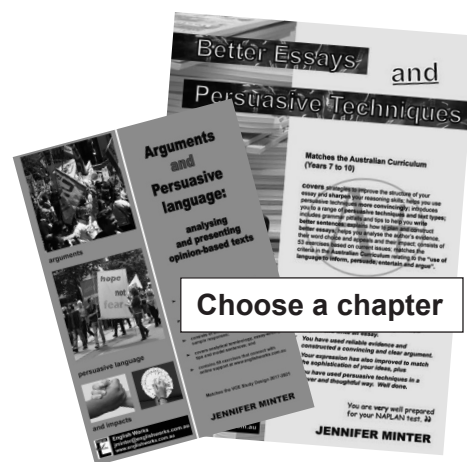


Chapter 5: how to write a persuasive essay

Your point-of-view essay in 10 steps

In a point-of-view essay, you must be able to argue a position rather than simply state your case. Do you agree or disagree with the topic or with an expert's stance? What is the problem and what should be done to fix it?

You will need to explain your choice of evidence, your reasons and their link to the topic. In this regard, you need to develop sound reasoning skills and be aware of any biases that may cloud your judgement.



Step 1: choose a controversial issue and do the research

Gather the evidence: research background material and the opinions of the various stakeholders (groups who have an interest in the issue). Make sure the sources are credible; treat with care the opinion of those who may have a vested interest in the issue. You must formulate your own point-of-view perspective taking into account all the available data. What do the experts say? What are your own observations and experiences?

Step 2: brainstorm the key components

Do a mindmap of all relevant data and viewpoints. Underline important facts, draw arrows between related ideas and group common points. What is the problem? What are the consequences? What are the solutions?

Step 3: classify the evidence

Construct a table. Classify the evidence in a “for” and an “against” column. Underline the most convincing facts, figures, quotes and examples. You must evaluate the information in a reasonable, fair and perceptive manner. Accordingly, you will use a number of reasoning tools to evaluate its currency and credibility. Question or test your information. What does it suggest? What are the consequences?

Step 4: choose your angle and write your main contention

Write your main contention — a concise statement summing up your point of view on an issue. Take a stance and be sure to develop your views in a confident manner. Although you need to adopt a point of view, you still need to be fair and present a balanced argument. That is, you are expected to present and justify the strengths of your argument and expose the weaknesses of your opponents.

Step 5: evaluate the evidence

You need to defend your viewpoint by focussing on the most credible and reliable pieces of evidence.

In each body paragraph, include a combination of evidence such as “hard” facts (statistics, current surveys, research figures, professional experience and an expert’s opinion) and “soft” people stories (case studies, anecdotal accounts and personal observations).

Apply common sense and reasoning skills. By comparing situations, events and policies with something more familiar, and by making logical connections based on the evidence, you can help your audience gain a fresh perspective.

Step 6: plan and write your essay

Do a dot-point plan of each paragraph and fine-tune your topic sentences. You must express your opinions clearly and logically, by writing effective topic sentences and by choosing relevant support material.

Each topic sentence must relate to your main contention — either for or against a course of action or policy.

Organise your paragraphs in order of priority, showing a logical sequence. Start with your most important reason; progressing to the next reason. Consider how you can broaden your essay to show similarities and differences with other schemes, problems and policies.

Ensure that each paragraph has a distinct and different focus and draws upon different evidence.

Step 7: write a rebuttal

In order to strengthen your viewpoint, you will need to write a rebuttal and attack your opponents. You must have good reasons to counter your opponents’ views and persuasively show why they are wrong or misguided. Draw upon your research and expose flaws in your opponents’ argument.

Step 8: fine-tune your writing style

Authors have a characteristic way of writing or speaking. This is called “style” and reflects their personality. Your style is reflected in your choice of words, your turn of phrase, and the order in which you arrange words, as well as sentence structures. Throughout your essay, you will use a variety of persuasive techniques and rhetorical devices to encourage readers to see an issue from your point of view. These include appeals, analogies and emotive and figurative language. Above all, adopt a confident and resolute tone.

