ARGUMENTATIVE & DISCURSIVE WRITING
These are essays where you are given a topic and you can either agree, disagree or look at both sides of the argument.

For example:
Boys should not have to be clean shaven as part of the school rules.
WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

**Discursive Essay**

A discursive essay presents a balanced view which EXAMINES BOTH SIDES OF AN ISSUE. The topic is discussed in a logical, impartial manner.

**Argumentative Essay**

An argumentative essay presents a forceful set of reasons for ADOPTING ONE POINT OF VIEW; a persuasive stance is taken from the outset.
ARGUMENTATIVE

✓ Formulate a mature opinion about your topic.
✓ State and justify your opinions on a given topic
✓ Prove your point and give reasons in support of what you think.
✓ Plan a well-developed and logical argument: each stage must be linked to the preceding point.
✓ A clear, defined, cohesive and developed argument must unfold.
Your task is to remain impartial and acknowledge various viewpoints.

Plan your essay carefully so that you do not appear to be contradicting yourself.

A well-balanced discussion must unfold.

You may state your stance in the conclusion after weighing both sides.
1. Highlight the key words of the title
2. Jot down many points for and against the topic
3. Brainstorm so that your essay is rich with content
4. Decide whether you agree or disagree with the thesis (argumentative) or whether you are going to present a balanced view of the topic (discursive)
5. Prioritise the key points you wish to focus on and abandon irrelevant material
6. Order your thoughts in a logical fashion, building up to your most powerful argument
7. Plan these key points in a logical, structured way:
   each paragraph should contain a **single, specific topic** (one topic sentence) and the rest should be **supporting material / examples /statistics**

8. Consider ways to **substantiate your points:**
   facts, statistics, quotes from famous people, historical facts, examples

9. **Look at your points from the opposing argument:**
   anticipate the opposition and flatten that argument even before it is raised

10. **Signposting is essential:**
    help the reader follow the logic of your argument (usually found at the beginning of a paragraph and may be single words like ‘however’, ‘similarly’, ‘also’ or phrases like ‘on the other hand’, ‘another way in which’ (these are also called linking words)
11. Now consider your introduction:
   this needs to be attention grabbing and it should clearly indicate how you are going to address the topic
   Ideas for effective introductions include dramatic scenarios, startling statistics, effective quotations, dialogue, rhetorical questions.

12. Write a strong conclusion to pull the essay together.
   You could sum up your earlier arguments or use a dramatic grand slam point at the end.
   Leave your reader thinking!
   At this stage there should be no doubt about your stance.
INTRODUCTION
Name your points of argument AND explain WHY your opinion is important.

BODY PARAGRAPHS
• Make your points of argument #1 in paragraph 1. #2 in paragraph 2 and so on...
• Substantiate – provide evidence to support your argument.
• Reference – refer to a source / research.
• Link – to next paragraph / topic.

CONCLUSION
• Sum it up.
• Don’t include any new information.
• Restate why your view is important!
INTRODUCTION
Introduce the topic in an interesting way.

BODY PARAGRAPHS
• Deal with each of your points in turn.
• You may choose to look at both sides of each point in one paragraph or write these in alternating paragraphs.
• Substantiate – provide evidence to support your arguments.
• Reference – refer to a source / research.
• Link – to next paragraph / topic.

CONCLUSION
• Sum up both sides.
• Don’t include any new information.
• State which argument you believe is more valid.
Use pertinent statistics: not too many, but well-chosen stats build a strong case. Use evidence from your personal life or general observation.

Use powerful well-chosen emotive words: these will convey your interest and involvement and will emphasise your point of view.

Rhetorical questions used sensibly force the readers’ involvement in your argument.

Figurative writing is an important ingredient of a good essay. Just because you are writing in a logical fashion does not mean your writing must be boringly factual.
Contrast can be a very effective technique to emphasise your point.

Humour, if wisely used, too can be a powerful tool: it suggests that you are in control. Beware of inappropriate sarcasm.

Use formal language – avoid colloquialisms, contractions and slang as these detract from your argument.

Edit your work. Grammar, spelling and punctuation should be checked as a matter of course.
NOW YOU TRY!

Pick one of the following topics and brainstorm all the points you can think of that **support** and all those that **go against** the topic. You may find it helpful to do this in table form.

1. Child beauty pageants do more harm than good.
2. Children should spend more time playing video games.
3. The legal driving age should be raised to 21.
4. It should be compulsory to be an organ donor.