

A The basis of a discursive essay*

In a discursive essay you have to express your own ideas and **point of view** [opinion]. It is also important to show that you understand **both sides of an argument** [reasons **for** something and reasons **against** something]. This means you need to understand and use different link words and phrases such as **in addition, however**, etc. (See [Unit 93](#).)

* an essay that discusses a subject

B Expressing a point of view

Some people believe [Some people think] that no one should be sent to prison under the age of 18. There is **an argument** [a reason to think] that everyone should have a university education.

Language help

You can express a personal point of view with phrases such as **I believe / think that ...** or **It seems to me that ...** but you can also use less personal and direct ways of expressing a point of view, as in the phrases on the left. Many people think it is better not to use *In my opinion* in written essays.

C Giving both sides of an argument

One of the advantages of being an only child is that you have more attention from your parents. **However**, it can be lonely without the company of brothers and sisters.

On the one hand, computers can do so many things faster than human beings. **On the other (hand)**, some people are becoming dependent on them, which is not a good thing.

D Comparing and contrasting*

We often **make comparisons** between groups of people, or between the past and the present. **Compared with / to** my grandparents, I have had much more opportunity to travel abroad.

In the past people didn't have computers, **but nowadays** there is one in almost every home.

Most parts of the developed world have become richer in the last thirty years. **In contrast**, many countries in Africa have become much poorer.

* saying how two things are similar and how they are different

E Making generalisations

Sometimes a simple statement is not accurate, e.g. *Young people prefer to watch American films*. This is not true for *all* young people, so we use certain words and phrases to show that we are **making a generalisation** [saying that something is true most of the time or in most situations].

In general, Japanese society is more focused on groups than individuals. (*syn on the whole*) Teenagers **tend to** have [usually have] more freedom than in the past.

F Cause and effect*

Poor diet and lack of exercise are the main **causes of obesity** [reasons for being very fat].

Obesity is often the **result of** a bad diet and not enough exercise.

People don't eat the right food or get enough exercise, and **consequently** [because of this; *syn as a result*] they put on weight.

Poor diet can cause obesity, and this can have a bad **effect on** people's health.

* how something happens, and then makes something else happen

Language help

Don't confuse the verb **affect** and the noun **effect**.

Pollution can **affect** people's breathing.

Pollution can **have an effect on** people's breathing.

Exercises

97.1 Match the definitions on the left with the examples on the right.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 expressing a point of view | ☒ c | a Canada has a smaller population than the USA. |
| 2 making a comparison | ☐ b | b People tend to retire at a later age. |
| 3 describing the result of something | ☐ c | c Some people believe we should never go to war. |
| 4 showing both sides of an argument | ☐ d | d Animals die because we're cutting down the forest. |
| 5 making a generalisation | ☐ e | e Television can make children lazy. However, there are many programmes with real educational value. |

97.2 One word is missing in each sentence. What is it, and where should it go?

- It seems ~~me~~ that there is a problem. *to*
- One of the advantages studying law is that it should lead to a good career.
- It is important to give sides of the argument.
- Too much time spent in front of a television can have a bad effect children.
- People like to have freedom of choice. On the other, too much choice can be a bad thing.
- Time tends go faster as you get older.

97.3 Choose the correct word to complete the sentences. Sometimes both are correct.

- There is not enough food, and consequently / *on the other hand* people are dying.
- Advertising is so powerful that it *causes* / *affects* people to buy things they don't want. *In addition* / *However*, it can help them make the right choice when they buy things.
- In general* / *On the whole* people have more access to education than fifty years ago.
- Supermarkets are very convenient because you can buy almost everything you want. *On the other side* / *hand*, they are putting small shops out of business.
- The north of the country is much richer compared *with* / *to* the south.

97.4 Complete part of this essay on the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet for children.

One of the¹ advantages of the Internet is that children have access to so much knowledge and information.² _____, many children can access this knowledge from their own homes; they don't have to go to libraries.³ _____, some of the information on the Internet is unreliable and out-of-date, and there are some websites we would not want our children to look at. ⁴ _____, we need to control the way that our children use the Internet, and there is certainly an ⁵ _____ for much stricter controls on the websites that people are allowed to create. If we don't do this, the Internet could have a bad ⁶ _____ on children.

97.5 Rewrite the sentences following the instructions in (brackets).

- People who drink and drive should go to prison. (*Show that this is a personal opinion.*)
I believe that people who drink and drive should go to prison.
- People are conservative. (*Make this statement a generalisation.*)
.....
- Cars should not be allowed in town centres. (*Make this opinion less personal.*)
.....
- Children played on their bikes. Children spend most of their time in front of a computer. (*Make this a comparison between the past and the present in one sentence.*)
.....
- Many people work longer and longer hours. They don't have time for hobbies. (*Show the connection between these two statements in one sentence.*)
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