

Writing Guide

Process for Successful Writing

1 Brainstorming

Make sure that you have understood the topic. Then very quickly write down all the ideas that you can think of.

- Don't worry whether the idea is relevant or not.
- Don't worry about grammar or spelling.
- Write in your own language, if you prefer!

The important thing is to write down your ideas before you forget them.



2 Planning

- Group similar ideas together.
- Cross out any irrelevant ideas.
- Give each group a name.
- Number the groups in a logical order.



3 Fast Writing

Quickly write down your points for each of the main ideas. If you can't think of a word in English, write it in your own language. Don't write complete sentences and don't worry about spelling. At this stage, your ideas are more important!



4 Drafting

Now you are ready to begin writing, using your plan from Step 2.

- Write in pencil. Leave wide margins for notes. Leave space between lines for additions and corrections.
- Write quickly. Don't worry about neatness or accuracy.



5 Improving

When you have finished writing the first draft, you will almost certainly need to improve it. Read your paragraph / essay again and clearly mark the things that you need to improve.



6 Giving Feedback

Exchange papers with a partner and make suggestions for improving each other's work. Make sure your comments are helpful and give constructive rather than negative criticism.



7 Presenting

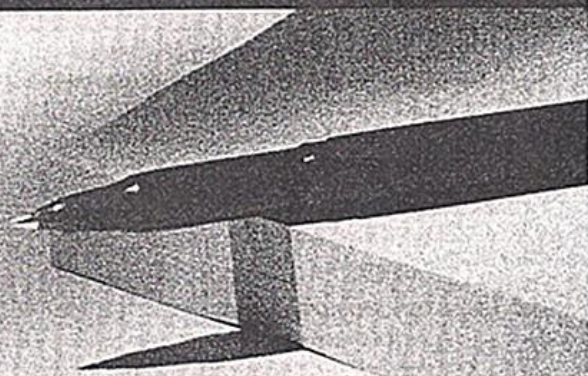
When you are satisfied with your work, present it in a neat, attractive manner. Be sure to include all your corrections.

- Leave a margin on the left-hand side.
- Make sure your paragraphs are clearly indicated.

Note: There are two ways of indicating the beginning of a paragraph:

1. by indenting (moving the first word of the paragraph to the right).
2. by skipping a line before beginning a new paragraph. In this style, called the "block style", each new paragraph begins at the left-hand margin.

Both styles are correct, but be consistent in your writing. The indented style is generally preferred for informal letters.



Read what you have written critically.
Use the checklist below as a guide.

Checklist

CONTENT AND ORGANISATION

Did I ...

- begin with a strong opening sentence?
- present my ideas clearly?
- support my ideas with details and examples?
- use connectors to link my ideas?
- end with a good closing sentence?
- use pronouns to refer to the key nouns in the paragraph?

GRAMMAR, SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION

Did I ...

- check my grammar?
- check my spelling?
- use suitable punctuation?
- use capital letters correctly?

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

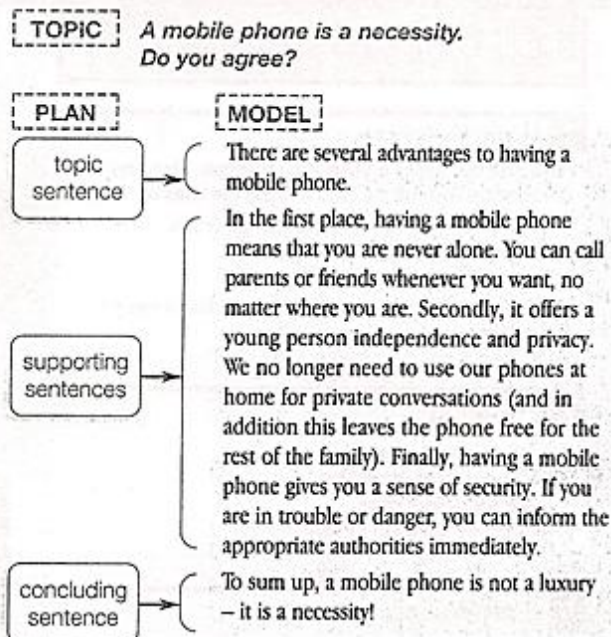
Did I ...

