

For and Against Essays

A ‘for and against’ essay is a formal piece of writing in which you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a specific topic.

A good essay of this type should consist of:

- a) an **introductory paragraph** in which you clearly state the topic to be discussed, without giving your opinion;
- b) a **main body** in which you present the points for and the points against, in separate paragraphs, supporting your arguments with examples and justifications.
- c) a **conclusion** in which you state your opinion or give a balanced consideration of the topic.

Note:

- Opinion words (*I think, I believe, In my opinion, etc.*) can only be used in the closing paragraph where you give your opinion on the topic.
- You can find this type of writing in articles in newspapers, magazines, etc.

Points to consider

- Before you start writing your essay you should make a list of the points for and against.
- Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence which summarizes the topic of the paragraph. The topic sentence should be followed by supporting sentences which justify the argument presented in the topic sentence, by giving examples or reasons. You should use linking words/phrases to present your justifications (they will be listed later).
Travelling by train has a lot of advantages (topic sentence)
First of all, it is comfortable as trains are spacious so there is plenty of room to walk about. What is more, trains are convenient. For example, you do not have to take any food or beverages with you, because most trains have a restaurant. Finally, when you travel by train you reach your destination fairly quickly. (supporting sentences)
- Make sure each paragraph has more than one sentence.
e.g. One advantage of using a word processor is that it saves time. It is much quicker to make corrections on one than it is to do them by hand.
- Do not use informal style (e.g. *short forms, colloquial language, etc.*) or strong language to express your opinion (e.g. *I know..., etc.*). express your opinion in a non-emotional way (e.g. *It seems that, I therefore feel, ..., etc.*).
- Well-known quotations relevant to the topic you are writing about will make your composition more interesting. For example, if you are writing an essay on education, a quotation you may include is: *“Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.” (Will Durant)*

Note: Although these are “balanced” arguments, if you feel that either the *for and against* side is stronger and should be supported, this side should be presented in paragraphs 4 &5, thus leading the reader to your conclusion.

Introduction

Paragraph 1

State topic (summary of the topic **without** giving your opinion)

Main body

Paragraphs 2 & 3

Arguments for & justifications, examples and/or reasons

Paragraphs 4 & 5

Arguments against & justifications, examples, and/or reasons

Conclusion

Final paragraph

Balanced consideration/your opinion directly or indirectly

Useful expressions and linking words/phrases

- **To list points:**

Firstly, First of all, In the first place, To begin/start with
Secondly, Thirdly, Finally, Last but not least,

- **To list advantages:**

One/Another/A further/An additional (major) advantage of ... is ...

The main/greatest/first advantage of ... is ...

One point of view in favour of...

It is often suggested/believed/argued that...

Some/Many people suggest/feel argue that...

Some/Many people are in favour of/are convinced that....

- **To list disadvantages:**

One/Another/A further/An additional (major) disadvantage/ drawback of ...

The main/greatest/most serious/first disadvantage/drawback of ...

Another negative aspect of ...

Some/Many people are against...

One point/argument against...

- **To introduce points/arguments for or against:**

One (very convincing) point/argument in favour of ... / against ...

A further common criticism of ... / It could be argued that ...

It is often claimed/suggested
widely argued that ...
generally felt/believed

some/many/ most people/experts/ scientists/sceptics/ critics	claim/suggest/argue/feel/believe/agree that ...	
	support /oppose the view that ...	
	are	in favour of/against ... of the opinion that/convinced that ... opposed to ...

- **To add more points to the same topic:**

In addition (to this), furthermore, moreover, besides, apart from, what is more, as well as, not to mention (the fact) that, also, not only ... but also/as well, both ... and, there is another side to the issue/question/argument of ...

- **To make contrasting points:**

on the other hand, however, still, yet, but, nonetheless, nevertheless, even so,	it may be said that, ...
	others/ many people
	oppose this viewpoint (strongly) disagree ..., claim/feel/believe this argument is incorrect

although, though, even though, while, whilst, whereas, despite/in spite of (the fact that), regardless of the fact that

Opponents of ... argue/believe/claim that ...

- **To introduce examples:**

for example, for instance, such as, like, in particular, particularly, especially,
This is (clearly) illustrated/shown by the fact that ...

One /A clear/typical example of (this) ...

- **To emphasise a point:**

Clearly, obviously, it is obvious, naturally, of course, indeed

- **To express reality:**

In fact, the fact (of the matter) is, actually, in practice, it is a fact that

- **To make general statements:**

as a (general) rule, generally, in general, on the whole,

- **To make partially correct statements:**

to a certain extent, in a way/sense, this is partly true (but), to a limited extent, there is some truth in (this), in some cases

- **To explain/clarify a point:** in other words, this/which means that

- **To express cause:** due to (the fact that), on the grounds that, given that, because, as, since

- **To express effects:** therefore, thus, as a result/consequence, so, for this reason, if ... were to happen, ... the effect/result would be ...

- **To express intention:** to, so as to, in order to, so that, with the intention of (+ -ing)

Conclusion expressing balanced considerations/opinion indirectly

In conclusion,	it seems that ...
On balance,	it may be concluded/said that ...
All things considered,	it is likely/unlikely/possible that
Taking everything into account/ consideration,	it is clear/obvious that ...
To conclude,	there is no/little doubt that ...
To sum up,	it can/must be said/claimed that ...
All in all,	although it must be said that ...
Finally/Lastly,	it is true to say that ...

