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ABOUT THIS BOOK

HOW “SPEAK YOUR MIND IN WRITING” IS DESIGNED

The aim of this book is to help students master the writing techniques required at C1 level and help them become confident, autonomous writers. This is achieved through a carefully designed teaching approach to writing skills and enhancing students' vocabulary. Since students' needs change as the year progresses, you will find that book starts out with more guided lessons and simpler exercises, gradually leading up to more demanding and creative ones.

Introduction

The first part of the book is devoted to a thorough introduction of what a discursive essay is all about. The difference between an **Opinion essay** and a **For & Against essay** is demonstrated through essay plans and contrastive exercises. Introductions, main bodies and conclusions are specifically explained for both types of essay and consolidated through appropriate exercises. Further issues, such as the difference between a thesis statement and an intention statement, presenting and refuting an opposing argument, turning points into topic sentences and supporting topic sentences are also covered in the introductory section. These are always accompanied by exercises and appropriate linking words.

Units 1-10

The main part of the book is divided into **10 units** of two lessons each, **a** (4 pages) and **b** (2 pages). 5 of the units teach **Opinion essays** while the remaining 5 teach **For & Against essays**, in alternating order. Lessons **a** and **b** of each unit revolve around similar topics, so that students can use information and/or vocabulary from lesson **a** in their own writing in lesson **b**. Both lessons **a** and **b** start with a warm-up section of questions or a small questionnaire, which leads to a class discussion on the topic of each lesson. Essay topics are presented in the ALCE style, that is, they are followed by relevant points to be used by the writer. Each topic is briefly analyzed with the help of multiple choice questions, which gradually change into more open-ended questions as the book progresses.

Lessons a

All lessons **a** present a model essay on the lesson topic, with missing words to be filled in by the student. Teachers are encouraged to make full use of the model essays, asking students to notice how essay points are turned into sentences, or how paraphrasing of essay points is accomplished. An essay plan with blanks is also given, so as to encourage students to analyze the model in order to complete it. Lessons **a** include a whole page devoted to the presentation and use of vocabulary items relevant to the topic of each unit, entitled “**Enhance your Vocabulary.**” Each lesson **a** includes a multiple choice text preparing students for the similar topic they will encounter in lesson **b**. All lessons **a** also include a page entitled “**Improve your Writing Skills.**” This page is devoted to the further practice of specific writing techniques / issues, such as how to write introductions, how to support topic sentences or how to refute opposing opinions.

Lessons b

Lessons **b**, which present the topic students are required to write, include a page entitled “**Organize your Essay.**” On this page, students are shown how to distinguish between the pros and cons of the topic, how to turn them into topic sentences, and how to support these sentences. Exercises gradually progress from matching, to completing, to open-ended writing of paragraphs. The page typically ends with an essay plan for the students to complete with the points they decide to use in their essay, according to whether they are in favor of or against the given issue.

Further essay topics

Further essay topics of both essay formats are provided in the last section of the book, to be used at the teacher's discretion, either in the course of the school year or after **Units 1-10** have been completed. At the end of the book you will find extra pages for students to copy their corrected essays.

Introduction to ESSAY Writing

ESSAY PLANS

An argumentative essay is typically either an opinion essay or a for & against essay. Here are the main essay plans you will need for each type.

Opinion essay

Introduction

Main body para 1: first reason supporting your opinion
 para 2: second reason supporting your opinion
 para 3: third reason supporting your opinion
 OR para 3: opposing view and refutation

Conclusion

For & against essay

Introduction

Main body para 1: advantages
 para 2: disadvantages

Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

Your introduction is the first thing someone reads in your essay. It should do the following things:

- tell the readers what the topic you are writing about is
- tell the readers how you understand the topic

In order to do this, it is practical to divide your introduction into two parts:

- a) rephrasing the topic / acknowledging a situation
- b) your thesis statement OR intention statement

Introduction for opinion essays

- Rephrasing the topic
- Thesis statement

Introduction for for & against essays

- Rephrasing the topic
- Intention statement

You are expected to start your introduction with a **general comment** that lets your readers know what the topic is. **Rephrasing** the topic is a good way of doing this; that is, expressing the topic differently, using synonyms. You must be careful not to copy expressions from the rubric of your essay topic, but use your own words instead.

