

Writing an Essay

IGCSE English ■ Topic 8

IGCSE English



From a slogan to a developed argument

A slogan

“The library should stay open because it is **good**.”

What does “good” mean for a **student**?

Why would staying open help?

What practical **concern** must the school consider?

Essay 议论文 develops an argument or view with relevant **reasons** and **examples**.

Essay writing in the current course

Course	Cambridge English as a Second Language 0510, not First Language English 0500.
Exercise 6	An essay is one possible response, alongside an article, report or review. Follow the actual format.
Length and marks	120–160 words; up to 6 marks for content and 9 for language.
Reader and style	Use neutral or formal language suited to the stated reader and purpose.

Both the 2024–2026 and 2027–2029 syllabuses retain these writing requirements.

1

Two kinds of essay

Discursive essays and argumentative essays

Discursive 论述的

Consider different sides fairly; explain benefits and drawbacks.

Argumentative 议论的

The instruction decides

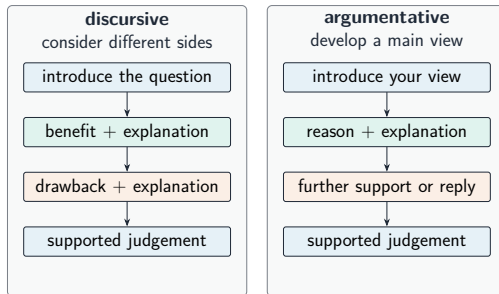
Develop a main view with relevant reasons and examples.

Include both sides if required. Give your opinion when asked; it can be qualified.

Flexible organisation

A relevant objection and reply may help. A separate counterargument paragraph is not always required.

Two possible routes, not two fixed formulas



Example routes, not fixed paragraph counts.
Include both sides or your opinion when instructed.

These routes illustrate organisation. Paragraph count and a compulsory opposing paragraph do not decide the mark.

Read the task: original attempt

Task

Your teacher asks for an essay giving your opinion on whether the school library should **stay open after lessons**. Write **120–160 words**.

“We need a quiet place”

“Staffing will cost money”

+ an idea of **your own**

Your turn

Identify the **format**, **reader**, **question**, required **judgement** and **length**. Does this instruction demand equal space for both sides?

Task reading: worked check

Format and reader	An essay for the teacher, using neutral or formal language.
Exact question	Whether this school library should stay open after lessons; not the general history of books.
Judgement	Give your opinion. A limited opening trial is a possible supported view.
Both sides?	Equal space is not demanded. Addressing a genuine cost concern may strengthen this particular argument.

A real setting, a hypothetical policy



The photograph illustrates a reading room. It supplies no survey, staffing cost or proof that longer opening is needed.

Select ideas: original planning attempt

Choose **useful ideas** for the library essay and explain how each helps answer the question:

quiet study space
for students
with busy homes

extra supervision
costs

a two-afternoon
trial before
daily opening

the colour of
the library walls

Your turn

Choose a **view** and an **order**. Do not draft a list of all four items.

Planning: worked selection

Benefit	Quiet space can help students who share busy rooms at home.
Concern	Extra opening requires supervision, which has a cost.
Own proposal	Try two afternoons each week and check demand before extending.
Leave out	Wall colour is irrelevant here unless it contributes to the opening-hours argument.

A few developed ideas are stronger than a long undeveloped list. Do not invent survey results or statistics.

A plan should show relationships

View: open the library on two trial afternoons.

Why: quiet space helps students study while waiting for transport.

Concern and reply: supervision costs money; test demand before daily opening.

Judgement: limited opening balances usefulness with cost.

This is one workable plan, not a compulsory number of paragraphs.

2

How to structure an essay

Introduction: original revision attempt

✗ “Since the beginning of time, libraries have been very important in the modern world. There are many advantages and disadvantages.”

Your turn

- 1 Rewrite this **introduction** 引言 for the **actual library question**.
- 2 Name the **policy** and give the reader a clear **direction**. Avoid an opening that could fit almost any essay.

Introduction: worked revision

Revision

"The school library currently closes after lessons. I believe it should stay open on two afternoons a week so students have somewhere quiet to study."

the **policy**

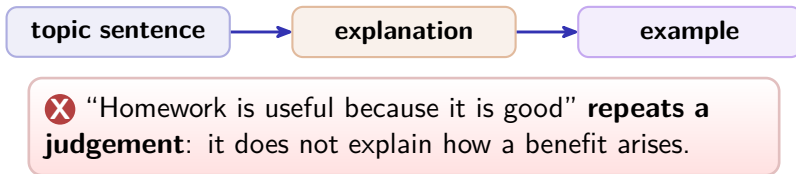
a **view**

a **reason**

Leave room for developed ideas: two or three sentences is a **guide**, not a count.
A rhetorical question and an essay heading are **not compulsory**.

