Essay Writing Skills in German and English as a Second or Further Language

A Practical Guide by Andrea Klaus & Yuliia Lysanets

ESSAY WRITING SKILLS IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR FURTHER LANGUAGE:

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

by

Andrea Klaus, Yuliia Lysanets

[This page is left blank]

ESSAY WRITING SKILLS IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND OR FURTHER LANGUAGE:

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Andrea Klaus, Yuliia Lysanets

University of Warwick Press

2025

Table of Contents

Preface

Written language proficiency represents a fundamental component of a language degree, complementing the other three key skills, speaking, listening, and writing. In British universities, essay writing constitutes a core academic requirement and an integral component of language education and many other subjects. The development of essay writing skills in any language cultivates a range of transferable competencies, including the capacity to communicate with clarity, precision and conciseness. Furthermore, it fosters the ability to think critically, to structure and articulate complex ideas, and to manage time effectively. Our own experience and observations also indicate that essay writing techniques and methodological approaches students acquire in their foreign language classes have an additional positive impact on their performance in culture-related modules, which are typically assessed through essays in their first language.

The idea for developing this book, particularly the section focused on essay-writing in German, arose from a noticeable gap in available resources and a clear need for targeted instruction on how students can improve their writing skills in a foreign language. Whilst there is a wide range of German grammar books for students of German available, advice for writing essays in German is very hard, if not impossible, to find. Although the situation is different for English – where numerous resources on essay writing exist – this study guide offers a unique contribution to the field of academic writing instruction by addressing essay writing in both English and German simultaneously. By focusing on the similarities and differences in writing conventions across these two languages and

academic cultures, the guide serves the needs of multilingual learners and educators seeking a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic writing practices. This dual-language approach not only broadens the scope of the target audience – including students learning both English and German – but also enhances writing proficiency, cognitive flexibility, intercultural competence, and academic literacy.

Moreover, we believe that mastering academic essay writing in multiple languages can significantly enhance students' ability to engage with diverse academic communities and gain a competitive advantage in the global job market. In an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, the ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages is an asset in many fields, particularly those that involve international business, cross-cultural communication, academic exchange, research partnerships and collaborations.

Therefore, this study guide aims to showcase the similarities and differences between essays written in English and those composed in German. Both adhere to a very similar structure, comprising an introduction, a main part and a conclusion. Differences between German and English essays are reflected in their unique rhetorical conventions and stylistic features, including variations in argumentation style, language use, and how writers present and develop their ideas.

It is important to note, however, that each section of this study guide is self-contained and may be used on its own.

This study guide was written with special attention to students' needs and is mainly designed for independent learning but may also prove useful for class-based learning and reference purposes. It is aimed at students on German Studies degrees on level C1 and above of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); however, language learners on an intermediate level (B1/B2) should also find it useful. Similarly, the section on essay writing in English is tailored to the needs of EFL/ESL learners, particularly those at B2 level and above, but can also support motivated learners at lower-intermediate levels in developing academic writing skills.

This guide explores two key genres of persuasive writing – argumentative essays and opinion texts – which are closely related, as both involve presenting a clear point of view on

a specific topic. In each, the writer expresses a personal stance or belief and supports it with reasons and evidence. While opinion texts often focus on the writer's personal perspective and may be more informal, argumentative essays typically require a more structured approach, including consideration of opposing viewpoints and the use of logical reasoning. Despite these differences, both genres aim to persuade the reader and rely on similar skills such as critical thinking, organisation, and clarity. Because of this connection, learning to write one text type can strengthen a student's ability to write the other, making them complementary forms of persuasive writing.

It is also necessary to acknowledge the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on essay writing. The natural question arises: Why publish a guide on essay writing in the age of AI? When we initially conceived the idea for this study guide, the influence of Artificial Intelligence in academia was not yet apparent and AI tools such as ChatGPT had not been introduced or were at least not very widely known and used. Since then, the situation has evolved rapidly but the extent of the impact of AI and particularly that of ChatGPT on the education sector remains uncertain. It is clear, however, that technological advancements are beginning to reshape the way foreign or second languages are taught and learnt. In response to these developments, we have begun to integrate AI into our teaching and learning practices, and we are aware that it will change the educational system as we know it. Nonetheless, we maintain that it is essential for students to develop the ability to recognise and evaluate what makes a good text and furthermore to produce high-quality academic texts themselves. The ability to structure ideas logically, construct coherent arguments, and communicate effectively in writing is not only a cornerstone of academic success but also a fundamental human skill – one that should not and cannot be wholly outsourced to technology.

We believe that students must first acquire the foundational competencies of good academic writing before they can engage critically with AI-generated content and make informed judgements about its quality. The capacity to recognise the characteristics of well-written texts and to produce such texts independently remains vital, even in the context of AI-enhanced learning environments.

This study guide is designed to support both students and tutors in this endeavour. We remain convinced of the continued relevance and necessity of explicit instruction in essay

writing. Our hope is that this guide will assist students in producing more effective essays, thereby enriching their academic experience and contributing to improved academic performance.

Andrea G. Klaus

University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Yuliia Lysanets

Poltava State Medical University, Ukraine

2025

Academic writing in German

Introduction to German essay writing

Writing in German constitutes a fundamental component for mastering the language and has therefore always been an integral part of German Studies curricula.

Within the scope of a German Studies degree there is a great variety of written texts that students can be taught to produce - including, for example, discursive essays, critical commentaries, letters, reports, emails, and blogs. Some of these may vary widely in terms of formality. Despite those variations, many of the formal structures and linguistic features are applicable to most text types.

This study guide, however, will focus specifically on the argumentative essay and the opinion piece in German. These two text types share a similar structure; both are organised in a logical way and adhere to formal conventions. Both types of text comprise three formal sections, an introduction, a main body and a conclusion.

The pedagogical justifications for teaching essay writing in the target language are varied. Essay writing helps to develop critical or dialectical thinking. This is defined as the recognition that any topic may be approached from various perspectives, and that genuine understanding derives from the consideration and integration of those differing perspectives. Furthermore, essay writing demonstrates a student's understanding of a particular topic while at the same time enhancing his or her proficiency in the language.

When composing a text in German, students are typically assessed on two fundamental components: linguistic competence and content. The marking criteria for formal written assignments, including essays, commonly comprise factors such as linguistic accuracy, grammatical range and complexity, pertinent use of structures, wide-ranging and topic-

specific vocabulary, appropriate register as well as spelling. The content assessment incorporates students' understanding and interpretation of the task as well as the scope of ideas presented, and the clarity, coherence and logical progression of the argument.

1. The argumentative essay (known in German as *Die Erörterung*)

The primary objective of this text type is to present a persuasive argument that conveys the writer's point of view regarding a specific issue. The argument is supported by logical reasoning, fact-based and credible evidence, and relevant examples. The aim is to influence the reader's perspective by convincing him or her of the validity of the argumentation. To achieve this in an effective manner, the development of the argument must be characterised by clarity, precision, and a structured line of thought.

There are two different structural approaches to this type of essay and the title question typically provides an indication of which approach is the appropriate one. These two structural approaches are: the ascending argument (known in German as *steigernde Argumentation*) and the pro and con argument (or *antithetische Argumentation*). The ascending argument focuses exclusively on one side of the issue to be discussed whereas the pro and con structure presents arguments for both sides of the issue, ultimately favouring one position over the other.

An examination of the following examples will illustrate how the same topic may call for differing argumentative structures depending on the structure of the question posed:

Question 1:

1. *Inwieweit kann Künstliche Intelligenz zur Lösung globaler Probleme beitragen? Diskutieren Sie dies im Kontext von Umwelt, Bildung und Gesundheit.*

Question 2:

2. *Kann Künstliche Intelligenz einen wirkungsvollen Beitrag zur Lösung globaler Probleme leisten – oder überwiegen die Risiken und Grenzen ihres Einsatzes?*

Although both questions address the topic of Artificial Intelligence and its role in confronting global problems, each requires a different argumentative structure. Question 1 calls for an ascending argument and the response should progressively lead to the extent to which AI can contribute to solving global challenges. In contrast, question 2 requires a pro and con approach, involving a balanced discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of AI. This structure entails a reasoned (personal) conclusion: either affirming that AI holds significant potential in addressing global problems or asserting that the associated risks outweigh its benefits.

Question 3:

3. *Hat der Brexit Großbritannien eher geschadet oder genutzt? Nehmen Sie Stellung.*

Question 4

4. *„Der Brexit hat Großbritannien verändert". Stimmen Sie dieser Behauptung zu?*

In question 3 you are expected to examine both the advantages and disadvantages of Brexit, culminating in one stronger side of the argument. Question 4 requires a clear argumentative stance, either for or against the claim stated in the title.

When choosing to employ an ascending argumentative structure, it is important to consider that, although this structure might be easier to compose, it can present challenges in generating and developing a sufficient number of ideas within this single line of argumentation.

1.1. Getting started

1.1a. Analyse the title/ the essay question

Before you begin with your plan, you must study the essay question carefully. Do you understand all the words and the whole question? Can you identify any key words? Could there be any ambiguities in the meaning of the key word(s)? How specific is the title?

The wording of the essay question can also offer valuable guidance for structuring your argument. Consider what possible questions arise from the title. Additionally, it is important to determine whether the argumentation should follow an ascending or a pro and con structure (as previously discussed).

1.1b. First thoughts: a general plan

Before you begin, you must ensure that you have a solid understanding of the given topic so that you can argue your case convincingly. As you analyse the title question, identify key words as these may help shape the structure of your answer and clarify your main ideas. Note down the points you want to make – whether they present both sides of an argument (if the title question calls for a pro and con format) or a single stance within an ascending argument. These notes will form the foundation of your overall plan.

At this stage, it is also important to assess whether you have the necessary subject-specific vocabulary to engage with the topic effectively in German. Content knowledge alone is not sufficient if you lack the linguistic skills to articulate that knowledge appropriately in the target language.

Tip: You should try and compose your essay directly in German, rather than drafting it in English and translating it afterwards. Translated texts often result in awkward and unnatural phrasing which may reflect interference from the first language. Remember that developing the ability to think and write in German enhances fluency and authenticity in expression.

1.1c. Planning: Organising ideas and drafting your essay: a clear structure is a key element of your essay and gives you control over the process of writing

How to improve the clarity of your essay:

Define the purpose of your essay and keep it clearly in your mind while composing your text.

- What are the main points you want to include?
- What is the most logical way to order your ideas?
- Are all ideas and arguments relevant for tackling this topic?
- Are your ideas clearly argued?
- Are they logical?
- Are they precise?
- Are they rational and sound?
- Is there any evidence, are there examples and (scientific) facts that can support your claims so that you can formulate a valid argument?
- Can you arrange your ideas in such a way that the link between points will facilitate reader understanding?

1.1d. Structuring your arguments

When structuring an essay that presents supporting and opposing viewpoints (i.e., pro and con), you need to arrange your arguments in a coherent and logically progressive manner. The most effective approach involves presenting the arguments with which you disagree

first, followed by those arguments that support your own position. This strategy will help to convince your reader of your own viewpoint, as concluding with your strongest arguments increases their impact. The structure is as follows:

- opposing argument 1,
- opposing argument 2,
- opposing argument 3,
- followed by supporting argument 1,
- supporting argument 2,
- and supporting argument 3.

Here are some examples that could be used to answer question 2:

Pro: KI kann einen wirkungsvollen Beitrag zur Lösung globaler Probleme leisten

- *KI ermöglicht effiziente Analyse und Verarbeitung riesiger Datenmengen.*
- *In Bereichen wie Klima, Medizin und Bildung liefert KI innovative Lösungsansätze.*
- *KI-Systeme können sehr schnell reagieren – z. B. bei Naturkatastrophen oder Epidemien.*
- *Automatisierung durch KI kann Ressourcen schonen und nachhaltiges Wirtschaften fördern.*
- *KI verbessert die globale Kommunikation, z. B. durch Übersetzungssysteme oder barrierefreie Technologien.*

Kontra: Risiken und Grenzen der KI

- *KI kann bestehende Ungleichheiten verstärken, z. B. durch Zugangsbeschränkungen oder voreingenommene Algorithmen.*
- *Fehlende Transparenz und Kontrolle über KI-Systeme bergen ethische und sicherheitstechnische Risiken.*
- *Abhängigkeit von KI kann menschliche Kompetenzen verdrängen oder kritisches Denken schwächen.*
- *Globale Spannungen können durch den Einsatz militärischer KI verschärft werden.*
- *Datensicherheit und Schutz der Privatsphäre sind oft unzureichend gewährleistet.*

> 👉 Remember to conclude with your strongest argument.

An alternative method entails alternating between opposing and supporting arguments, beginning with an opposing argument and finishing with a supporting argument. The pattern would be as follows:

- opposing argument 1,
- supporting argument 1,
- opposing argument 2,
- supporting argument 2,
- opposing argument 3,
- supporting argument 3.

While this structure can provide a dynamic presentation, it may prove more challenging to construct coherently. You must also be aware that the overall persuasiveness of the conclusion might be diminished because some of the supporting arguments appear early in the essay.

Regardless of the structural approach adopted, it is crucial to ensure that the argument unfolds in a step-by-step manner and that thematic consistency is maintained throughout the essay.

1.2.   The three parts of the essay

1.2a. The introduction

The introduction serves to demonstrate your comprehension of the essay question. It should give some indication of the approach you take in addressing the topic and it should provide the reader with a basic understanding of the direction and scope of the main part of the text. Together with the conclusion, the introduction functions to frame the overall argument. For an introduction to be effective, it should be precise, pertinent and engaging.

You could include the following in your introduction:

- Your opening sentence may be a paraphrase of the essay question (but do not just copy it). This shows that you have understood the question.
- You might establish a context (which could be social, economic, historical, or political for example)
- Would any term(s) in the title/ question benefit from a definition? Or do certain features of a term need to be explained? (So, for example, if a term has an ambiguous meaning or more than one meaning, make it clear to your reader what it is you are going to discuss)
- Why is the topic important or what is its relevance today? Can you, for example, remind the reader of a recent discussion or event?
- Does the discussion need to be limited to certain aspects? Can it be broken up into certain aspects?
- You might want to narrow down the question, especially if it is open-ended.
- You could define key words.
- You can define the scope of the discussion.
- You may want to set the topic against a wider background.
- You might want to explain why the question is worth exploring.
- You could describe what to expect in the main part of the essay, i.e., what areas you will look at (without saying too much about it at this stage).
- You should try and arouse your reader's interest; can you make the introduction interesting so that it grabs your reader?

