



National 5 Folio: Persuasive Essay Writing

What is persuasive writing?

- The aim of **persuasive writing** is to persuade the reader to agree with your views on a topic. You want to convince them that what you believe is correct and that any other viewpoint on your topic is incorrect.
- It should demonstrate **strong feelings and personal belief** in your topic and your arguments.
- Whichever essay type you choose, your essay will put forward all your arguments surrounding your topic and will show that you are **knowledgeable about your topic** and have **researched it in depth**.

To pass well, your folio must:

- Include **relevant ideas and opinions** on a topic you have chosen
- Have a **clear structure/ line of thought** and use linking words/ connectives
- Be focussed on your topic and show that you have a **firm belief or opinion** in what you are writing about.
- Use a **formal tone and language** (unless for effect)
- Use **rhetorical devices for effect**: emotive word choice, exaggeration, varied sentence structure, listing, repetition, parenthesis, shocking facts/statistics, rhetorical questions etc.
- Convey your meaning clearly with **very few mistakes in spelling and punctuation**.
- Have an **interesting title**
- For **National 5** you must write more than 650 words but **no more than 1000 words** (you can go 10% over, but beyond that you will be penalised!)
- **BE YOUR OWN WORDS unless using a quotation!**



Step 1: Choose your Topic

- Think of a current issue which **you feel very strongly about**. Think about what makes you mad!
- If the topic you choose is a Scottish issue or an issue that affects young people, then all the better!
- Tune into the **news, radio, newspapers, news websites** to see what is happening in the world and to get some fresh new ideas.

Topic ideas - Good Choice	Predictable/ unoriginal – AVOID
Why feminism is still crucial in the 21 st century	Abortion
Should those who drink, smoke and are overweight be allowed transplants on the NHS?	Euthanasia/Capital Punishment
Mobile phone use in schools is ruining young people's futures	Animal Testing
Plastic pollution: biggest threat to the environment/world	The Dangers of Social Media
Raise school leaving age to 18?	School uniform
Gambling in apps & games: Illegal?	Legalising cannabis
Domestic football clubs should have teams with 50% local players	Boxing

Task 1:

- Talk to friends and family and come up with 3 possible topics you could research and write about.
- Write down your **3 possible topics**.
- It is unrealistic to take a wide topic and say: 'My essay is on Scottish Independence'.
- You must narrow your focus and have a clear argument based around your topic.
- A good way to do this is to devise a clear statement based around your topic which makes it clear what your feelings are.
- Example...

"I will persuade you that an independent Scotland will strengthen our country."

Remember that although your essay will be **biased** and **heavily loaded** to one side of the debate, you must still show an awareness of **both** sides of the argument – for persuasive writing try to put your topic **in the form of a statement.**

Try to make your statement quirky and interesting - you want to catch the reader's attention and instantly involve them in the topic.
Puns/rhyme/alliteration are a good way to make your title interesting.

For example:

Topic: Festivals, concerts and huge events should be cancelled forever.

Statement: Frivolous festivals threaten our future.

Once you have chosen a topic and formed a question you should begin to **list areas of the topic that you are going to investigate** – this will help you to gather the information you need. **You should include at least 3 or 4 arguments and 1 or 2 counterarguments.**

For example:

Topic: Festivals, concerts and huge events should be cancelled forever.

Areas for Investigation:



Plastic

- ① Spread of disease
- ① Impact on emergency services
- ① Damage to environment/countryside



Fantastic

- ① Fun/bring people together, but lockdown has shown different ways of doing this virtually

Task 2

Choose a one of the topics you have developed for your persuasive essay. You should form an **appropriate statement**, ensuring there are **two possible viewpoints**, and then **list the areas you are going to investigate (4 - 6 research areas).**

You should try to be original in your choice of topic and it should be something that interests you!



