

National 5
Discursive Folio Piece

For your first folio piece, you are required to write a **discursive essay** of 500-1000 words.

This essay will be worth 15% of your total mark.

You will be doing a **Persuasive essay.**

You must chose a specific topic and then you must persuade the reader to accept your views and opinions on that topic.

What will the SQA expect?

- Well researched.
- Appropriate use of evidence.
- Detailed ideas and insights.
- Well-developed and coherent argument.
- Effective structure and well organised.
- Effective use of persuasive techniques.
- Well-written with a good use of language.

Research and planning

Choosing a topic

You are allowed to write about almost anything.

You should consider the following before choosing your topic:

- *Do I know anything about the topic already?*
- *Am I interested in the topic?*
- *Is the topic current?*
- *Can I easily find reliable information on the topic?*

There are many topics to choose from...

For example:

- Nuclear weaponry.
- The use of torture.
- Separate schools for gifted children.
- Childhood obesity.
- Social media.
- Freedom of the press.
- British membership of the E.U.
- Regulation of the banks.

- The use of renewable energy sources.
- The content of video games.
- Reality T.V shows.
- The salary of sports stars.
- The benefits system.

And so on...

Formulate a question

Once you have chosen your topic, you must then formulate a question based upon that topic. This question will then be the basis for your essay.

For example, if your topic is **Scottish**
Independence your question could be:

“Should Scotland remain part of the United Kingdom or become an independent country again?”

If your topic is **Drug taking in sport** then your question might be something like:

“Are sportspeople ever justified in using drugs to enhance their performance?”

Choose a side

Once you have chosen your topic and you have written your question, you must decide which side of the argument you agree with.

In your essay, you must then persuade me why your side of the argument is correct.

Task 1

What do you know or think about your topic already?

Put all your ideas into a spider diagram.

Task 2

What do you want to know or need to find out about your topic?

Put all your ideas into a spider diagram.

Homework

Come to a final decision about:

- A topic.
- Your question.
- The side that you are on.

Research

You must make sure that you research your topic in depth and detail.

You should research all sides of the argument so that you are completely informed about the all aspects of your topic.

Where will you look for information?

- Books; magazines; journals.
- Online articles and websites.
- Video and audio clips.

Make sure that you are using quality and reliable sources and that your information is up-to-date.

Some suggestions.

- Debatabase.
- International Debate Education Association.

Research skills

Skimming and Scanning

When you read a piece of writing, or listen to a clip, you must be able to find and identify the most important pieces of information.

You must look and listen carefully for key words and phrases.

When making notes you can't write down everything! You have to decide what is and isn't important.

Paraphrasing

When making notes, it is important that you “paraphrase” what is being written or said.

You must avoid copying what the author has written or said. This is called “plagiarism” and is treated very seriously by the SQA.

Paraphrasing= changing someone else's work into your own words.

Plagiarism= copying someone else's words without acknowledgement.

Quoting

It is fine to **quote** from someone else's work. This is not the same as plagiarism.

You must make sure:

- You use quotation marks (inverted commas) around the quote.
- You write the quote down exactly as it is written or said.
- You say where you got the quote from or who said the quote (Acknowledge your source)

Bibliography

It is very important that you keep a note of the different books, websites etc. that you use for your research.

When you hand in your essay, you must include a list of the sources of information you used.

Planning

When you have completed all your research, you must plan out your essay before you start writing it.

Organise your notes and organise your ideas so that you can start to plan how your essay will be organised and structured.

Writing persuasively

Your job is to persuade the marker to agree with your arguments and opinions about your chosen topic.

To argue your case, you will have to use some important techniques that are found in persuasive writing.

Main techniques

1. Address the reader.
2. Use evidence to support your arguments.
3. Explain and evaluate your evidence.
4. Use emotive language.
5. Destroy the opposing argument.
6. Question and answer.
7. Use of triples.
8. Attitude markers.

1. Address the reader throughout

This will involve the reader and engage them in your argument.

a) Use pronouns like “you” and “we”.

“**You** might not think that...”

“**We** often hear in the news...”

“**My** opinion on the matter is...”

“**I** believe that this is not acceptable in **our** country...”

b) Use rhetorical questions

- *Encourages the reader to think about what you are saying.*
- *Emphasises the point you are trying to make.*

e.g. “What kind of person would persuade a family member to have an abortion?”

e.g. “How would you feel if one of your family members had a terminal illness and the doctors wanted to switch off life support?”

2. Use evidence to support your argument.

You must be able to provide evidence to prove that your opinion is correct.

- *Use of examples.*
- *Use of facts and statistics.*
- *Quotes from reliable experts.*

This will give your argument credibility and will make your audience much more likely to agree with you.

For example:

According to a recent study by SportUK, approximately 12% of professional boxers suffer some form of brain damage during their careers.

This is much more effective than writing:

“Lots of boxers suffer some form of brain damage during their careers”.

3. Explain and evaluate your evidence.

When you provide a piece of evidence, you must also make an effort to explain and evaluate how it supports the point that you are making (just like you do when writing a critical essay!).

“According to a recent study by SportUk, approximately 12% of professional boxers suffer some form of brain damage during their careers. This shocking statistic clearly demonstrates that boxing cannot reasonably be termed a “sport” as it is putting at risk the lives of the men competing. How can we justify watching two people slowly attempting to kill each other by trying to cause the most brain damage to their opponent?”

