



## **GCSE Bitesize revision audio scripts**

### **English: Writing to argue, persuade or advise**

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## Writing to argue, persuade or advise: Typical questions and the general approach

This audio bite is about typical questions and the general approach.

ALIX: Writing to argue, persuade or advise sounds quite complicated, but it isn't really. You only have to answer one of the questions, so you can ignore anything that seems really difficult and pick the one you feel happiest with. But don't rush things – you have plenty of time to decide which question you'd do best at. For example, listen to where Eliot goes wrong here...

ELIOT: I was looking at all these questions when I saw this question about football – I love football, so I started writing about my favourite team. After about ten minutes I stopped and looked again at the question – it was all about persuading pupils at my school to take up other sports besides football. So everything I'd written was a waste of time.

ALIX: Eliot made quite a few mistakes there. Firstly, he chose too quickly – he should have read all the questions properly. He also didn't study the question he had chosen. He should have underlined the key words so that he knew exactly what he had to do. The key words should have been obvious – he was supposed to write about other sports, he was supposed to write for pupils at his school, and he was supposed to be persuading them to try something new.

ELIOT: Yeah, as soon as I read the question slowly and highlighted the key words, I knew what to write about.

ALIX: If he had planned a little as well, he would have been able to do much better. Your plan doesn't have to be very complicated – it could be just deciding on a topic for each paragraph. Eliot?

ELIOT: My first paragraph could be about the range of sports you can see on the TV, such as swimming, athletics, boxing and rugby. Then in my second paragraph I'd write about how good swimming is, and in my third I'd write about athletics. In the next paragraph I'd write about some of the people at school who do other sports, like Sam who does karate, and Karim who goes to a kickboxing class. Finally I'd convince them that there's a lot more to life than football and they should give one of these a go.

ALIX: That's far better. Eliot is showing he understands the question. He knows the subject, he knows the people he's writing for and he knows the purpose too. We'll go over purposes later but the other thing you need to know is the format – what the piece

looks like. For instance, a magazine article usually looks different to a leaflet or a letter.

ELIOT: Each question tells us about the format and there is nothing in the exam to catch you out. In fact, most questions are aimed at people like us. They might be about choices we have to make, or problems we face, or just about school, family or friends.

ALIX: So when you are writing to argue, persuade or advise, read all the questions very slowly. Do not choose something that seems difficult just to impress the examiner. Instead, choose what seems the most straightforward for you.

Then highlight the key words – underline them, colour them in, or circle them. Understanding the question is important – anything else you write about won't get you any marks.

Plan your paragraphs. This will give your writing structure and makes sure you're sticking to the question. It also makes you think about your subject, audience and the format. And leave a little time at the end to check it through and correct any mistakes you spot.

## **Writing to argue, persuade or advise: Writing to argue**

This audio bite is about writing to argue.

ELIOT: If you choose to write an argument in the exam, you'd think it would be straightforward. You've had loads of arguments with friends, so you shouldn't need any advice about how to go about it. But exams are different. You are not writing one side of an argument, you aren't just telling someone they're wrong and saying what you think.

ALIX: In fact the other side of the argument won't be heard if you don't write it. So you have to give a balanced argument. That means you need to write about the ideas for something, and the ideas against it. And you need to come to a conclusion, saying what you think about it all.

ELIOT: That's not too difficult. Suppose the question you've chosen is to write a magazine article about whether footballers are paid too much or not. In your plan write down both sides of the argument (even the bits you don't really agree with).

ALIX: For instance, on one side you could say that they deserve to get a lot of money because they work hard, they make money for the clubs, their agents often take a lot of what they earn and their working life is short.

- ELIOT: On the other side, you might write down that they don't need all this money, they don't do important jobs like nurses and doctors and they spoil football by making it so expensive.
- ALIX: Once you have this plan, you can start writing. You need to include all the ideas you can, and show reasons why different ideas might be good, but you must come to a conclusion at the end. Eliot?
- ELIOT: Yes, it's important to give examples and evidence for each point – anything from something you saw on TV to what your friend told you. But it's also important to link the ideas together.
- ALIX: The easiest links are using words like 'but', 'because', 'however', and 'therefore' – these words force your readers to compare ideas. They also help you to argue, because you can make the ideas you like stronger, and the ideas you don't like weaker. And this helps you reach a conclusion. Like this...
- ELIOT: Some pop stars make millions of pounds a year because they are really good and work hard. In fact, a recent TV programme showed one group working over 60 hours a week and spending most nights away from home. However, do they really deserve to earn 200 times more than a nurse? The nurse will also work long hours, often at night as well. But the nurse deals in life and death, not just songs.
- ALIX: This sounds good because it includes evidence and links the ideas together. It makes it a good argument, because it's obvious which side we should agree with. And that's important – if you are writing to argue, you must lead your readers to a conclusion – never let them decide for themselves.
- ELIOT: So, a good answer must give both sides of the argument. Plan your answer carefully and think about all the points that could be made. For example, you might have to write a speech arguing whether people should give money to charity or not. It's easy to write one side, but think about the negative ideas too – is the money wasted? Does it go to the wrong people?
- Then give evidence and examples in your writing. This makes the ideas seem better and shows that you have thought about your essay.
- Link the sentences, paragraphs and ideas together with words like 'so' or 'however'. And make sure you come to a definite conclusion and that you tell people what they should believe.

