

B2 First for Schools Writing Part 1 (An opinion essay)

Summary

- Review the format and focus of Part 1 of the Writing paper.
- Revise useful vocabulary for writing an opinion essay.
- Learn useful techniques for planning your own essay.
- Evaluate two examples of a Writing Part 1 essay.
- Practise and evaluate your own answer to a Writing Part 1 task.

Review: Writing Part 1

The B2 First for Schools Writing paper has two parts. Part 1 has only one task, which you **must** answer. You will:

- ✓ be given the essay title.
- ✓ be given two ideas to write about.
- ✓ need to add one more idea of your own.
- ✓ need to give an opinion and support it with reasons.
- ✓ need to write between 140 and 190 words.

Tip! You don't have to be an expert, but you still have to answer the question!

The topic will be something of general interest, so you won't need any specialist knowledge. However, it is very important that you write approximately the right number of words. This shows that you can select relevant information, organise it well, avoid repetition and keep the reader interested.

Your essay will be assessed according to these four criteria:

- 1. Content** Focuses on how well you have completed the task, in other words, if you have answered the question.
- 2. Communicative Achievement** Focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the task and whether you have used formal or informal style appropriately. For example, is the style right for a magazine article?
- 3. Organisation** Focuses on the way you put together the piece of writing. Are the ideas logical and ordered? Have you used paragraphs and linking words?
- 4. Language** Focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes demonstrating the range of language that you know, as well as how accurate it is.

Tip! Manage your time.

Try to spend no more than 40 minutes on Writing Part 1. The Writing Paper has two parts and you will have 80 minutes in total. Part 1 and Part 2 are both worth the same number of marks, so you should spend approximately the same amount of time (about 40 minutes) on each part.

Prepare to write 1: Review useful language

In Writing Part 1, you need to show that you can use language appropriately to do things such as:

- Agreeing or disagreeing
- Giving opinions
- Giving information or explanations
- Giving reasons
- Giving examples
- Comparing and contrasting ideas and opinions
- Drawing conclusions

You should also use a range of suitable expressions to organise your essay and help your reader understand the connections between your ideas.

Look at the following phrases. Can you put them in the correct groups according to their function in an opinion essay? (The first one has been done for you as an example.)

- ~~In my opinion / view...~~
- However, ...
- I partly / fully agree that...
- Although...
- In addition to this, ...
- Firstly / Secondly / Thirdly ...
- Moreover, ...
- Finally...
- Consequently...
- In conclusion...
- Furthermore, ...
- Another reason why...
- To sum up...
- I firmly believe that...
- What is more, ...
- As a result...
- I personally feel that...
- First / Second of all...

Giving your own opinion	Structuring and sequencing your ideas	Adding ideas	Contrasting two ideas / examples / statements	Explaining
<i>Example:</i> In my opinion / view...				

