

Openings: transactional/ persuasive

Starting a piece of writing can be difficult. For **Component 2: Section B – Writing**, know what you want to write, or you will be in danger of writing one or two boring paragraphs before you really get going.

An effective opening

Your first paragraph of any writing task – and your first sentence in particular – needs to grab the reader's interest and attention. You could use one or more of these five ideas.

- A bold and / or controversial statement:

Experimenting on animals is a cruel necessity.

- A relevant quotation:

'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.'
(William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2)

- A shocking or surprising fact or statistic:

99 per cent of the species that have ever lived on Planet Earth are now extinct.

- A rhetorical question:

How many of us can honestly say that we care more about others than we do about ourselves?

- A short, relevant, **interesting** anecdote:

When I was seven, my parents bought me a dog. This was when I first realised that ...

Introducing your topic

After your opening sentence, go on to introduce what you are writing about.

... The average person spends a quarter of their waking life watching television. Are they making good use of their time? Or is television sucking the life out of them, killing them slowly with its mind-numbing mediocrity?

A surprising statistic shocks the reader and grabs their attention. Here, it invites the reader to compare how long they spend watching TV.

Getting it right

Avoid telling the reader what you are going to write about:

In this essay I am going to argue that television is not a waste of time.

Just write it:

Television is informative, educational and interesting.

Two questions engage the reader, and present the two sides of the argument. The second question makes it clear which side the writer is on.

Now try this

Look at the exam-style question opposite:

- 1 Write **three** possible openings that would grab your reader's attention from the start.
- 2 Choose the most effective opening, then complete the introduction.

B2 A proposal has been made to build a skateboard ramp in your local park. You have decided to write an article for your local community website giving your views. You could write in favour or against the proposal.
Write an engaging article for the website giving your views.
(20 marks)

Putting it into practice

Component 2: Section B – Writing tests your skills in writing for **different audiences and purposes**. Planning before you write will help you produce stronger answers. Look at the exam-style question below and the two students' plans.

Worked example

B1 Your local newspaper has started a travel section and has invited readers to contribute.

Write a review for the local newspaper of a place you have visited.

You could write about:

- a town or an attraction such as a museum or theme park
 - what makes the place particularly enjoyable to visit.
- (20 marks)

You need to write 300 to 400 words to answer this question.

Planning for transactional/persuasive writing

To plan for a question like this you should:

- ✓ spend about **5 minutes planning** each answer
- ✓ read the **question** carefully and identify the **topic**
- ✓ **annotate** the question to highlight the **form, audience and purpose**
- ✓ **plan** the features and techniques you will use to support the **form, audience and purpose**
- ✓ create a **full and detailed plan**.

Sample plan

Bradcaster Park

- Good, fun, interesting.
- Playground for kids.
- Lake
-

✓ Some language ideas but undeveloped / unambitious

✓ Some ideas gathered, but more needed

Make sure you provide a range of details for questions like this. In this plan there is no detail added about the lake, the information about the park is not sequenced, and there is no introduction or conclusion.

Improved sample plan

1. Intro: use an anecdote about first visit

2. History: origins as animal market

Goose Fair: 700 years of family fun!

4. What is there? Rides/food – describe with similes and personification

3. Popularity: use statistics about visitor numbers, number of rides & position as top attraction in Nottm

Conclusion: go back to intro – latest visit still as good

✓ Features – title and sub-headings – are appropriate for a review

✓ Ideas sequenced into a logical structure

✓ Detail added

✓ Plans made for opening and conclusion

This student has used a spider diagram but the bullet point planning form used on page 65 would work just as well. It is the detail in the planning that is important, not the style of the plan.

Now try this

Plan your answer to the above exam-style question and write an opening paragraph.

Remember to:

- gather, organise and sequence your ideas
- plan your introduction and conclusion.

Putting it into practice

In **Component 2: Section A – Reading**, you'll need to respond to how a writer uses **language and structure** for **effect**. Read the extract from *The History of London's Black Cabs* on page 102. Then look at the exam-style question below and read the extracts from two students' answers.

Worked example

A2 The writer is trying to show us how difficult it is to be a London cab driver. How does he try to do this?

