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ARGUMENT WRITING-BANK JOB

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BASICS OF ARGUMENT WRITING

In argument writing, you are expected to produce an academic style essay in which you present your views on the given topic. In order to do this, you will have to follow conventions of essay writing. You will need to –

1. State your position in the argument
2. Produce evidence to support your position
3. Clearly organize your argument
4. Write an appropriate conclusion

STRUCTURING YOUR ESSAY

To understand what an appropriate structure of your argumentative essay could be, you may have a look on the diagram. As it can be seen from the diagram, at first you need to indicate in which side of the argument you are after re-stating the given topic. Thereafter, you may write two – three paragraphs to provide arguments, evidences, and examples, if any, in favor of your side. Lastly, you need to summarize all the views you have discussed throughout your discussion and re-state your position in the given argument.

Introduction: re-statement of topic
indication of writer's position.....

Body of the composition:
Paragraph 1: main ideas.....
supporting ideas and example.....
Paragraph 2: main ideas.....
supporting ideas and example.....

Conclusion: summary of the views and re-statement of position.....
.....

STRATEGY AND SAMPLE

Before starting to write, you need to adopt a few strategies such as identifying the issues, being clear about what you have to do, and planning your answer. Let's understand these strategies with a sample argumentative writing question.

Sample question 01:

The only way to reduce the amount of traffic in cities today is by reducing the need for people to travel from home for work, education or shopping.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?
Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Before answering this task, let's do some exercises to get accustomed with the strategies you need to adopt.

01. Identifying the issues

The issues are not always stated explicitly. Hence, you need to read the question carefully.

Exercise 1

Tick three ideas below that are implied in the question stated above.

1. Traffic in cities today is a problem.
2. There are too many people living in cities so some should move out.
3. There is not enough transport for everyone to use.
4. Traffic problems are mainly due to individuals travelling for work, study or shopping purposes.
5. There are not enough jobs in the economy today.
6. Today people can work, study or shop from home.

02. Being clear about what you need to do

This question type asks you to agree or disagree with the statement. Do you agree or disagree with the three ideas you identified in Exercise 1? Do you agree that this is the only way to reduce traffic problems?

It is likely that you will agree with some ideas but probably not with all of them. You should use signals *(remember the transition words we learned earlier)* to indicate this.

Exercise 2

Combine 1-3 and a-c below using each of the expressions given.

Even though……., ……..
It is certainly true that……. However, …….
It may be the case that ……., but……

1. People can work from home
2. Distance learning is very efficient
3. This presents a possible solution

a. it would be a very unpopular one.
b. there would be a lack of social contact for students.
c. it is unrealistic to think that they would all want to.

03. Planning your answer

The logical organization of your ideas and the way you signal the relationships between ideas are assessed in this module. So, plan your answer before you start to write.

Exercise 3

Put the paragraph topics below in a logical order.

1. Home working may reduce problems, but not the only solution.
2. Causes of traffic problems in cities.
3. Limitations of this solution
4. Distance working, studying and shopping possibilities

04. Signaling the organization

Look at the following opening expressions of different sentences.

a. It is also true that today……..
b. It terms of other solutions, we need to……
c. Probably these are mainly due to…….
d. So, in conclusion, I think that……..
e. However, even if ……
f. It is certainly true that today……..

After looking at the above mentioned expressions, it is obvious that you, by now, have already understood that these expressions are to be used to signal what type of statements and arguments you are going to give in the sentences. However, the above mentioned expressions are not in right order. The followings could be a proper order of the expressions in answering the argumentative question.

a. It is certainly true that today……..
b. Probably these are mainly due to…….
c. It is also true that today……..
d. However, even if ……
e. It terms of other solutions, we need to……
f. So, in conclusion, I think that……..

05. Supporting your ideas

It is not enough to state your point of view. You have to justify your ideas by supporting them with evidence. Hence, while answering any argumentative writing question, try to provide evidences in supporting your arguments and ideas.

