



**language
learning
scotland.**

spanish discursive essay writing toolkit



Background Higher Level

Both the Higher and Advanced Higher courses require you to write a discursive essay. At Higher level this is done in the classroom with two attempts (a first and second draft). Your title, known as the stimulus will be given in English and you will receive feedback on your first draft via the correction code. There is no time limit on the Higher essay and it should be between 200-250 words.

Background Advanced Higher Level

The difference with the Advanced Higher level essay is that you will have to do this straight after completing the listening paper. This essay does not get marked with the correction code and you only have one attempt to write it. This essay is also timed in with your listening paper, so you'll have about 50 minutes to write it. The stimulus at Advanced Higher is also given to you under the four headings of society, learning, employability and culture. You'll need to pick one of these pre-made titles to write your essay on. The number of words normally written at Advanced Higher is 250-300.

Discursive vs Persuasive

When writing a discursive essay, you must remember that you're not taking sides as that would be considered a persuasive essay. Therefore, you should avoid using phrases such as **pienso que** or **a mi modo de ver**, until your conclusion. We would recommend that you use impersonal phrases like **no se debe olvidar que**. You can also use the third person 'one' in Spanish.

Creating a structure

It's important not to get too bogged down by how to structure an essay, as the content is the important bit. For the majority of the essays that you'll ever be confronted with, you can use the simple structure of:

- Introduction - a simple rephrase of your title and a list of things that you'll speak about throughout your essay
- First paragraph - a list of advantages, try to add some statistics and facts
- Second paragraph - a list of disadvantages, again statistics and facts
- At advanced higher you may want to do a third and fourth paragraph if you feel that your first and second aren't enough. If you are going to do this, you could list a new set of arguments to back up the previous ones.
- Conclusion - Here you should give a summary of the essay, you shouldn't be adding any new information here. To round off the essay you can give your opinion.

Creating a good introduction

To create a good introduction, you should firstly re-word the essay title and use a good opening phrase. For example if your essay title was Climate Change is an unimportant issue in today's society, you should re-phrase this into something like; **Hoy, muchas personas creen que el cambio climático es un pigmento de nuestra imaginación. Entonces es posible que desee expresar una duda de tal manera que, por otro lado, muchos creen que este es uno de los problemas más importantes que ha enfrentado el mundo**

Creating a concrete first paragraph

When creating a first paragraph it's always important to start with a strong opening phrase like, **primero hablemos de...** After this, it is a very good idea to have some statistics from professionals at hand which you have pre-translated into Spanish. For example a statistic from NASA in a climate change essay would be invaluable. **Según la NASA, la temperatura promedio de la superficie del planeta ha aumentado en aproximadamente 0,9 centígrados desde finales de 1800, un cambio en gran parte debido al aumento de dióxido de carbono y otras emisiones antropogénicas en el atmósfera.** If you want, you could finish your paragraph by giving a slight introduction to the next paragraph with a phrase like, **Del otro lado del debate, algunos argumentarían que.**

Creating a confronting second paragraph

The second paragraph should replicate the first. Here you should give the other side of the debate on your chosen topic, a good idea would be to provide conflicting evidence or to give evidence that goes against what you have said in the first paragraph. Again, in this paragraph of your essay you should start with a different strong opening phrase followed by a fact or a statistic. If you choose to do third and fourth paragraph, you should alternate each paragraph so that you are not writing two advantages paragraphs straight after each other. You should also try to keep your paragraphs a uniform size. You do not want to make it look like you don't have anything to say for one opinion as you will be penalised for doing this.

Creating a strong conclusion

Your conclusion should only be a summary of points that you have previously given and no new information should be put here. The conclusion is also the **only** place that you should use any sort of personal language, in other words giving your own opinion on the subject matter. You should still try not to take sides until the very last sentence of your essay, a phrase that we would recommend is; **Claramente, ambas partes tienen fuertes argumentos, pero creo que.**

Good Essay Phrases

Spanish	English
Primero que nada, tenemos que preguntarnos	Firstly, we need to ask ourselves
En primer lugar	In the first place
Al principio	Firstly
Hay muchos	There are numerous
Cualquiera es capaz de ver que	Anyone is able to see that
Vamos a profundizar	Let's go deeper
Uno debe enfatizar que	One should emphasise that
Él / ella te haría pensar que	That would lead one to think that
Vamos a abordar	Let's address that
Las cifras atestan que	The figures attest that
Necesitamos subrayar el punto que	We must underline the point that
A primera vista	At first glance
Para considerar el asunto más detalladamente	In regards to/concerning
Lo que importa es que	What is important is that
Hay quienes dicen que	There are those who say that
Tiene que ser inconcebible que + subjuntivo	It has to be inconceivable that
Ahora bien, hay que insistir en	Now we must insist on
Para ilustrar el tema	In order to illustrate the theme that
No se puede negar que	One can't deny that
Examinar el asunto con más detalle.	To consider the matter in more detail
A esto se agrega un problema relacionado con	To this adding a problem regarding

Good Connectives

Spanish	English
Sin embargo	However
Luego	Next
Entonces	Then
Además	Furthermore
Tan	So (intensifier)
Es decir que	That's to say that
Una vez dicho esto	Having said that
Por esa razón	For that reason/therefore
Quiero decir	I mean
En otras palabras	In other words
Sin embargo	Nevertheless
Por una parte, por otra parte	On one hand, on the other hand
Por un lado, Por otro lado	On one side, on the other side

Colloquial Phrases

You must take care when using colloquial phrases, these can be good to add a bit of humour or for creating emphasis, but when used incorrectly they can be a large detractor to the overall feel of your essay. Therefore, the small selection below is what we would recommend you use. Moreover, you do not want to use too many colloquial phrases as this again detracts from the overall impression that your essay gives.

Spanish	English
Pedir peras al olmo	To ask for the impossible
Es harina de otra costal	That's another kettle of fish
Vale la pena	To be worthwhile
No tener ni pies ni cabeza	It doesn't make any sense
Matar dos pájaros de un tiro	To kill two birds with one stone
Remover Roma con Santiago	To move heaven and earth

Hints and Tips

- Try to go into your exam with a chunk of pre-learned content. Don't go overboard but taking a couple of good openers, connectives, statistics and a nice colloquial expression as these always leave a good impression on the marker.
- You have to remember all of the simple grammar, yes it's nice to show off an imperfect subjunctive but if you make mistakes with gender and the present tense you'll be penalised heavily as these are skills you should already know from National 5.
- When writing your essay try to think of things that you already know how to say, there is no point in trying to translate large chunks of English coming out of your head as 9 times out of 10 you'll make a mistake.
- The dictionary is equally your best friend and your worst enemy depending on how you use it. At the back of Collins dictionaries, you'll find verb tables where you'll find the most common irregular verbs in Spanish pre-conjugated for you. This is a great tool if you forget during the exam but don't start relying too heavily on it, as not all the verbs you need are here. Equally in your exam the dictionary should only be used to look up a word here and there or for double checking accents. It is not for you to create a whole paragraph of information out of. Also in the largest Collins dictionary in the middle between the Spanish and English sections, you'll find a part dedicated to essay writing which includes lots of good phrases.
- Finally, it is important to remember that the subjunctive in Spanish can be very hard to avoid once you put in a negative so brush up on this including the common irregulars.

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