- make my purpose clear to the reader?
- use a suitable style of language?

Writing a Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences about a certain topic. It consists of the following parts:

- ① a **topic sentence** which states the main idea of the paragraph.
- ② **supporting sentences** which develop the topic sentence by giving reasons, details and examples.
- ③ a **concluding sentence** which summarises the main idea of the paragraph. (not always necessary)



Writing an Essay

An essay consists of several paragraphs about a certain topic. There are many different kinds of essays, but they all follow this basic plan:

① The opening

The opening is a general presentation of the topic in one or two sentences. Try to start your essay with an opening that will catch your reader's interest.

Here are some ideas:

- a. **Begin with a short anecdote about real or imaginary people or events.**

Phil was driving along a country road when suddenly he saw a lorry overtake a slow car and then crash into a bus. Phil immediately picked up his mobile phone.

- b. **Begin with one or more questions:**

Have you ever been stuck in the middle of nowhere without a public telephone in sight? Have there been times when you would have given anything just to be able to use a phone?

- c. **Begin with an unidentified pronoun to arouse the reader's curiosity.**

It can drive you crazy, yet it could also save your life. You often spend a lot of money on it, but sometimes it saves you both time and worry. Some people are even addicted to it. What is it? The mobile phone, of course!

② The body

The body consists of one or more paragraphs which expand on the topic.

When you were preparing to write, you brainstormed for ideas (see page 142). Then you put these ideas into groups and numbered the groups in a logical order. Use these groups of ideas to write the body of your essay. Each group of ideas will become a separate paragraph.

③ The closing

The closing consists of one, two three sentences that summarise the main idea. It may restate the opening in different words and should always leave the reader with a strong impression.

Without a doubt, the mobile phone is an amazing invention. In my opinion, it can improve your life, whether you are sixteen or sixty. Although it does have some minor disadvantages, I strongly believe that it has made, and will continue to make, a positive contribution to modern life.

Connectors

Connectors are linking words which join ideas and show how those ideas are related to one another.

I love mobile phones but my parents don't. (but expresses a contrast)

We don't have a mobile phone because my parents don't want one. (because expresses a reason)

I don't have a mobile phone so I'm really fed up. (so expresses a result)

They also help us to organise our writing and make it easy for the reader to follow.

In general, I prefer mobile phones to ordinary phones. In the first place, mobile phones are there when you need them. For example, if you are late in getting somewhere, you can phone and let the other person know. On the one hand, they are really useful. On the other hand, they can be really disturbing. In conclusion, I couldn't live without my mobile phone.

Study the chart of connectors and phrases below.

PURPOSE	EXAMPLES
to add points on the same topic	and / in addition / furthermore / moreover / what's more / apart from / besides / also / too
to describe cause or reason	because (of) / since / due to / for this reason / that is why / one / another reason for ... is ...
to describe a result	so / therefore / consequently / thus / as a result / as a consequence
to express a contrast	but / however / nevertheless / yet / still / although / even if / though / in spite of / despite
to describe similarity	similarly / likewise / in the same way
to express personal opinions	in my opinion / I (strongly) believe (that) / I think / feel (that) / in my view / It seems to me (that) / personally / as I see it
to describe reality	in fact / as a matter of fact / actually / the truth is that
to make general statements	in general / generally / as a rule / on the whole
to list points	to begin with / to start with / first(ly) / in the first place / first of all / secondly, thirdly, etc. / after that / then / next / finally / lastly
to give examples	for example / for instance / such as / like / particularly / in particular / especially / (more) specifically
to introduce opposing points	on the one hand / on the other hand / in contrast / contrary to / it can also be argued that / there are people who say that
to conclude	in conclusion / to sum up / finally / in short
to show sequence	first / at first / in the beginning / next / then / later / meanwhile / after that / afterwards / at last / finally / in the end
to show time	when / while / before / after / until / as soon as / by the time

Guide to Writing Styles

An Opinion

We write opinion essays in order to convince our reader that our viewpoint is correct. Look at the topic. Then study the plan and read the model.

