

# AN OPINION COMPOSITION

When you are writing an essay that asks you to discuss a topic or give your opinion on a question, it is important to organize your thoughts and present your arguments clearly and to work out the structure of your essay before you start to write.

1. Plan four or five paragraphs:
  - an **introduction** (saying why it is important, what the situation is...)
  - **two** or **three paragraphs** in support of the argument/ giving a contrasting or different view (with reasons)
  - a **conclusion** (a summary of your opinion or interpretation of the facts)
2. List your reasons “for” or “against” before you start writing
3. Back up your reasons with clear examples.
4. Use connectors to introduce the different ideas and arguments in your essay.
5. Use a formal style: do not use contractions or very colloquial expressions.

## EXERCISE 1

a) **Read the following composition and fill in the blanks with a word or expression from the list:**

furthermore	recently	as a result	in conclusion	on the other hand
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*“Genetic engineering brings with it more dangers than benefits and should be banned worldwide”. Discuss.*

\_\_\_\_\_ (1), advances in science have demonstrated to us that things that once seemed possible only in science fiction could become a reality. The cloning of a sheep brought the possibility of using genetic engineering to create new organs, or even whole human beings, one step closer.

Some people consider this to be a dangerous development, and believe that all that research should be banned. Interfering with nature in this way could bring with it dangers that none of us can imagine. We have no idea how an artificially-created person might behave, or indeed how he or she might suffer. \_\_\_\_\_ (2), we may find ourselves in a position which we do not like, but which we are unable to reverse.

\_\_\_\_\_ (3), many people would say that it is not for human beings to decide what other human beings should be like. It is not only people with deep religious beliefs who feel that it is wrong, for example, for parents to choose whether their baby will be a boy or a girl, or have blue eyes or musical talent.

\_\_\_\_\_ (4), the latest research in genetics has also opened the possibility of new treatment for many diseases which up to now have been incurable. If it were possible to prevent a baby from developing a hereditary disease by modifying its genes, should we stop

the scientists? If doctors could replace a diseased organ with a new one grown from cells, should it not be allowed?

\_\_\_\_\_ (5), I would say that genetic engineering has the potential to be both a huge benefit and a terrible curse for humankind. To make sure that we benefit from it, it will be necessary to control it very strictly. The real challenge will be to find ways of monitoring the research that is conducted in laboratories all over the world and to make sure that it is only used for the good of everyone.

Text adapted from OXFORD STUDENT'S DICTIONARY

**b) In the box below you will find some more linking words and expressions you can use to substitute for the ones used in the composition above. Can you match the words with the blanks?**

moreover	consequently	therefore	nevertheless
however	to sum up	in addition	finally
			nowadays

## **EXERCISE 2**

**Here you will find another example of opinion composition. Read it carefully and complete with the words in the box.**

although	to sum up	such as	secondly	like
personally	besides	think so	firstly	just

***“Top sports people earn too much money nowadays”.***

In most countries today top sports people, \_\_\_\_\_ (1) footballers, tennis players and basketball players, get enormous salaries. In a week they often earn more than ordinary people in a year. Is this really too much? \_\_\_\_\_ (2) I don't \_\_\_\_\_ (3).

\_\_\_\_\_ (4), the active life of a professional sports person is relatively short – they often retire when they are in their mid-thirties. \_\_\_\_\_ (5), many of them don't even play that long, as they often get injured, which means they have to retire early.

\_\_\_\_\_ (6), \_\_\_\_\_ (7) their salaries are very high they are not much higher than those of other successful people in the entertainment industry

\_\_\_\_\_ (8) pop singers, actors or TV personalities, whose professional careers can last for fifty years. Sport today is watched by millions of people, so it should be considered entertainment \_\_\_\_\_ (9) like the cinema or TV.

\_\_\_\_\_ (10), I think that top sports people's high salaries are not unfair if you compare them with people doing similar jobs.

### **EXERCISE 3**

The composition you will find in the following exercise has been taken from the website

<http://www.writefix.com/argument>

This website is designed for people learning English who are interested in writing argument or opinion essays. You will find everything about:

- how to write argument essays (steps to follow)
- parts of an essay

and lots of examples of argument and opinion essays.

**Read the essay and, for each blank, decide which two of the three given answers are right and which wrong.**

***“Who learns faster - children or adults?”***

Small children seem to learn very quickly, \_\_\_\_\_ (1) adults sometimes appear to lose the ability to pick up new subjects such as languages, music, games, or computer programs. In this essay, I will discuss \_\_\_\_\_ (2) children or adults make the best learners.