- You may outline the general background of the topic and point to the structure and argument in the main part.

- At the end of the introduction the reader should have a clear understanding of what the text is about.

- Don't be too broad but leave room for manoeuvre in the conclusion.

Checklist:

✓ Is the introduction direct and relevant to the topic?

✓ Does it manage to arouse interest in what is to come?

✓ Is there at least an indirect reference to the title question?

✓ Does it outline how you will address the topic?

✓ Have key words and/ or concepts been identified, explained, defined?

✓ Does it provide a logical and seamless transition into the main part?

Avoid providing a direct answer to the essay question at the outset, as doing so would undermine the purpose of reading the rest of the essay.

As a guide, the introduction should encompass roughly 10 – 15% of the whole text.

Example introduction for question 1:

Ob Klimawandel, Bildungskrise oder Gesundheitsversorgung – die Welt steht vor dringlichen Herausforderungen. Immer häufiger wird dabei Künstliche Intelligenz (KI) als Hoffnungsträger genannt. Doch kann Technologie tatsächlich helfen, globale Probleme zu lösen? Dieser Aufsatz beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, welches Potenzial KI in den Bereichen

Umwelt, Bildung und Gesundheit hat. Ziel der Argumentation ist es, Chancen aufzuzeigen – aber auch kritisch zu beleuchten, wo die Grenzen dieser Technologie liegen.

Example introduction for question 3:

Kaum ein politisches Ereignis hat Europa und vor allem Großbritannien selbst in den letzten Jahren so gespalten wie der Brexit. Seit dem Austritt Großbritanniens aus der EU wird hitzig darüber diskutiert, ob dieser Schritt dem Land mehr geschadet oder genutzt hat. In diesem Aufsatz wird untersucht, welche wirtschaftlichen, politischen und gesellschaftlichen Folgen der Brexit bisher tatsächlich hatte – und ob er letztlich ein Gewinn oder ein Verlust für das Vereinigte Königreich war.

1.2b. The main body of the essay

The main part of the essay serves as its central component, where the principal ideas and arguments are systematically developed. At the core of any persuasive essay lies a well-structured and coherent argumentation that gradually leads to a clear and substantiated response to the question posed. Crucially, the effectiveness of the essay depends more on the logical construction of the argument than the simple presentation of factual knowledge.

Your text must exhibit a clear thematic unity, whereby each paragraph contributes meaningfully to the overall argument. While individual paragraphs should be self-contained (i.e., each paragraph addresses a distinct aspect of the topic), there must also be a smooth transition between them.

Checklist:

Aspects to consider for the main part:

- ✓ The main body addresses the question.
- ✓ A two-sided argumentation: pro and con or dialectical (*antithetische Argumentation*): you present strong arguments on both sides.
- ✓ Ideally, an essay with a pro/con argumentation should have three arguments for each side of the debate.

✓ The order of your arguments is as follows: from the weakest to the strongest argument.

✓ Structure your argument in the following way: from the general to the more specific, from assertion to proof.

✓ Ideas should flow logically, and they should be joined so that the reader can follow your argument easily.

✓ If possible, conclude each argument with an example which should be as precise as possible to support your argument and make it more convincing.

✓ Argument and counter-argument: you need to show why the counter-arguments are less convincing than your preferred arguments.

✓ Use facts to present an argument. A complete argument consists of a claim or hypothesis, an explanation/ justification and evidence/ an example.

✓ A well-structured paragraph should:

    o discuss or develop one idea, all information included in the paragraph should support this point;

    o should provide evidence to support the point and

    o critically analyse it.

✓ Always stick to the point and avoid digression.

✓ Be assertive, i.e., avoid expressions such as *vielleicht*, *es kann sein* etc.

✓ Avoid being subjective and emotional.

✓ Avoid over-generalised statements.

✓ Avoid irrelevant or superficial arguments.

✓ Avoid padding.

✓ If you use quotes, you should also discuss their relevance.

✓ Do not repeat information.

✓ Be coherent.

1.2c. Structuring a paragraph

Maintaining a clear structure within a paragraph is important for ensuring clarity and cohesion. The opening sentence typically introduces the central point of the paragraph, providing an overview of the new idea. The remainder of the paragraph is dedicated to expanding on this idea, offering detailed analysis, relevant evidence and examples to support the argument.

1.2d. How to construct an argument

An argument consists of a claim (your hypothesis), supporting evidence and an illustrative example. For an argument to be convincing, its claim must be supported by factual information. Unsupported claims are unlikely to convince your reader. Claims can be based on objective facts, or they can reflect value judgements, that is, they present the writer's perspective on the topic. However, even value judgements must be based on facts and supported by evidence to be considered valid. Your objective as the writer is to present a viewpoint that is relevant and compelling, even if your reader may initially disagree. By incorporating reliable facts to reinforce your points, you demonstrate the validity of your perspective.

When using a pro and con structure, the strength of an argument can be enhanced by addressing and refuting opposing arguments. By doing so, you not only challenge and weaken the credibility of opposing ideas but also reinforce the persuasiveness of your own claims.

Checklist:
- ✓ What does your reader need to know about one specific point? What do you need to explain?
- ✓ Does the argument naturally flow from one key point to the next?
- ✓ Are your points logically linked?
- ✓ Is each point relevant to your argument?

✓ Have you mentioned every idea only once? Do not repeat yourself.

✓ How persuasive is your argument?

✓ Does the argument make sense?

✓ Is each paragraph self-contained and clear?

✓ Does the first sentence of each paragraph clearly introduce the new idea?

✓ Remember to leave arguments you favour until the later part of the main body.

Common mistakes and how to avoid them:

- Weak argument: be more specific.

- Digression, i.e., an idea is not linked properly to the question: is everything you write relevant to your topic?

- Do not use padding to comply with a certain word limit, a shorter essay with relevant points is to be preferred.

- Lack of variety in sentence structure: use a good mix of different sentence structures and lengths to avoid repetition and therefore monotony.

- Lack of variety in vocabulary: use synonyms and suitable alternative expressions.

Example for a weak argument for question 1:

Künstliche Intelligenz ist sehr wichtig und kann vieles machen, was vielleicht auch bei Problemen helfen könnte. Es gibt viele Probleme auf der Welt, und manche sind sehr groß, wie z. B. Umweltprobleme. Wenn man über Umwelt und Bildung und Gesundheit spricht, dann merkt man, dass alles zusammenhängt. Zum Beispiel ist es wichtig, dass wir uns um die Umwelt kümmern, weil dann auch die Menschen gesünder sind und besser lernen können. Wenn man über Lösungen nachdenkt, dann denkt man oft auch an Fortschritt, und

Fortschritt hat heutzutage viel mit KI zu tun. Wenn man KI richtig einsetzt, kann sie bei globalen Problemen helfen, die die Umwelt, die Bildung und die Gesundheit betreffen.

Why is this argument weak?

- Informal register: conversational tone rather than academic/ professional style (*kann vieles machen, was vielleicht auch bei Problemen helfen könnte, dann merkt man, dass wir uns um die Umwelt kümmern*)
  - **Tip:** use more formal vocabulary and avoid vague expressions such as *vieles, vielleicht.*
- Repetition: several words and sentence structures are repeated (*Probleme, Wenn man … spricht/ nachdenkt/ einsetzt*)
  - **Tip:** vary sentence structure and vocabulary to maintain reader interest and to enhance your register
- Vague statements (*KI kann vieles machen, Probleme auf der Welt, alles hängt zusammen, Fortschritt hängt mit KI zusammen)*
  - **Tip:** provide specific examples and clarify abstract statements to increase both depth and credibility of your argument.
- Weak verbs (*kann helfen, kann vieles machen, dann denkt man oft*)
  - **Tip:** use stronger, more specific verbs and more sophisticated vocabulary in general.
- Lack of clear structure: the text moves between topics without clear transitions or a logical progression of ideas. As a result, the argument feels disjointed and unstructured.
  - **Tip:** Organise the content more clearly and use cohesive devices.

Example for a strong argument for question 1:

Ein zentraler Bereich, in dem Künstliche Intelligenz (KI) erheblich zur Lösung globaler Probleme beitragen kann, ist das Gesundheitswesen. Insbesondere in Regionen mit unzureichender medizinischer Versorgung kann KI lebensrettende Unterstützung leisten. Um das zu verstehen, muss man zunächst wissen, wie KI im medizinischen Kontext funktioniert: Durch die Analyse großer Datenmengen kann sie Krankheitsmuster erkennen, Diagnosen unterstützen und sogar personalisierte Behandlungspläne erstellen – und das

oft schneller und präziser als der Mensch allein. Mobile Apps, die auf KI basieren, können beispielsweise Hautkrankheiten analysieren. Dadurch wird ein schnellerer Zugang zu Erstdiagnosen ermöglicht. Darüber hinaus kann KI nicht nur bei individuellen Diagnosen helfen, sondern auch auf globaler Ebene zum Monitoring und zur Vorhersage von Krankheitsausbrüchen eingesetzt werden. Während der COVID-19-Pandemie zeigten KI-Systeme, wie durch die Analyse von Flugbewegungen, Daten aus Sozialen Medien und medizinischen Berichten potenzielle Ausbreitungsgebiete frühzeitig erkannt und Maßnahmen entsprechend angepasst werden konnten. Diese Fähigkeit, schnell auf neue Gesundheitskrisen zu reagieren, wird in einer zunehmend vernetzten Welt immer wichtiger.

The main part of the essay should comprise roughly 70 – 80% of the whole text.

1.2e. The conclusion

The conclusion serves to pull the essay together. It relates back to the introduction, and it must be substantiated by the points discussed in the main part of the essay. An effective conclusion is both concise and impactful, effectively reinforcing the key insights without any unnecessary repetition.

Tip:

Possible elements of a conclusion are:

- You could explore future implications of your topic.
- You might give recommendations (for the future) or give solutions to the problem.
- You may explore the broader implications of the topic.
- You could make suggestions for improving the issue.
- You might find a compromise of the two sides of the argument.
- You can give a short summary of the main points, i.e., synthesise key arguments without repeating individual points.
- You can highlight why the argument is important (if you haven't already done this in your introduction).

- You could mention any possible limitations to your discussion (again, only if you haven't already done this in your introduction).
- You can also comment and give your own opinion here (please note this is not possible in any other part of the essay).
- You could mention implications of your main points.
- You might refer back to the essay question.
- If the main part followed a pro and con structure you are normally expected to make clear in the conclusion which side you favour. If, however, you find this too difficult to do, it is also possible to remain neutral and state the reasons why.

The conclusion should not introduce any new ideas or arguments that have not been previously addressed in the main part of the essay.

Checklist:
✓ If the title of the essay was a question, did you give a clear answer to the question?
✓ Does the conclusion match your argument you made in the main part?
✓ Has no new idea, point or information been added?

The conclusion should comprise approximately 10 – 15% of the length of the whole text, aligning proportionally with the introduction.

Example of a possible conclusion for question 3:

Abschließend lässt sich sagen, dass der Brexit Großbritannien eher geschadet als genutzt hat. Zwar wurde das Ziel einer größeren politischen Eigenständigkeit erreicht, doch die negativen Folgen – insbesondere wirtschaftliche Unsicherheiten, Handelshürden, Fachkräftemangel und der Verlust an internationalem Einfluss – überwiegen immer noch deutlich. Die versprochenen Vorteile, wie eine stärkere Kontrolle über die eigenen Grenzen und Gesetze, konnten die entstandenen Nachteile nicht ausgleichen. Somit zeigt sich, dass der Brexit bisher in der Gesamtbilanz mehr Schaden als Nutzen gebracht hat.

1.3. Text cohesion

In order to achieve textual fluency, it is necessary not only to establish thematic coherence but also to ensure grammatical and lexical cohesion. Cohesion is defined as the connection and flow between distinct ideas, i.e., between individual sentences and also whole paragraphs. So-called cohesive devices maintain the overall flow of the text. These cohesive devices can be subtle features such conjunctions, adverbs, pronouns, articles or lexical patterns. By failing to create cohesion, the text might appear as a disjointed sequence of isolated ideas rather than a unified whole.

    a.   Conjunctions

Und, aber, oder, sondern, denn, weil, sowohl … als auch, entweder … oder, weder … noch etc.

Conjunctions are used to connect two clauses or sentences:

*Künstliche Intelligenz kann zu einer schnelleren Diagnose bei Krankheiten beitragen, **aber** ethische Fragen im Umgang mit Patientendaten sollten dabei nicht ignoriert werden.*

Conjunctions can also help to connect two ideas:

*Nicht nur im Bildungswesen, **sondern auch** in der medizinischen Versorgung eröffnet KI neue Möglichkeiten.*

    b. Adverbs

Deshalb, deswegen, trotzdem, beispielsweise, folglich, außerdem etc.

Adverbs are used to provide additional context and create a link between two pieces of information:

*Viele Unternehmen haben mit mehr Bürokratie und auch Lieferproblemen zu kämpfen, **folglich** sind die Produktionskosten gestiegen.*

*Die britische Regierung hat einige neue Handelsabkommen abgeschlossen, **beispielsweise** mit Indien und Australien.*

c. Pronouns, relative pronouns and demonstrative pronouns

Pronouns can only be used unambiguously if the noun (person or object) they refer to has been mentioned before, therefore connecting two sentences. Relative clauses are a means to add further information in one sentence rather than using two sentences, which can very often sound rather stilted.

*Künstliche Intelligenz**, die sich an den individuellen Lernstand der Schüler*innen anpasst**, kann im Bildungsbereich erfolgreich eingesetzt werden.*

*Es wurden neue Handelsverträge mit Nicht-EU-Staaten geschlossen. **Diese** sollen langfristig wirtschaftliche Vorteile für Großbritannien bringen.*

***Die politische Spaltung** in der britischen Bevölkerung kam durch den Brexit noch stärker zum Vorschein. Bis heute erschwert **sie** den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt.*

d. Articles

Definite articles refer to information in a preceding sentence.

