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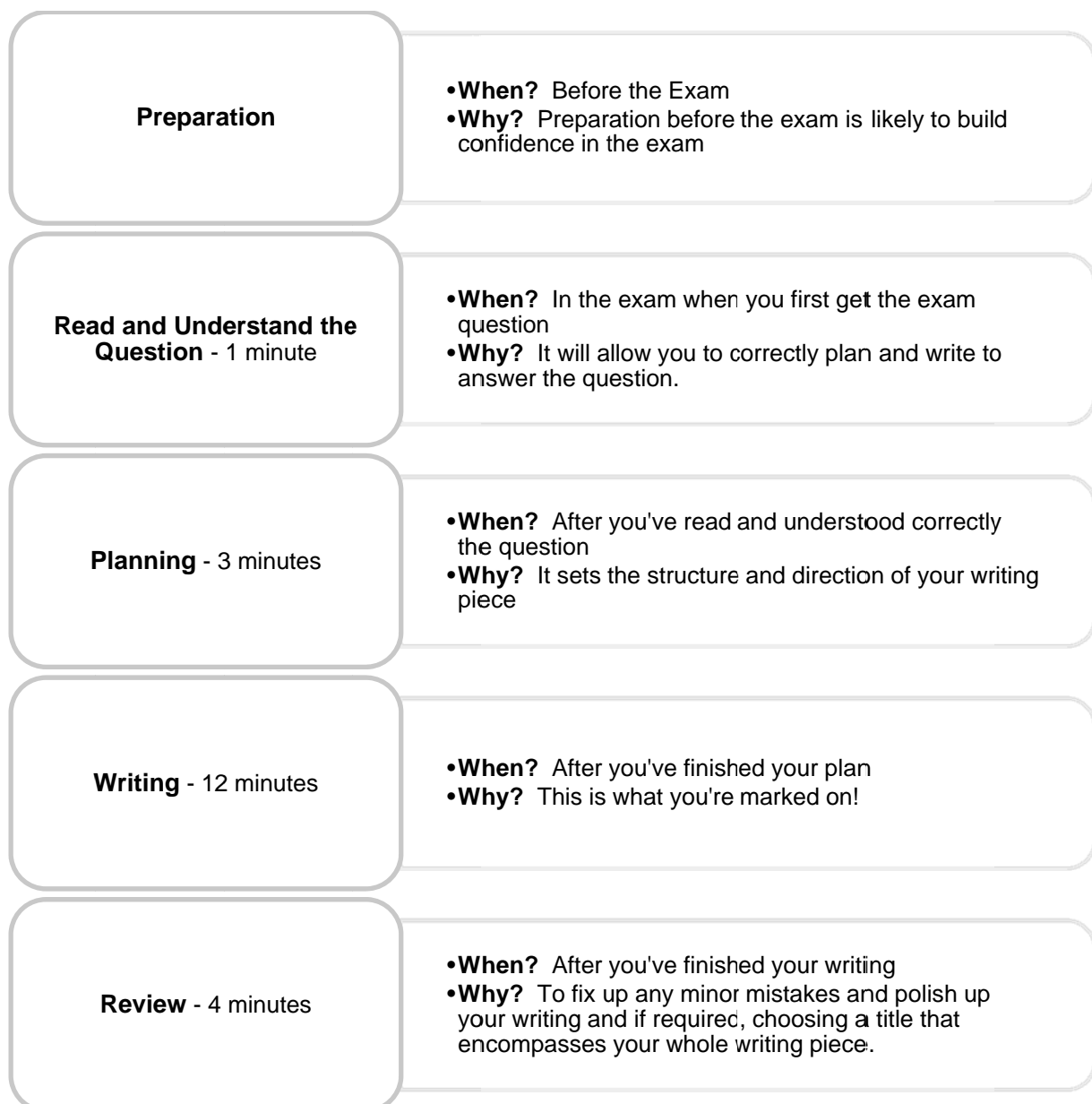
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1.2 Approach

An approach to writing a top argumentative essay in a limited time frame rests with good preparation and excellent exam technique.

Quite simply it should be a series of five steps as per the diagram below. The diagram below shows a guide for time that can be spent on each step for a 20 minute writing task. If your exam is shorter or longer than 20 minutes, please adjust the time spent on your writing task as appropriate.



Preparation

Good preparation is essential. Some people believe that you can't really prepare because you don't know what the exam question will be. In my view, this doesn't make sense because an exam question is generally not ever released. Even then, you still see people practicing their exam technique. For example, in Year 12 English exams, the exam question is obviously not released but you see students preparing so much for their exam by completing mock questions and reading up about current issues.

The same applies for your selective schools and scholarship entrance exams. Even though you do not know what the exam questions will be, you will still be able to do preparation to assist you in dealing with what you'll be presented with and the time constraint you will have to do it in.

So... how can you prepare? Here are some suggestions:

What?	Why?	How?
Read newspapers (especially opinion articles)	The exam question may touch on current issues. This will help to build up your vocabulary and you'll start to get a feel for what good writing looks like.	Read the newspaper article once to get an understanding of what the article is about, highlighting words that you don't understand along the way. Find the meaning of the highlighted words and then substitute the meaning in the sentence as you re-read the article. Pay attention to the arguments in the article and spend two minutes thinking about how they relate to the issue.