You should comment on:

- what he says to influence readers
- his use of language and tone
- the way he presents his argument. **(10 marks)**

Sample answer extract

The writer shows being a London cab driver is difficult as the writer can't even open the doors to start with, and panics when two passengers get into his cab.

He also doesn't know where to go as his nerves are 'frayed'.

Improved sample answer

The writer shows being a London cab driver is difficult as the writer can't even open the doors to start with, and he panics when he gets his first two passengers. This suggests that it is a nerve-racking job that probably requires proper training. The writer then goes on to say that his nerves are 'frayed', and he makes a joke by calling the destination 'Tuxedo Junction'. This suggests that the job of a cab driver is difficult, as it has made him very nervous and unable even to think about the correct route.

Now try this

Complete the 'Improved sample answer' on *The History of London's Black Cabs* above. Aim to identify and explain **three** more relevant points.

Commenting on language and structure

For a question like this you should:

- ✓ spend about 12 minutes on your answer
- ✓ read the question carefully and highlight the main focus
- ✓ only use the lines of the text referred to in the question
- ✓ comment on **how** the writer uses language and structure and what the **effects** are on the reader.

- ✓ Clear introduction that refers to the question, although the explanation is not really clear at the end of the sentence.
- ✗ This section only gives evidence without making a point or explaining the effect of the writer's use of language.

Remember that P-E-E stands for **Point – Evidence – Explain**. You need to include an explanation to make your answer complete and effective.

- ✓ Clear introduction that refers to the question, followed by clear evidence from the text
- ✓ Use of linking phrase 'This suggests' clearly signals an explanation
- ✓ Further examples are provided of the writer's choice of language and tone
- ✓ Clear and fully developed explanation that links back to the question

Remember to:

- focus on the key points in the question
- make a clear point
- use evidence from the text to support your point
- explain how the evidence you use supports your point.

Interpreting information and ideas

You will often need to **interpret** the information and ideas in a text. For **Component 2: Section A – Reading** you will need to interpret the information and ideas in a 19th-century text. Some of the words or phrases in a text like this may be unfamiliar and tricky to interpret. You need to be able to infer the meaning and explain it in your own words.

Understanding unfamiliar words and phrases

When you are asked to explain an unfamiliar word or phrase, read the text **before** and **after** it in the extract. This will give you more information and help you to infer the meaning. Remember that you can use this approach with all kinds of text, not just the more challenging 19th-century ones.

Extract from Victorian Cab Drivers. Full text on page 103. Lines 14–17.

There is a great deal of horse-play among these fellows. I observe one old man who is in the habit of going contentedly asleep on his box. It is a favourite device for someone to lift up the body of the cab from the ground, shake it, and let it dash upon the earth.

The word 'horse-play' is followed by an example of a practical joke, so 'horse-play' is likely to mean silly, childish or even dangerous behaviour.

Extract from Letters from Sydney. Full text on page 105. Lines 14–19.

I have had some rankles in my lifetime, but this bangs all. It took me just six weeks to travel 850 miles, part of which was a dense forest, 160 miles through, your only companions being kangaroos, emus, cockatoos, parrots etc, with now and then a black fellow and his family to be seen, stark naked, and about every 50 or 70 miles, a lonely shepherd gunya, or bark hut, in which you can lay on your bed, and count every star there is in the heavens.

This Component 2 exam-style question is about *Letters from Sydney*.

Worked example

Read lines 14–19.

A3 (a) What does the writer mean by 'I have had some rankles in my lifetime, but this bangs all' in lines 14–15...? **(1 mark)**

It means the writer has faced many difficulties and problems before in his life, but his current situation is worse than any of them.

The phrase is followed by lots of examples of the problems the narrator has had on his journey. These details help to explain the meaning of the phrase.

Getting it right

Remember to:

- read the text before and after the word or phrase you need to explain – this will help you to infer the meaning
- explain the **whole** word or phrase you are being asked about in your own words
- keep your answers brief – these questions are only worth 1 or 2 marks.

Now try this

Read the extract from *Victorian Cab Drivers* on page 103 and answer the exam-style question below.

A3 (a) What does the writer mean by 'a man of intellectual resources' in line 5? **(1 mark)**