

Opinion Writing (Academic English III)

Expressing an Opinion/Principle

When we write about opinions, we often start by stating a claim about reality.

I believe I think I feel I agree I disagree	+ that	+ <i>declarative sentence containing your opinion/claim.</i>
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Examples:

- I **believe that** children are the future.
- I **feel that** it is **unfair** to **force** students to **study a foreign language** in a **graded class** in **university**.
- I **think that** the best way to solve the problem of dormitory noise is to **evict habitually noisy** students.

- I **disagree that** taxes are automatically a bad thing.
- I **agree that** society is unfair to people with mental and physical disabilities.

Suggesting a Policy

_____ should _____.
<i>(who) should (do what?)</i>

Examples:

- The university administration **should create** a student feedback system for the cafeterias on campus.
- The student government **should demand** that more dormitories be built on campus.
- The city government **should rezone** undeveloped parts of the city to create more parking areas.

Putting it Together

Opinion Paragraphs can do several things:

Exploring an Opinion or Principle

If your topic sentence is this:

- I believe that children are the future.

Then your paragraph should explain *why* you believe this. Specifically, your **Primary Supporting Sentences** should give **three reasons** that support your belief, such as:

- Because they will outlive us, children literally are the future of humanity.
- When they grow up, children will lead society and determine the choices we make as a species.
- Children often are much more eager than adults to do something about serious problems facing the world, such as climate change.

Your secondary supporting sentences might explain these ideas in more detail.

This sounds kind of obvious, but remember: a lot of people think our future is technology, or AI, or space exploration, and feel we should put as many resources into these things as possible. If you believe children are the future, we should be investing money in children—in education and support for their development, learning, and empowerment.

Basing a Policy on an Opinion or Principle

You can combine these sentences or use them in sequence when writing an **Opinion Paragraph**. For example:

- I **believe that** attending too many academic hakwons is bad for children. **Therefore**, the government needs to limit the number of hours children can be enrolled in academic hakwon classes.
- I **believe that** attending too many academic hakwons is bad for children, **so** the government needs to limit the number of hours children can be enrolled in academic hakwon classes.

In these cases, your **Primary Supporting Sentences** should focus on reasons why the solution/policy you suggest is the *best* option for dealing with the issue. For example:

- Time limits are a good idea because limiting children's time in classrooms has been linked to better physical and mental health.
- Past efforts to control hakwons' hours of operation have failed miserably so far.
- Only government has the power to legally define over-schooling as a child welfare issue.

You don't need to include a statement of belief if your belief is generally shared with everyone. For example:

- I believe that murder is a crime.

Everyone thinks this. In fact, murder is the word we use when someone kills another person in a way that it is a crime (rather than self-defense, in a war, etc.).

However, if you make a statement that you know some people will not agree with, you can use an opinion verb + that to highlight this statement. For example:

- I believe it is not morally justifiable to kill animals for food.

For this topic sentence, your three Primary Supporting Sentences should focus on reasons *why* you think it is immoral to kill animals for food. For example:

- Millions of animals suffer throughout their lives, and then are slaughtered, just for food.
- Meat is not actually a nutritional necessity for human beings, as millions of vegetarians worldwide demonstrate.
- Animal agriculture is deeply unsustainable, and a serious threat to climate and ecological stability.

Alternately, you might write a topic sentence like this:

- **Because I believe that** it is morally unjustifiable to kill animals for food, the government **should** fund research into the development of artificial meats.

Here, you don't need to explain why you believe this: you need instead to provide three reasons why funding artificial meat research is the best way to solve the problem. You might write **Primary Supporting Sentences** like this:

- Most people who do eat meat are unlikely to stop, but might embrace an alternative meat source.
- Artificial meat will almost certainly be more ecologically sustainable than traditional meat agriculture.
- The artificial meat industry will contribute to developments in biotech generally, which will positively affect other scientific fields like medicine and public health.

The key is always to look at your **Topic Sentence** and see what the focus is, and then to **maintain your focus**, always **supporting that idea throughout the paragraph**.