# Article

Articles published in printed and electronic media are written by professional journalists, and we, the readers love getting lost in the witty, clever texts thinking 'Yes, my thoughts exactly!' This is especially true of feature articles where we read someone's opinion, argument or analysis of an issue that we have experienced ourselves or that we have a strong opinion of.

If you have an opinion on the topic of the article at the exam, feel free to choose the article if the exam allows you to choose. In most exams, the task itself is an article written for a print or online magazine (e.g. a student magazine or a local newspaper).

It is a popular choice of text types with candidates due to its inspiring topic, relatively free format and – compared to the essay – a more laid back, informal style.

## First thoughts before writing

In the exam, the topic of the article is usually a controversial, sometimes provocative statement related to a topic affecting the local community and students (e.g. '*No parks, no sport facilities! How long can this go on?*', '*Tuition fees – can they improve our schools?*'. When designing the tasks, item writers focus on creating a task that candidates will be able to complete after a minimal amount of brainstorming.

While in an essay you are required to contrast arguments with counterarguments, in articles, it is perfectly acceptable to choose a side and only argue for that given aspect, ignoring the other side. Try to focus on listing as many points to support your argument as you can in order to convince the readers (within the required word limit). On top of this, you will also be required to produce a logical, well-structured and clear text.

## Opening paragraph

The primary function here is to gauge the reader's interest. Feel free to go for it and drop the bomb with a personal anecdote related to the topic in order to provoke emotions. Another main goal is to communicate to the reader exactly which side of the issue you are taking, but make sure you do so without a direct reference to the title (e.g. '~~I agree with the title~~…'). Think of the title more as a general guideline about the main topic.

## Main body (2-3 paragraphs)

With the main body, you have one goal: to support your stance that you clearly stated in the opening paragraph. Achieve this by dedicating one paragraph to each main aspect of the given topic and by organising your related argument into it.

With regards to the paragraphs, the general rule applies:

One paragraph deals with one main aspect and the supporting sentences are linked to each other. However, compared with the essay, there is one important difference: unlike in an essay, here you do not need to have a 'topic sentence' in each paragraph. Instead, you can think of each logically linked up sentence of the paragraph as equally important.

In order to achieve the above mentioned linked-up structure, it is essential to rely on the help of linking words, which help your reader to follow your train of thought. The genre of the article differs from the other genres mainly due to the importance of the art of making an impact. This means that you should try to do more than just using acceptable word. Have some words at your disposal that you can wow the reader with (e.g. '*surprisingly*,…', '*unbelieveably*,…').

Another interesting stylistic and structural device could be to use some imaginary interviews to provide support for your argument. In these interviews, you can provide answers to the questions you posed and you can do so in the form of direct quotes.

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## Closing

Here, you address the reader directly, asking them to do something expecting some form of reaction from them.

You can go through the main arguments again if you want to make sure you leave a lasting impression in the reader.

If you also manage to come up with a final sentence which refers back to the opening paragraph, you can create a strong impact. Remember that the closing of an article is different from that of the essay in that the main goal here is to involve or convince the reader

## The style and level of formality of articles

The article is unarguably one of the less formal, media genres, where the author is 'talking' to the readers (e.g. to the students or other people affected) in a written monologue hoping to provoke reaction from them. This style allows for contractions to be used (e.g. '*shouldn't*') or to some extent, the use of colloquial, spoken language (e.g. '*Nice job, isn't it?*').

Another way making the article a colourful genre is using rhetorical questions and exclamations in the appropriate place without damaging the cohesion of the text. You can use them to draw attention to the most important points or just make your text more varied, thought-provoking. You can also use strong, vivid vocabulary (e.g. '*spectacular*', '*bullshitting*') for such purposes.

## Articles in the business exam

In business, an article is a text created upon request or by the decision of the writer and is usually intended for a business journal/website. You can use it to argue for or against certain business matters or processes, or you can propose the adoption or rejection of certain business ideas. The requirements are the same as those of the general article: a well-structured sequence of arguments fully supporting a point of view (e.g. why the local government doesn't support local enterprises more).

## Useful links

Luckily, there are a lot of useful materials on the internet for this important genre. Here is our selection:

Nasa Quest (aspects, sample text and task), Squidoo (great tips)

## Format requirements in the Euroexam writing test

Recommended length: B2 – approx. 150 words; C1 − approx. 200 words. This word count is a recommendation only and normally we do not penalise deviation from it (being overlong is the most common occurence). However, it is in your own interest to keep yourself to the instructions of the task. Anyway, before starting the letter, we suggest that you jot down a few keywords and ideas to help yourself decide what to include in the letter and what to leave out.

## Using a dictionary in the Euroexam writing test

Although a dictionary is permitted throughout the entire writing test, we recommend that you primarily use your active vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Remember that looking up words in a dictionary is time-consuming, and therefore only resort to it if it is absolutely necessary in order to express yourself. The dictionary will probably prove more useful when proofreading your finished letter.

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