A knowledge of persuasive tactics will help you reinforce your argument and will remind you to choose words carefully in order to win over the hearts and minds of your readers. A knowledge of common appeals can help you emphasise your main concerns by exploiting their persuasive power.

Step 9: write your introduction and conclusion; use signposts

Outline your three reasons in the introduction. Each paragraph draws upon these reasons. Your conclusion should sum up your viewpoint and leave the reader with the impression that you are outlining the only possible course of action.

You must guide your readers through your discussion using appropriate signposts. If your essay makes sense to readers, then it is “coherent”. The order in which the information is presented and the logical progression of ideas determine the clarity and coherence of your argument.

Step 10: proof-read and check your draft

Proof-read carefully for spelling errors and delete repetitive words and irrelevant details.

Check the flow of your essay. Topic sentences must be relevant and assertive — written in the active rather than the passive voice. They must flow in a logical and persuasive order.

Make sure you have a sound and interesting variety of evidence and that you exploit the persuasive power of your personal and/or professional opinions, anecdotal recounts and statistics.

Compile a bibliography — a list of your sources.

Essay structure: a standard essay

Your essay must be well organised and show a clear progression of ideas. Each paragraph should focus on a key supporting reason with appropriate evidence and a clear link to the topic. Organise your topic sentences in order of priority. Use the best available evidence for each topic sentence.

STRUCTURE

Introduction

Introduce the issue.

What is the background/problem?

State your main contention and supporting reasons.

Excessive sugar consumption is creating a health crisis.

The Government must implement a sugar tax on drinks. This will discourage high consumption of drinks which contribute to obesity. It will also reduce the strain on the health budget.

First paragraph

Start with your most important reason.

Topic sentence

Evidence/Example(s)/Quote(s)

Explanation

Link

A sugar tax will deter consumers from buying soft drinks.

Real-life story: Connor Cloud (a five year old who is at risk of obesity).

Comparison with WHO figures.

Cause and effect: Increase the price of a can of coke so as to reduce the amount spent (\$2.2 billion) on soft drinks.

CONTINUE WITH YOUR NEXT MOST IMPORTANT REASON AND SO ON

(A standard essay has three to four body paragraphs: try to ensure that each paragraph has a different focus.)

Taxes do work as they help to counter the feel-good marketing messages peddled by Big Beverage companies.

Comparison between Big Tobacco and Big Beverage: proves that taxes can have an impact on people's habits.

Rebuttal

Choose one of your opponent's most important reasons.

Point out the errors in their argument.

Sceptics argue that a sugar tax would restrict an individual's freedom and personal choice.

Appeals: nanny state/excessive government controls.

Counter: cost of health-related diseases to the taxpayer. (Someone has to pay.)

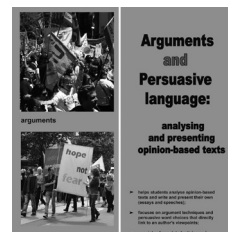
Conclusion

The concluding paragraph sums up your argument. It should refer your reader back to the topic and clearly state your proposed solution. For example, you may wish to refer to a key word or phrase in your introduction. This gives your essay a sense of unity. Do not develop any new points. Aim for an impact and leave the reader with a sense that your views offer the only course of action.



Your essay goals

Should the Government introduce a tax on sugar drinks?



Place the issue in a context and outline your point of view with supporting reasons.

Topic sentence (*forthright tone*)

Reasoning and persuasive techniques:

*evidence and statistics
common sense (cause and effect); real-life example of children (shock and horror/anger and fear)*

Topic sentence

Reasoning and persuasive techniques:

*comparisons
(evidence and attack)*

Signpost the rebuttal

Persuasive and reasoning strategies:

*attack on appeals to nanny state/freedoms
evidence and statistics to shame and show the funding problems*

Conclude with a statement(s) leaving readers in no doubt that there are too many risks.

