



Writing Part 1: essay

Overview: An ideas-driven, speaking-led process to develop a written essay, mainly working in pairs

Part of exam: First Writing (Paper 2) Part 1

Language/Skills Practised: structuring an essay; developing an argument; writing about advantages and disadvantages

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Time: 45–60 minutes

Preparation

Copy the worksheet. You could also bring in pictures of country and city life to stimulate discussion.

Procedure

1. Introduce the topic by asking the class the exam task question (Where would you rather live: in the city or the countryside?) and taking a vote by a show of hands. Start a class discussion by eliciting the students' reasons for their answers.
2. Hand out the worksheet. Tell students to work in pairs. Make sure these pairs are formed of people who have voted the same way, or who don't have strong opinions either way. Students discuss their ideas for the first two points ('jobs' and 'cost of living'), which are provided in the question, and make notes (not sentences) of as many pros/cons as possible for either the city or the countryside, whichever one they think is better to live in. Make this stage quite short and stick to a strict time limit.
3. Ask students to form mini debating circles, with representatives of opposing points of view (if they all agree, ask them to play devil's advocate). Using their notes, they should put forward their points, and try to convince the other students of their points of view. At this stage it is also a good idea to get students to think of examples for each of the ideas they have come up with. This is a good habit to get into in the exam as it shows that they are able to

develop their point constructively.

Optional: You may wish to monitor, and note to yourself any particular needs for language support – for example, you might observe that they only say, 'Yes, but...' when presenting an opposing point of view. You can then do a quick presentation of relevant language ('On the other hand...', 'But don't forget that...', 'I don't think you appreciate that...', etc). Alternatively, you may wish to pause the proceedings in order to inject this language, let them practise, and then continue.

4. Students go back to their original pairs and discuss which topics they could consider for the third point ('your own idea'). Encourage students to come up with as many ideas as possible. They can then pick the best for inclusion in their essays. If students need help with generating ideas, you could feed in the following points for them to consider:

- education
- entertainment
- different age groups
- quality of life
- technology
- transport
- work/leisure
- family life.

During this brainstorming session, you could also make use of the pictures that you prepared.

5. Still working in pairs, students should decide which topic they want to use for the third content point ('your own idea'), and whether they are going to argue in favour of living in the city or in the countryside. They should also decide on the best way to order their ideas (probably, but not necessarily, the same order as presented in the exam question). Remind everybody about the word count, as this affects how many examples/reasons they can include.
6. Before students write up their essays, remind them that they should use language that:
 - is accurate
 - uses a range of grammatical structures
 - demonstrates a strong vocabulary.



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7. Work through an example with the class. Perhaps somebody has made a note: 'city better' under 'jobs'. Elicit different ways of building this up into a sentence or two. Put ideas on the board, and ask students to correct them as you go. You'll end up with lists of short sentences expressing similar ideas, for example:

There are better opportunities for employment in the city.

A much wider range of jobs is available in the city.

Job prospects are far more limited in the countryside.

And of course any idea can be turned around, so also put opposing points on the board:

Developments in IT mean that many jobs can now be done online anywhere.

A great many of the jobs available in the city are very hard and badly paid.

Travelling into the city is very expensive so salaries are lower in real terms.

8. The pairs should now write up their compositions, paying attention to grammar and vocabulary (you may wish to do this in another lesson, or as homework which is then reviewed later).



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In your English class you have been talking about the best place to live. Now, your English teacher has asked you to write an essay.

Write an essay using **all** the notes and give reasons for your point of view.

Where would you rather live: in the city or the countryside?

Notes
Write about:
1. jobs
2. cost of living
3.
(your own idea)

Write your essay in **140–190** words.

Jobs:

Cost of living:

Your own idea:

Worksheet