Prepare to write 2: Generate and organise ideas

1. Imagine that you have been given the following essay task:

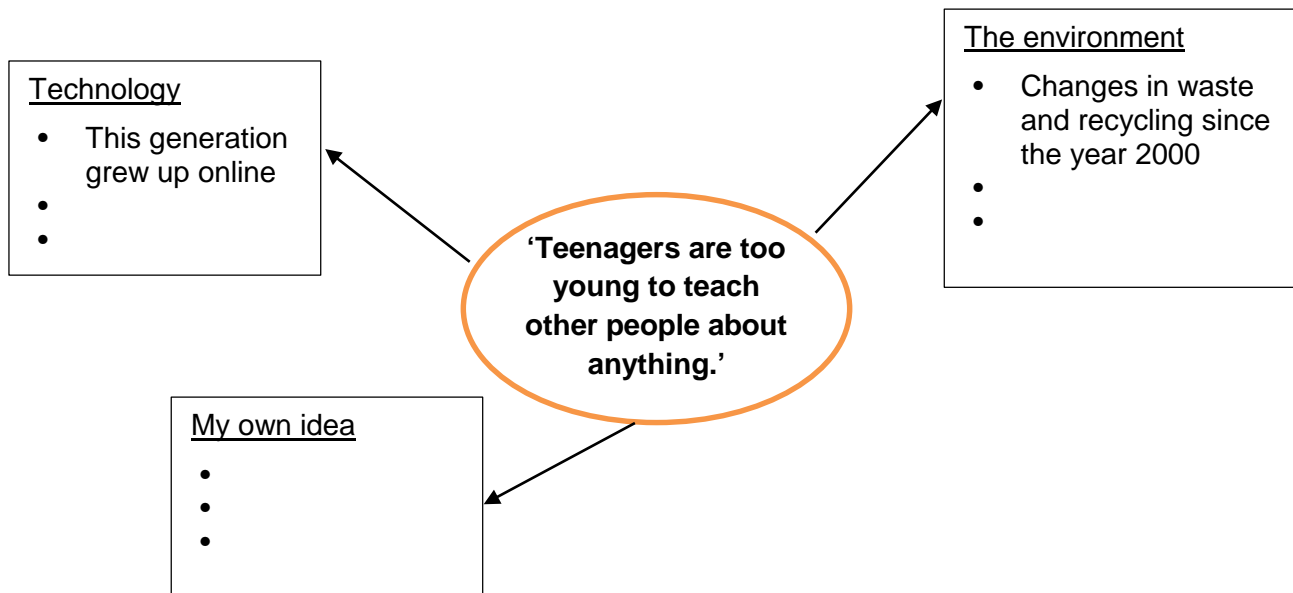
‘Teenagers are too young to teach other people about anything.’

Do you agree?

Notes
Write about:

1. technology 2. the environment 3. (your own idea)

How could you develop these first two ideas? Take notes in your notebook using a mind map like this:



Tip! Read the task carefully.
In Writing Part 1, you must use **all** the notes which are given in the task. For example, for the task above, if you wrote about technology but didn't mention the environment, you would lose marks.

2. Add your own third idea to the mind map above, then add some notes to develop this idea.
3. Now do a brief internet search about this topic. (Make sure you use websites that are in English!) Can you find anything interesting that you would like to add to your mind map?

Tip! Plan the structure of your essay before you write.
One of the assessment criteria for Writing Part 1 is *Organisation*. It's difficult to organise an essay clearly without making a simple plan first. Decide what points to include, in what order, and how they are connected – *then* start writing your essay. (Cross out your plan before you submit your test paper, so the examiner will assess only your essay and not the plan.)

Here's a useful structure for an opinion essay:

Paragraph 1	Introduce the topic using a general statement and <u>give your opinion</u> . Say whether you agree or disagree with the statement.
Paragraph 2	Give the first reason to support your opinion. Provide specific justifications for your opinion, using examples if necessary.
Paragraph 3	Give the second reason to support your opinion. Provide specific justifications for your opinion, using examples if necessary.
Paragraph 4	Give the third reason to support your opinion. Make sure this is clearly different from the points you made in the previous 2 paragraphs.
Paragraph 5	Summarise your ideas and repeat your opinion <u>using different words</u> to provide a strong conclusion.

Evaluation task 1: Two sample essays

Below, there are two examples of essays written in response to the task given in **Prepare to Write 2**. It's now your job to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these essays according to the 4 assessment criteria that you looked at in **Review: Writing Part 1**.

1. Read each student's work and take notes in the table below their essay.
2. Give each student a mark out of 5 for each assessment category.
3. Which essay do you think would get a higher mark in the B2 First for Schools exam? Why?

Student A:

Adults often think teenagers to be noisy, childish and violent. Some of them even don't think they have any adult senses or wise thoughts at all but, as a teenager, I think we're intelligent enough to teach other people some things, and, according to this, I'm not agree with the quotation on top of the page.

For example, lots of teenagers have better knowledge in technology, so they can teach the older generation how to deal with gadgets. In our gymnasium there are special classes for the senior people where they are taught to work on computers, and their teachers are teenagers.

Moreover, teenagers have the great knowledge in ecology, and they are really concerned on saving the planet alive. We talk a lot about environment on classes, we take part in ecology olympiades and contests for the best ecological projects and often won them, so we have a lot to tell the others about environmental problems and ways of their solving.

