

The essay

Argue your position with evidence

WORD COUNT	REGISTER	TITLE	STRUCTURE
~400 words (360-440)	Formal	Required	~5 paragraphs

STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT

Title — clear and relevant — not necessarily catchy

Introduction — ~80 words — hook + state your opinion clearly

Body paragraph 1 — ~80 words — bullet point 1

Body paragraph 2 — ~80 words — bullet point 2

Body paragraph 3 — ~80 words — bullet point 3

Conclusion — ~80 words — summarise + restate opinion in different words

DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

- Write in a formal style throughout
- Make your opinion clear from the introduction
- Start each paragraph with a topic sentence
- Use generalisations, not personal anecdotes
- Use formal linking words: However, Nevertheless, Moreover, Furthermore
- Vary sentence length — mix short and long
- Use complex grammar: passive voice, conditionals, relative clauses
- You may mention a counter-argument — but then refute it

DON'T

- No contractions (don't, can't, it's)
- No colloquial or slang expressions
- No overly emotional language
- No personal anecdotes ("When I was 12...") — use general or hypothetical examples
- No over-generalisation ("All politicians are liars.")
- No simple linking words as your only connectors (and, but, because)
- No very short sentences one after another
- No statistics without context

WEAKER VS. STRONGER

WEAKER

"Social media has many advantages and disadvantages for young people today."

STRONGER

"The real cost of social media for teenagers is not screen time, but a slowly shrinking attention span."

Why it matters. A strong essay opens each paragraph with one clear, arguable point. The weaker version lists everything and commits to nothing, so the examiner cannot follow your line of argument.

KEY TIP

Key tip. An essay should make the reader think. It is fact-based and formal. An article should make the reader feel. An essay uses generalisations; a blog uses personal anecdotes.

USEFUL PHRASES

Giving your opinion (without overusing "I")

- It is (firmly) believed that...
- One can argue that...
- Many people are convinced that...
- As far as many people are concerned,...
- It is often argued that...

When you do use "I"

- In my opinion/view,...
- I am inclined to believe that...
- I (firmly) believe that...
- I am (not) convinced that...

Adding arguments

- Furthermore,...
- Moreover,...
- In addition to this,...
- What is more,...
- Not only... but also...

Introducing the other side

- One should, nevertheless, consider...
- The other side of the coin is that...
- On the other hand,...
- Admittedly,...

Conclusions

- Taking these points into consideration,...
- All of this points to the conclusion that...
- On balance, we can safely say that...
- The arguments presented prove that...

MODEL TEXT

The Hidden Cost of Fast Fashion (~400 words • Formal)

Have you ever stopped to think about where your clothes actually come from? The fashion industry has grown dramatically over the past two decades, with consumers now purchasing around 60% more clothing than they did in 2000. In my opinion, the environmental and social damage caused by fast fashion far outweighs the benefit of cheap clothing.

To begin with, the environmental impact of fast fashion is severe. The production of cheap garments requires enormous amounts of water and energy, and releases toxic chemicals into rivers and soil. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, the fashion industry is responsible for an estimated 2 to 8 per cent of global carbon emissions, alongside a significant share of industrial water pollution. Furthermore, most of these garments end up in landfill within a year of purchase. In addition, synthetic fabrics such as polyester are made from fossil fuels and shed tiny microplastics with every single wash. These particles flow into rivers and oceans, enter the food chain, and have even been detected in human blood.

Equally alarming are the working conditions in the factories that produce these clothes. Workers in countries such as Bangladesh and Cambodia are often forced to work twelve-hour shifts for wages that barely cover basic living costs. The Rana Plaza factory collapse in 2013, which killed over 1,100 garment workers, exposed the dangerous reality behind bargain-priced T-shirts. Despite promises of reform, investigations continue to reveal unsafe conditions. Independent investigations have also uncovered widespread child labour and the violent suppression of trade unions. While shoppers in Europe enjoy an endless supply of cheap outfits, the people who actually make them are denied safety, a living wage and basic security.

Admittedly, some argue that fast fashion makes trendy clothing accessible to people who cannot afford designer brands. While this may be true to some extent, it does not justify an industry built on exploitation and pollution. Affordable clothing can exist without disposable clothing. A number of clothing brands have shown that durable, fairly produced garments do not have to be expensive.

Taking these points into consideration, it is clear that the true cost of fast fashion is paid not by consumers, but by workers and the planet. If we genuinely want to address the climate crisis, we must start by rethinking our relationship with the clothes we wear. Consumers can make a genuine difference by buying less, choosing quality over quantity and repairing what they already own.

More online. This text type also has a second model text on a different topic for you to analyse yourself, plus quizzes and a sentence-ordering exercise, at matura.bernhardgmeiner.com.