The statistics are astounding. Nearly half of Australian kids drink sugary drinks every day, which are the single largest source of added sugar in our diet. They are responsible for around half of Australia's high intake of sugar resulting in disturbingly high obesity rates. There is no simple answer, but as the rate of obesity-related diseases continues to increase, it is becoming evident, that the government must implement a sugar tax. This will help to combat the high consumption of sugar and reduce the strain on the health budget.

Most importantly, a sugar tax will deter consumers from buying soft drinks and stem the rise in obesity-related diseases. Health experts remind us that excessive consumption of sugar is one of the greatest preventable threats to our nation's health. For example, five-year-old Connor Cloud is one of the 27 per cent of children who are overweight and vulnerable to diabetes or heart disease. That is because he consumes at least one can of coke per day, which has 10 teaspoons of sugar (above the total limit of six teaspoons of sugar recommended by the World Health Organisation for an entire day). If this one can of coke were to triple in cost, it is likely that Connor would drink less, and that Australians generally would spend less than the current \$2.2 billion figure donated to soft drink companies. Thus, a sugar tax is a necessary tool in the fight against obesity and ill-health.

Additionally, taxes do work as they help to counter the feel-good marketing messages peddled by Big Beverage companies. These companies use their sizeable marketing budgets to undermine health and fitness messages and to downplay the problems of sugar. Just as Big Tobacco tried to conceal the harmful effects of smoking, so, too, does Big Beverage conceal the existence of sugar by using 26 different names. Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the cigarette tax directly contributed to lower rates of smoking. Likewise, it is expected that there would also be a downward trend in the sale of soft drinks, sports drinks and fruit drinks. A study published in the British Medical Journal found that consumption of sugary drinks fell by 12% in Mexico after the introduction of the tax ...

On the other hand, sceptics argue that a sugar tax would restrict an individual's freedom and personal choice. They say that the government should not control people's consumption ... However, people often overlook the fact that it is the government and taxpayers, in particular, who must deal with the consequences of ill-health. Currently, increased medical care and welfare for obesity-related diseases cost taxpayers about \$5.3 billion a year.

A sugar tax is crucial in combatting health issues in Australia. If cigarettes are taxed, then why can't sugar be taxed? After all, it will save lives, improve the quality of life and reduce health costs. That is why it is time to take a stance and do something more effective to improve the lives of Australians.

“We are on the cusp of one of the fastest, deepest, most consequential disruptions of transportation in history”.
(Professor TonySeba, Stanford University economist)

Welcome to the electric car revolution! General Motors, Ford, Mercedes, BMW, and Volkswagen expect Electric Vehicle sales in China to explode, creating a path toward monumental profits. Volkswagen has said 25% of its global car sales by 2025 will be battery-electric only. Britain will ban the sale of new petrol, diesel or hybrid cars by 2035 and other large economies are likely to follow suit.

India is drawing up plans to phase out all petrol and diesel cars by 2032. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for a mix of subsidies, car-pooling, and caps on fossil-based cars. The goal is to cut pollution and break reliance on imported oil. In a country which has 21 out of the 30 most polluted cities in the world, pollution is a serious health issue. Up to 27% of India’s air pollution is caused by vehicles.

With all Australia’s cars sourced from overseas, many commentators believe if we don’t plan ahead and keep up we will be disadvantaged.

Government subsidies (tax breaks and incentives)

Because electric vehicles are, currently, more expensive than petrol, most nations with high sales have relied on subsidies to encourage their use. One option is to offer tax breaks and tighter standards on emissions.

Currently, battery-electric car purchasers in Britain and Germany get a \$4,500 subsidy and in France up to \$8,500. Until a manufacturer’s electric car sales reach 200,000, car buyers in the United States get a \$7,500 tax break.

The Norwegian Government leads the way with the following incentives:

- there are no purchase or import taxes on electric cars;
- the government exempts buyers from 25 per cent VAT at purchase (British equivalent of GST);
- it offers half-price ferry, toll and parking fares and access to bus lanes; and
- it provides a 40 per cent reduction in company car tax for EV buyers.

