7. The Sections of the Essay

7.1 The introduction

The **purpose** of the introduction is to let the reader know

> a) the topic
> b) the aspect of the topic being dealt with
> c) the stand (attitude) taken by the writer to the topic.

In other words, the introduction actually contains the conclusion!

For example, if the topic is:

> *Many modern children spend too much time sitting in front of a television screen. This is extremely harmful to their development. Therefore parents should strictly limit the time that children spend in this way. Do you agree?*

you should let your reader know in the introduction whether your answer is yes, I agree, or no, I disagree. The rest of the essay then provides support for your argument. The **structure** of the introduction usually follows a common pattern. To introduce the topic and explain why it is worthwhile talking about, you will normally need a statement something like this:

> *Television is so common now that it is hard to imagine life without it.*

That is, the first sentence typically makes a general statement about a situation.

The next statement then narrows the topic down to a specific aspect that he writer will deal with. For example:

> *However, as many people have pointed out, most children spend too much time in front of the screen, and this is harmful.*

Note that the second statement often contains the word *but* or *however,* to show that the writer has something new or different to say. For example, if the first sentence is:

> *Many people complain that children spend a great proportion of their lives watching television.*

then the second statement would be more likely to present the opposite view, such as:

> *This may be true in some cases, but it is certainly not common enough to be a serious problem.*

It is, however, not always the case that the second statement contains a *but* or *however.* It may also support and strengthen the first statement.

Here are some examples:

> *Television has become so much a part of our lives that many people do not realise how many hours they actually spend watching it. In fact, it has been pointed out that most children watch far more television than is good for them.*

Here is another topic:

> **The environment is one of the most important issues in the world today, but governments are not doing enough about it. To what extent do you think that individuals can help to protect the environment?**

> *People are gradually becoming aware of the fact that we are destroying our natural environment. We should realise that none of the other problems that we face are more important than this one, but clearly governments are not taking a lead in dealing with the issue. It is therefore up to individual citizens to do something about it.*

Note: In the above example the writer's conclusion is presented in the third sentence. A statement, in this context, is not the same as a sentence. That is to say, the writer's opinion is presented as the second statement, but not necessarily the second sentence. See the model essays in Appendix B for more examples.

WARNING: You must avoid repeating the exact words of the topic. If you repeat the words, you can gain no marks, since they are not your words. The examiner will simply ignore them. If you paraphrase, you are displaying your language skills.

Look again at the examples given above, and see how the first sentence in each case is a paraphrase of the topic as it is given.

TASK 19

The following are five introductions to the essay topic:

> *Modern technology has increased our material wealth, but not our happiness. To what extent do you agree with this statement?*

However, the sentences have been jumbled. Find the first and second sentences which belong together in each case, to make five different introductions.

1. *Every country in the world is aiming for technological development.*

2. *The most important thing for happiness, however, is not possessions, but relationships.*

3. *For most people, technological development means an improvement in their life-style.*

4. *Their governments are not making their people more contented, however, as inequalities in society continue to grow.*

5. *Modern technology can provide enormous benefits in terms of material goods.*

6. *It seems clear, however, that this is an old-fashioned view, and that technological inventions actually allow people to have more time and leisure to satisfy their spiritual needs.*

7. *Technology has brought many changes to people's lives, not all of which are beneficial.*

8. *Some people claim that modern technology is harming society's spiritual and traditional values.*

9. *In fact, in many cases people have suffered enormously because of these changes.*

10. *However, while some people enjoy an easier life, others are often made unemployed as a result of new technology, and most people now feel insecure and unhappy as a result.*

☞ *Answer Key*

TASK 20

Select the best pair of sentences from the following to introduce the topic:

The Internet has provided great benefits, but at the same time it has also created new problems and inequalities. Is it possible to control some of these problems?

a)   *Most people would like to have access to the Internet.*

b)   *The Internet has changed our lives more than any other modern technology.*

c)   *The Internet has given both advantages and disadvantages to our society.*

d)   *The Internet is a relatively new phenomenon.*

e)   *In fact, with the Internet it is possible to do many things.*

f)   *However, the Internet can help terrorists to communicate with each other.*

g)   *At the same time it has created an enormous gap between those who have access to it and those who do not.*

h)   *On the other hand it has created some problems.*

☛ *Answer Key*

7.1.1 Grammar and Vocabulary in the Introduction

The introduction will normally be in the present tense *(e.g. people complain)*, or the present continuous *(people are gradually becoming aware)*, or in the present perfect tense *(people have pointed out)*.

