

## WRITING A DISCURSIVE COMPOSITION

### GUIDE TO THE WRITING SECTION OF THE EXAM

- Students must select **ONE** of the 2 or 3 questions on the writing paper.
- The question requires you to write a **discursive composition**.
- This should be written in a more formal English in line with academic writing.
- Students must be careful to answer the exact question which is asked. For example, if the question asks you to “discuss the negative impact of tourism in some areas,” you would be wrong to write 200 words about the history of tourism or about mostly positive effects of tourism or your holidays! **Irrelevance will be penalized**. TIP: Look back at the question frequently to ensure you are answering it.
- You should write at least 200 words to fully develop your answer.
- Points will be awarded for a good range of vocabulary, grammar and structures.

### IMPORTANT ELEMENTS

#### **Introduction.**

The introduction is a separate paragraph. Here you should make a general statement on the topic followed by an indication of your opinion. You should not go into too much detail as this will be done in the central (main body) paragraphs. It should be 3 to 5 lines long.

Example.

### PAST WRITING QUESTION 2015

**1. Many people play team sports rather than individual sports. What do you feel are the benefits of playing team sports compared to individual sports? And, personally which type of sports do you prefer?**

#### **GOOD INTRODUCTION**

Team sports are undoubtedly highly entertaining to watch and are extremely popular in almost every culture. There are several reasons why people tend to enjoy these more than individual sports and why they are more beneficial.

The first sentence is a general statement. The second shows that the writer is clearly in favour of team sports and we know they are going to give us “several reasons”

## BAD INTRODUCTION

*Nowadays people prefer playing team sports rather than individual sports, especially among the youngsters, who hope to have the chance to keep in touch with new friends. This is especially true in high schools, for example in the school I attended.*

*But does it mean that team sports have more benefits than individual sports, or it doesn't?*

There is a general statement although the information about keep in touch with friends would be better placed in the main body as a supporting reason to the writer's argument. The personal information about their high school is out of place in the introduction and finally the extra one-sentence paragraph is horrific.

Do not insert one-sentence paragraphs as afterthoughts. Integrate them into the previous or next complete paragraph if they are relevant.

## TERRIBLE INTRODUCTION

*I believe that sport is very important for all ages of people. Ever since Roman and Greek times people play sports. It was believed to be healthy also for the mind hence the expression "healthy body, healthy mind". Nowadays many more people do sport and they are living longer and are happier because of this. Personally I don't do team or individual sports but when I will have more time in the future I would like to go swimming perhaps. There are many young people, students included, who don't do sport, however, and they eat junk food and smoke. This is bad in my opinion. .... (etc. etc.) I will spare you the torture*

This student goes on to write without any paragraphs. There is no logical place to divide into paragraphs anyway because it is a ramble of semi-associated points to the question. It does not begin to answer the question and does not/cannot be logically divided into phases/paragraphs.

Many people play team sports rather than individual sports. What do you feel are the benefits of playing team sports compared to individual sports? And, personally which type of sports do you prefer?

## Good introduction 2

Although individual sports have their merits and are followed by people all around the world, they are nowhere near as popular as team sports. There are clear benefits to playing in a team which outweigh those which may be had while participating as an individual.

## MAIN BODY OR CENTRAL PARAGRAPHS

These contain the supporting information for your introduction

Begin the paragraph with a “topic sentence” This sentence is usually not too long. It is a clear indication of the content of the paragraph. **Everything in the paragraph should be related to that first sentence.**

The TOPIC SENTENCE is explained in the paragraph. Information is given to demonstrate that the topic sentence is true by expanding, explaining and exemplifying

**Team sports allow people to bond.** Playing together in order to succeed together with other people, particularly children or young adults, may help to develop a sense of respect and fraternity among those who are working towards the same objective, generally trying to win. This feeling develops when there is no competition among those in the same team, only a desire to do well as a group. This environment can be particularly beneficial to timid people who tend to be introverted because it will help them to open up. In individual sports, everyone has to perform independently of the other people around them. They depend only on their own preparation and do not need to make an effort to bond with others. Therefore, taking part in activities such as team sports lets us share the pressure and enjoy the good moments in a group. According to psychologists, this is a very healthy mentality.