## Writing to argue, persuade or advise: Writing to persuade

This audio bite is about writing to persuade.

ELIOT: Persuading people should be easy – it's about giving them ideas and deciding for them. The thing is, you're making them agree with you.

ALIX: Just imagine you wanted something from your mum – you'd tell her all sorts of things, not exactly lies, but you'd make her feel that she should do what you want.

ELIOT: You could start by using feelings and emotions, so pick your words really carefully. Let's see what Alix can do...

ALIX: Mum, I really need to go to the leaver's do. Everyone will be there, and if I don't go, I'll be letting all my teachers down.

ELIOT: That's not a bad start, is it? Then you can say the same thing again, and again, and again ... just so that she won't forget it.

ALIX: And I'll be letting my class down, but most of all I'd be letting Mr Wilkinson down, and you know how nice he's been.

ELIOT: Then you could add a few reasons why it's such a good idea – that means you talk about all the benefits, like this:

ALIX: And if I go, you'll be able to have a bit of peace on Friday night. It'll hardly cost anything because we've got a school discount, and I'll be able to wear that dress I got last year. And Sandie's mum said she'd pick us up at the end.

ELIOT: You can do even more, because you have got to make someone else believe you. One thing is to ask rhetorical questions, which you don't really have a choice about answering. Alix?

ALIX: So mum, do you really want me to sit at home moaning for the rest of the term? Do you want me to let the whole school down?

ELIOT: And Alix has started to exaggerate too – she's going a bit over the top. She can't really moan all the time until the end of term. But she's right about exaggerating – you need to make your persuasive writing strong. You are selling your idea, so you must be positive and only write about the good bits. Think about the reasons you chose something...

ALIX: I got this phone because it sounded really good, and the man in the shop told me it was ideal for me.

ELIOT: The salesman here was using another persuasive technique – he addressed people directly.

ALIX: You can do the same in your writing, using words like ‘you’ or ‘we’ because it makes your readers feel important. When you use ‘we’ it even sounds like you know what they think, you’re speaking for them and you’re on their side.

ELIOT: And that’s what you should be doing in all your persuasive writing – getting people on your side. So remember, persuade people by using feelings and choosing strong words, such as ‘starving’ instead of ‘hungry’.

Repeat ideas so that they won’t be forgotten and just talk about the positive bits so it sounds better.

Include some rhetorical questions, like ‘Do you want to do well in your exam?’ – if you are listening to this audio clip, the answer’s bound to be ‘yes’, so pick questions which push people to agree with you. And as I’ve said a million times, you can exaggerate a little if you want. And you can make it personal by using ‘you’ or ‘we’.

## **Writing to argue, persuade or advise: Writing to advise**

This audio bite is about writing to advise.

ALIX: There are always one or two questions asking you to give some advice. It might be advice about how to look after a pet, or lose weight or even how to do well in exams.

ELIOT: And you’ve probably read loads of problem page letters as well – about anything from living with acne to coping if your parents get divorced.

ALIX: The thing is, advice follows a pattern or model, and if you remember the pattern, it’s much easier. Let’s imagine you’re giving advice to someone going on a first date. In your plan you’d have a list of the information you’d give them. For instance, ideas about how to ask them out, where to go or what to wear.

ELIOT: Once you’ve got that, you can decide what goes in each paragraph. The easiest way is to put it into the order it happens – so asking someone out comes before deciding where to go. At this stage you are just dealing with information – for example, you could include a list of chat up lines, or add a list of things not to say.

- ALIX: Once you've got all the information and ideas, you need to make some of the sentences into orders. You are telling them what to do, and what not to do, like this.
- ELIOT: Always be interested in the other person. If you really like them, look directly at them a lot. However, don't stare or they might think you're mad.
- ALIX: The ideas sound fine, except so far it's just a list of orders. If you carried on like that, it would get a bit boring. So now you need to add some softer sentences – sentences which guide people, using words like 'should', 'can', 'could' or 'might'. Listen to what Eliot comes up with.
- ELIOT: You ought to go somewhere quiet so you can chat easily. You could go to the cinema, but you shouldn't pick a film the other person won't like. Why don't you choose a romantic comedy?
- ALIX: And Eliot's added a question too. Questions are a good way of giving advice – they lead people without telling them they have to do something.
- ELIOT: Your advice should also be friendly and reassuring. Make sure that everyone can follow it – for instance if they are sixteen, it's no good telling them to buy a sports car to impress someone. And it should be easy to read, so you can use things like bullet points and headings – these break up the ideas and make them easier to remember.
- ALIX: Writing good advice means remembering a pattern or model. If you want to see lots of examples, look in almost any teenage magazine. The first thing you need to do is plan the sort of information you need to give the other people. You should have lots of information to give them – if you can't think of any ideas, you are doing the wrong question.
- Then you need to put ideas into order, perhaps one or two in each paragraph. Make some of the ideas orders, like, Do not watch TV when you are revising. Take short breaks every half hour.
- Then make other ideas into suggestions, with questions and words like 'ought, should, and can'. For example, Why don't you revise with a friend? You should revise in a quiet place. You could make a revision plan.
- And remember to make your advice useful and easy to read. In the exam you'll usually be writing for people like you, so don't try to impress them, just suggest what they need to do.