Subsidies for solar panels

For the past 10 years, Australian state governments have provided subsidies for roof-top solar panels. In 2020 the subsidy on a 6.6kW solar system installed in Adelaide is worth around \$3,700. The Victorian solar rebate is currently up to the value of \$1,888 or 50% of the price of a solar power system (whichever is lowest). Why not subsidies for battery-charged vehicles?



The cost:

A non-EV Hyundai Kona costs \$26,000 and an EV Kona costs \$69,000.

But the cost of such vehicles is falling and studies suggest drivers can recoup the up-front cost by saving on petrol. While electric vehicles will increase demand for electricity, most drivers will mainly charge the batteries at off-peak times when electricity is cheaper.

In his report, “Rethinking Transportation 2020-2030”, which has created a traffic jam in traditional transport circles, Stanford University economist Tony Seba makes some startling predictions. “Internal combustion engine vehicles will enter a vicious cycle of increasing costs”.

“The ‘tipping point’ will arrive over the next two to three years as EV battery ranges surpass 200 miles and electric car prices in the US drop to \$30,000. By 2022 the low-end models will be down to \$20,000. What the cost curve says is that by 2025 all new vehicles will be electric, all new buses, all new cars, all new tractors, all new vans, anything that moves on wheels will be electric, globally.”

What do opponents say?

Some conservative politicians are of the view that EV targets will increase the price of a car by \$5,000. They also state that Australia is different from many countries in terms of the long distances that often need to be covered. They are worried about the charge time and the short driving range.

Employment Minister Michaelia Cash states: “We are going to stand by our tradies and we are going to save their utes ... We don’t want to end the weekend.”

One wonders whether the Government is worried about losing an important source of revenue. It earns up to \$11.6 billion revenue per annum from petrol excises. The tax is around 41 cents per litre on unleaded petrol and diesel. The revenue funds road projects and repairs roads.

However, within six years, Toyota expects to release an electric replacement for its bestselling HiLux, complete with the same rear trays for tradies’ kelpies to jump onto.

Mazda Australia’s managing director Vinesh Bhindi states: “Why should taxpayer money be thrown to entice someone to buy, when the government really haven’t addressed the hard piece which is having renewables, and having the capacity.” Mr Bhindi said that responsibility falls on energy companies and government, not car companies, and “needs to happen first”.

Currently, Australian electricity is mostly generated from coal (81.1 per cent). Federal Government figures show that just 18.9 per cent of our energy supply came from renewables such as solar, wind and wave power in 2018.

Also some claim that cash incentives for electric vehicles will create distortion in the market place and give some an unfair advantage.

Recharging networks

Opponents to subsidies say that it makes more sense for governments to help with the roll out of recharging networks, especially those powered by renewable energy.

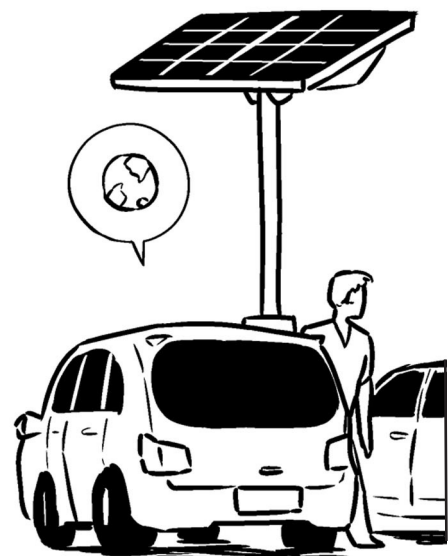
If recharged solely by coal-fired power, EV cars are no better for the environment than petrol or diesel cars. However, when recharged using mostly renewable energy, electric cars have a fraction of the emissions of a petrol or diesel car.

There are a number of private- and publicly-funded projects underway to develop charge networks in Australia. Chargefox plans to have 22 fast-charge sites operating in another few years, linking the capital cities as part of its Australian Renewable Energy Agency-backed network.

