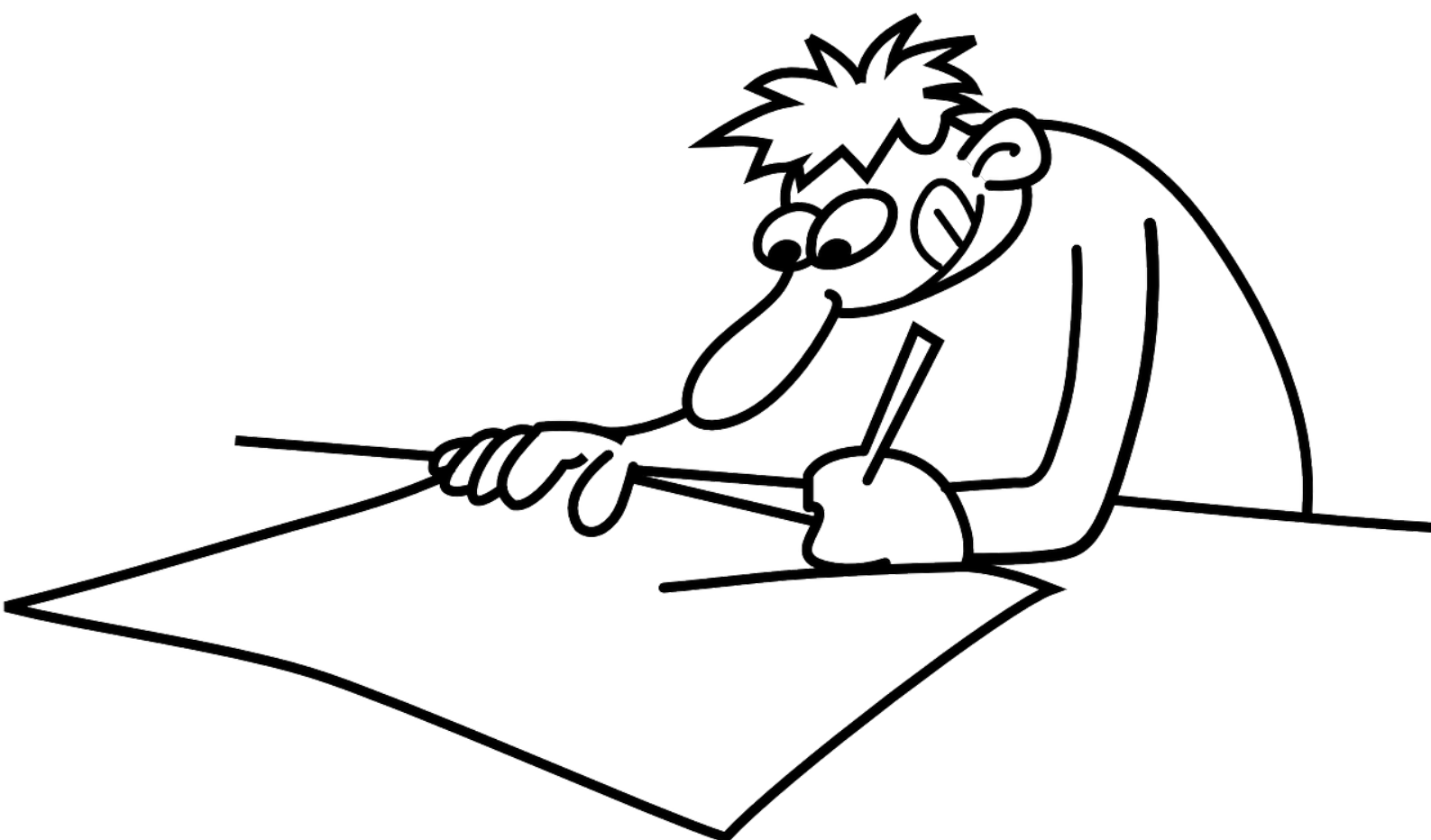


LITERACY



WRITING CONVENTIONS AND CROSS-
CURRICULAR GUIDELINES

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Presentation of work

- Each piece of written work should have a title and a date.
- Titles and headings should be underlined.
- Extended writing must be paragraphed.
- Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar should be encouraged at all times.

Paragraphs

Accuracy in writing is important in every subject. All teachers should be concerned with spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Paragraphing is essential and pupils often neglect it in their work. In English assessment of AT3 (writing), no pupil can progress beyond Level 4 if the work is not paragraphed.