*Künstliche Intelligenz wird zunehmend in der Medizin eingesetzt. **Sie** kann Diagnosen deutlich beschleunigen und verbessern.*

e. Lexical pattern

Lexical patterning refers to recurring words or word groups, reflecting semantic or grammatical relationships. Text cohesion is achieved by referring to concepts, ideas or thoughts already mentioned earlier in the text. This can be done by repeating the same noun, by using a pronoun or by an alternative word with a similar meaning, a synonym.

For further help on cohesion please see below **'*useful phrases*'**.

Please also refer to German grammar books for more information.

1.3. Various

a. Word limit:

Ensure your essay adheres to the set word limit. Any deviations – either exceeding or falling short of the word limit – may result in a loss of marks.

b. Quotations:

While the use of quotations is permissible, you should use them sparingly. Any quotations included should normally be brief and carefully selected for their relevance (and not used as a way to reach your word limit).

> ☛ Quotations should be integrated purposefully to support and strengthen your argument, rather than serving as optional embellishments.

c. Proofreading your essay:

Do not forget to proofread your text and pay special attention to the mistakes you are prone to make (grammar, vocabulary, syntax, spelling, punctuation, style/ register/ tone, presentation).

> ☛ Remember that becoming a good linguist also means learning to spot your own mistakes.

d. Referencing:

All sources and quotations must be cited in accordance with your university's referencing guidelines. However, referencing is normally not required for essays written under

examination conditions. Nonetheless, it would be prudent to consult your institution's specific policies to confirm whether this applies.

    e.   Your tutor's feedback:

It is advisable to engage thoroughly with any feedback provided, rather than focusing solely on the mark received. This will offer valuable insights for improving future assignments.

> Reflect critically on both the strengths of your work and the areas requiring improvement. Learn from your mistakes.

Furthermore, keep in mind that there is no single "correct" answer to an essay question; the objective is to construct a well-reasoned and persuasive argument.

2. The opinion piece (known in German as *Stellungnahme*)

The main distinction between an opinion text and an argumentative essay lies in the manner how and when the writer's perspective is presented. In an opinion text, the writer's viewpoint is clearly stated in the introduction. The principal aim of an opinion piece is to inform the reader of a specific issue and persuade them to adopt the author's point of view. To achieve this, the writer must demonstrate their position through coherent, convincing, and logically sound reasoning. The title question or central claim must be either challenged or defended in an intellectually rigorous way. Furthermore, the stated viewpoint must be supported by well-founded arguments.

Structurally, the opinion text mirrors the argumentative essay, comprising an introduction, a main part and a conclusion.

The introduction

- Establishes the context and pertinence of the topic.
- Explains and clarifies your own view, states your reference to the topic, and possibly declares why you may be an "expert" in this area.

Example for an introduction for question 2 (*Kann Künstliche Intelligenz einen wirkungsvollen Beitrag zur Lösung globaler Probleme leisten – oder überwiegen die Risiken und Grenzen ihres Einsatzes? Schreiben Sie eine Stellungnahme für oder gegen den Einsatz von KI*)

In einer Welt, die von globalen Krisen wie dem Klimawandel, der Bildungsungleichheit und gesundheitlichen Herausforderungen betroffen ist, wird Künstliche Intelligenz (KI) oft als

Antwort auf diese Probleme gesehen. Trotz der unbestreitbaren Chancen, die KI bietet, bin ich der Meinung, dass die Risiken und ethischen Bedenken, die mit ihrem Einsatz einhergehen, nicht ignoriert werden dürfen. In dieser Stellungnahme werde ich darlegen, warum ich davon überzeugt bin, dass die potenziellen Gefahren von KI gegenwärtig die Vorteile überwiegen.

Main part:

- Your own position must be proven and justified by using 3 – 4 arguments (starting with the weakest and finishing with the strongest argument, cf argumentative essay).
- All arguments serve to convince your reader to take your viewpoint.

Remember that the opinion piece always has a linear argument.

The conclusion:

- You should conclude with a strong result on the basis of the preceding argumentation.
- You could possibly present a suggestion for a solution to the problem, or some advice, or a plea.
- You may take up the point of view from the introduction once again.

To summarise, while the structure of an opinion text closely resembles the linear argumentation in the argumentative essay, the emphasis differs in terms of content. Specifically, the writer's personal viewpoint, supported by coherent arguments, occupies the central role in the text. Furthermore, opinion pieces are frequently composed in the form of letters or appeals, reflecting their rhetorical intent.

Language:

A neutral to formal register is expected, however, a more expressive and stylistically bold use of language is not only acceptable but at times encouraged. This may include the strategic use of irony, rhetorical questions, a journalistic tone, proverbs or idiomatic expressions, and, where appropriate, even informal language (used sparingly). Such rhetorical devices can serve to establish or emphasise an emotional connection—whether genuine or perceived—between the author and the subject matter, thereby enhancing the persuasive impact of the text.

Proverbs and idioms that might be useful in opinion texts

A *proverb* is a memorable, usually short sentence that conveys a piece of advice or articulates a general truth.

An *idiom* is defined as a figurative expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from the literal interpretation of its individual components. The meaning of an idiom is typically rooted within the cultural context in which it is used.

Examples of useful proverbs

German proverbs	English equivalents
Besser den Spatz in der Hand als die Taube auf dem Dach.	A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
Ist die Katze aus dem Haus, tanzen die Mäuse.	When the cat's away, the mice will play.
Viele Köche verderben den Brei.	Too many cooks spoil the broth.
Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund.	The early bird catches the worm.
Steter Tropfen höhlt den Stein.	Constant dripping wears away the stone.
Das ist ein Tropfen auf den heißen Stein.	That's a drop in the ocean.
Aller Anfang ist schwer.	All beginnings are difficult.
Es ist nicht alles Gold, was glänzt.	All that glitters is not gold.

Wer A sagt, muss auch B sagen.	In for a penny, in for a pound.
Was Hänschen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr.	You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
Rom wurde nicht an einem Tag erbaut.	Rome was not built in a day.

Examples of useful idioms

German idioms	English equivalents
um den heißen Brei herumreden	to beat about the bush
auf keinen grünen Zweig kommen	to get nowhere
jemandem nicht das Wasser reichen können	not to be fit to hold a candle to someone
das A und O	the alpha and omega
in den sauren Apfel beißen	to bite the bullet
am Ball bleiben	to hang in there
kleinere Brötchen backen	to lower one's sights
wie es im Buch(e) steht	a textbook example
Eulen nach Athen tragen	to carry coals to Newcastle
an einem seidenen Faden hängen	to hang by a thread
sein Fähnlein nach dem Winde drehen	to float with the tide
Farbe bekennen	to show one's true colours
die Grechtenfrage stellen	the crucial question
im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes	in the truest sense of the word
etwas für bare Münze nehmen	to take something at face value
der springende Punkt	pivot
auf Sand gebaut	to be built on sand
reinen Wein einschenken	to tell someone the plain truth
den Wind aus den Segeln nehmen	to take the wind out of someone's sails

The above selection represents a very limited sample of German proverbs and idioms that may be appropriately incorporated into an opinion text. The use of such linguistic elements can, correctly applied, enrich the text, enhance its expressiveness, and at the same time demonstrate a strong command of the language.

If you decide to use proverbs, do so sparingly. Incorporating one or two well-chosen examples is in most cases sufficient to achieve the desired rhetorical effect.

3. Language and register:

In linguistic terms, the concept of 'register' refers to the variation in vocabulary and grammatical structures appropriate to the communicative context. As the level of formality in a certain situation increases, so too must the formality of the language used. Both the argumentative essay and the opinion text require the use of a neutral to formal register.

It is important to bear in mind that an essay is a one-way mode of communication. Unlike spoken discourse, it does not allow for immediate feedback or clarification from the reader. Consequently, you must ensure that the text provides sufficient logic and clarity to preclude misunderstandings or the emergence of unanswered questions on the part of the reader.

In addition, distinctions between spoken and written language must be recognised. Proficiency in spoken German - particularly after an extended stay in a German-speaking country – does not automatically equate to proficiency in formal written German. Therefore, it is essential to learn to distinguish between language appropriate for everyday use and that which is suitable for academic and formal written contexts.

Checklist:
- ✓ Use clear, concise, and cohesive language.
- ✓ Be explicit and precise by using differentiated and extensive vocabulary.
- ✓ Avoid expletives and filler words such as *eigentlich, bestimmt* etc.

- ✓ Avoid abbreviations (use *Universität* instead of *Uni*) or contractions.
- ✓ Avoid insider terminology or regional variations.
- ✓ Avoid English words or Anglicisms – there is usually a very good German term available.
- ✓ Avoid cliches.
- ✓ Avoid highly opinionated words in the argumentative essay (used sparingly, however, they will work in an opinion text).
- ✓ Avoid value judgements (such as *gut*, *wunderbar*, *schrecklich*) in the argumentative essay – again they might work in an opinion text, but do not overuse them.
- ✓ Avoid temporal adverbs, adverbs of manner and intensifiers because they might dilute meaning (e.g., *oft, manchmal, ziemlich* etc).
- ✓ Avoid absolute terms such as superlatives (*immer, alle, der/die/das beste, schlimmste* etc).
- ✓ Avoid word repetitions, find synonyms instead, vary your vocabulary.
- ✓ Avoid sentences that are too long and overcomplicated.
- ✓ Use the present tense for factual topics, your own ideas and ideas in reference, only use the imperfect to describe a past event, use the future tense when writing about an event that will or might occur in the future.
- ✓ The use of the personal pronouns: using personal pronouns is usually not advisable, however, there is no strict rule against using *ich*, and it is fine if you use it sparingly. However, you should avoid using *wir* or addressing the reader with *Sie* – unless you write an opinion text in the form of a letter.

How to achieve a more formal register

A formal register is characterised by the use of specific vocabulary and grammatical constructions. To develop proficiency in formal written German, you should engage in extensive and attentive reading. This includes academic texts as well as journalistic writing and literary works such as novels and short stories. Thereby, you will acquire advanced vocabulary, and you will also develop an understanding of various syntactic and stylistic choices.

Techniques for enhancing linguistic formality:

a. **Use of the passive voice**

   The passive voice is typically employed to increase the formality of the language. It is frequently found in formal contexts, particularly in written German, including newspaper articles, academic writing and official documents. Grammatically, the passive serves to emphasise the action itself, or the object affected by the action, rather than saying who or what is doing it. Actions or events become more important than the actors. By omitting the actor or subject - the person or entity responsible for the action - the tone becomes more impersonal and objective. At the same time the emphasis shifts from the doer to the action. Formal and academic writing usually places greater emphasis on the action than the actor.

   In addition to the standard passive constructions the German language also offers a range of alternative structures that serve similar functions to the passive voice and are appropriate in formal writing:

   - Reflexive verbs (*Die Frage, ob der Brexit Großbritannien mehr geschadet oder genutzt hat, lässt sich nicht leicht beantworten.*)
   - Mehrgliedrige Verben (*Diese Frage steht zur Diskussion.*)
   - infinitive with „zu" (*Diese Frage ist zu erörtern.*)
   - „sich lassen" (*Das lässt sich mit den folgenden Argumenten erklären.*)
   - Adjectives ending in *-bar* (*Dieses Argument ist widerlegbar.*)

b. **Use of the subjunctive**

- Subjunctive I is used to mark indirect speech.

  Indirect or reported speech serves to convey that the ideas expressed in a particular statement originate from another source, without using a direct quotation. It is commonly employed in formal writing.

  Die britische Regierung betonte, dass das vorgeschlagene Jugendmobilitätsprogramm keinesfalls eine Rückkehr zur vorherigen Freizügigkeit innerhalb der EU bedeute.

- Subjunctive II: the main use of the subjunctive II is to characterise something as unreal, not necessarily true, or, as in the example below, possible.

  Es könnte argumentiert werden, dass die Künstliche Intelligenz unser aller Leben vereinfacht.

  Please note that the subjunctive II is also used for indirect speech if the form of the subjunctive I is the same as that of the indicative form.

c. **Nominalstil/ nominal style** (preference for nouns as opposed to verbs)

  In German, actions or states can be conveyed through either verbal or nominal constructions. Verbal expression, referred to as verbal style, is considered standard usage and predominates in everyday (spoken) language.

  In contrast, the nominal style places greater emphasis on nouns rather than verbs. This form is typically found in formal linguistic contexts, and is especially prevalent in written, non-fictional texts such as academic or official documents.

- The meaning of the sentence shifts from the verb or adjective to the noun:

  Obwohl Großbritannien aus der EU ausgetreten ist, sind die Beziehungen zu den anderen europäischen Staaten gut.

43

→ ***Trotz des Austritts*** *Großbritanniens aus der EU sind die Beziehungen zu den anderen europäischen Staaten gut.*

Die Frage konnte schnell beantwortet werde, weil KI eingesetzt wurde.

→ ***Wegen des Einsatzes*** *von KI konnte die Frage schnell beantwortet werden.*

Tip: It is also typical to convey a lot of information in a noun-phrase as an alternative to a relative clause. You can do this by adding adjectives:

Trotz endloser, mühseliger und ernüchternder Verhandlungen *zeigten sich die politischen Vetreter der Staaten optimistisch.*

d. **Extended participle phrases**

When a participle is used to modify a noun, the modifying phrase can be extended to include additional information. Extended participle phrases may be used as an alternative to relative clauses and are very common in formal written German.

*Die **auf der Grundlage riesiger Datenmengen arbeitende** KI kann in Bereichen wie dem Klimaschutz wertvolle Dienste leisten.*

Verantwortungsvoll genutzte und ethisch regulierte *KI kann einen bedeutenden Beitrag zur Lösung globaler Probleme leisten.*

e. **Funktionsverbgefüge/ feste Nomen-Verb-Verbindung**

A noun-verb-construction is a phrase consisting of a noun and a verb that conveys a meaning that can also be expressed by a standalone verb and functions as the

predicate in a sentence. It can be used as an alternative to the standalone verb and is typically of a higher register.

Some examples that might be useful in essays are:

Kritisieren – Kritik üben

Der Einsatz von KI im medizinischen Bereich wird oft kritisiert.
→ Am Einsatz von KI im medizinischen Bereich wird oft Kritik geübt.