There is no absolute answer to the question of ...

In conclusion,	it is	clear/apparent plain/obvious evident	from the	above foregoing	evidence points arguments
All in all,					
To sum up,					

Conclusion expressing opinion directly

In conclusion,	it is in my belief/opinion that ...
On balance,	I (firmly) believe/feel/think that ...
All things considered,	I am convinced that ...
Taking everything into account/ consideration,	I am inclined to believe that ...
To conclude,	I (do not) agree that/with ...
To sum up,	
All in all,	

Exercises:

Read the main body of the for and against essay below on the topic: "Discuss the view that advertising promotes excessive consumerism." Then read the beginnings and endings and say which of the techniques has been used in each one. Finally, replace the bold type words or phrases in the main body with ones similar in meaning.

BEGINNINGS...

1. Whether it is on TV, radio or hoardings at the side of the road, advertisements have become a part of our lives. Is advertising simply a means of informing the public or does it encourage consumers to purchase they do not really need?
2. Advertising is a powerful and persuasive medium. You may feel this is an intrusion in your daily life, and resent the pressure on you to spend money. Others, however, enjoy the variety which this highly creative industry brings to everyday life.
3. Advertising is an effective way of selling new products, and many people argue that its effectiveness brainwashes us into unnecessary spending. Others, however, disagree. As Jeremy Tunstall said, "Advertising can't sell *any* product; it can only help to sell a product the people want to buy."

One of the main arguments for advertising is that it generates wealth for a country. That is to say, taxes paid on goods sold, help governments to pay for essential services **such as** education and health care. **Moreover**, the number of jobs created for producing, marketing and servicing these goods helps to reduce the unemployment problem, which is also a great advantage for a country's economy.

What is more, advertising raises money for a huge number of sporting events and artistic performances which would otherwise not be held. Without sponsorship from companies who advertise their products, these events would disappear due to lack of funding. **In other words**, although consumerism is promoted through advertising, it is beneficial to **both** the consumer **and** society.

On the other hand, advertisements can cause people to be

dissatisfied with what they already have, and make them want more. Being exposed again and again to products which one cannot afford produces frustration and dissatisfaction. **Furthermore**, not all parents are in a position to afford the goods which their children see advertised and want to possess. This often leads to feelings of inadequacy, **especially** among the less well-off.

In addition to this, advertising creates materialism and causes people to place too much importance on material goods. The fact that people are prepared to work long hours, or even turn to crime **in order to** gain the goods on offer, shows that advertising persuades people to go to great lengths to keep the same standard of living as those they see around them. It is a fact, though, that neither crime nor the stress caused by overwork can benefit society.

Endings...

- A. **To sum up, it is true to say that** advertising does provide some benefits. **However**, do you not agree that the drawbacks of a greedy, materialistic society far outweigh the advantages, and we need to be careful that we do not lose sight of what is most important – a spirit of co-operation rather than competition?
- B. **To conclude, it must be said that**, while advertising may create jealousy and inequality in society, without it we would lose a valuable source of revenue which is used for the benefit of the majority. What would our lives be like without advertisements?
- C. **In conclusion, I believe that** advertising exists to generate wealth by encouraging people to spend unnecessarily. It fosters greed and breeds dissatisfaction while distracting us from focusing on more vital things. As Marion Harper Jr said, "Advertising is found in societies which have passed the point of satisfying the basic animal needs."

Read the four topic sentences below and match each with the corresponding paragraph. Does each topic sentence adequately summarise the argument it presents? What would a suitable introduction and conclusion be for this essay?

*"Living in a foreign country cannot be better than living in your own."
Discuss.*

- a) Furthermore, people who move to a foreign country may be regarded with suspicion and treated unfairly.
 - b) On the other hand, living abroad can be a way to escape a variety of problems presented in one's country of birth.
 - c) One argument in favour of staying in one's native country is that the problems of adapting to a new way of life cannot always be overcome.
 - d) Finally, it may be said that by living in a foreign country, people are able to establish a greater understanding between nations.
- 1)
.....The fact of the matter is that, even in cases where the language is the same, there are other changes, such as cultural differences, which an outsider might find difficult to adjust to. Even the weather can force some people to return to their country of origin. For example, take an Inuit and an Amazonian Indian. They would almost certainly find it impossible to adapt to the extreme climates of each other's native homes.
 - 2)
.....In countries with a large number of immigrants there are often social problems, and immigrants stand out as being "different" and even inferior. As a consequence, the country may react in a variety of ways, from open hostility and racism to depriving the immigrants of the right to equal pay.
 - 3)
.....For example, war, political or religious intolerance, and natural catastrophes are among the reasons for people seeking a new home in a foreign land. In such cases, people are often able to start a new life abroad with greater freedom and higher standard of living.
 - 4)
.....That is to say, by working and living among foreigners, some of the barriers between countries can be broken down, helping to create a more peaceful world. Needless to say, better diplomatic relations would be of benefit to all.