After your introductory statement you need to connect the second statement (i.e. second or third etc. sentence) either by showing contrast, or by adding emphasis:

Contrast Connectors: *but, however, nevertheless, by / in contrast, on the other hand, in spite of this, while, whereas, although.*

NOTE: IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO USE THESE CORRECTLY.

Note: It is best to avoid starting a sentence with But, since it is rather informal to do so. *However* is the most common and the most useful word. It can be used for almost every situation. Note, **however**, that it is often better to use it in the **second** position in the sentence. Avoid using **on the contrary** and take great care with other connectors.

TASK 21

Supply a suitable connector in the gaps in the following introductory sentences:

a) Many people believe that nuclear energy is clean. _____
it is potentially more dangerous than any other technology that we use.

b) The Internet has brought many opportunities to people. _____
it has also increased the gap between rich and poor people and societies.

c) We have clearly gained many benefits from modern technology. _____
it can be argued that happiness does not depend on material comforts.

☛ *Answer Key*

TASK 22

Write introductions for the following topics, remembering to:

    a) write a general statement in your first sentence
    b) indicate your <u>o</u>wn position or stand on the topic in the second or
       third sentence.
    c) paraphrase the words of the topic.

1. It is generally agreed that the world is facing serious environmental problems of pollution, global warming and the loss of resources such as fresh water. Some people believe that these problems can be solved by technological inventions and developments, while others feel strongly that we can only solve these problems by consuming less, and living simpler life-styles. What is your opinion?

2. Many people feel strongly that health services should be provided by the government and should be freely available. Others argue that only privatised health care can provide good quality health services. To what extent do you believe that health and medical services should be privatised?

7.2 The Body

The body will typically consist of about three paragraphs, presenting points to support your argument. You will have worked out your ideas in the planning stage, when organising your brainstormed ideas. Now it is simply a matter of presenting one main point in each paragraph.

A paragraph is like a mini-essay, since it is also a **unit** of writing. That means that, like in an essay, you must let the reader know as soon as possible what your proposition or statement is, and then support it. This is usually done with a **topic sentence.** Let us look again at the classification in 4.3 of brainstormed ideas on the question about the Internet.

> *The Internet has revolutionised the modern world, but it has also created new problems and inequalities. Do you agree?*

Our brainstorming produced the following ideas:

BUSINESS ACTIVITIES	INFORMATION / RESEARCH	COMMUNICATION
Positive:	Positive:	Positive:
online banking	distance education	business communication
online shopping	info. for research	email
airline bookings		sharing info
concert bookings		chat-rooms
theatre bookings		police sharing info
Negative:	Negative:	Negative:
hackers	no access for poor people	terrorists sharing info
pornography		

First of all, we will look at which of the points we may want to delete. We will want to keep the main categories: business activities, information / research (include education here, perhaps), and communication. Not all the details are going to be worth keeping, but at present we are only considering the topic sentences, so we can ignore that for now.

Next we need to **rank** the ideas in order of importance. Perhaps we can start with business activities, because they are the most widespread use of the Internet at present, and then go on to talk about education, which is very important, and finally discuss personal communication.

However, we also need to discuss the positive and negative aspects. At this stage we need to decide whether to start with our three categories, and list the positive and negative aspects within each, or to start with the positive aspects, listing all three categories in a row, and then to move on to the negative ones. Either organisation system is possible. Here is a suggestion about how to construct topic sentences for the first system:

> *There is no doubt that the Internet has brought about an almost unbelievable change in the way business and banking is conducted.*

Next, we must go on to the negative aspects, so our next paragraph could begin something like this:

> *However, since the Internet is not available to most people in developing countries, it is clear that the gap between the rich and the poor countries has actually widened enormously since online business and banking have been introduced.*

If we continue like this, we would end up with 6 paragraphs in the body (3 categories x positive and negative), which is too long for the test essay. So, to keep it shorter, and to have a little variety, you could introduce the positive and negative ideas together in the next paragraph's topic sentence, like this:

> *In education and research the situation is similar: the Internet has made revolutionary changes in these fields, but the lack of access for poor people and poor societies is creating serious inequalities.*

Notice how, if you have a point that appears twice in your lists, you can use it to link one paragraph to the next, as above *(widened gap –similar –serious inequalities)*.

