




Identifying the Question Type

Discursive	Argumentative
<p>Possible question stems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are ... • How can ... <p>Typically these questions focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for/ against • Factors for • Solutions 	<p>Possible question stems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree? • To what extent ...? • How far is this true? • Is ... • What are your views? <p>Typically these questions require you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a stand • Acknowledge the opposing viewpoint • Rebut the opposing viewpoint
Comparative	Absolute
<p>A comparative essay asks that you compare at least two (possibly more) items. These items will differ depending on the assignment. You might be asked to compare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • varied positions on an issue (e.g., responses to education systems in Finland and Singapore) • two different ideologies (e.g., capitalism and communism) • existing plans versus ideal plans (strengthen, improve) • across time (e.g., educational policies in the past vs educational policies in the present) 	<p>The use of specific key words may mark the absolute statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only, • Always • Never • Every • Death of • Banned • No place in society <p>Questions with absolute statements often present very strong opinions which typically show an extreme stance.</p>

Note: Questions can be a mix of different types, e.g. comparative discursive question or absolute argumentative question.

	DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL Year 4 2023
	English Language Expository Writing Question Analysis (Absolute Terms)

Questions with absolute statements often present very strong opinions which typically show an extreme stance. The use of specific key words may mark the absolute statement. For example:

- a) **Genetic engineering will only benefit mankind. Do you agree?**
 - ❖ The statement suggests that there are nothing but benefits due to genetic engineering. This is an absolute stance on the matter; to agree with the statement would mean that you agree that genetic engineering would bring no detriments to mankind. Is this a feasible stand?

- b) **Technology always gives us hope for the future. Do you agree?**
 - ❖ The statement suggests that technology is only promising. Again, if you agree with this absolute, you would be suggesting that there are **no cases** in which technology may cause anything other than hope for the future. Is this true?

- c) **The key to solving poverty is money. Do you agree?**
 - ❖ While more subtle than the previous two, this statement is also an absolute one. Use of the determiner “the” in “the key” suggests that there is only one solution (the use of money) to resolving poverty. Agreeing with this statement would be to agree that there are **no other viable solutions** to approaching poverty. Do you feel this is true?

In unpacking the absolute statements, you will realise that agreeing with the absolutes may present a very limited and short-sighted view of the topic of discussion. In some cases, it is logically unsound to agree with the statements.


We recommend that when faced with absolute statements, taking an opposing stance/disagreeing with the absolute gives you a better chance to write a convincing, well-rounded essay on the topic.

Disagreeing with absolutes does not mean that there is no shred of truth within them. Even when you disagree with the absolute statement, you should acknowledge why some people may be inclined to agree. For example:

Q: Genetic engineering will only benefit mankind. Do you agree?

- To agree with the statement would mean that you agree that genetic engineering would bring *no detriments to mankind*. Taking this stance would only show a shallow understanding of the topic.
- In disagreeing with the statement, you can discuss a wider variety of ideas:
 - How genetic engineering *does benefit mankind* (i.e. why some might say that there are only benefits) in your counter argument
 - How genetic engineering *may also create problems for mankind* in the main points of your argument

While there are many ways to respond to any essay question, sometimes acknowledging why some would agree with the statement (i.e. your counter argument) early on in your essay is an effective way to structure your argument.

	DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL Year Four 2022
	English Language Expository Writing Question Analysis (Comparative Terms)

A comparative essay asks that you compare two or more items (e.g. leaders vs followers), or one item across two or more parameters (e.g. past vs present)

Take for example: **Q: How can we be a more tolerant society?**

To tackle this question, you must

- **Acknowledge what has been already done** to create a tolerant society.
 - **Build on** these measures OR Suggest **new** measures
- Build on: How can they be improved? Suggestions for improvement could be an extension or adaptation of current measures or an adoption of measures used in similar situations
- Suggest: Are there gaps between the problem and solution? What are some solutions that could address the issue?

Ignorance of past and current measures would result in not answering this question adequately

Essay structure


We will use the question above to show the structure you can use:

Q: How can your society be a more tolerant one?

Point-by-point pattern (Alternating)

In this method, you find related points common to your central subjects A (present measures to create a tolerant society) and B (improvements to current measures or suggest new measures), and alternate between A and B on the basis of these points (ABABAB ...).

The alternating system generally does a better job of highlighting similarities and differences by juxtaposing your points about A and B. It also tends to produce a more tightly integrated and analytical paper. Consider the alternating method if you are able to identify clearly related points between A and B. Otherwise, if you attempt to impose the alternating method, you will probably find it counterproductive.

	DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL Year Four 2023
	Ways to Analyse the Question

EXAMPLES:

Q1. What are some ways society can better support young Singaporeans who wish to become full-time athletes? (2013 Y4 EOY)

Question Type- Discursive, Comparative (old vs new ways)

What are the key words in the question that you have to pay attention to?

- What are **some ways** society can **better** support young **Singaporeans** who wish to become **full-time athletes**? (2013 Y4 EOY)

More than 1

In Singapore

There is already support (existing policies) - how do we BETTER support (new policies/ideas)?

Professional

Q2. The teacher will never be replaced. Do you agree?

Question type- Argumentative, Absolute

Keywords/Scope:

- “The teacher”: Human beings who take up teaching as a profession and are part of a structured education system OR
- any entity that is capable of imparting knowledge (parents, life experiences, nature, videos, books, online courses, use of artificial intelligence)
- “will never be”: **Absolute term**. No possibility even in the context of the future.
- “replaced”: The **same** function(s) carried out by the teacher to be fulfilled by anyone/anything else (element of **comparison**)

Q3. Men and Women are offered equal opportunities in life today. Do You Agree?

Question type- Argumentative, Comparative (men vs women)

Topic: Gender Inequality

"equal": having the same as another, without discrimination on any grounds

Men and Women are offered **equal opportunities** in life **today**. **DYA?**

a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something

Argumentative Essay [CA+R]

Scope: 21st Century/
Modern World



DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL
Year Four 2022


Handout : Connectors - Writing with Persuasion

Adapted from Present Perfect (2018). *The Essay Issue*. SG: Think Tank

Transition words or connectors are one way to enhance the coherence of your writing. By using connectors, you create relationships between your ideas for your reader's understanding. Below is a list of connectors that you may employ in your writing.

To list ideas	To build on ideas	To conclude
Firstly, secondly, thirdly	Additionally	Therefore/ Hence
First and foremost	Furthermore	Ultimately
To begin with	Indeed	Given these points...
Last of all	Moreover	As a result/ consequence
Initially	Just as ... so...	Thus
	Subsequently	To sum up
	Apart from this	All in all
		Consequently
		Because
To show similarity	To signal a change in direction of argument	To signal disagreement while acknowledging other views
Likewise/ In like manner	However	Despite X , I believe that Y is ...
By the same token	On the other hand	Although X may be true, Y is ...
In the same manner	In contrast/ By contrast/ By comparison	Notwithstanding X, it is sometimes Y...

In a similar vein	Conversely	While X is more often than not..., Y is ...
Just as/ like	Nevertheless/ nonetheless	No doubt X is... but Y is...
Similarly	Yet	It is true that X is ... however, Y is ...
Also	Although	Admittedly, X is ... but Y is ...
Correspondingly	On the contrary	
Equally	Instead/ Alternatively	

	DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL Year Four 2022
	Essay Planning Template

Essay Question	
What type of question is this?	
What are the key terms in the question?	
What do I need to do to address them?	
What will my stand be?	
How will I open my essay?	
How will I end the essay?	

POINTS (Topic Sentences)

POSSIBLE ARGUMENTS	COUNTER-ARGUMENTS (for argumentative only)

Sample:

Home-based learning is better than classroom teaching. Do you agree?

Wu Zekai Justin 20Y4K

<p>"How did you do it Frank? How did you cheat in the bar exam in Louisiana?"</p> <p>"I didn't cheat. I studied for two weeks and passed".</p> <p>This is arguably one of the most iconic scenes in the 2001 film Catch Me If You Can, based on the exploits of young con artist Frank Abagnale Jr. The brilliant Abagnale is depicted to have passed the Louisiana bar exam after only two weeks of self-directed studying, a testament to the outstanding yields of self-directed learning. However, this is a romanticised, inaccurate portrayal of Abagnale's real story, much like how self-directed and home-based learning are only feasible under quixotic (idealistic) conditions. Home-based learning requires students to learn from home, usually via digital media with lessons conducted online through live streams or assignments. For the purposes of this essay, a method of teaching will be "better" if it ensures student welfare and facilitates student learning to a greater degree as this aligns with the priorities of most schools. The writer recognises that home-based learning can improve learning in certain aspects such as improving the flexibility of learning pace. However, classroom teaching trumps home-based learning in both aforementioned aspects due to more control conferred to teachers and the unreliable nature of home-based learning.</p>	<p>Grab: Popular Culture: Movie</p> <p>Definition of HBL</p> <p>His justification for his stand later. That whatever his stand is, it will be because of this main reason: student welfare & facilitation of student learning</p> <p>Still respectful & mention positive things about HBL</p> <p>Use of signpost "however" to show the shift in viewpoint. His stand is actually in support of classroom learning</p>
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Students become distracted during home-based learning whereas classroom teaching lets teachers supervise students to a greater extent, prompting students to have **greater focus**.

