

This paragraph gives the reader concrete examples and so supports the points you have made.

3- LISTS

This type of paragraph will offer a series of reasons for the state of affairs which your essay describes (e.g. "There are many reasons for the current opposition to **globalisation.....**)

However/ it is wise to **avoid**, 'Firstly....Secondly as this can become irritating!

4- COMPARISON/CONTRAST

This type of paragraph will offer a clearer understanding of your abstract point by highlighting similarities or differences

(While it is not unusual for paragraphs to be more complex than this, these are the types most commonly found in this kind of writing.)

B. ii- You will show that you are **logical** by **SEQUENCING** your paragraphs in an order which will

lead the reader through the development of your argument or your exploration of your chosen subject.

ORDERING PARAGRAPHS

Introduction:-

OPENING PARAGRAPH which usually contains explanations and definitions. This should make clear exactly what the subject and scope of your essay will be.

Development:-

VARIOUS PARAGRAPHS which contain illustrations, examples or reasons which support your point of view.

These are normally written in the order of **INCREASING IMPORTANCE** since the reader always remembers the last thing he reads.

If it is appropriate to the type of essay, this central section should also deal with all possible arguments **AGAINST** your thesis.

Conclusion:-

FINAL PARAGRAPH which sums up the central section and restates your thesis. On occasions this paragraph may contain a final argument which ends your essay with a flourish. (NB. Avoid writing, "and I think I have demonstrated conclusively..." – just in case the reader disagrees!)

Skills: Selection; Organisation; Sequencing

Certain types of essay will dictate your structure for you.

A- ARGUING A CASE e.g. *Television can seriously damage your health, School attendance should be optional*

- Introduce thesis and define terms
- Good points / Advantages
- Bad points / Disadvantages...or vice versa depending on your point of view
- Conclusion

B- DISCUSSING A PROBLEM e.g. *The problem of bullying in schools*

- Establish problem and define terms
- Causes
- Effects
- Solutions
- Conclusion

C- EXAMINING A SITUATION – as it is / as it has developed.

e.g The treatment of asylum seekers, my generation

Here/ the structure will be determined by your approach to the topic. In the first case you might choose to treat the topic **geographically** and compare the treatment of asylum seekers in different countries. Or you might choose to treat it **chronologically** - their treatment throughout the ages. In the second, you will have to decide **the categories that emerge from your notes** : you may choose to group them under e.g. the attitudes, the leisure pursuits, the ambitions, the anxieties.....of your generation.

CHOOSING YOUR STYLE AND TONE

If you want the reader to have a clear understanding of your argument your style should be **CLEAR**,

DETACHED AND IMPERSONAL. This will suggest that your view is not unbalanced or too emotional. If, however, there are moments in the essay when you hope to involve the reader's feelings, then your style will be more emotive, using colourful language and telling images. It is wise to limit this in a discursive essay. Pay attention to your **TONE** : it should never show contempt for the point of view of others and should always appear rational and balanced. Even **indignation** should be controlled.

WRITING AND EDITING

Now write the essay and remove anything that does not contribute to the force of your argument or your exploration of a topic.