

OPINION-BASED WRITING

Many writing tasks ask you to express your opinion on one or more issues. In particular, opinion-based writing can be found in articles, reviews, essays and letters to the press/authorities. When writing, the following factors should be remembered:

- **Relevance** – it is essential that you address all the main points in the rubric.
- **Target reader and style** – the style of writing used should always be appropriate to the reader.
- **Organisation** – usually you start a new paragraph with each new opinion. Each opinion should be stated clearly using a topic sentence. Supporting sentences should then be added to explain and/or give examples. *I believe that mobile phones are a tremendously useful invention.* [Topic sentence]
Not only do they enable you to stay in touch wherever you are, but they are also indispensable in emergencies. [Explanation]
If, for example, your car breaks down in a remote place, you could use your mobile to call for help. [Example]
- **Linking** – you should make use of linking words and phrases, such as *furthermore, however, in contrast, in this way*, etc, in order to connect your ideas.

SAMPLE

Understanding the Rubric

40 Read the rubric below, paying careful attention to the underlined words and phrases. Then answer the questions that follow.

- 1) A magazine for students of English has invited readers to send in articles for a feature entitled 'Are e-mails and text messages destroying the language?' Write your article for the feature, giving your opinion. Your article should make reference to the effect that e-mails and text messages have on such things as spelling and grammar.

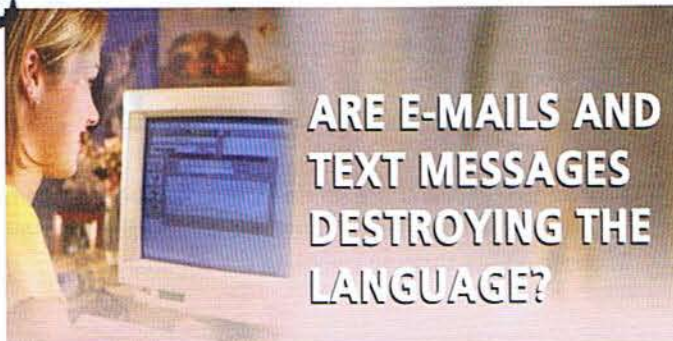
- What do you have to write?
- What kind of publication are you writing for? Who are the target readers? What style is appropriate?
- Tick the boxes below to show which of the points are relevant to the question. Try to suggest other points of your own.

- When sending text messages and e-mails, people do not always use correct grammar.
- Writing correctly is not so important as getting the message across.
- Text messages and e-mails are more fun than letters.

Analysing the Model Linking Words & Phrases

41 a. Read the model and fill in the gaps with the appropriate linking word or phrase. Then suggest your own alternatives.

- for instance • first of all • finally • to sum up
- secondly • particularly • by this I mean



Technology has undoubtedly brought about a revolution in communication. Most people would agree that this has been a positive development. Recently, however, there has been concern over the negative effect that modern methods of communication are having on the English language.

1) , the increasing use of e-mails and text messages is changing the way we use grammar. 2) that certain words are dropped in order to keep messages short. *In my view*, this cannot be avoided. In a text message, 3) , there is neither the time nor the space to write complete sentences. The same applies to e-mails, which are supposed to be a shorter, more direct form of communication. In both cases, the need to be brief often means that the grammar is changed in some way.

4) it is fashionable nowadays to in text messages. One example of this is when people write 'CU later' instead of 'See you later'. To purists or to people who are not used to such abbreviations, this might be seen as a threat to the language. *To my mind*, it simply shows that the language is changing in much the same way as it has done for centuries.

6) , *in my opinion*, writing English correctly is not so important as getting the message across. If, for example, you send someone an e-mail or a text message telling them to meet you in a specified place at a certain time, making yourself understood is much more important than your grammar and spelling. *As far as I am concerned*, we should allow a certain amount of flexibility. Not everyone has a perfect command of the language but that should not stop them from being able to communicate.

7) , the effect that e-mails and text messages are having on written English is a significant one. This may, in the future, result in major changes to the language. However, we should not let rules get in the way of communication. After all, isn't that the reason language was developed in the first place – so that we could communicate?