Did you know? In Year 12, I used to read an opinion article every week and spend at least 3 hours doing so. I found that this improved my vocabulary, I started to get used to what good writing was supposed to look like and it helped me to come up with great arguments.

There are largely three main groups which most arguments fall under and they are: social, economic or health related. As an added dimension, you can argue at an individual level and/or community level which would add more depth to your argument. Furthermore, you can consider **short term and/or long term consequences** or implications for your arguments.

Now... let's see how you could go about using the Dimensions of Argument to help you come up with some arguments (NB: You won't have this matrix in the exam, it is just provided here to assist you in how you can think about arguments) for the following question:

Dangerous dogs should be put down. Argue your case.

	If you are arguing <i>for</i> this statement, possible arguments are:		If you are arguing <i>against</i> this statement, possible are:	
	Individual Level	Community Level	Individual Level	Community Level
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives individuals more safety to freely move e.g. going for a jog (Short term & Long term implications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps preserve community safety e.g. school children (Short term & Long term implications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog owners have a right to keep their dogs. Putting down dangerous dogs takes away dog owners' rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't really apply for this question
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't really apply for this question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't really apply for this question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost to dog owners to replace their destroyed dogs and find another dog. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost to taxpayers of finding dangerous dogs and then putting them down is a large exercise. (Short term & Long term implications)
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in the people being attacked fatally/seriously injured by dogs (Short term & Long term implications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less people in hospitals for dog attack related injuries and therefore doctors can focus on other things (Short term & Long term implications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't really apply for this question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't really apply for this question

See how with the matrix, for this question, one would be able to come up with four arguments 'for' the statement and three arguments 'against' the statement. Furthermore, when you add long term and short term implications, you essentially have double the amount of arguments. Again, **the trick with using the matrix is to apply it to the question, not all dimensions will be relevant and you will need to customise.**

1.5 Supporting Your Arguments

The arguments that you come up with need to be supported either with an explanation or through examples. Whatever you use to support your arguments should be relevant and appropriate. They can be:

- Drawn upon recent events in the news
 - For example, it has been reported that a number of dog attacks on people have come from the pitbull breed of dogs (in relation to a question about putting down dangerous dogs).
- Expert opinions and statistics
 - For example, medical experts and researchers have found that smoking can lead to a multitude of illnesses, most fatal (in relation to a question about whether smoking should be banned).
 - **Avoid the common mistake of** quoting specific percentages such as 'studies show that 60-75 per cent of garbage in landfills can be recycled'. Why? Because you can't be certain of something so specific. If the studies really show 61%, then your supporting argument is incorrect. Furthermore, it is unlikely and also, not a good strategy to try an 'remember and recall' specific statistics.
- Relationships
 - For example, being role models in society to children, if footballers injure others it signals to children that such actions are socially acceptable (in relation to a question about whether football players should be banned from playing if they injure others)
 - **Avoid the common mistake of** illustrating a relationship which shows nothing new or illustrates simple maths. For example, *recycling is an easy solution as studies show that 60-75 per cent of garbage in landfills can be recycled. This indicates that if everybody were to recycle, we would have 60-75 per cent less garbage in our landfills.* This doesn't really say anything but applies the percentage. Another example is: *if they allow 20% of candidates a place, it means that 80% of candidates miss out.* Again, this doesn't say anything worthwhile. It just shows mathematics being applied and usually signals to the exam marker that the student hasn't thought of good and solid examples to support their arguments. Rather, the writer could have said *it is*

	YES ✓	NO ✗
Counter-Argument (Paragraph 4)	Your paragraph should now introduce the opposing view through words like 'Those opposed would say...' The transition must be clear to the reader. Again, support and explanation must link directly to the counter-argument.	As per details shown above in Argument 1 but applied to your plan for the Counter-Argument.
Re-Orientation (Paragraph 4)	In the same paragraph, transition back to your position through words like 'Even though those opposed say...' through an argument that directly addresses the counter-argument, again with support and explanation clearly linked to your re-orientation argument.	If your re-orientation doesn't address the counter-argument directly, it breaks up the order of your writing piece. Again, a common error to be avoided.
Conclusion (Paragraph 5)	Should simply recap briefly the exam question and the main arguments.	No new information should be included here. This is only a recap of what's in the writing piece.

If your piece is lacking in structure or doesn't have a good sense of order, you need to locate the problem. Is it in your planning i.e. did you have a structure to begin with? If it's not in your planning, have you drifted in your writing e.g. changed arguments midway? **Changing arguments midway is a common error and should be avoided.** To avoid it, focus on the argument at hand and develop it rather than trying to find any piece of information to boost up your word count.

Is the overall tone of your argumentative piece reasonable?

This test is about making sure your argumentative piece sounds like an argumentative piece.