The correct convention for indicating that a new paragraph has been taken is to skip a line and start the new paragraph at the margin of the following line.

This is an example of well-paragraphed work:

Noble Families

Unlike peasant families, noble families did not work together, not even always live together. In return for their land, barons and knights had to fight for their king in times of war. In peacetime, too, their duties often took them away from their families. A knight, for instance, might have to guard his baron's castle, or escort prisoners to a royal court. In his absence, his lady was in charge of the manor, as well as the household which she managed all the time.

Nobles lived in households rather than families. These households were made up of family members, long-term visitors, and the servants. The largest households contained hundreds of people. With the help of her servants, the lady made sure they were all provided for.

Letter writing

Pupils are often required to write letters as part of their studies. This may be a creative exercise in a subject like English, History, or Geography, or a real letter with a practical purpose.

It is important that letter layout is consistent across the curriculum.

The following is an example of the layout taught and recommended by the English Department for formal and informal letters:

Informal letter layout

1. **Address in block** 26 Rowan Street

BELFAST

BT13 7LM

2. **Leave a line**

3. **Date** 11 June 2001

4. **Greeting at margin**

Dear Karen

5. **Leave a line**

Thank you very much for your letter. I received it just before I went to school on Thursday morning, so I read it on the bus. Imagine Graham breaking his leg at the ice rink! I'm sure he had to listen to some wise remarks from James and his friends. Did he have to stay in hospital all night? Is he able to go to school this week after the accident? I think I'll send him a card.

6. **Leave a line in between paragraphs**

School is much as usual. We have so much work it is unbelievable. Do you have to write many assignments for your English folder? My mum says that I should be working harder. My best mark so far has been 35. I suppose I rush through the work instead of planning it and writing

it carefully. Maybe I'll try harder next time. Dad said he would buy me a new jacket if I have a good report in January.

Write soon and tell me how your studies are going. Don't forget to include all the latest news about your busy social life.

7. *Leave a line*

Best wishes

Lynda

8. *Signature at margin*

Formal letter layout

1. *Address in block* 345 Sandwell Road

Dudley

West Midlands

2. *Leave a line*

3. *Date* 11 June 2001

4. *The name or title and address of the person to whom you are writing*

The Manager

Ridgway Leisure Centre

Tipton

West Midlands

B65 3ED

5. *Greeting at margin*

Dear Sir or Madam

On the evening of Friday 26th October, I visited your leisure centre to book a squash court for Saturday morning. Although it was only 10.00pm and the centre does not close until 10.30pm, the reception desk was closed. I wandered around for several minutes trying to find a member of staff who could deal with my booking, but it appeared the only staff on duty were involved in the swimming pool and gym, and were unable to help me.

6. *Leave a line between paragraphs*

As it is your policy that non-members of the centre have to book facilities in person and not by phone, I consider the reception desk should be manned until closing time. I also feel that more members of staff should be available in the evenings to help users of the leisure centre and provide stricter security for the premises.

I look forward to hearing your comments on these matters.