Step 2: Research

The research phase is extremely important in persuasive essay writing because you have to provide **evidence** for each point you make:








- ① **Facts** are things which are known to exist and for which there is evidence of their existence.
- ① **Opinions** are views or beliefs which have not been proven.

In persuasive essay writing the writer must use **facts** to **support** (or back up) **opinions**.

Sources of Information



There are many different ways that you can investigate your topic:

-  Talking to experts in the field
-  Visiting the library
-  Using online encyclopaedias
-  Consulting newspaper articles
-  Surfing the internet

You will need to be precise about what you are looking up – what key words and phrases will you use?



WARNING!!!

Although most pupils enjoy surfing the internet, the information they obtain is not always RELIABLE!

Remember!!!

British internet sites end in - .co.uk American websites end in - .com

Therefore, if you were investigating sectarianism in western Scotland, information from American websites could be extremely unreliable!

Try to collect information from well known websites/organisations.

The school intranet is a useful starting point it supplies information on a number of topics (including newspaper articles) and provides links to reputable websites.



YOU SHOULD ALWAYS REFERENCE THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE COLLECTED



Organising your Information

Task 1: As you collect all the information you need, you should try to put it into some kind of **order**. This will give you a clear idea about how to **structure** your essay and how to **develop your argument**.



A simple way of organising your information is to create a fact table:

Plastic or Fantastic?	
<i>Cosmetic Surgery</i>	<i>Emotional Well-being</i>
<p>“Various operations of this type have resulted in septicaemia and in extreme cases death.”</p> <p>www.notarealquote.org.uk</p>	<p>“These studies revealed that 80% of the test group still suffered from depression following their respective procedures.”</p> <p>“Fake Quote” by The Author</p>
<i>Body Image</i>	
<p>“1 in 3 girls admitted that they were unhappy with their body image and would consider ‘going under the knife’.”</p> <p>www.anotherfakeone.co.uk</p>	



By organising your information in this way you are ensuring that you have information for **both** sides of the argument. Try to find as much information as possible - **it is always better to have too much and have the option of being selective.**



Step 4: Start Writing

As you write the essay there are certain **conventions** you must adhere to. Use the checklist below to check over your work:

Conventions of Persuasive Writing

- ✓ You must show an awareness of both sides of the argument
- ✓ You must write in a **biased/loaded and formal manner**
- ✓ You must **back up** the points you make with **evidence** (quotations or paraphrasing)
- ✓ **You must provide precise, reliable and factual information**
- ✓ You must **reference all sources** of information you have consulted
- ✓ You should try to use the **stylistic features** of this genre of writing
- ✓ In the conclusion, you should give your **personal opinion** justifying your reasons for supporting this side of the



Essay Structure



Introduction

Main argument 1

Main argument 2

Main argument 3

Main argument 4

Counterargument 1

Counterargument 2

Conclusion

In order to show the **direction** of your argument you will need to make use of Link **words/phrases**.



Task 1

In pairs brainstorm as many link words/phrases as possible in the space provided below.

Developing the Same Side of the Argument

Similarly
furthermore

Developing the Opposing Side of the Argument

Alternatively
oppositely

Considering the Language of Arguments



When discussing beliefs and opinions of opposing sides, try to use **problematizing words/phrases**. These make the statement appear debateable and make it clear that their assertions are not necessarily correct/true.

For Example:

Human rights campaigners **claim** that...

Problematizing Words/Phrases

Claim
argue

Task - Expand Your Vocabulary

With a partner discuss other **problematizing words/phrases** and write them in the space provided (you may wish to consult a thesaurus for additional help if you are stuck):

When discussing factual evidence, you should ensure your use of language demonstrates this.

For Example: Dr. Allan Shepherd, Chief Researcher in Biomedical Sciences, **explains** that... OR As the statistics **illustrate**...