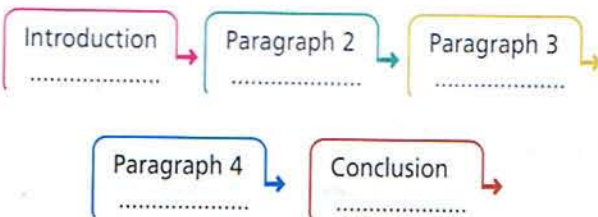
SAMPLE

- b. The expressions in italics in the text have been used to introduce the writer's opinion. Look again at these expressions and suggest suitable alternatives.

Paragraph Planning

- c. Put the points from the model into the appropriate boxes.

- A summarised opinion
- B opinion concerning spelling
- C background information
- D opinion about communication
- E opinion concerning grammar



- d. Look at the main body of the model again and find examples of:

- Topic sentences • Explanations • Examples

Topic & Supporting Sentences

- 42 Read the following paragraphs and say whether they contain explanations, examples or both. Think of an appropriate topic sentence for each one. The first one has been done for you.

A First of all, I totally disagree with the plans to build the mobile phone aerial. Not only is there the threat of radiation to local residents, but it will also destroy their views of open countryside and reduce the value of their properties. *[Explanation]* This will be disastrous for residents of places such as Harlesden and Pemble Waters. *[Example]*

B

 This appears to be the only sensible solution. After all, many children today know how to use a computer but may not be able to afford one at home. Providing them in schools will ensure that no one is deprived of this valuable learning aid.

C

There is no need for this at all. School is a place of learning, and talking to their friends or sending text messages is something that students should do in their own time. Furthermore, they cannot use the excuse that they need them for emergencies, since in a real emergency, they can use the school phone.

D

In other words, there is no way that we can be sure that mobile phones are safe. Even if we take all the precautions available today, we do not know what to expect in the future. What will happen if, for example, they discover a link between mobile phones and cancer? If we wait until then, the damage will have been done and it will be too late to act.

43 Read the following topic sentences and complete the supporting sentences.

a) I believe that, thanks to technology, people are able to communicate far more easily than ever before. For example, we only have to look at the Internet to see that

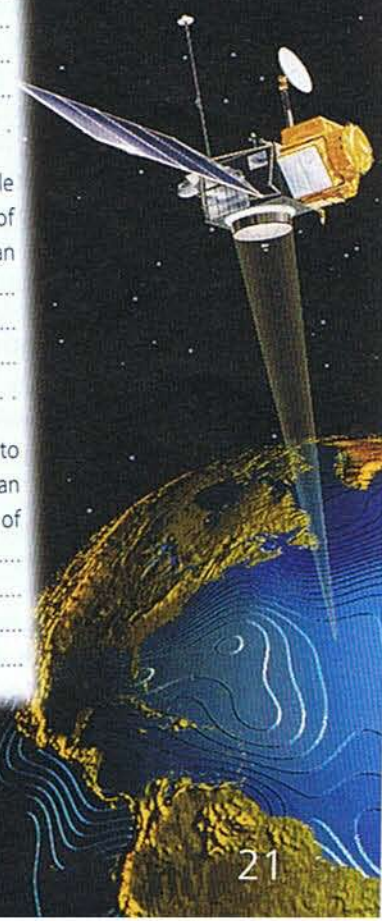
.....
 In addition,

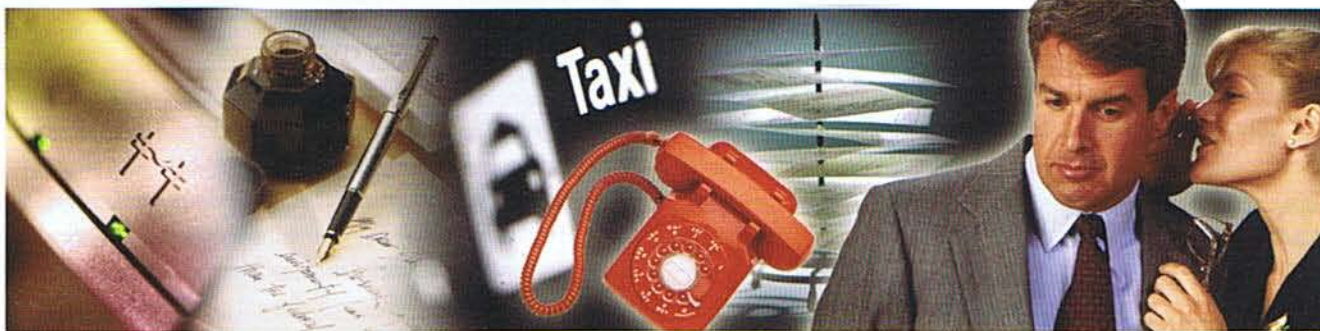
b) As far as I am concerned, mobile phones are the worst invention of the twentieth century. By this I mean that