Beitragen – einen Beitrag leisten

Künstliche Intelligenz kann wesentlich zum Gesundheitswesen beitragen.

→ Künstliche Intelligenz kann im Gesundheitswesen einen wichtigen Beitrag leisten.

Verb	Noun-verb construction
abschließen	zum Abschluss kommen
ansprechen, erwähnen	zur Sprache kommen
anzweifeln/ bezweifeln	in Zweifel ziehen/ in Frage stellen
beanspruchen	Anspruch erheben
beantragen	Antrag stellen auf/ einreichen
beeinflussen	Einfluss auf … ausüben
beenden	zu Ende bringen
beurteilen	ein Urteil fällen
erwägen	in Erwägung ziehen/ in Betracht ziehen
herausfinden	in Erfahrung bringen
kontaktieren	sich in Verbindung setzen
mitteilen	in Kenntnis setzen
nachdenken über	in Erwägung ziehen
raten	Rat geben
sich auswirken	Auswirkungen haben

sich entscheiden	einen Beschluss fassen
sich erfüllen	in Erfüllung gehen
sich verabschieden	Abschied nehmen von
sich vorbereiten	Vorbereitungen treffen
verlieren	eine Niederlage erleiden
verfügen über	zur Verfügung haben

f.   Use of the genitive case

- In modern German, the use of the genitive case is mainly restricted to a formal register. It is advisable to use the genitive instead of the dative when you have the option between the two cases:

Wegen des Brexits brauchen Deutsche einen Reisepass, um nach Großbritannien zu reisen.

Instead of: *wegen dem Brexit*

The other prepositions you should use with the genitive instead of the dative are: *(an)statt, trotz*, and *während*.

- Some adverbial genitives and noun phrases in the genitive case are useful expressions for essays, for example:

Meines Erachtens
Meines Wissens
Ich bin der Ansicht ...
Ich bin der Auffassung ...
Ich bin der Meinung ...
Ich bin der (festen) Überzeugung ...

- There are also some German verbs that are governed by the genitive which are typically used in a formal register, so for example:

gedenken: *Wir gedenken der Opfer der Flutkatastrophe* is more formal to say than *Wir denken an die Opfer der Flutkatastrophe.*

bedürfen: Er bedarf der Hilfe seines Freundes, instead of *Er braucht die Hilfe seines Freundes.*

Other examples would be: sich erfreuen, sich rühmen, anklagen, beschuldigen, verdächtigen etc.

- In formal written German the genitive case is used rather than the preposition *von*

  *Die Steuereinnahmen des Staates (*colloquial speech*: die Steuereinnahmen vom Staat)*

g. **Vocabulary and register**

A higher register can be achieved by vocabulary that conveys a certain degree of formality, for example:

bekommen (neutral word) → erhalten, empfangen (formal word)
brauchen → bedürfen, benötigen
Geld → Geldmittel
sehr → höchst, äußerst, überaus
trotzdem → gleichwohl
verstehen → erfassen
versuchen → anstreben, sich bemühen

(For more examples, please see for example *Martin Durell: Using German, A Guide to contemporary Usage, 2003)*

h. **Synonyms/ alternatives for frequently used words**

A higher degree of precision in expression is achieved by means of more nuanced vocabulary and exact formulations. Additionally, incorporating synonyms and alternative expressions wherever appropriate contributes to greater linguistic variety within a text.

Some examples of frequently used words and their synonyms

Neutral language	Formal language
anfangen	beginnen
beenden	zum Schluss kommen, beendigen, aufhören, zu Ende bringen, zum Abschluss bringen
bekommen	erhalten, empfangen, beziehen
besprechen	erörtern, diskutieren
Grund	Ursache, Umstand, Tatbestand, Motivation, Anlass, Begründung, Auslöser
haben	besitzen, verfügen über
jetzt	nun, im Moment, momentan, zur Zeit, heutzutage, augenblicklich
oft	häufig, vielmals, mehrmals, regelmäßig, immer wieder, in vielen Fällen, mehrfach
sagen	feststellen, betonen, erklären, erläutern, erwähnen, meinen, hinweisen … auf, bekannt machen, angeben, anführen, aussagen, hervorheben
sein	existieren, sich befinden, bestehen, sich ereignen, stammen aus
und	außerdem, auch, sowie, überdies, darüber hinaus, weiterhin, sowohl … als auch, zusätzlich, einschließlich
wichtig	bedeutend, entscheidend, maßgebend

i. **Tenses**

In the composition of argumentative essays or opinion texts, the present tense is generally used. When referencing past events, the imperfect (Präteritum) is the

preferred tense. Although the imperfect and the perfect tense are grammatically interchangeable in German (i.e., it is grammatically not incorrect to say: *Ich habe gestern meine Freundin getroffen*), their usage has stylistic implications. The perfect tense is commonly associated with spoken and less formal language whereas the imperfect is typically preferred in formal, especially written, contexts.

4. Redemittel (useful phrases)

Einleitung

- Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit/ befasst sich mit/behandelt/ analysiert/ untersucht/ diskutiert/ beleuchtet/ erörtert/ legt dar/ umreißt/ vergleicht/ thematisiert.
- In der vorliegenden Arbeit geht es um
- Die Frage nach ... ist von großem/ besonderem Interesse, weil
- Zugrunde gelegt werden
- Es ist allgemein bekannt, dass
- Man könnte behaupten, dass
- Heutzutage werden wir oft mit dem Thema konfrontiert
- Auf ... kann im Rahmen dieser Arbeit nicht/ nur am Rande eingegangen werden
- Zunächst wird
- Zunächst untersuche/ betrachte ich
- Zu Beginn stelle ich dar
- sich befassen mit
- In ... geht es um
- Der Aufsatz handelt von
- untersuchen
- darstellen
- sich beschränken auf
- eingehen auf

Hauptteil

- Es ist allgemein bekannt, dass
- Man könnte behaupten, dass
- Es wird häufig behauptet, dass
- Zu fragen ist auch, ob
- Drei Gründe sprechen für/ gegen
- Es muss ferner daran erinnert werden, dass
- Dieses Argument muss genauer betrachtet werden.
- Einige Beispiele mögen zum besseren Verständnis dieser Frage/ dieses Arguments beitragen.
- Ein gutes Beispiel dafür ist
- Dies wird besonders deutlich, wenn man
- Im Gegensatz dazu steht
- Man kann dies daran sehen, dass
- Die Gründe dafür liegen auf der Hand.
- Wichtig ist weiterhin
- Es gibt jedoch auch Stimmen, die behaupten, dass
- Die Befürworter sind der Meinung, dass
- Gegner dieser Ansicht bringen vor, dass
- Ein möglicher Einwand könnte sein, dass
- Allerdings lässt sich dagegen einwenden, dass
- Allerdings ist auch zu beachten, dass
- Bei genauer Betrachtung zeigt sich jedoch, dass
- Das mag auf den ersten Blick einleuchtend wirken, aber
- In diesem Zusammenhang ist auch zu berücksichtigen, dass
- Ein wichtiger Zusammenhang besteht darin, dass
- Einerseits ... andererseits
- Auf der einen Seite ... auf der anderen Seite
- Ein häufig genanntes Argument ist
- An dieser Stelle muss außerdem die Frage beantwortet werden, ob
- Es lässt sich nicht bestreiten, dass
- Dieses Beispiel zeigt, dass

- Dennoch, trotzdem

- Jedoch, obwohl

- Im Gegenteil/ im Gegensatz

- Verglichen mit

- Zuerst ... dann ... schließlich

- Zum einen

- Zunächst/ am Anfang/ als erstes

- Als erstes kann man feststellen, dass

- Nicht zuletzt

- Zweitens/ der zweite Grund ist

- Ein weiterer Grund, warum

- Zum Beispiel/ beispielsweise

- Hieraus

- Darüber hinaus

- Dies deutet darauf hin, dass

- Außerdem/ desweiteren/ ferner

- Wichtiger/ schwerer wiegt

- Besonders

- Vor allem

- Schließlich

- Allerdings

- Demgegenüber sollte betont werden, dass

- Jedoch/ aber

- Auch/ weiterhin

- Infolgedessen

- Überdies

- Darüberhinaus

- Am wichtigsten/ am bedeutendsten

- Zwar ... aber/doch

- Obwohl

- Dieses Argument mag überzeugend klingen, aber ...

- Daraus folgt, dass

Schluss

- Die angeführten Argumente beweisen

- Wir sehen also, dass

- Es spricht also alles dafür, dass

- Alles in allem lässt sich nur folgern, dass

- Zusammenfassend kann man sagen/ ergibt sich, dass

- Zum Schluss/ Daraus kann man folgern

- Man kommt (unweigerlich) zu dem Schluss, dass

- Die angeführten Argumente zeigen, dass

- Abschließend lässt sich sagen, dass

- Alles in allem zeigt sich, dass

- Es zeigt sich, dass

- Daraus folgt, dass

- Dies führt zu der Schlussfolgerung, dass

- Meiner Meinung/ Ansicht nach

- Ich bin der Überzeugung, dass

- Aus meiner Sicht ist es entscheidend, dass

- Hieraus können wir folgern, dass

5. Writing an essay under exam conditions

In this section we dealt with the type of essay typically required of students in their final year of a German Studies degree programme. Such essays may take the form of assignments written at home or timed examinations, the latter generally involving a two- to three-hour writing session on campus and a word count of approximately 700 – 1000 words. However, all guidance provided here is broadly applicable and can be adapted to suit both shorter and longer writing tasks.

Usually, students are given a selection of essay questions from which to choose. The selection of a topic should be guided by two principal considerations:

a. your prior knowledge of the subject matter, and
b. more importantly, your ability to discuss the topic in the target language. This includes possessing the necessary subject-specific terminology and linguistic competence to construct a convincing argument.

Tip: Even under exam conditions it is important to allocate time for careful essay planning prior to the writing process. Examinations often include a designated reading time - typically 15 minutes – during which you can select a topic and plan your essay, i.e., collect ideas and structure them. Use this time wisely before you start writing. It is equally important to allocate sufficient time, ideally approximately 10 - 15 minutes, at the end of the examination to thoroughly proofread your essay prior to submission.

Academic writing in English

Introduction to English essay writing

For EFL/ESL learners, developing strong essay writing skills is a crucial part of achieving academic and professional success. Essay writing not only enhances language proficiency, but also fosters critical thinking, logical organisation, and the ability to articulate complex ideas clearly and persuasively. As many EFL/ESL students aim to pursue higher education or professional careers in English-speaking environments, mastering essay writing equips them with essential tools for effective communication in both academic and real-world contexts.

Furthermore, essay writing serves as a bridge between language acquisition and academic literacy. It provides EFL/ESL learners with a structured way to practise vocabulary, grammar, and discourse while engaging with a variety of topics. Whether preparing for standardised English exams or participating in university coursework, students benefit from understanding how to construct clear arguments, support opinions with evidence, and follow established conventions of academic writing. As such, a focus on essay writing contributes significantly to learners' overall language development and confidence in using English.

As with the preceding chapter on German academic writing, this chapter likewise focuses on the genres of the argumentative essay and the opinion piece. The decision to highlight these forms in both languages reflects the authors' shared pedagogical priorities and the significance of these text types in educational contexts. The argumentative essay is instrumental in equipping students with the ability to produce persuasive scholarly texts and impactful academic papers. Meanwhile, the opinion piece is highly effective in preparing for international English proficiency exams, and serves as an ideal platform for practising general English writing skills on everyday topics. Hence, by addressing both

genres, this chapter aims to support learners in building strong foundations in academic and general English writing.

Core features of academic writing in English

Feature	Guideline
Language style	Clear, concise, formal
Average sentence length	12–15 words
Maximum sentence length	No more than 20 words
Average paragraph length	~8 lines (for printed sources)
Audience awareness	Use arguments and vocabulary suited to the reader's knowledge and expectations. Embrace a reader-focused approach

Academic writing guidelines based on the reader-focused approach

Category	Guidelines	Example / Note
Tone and style	Formal but accessible; avoid overly complex phrasing	Use "illustrates" instead of "serves to illustrate the notion that…"
Voice	Prefer active voice; use passive voice only when appropriate	Active: "Researchers found…" vs. Passive: "It was found by researchers…"
Sentence structure	Use sentence variety; short sentences for clarity, longer ones for depth – combine for rhythm	Mix short and compound-complex sentences for flow
Verb choice	Strong, precise verbs; avoid overuse of "to be" verbs and vague verbs	Use "demonstrates," "reveals," "suggests" instead of "is"
Nominalisations	Avoid turning verbs into nouns unnecessarily	Use "decided" not "made a decision"

Clarity and precision	Avoid wordiness, ambiguity, and jargon (unless discipline-specific and clearly defined)	Define terms the first time you use them
Formatting	Follow discipline-appropriate citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)	Be consistent with font, spacing, heading structure

1. The argumentative essay: Supporting your position

An argumentative essay presents a clear position on a specific issue and supports it with logical reasoning, evidence, and analysis. The goal is not only to state what you believe, but to persuade the reader that your viewpoint is valid. This requires critical engagement with the topic, awareness of opposing viewpoints, and the ability to refute counter-arguments effectively.

Key features of the argumentative essay:
- A clearly stated thesis (main argument)
- Logical structure (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion)
- Evidence-based reasoning
- A formal and objective tone
- Consideration and rebuttal of counter-arguments

1.1. Getting started

1.1a. Understanding the essay prompt

The first step in writing an effective argumentative essay is understanding what the question is asking. Misinterpreting the prompt can lead to an irrelevant or unfocused essay.

Example prompt:

"Do social media platforms have a positive or negative effect on young people's mental health? Support your argument with evidence."

Steps to understand the prompt:

1. Identify the topic – social media and mental health
2. Determine the task – take a position (positive or negative)
3. Recognise requirements – support your view with evidence

Tip: Try to rephrase the prompt in your own words:

"I need to argue whether social media helps or harms young people's mental well-being, using examples or research."

1.1b. Generating initial ideas: Brainstorming and outlining

Once you have understood the prompt, the next step is to gather ideas. This stage helps you to explore different angles before committing to a particular argument.

Brainstorming techniques:

- **Freewriting:** Write your thoughts on the topic without worrying about structure.