Introductions



The purpose of an introduction is to:

- ① Refer to the question or topic
- ① Make the reader aware of both sides of the argument
- ① Grab the reader's attention and force them to consider the debate before reading on
- ① Make your persuasive stance clear

For example:

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder...” Or is it? In a nation obsessed with image and identity are we ever allowed to truly be ourselves? Plastic surgery can be life-changing or life-saving, producing emotional well-being and damage limitation. However, its cosmetic counterpart can be addictive and leave its victims with more insecurities than they had to begin with. Are these medical advancements a God send or are the consequences simply too hellish? There is simply nothing fantastic about the nation's fascination with plastic. It's time we all 'got real' and wised up rather than wasting our looks and lives by 'going under the knife'.

Task 2:

Try to **identify techniques/features** used within the above introduction designed to grab the **reader's attention** and get them **thinking** about the topic.



Persuasive Paragraphs

There are 5 key stages involved in structuring a discursive paragraph:

- 1) **Topic sentence**
(link word/phrase + reference to research topic + link to argument)
- 2) **Clarification**
(explain and give information about this area of research)
- 3) **Make your point**
- 4) **Back up this point with evidence**
- 5) **Explain the relevance of this evidence**



Furthermore, concern for our children's welfare has rightly been raised due to their obsession with social networking sites such as 'Facebook' or 'Instagram'. In these domains children and adults are able to create their own page/profile where they can share information about themselves. No monitoring system exists, however, to review this information, ensure its accuracy or indeed ensure the user's safety. Our children are therefore vulnerable to the predators of the World Wide Web - contact can be made by anyone anywhere. Recent statistics from Child Protection Online reveal that 1 in 4 children will have been contacted by an adult, disguised behind another identity, on one of these social network sites. This is an alarming observation given the popularity of these sites among young, impressionable and naïve minds. if we can't stop the temptation for young people, we must educate them to protect themselves online as the social media giants continue to be neglectful as long as the cash keeps rolling in.



Task 3

Try to **identify the different stages and any techniques** used within the above persuasive paragraph.

Counterargument Paragraphs

There are 5 key stages involved in structuring a counterargument paragraph:

6) Topic sentence

(link word/phrase + reference to research topic + link to argument)

7) Clarification

(explain and give information about the counterarguments others try to make)

8) Discredit their argument

9) Back up this point with evidence (if you can)

10) Explain the relevance of this evidence



However, concern for our children's welfare has been raised due to pushy parents over-exaggerating their children's relationship with social networking sites such as 'Facebook' or 'Instagram'. In these domains children and adults are able to create their own page/profile where they can share information about themselves and connect with others who have similar interests. These helicopter parents claim that these sites jeopardise their children's safety when in fact the contrary is true. "Children" are not permitted or encouraged to access these sites until the age of 16 and the user themselves chooses the privacy settings for their account. Surely this demonstrates each company's commitment to ensuring these sites are used responsibly? In fact in 2017 Facebook spent £750000 on profile security updates. Parents should really consider their own responsibilities to their child's safety by avoiding placating them with devices and apps devised for adults and stop passing the blame onto the platforms themselves.



Task 4

Try to **identify the different stages and any techniques** used within the above persuasive paragraph.

The Conclusion

An effective conclusion is essential in any essay.









The purpose of the conclusion is to:

- ① Sum up the main points made on both sides of the argument (i.e. all the positives followed by all the negatives or vice versa)
- ① State your personal views and, with reference to the evidence discussed throughout the essay, explain why you hold them
- ① End with a final persuasive statement.



Now ... it's over to you!

Remember to:

-  Check all spelling, punctuation and expression.
-  Punctuate quotations correctly.
-  Include a bibliography detailing all of the sources you consulted.
-  Use the conventions of persuasive writing.
-  Give a sense of your personality through your writing style
-  Provide a word count



Avoiding Plagiarism

This essay must be entirely your own work. **Copying chunks of information from the internet/books, downloading an essay from the internet, copying a friend or relative's essay is forbidden and will have serious consequences.**

- If you are using someone else's words exactly - **use quotation marks.**

Example: A leading educational psychologist stated that: "homework is an unnecessary burden on our young people and can cause stress and anxiety"

- If you are paraphrasing someone else's words or their research, then put **their surname and year they write it beside what you have written.**

Example: Homework has been seen to cause stress and anxiety in young people who feel it is an added weight on their shoulders (David, 2011).