Body paragraphs develop, not merely repeat

The **body** 主体 explains the argument. A helpful scaffold:



Paragraphs group related ideas. The official guide permits different organisations; there is **no compulsory three-sentence formula**.

Point, explanation and a possible example

an illustrative paragraph

School sport can help students build friendships.

point: a
qualified claim

Team practice gives students time to cooperate and know one another.

explanation:
how it could
happen

For example, weekly practice partners may become friends outside sport.

example:
a possible
situation

This example shows how a claim can be developed. It does not prove that sport always creates friendships.

Develop a reason: original attempt

Starting point

“Homework is good because it is useful.”

Your turn

Write a short paragraph that:

- 1 identifies one **specific benefit**;
- 2 explains **how** it could arise;
- 3 gives an **example**.

Keep the claim **realistic**: independent work can help, but not every homework task benefits every learner.

Development: worked paragraph

Worked paragraph

“Short homework tasks **can** help students practise working independently. Without immediate teacher support, they need to choose a method and notice where they are stuck. For example, trying a new maths problem **may** reveal a question to ask in the next lesson.”

claim

explanation

example

Your turn

Which words prevent the claim from becoming an **unsupported universal law**?

Development: why this paragraph works

Claim	A specific benefit: practising independent work.
Explanation	Students choose a method and notice where they are stuck.
Example	A new maths problem reveals a question for the next lesson.
Qualification	“Can” and “may” allow for different tasks and learners. The example illustrates the reasoning; it does not prove a universal result.

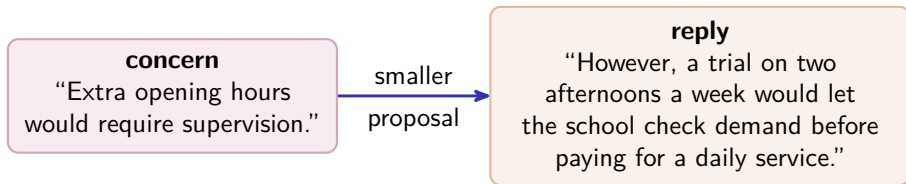
Answer a genuine concern: original attempt

“Library staff cost money. Therefore,
the library must stay closed.”

Your turn

- 1 **Keep** the genuine concern but answer it with the **limited-trial plan**.
- 2 Why would “People who disagree are selfish” not answer the **staffing argument**?

Concern and reply: worked revision



- Calling opponents selfish **attacks people** without answering their reason
- Use an objection when relevant: the **actual instruction**, not a memorised template, decides whether both sides are required

Conclusion: choose the supported judgement

For a **conclusion** 结论, which option best follows our developed library plan? Explain.

A Both sides have points, so nothing can be decided.

B Open on two trial afternoons and review whether the benefit justifies the cost.

C Open every day because the new computer system will increase exam scores.

Your turn

Which option introduces a **new unsupported reason**?

Conclusion: worked choice

B follows the body	It brings together the study benefit, supervision cost and trial proposal.
A avoids the requested opinion	It does not give a judgement on the policy.
C adds unsupported material	The computer system and exam-score claim were not developed.
A clear qualified view	A limited trial is a definite position; an essay need not choose an absolute yes or no.

Linking words must match the relationship

Linking words 衔接词

Signal how ideas relate; their meaning and grammar matter.

Addition

The library provides books. It also offers a quiet place to work.

Reason

A trial is sensible because the school does not yet know the demand.

Contrast

The service would be useful. However, supervision costs money.

Example

Some students need quiet space; for example, they may share a busy room at home.

Repair the links: original attempt

✗ 1 “Although the library is useful. It costs money.”

✗ 2 “Staff must be paid. Furthermore, the school cannot afford daily opening.”

Your turn

- 1 Repair the first **sentence boundary**.
- 2 In 2, choose a link if staffing costs are the **reason** daily opening is unaffordable.
- 3 Can “although” and “however” be **swapped** without changing grammar?

Link repair: grammar and meaning

Repair	Why
“ Although the library is useful, it costs money.”	the although-clause joins a main clause
“Staff must be paid. Therefore , the school cannot afford daily opening.”	the cost leads to the conclusion; “Furthermore” only adds a point
“The school has a large budget. However , it has not funded longer opening hours.”	“however” starts a new sentence: not the same pattern as “although”

Links can appear within sentences

Two orders, one link

“Although supervision costs money, a short trial could be affordable.”