The removal of the physical presence of teachers coupled with additional distractions at home such as gaming consoles removes the deterrent and increases the temptation to indulge in these distractions. Less mental effort is expended to indulge in social media or video games than paying attention to lessons; these hedonic pleasures are also just a click away from the online lesson, further increasing its allure. **In contrast**, classroom teaching reduces the need for students to use digital devices and they are under constant supervision of the teacher even as they do so. To instantiate this, a 2019 study published in the Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning found that, during lectures, 49% of college students used technology for off-task purposes such as using social media instead of focusing on the lesson. This aptly illustrates students' susceptibility to distraction during lessons which may be exacerbated by the long duration of home-based learning compared to an hour-long lecture. Hence, home-based learning makes students more prone to distractions during lessons, impeding their learning.

Parents are disturbed to note that platforms on which home-based learning are conducted are **vulnerable to intrusion by individuals with malicious intent** aimed at students. It is commonplace for teachers to conduct live streamed lessons for students during a period of home-based learning to substitute classroom teaching. However, current platforms for conducting these lessons such as Zoom and Google Meet have security features that are rudimentary at best. This leaves lessons at the mercy of hackers and attackers whose misdeeds can range from mild mischief to an outright outrage of modesty, as was the case in Singapore amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Lessons were shifted onto video conferencing tools such as Zoom as full home-based learning was mandated. The incident involved the perpetrators entering a geography lesson hosted on Zoom and displaying lewd photos to secondary 1 students. Female students were also told to flash themselves. This sparked anxious ruminations on online forums as parents questioned the security of their children. Hence, the egregious incident highlights the hidden dangers faced by students on the internet during home-based learning which could be detrimental to the mental and emotional well-being of students. Teachers are also limited in their capacity to protect students from such online attacks compared to classroom teaching where **teachers have a greater command of the classroom**. Therefore, classroom teaching is more reliable than

Topic sentence

How HBL distracts students from learning (lacks focus)

How with classroom learning, students can focus better

Example

Topic sentence

Example (HBL: risks online)

home-based learning when ensuring the mental welfare of students.

However, opponents may argue that home-based learning outclasses classroom teaching in terms of **lesson flexibility**, allowing students to learn at their desired pace. During home-based learning, lessons are uploaded online and students of different academic inclinations can learn at suitable speeds. The classroom setting, albeit free from distraction, has the right pace for a small fraction of the class; most students are either struggling to keep up with lesson content or weary of similar concepts reiterated ad nauseum. Home-based learning eliminates this issue by conferring autonomy to students to customise their learning by repeatedly attempting areas they are weak in while skimming through familiar territory. For example, Summit Public Schools in California have employed semi-autonomous software that guides children through the syllabus, with a teacher on hand to address student doubts. This increased students' mathematics scores from the 64th percentile to the 33rd, almost halving their rank. Thus, this self-directed element which is translated into home-based learning is probable to improve academic performance by adjusting learning pace. While it is valid that home-based learning may improve students' degree of understanding, it overlooks the point that students **can assimilate and understand content faster** during classroom teaching than in live streamed lessons or uploaded lesson content. According to renowned American anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell, 60% of communication occurs nonverbally, suggesting that the physical aspect of communication is imperative. However, home-based learning effectively removes this element due to its reliance on screens, impeding the rate and degree of understanding in students. In the above mentioned study, the opposition neglects to mention that students spent about twice as much grasping a concept when learning through the software as regular classroom lessons. This unequivocally increases the mental strain on students and may even impel indolent students to give up completely. Hence, effective communication is key to teaching and learning but becomes heavily restricted during home-based learning.

In conclusion, classroom teaching is better than home-based learning as it exposes students to fewer distractions, protects students from malevolent attempts and allows students to learn faster. Education is a multifaceted subject and the two weighing criteria introduced do not provide a thorough evaluation of both methods of pedagogy. Amidst different circumstances such as the aforementioned Covid-19 pandemic, home-based learning would be the prudent choice. However, in regular settings, classroom teaching is often

Link to students' welfare (compromised)

How F2F is safer

CA

HBL is flexible; ss can pace themselves

F2F inflexible

HBL is flexible; ss can pace themselves

Rebuttal

HBL: SS takes more time to understand things

preferred for its time-tested effectiveness and established methods. Innovative methods to improve home-based learning have yet to be implemented thus we must not be hasty to dismiss its viability.

C: 13 L: 14 Total: 27/30