

Expressing your ideas

You can express your opinions in writing in a number of ways – for example, in an essay, in a magazine article or in an email to a newspaper. Whichever form you use it is important to plan your writing and think carefully about how you are going to develop your argument.

In my opinion

Subject: Toy guns
From: Zarah

I think that toy guns and weapons should be banned. They give young children the wrong idea. It suggests that war is fun and violence is OK.

Some people say that playing war games is harmless and that it helps people let off steam. They say that it gets rid of aggressive feelings that might otherwise lead to real violence. I don't agree. If you play violent games, you're more likely to act violently.

Besides, it's nearly always boys who want to play war games and it's boys who become soldiers and fight wars. So I say, stop encouraging them and ban toy weapons.

Subject: Falling for the latest fashion
From: Tristan

Why do so many people follow fashions? Don't they realise what's really going on? It's all a big con. They are being tricked into buying things just because everyone else is.

Why do they fall for these crazy crazes? One minute it's Vans, the next it's Nikes. Can't they see they are being manipulated by the marketing men?

Why not show some individuality for a change and resist the temptation to be like everybody else? Wear a T-shirt you dyed yourself instead of one showing the latest Disney or games console character. And spend your money on something useful rather than a plastic model of a mermaid or an alien!

Subject: Football crazy
From: Abi

Why are so many people obsessed with football? They spend all their time talking about it, reading about it, and watching it on TV. You'd think it was really important, the way they go on about it.

And another thing. Why are football players paid so much? It's totally ridiculous the amount some of them get each week. As for the size of transfer fees, they're absurd!

Also, there are far too many foreign players in British football. Clubs should spend their time developing local talent instead of importing stars from abroad.

I think we've all gone football crazy.

Study the emails above written by teens to a newspaper for young people. Imagining you had to choose one of the emails to win a £15 prize as an email of the week. Which email would you choose and why? Consider the following points:
Which email has the most effective opening?

In which email is the main statement best supported by the arguments that are developed and the evidence that is quoted?

Which email has the most effective ending?

Which email involves the reader most?

Which of the arguments do you agree or disagree with most strongly? Write a reply to one of the emails stating your views on the subject.

Task 2:

Writing an article or essay

Following these steps will help you plan and write your article or essay effectively.

1

Find out

as much as you can about your subject by reading up on it in books and magazines. Go to the resources centre, read up about it in reference books and use the Internet to visit any websites that might be useful.

2

Make notes

of any key facts you might want to use in your argument, or things people have said that you agree or disagree with. Always keep a record of where you found the information.

3

Make a plan

Do a brainstorm and list all the points you are going to make. Then number them to show the order in which you are going to make them.

4

State your viewpoint

clearly in the first paragraph. Start with a statement or a question that will grab your readers' attention.

5

Explain the reasons

for your opinions.

6

Use evidence and examples

to support your statements.

7

Give the source

of any key facts that you include, and the names of any people whose statements you quote.

8

End with a statement

that either sums up your argument or recommends any action you think needs to be taken.

Write an essay, article, email or speech for young people, either on a subject that you have strong opinions or on one of the following questions:

- Should parents be allowed to smack children?
- Has Christmas lost its true meaning
- Is it right to ban fox hunting?

(If you're feeling extra create, make a podcast expressing how you feel on your chosen topic)

Here is the plan that Dominic made before writing an article saying that he thinks we should stop celebrating Bonfire Night.

Paragraph 1 - Bonfire Night celebrations are out of date and should be stopped.

Paragraph 2 - Celebrating by burning a guy is the wrong way to remember the barbaric custom of burning people at the stake.

Paragraph 3 - Every year bonfires get out of control. Nov 5th is the fire brigade's busiest night of the year.

Paragraph 4 - Every year there are lots of firework accidents (e.g. boy with horrific facial burns in November 2012).

Paragraph 5 - Bonfire Night is terrifying for animals.

Paragraph 6 - People say it's traditional and gives enjoyment. That's no reason to keep it.

Paragraph 7 - So Bonfire Night should be scrapped. Instead of spending money on fireworks, give it to a good cause.