Your **thesis statement** is the sentence that gives the readers your opinion on the topic. It does not rephrase the topic, and it does not include explanations and examples. It is usually the last sentence of the introduction in an opinion essay.

An **intention statement** is usually used instead of a thesis statement in for and against essays. Since you have to be objective, an intention statement merely informs the reader of the fact that you will be discussing the pros and cons of the topic.

EXERCISE: Read the following introductions and identify the rephrasing of the topic, the thesis statements and the intention statements. Are they opinion essays or for and against? What is the topic of each essay?

1 Many students look forward to moving to a different city when they start university. Others prefer the safety and comfort of studying in their hometown and living in their parents' house. Studying away from home has both benefits and drawbacks, both of which will be examined below.

Topic: *Studying away from home*
Type: *For & Against essay*

2 Continuing education is a new reality in the contemporary workplace. As employers prefer staff who are familiar with the latest developments in their field, they offer regular training opportunities. Given the competitiveness of the job market today, continuous education is a beneficial process for the employee for many reasons.

Topic: *Continuing education*
Type: *Opinion essay*

3 Recent incidents in schools all over the world of children being murdered by their classmates have led to claims by educators and psychologists that the constant exposure of children to TV violence is responsible for these crimes. It seems to me that this generalization ignores the potential of television to educate and influence children in a positive manner.

Topic: *TV responsible for child violence*
Type: *Opinion essay*

Here are some useful expressions to help you start your introduction by rephrasing your topic:

- Nowadays, we are all becoming aware of (the fact that) ...
- In recent years the number of ... is on the increase.
- Recently, there is a tendency towards (+ing) ...
- ... has recently been a matter of debate between ... and ...
- Recently, there has been a great deal of controversy about ...
- It is a well-known fact that ...
- More and more (people / educators) today ...
- The trend of ... is gaining (in) popularity in recent years.

TURNING POINTS INTO TOPIC SENTENCES - OPINION ESSAY

Looking at the essay plan for an opinion essay, you will see that you are expected to write three main-body paragraphs providing reasons to support your opinion, or two plus a third one to present and refute an opposing view. Each main-body paragraph starts with a topic sentence, that is, a sentence which summarizes what the paragraph is about. The topic sentence presents the point you want to make and it is followed by supporting sentences, which explain and illustrate your point.

This is what a typical main-body paragraph should look

like:

1. Topic sentence
2. Supporting sentences
 - a. explanation and / or
 - b. example / result

EXERCISE: In the following paragraph, underline the topic sentence in red and the supporting sentences in blue:

To begin with, living on your own allows for a greater sense of freedom. You can come and go as you please without disturbing your parents or having to explain yourself for things such as staying out late or having a friend over.

Where do you get the ideas for your topic sentences?

You get them from the points provided with your essay topic. All you have to do is decide whether you are in favor of or against the issue to be discussed, and choose the ideas you can support best.

Remember not to copy the exact phrasing of the points. Look at the topic below and the points given.

ESSAY TOPIC

More and more young people choose to go to a college far away from their parents' home. Although this provides greater independence, they lose many of the comforts they would have if they went to a college closer to home and stayed with their parents. What is your opinion on leaving home to go to college?

In favor of leaving home to go to college

- you are more independent
- you become more responsible
- you learn to take care of yourself and your house

Against leaving home to go to college

- college is a big enough change without leaving home as well
- you miss the support of your parents and friends
- you have to do the housework as well as study hard

Suppose you decide to write an essay in favor of leaving home for college. You can turn all three in favor points into topic sentences or use two and add an against point as an opposing view for the third paragraph. This is what your essay will look like:

Introduction

(thesis statement: *I am in favor of leaving home to go to college.*)

Main body

para 1: *To begin with, studying away from home helps young people become more independent.*

para 2: *Secondly, the experience of going away to college makes one more responsible as a person.*

para 3: *Finally, when you live away from your parents' home, you learn to take care of yourself.*

OR

para 3: *It must be admitted, however, that by leaving home to go to college, you will miss your support network of family and friends.*

Conclusion

(restate your opinion)

EXERCISE: Look at the topic below on distance learning. Following the process discussed above, can you write an essay plan with your own topic sentences? Remember to decide if you are in favor of distance learning or against it first. Look at the next page for appropriate linking words you can use.