7. *Leave a line*

Yours faithfully

8. *Capital 'Y', lowercase 'f'*

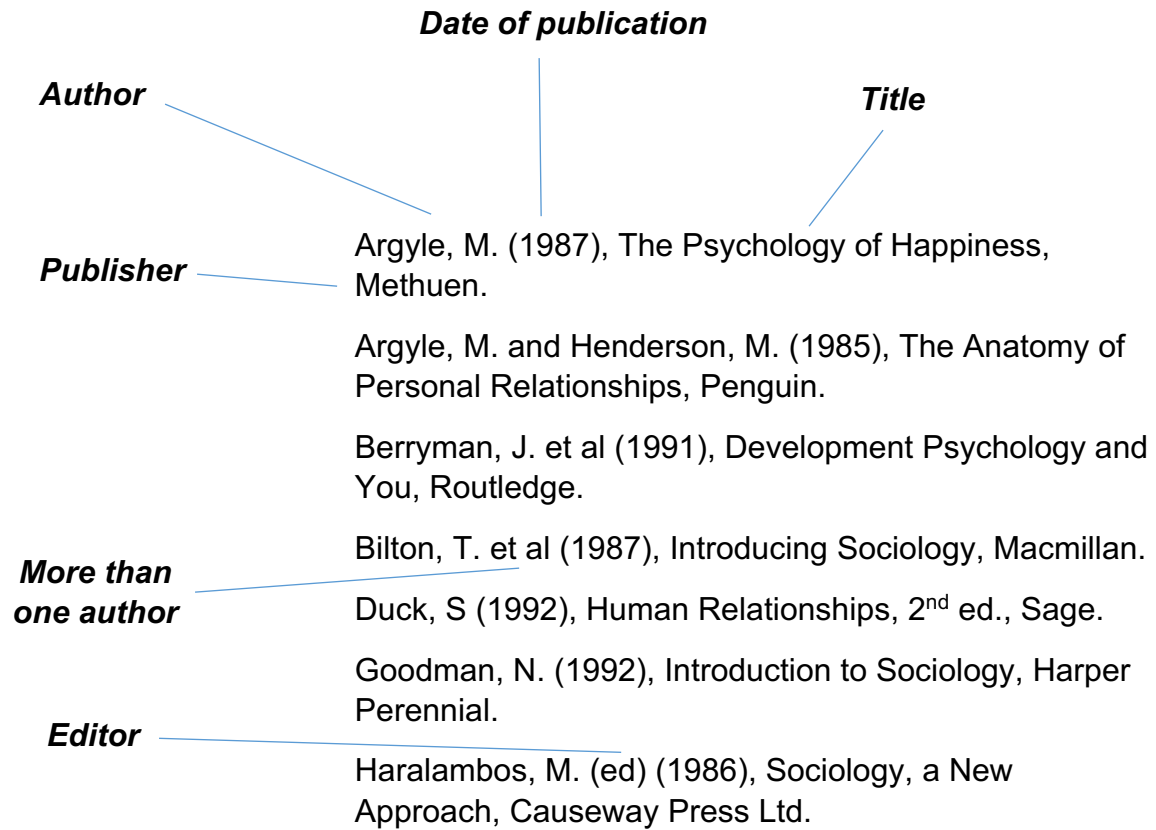
9. *Leave a line*

Chester Gordon

Chester Gordon

If you begin a formal letter using 'Dear Sir', you must end with 'Yours faithfully', but if the person is named, e.g. 'Dear Mr Jones', the ending must be 'Yours sincerely'.

Bibliography



Quotations

- Quotations are used when pupils do research and wish to refer their sources.
- As pupils read a text, they should make a list of key quotations and note the page numbers to find them again.

Quotation marks are essential to show that the pupil is quoting, not just stealing words.

The war on poverty is a typically American solution reflecting the values of American culture with its emphasis on individual achievement in the land of opportunity. As Walter B Miller neatly puts it, 'Nothing could be more impeccably American than the concept of opportunity.' The poor must make their own way: they must achieve the status of being non-poor, they must seize the opportunities that are available like every other respectable American. Commenting on the way on poverty, Elinor Graham states:

Quotation must be attributed where possible.

Everything inside the speech marks is a quotation. It has to be word for word what the person has said or written.

Above all, it is 'the American way' to approach social-welfare issues, for it places the burden of responsibility upon the individual and not on the socio-economic system. Social services are preferred to income payments in an ideological atmosphere which abhors 'handouts'.

By the late 1960s, many social scientists felt that the war on poverty had failed.

Longer quotations should be given a separate paragraph and no quotation marks used.

Giving a talk or presentation

What to do in order to speak well

Whatever talking activity you have to take part in, you need to make yourself understood by the people listening to you. Many people are very nervous when they have to speak in front of other people, but whether you are:

- taking part in an interview;
- giving explanations or descriptions;
- reading aloud;
- telling a story;
- arguing, persuading, or debating; or
- giving a talk or making a speech,

there are many things you can do to help yourself relax:

★ **Vary your pace and intonation –**

- Put as much expression as you can into your voice.
- Slow down and say things more than once for emphasis.
- Make emotional or personal appeals if they seem appropriate.
- Stress words and ideas which are important.

★ **Do not rush –**

- You are not in a race.
- Take your time to illustrate your points (using handouts or the board)...
- ...but try not to hesitate and stutter, overusing 'fillers' such as 'you know'/'er'/'like'.
- Think about punctuation marks which tell you when to pause.