The NRMA has 15 fast charge sites. Queensland has an electric-car charging network linking Coolangatta with Cairns through 17 stations.

Should the government provide subsidies for electric cars?

1. *Read the information regarding “Electric Cars”.*
2. *What does the evidence prove?*
3. *Analyse the type of evidence provided: facts, figures, expert commentary, comparative examples, real-life examples.*
4. *Classify the information into “For/Yes” and “No/Against” columns.*
5. *Think about which side has the most convincing evidence. Think in an independent manner, that is, don’t just follow an opinion because an expert or someone you admire thinks in a certain way. Make sure you think about the expert’s background and degree of bias.*
6. *Think logically and critically; test your information. What does it suggest? What are the consequences?*
7. *Organise your points in order of priority, starting with the most obvious and significant point.*



Your introduction

First impressions are important so make your introduction count!

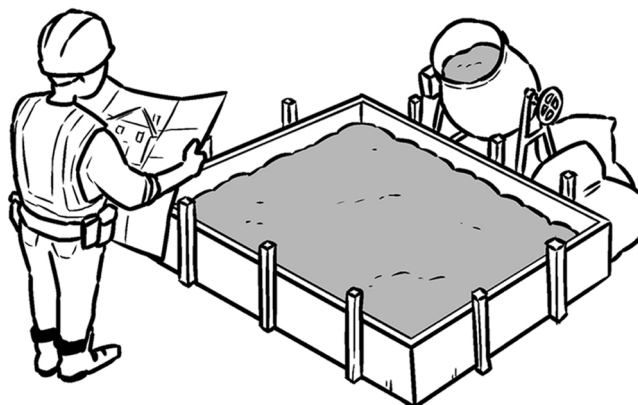
Your introduction should not only set the scene and arouse interest in the topic, but must clearly outline your attitude or “main contention” and supporting reasons in order of priority.

Where necessary, you should also define any key terms and frame your response around these so that you keep on track.

The **main contention** is a concise statement summing up your point of view on an issue.

Take a stance — it is no use “sitting on the fence”.

What is your view on the topic? Do you support or reject a proposal or scheme? For example, schools should drug test students. The Government should increase taxes on junk food to subsidise fresh fruit and vegetables.



Your tone and style

In a point-of-view essay, your tone and style are critical to the message. They reflect the type of relationship you wish to establish with the audience, which is, in turn, influenced by your persuasive intentions.

You must set the tone of your essay in the introduction. Be confident and state your opinions clearly and assertively. It is important to express your views in a way that allows you to sound mature, intelligent and sensitive.

In a formal essay, you will need to use correct grammar and punctuation and standard vocabulary (avoid clichés and contractions) and include inclusive and respectful terms.

You may use some jargon (specialist terms) to convey your expertise and knowledge as well as some emotive and figurative terms to inject colour, interest and persuasive power.

What is the issue and why is it important?

Main Contention

Record levels of pollution are causing significant health problems in many major cities around the world. One solution is to accelerate the transition from fuel-based cars to electric vehicles. Because of the current high costs of such cars — at the present up to three times the cost of a normal car — governments must introduce subsidies or taxbreaks. Governments around the world are taking this obvious step. It is a step that our Australian government must take or Australian consumers will be disadvantaged. Economists believe that subsidies will have an impact upon the cost of battery-charged vehicles and will provide the catalyst for a market “tipping point”. Subsidies will also help manufacturers deal with current problems such as re-charge facilities and driving distances. The move to a greener world is an inevitable one.

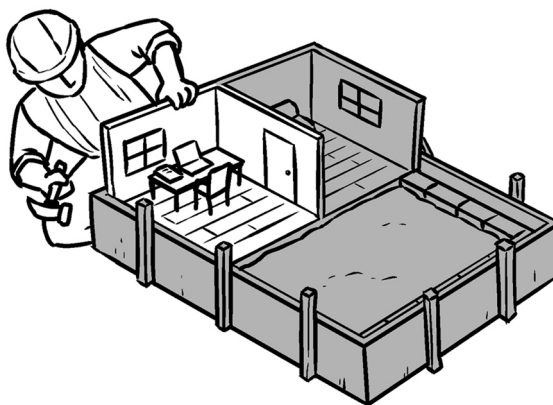
Define the key terms/ the problem

Supporting reasons

Summing up sentence

Your body paragraphs

The body paragraphs should outline your most important reasons in order of priority. Each body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that unifies and controls the paragraph. There should be one main idea in each paragraph.