.....
 What is more,

c) In my opinion, it is far nicer to receive a hand-written letter than an email. One of the disadvantages of emails is that they are

.....
 It is much more pleasant





Expressing Your Opinions

44 a. Read the sentences below and choose appropriate words/phrases to give your opinion, as in the example.

- I think/feel/believe (that) ...,
- I strongly believe (that) ...,
- In my opinion/view ...,
- The way I see it ...,
- It seems/appears to me that ...,
- To my mind ...,
- I (do not) agree with/that ...,
- As far as I am concerned ...,
- I completely/fully agree with/that ...,
- I am totally against/I strongly disapprove of/
- I completely disagree with (the idea/ suggestion/ statement that) ...,
- I fully support ...,
- I am entirely in favour of ...

- 1 Knowing how to use the Internet is a tremendous advantage nowadays.
I fully agree that knowing how to use the Internet is a tremendous advantage nowadays.
- 2 Children should be allowed to take their mobile phones to school with them.
- 3 All schools should give basic training in writing emails.
- 4 You should not judge people by the clothes they wear.
- 5 Life would be far better if we did not have telephones.
- 6 True communication involves the ability to listen as well as speak.

b. Now say how you would support these statements.

- 1 *I fully agree that knowing how to use the Internet is a tremendous advantage nowadays. The Net is an incredible source of knowledge and information, both at work and in the home. In addition, it provides us with a quick and easy means of communication in the form of emails.*

Relevance / Brainstorming

45 a. Read the rubric and underline the key words.

- You have read the extract below as part of a newspaper article about modern communications. You decide to write a letter responding to the points raised and expressing your own views.

SAMPLE

"The invention of the telephone, rather than being a great benefit to society, is responsible for a breakdown in communication. Because of the telephone, we have fax machines, the Internet, mobile phones and the death of letter-writing – all of the things which have led to the poor communication which exists between people today."

b. In pairs, correct the following points.

- 1 you have to write a newspaper article
you have to write a letter based on a newspaper article
- 2 the telephone has greatly benefited society
- 3 the telephone has directly brought about a wide variety of problems
- 4 the writer of the extract thinks fax machines, the Internet and mobile phones are great inventions
- 5 mobile phones caused the death of letter-writing
here is excellent communication between people today

SAMPLE

c. Which of the points made in the extract do you agree with? Which do you disagree with? Make brief notes below.

Agree	Disagree
.....
.....
.....
.....

d. For each of the points above, say how you would support your opinion.

I completely disagree with the statement that the telephone has led to poor communication. First of all ...

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

The purpose of the **beginning** is to make sure that the target reader knows what to expect in the main body of the writing.

The **ending** must conclude the writing in a way that will satisfy the target reader.

When expressing your opinion, the way you begin and end depends on what you are writing (letter, essay, article, etc).

You can make your writing more interesting by the inclusion of various techniques.

Techniques for beginnings include:

- addressing the reader directly
If you were to be offered a free mobile phone, you would probably gratefully accept it. You probably wouldn't stop to think about...
- mentioning background information
Over the last fifty years, businesses have become increasingly dependent on the use of telecommunications...
- asking a rhetorical question
Just how useful are all these developments?
- stating the reason for writing (for letters)
I am writing in response to the announcement that...

Techniques for endings include:

- making a thought-provoking statement
Perhaps the Internet was not such a good idea after all.
- making a prediction for the future
Maybe one day we will no longer need telephones at all.
- summarising the main opinion
On the whole, it would seem that there are a number of disadvantages to the Internet.
- asking a rhetorical question
Who knows what the future has in store for us?
- making reference to further action (for letters)
I strongly urge the council to reconsider its decision.