TOPIC Should rich countries help poorer countries?

PLAN

Opening
State the topic and your opinion.

agree with topic

Body
Support your opinion with reasons, facts and examples. Include a new idea in each paragraph.

not just send money
- give them
knowledge too

rich countries should
help poorer countries
fight disease -
doctors and
medicines needed

Closing
Restate your opinion.

in favour of helping
poorer countries

MODEL

Should rich countries help poorer countries in their fight against poverty and disease? In my opinion, no one in their right mind could possibly disagree with this. It is our moral duty to help those who are less able to help themselves. We should do everything in our power to help fellow human beings who are not as lucky as we are.

I agree with sending money to poorer countries, but I strongly feel that this is not enough. We should send experts to advise them in the fields of industry, economics, agriculture and possibly tourism. By helping these countries to help themselves, I believe we would help them more than by just giving them money.

I believe that rich countries should do as much as they possibly can to help poor countries fight disease. In addition to sending our own doctors to poorer countries, we should train doctors from these countries at our universities. Moreover, we should make sure that pharmaceutical companies sell medicines to the developing world at the lowest possible prices. How could anyone want to make a profit at the expense of these poor people?

In conclusion, it is clear to me that we must help poor countries stand on their feet. As human beings we owe this to them, but it must be done in such a way that the people from these countries can still keep their respect and dignity.

Useful Language	in my opinion	it is clear that	obviously	personally
	as I see it	I think / feel / believe that	clearly	(un)fortunately
	it seems to me that	I agree / (strongly) disagree	as far as I'm concerned	of course

A Biography

When we write a biography, we want to give important information about a person in chronological order. Look at the topic. Then study the notes and the plan and read the model.

TOPIC Write a biography of Nicole Kidman.

Nicole Kidman

Date of Birth: 1967

Place of Birth: Hawaii, USA

Occupation: Actress

Education: Left school when 17 years old - to care for her sick mother

• First film: *Dead Calm* (1989) - thriller

• 1990 - Married Tom Cruise after meeting him while working on the film *Days of Thunder*

• Adopted two children - Connor Anthony and Isabella Jane

• August, 2001 - Divorced

• Other films include: *Billy Bathgate*, *Far and Away*, *To Die For*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *Practical Magic*, *Moulin Rouge*, *The Others*

• Hobbies: hiking, rock-climbing, scuba diving, skydiving

PLAN

The opening sentence introduces the person.

The information is organised in chronological order. Relative pronouns and conjunctions are used when possible.

MODEL

Actress Nicole Kidman was born in Hawaii in 1967, but grew up in Australia. She left school at the age of 17 in order to look after her mother, who was ill at the time.

Kidman's first film was *Dead Calm*, a thriller, which was produced in 1989. One year later, during the filming of *Days of Thunder*, she met Hollywood star, Tom Cruise, whom she married that same year. The couple adopted two children, however, their marriage unfortunately broke down, and they got divorced in August, 2001. Kidman, who became no less of a star than her husband, has starred in several successful films, such as *Far and Away*, *Practical Magic*, *Moulin Rouge* and *The Others*. In spite of her busy life, she still finds time for her hobbies, which include hiking, rock-climbing, scuba diving and skydiving.

Useful Vocabulary	first	before	after	soon	in (season)
	later	eventually	when	in (year)	on (day)
	then	finally	while	in (month)	on (a specific date)

An Informal Letter

Writing an informal letter is like speaking to someone you know well. Look at the topic. Then study the plan and read the model.

TOPIC Write a letter to a friend inviting him / her to visit you this summer.

PLAN

Opening

Address

Date

Greeting

Introduction
States reason
for writing.

invite friend to
come and visit

Body
Gives information,
news or details.

give friend reasons
to come: local
festival, chance to
meet friends

tell friend that
family wants to
meet him / her

Closing

persuade friend
to agree

MODEL

Rose Cottage,
South Linton
28th April, 2002

Dear Kate,

Thanks for your last letter. It was great to hear all your news. The trouble is that I always want to ask you so many questions when I get a letter from you! Why don't you come and visit me this summer? That way, we can both catch up on all our news!