Besides this, teenagers can teach adults foreign languages. According to the statistics, 50% of adult generation of our country don't know any foreign languages, so we can help them to come by the new knowledge or to improve that what they have. And, of course, students from foreign countries can teach Russian students their language, and Russians can teach them Russian. It is sometimes done in linguistic centres.

To sum up I can say that teenagers have great knowledge in many fields of study, so they can also teach the people of older generation and their classmates and friends.

Content:	Communicative Achievement:	Organisation:	Language:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they use all the notes given in the task? • Did they write 140-190 words, or is it too long / short? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the style suitably neutral / formal? • Is every point justified with a clear reason? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the essay organised into clear paragraphs? • Is the order logical? • Is the punctuation correct? • Did they use linking words? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they use a good range of vocabulary and grammar related to the topic? • Did they use language accurately?
___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5

Student B:

I don't think that teenagers are too young to teach other people about anything. Of course, they can't know very well some things, for example: some scientific theories, history, mathematic at all and etc, but a lot of teenagers know a lot about technology. It's normal for them to spend a lot of time with computer, different gadgets. Most of them know, how these gadgets work, so they can explain other people different moments of their working. My Granny often asks to me for a piece of advice about her mobile phone. Teenagers' knowledge about technology usually based on practice, so often they don't know about process of creating the phone, the TV, etc. They really shouldn't try to tell about things, which they don't know.

People don't need special knowledge about our world to make it better. Teenagers have a lot of time for help the environment and sometimes they tell about it people, who usually are very busy and couldn't notice the awful problems. So they can and must tell and teach people to help our planet.

In my opinion, teenagers shouldn't teach other people about things, which they know very bad, it may be only funny and of course they ought to teach other people and help them with things, which they know very good. Today all people have opportunity to learn everything, what they want. They can search information in the Internet, in books and the age doesn't matter.

Content:	Communicative Achievement:	Organisation:	Language:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they use all the notes given in the task? • Did they write 140-190 words, or is it too long / short? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the style suitably neutral / formal? • Is every point justified with a clear reason? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the essay organised into clear paragraphs? • Is the order logical? • Is the punctuation correct? • Did they use linking words? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they use a good range of vocabulary and grammar related to the topic? • Did they use this language accurately?
___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5	___ / 5

Now compare your notes and marks with the examiner feedback. This is supplied at the end of the document. See **Evaluation task 1: Sample essays - Examiner feedback**.

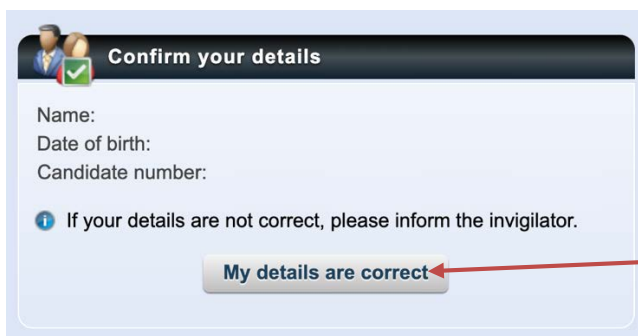
Do you agree or disagree with the examiner? Why?

Exam task: Writing Part 1

Great work! You're ready to practise writing an opinion essay for a real Writing Part 1 test.

There are two ways you can do this: on the computer, or on paper. Both options are explained below.

1. To try the computer-based test, you need to use the Firefox or Chrome browser. **Click here to open the test website** and then follow the steps on the next page to begin the test:



1. This is only a *practice* test. You do not have to enter any personal details here.

2. Simply click this button to continue.



3. Read all the instructions carefully.

4. Click this button to start the test. You will move to the next screen and the timer will begin automatically.

Important! Before you begin, please note:

- The online practice test includes Writing Part 2 as well, but you don't have to do this part now.
- Make sure you save a copy of your essay for the final stage in this lesson.

2. If you prefer to do the practice test on paper, simply use the task below.

Some parents teach their children at home rather than sending them to school. Is this a good or a bad thing for the children?

Notes

Write about:

1. having a parent as a teacher
2. making friends
3. (your own idea)

Source: *Sample Test 1, D255/02.* © UCLES 2015 Cambridge English Level 1 Certificate in ESOL International.