Exercise 4

Look at the supporting ideas below and match them to the three ideas you marked in **Exercise 1.**

a. The options IT gives us today
b. The number of vehicles on our roads and the amount of pollution they cause
c. The rush hours we experience every morning

For your convenience, the three identified ideas from exercise 1 are mentioned here.

1. *Traffic in cities today is a problem.*
2. *Traffic problems are mainly due to individuals travelling for work, study or shopping purposes.*
3. *Today people can work, study or shop from home.*

06. Using proper language and vocabulary

The discussion thus far has already indicated multiple times that it is important – especially in argument writing – that you use proper expressions, transition words and vocabularies. Moreover, you also need to keep in mind that repetition of same word and expression is something that you should try to avoid. Therefore, you – while giving your opinion – should not always write '*I think*'. Instead you may try to use impersonal expressions to make your writing much more academic. For example – it is obvious that…; it is true that…; this is evident that…. etc.

To gain greater expertise on the language and vocabulary for argument writing, study the contents discussed later of this lecture sheet.

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Sample answer to the question 01:

It is certainly true that today traffic in cities throughout the world has become a major problem. **This is obvious** from the number of vehicles on our roads and the amount of pollution they cause. **Probably** the traffic problem is due to individuals travelling for work, study or shopping purposes, and this is evident in the rush hours we experience every morning and evening. **However**, I do not agree to the fullest extent with the given argument.

It is also true that today such daily commuting is not always necessary because people can do these things from home. We can see this in the options Information Technology gives us today. **For instance**, on-line work, distance learning and shopping facilities are all available via the Internet.

However, even if everyone had access to the technology and the opportunity to work from home, it is unrealistic to think that everyone would want to. **Even though** the technology for working, studying or shopping on-line makes this option a possibility, it would mean people had less freedom of choice and less social contact in their lives. This would have a large impact on society as a whole.

So, **in conclusion**, I think that while this practice could reduce the' traffic problems in our cities, it is most unlikely to be an acceptable solution. In terms of other solutions, perhaps we need to think more carefully about facilitating public transport and limiting private cars in our city centers. The development of public transport that is not road-based, such as sky trains or subways, would probably be a more acceptable alternative measure to reduce jams on our roads.

(the above answer is taken from IELTS Practice Tests – Plus 2 by Morgan Terry and Judith Wilson and is a band 9 score sample answer in IELTS)

LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY FOR ARGUMENT WRITING

Try to study and understand words and expression presented below properly and remember them to use in your writing when appropriate.

The language of change

For writing something about change, the following words and expressions will be helpful.

Steady increase	declined	peaked	growth
dropped dramatically	fall	soaring	fluctuate

The language of cause and effect

So much	largely because	the causes of
since	due to	contributed further to

The language of comparison and contrast

In/ by contrast/ on the other hand/ however/ while/ whereas/ although
Compared to/with
Similarly/ both……and……. / like……. / unlike……./ likewise…./in comparison…….

Difference	as many as	the same	higher	a lot more frequent
high as	far	fewer	differently	much more

A Few More Tips

- Read the question very carefully
- **Underline key points** in the question and make sure your answer is **relevant to these**
- Consider your personal view on the topic. Do you **agree** or **disagree** or have an impartial view?
- Take **a minute to plan** what you are going to say in your answer. Think of the main idea you will include in each paragraph, then think of some supporting points.
- Before you start writing, think about how will introduce topic. ***Do not copy the question***.
- Include some arguments that are **relevant to your society or personal experience**.
- Clearly state your conclusion. Make sure that you **address the question**.

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A few more words about critical writing

In critical writing, the questions in the exam may not always necessarily ask you to directly agree or disagree with any statement. You may have to analyze the given argument or topic, provide your reasoning on different sides of the issue, discuss some alternative approaches and as such. Therefore, be careful about tackling this type of question in the exam hall and don't just immediately jump on to saying whether you agree or not. The question may contain something that does not ask on which side you are – just as it is in the sample practice 2.