If you can, you should try to come when we have our village festival – it's always a lot of fun. It's an ancient tradition where we choose a local girl to become the village queen and we have celebrations for a whole week. There are always lots of parties, and you'll be able to meet all the people I've told you about in my letters.

My family is also dying to meet you – they have already heard so much about you. My brother, Kevin, is very keen for you to come, especially after I showed him your photograph!

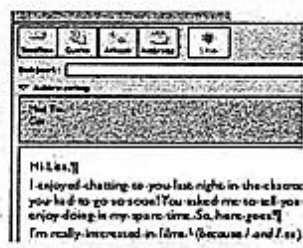
So, please say you'll come. It'll be such fun if you do. I can't wait to hear from you, so please write soon.

Love,

Jenny

An E-mail

- When we send e-mails, we write the topic of the e-mail in the place that says "subject".
- The reader's e-mail address is written in the place that says "addressing".
- We do not include the writer's address in the opening of an e-mail.
- If we write to someone often, we can begin our e-mails with just "Hi".
- Language used in business e-mails is more formal than that in personal e-mails.



Useful Language

Openings

It was great to hear from you!

I've got so much to tell you.

Sorry I haven't written for so long.

Thank you so much for ...

I was happy to hear that ...

I was sorry to hear about ...

Congratulations on ...

Closings

That's all for now.

I must sign off now.

Give my regards to ...

(I) Can't wait to hear from you.

Looking forward to seeing you.

Take care.

Be well.

Please write soon.

Regards

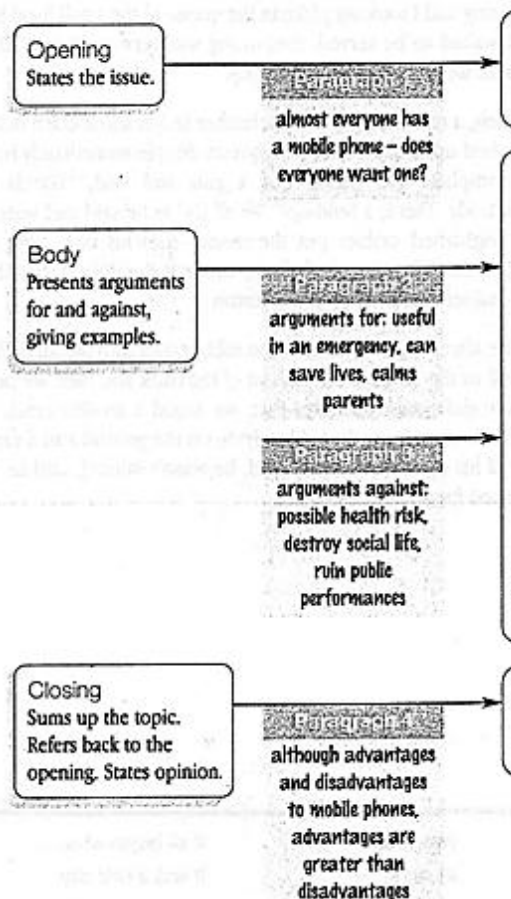
Best wishes

A For and Against Essay

When discussing an issue, we try to present an objective picture by showing both the advantages and disadvantages. We often give our personal opinion on the issue in the closing. Look at the topic. Then study the plan and read the model.

TOPIC Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones.

PLAN



MODEL

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Mobile Phones

Who doesn't have a mobile phone these days? The fact is they seem to be everywhere. However, while mobile phones certainly have many supporters, there are also people who have reservations about them.

Those who are in favour of mobile phones claim that they make communication an immediate process and people no longer need to wait until they find an ordinary phone when they need to make an urgent phone call. Moreover, they also point out that a mobile phone can be a life-saver in the case of an emergency. Finally, parents feel much more secure when they know that, thanks to mobile phones, they can contact their children whenever they want.

On the other hand, those who are against mobile phones state the fact that much research must still be carried out in order to prove decisively that mobile phones do not damage your health. Another disadvantage is the way that mobile phones are destroying our social life. How many times have you had to stop a conversation so that your partner can answer his or her mobile phone? Not to mention the disturbances they cause at concerts and theatre performances.

