

## Considering Structure

It should be clear to you by now that time, energy and thought dedicated to your work in the initial stages in the process of writing will have a direct impact on the quality of your final product. Only having arrived at a list of points relevant to your chosen topic you would like to include in your arguments and having explored the lexical items you consider pertinent to the subject under discussion, will you be able to successfully organise your work to formulate a coherent text. The importance of these three stages cannot be emphasised enough. However, it is the question itself which will dictate how you organise your work: you may be asked to discuss a topic, you may be asked to persuade the reader of one point of view, you may be asked to give two sides of an argument. How the question is worded will inevitably direct you towards a certain type of organisation. Only once you have decided the overall structure, can you set about ordering the points you wish to make.

Consider this student answer to the title '*Parents should be responsible if their children behave badly*'. The student who wrote this essay has already been through the preliminary stages of writing an essay, having already made a list of pertinent ideas to be included and having noted the relevant lexical items. There were many possibilities for the organisation of an answer to this title. This student has opted for a standard academic essay organisation of presenting two sides of the same argument.

Exercise. Analyse the student text below. Consider the following :

- decide what the role of each paragraph is in this text
- label the topic sentences
- decide what role each sentence has in the paragraph

Now that you have considered the internal structure of this essay, you are in a position to evaluate the student text. Answer the following questions:

- What are the positive qualities of this answer?
- What is missing ? What would you add?
- What mark would you give this essay if you were the teacher? Why?

### *Parents should be responsible if their children behave badly*

*Many crimes and social problems are caused by children. Despite the damage these teenage criminals cause, parents are not held responsible in most countries. This essay will discuss whether parents should be forced to pay for their children's crimes.*

*There are many reasons why parents should not be responsible for crimes committed by teenage children. First of all, teenagers today are independent. They often move out of the parents' house at 18 years of age or younger. They are expected to learn to take care of themselves and make their own decisions, and not stay like small children attached to their parents. Secondly, parents work. They cannot watch their adolescent children all the time. A third point is that even children from good families can sometimes commit crimes. Parents should not be responsible if they have worked hard to raise their children properly.*

*However, because of the many problems young troublemakers cause, some people feel that we should make parents responsible. Firstly, most juvenile crimes are committed by adolescents whose parents do not care or make any effort to control their children. If children had to pay fines, they might make more effort. Another point is that even though the children may seem mature, they are not really able to make good decisions. Parents should be responsible for raising and teaching their children until they are fully grown. Furthermore, if children know that their parents will have to pay, they will think carefully before getting into trouble.*

*In conclusion, there are good reasons both for and against making parents pay for acts committed by their children. However, I feel strongly that if we want to reduce the number of such crimes, we need to make parents take more responsibility.*

Word count: 289

Although possibly not the most ambitious format, one of the strong points of this answer is the way the text is divided clearly into paragraphs, helping the reader to identify the various components of the essay. These paragraphs have been represented below in the form of a table. The individual parts of the text have been broken down to help you understand how the text has been constructed, and the role of each sentence is identified.

Paragraph 1: Introduction

<b>Present situation</b>	<i>Many crimes and social problems are caused by children. Despite the damage these teenage criminals cause, parents are not held responsible in most countries.</i>
<b>Statement of purpose</b>	<i>This essay will discuss whether parents should be forced to pay for their children's crimes.</i>

Paragraph 2: Arguments against

<b>Topic sentence</b>	<i>There are many reasons why parents should not be responsible for crimes committed by teenage children.</i>
<b>Reason 1: independence</b>	<i>First of all, teenagers today are independent. They often move out of the parents' house at 18 years of age or younger. They are expected to learn to take care of themselves and make their own decisions, and not stay like small children attached to their parents.</i>
<b>Reason 2: parents work</b>	<i>Secondly, parents work. They cannot watch their adolescent children all the time.</i>
<b>Reason 3: unpredictability of criminal</b>	<i>A third point is that even children from good families can sometimes commit crimes. Parents should not be responsible if they have worked hard to raise their children properly.</i>

Paragraph 3: Arguments for

<b>Topic sentence</b>	<i>However, because of the many problems young troublemakers cause, some people feel that we should make parents responsible.</i>
<b>Reason 1: lack of parental control</b>	<i>Firstly, most juvenile crimes are committed by adolescents whose parents do not care or make any effort to control their children. If parents had to pay fines, they might make more effort.</i>
<b>Reason 2: children not mature</b>	<i>Another point is that even though the children may seem mature, they are not really able to make good decisions. Parents should be responsible for raising and teaching their children until they are fully grown.</i>

Paragraph 4: Conclusion

<b>Summary</b>	<i>In conclusion, there are good reasons both for and against making parents pay for acts committed by their children.</i>
<b>Future/personal opinion</b>	<i>However, I feel strongly that if we want to reduce the number of such crimes, we need to make parents take more responsibility.</i>