

Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9–1) English as a Second Language 0510/0511 \ 0993/0991 (for examination from 2024)

Writing an article

Overview

The purpose of an article is often to inform and persuade the reader. Articles give the reader information about a certain topic and can also be used to persuade the reader that a certain viewpoint is correct. However, they often provide a balanced argument which lets the reader make up their own mind about the topic. Articles can be used in newspapers or magazines and will express a particular viewpoint or perspective – this may be positive or negative depending on the topic. The language and vocabulary you use when writing an article will depend on the audience you are writing for.

Content

Content covers:

- Task fulfilment (i.e. whether the piece fulfills the task, how relevant the content is and an awareness of style, register, purpose and audience).
- Development of ideas (i.e. the detail/explanation provided).

Language

Language covers:

- Range (i.e. complexity of grammatical and lexical structures).
- Accuracy (i.e. the level of grammatical and lexical accuracy, the type of errors and whether these impede communication).
- Organisation (i.e. whether ideas are organised and sequenced effectively, the range of linking words/phrases and other cohesive devices).

Tips for writing an article

Language

- think about the audience that the article is for
- the tone of most articles should be semi-formal
- your article should be persuasive but also engaging
- include a range of grammatical structures and related vocabulary
- avoid writing very simple sentences with the same grammatical structures and simple repetitive vocabulary.

Organisation

An article should have well-developed ideas that are organised into paragraphs as appropriate. Make sure that each paragraph deals with a different idea.

Use linking words/phrases which suit a more formal type of writing (e.g. furthermore, however, in conclusion, etc.) to link ideas in sentences and paragraphs.

One way to structure your article is to have a balanced argument (i.e. you discuss the ideas for and against the viewpoint given in the task):

- Introduction – outline the main point of the article. Engage the reader to make them interested in the topic (e.g. ask a rhetorical question).
- Opinion – agree (or disagree) with the viewpoint expressed in the task. Support your ideas with evidence/reasons to persuade the reader.
- Opinion – now disagree (or agree) with the viewpoint expressed in the task. Support your ideas with evidence/reasons to persuade the reader.
- Conclusion – this should summarise what you have said and what you think about the viewpoint. You can link your conclusion back to the beginning and/or encourage the reader to decide what they think about the same viewpoint.

Alternatively, your article can be one-sided (i.e. you only agree, or disagree, with the viewpoint).

In this case, the organisation of your article would be the same as above, apart from the third paragraph. In the third paragraph you should offer another reason why you agree, or disagree, with the viewpoint.

Example task

This is an example of a **Paper 1 Exercise 6** task. We have annotated the question below with some **guidance** for candidates to help them prepare their answer and encourage them to focus on what the question is asking for. This guidance is not given to candidates in the examination.

Once you have read through the **task** and all the **instructions**, you should also read the **comments**. Before you start writing, **plan** how many paragraphs you will need and what ideas you want to include in each paragraph.

In class, you recently had a discussion about whether towns and cities should have more parks and green spaces.

You have decided to write an article for your school magazine.

Here are some comments from students in your class:

It's a lot of hard work to look after a park.

We need more houses, not more green spaces.

I love running in the park!

Seeing birds in the trees is lovely.

Now write an article for your school magazine, giving your views.

The comments above may give you some ideas, and you should also use some ideas of your own.

Write about 120 to 160 words.

You will receive up to 6 marks for the content of your article and up to 9 marks for the language used.

The number of words is for guidance: write **about 120 to 160 words**. Paying attention to the guidance for word limits will help you to plan your time in the examination more effectively.

The **purpose** of the article is to express your opinion about the viewpoint presented in the task.

Other students from your school are the intended **audience** for the article.

You can use some of the ideas from the **comments** in your article, but you should expand on them and/or include other **ideas of your own**.

The response to this question needs to be in the form of an **article** for a school magazine, so the **register** should be **informal to semi-formal** but should avoid language that is too idiomatic and colloquial.