When You are ready to discuss another aspect, point of view or separate idea from “team sports allow people to bond” change paragraph. Leave a clear space and start a new paragraph with a new TOPIC SENTENCE

Example of next 2 paragraphs in essay

**This working together towards a common goal, also prepares us to face the world of work.** Many jobs require people to work in a team, to share ideas and information. The lone wolf finds it difficult to perform well in this kind of environment. Indeed, many companies organize bonding events, weekends where employees really need to work together in a context which is outside the office but which requires the same principles of collaboration.

**Lastly, team sports are more fun.** You can laugh and joke together after a performance or at training. Of course, some of these elements are possible in individual sports. A person who does karate, for example, will speak and laugh with others who train at the same gym, but it will not be as deep as the bond among team members.

Notice how all the sentences explain the topic sentence.

### ERROR

**Lastly, team sports are more fun.** You can laugh and joke together after a performance or at training. Of course, some of these elements are possible in individual sports. A person who does karate, for example, will speak and laugh with others who train at the same gym, but it will not be as deep as the enjoyment felt in the bond among team members. **It can also be stressful however and I remember that I was not happy all the time when I played volleyball.**

This sentence does not belong here. It goes against the function of this particular paragraph. It speaks of stress but the topic sentence tells us it is about “fun”

If there is a paragraph about negative points put it in there, if not eliminate it.

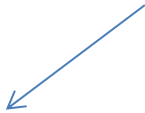
Another example

### **EXAMPLE:**

## **Central paragraph in an essay on the dangers young people face.**

EXPAND   EXEMPLIFY   EXPLAIN

TOPIC SENTENCE



Young people under 21 should not drive powerful, fast cars. At that age they generally do not have the experience necessary to control such a car. It takes years of practice to be able to handle a car travelling at high speed on wet surfaces or on tight bends. First and foremost, they ought to cut their teeth on a small to medium sized car, then only when they have a balanced combination of confidence and ability should they consider moving up to a high- performance vehicle. We often hear or read in the newspaper about young adults who are involved in terrible and often fatal accidents while driving their father’s fast car. Such accidents could perhaps be avoided if it were illegal to drive high horse power cars for younger people.

All information relates to topic sentence.

### CONCLUSION

Finally a short paragraph beginning “ To conclude” or “In conclusion” “ To sum up” or such like will paraphrase your position and point of view, already given in the above composition. Don’t add too much new information here, or new examples etc.

### **Good Example**

In conclusion, the benefits of team sports significantly outweigh those of individual sports even though it cannot be denied that individual sports also offer many benefits. I for one, have no doubt in saying that I would always opt for playing as part of a team rather than as an individual.

GOOD EXAMPLES OF WELL- WRITTEN COMPOSITIONS which follow the guide lines suggested above.

*As most people spend a major part of their adult life at work, job satisfaction is an important element of individual wellbeing.*

*What factors contribute to job satisfaction?*

*How realistic is the expectation of job satisfaction for all workers?*

Nowadays many adults have full-time jobs and the proportion of their lives spent doing such jobs is very high. So feelings about one's job must reflect how an individual feels about his or her life as a whole, and because of this, job satisfaction is indeed very important for the wellbeing of that person.

Employees get job satisfaction in a number of ways. Firstly, a person needs to feel that they are doing valued and valuable work, so positive feedback from superiors is very important in this respect. A sense of fulfilment is also encouraged if a worker feels the job is worth doing because it contributes to the society or the economy as a whole. Secondly, when someone feels they are improving or developing their skills through training opportunities, for example, then there is a sense of progression and purpose that rewards a worker. The sense of belonging to a team or a working community also contributes to job satisfaction because colleagues help each other to enjoy their working lives. Satisfaction is also increased by a sense of responsibility for and loyalty to a team.

Of course not everyone enjoys their work. Hard economic realities mean that many people have little choice in the kind of job they can get. In some cases an employee is working in a job that suits neither their skills nor their personality. Some jobs are repetitive and boring, and labour relations may be poor and lead to resentment and insecurity rather than to job satisfaction.

However, even though it is unlikely that all workers do feel happy in their work, I think it is not unrealistic to promote more job satisfaction in any job. If the factors identified above are implemented, then any job can be improved and more workers can feel greater degrees of job satisfaction.

Some people choose to eat no meat or fish.

They believe that this is not only better for their own health , but also benefits the world as a whole. Discuss this view and give your own opinion.

