

### Online Comment

Everyone knows what a comment is, yet...

It is undoubtedly a text-type we all produce on a regular basis. Here, regular might as well be every few seconds even, mostly in social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram), as well as in blogs, forums, news portals etc.

However, if the writing of online comments happens to be an exam task, it should not be a one-sentence reaction, remark or outburst. Rather, a 3-5-paragraph long, logically structured, informal text, which comments strictly on the specific topic of the post or article, using the right vocabulary. The comment gives the writer's points, arguments for and/or against the main statement or viewpoint of the source text, or on remarks made by other commentators. In the task instructions:

- A. you are given a situation or a provocative statement as the title of a blog or forum post (e.g. 'How do you protect your personal data on Facebook', 'Socks worn with sandals? Yuck!'). In this version, you have no text to read before writing the comment.
- B. you are given a 4-5-sentence long blog or forum post that you have to read before writing the comments (in this version you have more details to react to than in version A above).



### Opening sentences

This is normally a statement, whether in one sentence or two. You want to make a reference to the source text and then present your overall position briefly, which you will elaborate on further below in some detail.

If you decide to come up with a bit longer intro, you can also write some key words for the topics that you are going to write more about in the main, explanatory part of your comment.

### Body paragraphs (2-3 in exams)

If There are no rules or conventions to follow, but two approaches look appropriate.

- A. If you have already indicated in the opening statement(s) what topics you are going to write about in the explanatory part, here, in the body part you don't need to repeat those. Thus, you will only present your pro and/or con arguments, points, issues, opinions one after the other, preferably connecting them effectively.

- B. The other possible approach is to mention an imagined argument in the imagined original post, and give your pro and/or con response to it. If you have decided to react to three such imaginary arguments, you are probably going to present your reactions in three paragraphs, or in one longer paragraph with clear separation of the individual points.

### Closing statements

The loose, informal nature of the online comment may not require a closing statement at all. But plenty of commentators who take their remarks seriously and want to read meaningful comments in response to their own may write a closing remark, referring back to their overall point, argument and even to the source text, post as well.

## The style and level of formality of an online comment

In your comment you can use an informal, chatty style, using contractions (e.g. *'doesn't'* or *'needn't'*). You express your views, arguments directly 'speaking' to other readers, commenters, yet in terms of vocabulary, you need to be relatively formal, using words, phrases which strictly refer to the topic.

## DOs and DONTs for online comment exam tasks

The following tips, or rather suggestions, which are worth considering before and during the writing of an online comment in an exam situation. Some of them confirm points we've already mentioned above, others are useful extras.

### DOs

- Make clear your overall point in the first statements (either in a separate paragraph or not), probably in one sentence or maximum two.
- Give evidence rather than just your opinion.
- Write a concluding paragraph, probably one sentence, at maximum two.
- Plan your answer before starting to write.
- Use meaningful linking words and phrases to establish cohesion in your comment.
- Use formal vocabulary related to the topic, but feel free to use contracted forms (e.g. *'can't'*, *'won't'*).

### DON'Ts

- Don't tell the author of the post or text to correct his/her article or to write a new one.
- Don't be rude or insulting, but be direct.
- Don't use slang.
- Don't address your comment to anyone (e.g. *'Dear Sir'*, *'Dear Readers'*).
- Don't sign your name at the bottom. Use a nickname or user name instead.