Task 5: writing your essay

Use the persuasive help sheet or the discursive help sheet on the following page to write either a persuasive OR discursive essay.

Persuasive essay help sheet – essay structure

Introduction –

- Start with an interesting opener: a quote, a powerful statistic, a rhetorical question, an anecdote, a short punchy sentence.
- Explain your topic and standpoint
- Summarise the three/four main arguments you are going to make

Paragraph 1

- Explain your first argument
Example: **Liberals, open-minded people and feminists believe that it is a woman's right to choose if she wants to have an abortion, since it is something happening to *her* body...**
- Expand on this with more in-depth opinion and examples
Example: **This is one of the fundamental arguments against restrictive abortion laws; that there are no laws that govern what a man can or cannot do to his own body. So why do they exist for women?**
- Exemplify your argument with evidence
This is where you add your information that you found when researching your topic. You use statistics, quotes from experts, etc.
Example: **As Sarah Weddington argued during an important legal battle in the US: "A pregnancy to a woman is perhaps one of the most determinative aspects of her life. It disrupts her body. It disrupts her education. It disrupts her employment." Morally, therefore, we should give greater consideration to a woman's rights and needs, as well as considering those of an unborn child.**

Paragraph 2

- Explain your second argument
Example: **Another argument against restrictive abortion laws is that by removing access to safe terminations, women will turn to dangerous procedures in desperation.**
- Expand on this with more in-depth opinion and examples
Example: **Stopping abortions will not stop women from wanting or needing them. So, what will women do if they cannot access them easily and freely? They will turn to illegal means.**
- Exemplify your argument with evidence
This is where you add your information that you found when researching your topic. You use statistics, quotes from experts, etc.
Example: **Around 25 million unsafe abortions were estimated to have taken place worldwide each year and according to the World Health Organization, more than 6 million women are admitted to hospitals every year in developing countries due to complications from unsafe abortions...**

Paragraph 3

- Explain your third argument
Example: **A further argument in support of legalising abortion worldwide is...**
- Expand on this with more in-depth opinion and examples
- Exemplify your argument with evidence
This is where you add your information that you found when researching your topic. You use statistics, quotes from experts, etc.

Paragraph 4 – another argument from your viewpoint OR counter argument

Paragraph 5 – counter argument OR conclusion

Conclusion

- Sum up your main arguments
- Have a call to action
- Something that the reader will "takeaway" from your essay & remember

Some rhetorical devices and persuasive language techniques:

- **Emotive words** – strong words that make people feel a certain way – angry, sad, outraged

Example: It is **truly abhorrent** that these **intelligent wild** animals are **forced to suffer in tiny pens** with no access to their natural habitat...

- **Rhetorical questions** – a question that inspires thought but doesn't need an answer

Example: why are we treating these beautiful creatures this way?

- **Powerful facts & statistics** – use percentages & numbers to make it seem shocking.

Example: 40 whales kept in captivity have died in the past 3 years...

- **Short sentences & paragraphs** – Example: This has to stop.

- **Direct address** – talking directly to the reader by saying “you”

Example: how would you feel if you were kept locked up and forced to perform for crowds?

- **Anecdote** – a personal story linked to the issue

Example: When I went to SeaWorld I thought it was all a bit of fun...

- **Shock tactics** – using shocking information to inspire strong emotions

Example: Orcas have killed trainers by ripping their hair out...

- **Repetition** – repeated key words or phrases.

Example: Orcas can't speak for themselves. Orcas need our help. Will you help? Help get them back to their natural habitat...

- **Exaggeration** – Example: hundreds of baby orcas are ripped from their mothers' sides every year...