In conclusion, although there are two sides to a coin, I believe that mobile phones generally do improve the quality of our life. In my opinion, even if only one life has been saved thanks to a mobile phone, they have justified their existence.

Useful Language

on the one hand
on the other hand
in contrast

moreover
furthermore
finally

in the first place
firstly
secondly

in conclusion
to sum up
in short

A Narrative

Writing a narrative is like telling a story. Look at the topic. Then study the plan and read the model.

TOPIC You recently witnessed a bank robbery. Describe what you saw.

PLAN

Opening

Sets the scene with details of time, place, atmosphere and characters.

on holiday in London, need money, quiet bank, people waiting in queue

Body

Develops the plot with details of events and characters.

man came in, robbed bank, cashier pressed alarm button

Closing

Ends the story with the reason for what happened or the consequences.

robber shot in air, ran out of bank, crashed motorbike, arrested

MODEL

It all happened last year when I was on holiday in London and had to change some money. It was about 11 o'clock in the morning and I took my place in the queue in the small local bank and waited to be served. Everything was very quiet and all the people were waiting very patiently.

Then, a man wearing a black leather jacket and a crash helmet marched up to the front of the queue. People immediately began to complain. He pulled out a gun and said, "Hands up, everybody. This is a hold-up!" We all did as he said and watched the frightened cashier put the money into his bag. Next, the robber turned and walked slowly towards the door. Meanwhile, the cashier pressed the alarm button.

The alarm began to sound, the robber shot into the air and we all fell to the ground. He ran out of the bank and then we heard a motorbike start up. After that, we heard a terrible crash. We rushed out and saw the robber lying on the ground and a car on top of his motorbike. In the end, he wasn't injured, and he was arrested for robbing the bank.

Useful Language

Time expressions
show when things
happened.

when
while
before
after

as soon as
by the time
until
during

yesterday
all night
a week later
last summer

It all began when ...
It was a cold day
before I knew it
suddenly

Expressions of sequence indicate the
chronological order of events.

first
at first

in the beginning
to begin with

next
at last

meanwhile
later

in the end
finally

A Description of a Place

When we write a description of a place, we want to recreate the atmosphere of that place for our reader. Look at the topic. Then study the plan and read the model.

TOPIC Describe a place you have visited and say what you liked about it.

PLAN

Opening
Includes the name and location of the place.

India - Rajasthan

Body
Describes physical characteristics, special features and points of interest. Also describes the atmosphere, the people, the culture and the way of life.

Includes historical details, sounds, smells and personal feelings about the place. Writer uses as many adjectives as possible.

north of India:
famous cities - Delhi, Agra, Jaipur; hot and dry - not enough rain

favourite place - Jaipur; Palace of the Winds, elephant ride to Amber Fort

Closing
States general conclusion about the place, as well as the writer's personal opinion or attitude.

recommend going there in spite of fears people might have

MODEL

Last summer, I visited India with some friends. We had always wanted to go to an Asian country, and since India is such a vast country, we decided to concentrate on the Rajasthan area.

Rajasthan is a region in the north of India with many beautiful ancient towns which are associated with India's moghul rulers. The most famous (and probably the most visited) towns are Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. When we visited Rajasthan, the weather was extremely hot and the rivers and lakes were almost dry. People were praying that rain would soon fall.

I particularly liked Jaipur, "the pink city", so called because of the colour of the stone which they used to build the buildings with. The maharajah's palace and the Palace of the Winds are well worth a visit, but for me, nothing can beat a trip to the Amber Fort, high in the mountains above the city of Jaipur. To make the experience even more unforgettable, you can ride up to the fort by elephant!

In conclusion, although many people are afraid to go to India because of the poverty or the diseases you can catch there, I would still recommend that you go there. If you take care, nothing bad will happen to you. Quite the opposite, in fact!

Useful Vocabulary

Geography

beach
coast
lakes
mountains
valley

Adjectives

ancient magnificent
beautiful peaceful
delicious quiet
friendly splendid
kind wonderful

Culture and History

castles
churches
festivals
markets
museums

A Summary

When we write a summary, we want to give only the most important information. Look at the topic. Then read the original article, the writer's notes and the model.