You should know instantly if you have satisfied this check when you read through your piece. If you can use an adjective to describe your piece that is a 'feeling' type adjective (e.g. if your piece is angry, disappointed), you will know emotive language has been used too frequently.

You will need to cut this out and refocus on explaining the arguments rather than focusing on expressing a feeling.

4. Writing

When: Writing should **ideally take up 12 minutes in the exam**, after planning.

How: Follow your plan as a guide. See the example below for this question.
Read the notes on the side for important areas to watch out for and try to incorporate this into your own writing.

Legend: **Q = Question** (Is the question answered?), **A = Arguments** (Are they fully explained, appropriate and supported?), **O = Order** (Is there a logical sequence that the reader can understand?), **T = Tone** (Is your style of writing reasonable i.e. not overly emotional).

In a world like ours, it is vital to recycle. With our
.....
world resources slowly declining, every single person
.....
should recycle. Everyone should recycle because first,
.....
recycling helps reduce the impact of global warming, and
.....
secondly, it helps restrain our landfills from overflowing.
.....

.....
Firstly, everyone should recycle because the
.....
combined effort will contribute to more sustainable living.
.....
At present, climate change and environment issues are
.....
the focus and priorities for government. This is most likely
.....
a result of past human practices like throwing things out
.....
unnecessarily and a disposable consumer type lifestyle.

Q: Position established

'Everyone should recycle' says that the writer's position is that she supports the statement and is arguing 'for'.

A: Signposting

After the statement, the writer says 'first..., secondly...' outlining her arguments and signposting what is to come.

O: Introduction

The first sentence explains why the question has arisen that is, 'resources slowly declining' and leads to the position and then signposting. This is excellent and clear ordering of an introduction.

T: Tone

Note that simple language is used and is straightforward. This is what you should aim for throughout your piece.

O: Argument 1

It is ideal and good practice that the first sentence of the paragraph matches that of what you had signposted.

A: Explanation

Explains the past situation leading to the current need for sustainable living.

Firstly, children shouldn't be allowed to use the Internet because it allows them access to potentially dangerous information and websites. As the internet is open and uncensored, information whether it is beneficial or harmful can easily be accessed and there is no physical barrier that prevents children from accessing dangerous material. For example, a child may have low self-image and may find information on a pro-anorexia website that encourages the child to lose weight in a dangerous manner. By being allowed to use the internet, children can access such dangerous websites which encourage practices that are detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

O: Argument 1

It is ideal and good practice that the first sentence of the paragraph matches that of what you had signposted.

A: Explanation

See how the writer has explained the 'problem' of why the internet shouldn't be used in that it is 'open and uncensored' and that there is 'no physical barrier that prevents children...' It emphasises the problem with the internet and how it isn't compatible with children and their needs.

A & O: Development & Support

See how the argument is then further developed through the use of 'for example...' which marks the beginning of the illustration. A clear, specific and confined example has been used and explained (anorexia sites and low self-image in children). You should be careful of using too many examples, as was the case in the first draft of this writing piece. It is quite easy to get caught up in great examples, but if you included too many, you risk not focusing and developing one and instead, list out many brief and not meaningful examples.

O: Confined to the same argument

See how the argument doesn't jump topics – you can see order.

O: Argument 2

It is ideal and good practice that the first sentence of the paragraph matches that of what you had signposted.

Secondly, children shouldn't be allowed to use the Internet because disallowing use of the Internet may encourage children to undertake more beneficial activities. If children are not able to use the internet, they are unlikely to spend their time on social networking sites

such as 'Facebook', 'MSN messenger' and spend their time playing online games. Without access to the Internet, children will be more inclined and encouraged to spend their time on more productive and healthier activities such as playing sport or musical instruments.

Some may argue that children should be allowed to use the internet because the internet provides them with the most up to date and useful information which they can use to research and use in their homework. Although this may be the case, not all the information available on the internet is reliable and children, because of their age, are less likely to be able to distinguish the difference between information that is legitimate and information which is unreliable.

Overall, children should not be allowed to use the Internet as it gives children access to potentially dangerous content and it will encourage children to spend more time on other beneficial activities.

A & O: Development & Support

See how a clear link is shown between children not having the internet and how that will leave them with time free to spend. The free time is then linked to beneficial activities which children are then available to undertake. This is an example of a logical sequence that you should always have in your arguments.

O: Confined to the same argument

See how the argument doesn't jump topics – you can see order.

O, A & T: Counter Argument

See the marked transition 'some may argue that ...' to the opposing position. The argument is short and to the point. There is no need to elaborate on it greatly. Having the counter-argument adds balance to your piece.

O, A & T: Re-Orientation

Now, it is clear to the reader that we are reverting back to our original position ('although this may be the case') and have addressed the counter argument directly by having a re-orientation that considers 'up to date and useful information' that the internet provides..

Furthermore, this argument is developed by linking it in with children and how they aren't able to distinguish between what's reliable/unreliable.

This emphasises the writer's position that children shouldn't use the internet.

O: Conclusion

See how the conclusion doesn't have any new information. It is quite simple and recaps all that had been argued throughout the piece. You shouldn't spend too much time on it in the exam.