

## writing to argue or persuade - 2

### 1. Brainstorm to create a list of “For” and “Against” Points


1. Before you do anything: consider your audience! Their view is different from yours but the chances are it has been well thought out and is held for good reasons. Always recognise this fact by remembering that an argument is a disagreement about a point of view, not about the quality of a person. Be tactful and diplomatic and *never* suggest that to hold a view different from your own is foolish; otherwise you are calling the person who holds the view foolish and the result is a lost argument - and lost marks!
2. Keeping your audience in mind, try to think what your ideas can offer them. After all, most people are at least a little selfish. What does your idea have that they could use? Is there something - if so, make this a key part of the argument. Certainly see below for “common ground” as this goes part way to offering what is wanted by both sides.
3. Make a list of ‘for’ and ‘against’ points and choose the best four in favour, and the strongest against. Use these to develop your paragraphs - *one* new point per paragraph, except when you use an opposing point: use this to show your view is even stronger.

### 2. Capture your reader’s interest from the first sentence...

1. State your topic in as interesting a way as you can  
→ *Make sure you choose the right level of formality and style to suit your audience.*
2. State why you believe your topic is important and worthy of your reader’s attention.
3. Show you understand that there are differences of opinion about this topic
4. Create common ground - an outcome that all sides would support.  
→ *This is an effective way of showing you are a reasonable person.*  
→ *It suggests you both have a similar goal (but you are going to show that yours is the best way to achieve it!).*
5. Show why you are in a good position to argue about your topic.
6. Indicate the general approach you will take and make your own position clear.

 Find all six of the above in the following opening paragraph - a letter to a college magazine:


The issue of whether sixth formers should be allowed to stay at home during their study periods is becoming a hot issue. Resolving it is important because many students are already flouting the college’s rules and coming into college only when they have lessons. Not surprisingly, this is leading to dissatisfaction among other students who obey the rules. Clearly, there are differing views about the issue but one thing is clear, the college needs a contented sixth form as this will lead to a more effective learning environment and better final A-level results. I am in the unusual position of having two brothers in the sixth forms of different schools, one that allows study leave and one that does not (this one!). In this letter, I shall discuss both sides of this contentious issue before putting forward what I believe to be a workable solution that will allow common sense to prevail.

 Now try your hand at doing this - write your own introduction for the following topic:  
“Providing better lunchtime facilities at college”

### 3. Use “connectives” to link and develop your points...

Firstly..., furthermore..., moreover..., in addition..., finally..., in conclusion..., in summary..., thus...

- Connectives act as grammatical chain links and help create a coherent and fluent argument.
- They impress a reader that you can use an effective and educated style.

 Now have a go at creating a short paragraph that uses connectives to support the above topic.

### 4. Use “connectives” to make opposing facts seem like problems...

It could be argued that...	however...
it has been suggested that...	whereas the truth seems to be...
some people would say that...	studies show however...
one way of looking at this is...	but some see problems with this view...
there are those that think...	but my research in Year 11 seems to suggest that...
it has been claimed that...	but another way of looking at this is...
some people consider that...	but the majority seem to be of the view that...

 Your turn... create two pairs of statements containing opposing facts for the lunchtime topic.

## 5. Use a persuasive and lively anecdote to interest your reader...

*We all love stories and tend to listen carefully; they can be very persuasive indeed. So somewhere in your writing try to use a crisp, short but highly believable anecdote to show why you think the way you do. You might even use it to open your argument:*

"When I was walking home from school a few weeks ago, I witnessed an event that really made me think..."



Now create your own anecdote to support the lunchtime topic.

## 6. Use rhetorical questions...

*Lead your audience to see things your way by using a subtle rhetorical question...*

"I wonder if you might have felt the same way if you had been unfortunate to have witnessed this?"



Create three suitable rhetorical questions concerned with the lunchtime topic.

## 7. Use "in fact" and "indeed" to strengthen a point and...

## 8. Use "however" to offer a contrasting viewpoint...



Match the pairs below and then join with "in fact", "indeed" or however...



Use a semicolon before these connectives - it adds style and introduces a pause that causes a worthwhile emphasis of the second half of the sentence.

General Statement	Specific / Detailed Statement
Having a balanced diet is considered to be very important for a person's health.	It accounts for a very high number of hospital admissions and creates a major burden both for families and the NHS.
Many people think Leicester is a very good city in which to live.	It is arguably the single most important factor in determining good health.
Smoking is a very serious health problem in the UK.	It is probably the biggest single problem facing British society today
The UK has a very poor record in providing for the health needs of elderly people.	In the early 1990s an international panel judged it to be the world's "most contented city".
Unemployment in the UK remains a very big social problem.	They suffer much higher rates of disease than younger people.

## 9. End positively and interestingly...

*A strong ending is as important as an attention-catching introduction. Use your conclusion to close your argument and to try to close the issue. Your aim is to convince your reader that your argument has covered the most important points about the issue and that your idea is the best position that can be taken on it. You should never present any new arguments in your conclusion, but you could allude to a main opposing reason just to show that you have overcome such an objection.*

*There are three parts to a strong conclusion:*

1. A restatement of your main premise - how you feel about the topic.
  2. An accurate but brief summarise of the key points in support of your idea.
  3. A general but subtle 'warning' of the consequences of **not following** your ideas and/or a general statement of how the college/community/whoever/whatever will benefit from following your ideas.
- *Remember never to introduce any new points in your conclusion.*

In conclusion, I believe that sixth formers deserve to be treated like adults, or at the very least, to be allowed to choose what is best for their own situation in consultation with their form tutor. Clearly, they are no longer prepared to tolerate being treated as young children when they are so close to adulthood. If the college continues with its present rules, it will risk alienating its older students yet further and perhaps even driving in a wedge that will be difficult to remove and which might have long lasting deleterious results.