Evaluation task 2: Your own essay

Great work! In the real exam, you should always check your work carefully one final time before you submit your paper. Look at the essay you just wrote and ask yourself honestly:

Content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you included all the points from the question in your notes? 2. Is your writing too long/short?
Communicative Achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you given a clear reason to justify each point? 2. Have you given your opinion in the first and the final paragraph – but using different words.
Organisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is your writing organised into clear paragraphs? 2. Have you included linking words to connect your ideas?
Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you checked your spelling carefully? 2. Have you used a variety of adjectives/adverbs? If you have repeated words, can you use synonyms?

Now play the role of the examiner. What mark would you give your writing for **Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation** and **Language**?

Evaluation task 2: Compare your own essay with a model answer

Compare your essay with a model answer for the task you practised in this lesson and read the examiner's feedback.

Look back at your essay and think:

1. What are the similarities and differences between your essay and the model answer?
2. Is there anything you would you change about your essay? What? Why?

Improve your writing skills

Tip! Get a study buddy. Students can learn a lot from each other.

Working together with other students is a really good way for you all to learn and develop your skills. If you have a classmate or friend who also did this practice Writing Part 1 task, why not swap essays and evaluate each other's work? You can give useful critical feedback that will help each other improve the next essay that you write.

Reflect: How do you feel about your writing skills?

Write some ideas in your notebook about these questions:

1. What have you learned from this lesson about writing a good opinion essay?
2. Which areas of writing do you still need to develop?
3. What did you do well in this sample task?

One final tip before you go

Visit **WriteAndImprove.com** to practise your writing skills and get immediate feedback to help you continue developing. There are a range of exam-style tasks at different levels for you to try.

Answer key¹

Prepare to write 1: Review useful language

Giving your own opinion	Structuring and sequencing your ideas	Adding ideas	Contrasting two ideas / examples / statements	Explaining
In my opinion / view...	Firstly / Secondly / Thirdly ...	Another reason why...	However, ... Although...	Consequently... As a result...
I personally feel that...	First / Second of all...	In addition to this, ...		
I firmly believe that...	Finally...	Moreover, ...		
I partly / fully agree that...	In conclusion...	Furthermore, ...		
	To sum up...	What is more, ...		

Evaluation task 1: Sample essays - Examiner feedback

Here is examiner feedback for the two essays you evaluated in this lesson.

Student A – Examiner feedback

Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
<p>All content is relevant and the reader is fully informed.</p> <p>The writer discusses the statement and gives examples to support their opinions and develop their argument.</p> <p>The essay is focused on the knowledge and skills that teenagers have. The third point, the writer's own idea, focuses on language skills that teenagers have and how they can use these to help others communicate.</p>	<p>The essay uses a good style which communicates the writer's ideas effectively and clearly.</p> <p>The paragraphs are well constructed and the main points are introduced with suitably formal phrases (<i>For example; Moreover; Besides this; According to; To sum up</i>).</p> <p>The essay does not present <i>both</i> sides of the argument, but this is OK.</p>	<p>The text is well organised and uses a variety of linking expressions and grammar (like pronouns) to make references clear.</p> <p>Some organisational features are used well: for example, the first paragraph presents a popular view of teenagers (<i>noisy, childish and violent; Some of them [adults] even don't think</i>). This is contrasted with, <i>but, as a teenager, I think</i>, mirroring the construction of the previous statement.</p>	<p>There is a range of technical and some environmental vocabulary, plus some formal essay vocabulary (<i>According to the statistics</i>). There is a range of simple and complex grammar, which is mostly accurate.</p> <p>There are some mistakes with less common vocabulary, but this is only because the writer is being ambitious.</p>
Mark: 5	Mark: 4	Mark: 5	Mark: 4

¹ All sample tasks and feedback in this lesson are adapted from the B2 First for Schools *Handbook for teachers*.
© UCLES 2019. Available online at <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/first-for-schools/>