★ Involve your audience –

- Keep your head up and look at your audience – smile!
- Do use notes or prompt cards, but don't just read.
- Try to look confident, even if you are really very nervous and embarrassed.
- Use body language, gestures, and eye contact, but don't fidget.
- Try to use some rhetorical devices – address your audience directly.
- Use alliteration, slogans, and comparisons.

★ Speak clearly and audibly –

- Sound your words properly without dropping letters at the beginning, middle, or end of words.
- Avoid using slang in formal situations.
- Try to vary your choice of words.

Planning your talk

- Carry out any research you might need to do;
- Write out your talk in detail, but remember that eventually you will be giving a talk, not a reading;
- Check you have a lively opening and strong conclusion, and that you have avoided clichés;
- Develop your ideas in carefully structured paragraphs;
- Summarise each paragraph in a few words – write these on small cards to use in your talk;
- Prepare props to help you, but not too many – diagrams, posters, souvenirs, etc.;
- Know your speech thoroughly.

Advice on delivery

★ On the day

When the time to give your talk finally comes:

- Relax by breathing slowly and deeply before you start;
- Look at your audience and smile;
- Do not rely too heavily on your notes – they should be used as reminders only;
- Be interesting and confident;
- Put as much expression into your voice and face as you can;
- Use your hands to emphasise what you are saying;
- Do not rush!

Writing essays at A-Level

This guide gives you advice on how to prepare, plan, and write A-Level essays. Use it throughout you're a-Level studies to help you write successful essays.

Aims:

This guide will help you to:

- Understand what an essay title requires
- Collect material for your essay
- Plan the structure of your essay
- Write your introductory and concluding paragraphs
- Set out quotations
- Write in the appropriate style

Activity 1: Understanding essay titles

It is important to develop the ability to recognise precisely what an assignment requires. Read every part of your essay title very carefully. Break it down into separate components.

- Look for key words: these are the words which tell you what you will have to do.
- Look for the focus: who or what are you going to be writing about?
- Look for the theme: this is the topic you will explore.

Example: How far are Romeo and Juliet responsible for what happens to them?

- The key words in this title are 'how far';
- The question focuses on Romeo and Juliet; and
- The theme to explore is their responsibility for their fate.

The title could be set out like the following table:

Key words	Meaning	Focus	Theme
How far	To what extent	Romeo, Juliet	Responsible for fate

Collect past paper essay titles, and use this table to help you break these titles down into their different components.

Activity 2: Collecting material for your essay – the process

When you have been given an essay title, identify its key word, focus, and themes. Jot down initial ideas for each component.

After you have outlined what the essay required, you need to collect relevant material. This might involve you doing some/all of the following:

- Discussing the question with other students and your teacher, or perhaps joining a website conference;
- Re-reading your notes, printed handouts, and any other relevant information;
- Using a booklist to help you with further research; and/or
- Researching your topic using the internet, CD-ROM, school, and public libraries.

Try to do the following as you form your opinions about the question:

- Think in advance of your writing;
- Try not to be overwhelmed by the material – there will be a lot of it;
- Keep a separate list of the main points you will want to make;
- Annotate material to help you remember which point you may use it for; and
- Remember, there is no single right answer – you will be marked on your argument and evidence.

By the end of this process, you should have engaged in some critical reflection:

- Judge the evidence
- Form your opinion
- Come to your conclusion.

Activity 3: Planning and writing your essay – the structure

Here are a few ‘dos’ and don’ts’ you should consider when planning your essay:

Don’t		Do
Don’t repeat the question	Introduction	Do say what you intend to do
Don’t give your conclusion here	Main body	Do define the terms of the question
Don’t jump from one point to another		Do set out points in a logical order – use paragraphs
Don’t make a statement without proof		Do support points by example, illustration, quotation
Don’t make a statement without proof	Conclusion	Do add comments to explain the significance of your evidence
		Do state your points strongly
		Answer the question
		Recall the issues raised in the introduction

Conclusions should be conclusions, and not just re-statements of the argument.

Review and read through.

Ask yourself: Are my points presented logically? Did I answer the question?

Make any necessary amendments to your plan.

Activity 4: Tracking and planning the structure of an essay

This activity shows you how to use the work of past students to help you see how essays can be structured.

Collect examples of past A-Level essays from your tutor. Read them and produce a chart which shows how they were planned. Use the following headings

- introduction
- main body
- conclusion

Decide how clearly the writers of the essays you have followed use the guidance in this guide. You could even grade the essays on an A-U scale for their clarity of organisation.