ESSAY TOPIC

Many people nowadays turn to distance learning in order to obtain a college degree. Although convenient, these courses have received criticism for their quality and academic standards. What is your opinion of distance learning in education?

In favor of distance learning

- it is convenient - you can study from home
- it is flexible - you can make your own schedule
- it is economical - no travel or renting costs

Against distance learning

- degrees are not equal to regular college degrees
- it is difficult to have access to libraries and other resources
- no personal relationship with other students or professors

Introduction	(thesis statement: <i>I am in favor of distance learning.</i>)
Main body	para 1: <i>First of all, distance learning is convenient, since it allows you to complete your studies without leaving your home.</i>
	para 2: <i>What is more, it provides you with the luxury of adjusting your study schedule to your needs.</i>
	para 3: <i>Finally, it helps you save money during your studies, as you have no travel or accommodation expenses.</i>
OR	para 3: <i>It must be conceded that you will not be able to use the college library and other campus facilities if you are not there in person. *</i>
Conclusion	(restate your opinion)

Here are some useful expressions to help you list similar points:

- First of all, ...
- To begin with, ...
- Secondly, ...
- What is more, ...
- Moreover, ...
- Furthermore, ...
- Finally, ...
- The main / greatest advantage/drawback of ... is ...
- Another / An additional advantage/drawback of ... is ...

TURNING POINTS INTO TOPIC SENTENCES - FOR & AGAINST ESSAY

In a for & against essay you are expected to write two main-body paragraphs, one for the pros and one for the cons. This means that you will need two topic sentences. They can be general, indicating that the pros or cons will follow, or you can start mentioning your pros / cons right away, writing a specific topic sentence.

Look at the following example for the topic of leaving home to go to college. Imagine it is phrased as a for & against essay: "Discuss the advantages and drawbacks of leaving home to go to college."

Introduction	(intention statement: <i>both advantages and disadvantages will be examined below</i>)
Main body	para 1: <i>Living on your own when you are a college student can be a very positive experience. (general)</i>
	OR <i>One of the main advantages of going away to college is the sense of independence it offers. (specific)</i>
	para 2: <i>On the other hand, leaving home to go to college has some drawbacks as well. (general)</i>
	OR <i>On the negative side, going to college and changing your living environment at the same time can be overwhelming. (specific)</i>
Conclusion	(opinion directly / indirectly or balanced consideration)

Here are some useful expressions to help you introduce disadvantages:

- On the other hand, there are considerable disadvantages to ...
- Despite its benefits, ... also has several limitations / drawbacks.
- Despite these advantages, ... exhibits some limitations / drawbacks as well.
- On the negative side, ...
- ..., however, has its disadvantages.

EXERCISE: Look again at the topic on distance learning on the previous page. If the question reads "Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning", can you write an essay plan with appropriate topic sentences? Try to think of both general and specific topic sentences. Remember to use appropriate linking words.

Introduction	(intention statement: <i>both advantages and disadvantages will be examined below</i>)
Main body	para 1: <i>Distance learning can be the right study choice for many reasons.</i>
	OR <i>One of the main advantages of studying over the Internet is the flexibility it allows for.</i>
	para 2: <i>Distance learning, however, has its disadvantages.</i>
	OR <i>On the negative side, the college degree one obtains through distance learning may lack academic validity. *</i>
Conclusion	(opinion directly / indirectly or balanced consideration)

* indicative answers

COMMON GRAMMAR MISTAKES

Many students confuse the following words and structures. Have a look and see if you can complete the examples.

• BOTH

When two things or people have something in common, we can use **both** to refer to them. **Both** requires a plural verb form.

example: Alison lives in New York. Susan lives in New York.
..... **Both** Alison and Susan live in New York.
OR Alison and Susan both **live** in New York.