Topic sentences are statements that form the backbone of your essay and must reflect your key ideas. Progressively, they answer the question, “What do I want to say regarding the topic?” Topic sentences should be clear, precise and persuasive.

Reasoning and persuasive techniques

In a well-written body paragraph, you must ensure that:

- ◆ your topic sentence has a persuasive focus; for example, “it is imperative that the government introduce a subsidy to encourage the transition to solar energy”.
 - » Beware of topic sentences that describe a situation or simple state a problem. For example, “over the past 25 years, duck numbers have decreased by 70 per cent”. Compare: “The government must ban duck shooting to ensure the sustainability of the duck population”.
 - » Generally, topic sentences that use the active voice (“the government must ban duck shooting”) (rather than the passive voice: “duck shooting must be banned”) are more direct and forceful. Use a confident tone.
- ◆ you link your topic sentences to the topic. Each statement should show a clear and direct connection. “A tax on junk food is required to stem the rise in obesity-related diseases.”
- ◆ you link your evidence and examples to the topic sentence: “Mr Boyd’s views reflect those of many public commentators who draw attention to the devastating health consequences of junk food. For example, he states that [...]”.
- ◆ there is a logical flow of ideas throughout your paragraph from a “broad” to a “specific” focus;
- ◆ there is a logical step-by-step progression of topic sentences (key ideas) throughout your essay; link your first and second topic sentences. “In addition to an increase in price, education campaigns are critical if we are to successfully combat the unhealthy consequences of junk food.”

Topic Sentence

Economic context

Evidence

Analyse the significance of the evidence (comparative example)

Link to topic

The government must introduce subsidies to encourage the transition from petrol to electric-charged cars. A subsidy will stimulate demand which will have a direct impact on prices and will help us reach what economists call a “tipping point”— that is a point whereby battery-charged cars will be more economical than fuel-based cars, which in turn will benefit the environment. Many countries around the world are providing subsidies. For example, British consumers get a \$4,500 and French consumers a \$8,500 grant. In Norway, consumers also receive additional incentives such as half price ferry and parking fees. These governments understand the need to rapidly reduce our reliance on oil imports which will also reduce pollution. The Australian Government provided subsidies for rooftop solar panels which had a significant impact on price and uptake. Why can’t they do the same for electric-charged cars?

Your rebuttal

Your discussion should involve a rebuttal. That is, you must find weaknesses in the opponent's argument and counter-punch. The rebuttal is generally your last body paragraph in your essay. Exposing your opponent's flaws enables you to further strengthen your own viewpoint.

Your tone and choice of words — emotive and critical to give an unfavourable image — will help you attack and isolate your opponents.

Be sure to signpost the rebuttal and guide your reader through the paragraph.



Reasoning and persuasive techniques:

- ◆ Examine your opponent's qualifications and motives. Are they likely to gain money or fame from the scheme or proposal? Or perhaps lose money from the introduction of a scheme? Can they be trusted? Is there evidence of double standards? Do they say one thing and do another?
- ◆ How does the author present the facts? Have some facts been overlooked or omitted? In this case, the author may be guilty of sloppy research. You might have researched some information from a current and reliable survey, report or expert that is left out by the author. Have some facts been sensationalised or exaggerated to capture attention?
- ◆ Are the statistics misleading or does the author rely on an outdated survey?
- ◆ Are there errors in logic? Does A lead to B? Just because two events occur at the same time does not mean they are linked.
- ◆ Comparisons: Is "like" being compared with "like"? Is the comparison valid? Look for their errors or blind spots. What facts have they overlooked? What statistics appear to have been (mis)interpreted?

