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Writing skills: Tips for learners

During the exam

- Take some time to choose the question you can answer the best.
- Underline the key words in the question to ensure you keep your focus on these words.
- Write a plan, ensuring you have some things to write covering both sides of the argument.
- Make a note of examples you are going to use to support your arguments.
- Write a clear, focused introduction giving a general overview of your point of view.
- Do not spend too long on the introduction as you will have time to develop individual ideas later in the essay.
- Make sure you are writing using clear, accurate English.
- Use a formal register when writing and avoid conversational words and phrases such as ‘sure’, ‘yeah’ and ‘okay’.
- Avoid using contractions in your writing such as ‘don’t’ and ‘it’s’.
- Use paragraphs throughout. It is good practice to have an introduction, followed by 4 or 5 paragraphs with different points and arguments followed by a conclusion.
- Try to avoid using awkward overly formulaic structural words at the start of each paragraph such as ‘firstly’, ‘secondly’ and ‘finally’.
- For each paragraph, make sure there is a clear point being made and always check you are still answering the question.
- Remember to include a supporting example or two for each main point you make.
- Do not write lengthy descriptions of a situation as your example.
- Keep the examples specific and relevant. General examples are often unclear and unhelpful.
- Evaluate the point you are making, preferably after you have included your example.
- At the end, ensure your conclusion offers a clear final view and that you have stepped back to offer an evaluative judgement.
- Allow time at the end to check over your writing to correct any mistakes you may have made.

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