Activity 5: Introducing and concluding your essays

You will find it helpful to spend some time thinking about how you could plan an essay's structure. Use the following ideas to help you.

Small group activity

- Select an essay title relevant to your studies.
- Decide the main points that the answer should contain (use key words – focus – theme to help you).
- Put the main points in order. Discuss and justify the order you select.
- Write the introductory and concluding paragraphs to your essay. Read them out to the rest of your group. Discuss everyone's vision.

Decide who wrote the most effective paragraphs. Be clear about the reasons for this.

Activity 6: Main body paragraphs and using quotations from the text

This activity outlines the main points to remember when writing paragraphs in the main body of your essay and suggests when to use quotations.

★ Starting and concluding the paragraphs

Begin your main body paragraphs with a sentence which states its purpose clearly.

Conclude these paragraphs by stating how your argument relates to the essay title.

★ Using quotations

Example 1: Context – Quote – Comment

A-Level examiners say,
“Quotations from the text are essential to support your line of argument”,
and that is why I have included them.

This states the context of the quotation.

The quotation itself is brief and relevant.

This is your comment saying how the quotation proves your point.

Always use the Context – Quote – Comment sequence.

Example 2: How to display longer quotations

Commenting on the war on poverty, Elinor Graham states:
Above all, it is ‘the American way’ to approach social-welfare issues, for it places the burden of responsibility upon the individual and not on the socio-economic system. Social services are preferred to income payments in an ideological atmosphere which abhors ‘handouts’
By the late 1960s, many social scientists felt that the war on poverty had failed.

Give context. Use colon to introduce the quote.

Longer quote displayed in the middle of the page. Exact words quoted.

Example 3: How to set out shorter quotations

As Walter B Miller neatly puts it, 'Nothing could be more impeccably American than the concept of opportunity'.

Note: The context is stated.

Use a comma to introduce shorter quotations and integrate them into your sentence.

Activity 7: Using a clear prose style

Read through the following points – if you follow them you will be well on the way to writing successful essays:

- **Think before you write;**
- Use a straightforward sentence structure;
- Avoid using long and involved sentences;
- Choose the exact vocabulary you need;
- Avoid repetition and don't be long-winded; and
- Construct your paragraphs carefully.

Writing a script

There are occasions when pupils might be required to write a script. These could include creative writing in the form of drama, role plays in various subjects, or transcribing an interview.

Scripts should be set out in the following way:

Name in margin in capitals.

MARY: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Tonight I would like to welcome Jane McCartney from Belfast Model School for Girls.

Leave a line between speech.

JANE: Thank you, May, I am very glad to be here.

Leave a line between speech.

MARY: Tell me, Jane, where do you live?

Colon follows name.

NB: No speech marks are used in a script.