ADVANCED ANSWER 30+

The question of whether it is right to eat the flesh of living animals has been debated for thousands of years, mostly by philosophers and religious groups, but more lately also by people who believe it is wrong to kill beings for sustenance and that this way of life has detrimental effects on our health as well as for humanity. Supporters of both points of view seem to have moral and practical arguments to defend their position.

**Supporters of a vegetarian diet claim that over consumption of meat brings about a series of health problems.** Animal fat has been blamed for an increase in cancer and heart disease , *which account for an extremely high number of deaths* in the western world. They believe that more nutrients can be found in a wide range of non-animal food comprising grains, nuts , legumes , fruit and of course vegetables. These are held to contain all the nutrients , vitamins and minerals we need while not exercising a negative effect on our body. They also claim that our mental well-being will be enhanced as mind and body are closely linked. It is also true that most meat is heavily treated with antibiotics and various chemicals and that sea food nowadays may be contaminated with degraded plastic or heavy metals.

**However, an even greater number of experts tell us that the consumption of meat is beneficial and that abstinence for long periods would lead to a lack of certain vitamins , minerals and proteins.** This is especially true , we are told, for young growing children whose bodies are still forming. Parents are not generally willing to risk their children's health by experimenting on them with a non- western diet. In countries where such a diet is common or mainstream, they have centuries if not millennia of experience . Furthermore, fruit and vegetables are just as contaminated as meat products, if not more so. Apples receive 23 pesticide treatments per season in large farms. One would have to buy only organic produce, which is currently beyond most families means.

**Another side of the argument to be considered is the benefit of vegetarianism to the planet or humanity.** Vegetarianism seems to have the moral high ground. I do not think that any sane person enjoys seeing an animal being slaughtered. It is a disturbing site to most people unless they have been hardened by repeated practice in killing. They shut themselves off from empathy for the animal. The strategy seems to be that of disconnecting from the act of killing. The need to detach from the act and not reflect on it suggests that there may be a moral problem. If it were the right thing to do, a pure, healthy act such as picking an apple or drinking water there would be no necessity to remove one's mind from it. Morally , non-killing or non-violence as it is called in India appears to be noble .

**Lastly, perhaps a policy of non-violence beginning in our dining room would extend beyond to a mentality of non-violence also towards our fellow man.** A few hundred years from now people might well look back on us and be horrified that we killed other creatures in order to consume them. I believe that over eating of meat is detrimental to our health , but that the negative effects of food may depend more on how it is

grown and produced . A stick of celery might be more damaging than a meat base dish if it contains an excessive quantity of chemical compounds .

#### EXAMPLE 27/30

After high school students usually have to take the choice between living with their parents or to be more independent, by living outside the place in which they spent most of their childhood. Which is the best option in your opinion and why?

*While in some mediterranean countries traditions and habits are more in favour of the first choice, in my opinion the choice of living outside the well know parent's house should be choosen for several reasons: more economic indipendence, freedom and responsibilities in the place they live and, thirdly, as a school of life.*

*Firstly, this choice is important from the economic point of view since, with limited budget, students start to think more on the real value of money. Apart from extreme causes in which family are totally unable to support students outside their house, usually it's possible to live with dignity with not a huge budget. If money provided from the family aren't enough to make a living, a small part-time job is worth to be taken for a student.*

*Secondly, leaving the nest of the old parent's house, students have more control of their own space. The direct results of this is that students have the chance to be more responsible, for example doing many house activities that they were not used to attend previously, such as going to the market daily or cleaning the bathroom. Moreover, it's important in this stage of life to share a place with people of the same age. This aspect is important to built a person able to cope different problems, to share interest and activities and, not less important, to make new friends.*

*As a third reason, in my opinion the key point of leaving the parent house for a dormitory or an apartment, is the start of new projects that usually come with it. For example, when a boy is still fully dependent from his parents and is about to be or maybe is already over 25, he would be more likely to avoid taking risk or chances in the future. By this, the simple process of leaving the old place early is like the starting point for a person to rely only on himself, making projects, taking risks and chosing for his own path in life.*

*In conclusion, the choice of living away from the old parent's house is the spark for many important aspects that are simply part of life. Sometimes it might seems hard to do it, however leaving the "confort zone" will pay off anyway in the long term.*