TOPIC Write a summary using 50-70 words.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

ARE SCHOOLS FOR SALE?

Schools are always in need of more money. Some schools in the United States are solving their money problems by making private business deals with big companies.

These schools have signed contracts with certain companies. This means that the company will give the school new equipment or pay for special programmes. In return, the school must advertise the company's product. Pupils participating in competitive school sports, for example, wear sports clothes with the name of the company on them. Pupils will see and remember the name of the product, and the company may get new customers.

In 1997, an unusual 10-year contract was signed between Dr. Pepper, a soft drinks company, and the Grapevine-Colleyville School District in Texas. The school district agreed to let the company paint its logo on the roof of the school building. The Dr. Pepper logo could be seen by all the planes landing and taking off from Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. In return, the soft drinks company paid the school district \$4 million!

Many parents are angry about these contracts between schools and businesses. They feel that the businesses aren't really interested in education. Many teachers are afraid that businesses might try to influence what is taught in the schools. They don't want to mix education and business.

WRITER'S NOTES

Paragraph 1
schools are always in need of money. Schools sign contracts with big companies.

Paragraph 2
schools must advertise companies' products. Pupils in sports competitions wear clothes with company names on them.

Paragraph 3
in 1997, the Grapevine-Colleyville School let the Dr. Pepper soft drinks company paint logo on roof of school building.

Paragraph 4
Parents and teachers are angry and afraid. don't want to mix education and business.

PLAN

Summary
Includes the most important information.
Ideas are organised into one cohesive paragraph.
The language is simple.
There are no unnecessary examples, details or personal opinions.
The writer uses only 50 words.

MODEL

In order to make money, some American schools have made advertising deals with large commercial companies. In return for a cash payment, the schools allow the companies to advertise on their buildings and even on their sports clothes. Many parents and teachers, however, are against combining commercial and academic interests.

Connectors

although
though
in spite of

however
consequently
since

due to
therefore
moreover

whereas
because of
in addition

despite
because
furthermore

A Formal Letter

When we write a formal letter, the presentation is just as important as the contents of the letter. Look at the topic. Then study the plan and read the model.

TOPIC Write a letter in response to an advertisement for a sailing expedition in a student newspaper.

PLAN

Opening

Paragraph 1
Address of person
writing the letter
Date
Name and address
of person or business
being written to
Greeting

Introduction
Gives a clear reason
for writing.

Paragraph 2
writing in reply to
advertisement for
sailing expedition

Body
Includes relevant
information and
questions.

Paragraph 3
ask for more
information –
experience required

Paragraph 4
ask for information
about price

Paragraph 5
ask questions about
the food on the ship

Conclusion

Paragraph 6
thanks and polite
finish

Closing

Paragraph 7
Signature with full
name written
under it

MODEL

32 Smithfield Court,
EXETER

26th August, 2002

Captain Ned Bluebeard,
The Pirate Tavern,
Cat's Eye Bay

Dear Captain Bluebeard,

I am writing in reply to your advertisement which appeared in the 25th August edition of *The Student Weekly*. You say that you are organising a sailing expedition in the Mediterranean Sea for young people and I would be grateful for more information about the expedition.

First of all, I would like to know whether it is necessary to have previous sailing experience. I would also be grateful if you could tell me what kind of boat you intend to sail on. My only sailing experience has been on a yacht.

Secondly, could you tell me what the cost of participating in the expedition is? As it is aimed at students, I hope that it will not be too expensive.

Finally, I would be interested in knowing what arrangements have been made with regard to food. I am a vegetarian and I hope that this will not cause any problems.

I would like to thank you in advance for your assistance, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

James Hawkins

James Hawkins

Useful Phrases

I am writing in response to ...
I would like to apply for the job/position of ...
I read your advertisement for ...
I would be grateful for information about ...
I would appreciate information on ...
I wish to find out more about ...

My qualifications include ...
Could you tell me if ...
Thank you for your assistance.
I look forward to hearing from you.
I look forward to receiving a reply.
I would be happy to attend an interview ...