Finally, we need to mention communication in general, which is already covered by some of the above points, as well as personal communication. Again, we can link the concepts:

> *The Internet basically involves communication, not only in business and education, as mentioned above, but also for personal information exchange.*

There is , of course, an almost endless number of ways of introducing the same concepts at the beginning of each paragraph. The main points to remember are:

>   a) the introductory paragraph introduces the main idea of the essay, and
>   the topic sentences introduce the main supporting ideas
>   b) the topic sentence introduces the main idea of the paragraph, and the
>   following sentences provide supporting ideas for it.

7.2.1 Vocabulary in the Body

Connectors will occur throughout the body of your essay. The most common ones are those that are used for **listing,** and for **addition,** for **consequences** and for **emphasis.** The basic **listing** connectors are:

> *firstly; secondly; the third feature etc.; finally; in conclusion.*

These are the most boring ones. Rather better are the ones that show **addition:**

> *both...and; also; not only....but also....; furthermore; moreover; in addition.*

Note: Do not overuse these connectors. It is very boring to read one of these at the beginning of each sentence! Note also that it is better to put *also* in the second position in the sentence, not at the beginning.

The most common connectors showing **effects, results** or **consequences** are:

> *therefore; consequently; for this reason; as a result; because of this.*

Note also: All of the above must start a new sentence —they cannot be used to join clauses. For example

> *#Not everyone has access to the Internet therefore it divides communities*

is wrong. You can either use a semi-colon (;) or use *and therefore.*

Connectors for **emphasis** are useful and include:

> *in fact; what is more; in particular.*

When giving **examples** you can use:

> *for example; for instance; such as.*

Be careful with the latter: *such as* can NOT begin a clause. It is a preposition, followed by a noun (or gerund). (And please never use *#such like,* which is not correct English!)

There are of course many other connectors. Make yourself familiar with the most useful ones and be careful to use them accurately or your logic will appear faulty.

7.3 The Conclusion

The conclusion need not be long. In fact, it can be as short as one sentence. A good conclusion will not be merely a repetition of the main topic statement of the essay, or of your proposition statement in the introduction, since that is rather boring to read and does not show your English skills. Nevertheless, it should contain some kind of a summary of the main argument or proposition of the essay. It is also a good idea to include a comment on the **implications** of your conclusion.

If, for instance, you make a **recommendation,** you can comment on what may happen if your recommendation is followed. For example, (for the topic that **children's viewing of television should be controlled**):

> *Therefore it is important to limit the amount of television that children watch, otherwise they will suffer educationally and socially as they grow up.*

Or: *Therefore, if children's television viewing is sensibly supervised it will allow them to enjoy certain programs as well as to develop the skills that they need.*

Note the **paraphrases** for the word *control.* As with the introduction, if you want to stay close to the topic statement it is desirable to attempt to paraphrase it. In some cases you can even avoid a paraphrase completely by summarising in a new way. For example:

> *Children do not always know what is best for them, and in this case, as in many other cases, the guidance of parents is essential if they are to grow up as well-balanced people.*

In some cases a conclusion may consider possible **future outcomes.** For example:

> *The Internet has already become widespread and almost indispensable, and it can be expected that in future access will become cheaper and easier for everyone in the world.*

Or: *Although atomic energy can never run out, unlike fossil fuels, it is clear that other, less dangerous sources of energy will need to be developed for future generations.*

7.3.1 Grammar and Vocabulary in the Conclusion

Make sure that you know how to use various terms expressing **implications** correctly. These include:

> *otherwise; in this case; under these circumstances*

followed by the future tense.

You will also need the language of **speculation** (see below).

For predictions you will need the future tense, of course, and it is important to use **modifiers** in this case, such as *it is likely that, in all probability.* (See 8.1 below).

There are, of course, connectors that are typically used for conclusions. The first one on the list is the most unimaginative, and it is better to think of a more interesting one if you can.

> *In conclusion, finally, therefore, consequently, clearly, it is clear, on the whole, in other words, generally speaking*

Remember that you can combine *therefore* with other connectors: e.g. *It is clear, therefore, that..; Generally speaking, therefore.*

Note: Beware of the common error of using *more* for emphasis. *More* is a comparative term.
For example:

> *People are more interested in making money*

does not mean

> *People are very interested in making money.*

If you say they are *more interested,* it should mean that they are *more interested than before,* or *more interested in making money* than something else, but if there is no comparison expressed or clearly implied, then *more* should not be used.