SAMPLE

2 I am writing to express my support for the opinions raised by your columnist in last week's *Advertiser*. Not only do I fully agree that the telephone is a marvellous invention, but I also feel strongly that the latest developments in mobile phone technology will make life considerably easier for all of us.

3 A considerable number of people are against mobile phones. These people claim that these phones are an invasion of privacy, and that their users are inconsiderate. It is also often said that mobile phones are dangerous. But how many of these people have stopped to think of the benefits that mobile phones have brought us?

4 So, what with all these changes coming our way, the future looks interesting. Perhaps we can all look forward to the day when we can do our jobs from the comfort of our own homes!

5 Once again, congratulations on printing such an enlightening article. It is encouraging to find such well-researched and informative journalism in a weekly newspaper. I look forward to reading more in future issues.

6 All in all, it would seem that there is a lot to be said in defence of mobile phones. They are indispensable in business and great fun for young people. What is more, they are invaluable in an emergency. I think they will be with us for a long time to come.

b. Using some of the techniques above, write a suitable beginning and ending for the rubric in Ex. 45a.

46 a. Read the following beginnings and endings and identify the techniques which have been used.

1 Throughout the twentieth century, technology played an increasingly important part in the development of the telephone. Now, in the early years of the new millennium, we are about to see even greater changes in the way we communicate. Let's have a look at some of those changes.

SAMPLE

STYLE

The style you use in your writing depends on the target reader and the type of writing. For example, a business letter written to your bank manager requires a more formal style than a light-hearted article written for teenagers.

Formal style includes:

- sophisticated vocabulary
- more frequent use of the passive voice
- complex grammatical constructions

Informal style includes:

- colloquial (spoken) and idiomatic English
- less frequent use of the passive voice
- less complex grammatical constructions

47 a. Read the following paragraph and make it more formal by replacing the words/phrases in bold with suitable ones from the list.

- furthermore • played a major role in • after all
- rather than • such as • an invaluable aid
- particularly suitable for • by this I mean
- I have little doubt that • had it not been for

I'm pretty sure that the telephone has helped with the changes that took place in the last century. What I'm trying to say is that, without the telephone, we would never have had other developments, like faxes, mobiles or the Internet. Apart from that, the telephone is really important for businesses and the best way of keeping in touch with friends. Let's face it, most people prefer to pick up the phone instead of writing a letter.



b. Now rewrite the underlined sections of the following paragraph to make it more formal.

The way I see it, instead of getting closer together, we're moving further apart. What I'm trying to say is that communications don't really help us understand each other, especially in areas like politics. And something like computers aren't really the best way of staying in touch. Let's not forget, human contact is important too.

Discuss & Write

48 Read the following rubrics and underline the key information. Then, for each one, answer the questions that follow.

A Your school/college magazine is running a competition to find the best article on the subject 'Staying in Touch'. Write your article for the magazine, giving your opinion on the best ways of corresponding with friends and relatives.

B You have read the extract below as part of a newspaper article on ways of communicating. Write a letter responding to the points raised and expressing your own views.

"Sometimes I wonder how teenagers communicate. They seem to spend all their time on the Internet or on their mobiles but I have no idea what they are doing. There are other things well, such as the language that they use when they speak to each other. I mean, is this really communicating?"

C You recently attended a lecture entitled 'The Role of Communications in the Modern World'. Now your tutor has asked you to write an essay examining this issue and giving your own opinions.

- 1 What type of writing is this?
- 2 Who are the target readers?
- 3 What style is appropriate?
- 4 What are your views?
- 5 What linking words and phrases can you use?
- 6 Which techniques will you use in your beginning and ending?

➔ Planning & Organisation

49 Choose one of the rubrics above and, in the main body paragraph plan below, make notes about what you will include.

Paragraph 2

Topic Sentence

.....

Example(s)/Explanation(s)

.....

Paragraph 3

Topic Sentence

.....

Example(s)/Explanation(s)

.....

Paragraph 4

Topic Sentence

.....

Example(s)/Explanation(s)

.....

50 Using what you have learned in this unit, write the task you discussed in Ex. 49. Write between 300 and 350 words.