4. Use emotive language

You should try to use words and phrases which appeal to the emotions of the reader.

You should try to manipulate their emotions.

The use of blood-thirsty and ferocious hunting dogs to murder foxes is disgusting and appalling as it causes the poor and innocent animals to suffer terribly.

5. Destroy the opposing argument

It is important to mention the opposing side of the argument in your essay.

However, when you do this you must make sure that you prove that the opposing argument is wrong. You must destroy the opposing argument.

Otherwise, you will undermine your own argument!

Topic sentence outlines
the opposing argument

Conjunction
shows that you
don't agree.

It is sometimes argued that Catalonia would not be able to survive economically if it was to become an independent country. However, this conveniently ignores the fact that Catalonia has a thriving economy already and a young population. If it was to become independent the billions in revenue provided from its natural resources would make Catalonia one of the richest countries in the world. Furthermore, Catalonia would be able...

Your argument. Proves that the opposing argument is wrong.

You **could** adopt this structure in the paragraphs in the main body of your essay:

- *In your topic sentence (or first couple of sentences) you **could** mention an argument from the opposing side.*
- *In the rest of your paragraph, you then **must** put across your own argument and completely destroy the opposing viewpoint.*

6. Question and answer.

Pose a question to the reader and then go on to answer it.

*“How do we know that prison doesn’t work?
Well, it has been shown that 25% of people
released from prison go on to reoffend...”*

7. Use of triples.

Repeating an idea or image three times, usually in a slightly different way.

“It is beyond doubt that fox hunting is outdated, cruel and evil”.

When using a triple, try to build up to a climax:

“Some would argue that being imprisoned inside a tiny cell is a suitable punishment: it is boring, it is lonely, it is torture”.

8. Attitude markers

You can use certain key words and phrases to help make your audience more likely to be persuaded by your line argument.

“Clearly...”

“It is clear...”

“Obviously...”

“It is obvious...”

“Surely...”

“Fortunately...”

“Sadly...”

Clearly, for a civilised and democratic country to possess nuclear weapons in this day and age is unnecessary and morally bankrupt. Sadly, it seems that the government are unwilling to decommission these weapons of mass destruction.”

Structuring your essay

Your essay must have a good structure and must be well organised.

Introduction



Main Body

Write approx. four or five paragraphs.



Conclusion.

Introduction

Try to include the following, in any order:

- Make your topic clear.
- Make it clear what your overall opinion is on your topic.
- Indicate what your essay will be discussing.
- Try to include a great “hook” to get the readers immediate attention and make her want to read more.

Examples of “hooks”

- *A quotation.*
- *An interesting fact.*
- *An unusual piece of trivia.*
- *A rhetorical question.*
- *An exaggeration or outrageous statement.*
- *An allusion to a piece of literature or historical event.*

First two sentences are rhetorical questions which "hook" the reader.

Topic is made clear

What would you say if I told you that we were close to a source of fuel that was cheaper and cleaner than oil and coal? What if I also told you that we could extract it in the United Kingdom? Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, offers us hope on both fronts. This is the process of extracting natural gas and oil from rock formations deep underground by fracturing and injecting chemicals into them. The time has come for all our politicians, and the public, to get behind a process that offers enormous benefits to the environment, the economy, and the consumer.

Opinion is made clear

Indicates what he will be discussing

Main Body paragraphs

You should write approximately four or five paragraphs.

- Each paragraph should focus on a particular argument or idea related to your topic.
- The sequence of the paragraphs should be logical and sensible.
- Each paragraph should be well-organised.

In these paragraphs you must:

- *Emphasise your opinions and ideas.*
- *Go into detail with your arguments.*
- *Use lots of persuasive techniques.*

In each paragraph you must:

- Begin with a **topic sentence** which indicates what the paragraph will be focusing on.
- Include evidence.
- Explain and evaluate that evidence.

Conclusion

- Re-cap your main argument(s).
- Re-emphasise your overall opinion about your topic.

Other tips:

- Avoid using the same phrases you have been using already in your essay. Vary your vocabulary.
- Try to include an indication as to why this issue is important to you.
- If possible, link back to a point you made earlier on in your essay.
- Try to finish with a memorable closing line.

Re-emphasises her overall opinion

Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter play a huge part in our lives, with almost 1.4 billion of us using them each day. There are many reasons as to why I believe young children should not be allowed on these sites. They can be mentally affected due to the lack of social skills and interaction in 'real-life'. Children face many dangers online such as grooming by paedophiles whom they can't protect themselves from. Cyber-bulling is also, unfortunately another reason why children should stay away from these sites. We are forced to grow up very early in this day and age and I believe children shouldn't have to worry about the aforementioned things, they should be able to just be children.

Sums up her main arguments

Other things to consider...

Use of vocabulary

It is essential that you are using formal language as well as a wide range of mature and sophisticated vocabulary.

However, avoid using too much jargon. Your essay must be easy to understand for the marker.

Linking

It is important to ensure that you are using specific words in order to link your paragraphs, phrases and sentences together.

See your handout for different types of linking words/phrases that you should try to use in your essay.