- **Mind mapping:** Visually connect related ideas around your main topic.
- **Questioning:** Ask yourself "Why?", "How?", and "What if?" to deepen your understanding.

Example (Topic: Online learning vs. traditional learning):

- Flexibility
- Lack of face-to-face interaction
- Accessibility
- Motivation
- Self-discipline

After brainstorming, you can begin creating a simple **outline** to organise your ideas logically.

Tip: To make the most of freewriting, try using the *Squibler* platform (https://www.squibler.io/dangerous-writing-prompt-app), which offers a tool designed to encourage freewriting. This tool challenges you to keep writing without stopping, helping you maintain focus and letting your thoughts evolve naturally.

1.1c. Planning and drafting. Shaping your argument

Your **thesis statement** is the core of your argumentative essay – it tells the reader what your main point is.

Strong thesis example:

"While social media can foster connection, its overall impact on young people's mental health is harmful due to increased anxiety, sleep disruption, and self-esteem issues."

Next, create a **rough plan** with three or four supporting points, each forming a body paragraph. For each point, note the evidence or examples you will include.

Drafting tips:

- Start with a strong introduction that presents your thesis.
- Develop each paragraph around a single idea, supported by reasoning and examples.
- Include at least one paragraph addressing opposing views – and refute them.
- Conclude by reinforcing your thesis and summarising key points.

1.1d. Organising arguments logically and persuasively

The strength of an argumentative essay lies in how convincingly it presents and organises its arguments. To persuade a reader, a writer must do more than simply state an opinion. Persuasive writing relies on the following elements:

- **Clear position**: The writer's stance on the issue should be evident and consistent throughout the essay.
- **Strong reasons**: Each point should be supported by logical reasoning, relevant facts, examples, or expert opinions.
- **Anticipation of counter-arguments**: In more advanced writing, acknowledging opposing views and refuting them adds credibility and depth to the argument.

Tip: Ask yourself questions such as *Why do I believe this?* and *What evidence supports my view?* – it will help you move from general opinions to well-reasoned arguments.

1.2. The three parts of the essay

An effective academic essay follows a three-part structure: **introduction**, **body**, and **conclusion**. Each section serves a distinct purpose and contributes to the clarity and persuasiveness of your argument.

Section	Component	Description
Introduction	Hook	Captures the reader's attention with a relevant fact, statistic, or question.
	Background	Provides context and relevant information about the topic.
	Thesis statement	Clearly states the main argument or position of the essay. It should be specific, arguable, and focused; introduced early (usually the end of introduction).
Body paragraphs	Topic sentence	Introduces the main point of the paragraph and connects to the thesis.
	Evidence	Provides facts, statistics, examples, or other supporting material.
	Explanation	Connects the evidence to the topic sentence and explains how it supports the argument.
	Transition	Smoothly connects the current paragraph to the next (e.g., "furthermore," "however").
Conclusion	Restate thesis	Briefly summarises the main argument, using different phrasing.
	Summarise key points	Recaps the main supporting points of the essay.
	Concluding statement	Offers a final thought or call to action related to the topic.
Types of an argumentative essay	Classical (Aristotelian)	Introduces the topic, presents the main argument, addresses counter-arguments, and concludes.

	Rogerian	Introduces the issue neutrally, acknowledges opposing views, finds common ground, and seeks compromise.
	Toulmin	Introduces the issue, states the claim, provides evidence, explains the reasoning, addresses counter-arguments, and reinforces the original claim.

1.2a. Effective introductions. Thesis statement

The introduction is your first opportunity to engage the reader and present the main focus of your essay. A good introduction sets the context, outlines the issue, and clearly states your position in the form of a **thesis statement**.

Key features of an introduction:

1. Hook – a general statement, quote, or question to grab attention
2. Background – brief context to explain the topic
3. Thesis statement – your main argument in one clear sentence

A **thesis statement** is the most important sentence in your essay. It tells the reader exactly what your argument or position is.

What makes a good thesis?

Criteria	Description
Clear and specific	Avoid vague claims; focus on one strong idea
Arguable	Should present a claim that others might disagree with
Focused	Narrow enough to be fully explained within your essay
Usually at end of intro paragraph	Often the last sentence in the introduction

Examples:

> ☒ *"Climate change is bad."*
> ✓ *"Governments must adopt carbon taxes to address climate change effectively and equitably."*

Example introduction:

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, especially for young people. While it allows users to stay connected and express themselves, its effects on mental health have raised serious concerns. *This essay argues that social media has a predominantly negative impact on young people's mental well-being due to increased anxiety, reduced sleep quality, and low self-esteem.*

Tip: Keep your thesis specific and debatable. Avoid vague or overly broad claims.

Other examples of strong thesis statements:

- ✓ Universal access to healthcare is a basic human right and should be provided by all governments to reduce inequality, improve public health outcomes, and support economic development.

- ✓ Mandatory vaccination policies are essential for protecting public health, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, and boosting immunity, especially among vulnerable populations.

- ✓ Employers should prioritise mental health support in the workplace because it improves employee well-being, reduces absenteeism, and enhances overall productivity.

- ✓ Telemedicine should be integrated into mainstream healthcare systems, as it increases accessibility, reduces costs, and provides quality care to patients in remote or underserved areas.

- ✓ Governments should regulate sugar consumption through taxation and warning labels, as excessive sugar intake contributes to rising rates of obesity, diabetes, and other preventable diseases.

1.2b. The main body

The body of your essay is where you **develop your argument.** It usually consists of three to five paragraphs, each presenting one main idea that supports your thesis.

Suggested paragraph structure (PEEL):
- **Point** – the main idea (topic sentence)
- **Evidence** – facts, quotes, or examples that support the point
- **Explanation** – interpretation or reasoning that connects evidence to your argument
- **Link** – transition to the next paragraph or a reference back to the thesis

Each paragraph should:
- Start with a topic sentence stating the main point
- Include evidence (examples, data, citations)
- Provide analysis or explanation of the evidence
- End with a sentence that links to the next paragraph or back to the thesis

Example paragraph:
- **Point:** Excessive use of social media has been associated with increased levels of anxiety among adolescents.
- **Evidence:** According to a 2023 study conducted by the University of Oxford, teenagers who used social media for more than three hours daily experienced greater levels of anxiety.
- **Explanation:** This suggests that prolonged exposure to online content can heighten emotional stress and social comparison.
- **Link:** This emotional strain is one of several ways in which social media negatively affects mental health.

Logical flow between paragraphs is essential. Use transitions (e.g., "In addition," "However," "For example") to guide the reader.

1.2c. Structuring coherent paragraphs. Topic sentences

A well-organised paragraph makes your writing easier to follow and more persuasive. Each body paragraph should begin with a clear **topic sentence** that introduces the main idea or argument the paragraph will develop.

Features of effective topic sentences

Feature	Purpose
First sentence of the paragraph	Sets reader expectations
Connects to thesis	Develops one part of your overall argument
One idea per paragraph	Each paragraph should explore just one idea
Ensures cohesion*	Often links to the idea from the previous paragraph
Supports coherence*	Helps maintain a logical flow in the structure of the essay

*For more information, see Unit 1.3. Cohesion and coherence in academic writing

Example: "One major reason carbon taxes are effective is their ability to influence consumer behaviour directly."

The **OREO principle** is an effective writing strategy, commonly used to structure paragraphs clearly when writing argumentative essays.
OREO stands for:

- ✓ **O** – **Opinion**: State your opinion or main idea clearly.
- ✓ **R** – **Reason**: Provide a reason or explanation to support your opinion.
- ✓ **E** – **Evidence** / **Example**: Give an example or evidence to back up your reason.
- ✓ **O** – **Opinion (restated)**: Restate your opinion to reinforce your argument.

OREO paragraph example:
- **O (Opinion):** Regular hand hygiene should be strictly enforced in all healthcare settings.

- **R (Reason):** Proper hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infections in hospitals and clinics.

- **E (Evidence/Example):** For instance, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that hand hygiene alone can reduce healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) by up to 50%. This simple practice protects both patients and medical staff from dangerous pathogens, such as MRSA and COVID-19.

- **O (Opinion restated):** Therefore, enforcing hand hygiene protocols is essential for maintaining safety and reducing infection rates in healthcare environments.

Paragraph quality checklist:
- ✓ Begins with a clear topic sentence.
- ✓ Relates directly to the thesis statement.
- ✓ Explores only one main idea.
- ✓ Includes evidence, examples, or explanation.
- ✓ Uses transitions to connect ideas and ensure flow.
- ✓ Avoids overly long sentences (>20 words).

1.2d. Building strong arguments

An argument generally involves a claim, reasons to support that claim, and evidence backing those reasons. It can also include counter-arguments and rebuttals to strengthen the position (Fig. 1).
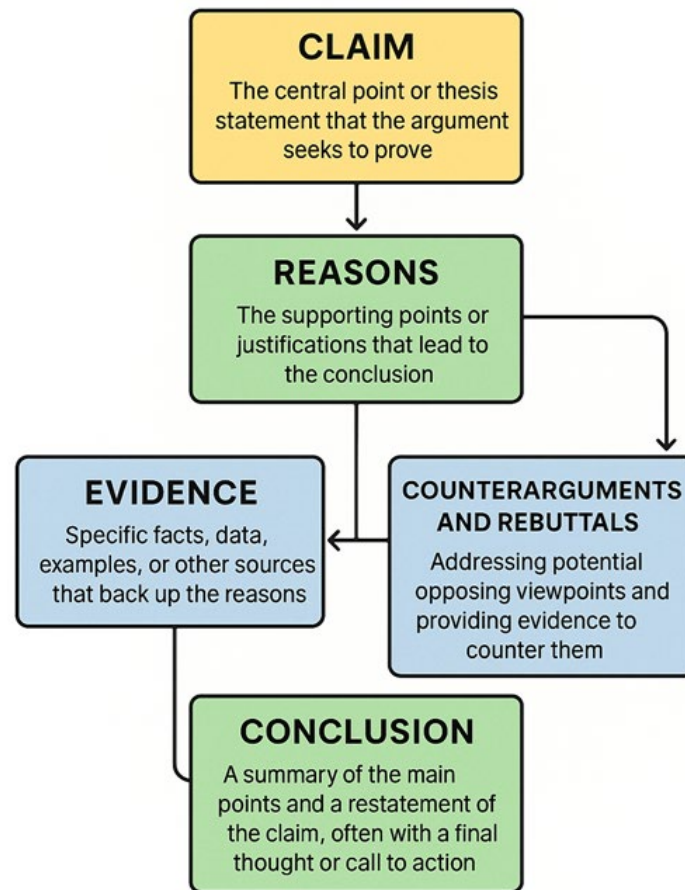
Fig. 1. Structure of an argument

Example:

Topic: Should Governments Mandate COVID-19 Vaccinations for Healthcare Workers?

Claim (thesis statement):

Governments should mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for healthcare workers to protect vulnerable patients, reduce transmission in clinical settings, and maintain workforce stability during public health crises.

Reason 1: Protection of vulnerable patient populations

Healthcare workers frequently interact with immunocompromised and elderly patients who are at high risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19.

Evidence:

A study published in The Lancet (2022) found that unvaccinated healthcare staff were 3.2 times more likely to transmit COVID-19 to patients compared to vaccinated staff.

Reason 2: Reduction of nosocomial transmission

Vaccinated healthcare workers are less likely to contract and spread the virus, helping to control in-hospital outbreaks.

Evidence:

According to the CDC (2023), hospitals with high vaccination rates among staff reported 45% fewer nosocomial COVID-19 infections.

Reason 3: Workforce stability during pandemics

High infection rates among unvaccinated healthcare workers lead to staff shortages, which compromise care delivery.

Evidence:

An analysis from the Journal of Health Management (2023) showed that staff absenteeism due to COVID-19 illness decreased by 28% in facilities with mandatory vaccination policies.

Counter-argument:

Opponents argue that mandatory vaccination policies violate personal autonomy and could contribute to staff resignations.

Rebuttal:

While autonomy is important, the ethical principle of non-maleficence – the obligation to do no harm – should prevail in clinical environments. Furthermore, a study in Health Affairs (2022) showed that staff turnover rates were minimally affected (<3%) after implementation of vaccine mandates, especially when exemptions for medical or religious reasons were allowed.

Conclusion:

Mandating COVID-19 vaccinations for healthcare workers is a necessary public health strategy. It upholds ethical obligations to protect patients, reduces hospital-based transmission, and supports the continuity of care. Reasoned policies with provisions for legitimate exemptions can ensure ethical integrity while maximizing safety.

Summary of argument components:

Component	Content
Claim	Governments should mandate COVID-19 vaccination for healthcare workers
Reason 1	Protects vulnerable patients
Reason 2	Reduces transmission in clinical settings

Reason 3	Ensures workforce stability
Evidence	Studies from *The Lancet*, CDC, *Journal of Health Management*
Counter-argument	Autonomy and possible staff resignations
Rebuttal	Non-maleficence outweighs, minimal resignations when exemptions are allowed

1.2e. The "So What?" strategy in argumentative writing

In argumentative writing, it is essential not only to state a claim but also to demonstrate why it matters intellectually, practically, and socially. Constructing a compelling argument requires more than expressing an opinion or presenting facts. Writers must explain why their claims deserve attention. This is where the "So What?" strategy becomes vital. It pushes writers to clarify the relevance and broader implications of their arguments, strengthening their persuasiveness and impact.
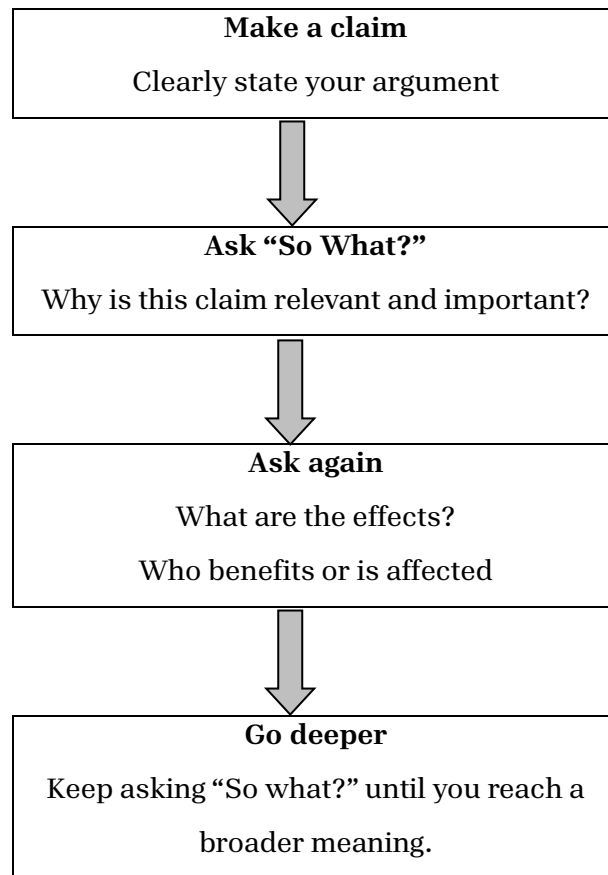
Self-evident logic is deceptive – what seems obvious to the writer may not be obvious to readers. Without stating the relevance explicitly, important arguments may be overlooked or misunderstood. Therefore, peer or mentor feedback is crucial. Others can help identify hidden value or social relevance in a writer's claims that they might overlook themselves.