Example candidate response and examiner comments

Example Candidate Response – middle	Examiner comments
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Parks and green spaces</i>¹</p> <p><i>Every towns and cities always have parks and green spaces for residents, but are they beneficial?</i>²</p> <p><i>3 Firstly, those in support of having more parks and green spaces believe that having such will not cause harm to the environment and it can benefit them financially by hosting small parties at the green spaces such as couples going there for a picnic. 4 Also parents can benefit by taking their children to the parks as a way of getting fresh air and using the playground as a way of exercising. 5</i></p> <p><i>However, those who are against the idea of having more parks and green spaces believe that there are some people who still cannot afford a place to start their business. Furthermore, whenever an event takes place at the green spaces, there will always be a group of people who will disrespect the environment by leaving litter on the grass. Lastly, it will take months for the grass to be fully green and maintained. 6</i></p> <p><i>In conclusion, 7 I believe that the towns and cities should have more parks and green spaces because once it is well taken care of, it can attract visitors from other countries as a way of increasing our reputation.</i></p>	<p>¹ The candidate uses a heading that is relevant to the topic of the article.</p> <p>² The candidate introduces the topic in the first paragraph and uses a rhetorical question to engage the reader.</p> <p>³ In this paragraph, the candidate lists the reasons why they think having parks and other green spaces is beneficial.</p> <p>⁴ The candidate uses a range of appropriate linking words to link their ideas together, e.g. 'firstly', 'also', 'however', 'furthermore'.</p> <p>⁵ The candidate does not heavily rely on the ideas from the prompts, but, instead, introduces their own ideas which are well developed. There is good evidence of a sense of purpose and audience in this paragraph.</p> <p>⁶ The candidate makes a few attempts at more complex structures.</p> <p>⁷ The candidate provides a clear conclusion which shows that the article is effectively sequenced and organised. The candidate uses an appropriate choice of words for the semi-formal register.</p> <p>Mark for Content = 4 out of 6 Mark for Language = 6 out of 9 Total mark awarded = 10 out of 15</p>

How the candidate could have improved their answer

The example answer shows a clear understanding of how to write an article. The task is generally fulfilled and the ideas presented are mostly relevant. The candidate engages the reader in the introductory paragraph by using a rhetorical question. The candidate chose to present a balanced argument in this article. While the reasons given supporting more green spaces are relevant and well developed, the candidate is not as successful with their reasons against them in the third paragraph. It is not entirely clear what is meant by, 'there are some people who still cannot afford a place to start their business'. The rest of the ideas in this paragraph are about the negative impacts people can have on parks rather than reasons against more green spaces. For this reason, the reader would not be fully informed about this particular aspect. The candidate provides a clear conclusion; however, this could have been linked more closely to the ideas presented in the main body of the article. The conclusion could also have been more persuasive to encourage the reader to take a stance on the issue of green spaces. However, the candidate demonstrates a good sense of purpose and audience.

The candidate effectively organises and sequences their ideas and uses a range of linking words to link ideas within paragraphs but introduces new ideas at the start of each paragraph. The choice of words is very appropriate for this text type and the article sounds semi-formal throughout. However, some of the vocabulary is rather repetitive and tends to be fairly common. The candidate could have chosen some more complex vocabulary (e.g. environmentally friendly, absolutely vital for, invaluable, infrastructure, etc.). The candidate occasionally attempts more complex structures (e.g. 'those in support of having more parks...' etc.). However, this is not consistent, and most structures used are relatively simple (e.g. 'going there for a picnic.'). Some phrasing is rather awkward (e.g. 'it can attract visitors from other countries as a way of increasing our reputation.'). Overall, there is a good level of accuracy and the errors do not impede communication.

Common mistakes

Candidates can lose focus when writing an article. Sometimes, candidates write about wider, more general issues associated with the topic. Although candidates should interpret the stimulus material in their own way, they should make sure that they focus on the topic. For example, if this candidate wrote about how many parks or green spaces there are in their town or city, then this would not meet the criteria for relevance. Candidates must remember that they are presenting their ideas in a balanced way and that they are trying to persuade the audience that what is being said is correct. They should do this by using a range of persuasive devices throughout their writing. Learners should try to not just describe the problem but attempt to convince their audience to choose a side.