“A short trial could be affordable although supervision costs money.”

- Both connect a **concern** to a contrasting **possibility**; punctuation follows the structure
- **No compulsory count** of links: pronouns and repeated key ideas also connect a text
- A linking word before every sentence can make writing **unnatural**

A short plan supports a purposeful draft



The photograph illustrates writing. It does not establish that every essay needs the same shape or timing.

3

A complete original model

Read the model as a whole argument

- An original library essay: **134 words** (space-separated count)
- A teaching model, **not officially marked**
- Paragraph count alone does not establish quality

As you read, locate...

- 1 the **view**
- 2 the developed **benefit**
- 3 the **cost concern** and the **reply**
- 4 the final **judgement**

Library model: opening and benefit

Model essay, part 1

Should the school library stay open after lessons? I believe it should, because students need a quiet place to study. However, the school must consider the cost of keeping it open.

An open library would help students who share a busy room at home. They could finish homework without constant interruptions. For example, a student waiting for a later bus could use that time to read rather than sit outside.

view with its reason

developed benefit

concrete example

Library model: concern, reply and judgement

Model essay, part 2

There would be extra costs, since someone must supervise the room. Nevertheless, the school could begin with two afternoons a week instead of opening every day. This would allow it to check demand before spending more money.

Overall, a limited trial would be sensible. It would give students useful study time while helping the school decide whether longer opening hours are worth the cost.

cost concern

reply: a smaller proposal

final judgement

Model: trace the reasoning

View	Longer opening is useful, but cost matters.
Benefit and example	Quiet space helps students with busy homes; waiting for a bus gives usable study time.
Objection and reply	Supervision costs money; two afternoons allow demand to be checked.
Judgement	A limited trial tests whether the service is worth its cost.

The trial is the writer's own proposal. Four paragraphs work here; other clear organisations are possible.

4

Exam tips

Verified exam connection: 0510/12, March 2025

Question 17

An essay for a teacher, giving an **opinion** about whether **all teenagers should do exercise**. It offers comments and asks for ideas of your own.

120–160 words

up to **6 marks**
content

up to **9 marks**
language

Identify that exact question, reader and purpose: do not write a general description of sports. Our library model answers a **different**, original task.

What the actual criteria assess

Content	Task fulfilment, relevant developed ideas, appropriate style, purpose and audience.
Language	Appropriate vocabulary and sentence range, accuracy and clear communication.
Organisation	A coherent sequence and appropriate linking words or other cohesive devices.
No automatic recipe	No guaranteed mark for a separate counterargument, a fixed paragraph count or a fixed number of links.

Independent writing: original transfer task

Task

Your teacher asks for an essay discussing the **benefits and drawbacks** of replacing one homework task each week with **independent reading**, and giving your opinion. Write **120–160 words**.

“Students could choose books”

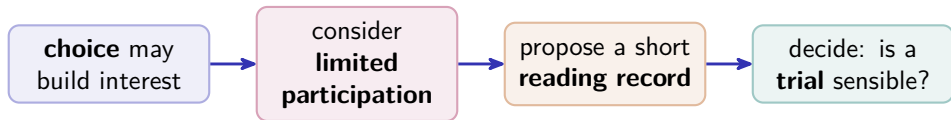
“Some might not read”

“Teachers need to know what was learned”

Your turn

Develop **both sides** and include an idea of your own. Plan, write and revise before looking at the possible plan.

Transfer: possible plan and review



Other supported views are valid. Here both sides are required; the proposal must **address** a real concern, not repeat it.

Review in two passes

Meaning: task fulfilment, developed ideas, opinion, neutral/formal style, natural connections.

Forms: word range, verb forms, sentence boundaries, punctuation, spelling.

Check yourself: revise a weak response

Weak response

"Firstly, reading is good. Secondly, everyone always reads if they can choose. However, reading is useful. In conclusion, homework should end forever."

an
undeveloped
idea

an unsupported
universal claim

a **wrong link**

a conclusion
that **exceeds**
the task

Your turn

Find each one, then give **one improved sentence** for each. Use the original homework-replacement question to keep your revision relevant.

Check yourself

Develop	Choice may increase interest because students can select a topic they enjoy.
Qualify	Choice alone does not ensure participation; a short reading record could help teachers follow progress.
Connect	“However” needs contrast; usefulness repeats approval, so connect or develop it without a false contrast.
Stay within the task	Judge replacing one task per week; do not announce the end of all homework.