How to use the "So What?" technique

By systematically asking "So what?" after each claim or idea, you can expand your reasoning from narrow points to broader societal, academic, or ethical relevance. This method transforms basic assertions into powerful argumentative claims by establishing why they should matter to the reader.

Follow these steps:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Make a claim              │
│     Clearly state your argument     │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Ask "So What?"             │
│ Why is this claim relevant and      │
│           important?                │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Ask again                │
│       What are the effects?         │
│      Who benefits or is affected    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Go deeper                │
│ Keep asking "So what?" until you    │
│       reach a broader meaning.      │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

This recursive questioning leads to a more refined, audience-aware argument that shows not only what you believe, but why others should care.

Applying "So What?" in an argumentative context

Topic: The Use of a New Antiviral Drug in Treating Influenza.

Claim: *The new drug significantly reduces the duration and severity of flu symptoms.*
   ➢ So what? Flu is a serious health issue, especially for vulnerable populations.
   ➢ So what? If treated more effectively, we can reduce hospital admissions and medical costs.
   ➢ So what? This helps overwhelmed healthcare systems, especially during flu season or pandemics.
   ➢ So what? A more resilient healthcare system benefits public health on a national scale.

Final argumentative claim:

The adoption of a new, more effective antiviral drug should be prioritised in national health policy, as it not only improves individual health outcomes but also alleviates systemic strain on healthcare infrastructure – especially during seasonal outbreaks – making it a crucial intervention in both clinical and public health contexts.

Tip: Always ask yourself, *"Why does this matter to my reader?"* Then, tailor your reasoning to address their interests, values, or concerns.

1.2f. The conclusion. Summarising and reinforcing your thesis

The conclusion ties everything together. It should not simply repeat what you have said but reinforce your argument and leave the reader with a clear final impression.

A strong conclusion will:

- Restate your thesis (in different words)
- Summarise the main supporting points
- Offer a final thought, reflection, or call to action

Example conclusion:

In conclusion, while social media offers some benefits, its negative impact on young people's mental health is significant. The rise in anxiety, disrupted sleep patterns, and damaged self-esteem underscore the need for more mindful and limited use of these platforms. Greater awareness and digital literacy may help mitigate these effects in the future.

Avoid: Introducing new arguments or evidence in the conclusion.

1.3. Cohesion and coherence in academic writing

Strong academic writing depends not only on presenting sound ideas, but also on how seamlessly those ideas are linked throughout the text. This sense of grammatical and lexical connection is known as **cohesion**, and it is achieved through deliberate word choices.

Key cohesive devices include:

- Transitional words and phrases (*however, therefore, moreover*)
- Pronouns and determiners (*this, these, those, it, they*)
- Repetition of key words or synonyms (consistency in terminology)
- Signal verbs (also called reporting verbs) – to introduce information from a source and to show your stance or attitude towards that information. They help indicate whether you agree, disagree, remain neutral, or are simply reporting.
- Conjunctions (*and, but, although, because*)
- Parallel structures (repeating grammatical patterns for emphasis and rhythm)

Example: The study showed significant results. **These findings** suggest a need for further research.

Transitions are words or expressions that show the relationship between ideas. They help readers follow your "train of thought" by signalling shifts in reasoning, emphasis, or time. Without transitions, writing can feel choppy or disconnected – even if the ideas themselves are strong.

Transition examples:

Purpose	Common transition words
Addition	also, in addition, moreover, furthermore, besides, equally important
Examples/illustration	for example, for instance, to illustrate, consider, to demonstrate

Agreeing with a source:

- X **affirms** that...

- X **offers the insight** that...

- X **points out** that...

- X **confirms** that...

Disagreeing or questioning a source:

- X **contends** that...

- X **denies** that...

- X **overlooks** the fact that...

Common reporting verbs:

Function	Examples
Neutral	states, describes, explains, reports, notes, observes
Agreement	agrees, supports, confirms, endorses, affirms, backs up
Disagreement	challenges, disputes, rejects, questions, contradicts, refutes
Argumentation	argues, suggests, proposes, asserts, claims, maintains, points out
Analysis	discusses, examines, explores, highlights, identifies, investigates

In academic writing, these verbs are often used in past tense, especially when referencing previous studies:

- Smith **found** that...

- The researchers **suggested** that...

- Jones **described** the effects of...

Checklist: Cohesion – linking ideas at the sentence level:
- ✓ *Have you used appropriate transition words and phrases?*

Use connectors like *however, in contrast, therefore, for example, as a result* to show relationships between ideas.

✓ *Are signal verbs used correctly to introduce and discuss sources?*

Choose verbs such as *argues, suggests, claims,* or *acknowledges* to show your stance and clearly report others' ideas.

✓ *Have you used reference words clearly (e.g., this, these, it, they)?*

Make sure pronouns and reference words clearly refer back to specific ideas or nouns, avoiding confusion.

✓ *Do sentence structures vary but still link smoothly?*

Use a mix of simple and complex sentences, connected with conjunctions or cohesive devices (*because, although, which*).

✓ *Have you revised your draft to eliminate repetition and awkward phrasing?*

✓ Check for overuse of the same words or unclear connections that affect the reading flow.

Coherence is the overall clarity and logical organisation of ideas in your writing. It means the text makes sense as a whole and that ideas are presented in a clear, logical order.

Coherence is achieved when:

- Your ideas are well-organised (using paragraphs effectively)
- Each paragraph focuses on one main idea
- There is a logical progression of ideas from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph
- Connections between ideas are clear to the reader

Checklist: Coherence – organising ideas at the paragraph and essay level:

✓ *Is your thesis statement clear and focused?*

The introduction should include a precise main argument that guides the entire essay.

✓ *Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence?*

Make sure each paragraph starts with a sentence that introduces its main idea.

✓ *Are your supporting points logically ordered?*

Arrange your points from most general to most specific, or in order of importance or time, depending on the essay type.

✓ *Do paragraphs connect logically to one another?*

Use linking sentences or ideas to create smooth transitions between paragraphs.

✓ *Does your conclusion clearly restate the main idea and summarise key points?*

✓ The conclusion should reinforce your argument without introducing new ideas?

Examples:

Without cohesion and coherence:

Climate change is a serious problem. People should recycle more. Many animals are endangered. Global warming causes ice to melt.

With cohesion and coherence:

*Climate change is a serious problem that affects many aspects of our environment. **For instance,** global warming causes polar ice caps to melt, threatening animal habitats. **Therefore,** it is important for individuals to adopt environmentally friendly habits, such as recycling, to reduce their carbon footprint.*

1.4. The role of conciseness in academic writing

Clear, concise writing is a hallmark of strong academic work – especially in argumentative essays, where your goal is to persuade. The more direct your language, the more compelling your ideas.

Formula for effective writing:

Concise → Clear → Convincing = Effective

Why conciseness matters:
- Improves clarity and readability
- Strengthens arguments by removing distractions
- Helps the reader stay focused on the key point

How to make sentences more concise

Tip	What to do	Example
Eliminate redundancy	Do not say the same thing twice.	⊠ "Close proximity" → ✓ "Proximity"
Cut filler words	Avoid "very," "really," "actually," "just"	⊠ "It is very important" → ✓ "It is important"
Use strong verbs	Avoid weak verbs like "make" or "do"	⊠ "Made a decision" → ✓ "Decided"
Replace phrases with one word	Use specific terms	⊠ "At this point in time" → ✓ "Currently"
Avoid nominalisations	Turn nouns back into verbs	⊠ "Conducted an investigation" → ✓ "Investigated"
Prefer active voice	It is clearer and usually shorter	⊠ "Was treated by the doctor" → ✓ "The doctor treated"

| Drop unnecessary qualifiers | Use "may," "might" sparingly | ⊠ "This approach might possibly improve…" → ✓ "This approach improves…" |

Avoid these wordy phrases

- "In order to" → "To"
- "It goes without saying" → (Delete)
- "Due to the fact that" → "Because"
- "The reason is because" → "Because"
- "In the condition of" → "In"
- "Take steps to" → "Try" or "Plan"

Smart editing strategies

Strategy	Example
Use plurals to eliminate articles	"Scans were diagnostic" instead of "The scan was…"
Hyphenate compound adjectives	"Information-seeking behaviour"
Use prefixes	"Underdeveloped" instead of "Not completely developed"
Replace prepositional phrases with adjectives	"Spinal injuries" instead of "Injuries to the spine"
Use parallel structure	"7 years in X group, 13 years in Y group"
Avoid circumlocutions	"Contributes" instead of "Has been known to play a role in"

Keep it balanced: Do not over-cut

Conciseness does not mean stripping your writing bare. Use judgement: be precise but keep necessary context and tone.

Checklist for concise writing

- ✓ Each word adds value.
- ✓ Sentences are direct and active.
- ✓ Verbs are strong and specific.
- ✓ Redundancies are removed.
- ✓ Wordy phrases are replaced.
- ✓ Arguments are easy to follow.

1.5. Additional considerations

In academic writing, you are expected to support your points with evidence from reliable sources. This can include direct quotations, where you use the author's exact words, or paraphrasing, where you rewrite the original idea in your own words.

When to use quotations:
- To present a definition, claim, or particularly well-phrased idea
- To support a key argument with the authority of a well-known source
- When the exact wording is important for your analysis

Example: As Smith (2022) argues, "social media has fundamentally altered the way young people form their identity" (p. 45).

When to paraphrase:
- To simplify complex ideas for clarity
- To maintain a consistent voice in your essay
- When you want to integrate information more smoothly

Tip: Always cite your sources, whether quoting or paraphrasing. Avoid plagiarism by ensuring your paraphrasing is genuinely in your own words – not just a few changes to the original.

Proofreading strategies

No matter how strong your argument is, grammatical errors, typos, or unclear sentences can weaken your essay. That is why proofreading is a crucial final step in the writing process.

Effective proofreading strategies:

1. **Take a break before proofreading.**

Allow some time between writing and reviewing so you can approach your text with fresh eyes.

2. **Read aloud.**

Hearing your writing can help you notice awkward phrasing, missing words, or unclear transitions.

3. **Check for one issue at a time.**

Focus on different aspects in separate passes – grammar, punctuation, word choice, structure, etc.

4. **Use editing tools carefully.**

Tools like *Grammarly* or built-in spell checkers can catch some errors, but do not rely on them entirely.

5. **Peer review.**

Ask a classmate or tutor to review your essay. A second reader may spot issues you have overlooked.

6. **Use a proofreading self-check.**

   - ✓ Is your thesis clear and specific?
   - ✓ Does each paragraph have one clear focus?
   - ✓ Are your arguments supported with evidence?
   - ✓ Have you used appropriate transitions?
   - ✓ Are quotations and citations formatted correctly?
   - ✓ Is your grammar and punctuation accurate?

Final essay checklist

- ✓ Clear thesis at the end of the introduction.
- ✓ Each paragraph has a topic sentence and one main idea.
- ✓ Transitions used to link ideas and paragraphs smoothly.
- ✓ Sentences are mostly 12–15 words; none exceed 20 words.
- ✓ Language is formal, concise, and suitable for an academic audience.

✓ The essay addresses the prompt and supports claims with reasoning/evidence.

1.6. Argumentative essay writing templates

(Adapted from They Say / I Say by Cathy Birkenstein & Gerald Graff)

Academic argument writing involves presenting a clear claim, supporting it with reasoned evidence, addressing counter-arguments, and explaining why the issue matters. The templates below help structure your writing at every stage of the essay.

Stating your position (thesis statement)
- This essay argues that ___ because ___.
- It is argued that ___ plays a crucial role in ___.
- The central argument of this paper is that ___.

Providing reasons and support

Introducing reasons and evidence:
- One key reason is that ___.
- A major factor contributing to ___ is ___.
- For example, ___ shows that ___.
- Statistics from ___ reveal that ___.
- According to a study by ___, ___.

Explaining and connecting evidence:
- This suggests that ___.
- This demonstrates how ___.
- These findings imply that ___.
- As a result, ___.

Engaging with other perspectives

Acknowledging opposing views (counter-argument):
- Some argue that ___; however, ___.
- Critics of this view contend that ___.
- It is often said that ___ but evidence indicates ___.
- A common objection to ___ is that ___.

Responding to counter-arguments (refutation):
- However, this argument fails to consider ___.

- While this may be true to some extent, it overlooks ___.

- Although ___ raises a valid point, recent data show that ___.

- Nevertheless, the long-term effects of ___ suggest otherwise.

Clarifying and emphasising your ideas

Using metacommentary (to guide the reader):

- In other words, ___.

- This is not simply about ___; it is about ___.

- To put it differently, ___.

Strengthening key claims (boosters):

- Clearly, ___

- It is evident that ___

- The data strongly support ___

- Undoubtedly, ___ plays a vital role in ___

Softening where appropriate (hedging):

- It seems that ___

- This may suggest ___

- In many cases, ___

- To a certain extent, ___

Showing why it matters ("So What?")

- This issue matters because ___.

- The implications of this argument extend to ___.

- What is at stake here is more than ___; it is about ___.

- Understanding this helps policymakers to ___.