SAMPLE PRACTICE 02 – critical writing

Sample question 02:

Some employers reward members of staff for their exceptional contribution to the company by giving them extra money. This practice can act as an incentive for some but may also have a negative impact on others.

To what extent is this style of management effective?
Are there better ways of encouraging employees to work hard?

Sample answer to question 02:

In times of high unemployment, employers need do very little to encourage their staff to work hard, **but** when job vacancies are scarce, they have to find effective ways of rewarding their staff in order to stop them from going elsewhere.

Introduces the topic and provides a context for the question.

One obvious way of doing this is to offer extra money to employees who are seen to be working exceptionally hard and this is done in companies with a product to sell. **For example**, real estate agents or department stores can offer a simple commission on all sales.

Provides a concrete example and shows the down side of this approach.

This style of management favors people who can demonstrate their contribution through sales figures, **but** does not take into account the work done by people behind the scenes who have little contact with the public. A better approach is for management to offer a bonus to all the staff at the end of the year if the profits are healthy. This, **however**, does not allow management to target individuals who have genuinely worked harder than others.

Outlines the problems in the first method and suggests a second solution also with a flaw.

Another possibility is to identify excellent staff through incentive schemes such as 'Employee of the Month' or "Worker of the Week' to make people feel recognized. Such people are usually singled out with the help of clients. Hotels, restaurants and tour operators may also allow staff to accept tips offered by clients who are pleased with the service. **However**, tipping is a highly unreliable source of money and does not favor everyone.

Offers another suggestion but also with a potential problem.

Basically, employees want to be recognized for their contribution - whether through receiving more money or simply some encouraging words. They also need to feel that their contribution to the whole organization is worthwhile. Good management recognizes this need and responds appropriately.

Final paragraph addresses the last part of the question and sums up the whole text.

SAMPLE PRACTICE 03

Sample question 03:

"Social media does more harm than good to young generation" – do you agree or not with the statement. Justify.
(IBA MBA Admission Test - 2015)

Sample answer to question 03:

The topic whether social media is harmful for young generation is a very controversial one. There are people on both sides of the argument who have their own logics. However, I do not agree with the statement. I will first discuss the reasons behind why some people think negatively about social media. Then I will show my reasoning behind my disagreeing with the topic.

There are a number of reasons why people think that social media is doing more harm than good to young generation. **Firstly**, it is has made people lazy and stay away from their closed ones. For example, as social media allows people to remain connected with their relatives and friends, they hardly leave their homes and meet with their friends and relatives physically. **Secondly**, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. have become a common platform for

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cyber bullying. **Moreover**, it distracts the students from their study.

There are, **however**, some arguments against the statement. Firstly, social media does good to young generation if they know how to utilize it. It helps young people stay in constant contact with their friends from previous schools, with friends who live in far off places and organize outings etc. They are able to teach themselves and learn more about their schoolmates through instagram and twitter. **In a nutshell**, it depends on the purpose of social media for the individual. Search engines like Google are helpful as people can get loads of information. **Thus** it's a very beneficial thing for them.

Finally, the advent of the social networking sites such as Facebook, Skype, twitter etc. have vastly changed the way in which people search and access information. For example, news travels more quickly than ever, and current affairs can be discussed all over the world instantaneously through social networks. Young people can stay better informed and be aware of what is happening around the world without having to wait for newspapers and stuff. **Therefore**, social media is doing good to young generation.

In conclusion, I strongly object/opine that the topic is gravely destructive for our present as well as future generation unless we take sensible precautionary measures to limit the adverse/harmful consequences.

SAMPLE PRACTICE 04

Sample question 04:

'Increasing the price of fuel is the best way to address traffic and pollution problems'. Do you agree or not?