Examination preparation

In class learners should practise writing an article. Learners could research a topic that interests them and write about this, making sure they present arguments that show the positive and negative aspects of the topic.

After brainstorming for ideas, planning and drafting is then completed. Learners then compose their own work. Final drafts can be shared with each other for help with proof-reading and peer evaluation. Learners can read some good examples aloud to the class for discussion and peer feedback.

Classroom activities

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
AO2 Writing W1 communicate information, ideas and opinions W2 organise ideas into coherent text using a range of linking devices	Writing strategies: Writing an article Learners are able to plan and draft writing. Learners are able to understand the purpose, audience and form of	Pre-learning (optional): To engage learners in article writing, ask them to research a topic that interests them. Encourage them to think of a topic or an issue that they can argue about. For example, if a learner would like to write about football, it may be more useful for them to explore footballer's wages or racism in football. If you have a large class, assign topics or issues to learners based on their interests or ask learners to research a

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
<p>W3 use a range of appropriate grammatical structures and vocabulary</p> <p>W4 use appropriate register and style for the given purpose and audience</p>	<p>texts and use this in their own writing.</p> <p>Learners are able to use specific vocabulary which is relevant to the focus of the article.</p> <p>Learners are able to organise their writing into a coherent structure that matches the appropriate style and format of writing an article.</p>	<p>particular topic as a group. Alternatively, split the learners into groups and give them a statement from the lesson below.</p> <p>Starter: Divide the class into two groups. Assign one group to 'agree' with the statement and the other group to 'disagree' with the statement.</p> <p>Display one of the following statements on the board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Some people think that young people spend too much time on their phones and not enough time outside in nature.' 2. 'Some people think that we must do more to protect the planet and the environment for future generations.' 3. 'Some people think that young people should be able to vote from the age of 16.' 4. 'Some people think that there should be an 8pm to 7am curfew for all people under the age of 17.' <p>In their groups, learners discuss reasons to either agree or disagree with the statement. They must explain why they think this and justify their ideas. Model some on the board as examples, e.g. for statement 4, you could agree by saying:</p> <p><i>'I think it would stop crime and make people feel safer.'</i></p> <p>And then disagree by saying:</p> <p><i>'I think it takes away your freedom.'</i></p> <p>Extension: Groups feedback to each other and decide which reasons are the most persuasive and effective. Encourage learners to use a 'Diamond 9' structure to represent this:</p> <div data-bbox="884 1272 1465 1688" data-label="Diagram"> </div> <p>Development: Learners choose four statements: two that agree with the topic and two that disagree. Using the structure outlined in the 'Tips for writing an article' section above, learners consider how they will write their article.</p> <p>They should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how they will engage the reader at the start • what kind of persuasive features they could use • who they are writing for.

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
		<p>As part of this planning stage, suitable vocabulary for the topic and for making suggestions could be explored. Ensure learners understand the target audience and the formality that the task requires.</p> <p>Main task: Learners draft their article on the chosen topic. They should write in relatively formal English and use appropriate vocabulary throughout. Encourage learners to stay within the 120 to 160 word count.</p> <p>Plenary: Learners peer assess their work by reading each other's to help with proof-reading and suggestions for improvement.</p>

Useful resources

The **School Support Hub** at www.cambridgeinternational/support provides teachers with a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your learners the best possible preparation for Cambridge IGCSE.

Teaching and learning resources (for examination from 2024)

- Scheme of Work
- Writing a report
- Writing a review
- Writing an article
- Writing skills lesson plans
- Specimen Paper Answers
- Example Candidate Responses (January 2025)

Please note: The website links below provide direct access to internet resources. Cambridge Assessment International Education is not responsible for the accuracy or content of information contained in these sites. The inclusion of a link to an external website should not be understood to be an endorsement of that website or the site's owners (or their products/services). The website pages were selected when the guide was produced. Other aspects of the sites were not checked.

B2 First is a handbook for teachers preparing candidates for *Cambridge English Qualifications: B2 First*. Pdf and digital versions are available.

A magazine article This British Council website provides classroom material and lesson ideas which can be used to introduce techniques on how to make articles more engaging.