• AS ... AS

When we compare two things that are the same in a way, we can use **as ... as**.

example: Some argue that freelancing can be **as profitable as** having a regular job. (profitable)

• THE + comparative ... THE + comparative

When two things have a direct cause and effect relationship, we can use **the + comparative ... the + comparative**.

example: The more science advances, **the more** diseases are eradicated. (much)
..... **The faster** you drive, **the sooner** you will reach your destination. (fast, soon)

• LIKELIKE / SIMILARLY

When two sentences or paragraphs refer to similar things, we can use **likewise** and **similarly** to introduce the second one. They are followed by a comma.

example: Watching too much TV is harmful. **Similarly / Likewise** , playing video games for hours can have a negative effect.

• IN SPIKE OF / DESPITE

When we want to show contrast, we can use **in spite of + noun phrase** or **despite + noun phrase**. Note their position in a sentence.

example: **Despite / In spite of** the high crime rate, many people prefer living in big cities.
Many people prefer living in big cities **in spite of / despite** the high crime rate.

• INVERSION

Inversion is an excellent way to show your writing skills, as long as you don't overdo it. The most common phrases used with inversion are:

- Under no circumstances
- On no account
- No sooner ... than
- Little
- Not until ...
- Never
- Hardly ever
- In very few cases
- Only when / if

example: Rarely **do** people nowadays use bicycles.
..... **Not until** they have been tested can new drugs be released for sale.

Lesson 1a

Opinion Essay

Homeschooling or public schooling?

WARM-UP: In-class discussion

- Do you think that public schools in your country provide an adequate level of education? Why/Why not?
- If you had the opportunity, would you prefer to be homeschooled instead of going to school? How would that be better/worse?
- Would you like to have the chance to design your school curriculum according to your needs? What subjects would you include/exclude?



WRITING TASK

The victory of homeschooled 13-year-old Rebecca Sealon in the 1997 National Spelling Bee brought new attention to the growing phenomenon of homeschooling. Dissatisfied with the performance of government-run schools, more and more American families have begun teaching their children at home. Estimates on the number of homeschooled children vary widely, some as high as up to 1,23 million. What are your views on homeschooling?

You **must** use at least **two points** from the box below to develop and support your opinion, but you can also add your own ideas.

Pros of homeschooling	Cons of homeschooling
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• personalized study, according to the child's interests• flexibility regarding schedule and study times• convenient: no journeys to school required• opportunity to strengthen parent-child relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no social interaction with their peers, difficult to make friends• parents are not usually trained educators• parents sacrifice their free time or even their job• difficult to impose a schedule and discipline

TASK ANALYSIS

1. What is the topic you will be discussing?

- a. Homeschooling
- b. The case of Rebecca Sealon
- c. The disadvantages of public schooling

2. What are you asked to do in your essay?

- a. Discuss the advantages of homeschooling
- b. Express your opinion on public schooling
- c. Express your opinion on homeschooling

3. How many main-body paragraphs will you need?

- a. 1 - for all arguments supporting my opinion
- b. 3 - one for each separate argument supporting my opinion
- c. 2 - one for the pros and one for the cons

4. In which part of the essay will you mention your opinion?

- a. In the introduction
- b. In the main body
- c. In the conclusion

MODEL ESSAY STUDY

A. Read the model essay and fill in the gaps with the words below. Then, find and underline the thesis statement.

motivated tailored employ exhibited adjustments personalized entitled flexibility

Given the fact that parents and students alike are growing more and more dissatisfied with the quality of education offered by public schools, it is not surprising that the trend of homeschooling is gaining popularity. What started out as the only way to educate children living in remote areas seems to be the ideal method for any student who wants to enjoy the benefits of a high-quality, (1) personalized education.

To begin with, being homeschooled offers the unique opportunity to study subjects (2) tailored to each student's needs. This means that the child's interests and inclinations are taken into account in the designing of the individual curriculum. A child who has (3) exhibited great talent for music, for example, can thus begin to specialize at a very young age, without wasting time on subjects that may be useless in the future.