Justify your position by presenting arguments for and against the topic.
(Bangladesh Bank Officer Written Test – 2015)

Sample answer to question 04:

Traffic jam and air pollution in the Dhaka city has been a growing problem in the city dweller's life. There are so many reasons behind the tiresome traffic jam and cursing air pollution. The govt. effort to reduce the congestion on the street seems to fail. So the question arises from the civil society of redressing these problems comes out with new fall. Nonetheless, I do not think that fuel price increase will be an effective measure to control traffic and air pollution.

Increasing the price of fuel to redress these problems will not come into effect in no way. Because fuel is like a heart of an economy. The overall development of any economy broadly depends on the sufficient power supply. In the perspective of Bangladesh, fuel is not only used in producing gas, but also in household works, industries like garments, launches and steamers. So if the price of fuel increases, then the effect of such increased price will be observed in each and every part of civil life. People living under poverty grossly depend on the fuel. In many cases, they do not get access in the electricity facility. Their all household chores are related to fuel. So, they, at first, cannot bear the increased price of fuel.

Moreover, fuel price is also related to the commodities we use in our day to day life. As fuel is an essential element of production, the price of goods will also rise due to increased fuel price. Inflation is an evil to the economy. Due to soared price of fuel, inflation will also go up. At this consequence, the economy will fall in great problem.

Therefore, from the discussion thus far, it is evident that increasing fuel price will not do any good to the civil life. So, I strongly oppose to increase price of fuel to redress traffic and pollution.

SAMPLE PRACTICE 05 – critical writing

Sample question 05:

The population of Bangladesh is increasing day by day but the country does not have sufficient land for agricultural production. In spite of this, our peasants feed the nation adequately and supply extra yield for export.

Explain this puzzle.

Sample answer to question 05:

To accommodate increased people, we need more and more lands. So, agricultural lands are shrinking day by day though there is an astonishing amount of agricultural production. Meeting our national demands, peasants are now able to produce some extra yield for exports. It seems to be an ambivalence!

Though cultivable lands are lessening on account of growing population, due to the high yielding varieties and improved fertilizers and by the grace of the Almighty, our farmers are producing foods five to ten times larger the amount they produced two decades ago. Once upon a time, peasants only produced three types of rice. But now-a-days, with the help technological advancement, research and with great effort of our farmers, they are now able produce 25 items of rice only.

There are several types of food items and every items have hybrid/cross items. By dint of this hybrid varieties, peasants produce much more foods for the country. So, though agricultural lands are going down rapidly, our farmers feed the nation adequately and provide some extra yield for export.

SAMPLE PRACTICE 06

Sample question 06:

"Introduction of more rickshaws on the streets of Dhaka" – write your arguments either for or against the statement.

Sample answer to question 06:

The discussion about whether 'introduction of more rickshaws on the streets of Dhaka city is a very controversial one. There are people on both sides of the argument who have very strong points to place. I am in favor of the statement.

There are many good reasons that can compel one to go in favor of the statement. Firstly, rickshaw, now-a-days in Dhaka, is a very important means of transportation. It is part of our social heritage. Rickshaws have become an unavoidable mode of transport in most of the cases. Frequent oil price hikes, regular heavy traffic and various natural calamities compel a huge number of urbanites to use rickshaw as a major mode of their transportation. Secondly, rickshaw is the tool for a huge number of poor people to earn their livelihood. It can be called one of the biggest service industries. Decreasing the number of rickshaws will increase the number of jobless people. Thus it may create pressure on the economy.

On the other hand, some people argue that rickshaw makes Dhaka city roads lawless. It is parked everywhere and creates traffic jam. It destroys the beauty of this city. So, rickshaw should be eliminated from this city.

But, I think, one needs to understand the real reason. It is the ignorance of the rickshaw pullers. If we can give them training on traffic rules, the situation will surely improve. Implementing strict rules and mechanical obstacles to break traffic rules will also make changes.

