

Writing to Argue

In your English exam you may be asked to write an argument. You have about one hour to plan, write and check two sides of A4 in answer to your chosen question.

Example Question

Write a letter to your Headteacher, arguing that your school's curriculum should be changed.

TASK 1 Planning

Draw a table in your book like the one below. In the first column, list 8 to 10 ways in which you think what you are taught at school could be changed for the better. In the second column, give good reasons for these changes which will convince a Headteacher.

Changes	Reasons
More vocational subjects should be taught from year 9 onwards, such as electronics, journalism, accounting, public relations, etc.	This would prepare students for the world of work and give them a taster of the different trades and professions available to them.

TASK 2 Ordering

Organise these ideas into a logical order, putting a number next to each one.

TASK 3 Starting the letter

Use the letter layout below to start your letter. Then add the next paragraph, outlining some of the problems with the current curriculum. For example:

Writer's address

Reader's address

Date

Dear [name of Headteacher],

As a member of year 10 at [name of school], I am writing in order to suggest a number of changes to the school's curriculum which I feel would benefit pupils greatly.

At present, I feel the range of subjects on offer is providing only a limited educational experience for students, particularly those in their GCSE and A-level years. . .

TASK 4 Main Arguments

Now write up the ideas from your table, writing a detailed paragraph on each one.

Checklist

- ✓ Make sure you describe your suggested changes in full.
- ✓ Always give a good reason for the change (one which will convince a Headteacher).
- ✓ Keep your writing style formal and polite.
- ✓ Write in paragraphs – one for each different idea.

TASK 5 Closing the letter

Write a final paragraph thanking the Headteacher for reading through your ideas, and summing up your main argument. End with the layout below:

Yours sincerely,
[you would use "faithfully" if you had begun with "Dear Sir/Madam"]

[your name]

TASK 6 Proof reading

Spend a few minutes reading through your whole letter. Check for incorrect spelling, missing words, and a lack of paragraphing.

Writing to Argue

Some Useful Phrases

Always remember that you must be polite and formal in style, even when expressing strongly held opinions.

Stating your opinions

- In my opinion / view . . .
- I feel / think / consider . . .
- It is my belief that . . .
- It is my considered opinion that . . .

Linking between paragraphs

- A further consideration must be . . .
- Likewise . . .
- Furthermore . . .
- Similarly . . .
- This brings me on to another suggestion.

Arguing against other people's ideas

- Contrary to this view, I feel that . . .
- Nevertheless . . .
- However . . .
- On the other hand . . .

Being polite but convincing

- I'm sure you will agree that . . .
- I understand your objections . . .
- I know that you have the best interests of your students at heart . . .
- I would be very happy to discuss this matter further.

Being convincing through research

- Having surveyed 30 students in year 9, . . .
- In an interview I conducted with a local employer recently, . . .
- "The Sunday Times" recently published an article on . . .
- It has come to my attention that the Headteacher of a school in . . .