



**O'level**

**Foundation**

**Week 20**

**The Write Tribe**

**DISCURSIVE WRITING:**



## What is the difference between discursive and argumentative essays?

| Discursive Compositions                                                                | Argumentative Compositions                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The questions end with "Discuss".                                                      | Questions end with "Do you agree?"<br><br>Alternative, they might compel writers to make a stand through the use of absolute terms such as "always", "definitely" etc. |
| Focus is on explaining one's perspectives and thoughts.                                | Focus is on making a stand on an argument and providing elaboration and examples to reinforce this stand.                                                              |
| Writing is often balanced, with arguments on both sides of the issue.                  | Writing is often inclined towards the writer's stand and often offers a counter argument, of which it is often rebutted.                                               |
| Focus is more on the expression and clarity of the writers' thoughts and perspectives. | Focus is more on being persuasive, convincing the readers to the writers' point of view.                                                                               |

### Types of Discursive essay questions?

#### *Discursive essays:*

The ideal goal.

"Life is not fair." Discuss.

"Kindness begets kindness." What are your **views**?

What are your thoughts on introducing ebooks to the young?

What are the possible solutions to eliminate or reduce haze in Singapore?



## Types of Argumentative essay questions?

“Teachers should always trust their students.” Do you agree?

“Teenagers should be closely supervised by their parents.” Do you agree?

Are children from rich families **always** happier than those from impoverished families?

Is technology **definitely** beneficial to the young?

*(Note: the third and fourth questions above use “absolute terms” such as “always” and “definitely” to compel writers to write only in a specific direction reinforcing a specific stand. And because it needs to be persuasive, these are argumentative questions, and not discursive questions.)*

Up till this point, one can observe that discursive and argumentative essays can easily be differentiated with markers such as “discuss”, “what are your views”, “do you agree” etc.

*However, sometimes, the questions cannot be differentiated into discursive and argumentative writing that easily.*

For example, consider the following questions:

1. Are leaders born or nurtured?
2. Is it necessary to control the media?
3. Are experiences on a job more important than paper qualifications?
4. Is youth an advantage or disadvantage?



5. Is it better to have one long school vacation than to have a few short ones?

For the five questions above, students have the flexibility to write a discursive essay stating both sides of the arguments, or an argumentative essay with strong emphasise on the students' stand.

As to which is a better choice, it is actually a personal choice of students, assuming that they have the ability to write both types of writing well.

## Format of Discursive Essays

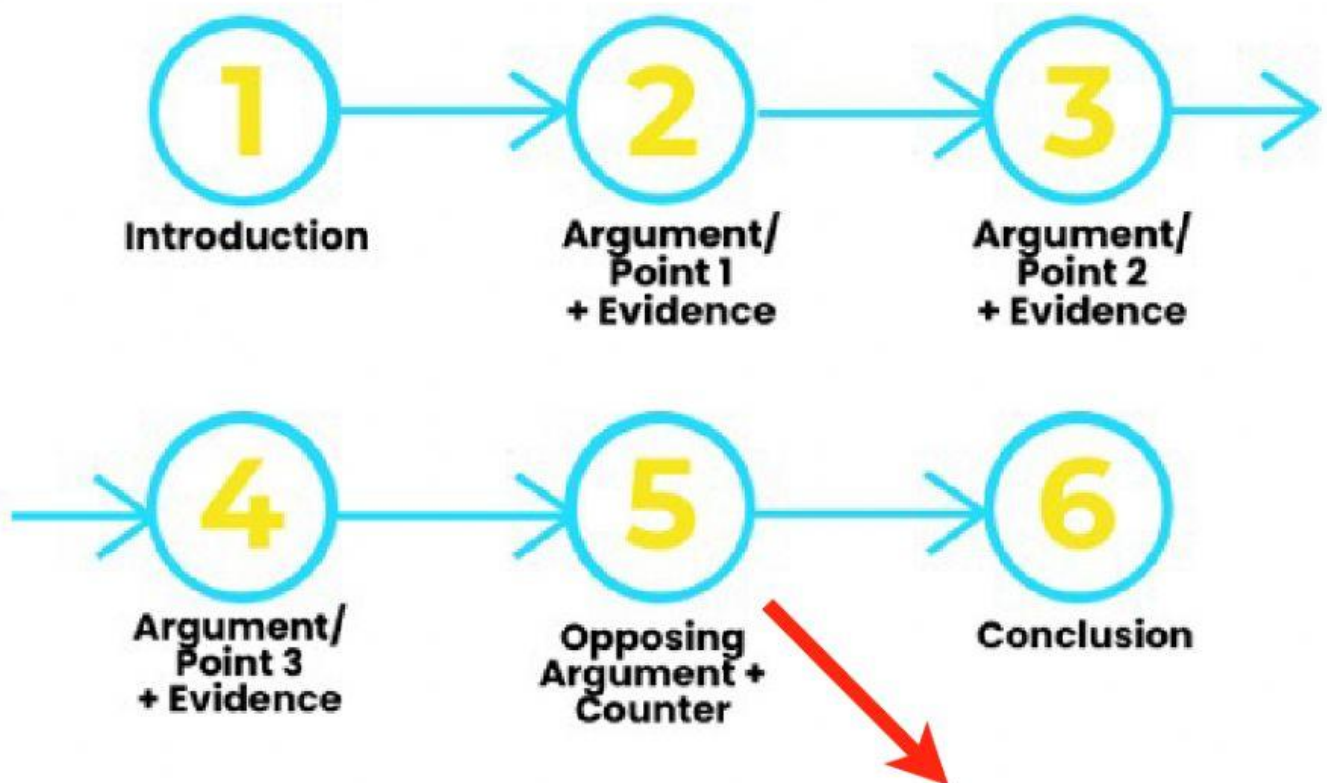


The baseline difference between Argumentative and Discursive is innate to definition. As the terms imply, an argumentative essay requires you to argue towards an explicit stand. Its individual points and structure revolve around putting across and strengthening this stand to convince the reader.