There are many other reasons for introduction of more rickshaws in Dhaka city. But what have been discussed so far is good enough to prove the cause.

Practice questions

1. Do you think that success of a business should only be measured by its ability to make profit? Justify your answer. (IBA Executive MBA Admission Test- 2017)
2. Recent figures show an increase in violent crime among youngsters under age of 18. Some psychologists claim that the basic reason for this is that children these days are not getting social and emotional learning they need from parents and teachers.
   Do you agree or disagree with the views expressed by some psychologists? Justify (IBA Executive MBA Admission Test – 2016)
3. Use of solar energy could abate the current energy crisis in Bangladesh. Therefore, the government should subsidize the production of the solar energy.
   Discuss to what extent you agree or disagree with the foregoing statement. Support your position with reasons and/or example form your experience, observation, and/or reading. (IBA Executive MBA Admission Test - 2010)

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4. Some people think that development of Information Technology (IT) will enhance human ingenuity. Others believe that development of IT will inhibit human ingenuity. Discuss both the points of view. Which view do you support? Give reasons for your choice. (IBA MBA Admission Test – 2001)
5. "We can learn more about a society by observing how its people spend their leisure time than by observing them at work".
   Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the opinion stated above. Support your views with the reasons and/or examples from your own experience, observations, or reading. (IBA MBA Admission Test – 2006)
6. WikiLeaks is an international new media non-profit organization that publishes submissions of private, secret, and classified media from anonymous news sources and news leaks in April 2010. WikiLeaks posted video from a 2007 incident in which Iraqi civilians and journalists were killed by US forces, on website called Collateral Murder. In July of the same year, WikiLeaks released Afghan War Diary, a compilation of more than 76.900 documents about the War in Afghanistan not previously available for public review. In October 2010 the group released a package of almost 400.000 documents called the Iraq War Logs in coordination with major commercial media organizations. In November 2010, WikiLeaks began releasing U.S State department diplomatic cables. Do you think that disclosure of information by WikiLeaks is justified to ensure the right to information or that banning such leaks is necessary for the sake of national security and international diplomacy? Justify your position. (IBA MBA Admission Test – 2010)
7. Critical writing: "Enacting laws against food adulteration is not adequate to protect consumers from health risk" – discuss and suggest with arguments the other measures requited to prevent this unethical practice in the country. (IBA MBA Admission Test – 2011)
8. Critical writing: In the past, sporting champions used to be motivated primarily by the desire to win a match or to break world records. These days, they are more likely to be motivated by prize money and the opportunity to be famous.
   What message does this attitude to sport send to young people and how does this attitude to sport affect the sports themselves?
   Give reasons for your answers. (IELTS Practice Test)
9. Critical writing: Modern societies need specialists in certain fields, but not in others.
   Some people therefore think that governments should pay university fees for students who study subjects that are needed by society. Those who choose to study less relevant subjects should not receive government funding.
   Would the advantages of such an educational policy outweigh the disadvantages?
   Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience. (IELTS Practice Test)
10. Critical writing: In recent years, some countries have experienced very rapid economic development. This has resulted in much higher standards of living in urban areas but not in the countryside.
    This situation may bring some problems for the country as a whole.
    What are these problems?
    How might they be reduced? (IELTS Practice Test)

Answers to the exercises

Answer to exercise 1
1, 4, 6
Answer to exercise 2
All three structures are interchangeable in these sentences.
1. ***Even though*** people can work from home, it is unrealistic to think they would all want to.
It is certainly true that people can work from home. ***However***, it is unrealistic to think they would all want to.
It may be the case that people can work from home, ***but*** it is unrealistic to think they would all want to.
2. ***It is certainly true that*** distance learning is very efficient. ***However***, there would be a lack of social contact for students.
3. ***It may be the case that*** this presents a possible solution, **but** it would be a very unpopular one.
Answer to exercise 3
2, 4, 3, 1
Answer to exercise 4
a - 3, b -1, c – 2