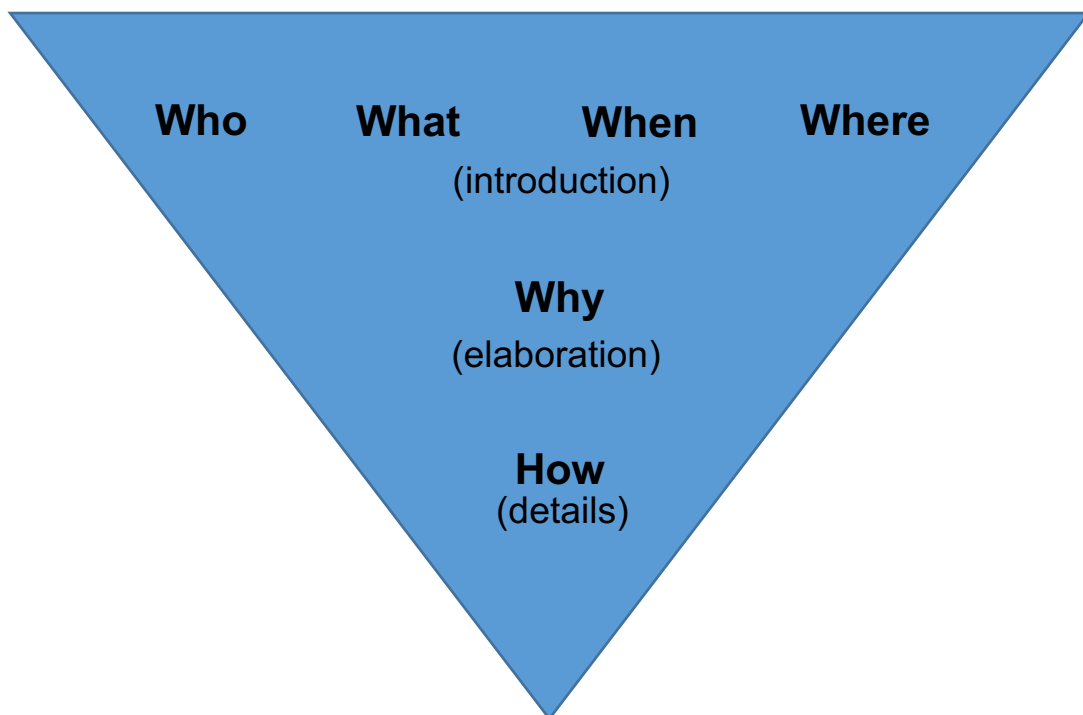
Writing a news story

The basic formula

Newspaper reports are written to a set formula. They contain information that answers the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Deciding what is relevant

The final story is written with the most important facts first, and the least important last. This is so that the story can be cut from the bottom upwards without losing vital information. Stories have to be cut sometimes because there is not enough room for them in the paper. This structure is sometimes called 'the inverted pyramid'.



Headline writing

Newspapers use headlines because of the way that papers are read by the public. Most people do not spend a long time reading a paper. About twenty minutes is the

average reading time. Readers need to be able to select quickly the bits of the paper that are of interest to them.

Headlines label stories so that people can tell quickly if they want to read a particular story.

How to write a good headline:

1. Emphasise the main point of a story;
2. Use as few words as possible.

Argumentative writing

Using connectives

An argumentative essay is a piece of writing in which you put across your views and opinions. You have to step back from the issues and attempt to give both sides of an argument in a balanced and objective way. To do this effectively you need to be able to plan paragraphs carefully and use a variety of connective words appropriately. These help to lead an argument along in a structured and logical way.

Connectives

In other words	But	To begin with	Naturally	As a result
That is to say	Still	In the first	Of course	Consequently
	However	Place	Certainly	So
Finally	Yet	Firstly	Oddly enough	Therefore
In conclusion	Meanwhile	Secondly	Luckily	Thus
In short	Nevertheless	Lastly	Fortunately	Accordingly
To sum up	On the other	Finally	Unfortunately	
	Hand		Admittedly	For example
Next	On the contrary	For this reason	Undoubtedly	For instance
Later	In spite of this	Owing to this		Thus
Eventually		...therefore...		

In drafting an argumentative essay, you need to assemble your ideas.

1. Gather all the arguments in favour of the topic and arrange them in separate columns or in a topic web.
2. Then assemble all the arguments you can think of against the topic.

Once you have assembled your ideas, try to follow these steps.

- Aim for a general introduction which will outline the scope of your essay.
- Draft linked paragraphs in favour of the topic.

- Draft linked paragraphs against the topic.
- Use appropriate connective words.
- Write a concluding paragraph where your own view becomes clear.

Drafting

The process of drafting is central to the development of pupils' writing skills. Where appropriate, this process should be encouraged and the concepts reinforced across the curriculum.

It would be a mistake to think that we can write exactly what we want neatly and correctly first time around. Even professional writers cannot usually do this. They may write their first draft quickly, whilst their ideas are fresh, but subsequent revisions will be slower and more careful.

It is important to note that redrafting is not the same as **proof-reading**. **Redrafting** is about making deliberate changes to what you have written until it says exactly what you want it to, in exactly the way that you want. Do not be afraid to highlight or write on your original draft in different ink. It may look messy to you at first, but this is not too important at this stage.

1. Is there anything which is not clear or even confusing in this piece? How could it be made clearer? Try changing the word or sentence in order to begin with.
2. Is there any part of this piece which could be removed without losing the sense of the writing? Is there anything missing? Does the reader need more information, explanation, or description?
3. Is the beginning suitable? What about the end? Is the reader properly introduced to the content? Is the reader left in mid-air? Do the paragraphs lead on well from one another?
4. Is the language appropriate for the intended audience? Are there any phrases or words which do not seem appropriate? Can you suggest helpful changes or substitutes?
5. Have you fulfilled the task, or answered the question?
6. Is the length of the piece appropriate for the purpose? What could be done to adjust it if necessary?