

Unit 7 Academic writing - Presenting an argument

Task 1 Arguing your case – For and against

- A) Do you send a lot of emails? If so, who to and when? Discuss with a partner.
- B) Has email improved our lives? Brainstorm ideas on the pros and cons.
- C) Read through the article quickly. How many of the points you made are mentioned?
- D) Study the article more carefully. How is the topic introduced? How is it concluded? Underline the expressions used to connect the ideas. How does the writer express his/her opinion?
- E) Can you guess the meaning of the phrasal verbs in bold?

Subject: Email – has it really improved our lives?

Email is an important means of communication. However, in my opinion, like most things it has both advantages and disadvantages.

On the plus side: First of all, email is easy. All you need is the appropriate software on your computer. A second point is that email is fast. No matter where you are sending the message, it takes only seconds to reach its destination. Email is not only fast, it is also cheap. Unlike long distance telephone calls, you pay no more for messages sent from the US to Canada or to India. In addition to this, email is environmentally friendly because being electronic, it saves natural resources such as paper, so you will hardly **run out of** it now! Last but not least, email is practically universal. Even my great aunt in Scotland is using it these days.

On the other hand, email is impersonal. Unlike when face to face or in telephone conversation, it is difficult to **get across** subtle meanings with no visual or voice clues. Secondly, it can be argued that email security is lax. As your email message makes its way to its destination, it has to pass through other, public systems. Anyone with the right technical know-how can intercept it without you knowing. A final and very important point is that email can **take over** your life. Because it is so easy you start getting more and more correspondence, and you **end up** spending most of your day reading and responding to floods of messages.

Overall, however, I firmly believe that the pros of email outweigh the cons. It has transformed the world of communication in largely beneficial ways, and alongside text messaging and social media, it is now a major way of keeping in touch.

(Adapted from Soars, J. & L. 2014. *New Headway Upper-Intermediate*. OUP.)

Task 2 Writing

Here we look at the type of writing where the writer argues a case, or expresses an opinion, by looking at a problem from two sides. As you have seen in the text above, in this type of writing, the way ideas are connected is very important; this is achieved by the use of connecting words, by the way the ideas are grouped together into paragraphs, and by the way the paragraphs themselves are ordered.

Use your imagination and creativity to complete the sentences in the mini-compositions below.

A) Students often wonder whether it is worth going to Britain to study English.

I would say it depends on

.....

Some students

Others, however,

All in all,

.....

B) I am often told I am lucky to be a man/woman, but in fact it is a mixed blessing.

While it is true to say

....., I nevertheless

.....

On balance

C) As an Olympic medallist, I am often asked what is the best way to spend the night before a big race.

On the one hand,

.....

On the other hand,

.....

Personally, though,

.....

(adapted from: Cory, H. 1999. *Advanced Writing with English in Use*. OUP.)

Task 3 Connecting words

Complete this passage with the words and phrases from the list below.

although when whereas however on the one hand who
which but less more

Is life better now, or was life more rewarding in the past? (1) we have more material things nowadays, such as cars, computers, and so on. (2) on the other hand, some people think that we were happier in the past, (3) we had fewer possessions and life was (4) complicated. My grandfather, for example, was a fisherman. He lived in a village on the coast and had a very simple life. There was no electricity and the family had to bring water from a nearby well, (5) they shared with the whole village. (6), I have never seen a man as happy as my grandfather.

Life is certainly (7) comfortable nowadays. People (8) live in cities have hot and cold water and heating in the winter, (9) in the old days these things were unheard of. One thing surprises me. (10) we have all the comforts at home, many people like to take a tent at the weekends and go camping in the countryside. Perhaps they are looking for a simpler way of life.

Task 4 Phrasal verbs

Match the phrasal verbs with their meanings, then use them in sentences.

brush up on come up with cut down on get over give in

let down make up make up for put off turn down

- a) recover from (a problem or an upsetting or startling experience)
- b) compensate for something lost, missed, or deficient, - to find a replacement for something, - to do something in order to correct a mistake
- c) to reduce in size or amount – e.g. smoking / cigarettes / drinking / spending / production etc.
- d) produce (something), especially when pressured or challenged
- e) to improve your knowledge of something already learned but partly forgotten; improve one's existing knowledge or skill in a particular area
- f) fail to meet the hopes or expectations of
- g) invent a story, lie, or plan
- h) to stop resisting; to surrender; cease fighting or arguing; admit defeat
- i) refuse to accept; reject an offer or application made by someone
- j) postpone something, push back in time, hold back to a later time