Moreover, being educated at home offers greater (4) flexibility as far as a daily schedule and study time are concerned. We all know that on some days a child may be more (5) motivated to study than on others. Homeschooling allows for schedule (6) adjustments, insofar as a certain number of hours of study are completed every week.

Last, but not least, studying at home often translates into saving valuable time by not going to school and back every day. Given the fact that many children live in the suburbs or in remote areas, being homeschooled gives them the opportunity to (7) employ this time in a more constructive manner.

All things considered, it seems to me that homeschooling is a highly advantageous alternative to conventional public school education, and that children should be (8) entitled to choose the educational method that suits them best.

B. Study the model above and fill in the essay plan below.

ELT PUBLISHING

TIP:

Remember to start a separate paragraph for each new argument in the main body of your essay.

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce the topic of homeschooling and give your thesis statement, stating your opinion.

MAIN BODY

- **1st paragraph** Give the first reason for your opinion, that homeschooling is personalized. Elaborate and/or give example.
- **2nd paragraph** Give the second reason for your opinion, that homeschooling is flexible. Elaborate and/or give example.
- **3rd paragraph** Give the third reason for your opinion, that homeschooling is convenient. Elaborate and/or give example.

CONCLUSION

- Restate your opinion, that you are in favor of homeschooling, summarizing your arguments.

ENHANCE YOUR VOCABULARY

A. Match the following words to form collocations and explain their meaning.

1. continued *education*
2. curriculum *design*
3. individual *needs*
4. flexible *schedule*
5. distance *learning*

- design
- education
- learning
- schedule
- needs

6. constructive *criticism*
7. conventional *schooling*
8. attend *classes*
9. educational *facilities*
10. hold *a degree*

- facilities
- criticism
- schooling
- classes
- a degree

B. Use the words below to complete the sentences. You may need to change their forms.

impart
facilitate

part-time
trend

lifelong
pursue

process
retain

qualify
proponent

1. After graduating from college, Helen decided to *pursue* a Master's degree.
2. This software is designed to *facilitate* your learning experience.
3. *Proponents* of public schooling point out that not all parents are professionally trained educators.
4. All students should be actively involved in the learning *process*
5. There is much more to the role of the teacher than *imparting* knowledge.
6. As a teacher, it is important to keep up with the latest *trends* in education.
7. Our business promotes opportunities for *lifelong* learning.
8. Many educational systems fail to provide students with the necessary *qualifications* for the job market.
9. Most students know that frequent revision facilitates the *retention* of information.
10. Lauren is a(n) *part-time* student, as she has to work for a living.

C. Complete the passage by selecting the word which best fills each blank.



With distance learning, you are responsible for your own schedule. While there is generally a ¹ _____ time within which you must complete a course or a degree program, you are not forced into a strictly controlled ² _____.

Distance learning programs often have excellent ³ _____ from educators - often your instructor is just an email or phone call away. Many distance learning programs offer online chats, video conferences and other ⁴ _____ means for students to work together.

If you enjoy life outside a large city, distance learning offers a wide range of topics and degrees you may not find ⁵ _____. Additionally, distance learning allows you to choose the standards for the school you wish to ⁶ _____, so you're not ⁷ _____ to what is within driving distance. Even if you live in an area with numerous educational ⁸ _____, they may not ⁹ _____ the degree program or certification that interests you most - with distance learning your choices are not ¹⁰ _____ by geography.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. a. relative | c. local |
| b. decisive | <input checked="" type="radio"/> d. fixed |
| 2. a. timetable | c. margin |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> b. schedule | d. level |
| 3. <input checked="" type="radio"/> a. support | c. connection |
| b. advice | d. tutors |
| 4. a. conclusive | <input checked="" type="radio"/> c. interactive |
| b. infinite | d. interpersonal |
| 5. a. currently | <input checked="" type="radio"/> c. locally |
| b. initially | d. integrally |
| 6. <input checked="" type="radio"/> a. attend | c. admit |
| b. visit | d. graduate |
| 7. a. entitled | c. addicted |
| b. adjacent | <input checked="" type="radio"/> d. limited |
| 8. a. constructions | <input checked="" type="radio"/> c. institutions |
| b. proponents | d. facilitators |
| 9. a. hold | c. qualify |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> b. offer | d. impart |
| 10. a. questioned | c. adjusted |
| b. awarded | <input checked="" type="radio"/> d. determined |

