



## Achieving English Excellence

English is a challenging subject that does not rely on you memorising formulas or recalling facts. Rather, it tests your ability to manipulate vocabulary, grammar and literary devices for a specific purpose. This guide aims to help you understand some of the basics of the subject as well as providing some tips and tricks for achieving English excellence.

### Styles and Modes of Assessments

The three most common **styles** of English assessment that you will face include:

- **Persuasive Exposition:** This task requires you to develop an argument to persuade the reader that your point of view on a particular topic is correct. Your main argument is called your thesis, which should be one sentence encapsulating your viewpoint. Your thesis should be accompanied by a number of (usually three) body paragraphs.
  - o **Introduction** – begin with a hook/sizzling start which engages your audience. This might be a startling fact or a thought-provoking rhetorical question. Then provide your thesis to convey what your viewpoint is. This should be followed by signposts which is where you list your three supporting arguments so that your audience are aware of the structure of the exposition and the reasons behind your argument.
  - o **3 Body Paragraphs** – construct one body paragraph for each of your three supporting arguments. Each body paragraph should follow the PEEL paragraph structure which is explained in detail below. In each paragraph you should use persuasive techniques such as metaphors, similes, analogies, onomatopoeia, alliteration, clusters of three and lexical cohesion.
  - o **Conclusion** – restate your thesis in different words and summarise your three main points. Then you should leave your audience with a thought-provoking last sentence which drive's home the point of your whole exposition.
- **Analytical Exposition:** in an analytical exposition you do not need to persuade your audience with persuasive techniques, rather you are required to show or prove something through an in-depth and thorough analysis of a provided source material.
  - o **Introduction** – should include a hook if appropriate, a thesis to tell your audience what the exposition is analysing and trying to prove, and finally signposting.
  - o **3 Body Paragraphs** – each paragraph should follow the PEEL structure explained in detail below. The purpose of each paragraph is to analyse part of the provided source material and draw a conclusion that links back to your thesis. Thorough and succinct evaluation of your evidence is key to a quality piece of work.
  - o **Conclusion** – restate your thesis in different words and summarise your three main points and what conclusion has been drawn from your analysis.
- **Short Story:** a short story will require you to craft a fictitious passage in response to source material that conveys a particular message or theme. A good short story should *show not tell* your audience what is happening through the use of imagery, foreshadowing, metaphors and other stylistic techniques. For example, instead of saying "Pat is walking to the shops" you could say "Listening intently to the clunk of his thick boots on the pavement, Pat could almost hear them calling him to the shops".
  - o **Introduction** – the orientation of your story should introduce the setting, time, place, main characters, themes and set up the stories foundations.
  - o **Conflict** –introduce the main issue or problem for which the story centres around. Note that your choice of conflict should reflect the purpose of the assessment.



- **Rising Tension** – the conflict builds in intensity and the story continues with some excitement or adventure that maintains the reader's interest.
- **Climax** – the peak of the story in terms of excitement and the readers engagement.
- **Resolution** – how the conflict was resolved and thus in an indirect manner the reader should now understand, what was the purpose of the story and the conflict.

There are three main **modes** of assessment:

- **Essays** require great care and attention due to the time allowed for their completion and thus a high level of technical accuracy and thoughtful creativity are expected.
- **Exams** require quick thinking and thus an in-depth knowledge of the source material in order to excel. It is also important that you are confident in your ability to plan and then structure a response to suit the requested style of writing.
- **Spoken presentations** present the challenge of public speaking, which is no easy hurdle to overcome, but practice, persistence and determination will help build confidence. Remember to show the same level of care crafting your speech as you would an essay and to start practicing/memorising your speech at least a week beforehand.

### PEEL Paragraph Structure

Body paragraphs of an analytical or persuasive piece should present clear and well-structured arguments. The best mechanism for this is the PEEL paragraph structure:

**P** for **Point**: To start your body paragraph it is important to state what the point of your paragraph is. This should be no longer than one sentence and should clearly represent one main idea. If you need a helping hand, ask yourself “what am I trying to say?” – your response to this question should loosely form your point sentence.

**E** for **Evidence/Example**: it is important to give evidence to support your point. This evidence can be facts, quotes, statistics, expert opinions etc. You can begin your sentences by incorporating phrases like “for example”, “this is shown in” or “such as”. You should use two/three examples per paragraph to demonstrate your understanding.

**E** for **Elaboration/Evaluation**: Following your evidence should be a succinct explanation of why your evidence supports your main point. Explain to your audience how they should interpret your evidence and how this contributes to the point of your exposition. Your evaluation should connect the dots between your evidence and your argument.

**L** for **Link**: Having now persuaded the reader that your point is correct, it is time to link this point back to your thesis for the entire text. Whilst each paragraph has its own point, they should each support and connect back to your thesis; you need to explain why that paragraph is significant for the purposes of the exposition.

### Tips and Tricks

1. **Audience**: Take note of your task's audience as this may dictate your style of writing. Are you writing an article for a magazine or are you writing a persuasive speech for a group of academics? How might your language need to change in each situation?
2. **Lexical Cohesion**: this is a powerful persuasive tool which connects a whole passage through the use of an extended metaphor. This is done by choosing a metaphor which appropriately represents the point of your exposition, and then using it where appropriate to connect each paragraph and point to the overall purpose of the passage.
3. **Thesaurus/dictionary**: a very important aspect of English is the ability to have a discerning selection of vocabulary. For many, using fancy and intricate words that perfectly convey a point is no easy task. So, write the sentence as best you can and then use a thesaurus to help extend your vocabulary. However, check a dictionary to make sure the definition of the word lines up with what you intended it to mean!
4. **Word Counts**: in every English assignment you will have a word count. It is important to respect this limit as going under it likely means you are not going into enough depth and detail and going over it means you are likely not being succinct in your writing.