Topic sentence: Introduce one of your opponent's views.

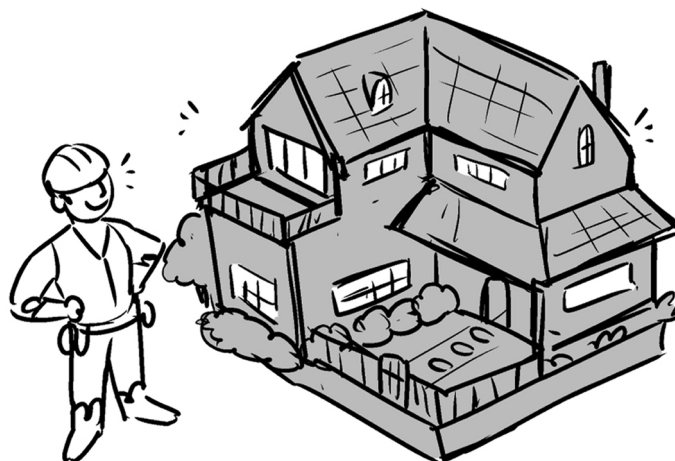
Those who oppose electric cars claim that whilst cars are recharged by coal, nothing will change. They state that the subsidy is a waste of taxpayer's money and distorts the market, which should be left to its own devices.

Counter punch: However, one problem with this outdated viewpoint is that it overlooks the fact that the market forces are concerned with profits rather than the environment and with people's wellbeing. The government needs to set the direction: it needs to support and stimulate the rapid improvements in sustainable battery-charged networks that are already taking place across the country. One example is the NRMA's installation of 15 fast-charge sites. Likewise, Queensland has an electric-car charging network linking Coolangatta with Cairns through 17 stations.

Link: Given the numerous advantages and initiatives already underway, one must question the motives of those who are intent on presenting obstacles in the way of subsidies and progress.

Your conclusion

The concluding paragraph sums up your argument. It should tie together the ideas that were introduced in your introduction and developed in your body paragraphs. It must show how these ideas (causes/reasons/factors) relate to each other and contribute to and reinforce your point of view. If there are two or more parts to the question, be sure to include responses to each part in your conclusion. This gives your essay unity and coherence.



- ◆ Begin with a link sentence that makes it clear that you are now summing up your main points. Phrases such as “in conclusion”, “finally, it is evident that” or “to answer the question whether” seek to place your conclusion in a context and show that these are your final statements.
- ◆ Do not develop any new points. Do not include long quotations or simply restate your introduction.
- ◆ You may use a short pithy quote that reflects your key ideas to inject colour into your conclusion, but basically the paragraph should be in your own words.
- ◆ Aim for an impact and leave the reader with a sense that your views offer the only course of action. For example, you may forecast future trends and the implications resulting from your discussion. Leave the reader with some food for thought. What might happen in the future?

Restate the issue decisively.

Finally, there is no doubt that the imperatives of a changing world and the need to move to greener solutions will accelerate the transport revolution. There is also no doubt that consumers will change from petrol to battery-charged cars. It is a matter of when. The Australian government must provide either car manufacturers or consumers with subsidies that reduce the price of electric vehicles so that we can keep up with world-wide trends. This will ensure that we are keeping up with governments world-wide and not being left behind in the land downunder. As the uptake of electric vehicles accelerates, so too, will the rechargeable technologies provide increasingly more convenient and practical solutions. It is therefore critical that we favour innovative solutions, rather than stick to a tired and defeated mind-set.

Draw together your main reasons and show the implications.

Make an impact.

Rebuttal:

On the other hand, opponents argue that [...]

However, many seek to defend the policy of [...] by asserting that [...]

Conversely, people typically attempt to justify the [...] by claiming that [...]

A spokesperson for the [...] criticises the policy on the grounds that [...]

Contrastingly, opponents state that [...]

Conclusion:

It is clearly evident that [...] To conclude [...] Finally, it is important to realise [...]

Sentence openers