Concluding the argument

- In conclusion, ___ is the most effective way to ___.

- To sum up, the evidence strongly supports ___.

- Ultimately, this debate reveals that ___ is necessary for ___.

- Given the arguments above, it is clear that ___.

2. Opinion writing: Developing and communicating your perspective

Opinion writing is a core skill tested in English proficiency exams, as it demonstrates a learner's ability to express personal views clearly, support those views with logical reasoning, and communicate effectively in written English. Exams such as the IELTS, TOEFL, and Cambridge English assessments often include tasks that require candidates to respond to prompts by presenting and justifying an opinion on everyday or global topics. These tasks assess more than just grammar and vocabulary – they also evaluate coherence, organisation, as well as your ability to construct persuasive arguments within a limited time. As such, mastering opinion writing equips learners with essential academic and real-world communication skills, making it a crucial component of exam preparation and overall English language development.

What is an opinion piece?

An opinion piece expresses a personal viewpoint on a general topic, supported by logical reasons and relevant examples. It is more informal than an argumentative essay but still structured and persuasive.

Why it matters:

- Enhances performance in international English exams
- Builds skills for writing editorials, blogs, and reflective commentaries
- Encourages critical thinking and structured expression

The main goal of opinion writing is to communicate your perspective clearly and convincingly. This includes:

- ✓ Taking a clear position on an issue or question
- ✓ Supporting your viewpoint with explanations, examples, or personal experience
- ✓ Maintaining a consistent tone and focus
- ✓ Structuring the text logically (introduction, body, conclusion)

Example prompt: "Do you believe smartphones are helpful or harmful for school-aged children?"

Other common prompts:

- Do the advantages of technology outweigh the disadvantages?
- Should governments invest more in healthcare or education?
- Is city life better than rural life?

These questions are general, not topic-specific, so you can answer using everyday logic and personal insight.

Structure of an effective opinion essay

Section	Purpose	Key tips
Introduction	Paraphrase the prompt + State your opinion	Be direct: clearly agree or disagree
Body paragraph 1	Present your first reason with example	Use topic sentences and real or hypothetical illustrations
Body paragraph 2	Add a second distinct reason with explanation	Link back to your opinion

(Optional) counter-argument	Acknowledge and respond to the opposing view	Adds depth and critical awareness (optional in most exams)
Conclusion	Restate opinion + Summarise key reasons	Do **not** introduce new points here

Language and tone in opinion writing

Aspect	Best practices
Clarity	Use simple, direct language
Linking words	Use connectors: *Firstly, Moreover, However, For example, In conclusion*
Tone	Semi-formal and personal – *I believe, In my view, Personally, I think*
Grammar	Avoid overly complex sentence structures

Useful phrases:

- Stating your opinion:

I think that… / I strongly believe… / In my opinion… / From my point of view…

- Giving reasons:

This is because… / One reason is that… / Another important point is…

- Providing examples:

For example… / Such as… / To illustrate this…

- Linking ideas:

Firstly, secondly, finally… / Moreover… / However… / In contrast…

- Concluding your text:

To sum up… / In conclusion… / All things considered…

Common topics for practice

- Education: Online learning, standardised testing
- Technology: Smartphones, social media, artificial intelligence

- Lifestyle: Fast food, exercise habits, work-life balance

- Society: Public safety, volunteerism, urban vs rural living

- Environment**:** Recycling, green energy, climate change

Tip: Use personal or community examples to make your points relatable and grounded.

Opinion text prompts (e.g., when preparing for IELTS/TOEFL)

1. *"Some people think fast food is a good choice for busy people. Do you agree or disagree?"* Give your opinion and support it with examples.
2. *"Is it better to study alone or in groups?"* State your preference and explain your reasons.
3. *"Social media is more harmful than helpful to young people."* Express your view and use personal examples.
4. *"Do you think students should wear school uniforms?"* Give reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Common mistakes and how to fix them

Mistake	Correction
Not stating a clear opinion	Decide early and make your stance obvious in the introduction
Repeating the same idea	Develop new reasons in each paragraph
Vague or no examples	Use real-life and/or personal examples
Language too formal or academic	Use everyday expressions and avoid jargon
Grammar and spelling mistakes	Practise regularly and review your writing under timed conditions

Using proverbs in opinion writing can be an effective way to illustrate a point, add cultural depth, or make your argument more relatable and memorable to the reader.

Here are some example sentences for each proverb, showing how you can naturally incorporate them into opinion writing to strengthen your arguments and make their ideas more relatable.

✓ **"Knowledge is power."**

Example: *I believe that access to quality education should be a basic right because knowledge is power – it empowers individuals to make informed decisions and improve their lives.*

✓ **"Experience is the best teacher."**

Example: *Although theory is important, experience is the best teacher. Hands-on training in real-life situations often teaches lessons that books cannot.*

✓ **"Where there's a will, there's a way."**

Example: *Even students from disadvantaged backgrounds can succeed if they are determined. After all, where there's a will, there's a way.*

✓ **"Rome was not built in a day."**

Example: *We should not expect quick solutions to complex problems like climate change – Rome was not built in a day.*

✓ **"No pain, no gain."**

Example: *Many people avoid challenges, but no pain, no gain. Struggle often leads to growth, especially in education and career development.*

✓ **"Actions speak louder than words."**

Example: *Governments claim to care about the environment, but actions speak louder than words. Without real policy changes, these statements are meaningless.*

✓ **"Don't judge a book by its cover."**

Example: *We must learn to accept others regardless of appearance. Don't judge a book by its cover is a lesson we should apply to social interactions.*

✓ **"It takes a village to raise a child."**

Example: *Raising well-rounded children is not just a family responsibility. It takes a village to raise a child – teachers, neighbours, and the community all play a role.*

✓ **"Look before you leap."**

Example: *Before starting a business, it is important to research and plan. Look before you leap can prevent financial mistakes.*

✓ **"The early bird catches the worm."**

Example: *Success often depends on preparation. The early bird catches the worm, so students who start studying early usually perform better.*

✓ **"Too many cooks spoil the broth."**

Example: *When too many people try to manage a project without coordination, problems arise. Too many cooks spoil the broth.*

✓ **"What goes around comes around."**

Example: *Treating others badly may backfire because what goes around comes around. Kindness, on the other hand, often leads to respect.*

✓ **"Honesty is the best policy."**

Example: *In both personal relationships and professional life, honesty is the best policy. Lies may offer short-term comfort but long-term harm.*

Opinion writing checklist

- ✓ Do I clearly understand the prompt or question?
- ✓ Have I stated my opinion clearly (agree/disagree/prefer)?
- ✓ Do I have at least two strong reasons and relevant examples?
- ✓ Have I paraphrased the prompt in the introduction?
- ✓ Is my first reason clearly explained with an example?
- ✓ Is my second reason distinct and clearly linked to my opinion?
- ✓ (Optional) Have I acknowledged and responded to a counter-argument?
- ✓ Did I restate my opinion and summarise key points in the conclusion (no new ideas)?
- ✓ Is my language clear, direct, and semi-formal (e.g., I believe, In my view)?
- ✓ Have I used appropriate linking words (e.g., *Firstly, However, In conclusion*)?
- ✓ Did I use the correct grammar and avoid overly complex sentences?
- ✓ Have I used a proverb or idiomatic expression, if appropriate?
- ✓ Are my arguments logical, relevant, and well-supported?
- ✓ Are my examples specific and not too general?
- ✓ Have I avoided repetition and maintained coherence throughout?
- ✓ Did I check spelling, grammar, and stay within the word/time limit?

3. Language and register in academic English

Register refers to the degree of formality in language, determined by audience, purpose, and context. In academic writing, the expected register is formal and objective. This means:

- No slang or colloquialisms
- Avoidance of contractions (e.g., "don't," "can't")
- Limited use of personal pronouns (depending on discipline)
- Precise and accurate word choices
- Use of passive voice when appropriate

How to achieve formality in academic English

Aspect	Guideline	Examples
Avoid contractions	Use full forms instead of contractions.	⊠ *don't, isn't →* ✓ *do not, is not*
Use third-person voice	Avoid first-person (I/we) and second-person (you), unless the discipline allows it.	⊠ *I believe this proves... →* ✓ *This evidence suggests...*
Choose precise vocabulary	Use discipline-appropriate, formal vocabulary; avoid slang or casual language.	⊠ *a lot of, stuff, things →* ✓ *numerous, substances, factors*
Avoid colloquialisms	Steer clear of idioms, phrasal verbs, and informal expressions.	⊠ *get the hang of, a big deal →* ✓ *understand, significant*

Use objective language	Focus on evidence and reasoning, not personal feelings or overly emotional language.	⊠ *It's amazing how...* → ✓ *This finding is significant because...*
Prefer passive where appropriate	Use passive voice where focus is on process/results rather than the actor.	✓ *The data were analysed using...* **(but do not overuse it – clarity first!)**
Avoid overgeneralisation	Make measured, specific claims instead of sweeping or absolute statements.	⊠ *Everyone agrees...* → ✓ *Many scholars argue...*
Use formal transitions	Use formal linking words to connect ideas logically.	*Furthermore, In contrast, Therefore, Consequently*
Avoid questions	Refrain from rhetorical or direct questions unless field-appropriate.	⊠ *Why does this matter?* → ✓ *This is important because...*
Avoid nominalising verbs	Avoid turning verbs into nouns or adjectives, as this weakens the sentence and lengthens it unnecessarily. Common word endings of nominalised verbs are: -tion, -ment, -ance, -er, -or, -ent, -ity, -sion, -ness, -ance, -ence, and -ist, and others. Maintain strong, direct verbs for clarity.	*Nominalised:* "We performed an operation on the patient." *Revised:* "We operated on the patient."
Maintain consistent tense	Use consistent verb tenses to maintain formal structure and logical flow.	Do not shift unnecessarily between past and present

Informal vs. formal vocabulary in academic writing

Informal	Formal	Example in context
a lot of / lots of	many, numerous, a large number of	Numerous studies have shown...
get	obtain, receive, acquire	Participants obtained results after...
get better / worse	improve / deteriorate	The patient's condition improved significantly.
think	believe, argue, consider, suggest	Many scholars argue that...
show	demonstrate, illustrate, reveal	The data demonstrate a clear trend.
big	significant, considerable, substantial	A significant number of responses were collected.
small	minimal, slight, limited	The study found only minimal variation.
bad	poor, negative, inadequate	The policy had negative effects on...
good	positive, beneficial, favourable	The program had a beneficial impact.
deal with	address, manage, handle	The study addresses several key issues.
talk about	discuss, address, examine	The article discusses the causes of the conflict.
come up with	develop, formulate, propose	The team formulated a new hypothesis.
point out	indicate, observe, note	The author notes that...
find out	discover, determine, identify	The experiment determined that...
thing(s)	aspect, factor, element, issue	One key factor in the analysis is...

stuff	material, content, information	The report includes relevant information.
okay / OK	acceptable, adequate, satisfactory	The results were deemed satisfactory.
really / very	(Use precise adjectives or intensifiers)	The results were highly significant (instead of "very important").
anyways / anyway	nevertheless, however	However, this does not affect the outcome.
you can see / we can see	it can be observed, it is evident that	It is evident that the trends align.
look into	investigate, examine, explore	The study investigates the effects of climate change on migration.
a lot of people think	it is widely believed that…	It is widely believed that exercise improves mental health.
make sure	ensure, verify	The researcher ensured that all variables were controlled.

Tone in academic writing

Tone refers to the writer's attitude toward the subject, the reader, and the argument being presented. In academic writing, the tone should be:

- **Objective** – based on evidence, not personal opinions.
- **Cautious** – especially when presenting uncertain or debatable claims.
- **Respectful** – even when disagreeing with others' views.

Language tips for academic tone:

Do:	Avoid:

	Use formal and objective language	Personal anecdotes or slang
	Vary sentence structure	Repetitive or overly complex sentences
	Use precise vocabulary	Vague or overly casual terms

Common tone mistakes

Too personal / emotional	Improved academic tone
I think this is terrible.	*This may be considered a serious issue.*
He completely failed.	*The results did not meet expectations.*
Obviously, this is wrong.	*This claim is debatable and lacks support.*

Avoid emotional, exaggerated, or judgemental language.

Checklist: Academic language and register

- ✓ Have I avoided contractions (e.g., *don't, isn't*)?
- ✓ Is my vocabulary formal and precise?
- ✓ Have I eliminated slang and informal expressions?
- ✓ Have I maintained a neutral, respectful tone?
- ✓ Have I used evidence-based statements rather than personal opinions?
- ✓ Have I included academic phrases or discipline-specific terms where appropriate?