Discursive, on the other hand, requires you to discuss an issue as is, primarily to educate the reader. Thus, there isn't a need to take an explicit stand or frame its points towards one.

It is important to distinguish this main difference between the two early-on; missing the purpose of the text type causes our writing to go haywire and become severely penalized.

## Discursive Essay Structure



Most important element of discursive is to dedicate an entire paragraph for a counter argument.

**INTRODUCTION**  
(Write about the  
Current situation)

### MOBILE PHONES: Should they be banned in public places?

Society has mixed feelings about the use of mobile phones in public places like restaurants and cinemas.

**Whereas/However** they were almost unknown twenty years ago, these days they are part of everyone's life, and the world would now feel a strange place without them.

**Arguments  
for**

One of the strongest arguments in favour of banning mobile phones is the annoyance they cause other people.

**Although/Despite** audiences are always asked to turn off their mobiles when they go to the cinema, you can be sure that the film you are watching will be interrupted by the sound of at least five ringing tones! **Therefore/What is more** many people insist on continuing their conversation, **in spite of/even though** hundreds of people can hear them! **For this reason/Besides** many people would welcome a ban on mobile phones in places where they might irritate others.

**Arguments  
against**

**On the other hand/Although** there are a number of arguments against such a ban. It is really difficult to stop users bringing their mobile phones into public places, and **however/therefore** it would be virtually impossible to enforce any ban. Some would see this as an infringement of their rights, **even though/while** other people would say they need them in case of an emergency. And **despite/besides** being asked to turn their mobile phones off, some people insist on leaving them on, or simply forget to silence them. Perhaps the most important point is that, **although/in spite of** all the disadvantages, many people these days simply feel that they are not able of living without their mobile.

**Conclusion**

**It seems to me that** a ban on mobile phones would be pointless. A way round any ban will always be found. **Nevertheless/Although** their use should be discouraged in places like restaurants, unless it is absolutely necessary. People should be made aware that it is very bad manners to use them at certain times. **However/Furthermore**, there will always be someone who thinks their call is much more important than other people's peace and quiet!

#### Useful language to express personal opinions:

*In my opinion/view*

*It is my opinion/view that...*

*I would say that...*

*I (strongly) believe that...*

*It is my (firm) belief that...*

*It is a commonly held view that...*

*It seems to me that...*

Based on Cutting-Edge UpperIntermediate by Cunningham and Moor



## Useful transitional words and phrases

|                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. To signal <u>addition</u> of ideas                                         | and, also, besides, further, furthermore, too, moreover, in addition, then, of equal importance, equally important, another                                                                                                                                       |
| 2. To signal <u>time</u>                                                      | next, afterward, finally, later, last, lastly, at last, now, subsequently, then, when, soon, thereafter, after a short time, the next week (month, day, etc.), a minute later, in the meantime, meanwhile, on the following day, at length, ultimately, presently |
| 3. To signal <u>order</u> or <u>sequence</u>                                  | first, second, (etc.), finally, hence, next, then, from here on, to begin with, last of all, after, before, as soon as, in the end, gradually                                                                                                                     |
| 4. To signify <u>space</u> and <u>place</u>                                   | above, behind, below, beyond, here, there, to the right (left), nearby, opposite, on the other side, in the background, directly ahead, along the wall, as you turn right, at the tip, across the hall, at this point, adjacent to                                |
| 5. To signal an <u>example</u>                                                | for example, to illustrate, for instance, to be specific, such as, moreover, furthermore, just as important, similarly, in the same way                                                                                                                           |
| 6. To show <u>results</u>                                                     | as a result, hence, so, accordingly, as a consequence, consequently, thus, since, therefore, for this reason, because of this                                                                                                                                     |
| 7. To signal <u>purpose</u>                                                   | to this end, for this purpose, with this in mind, for this reason, for these reasons                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 8. To signal <u>comparisons</u>                                               | like, in the same (like) manner or way, similarly                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9. To indicate <u>contrast</u>                                                | but, in contrast, conversely, however, still, nevertheless, nonetheless, yet, and yet, on the other hand, of course, on the contrary, or, in spite of this, actually, a year ago, now, notwithstanding, for all that, strangely enough, ironically                |
| 10. To signal <u>alternatives</u> , <u>exceptions</u> , and <u>objections</u> | although, though, while, despite, to be sure, it is true, true, I grant, granted, I admit, admittedly, doubtless, I concede, regardless                                                                                                                           |
| 11. To <u>dispute</u>                                                         | it isn't true that, people are wrong who say that, deny that, be that as it may, by the same token, no doubt, we often hear it said, many people claim, many people suppose, it used to be thought, in any case                                                   |
| 12. To <u>intensify</u>                                                       | above all, first and foremost, importantly, again, to be sure, indeed, in fact, as a matter of fact, as I have said, as has been noted                                                                                                                            |
| 13. To <u>summarize</u> or <u>repeat</u>                                      | in summary, to sum up, to repeat, briefly, in short, finally, on the whole, therefore, as I have said, in conclusion, as you can see                                                                                                                              |