Opening comment

Remember the basic structure of an introduction:

- For opinion essays:**
- Rephrasing the topic
 - Thesis statement

- For for & against essays:**
- Rephrasing the topic
 - Intention statement

A. Read the topics and answer the questions.

A In the light of recent terrorist attacks, more and more people believe that capital punishment should be reintroduced. What is your opinion of this argument?

1. What type of essay are you asked to write?
 a. Opinion essay b. For & against essay
2. What should your introduction include?
 a. An intention statement b. A thesis statement

B Many children with serious learning difficulties are excluded from mainstream classes and, in some cases, sent to special schools. What is your opinion of this type of schooling?

1. What type of essay are you asked to write?
 a. Opinion essay b. For & against essay
2. What should your introduction include?
 a. An intention statement b. A thesis statement

C Although nowadays we are increasingly aware of the necessity to use public transport for environmental reasons, more people own cars than ever before. Write an essay considering the benefits and limitations of public transport.

1. What type of essay are you asked to write?
 a. Opinion essay b. For & against essay
2. What should your introduction include?
 a. An intention statement b. A thesis statement

D As medical science advances and life expectancy rises, the number of elderly people in society grows. In many ways this is a mixed blessing. Discuss the positive and negative implications of an ageing population.

1. What type of essay are you asked to write?
 a. Opinion essay b. For & against essay
2. What should your introduction include?
 a. An intention statement b. A thesis statement

B. Use the following expressions to rephrase the topic for each of the essay prompts above.

- Recently, there is a tendency towards (+ing)
- Recently, there has been a great deal of controversy about ...
- In recent years the number of ... is on the increase, (despite)...
- Recently, people have become concerned that ...

A. *..Recently, there has been a great deal of controversy about .. the idea of reintroducing capital punishment to our legal .. system.**

B. *..Recently, there is a tendency towards discouraging .. students with learning disabilities from attending regular .. schools.**

C. *..In recent years the number of people who own a car is on .. the increase, despite the pressing environmental urgency .. for use of public transport.**

D. *..Recently, people have become concerned that, due to .. progress in medicine, the elderly population of our society .. is steadily increasing.**

* indicative answers

Extra Essay Topics

ESSAY TOPIC 1

Although nowadays we are increasingly aware of the necessity for using public transport for environmental reasons, more people own cars than ever before. Write an essay considering the benefits and limitations of public transport.

You **must** use at least **two** of the points below to develop and support your opinion, but you can also add your own ideas.

Pros of public transport

- more economical
- safer than driving a car
- environmentally friendly

Cons of public transport

- no flexibility in timetables
- less comfortable - often crowded
- limited destinations / stops

ESSAY TOPIC 2

The popularity of computer games is on the rise, particularly with young children, who can spend hours glued to the computer screen. Although no one can deny that computer games can be entertaining, there is great concern about the negative effects this habit has on children. In your opinion, should children be encouraged to play computer games?

You **must** use at least **two** of the points below to develop and support your opinion, but you can also add your own ideas.

In favor of computer games

- source of entertainment
- improve perception and quick reaction
- safer than playing outdoors
- help acquaint children with technology

Against computer games

- no social interaction with other children
- no physical exercise
- can be expensive
- addictive; can distract children from schoolwork

ESSAY TOPIC 3

Young people today are making increasing use of text messages, also known as texting. They feel it is an easy and fun way of communicating using their cell phones. Others, however, consider texting a threat to proper language and a poor substitute for social interaction. What are the pros and cons of communicating via text messages?

You **must** use at least **two** of the points below to develop and support your opinion, but you can also add your own ideas.

Advantages of texting

- it is fast and convenient
- it is fun and trendy
- it is cheap

Disadvantages of texting

- it is impersonal
- spelling and grammar deteriorates
- it is easily overused