4. Useful phrases for effective writing

Function	Useful phrases	Example sentence
Stating your position	- This essay argues that... - I believe that... - In my view...	*This essay argues that universal healthcare improves social equity.*
Introducing a reason	- One key reason is... - A major reason for this is... - Because...	*A major reason for rising inflation is increased production costs.*
Adding information	- Furthermore, - Moreover, - In addition, - Another reason is...	*Moreover, online learning allows for flexible scheduling.*
Giving examples	- For example, - For instance, - Such as, - Namely,	*Technology helps people stay connected. For instance, video calls allow families to talk even if they live in different countries.*
Explaining evidence / reasoning	- This shows that... - This suggests that... - This implies that...	*This implies that social engagement contributes to mental well-being.*
Presenting evidence / source	- According to... - A study by... shows... - Research indicates that...	*According to Smith (2022), biodiversity loss accelerates ecosystem collapse.*

Introducing a counter-argument	- Some argue that... - On the other hand, - It is often said that...	*It is often said that automation eliminates jobs.*
Refuting a counter-argument	- However, this view ignores... - Nevertheless, - Although...	*Although that concern is valid, current evidence suggests minimal disruption.*
Concluding / summing up	- In conclusion, - To sum up, - Overall,	*Overall, these findings highlight the urgent need for policy reform.*
Stating a personal experience	- In my experience, - Personally, I think... - From my perspective...	*From my perspective, collaborative writing improves communication skills.*
Clarifying / rephrasing	- In other words, - That is to say, - To put it another way,	*In other words, economic disparity affects educational opportunities.*
Defining terms or concepts	- This refers to... - X can be defined as... - In this context, X means...	*In this context, "equity" refers to fairness in access to opportunities.*
Emphasising a point	- It is important to note that... - Significantly, - Indeed,	*Significantly, the majority of respondents expressed concern about privacy.*
Sequencing ideas	- Firstly,... Secondly,... - Next,... - Finally,... - Subsequently,...	*Firstly, we must examine the data. Secondly, we analyse its implications.*
Making comparisons	- Similarly, - Likewise, - In comparison, - Just as...	*Likewise, renewable energy has shown similar trends in cost reduction.*

Showing contrast	- However, - In contrast, - Whereas, - Nevertheless,	*In contrast to urban populations, rural communities have limited access.*
Stating purpose or goal	- In order to... - So that... - With the aim of...	*In order to reduce emissions, stricter regulations are needed.*
Expressing cause and effect	- As a result, - Therefore, - Consequently, - Thus,	*Consequently, student engagement has significantly improved.*

Hedging language: Being cautious with claims

Hedging is essential in academic writing to avoid overgeneralizing and to acknowledge uncertainty. Here are some common hedging phrases:

Purpose	Hedging phrases	Example sentence
Softening a claim	- It seems that... - It appears that... - It may be the case that...	*It appears that socioeconomic status influences academic outcomes.*
Acknowledging uncertainty	- Possibly, - Perhaps, - Potentially,	*These results potentially reflect seasonal variations.*
Limiting scope	- In some cases, - To a certain extent, - In many instances,	*To a certain extent, remote work improves productivity.*
Qualifying evidence	- The evidence suggests that... - The data indicate a tendency to...	*The data indicate a tendency toward higher retention rates.*

	- Often,	
Avoiding absolutes	- Generally, - Typically, - It is widely believed that...	*It is widely believed that physical activity enhances cognitive performance.*
Offering multiple interpretations	- This could be interpreted as... - One possible explanation is...	*One possible explanation is cultural influence on consumer behaviour.*

While hedging expresses caution, boosters convey confidence and strengthen your claims. In academic writing, they should be used carefully – only when the evidence strongly supports your point.

Boosters in academic writing:

Purpose	Booster phrases	Example sentence
Emphasising certainty	- Clearly, - Undoubtedly, - There is no doubt that...	*Clearly, climate change poses a serious global threat.*
Showing strong evidence	- The evidence strongly suggests... - Research clearly shows...	*Research clearly shows that early intervention improves literacy rates.*
Asserting facts	- It is evident that... - It is clear that... - X has been definitively proven	*It is evident that antibiotic resistance is a growing public health issue.*
Strengthening arguments	- Indeed, - In fact, - It is important to note that...	*Indeed, access to clean water is a basic human right.*
Highlighting significance	- Significantly, - Notably, - Especially important is...	*Notably, the results remained consistent across all age groups.*

Stating frequency or generalisation confidently	- Frequently, - Commonly, - It is typical that…	*It is typical that online learners require greater self-discipline.*
Conveying strong cause/effect	- As a direct result, - X inevitably leads to…	*Pollution inevitably leads to ecosystem degradation.*

Use boosters wisely:

- Use when evidence is strong or widely accepted.
- Avoid exaggeration or absolute statements unless fully justified.
- Combine with hedging elsewhere to maintain a balanced, credible tone.

5. Common challenges in English essay writing (and how to overcome them)

For many EFL/ESL students, the challenges of writing academic essays in English arise not only from language proficiency but also from differences in rhetorical style, cultural expectations, and academic conventions. Below are some of the most common difficulties students encounter – and practical strategies to overcome them.

Understanding the essay prompt

Challenge	Strategy
Students may misinterpret the essay prompt, resulting in responses that are irrelevant or lack clear focus.	Break down the question – identify keywords, task words (e.g., *discuss, compare, evaluate*), and scope. Try to paraphrase the prompt in your own words as it can help ensure better understanding.

Structuring the essay

Challenge	Strategy
Learners often struggle with organising their ideas into a logical and coherent structure.	Follow the standard essay format – introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Use templates that show how to link ideas logically and how each paragraph serves a purpose in the overall argument.

Developing strong arguments

Challenge	Strategy
Students may rely on personal opinions without adequate support or fail to engage critically with the topic.	Provide evidence, examples, and reasoning. Support your thesis statement with factual information, comparisons, or citations where appropriate.

Paragraph and sentence-level coherence

Challenge	Strategy
Disjointed ideas, unclear topic sentences, and weak transitions make essays difficult to follow.	Focus on paragraph structure (topic sentence → explanation → example → link) and introduce cohesive devices such as transitional phrases and parallel structure.

Language accuracy and academic style

Challenge	Strategy
Grammatical errors, informal tone, or inappropriate vocabulary can undermine credibility.	Allocate sufficient time for careful proofreading and make use of academic phrase corpora to enhance language accuracy and variety. Peer editing can be a valuable tool for identifying errors and improving clarity.

Online resources and tools you can use to practise and overcome common challenges in English academic essay writing:

1. https://www.teach-this.com/
Interactive EAP activities for structuring introductions, body paragraphs, cohesion, unity, and coherence.

2. https://5minuteenglish.com/
Step-by-step guide tailored for ESL students covering structure, thesis, and paragraph coherence.

3. https://www.kialo-edu.com/

A visual debate/mind-mapping tool to organise and structure arguments before writing.

4. https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/free-resources/write-and-improve/

Online platform for submitting written responses and receiving instant feedback on clarity, grammar, and vocabulary.

5. https://essay.app/

A structured writing tool designed to guide you through each essay stage.

6. The Manchester Academic Phrasebank: https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk

A comprehensive collection of academic phrases and sentence starters to support clarity, coherence, and formality in writing.

7. https://writersdiet.com

An editing tool that diagnoses wordiness and sentence structure issues to improve academic writing style and precision.

Some shared characteristics of English and German academic writing

Connecting ideas: Use of transitional words and phrases.

Transitional phrases help your essay flow smoothly by linking ideas within and between paragraphs.

Consistency in tense:

Maintaining consistent verb tense ensures clarity

Objectivity and formal register.

Guidelines for tone and style:

Aspect	Recommendation	Avoid
Objectivity	Base arguments on evidence and data	Personal opinions or emotional bias
Formal register	Use formal vocabulary and grammar	Slang, contractions, colloquial phrases

Structure and flow.

Clear essay structure:

Section	Purpose
Introduction	Introduce topic, provide background, state thesis
Main body	Develop ideas with evidence, explanations, examples
Conclusion	Summarise points, restate thesis, provide final insight

Coherence and cohesion:
- Connect ideas logically within paragraphs and across the essay.
- Use transitional phrases to guide the reader.

Boosting your argument
- Strengthen arguments by adding extra evidence or examples.
- End the essay or paragraph with your strongest point to persuade effectively.

Persuasive techniques: Ethos, Pathos, Logos

Appeal	Definition	Use in academic essays
Ethos	Appeal to credibility and authority	Cite credible sources, demonstrate expertise
Pathos	Appeal to emotion	Use subtle emotional language to engage reader
Logos	Appeal to logic and reason	Present clear, evidence-based arguments

Balance your use of these appeals for a convincing, respectful argument.

Final checklist for academic essays in English and German

- ✓ Use transitional words/phrases to link ideas smoothly.
- ✓ Maintain consistent verb tense appropriate to context.
- ✓ Present objective, evidence-based arguments.
- ✓ Keep formal tone and avoid slang or contractions.
- ✓ Follow clear, logical structure: introduction, body, conclusion.
- ✓ Ensure coherence and cohesion across paragraphs.
- ✓ Strengthen arguments with additional examples or evidence.
- ✓ Finish with your strongest argument for maximum impact.
- ✓ Balance ethos, pathos, and logos in your persuasion.

Appendix: Using AI in the writing process – what it can and cannot do

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be a valuable tool in supporting your writing development. However, it is essential to understand both its potential and its limitations. Below are two lists to help you use AI responsibly and effectively.

What AI Can Help With

1. **Generating topic ideas**
   AI can suggest potential essay topics or angles for exploration based on your interests or assignment requirements.

2. **Clarifying grammar and vocabulary**
   AI can offer corrections and explanations for grammar, sentence structure, and word choice.

3. **Outlining structure**
   It can help you create a basic outline for an essay, including suggestions for

What Students Should Do on Their Own

1. **Choose and refine your argument**
   AI cannot decide what *you* truly think. You need to develop, refine, and take responsibility for your thesis or main argument.

2. **Evaluate the relevance and accuracy of content**
   AI may generate content that is plausible but factually incorrect or misleading. Always check facts and sources yourself.

3. **Make final writing decisions**
   From structure to wording, you must make the final decisions about how to present your ideas.

introductions, main points, and
conclusions.

4. **Paraphrasing and rephrasing**

It can help you express your ideas more
clearly by suggesting alternative
phrasing, especially for complex or
awkward sentences.

5. **Summarising texts**

AI can assist in condensing longer texts
into shorter summaries for easier
comprehension.

6. **Providing examples**

It can generate sample sentences or
examples to illustrate a point or
argument.

7. **Offering feedback on clarity and
   tone**

AI tools can give you general feedback
on whether your writing sounds clear,
formal, persuasive, etc.

8. **Practising language**

You can use AI to engage in low-stakes
practice in English or German,
especially for experimenting with style,
vocabulary, or genre conventions.

4. **Think critically**

AI does not reason or think critically.
You must analyse, synthesise, and
evaluate ideas in a meaningful way.

5. **Incorporate feedback from
   teachers or peers**

Human feedback is essential. Integrate
comments and suggestions
thoughtfully into your revisions.

6. **Practise academic integrity**

Do not use AI to write assignments on
your behalf. Use it as a tool to support
your learning, not replace it.

7. **Tailor your writing to your
   audience and purpose**

Only you understand the specific
expectations of your course, professor,
or exam. Make sure your writing aligns
with those requirements.

8. **Reflect and revise**

The process of revising is where much
of the learning happens. Engage deeply
in rewriting and improving your drafts.

9. **Checking formatting and referencing**

AI can help identify formatting issues and offer guidance on citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA), though manual verification is still essential.

9. **Develop your own voice**

Your writing should reflect your personality, values, and academic identity. AI should never replace your unique voice.

Bibliography

1. Al-Alami, Suhair E., "EFL Learners' Attitudes towards utilizing ChatGPT for acquiring writing skills in Higher Education: A case study of computing students". *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* (Academic Publication), Vol. 15, Issue 4 (7/2024), pp.1029–1038, doi:10.17507/jltr.1504.01

2. Belcher, Wendy Laura, *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*, 2nd edition (University Press of Colorado, 2019)

3. Cassuto, Leonard, *Academic Writing as if Readers Matter* (Princeton University Press, 2024)

4. Davies, Winifred V., *Essay-writing in German. A students' guide* (Manchester University Press, 1997)

5. Donald, Sydney G. and Pauline E. Kneale: *Study Skills for Language Students. A practical guide* (Oxford University Press, 2001)

6. Duensing, Annette and Uwe Baumann, *Developing Writing Skills in German* (Routledge, 2006)

7. Durrell, Martin (ed), *Hammer's Grammar and Usage* (Arnold, 7th edition, 2021)

8. Durrell, Martin, *Using German Synonyms* (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

9. Durrell, Martin, *Using German: A Guide to Contemporary Usage* (Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2003)

10. Dykstra-Pruim, Pennylyn and Jennifer Redmann, *Schreiben lernen: A Writing Guide for Learners of German* (Yale University Press, 2nd edition, 2023)

11. Fagan, Sarah M.B., *Using German Vocabulary* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

12. Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 3rd edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 2015)

13. Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers, *Rules for Writers*, 10th edition (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2021)

14. Hares, R.J. and C.G. Clemmetsen, *Der deutsche Aufsatz* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1986)

15. Johnson, Roy, *Improve Your Writing Skills* (Clifton Press, 2012)

16. Klaus, Andrea and Yuliia Lysanets, "Features of the Academic Essay from a Multilingual Perspective", *Modern Trends in Foreign Languages Research and Teaching: Conference Proceedings (Poltava, May 18–19, 2023)*, pp. 102–107

17. Langan, John, *Essay Writing Skills with Readings* (McGraw-Hill, 2011)

18. Lysanets, Yuliia, Andrea Klaus and Olena Bieliaieva, "Essay Writing Skills and Their Significance in Medical and Ecological Education", *The Medical and Ecological Problems*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2024, pp. 61–67, doi:10.31718/mep.2024.28.3.07

19. Lysanets, Yuliia, Olena Bieliaieva, Larysa Slipchenko, Ksenia Havrylieva and Halyna Morokhovets, "Essential Features of Effective Academic Writing in English", *The Medical and Ecological Problems*, Vol. 25, No. 1–2, 2021, pp. 41–43, doi: 10.31718/mep.2021.25.1-2.10

20. Montgomery, Scott L., *The Chicago Guide to Communicating Science* (University Press of Colorado, 2017)

21. Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, 3rd edition (University of Michigan Press ELT, 2012)

22. Turabian, Kate L., *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th edition (University of Chicago Press, 2018)

23. Wallwork, Adrian, *AI-Assisted Writing and Presenting in English (English for Academic Research)* (Springer, 2024)

24. Zemach, Dorothy E. and Lisa A. Rumisek, *Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay* (Macmillan, 2005)

This study guide is the result of a sustained collaboration between the two co-authors, a partnership that commenced in 2022 during Dr Yuliia Lysanets' fellowship at the University of Warwick. What initially began as an academic connection evolved into a dynamic scholarly cooperation, marked by the co-authorship of several research articles and conference presentations. This ongoing intellectual partnership ultimately led to the development of the present guide.

Andrea Klaus serves as an associate professor in German Studies in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Warwick, United Kingdom. Her experience in teaching German essay writing at undergraduate level, spanning over two decades, has shaped the pedagogical approach adopted in this study guide.

Dr Yuliia Lysanets is an associate professor in the Department of Foreign Languages with Latin and Medical Terminology at Poltava State Medical University, Ukraine. Her recent Fulbright research fellowship at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, USA) in 2024-2025, during which she investigated key aspects of English academic writing, contributed to the conceptual foundation of this guide. The project was finalised with the support of the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Warwick, which hosted Dr Yuliia Lysanets for an academic visit in July 2025.