It is \_\_\_\_\_ (3) that children seem to learn very quickly. In just a few years, they can learn how to play a musical instrument, speak one or even two new languages, and deal with many subjects at school. They \_\_\_\_\_ (4) have time for sports and hobbies, and become experts in their favorite pastimes. \_\_\_\_\_ (5), how much of this is social pressure and how much is genetic? I am convinced that while children's brains have a natural ability to absorb new information as part of their developmental growth, much of their achievement is because of social pressure. Schools force them to take many subjects. Parents force them to practice new sports or to learn music. Even their playmates force them to become better at computer games or to read Harry Potter novels faster. \_\_\_\_\_ (6), children may enjoy learning, but their environment also is a big motivating factor.

Adults \_\_\_\_\_ (7) are supposed to be poor learners. \_\_\_\_\_ (8), I disagree with people who say that adults cannot learn quickly. Adults have many skills that compensate for the decline in the ability of the brain to grasp and remember new material. They can organize their learning by setting times for reading or practice. They can build on skills and experiences they know already. Adults usually cannot learn to do ballet or to play the violin, but \_\_\_\_\_ (9) these physical challenges, their motivation can often be higher than a child's. \_\_\_\_\_ (10), society does not encourage many adults to learn. People are busy with families and work, and some adults may feel that further learning is pointless, \_\_\_\_\_ (11) they have already achieved many goals at work or in their personal life.

\_\_\_\_\_ (12), I feel that we cannot generalize about children or adults being better learners. It depends on the situation and the motivation of the person, and the level of enthusiasm he or she has for learning.

1 while whereas since	5 despite nevertheless however	9 even in spite of even though even despite
2 if whereas whether	6 as regards in summary to sum up	10 unfortunately unluckily unlikely
3 obvious undoubtedly true completely truth	7 on the contrary opposite on the other hand	11 furthermore since due to the fact that
4 even even though also	8 however although nevertheless	12 in summary to cut a long story short in conclusion

**This is the original text:**

Small children seem to learn very quickly, *while* adults sometimes appear to lose the ability to pick up new subjects such as languages, music, games, or computer programs. In this essay, I will discuss *whether* children or adults make the best learners.

It is *undoubtedly true* that children seem to learn very quickly. In just a few years, they can learn how to play a musical instrument, speak one or even two new languages, and deal with many subjects at school. They *even* have time for sports and hobbies, and become experts in their favorite pastimes. *However*, how much of this is social pressure and how much is genetic? I am convinced that while children's brains have a natural ability to absorb new information as part of their developmental growth, much of their achievement is because of social pressure. Schools force them to take many subjects. Parents force them to practice new sports or to learn music. Even their playmates force them to become better at computer games or to read Harry Potter novels faster. *In summary*, children may enjoy learning, but their environment also is a big motivating factor.

Adults *on the other hand* are supposed to be poor learners. *However*, I disagree with people who say that adults cannot learn quickly. Adults have many skills that compensate for the decline in the ability of the brain to grasp and remember new material. They can organize their learning by setting times for reading or practice. They can build on skills and experiences they know already. Adults usually cannot learn to do ballet or to play the violin, but *even despite* these physical challenges, their motivation can often be higher than a child's. *Unfortunately*, society does not encourage many adults to learn. People are busy with families and work, and some adults may feel that further learning is pointless, *since* they have already achieved many goals at work or in their personal life.

*In conclusion*, I feel that we cannot generalize about children or adults being better learners. It depends on the situation and the motivation of the person, and the level of enthusiasm he or she has for learning.

# KEY

## EXERCISE 1

- a)
1. recently
  2. as a result
  3. furthermore
  4. on the other hand
  5. in conclusion
- b)
1. nowadays
  2. consequently, therefore
  3. moreover, in addition
  4. however, nevertheless
  5. to sum up, finally

## EXERCISE 2

1. such as, like
2. personally
3. think so
4. firstly
5. besides
6. secondly
7. although
8. like, such as
9. just
10. to sum up

## EXERCISE 3

(right answers)

1. while, whereas
2. if, whether
3. obvious, undoubtedly true
4. even, also
5. nevertheless, however
6. in summary, to sum up
7. on the contrary, on the other hand
8. however, nevertheless
9. even in spite of, even despite
10. unfortunately, unluckily
11. since, due to the fact that
12. in summary, in conclusion