Student B – Examiner feedback

Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
<p>All content is relevant and the reader is fully informed.</p> <p>The essay discusses the main question of whether teenagers are too young to teach and provides an opinion on what teenagers are good at (<i>a lot of teenagers know a lot about technology</i>), and how practical knowledge of technology can help others (<i>they can explain other people different moments of their working</i>). In the second point, the writer explains that teenagers have time to learn about environmental problems and should share this knowledge.</p> <p>Finally, the third point presents the negative aspect that teenagers are more practical and sometimes aren't able to teach a subject in much detail (<i>they can't know very well some things, for example: some scientific theories; often they don't know about process of creating the phone; shouldn't teach other people about things, which they know very bad</i>).</p>	<p>The essay uses a good style in general, which communicates the writer's ideas effectively overall.</p> <p>The writer uses good language for giving explanation and opinion.</p> <p>The first two points are included in separate paragraphs, but the third point is an idea which is expressed in the whole essay. If this idea were discussed in a separate paragraph, the three points would be presented more clearly, and it would be easier for the reader to pay attention.</p>	<p>The essay is generally well organised, with a clear introduction and paragraphs.</p> <p>The writer uses a variety of linking words and other referencing features (<i>Of course; for example; Most of them; In my opinion</i>).</p> <p>The conclusion states an opinion on the main question (<i>teenagers shouldn't teach other people about things, which they know very bad</i>). It doesn't summarise all of the main points, but this is OK.</p>	<p>A range of everyday vocabulary is used appropriately in the context of this essay (<i>a piece of advice; based on practice; process of creating; special knowledge</i>).</p> <p>Simple grammatical forms are used well. When the writer tries to use more complex forms, there are a lot of mistakes. For example, specific expressions or use of prepositions (<i>they can't know very well; explain other people; tell about things; time for help</i>).</p> <p>The number of mistakes makes the whole essay less effective, but the reader can usually still understand what the writer means.</p>
<p>Mark: 5</p>	<p>Mark: 2</p>	<p>Mark: 3</p>	<p>Mark: 2</p>

Evaluation task 2: Your own essay

Here is a model answer, with examiner feedback, for the task you practised in this lesson.

Nowadays, more and more parents are making the controversial decision to teach their children at home rather than sending them to school. Although this approach to education has advantages, pupils who learn only at home definitely lose more opportunities.

First, children who don't go to school only know two teachers, the same people who are also their parents. Because of this, the pupils may not learn other points of view outside their family. Besides this, there is also the question if parents have the qualifications and knowledge to teach every subject. Perhaps their mother and father are experts in one or two subjects, but any school provides teachers expert in every subject.

We should remember that there is more to education than learning about topics. In addition, going to school is also a way to meet people your own age and to make friends. It is clear that children can socialise better at school, and as a result, children at school will have the chance to start many lifelong relationships.

I agree that parents can have some good reasons for having home school, but overall, considering teachers and friends, it's much better for children to attend school.

Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
<p>All content is relevant and the writer discusses the first two points in the question.</p> <p>They talk about the disadvantages of having parents teaching their own children. They explain that only one view might be offered and that there might not be enough knowledge about certain subjects.</p> <p>On the second point, the writer says that children have more opportunities to socialise at school and will find it easier to make friends.</p> <p>However, there is no third point (your own idea). This means the reader doesn't have all the information they need.</p>	<p>The essay is very well written. It uses the right style for an essay, which keeps the reader interested. It also uses formal language well.</p> <p>The writer gives balanced views and opinions, and also supports these views with examples (<i>Perhaps their mother and father are experts in one or two subjects</i>).</p> <p>Both simple and more complex ideas are communicated clearly to the reader (<i>pupils may not learn other points of view outside their family</i>).</p>	<p>The writer uses a wide variety of linking words and expressions to connect the ideas in the text.</p> <p>The essay is generally well organised, with positive and negative opinions being given (<i>Although this approach to education has advantages; Because of this; Besides this, there is also; I agree that ... but</i>).</p> <p>The essay has a good overall structure, with a clear opening paragraph which introduces the topic of the essay. Two points are developed in the main part of the essay and there is an effective conclusion which summarises the writer's own view.</p>	<p>The writer demonstrates a good range of vocabulary, including some effective common word combinations (<i>controversial decision; this approach to education; more to education than learning; socialise better; lifelong relationships</i>).</p> <p>There is a range of simple and complex grammar which makes the ideas clear. There are some mistakes, but the reader still understands what the writer means.</p>
Mark: 4	Mark: 5	Mark: 5	Mark: 5