

Discussion Texts General Information

Purpose: to present a balanced, evidenced overview of a controversial issue or topic, usually by giving at least two different perspectives on it

Suggested contexts: debates, overviews, advice, reports

Discussion texts contrast with persuasion texts because they attempt to give a balanced view of an issue, leaving the reader to make up their own mind. As with all text types, discussion texts vary, and elements of discussion writing may be found within other genres. Discussion texts can be focused on any topic, but more polarising issues are useful for teaching children to consider alternative viewpoints.

Generic Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general statement of the issue and why it matters/is contested. • Arguments for with supporting evidence and examples. • Arguments against with supporting evidence and examples. • Sometimes arguments for and against may be presented alternately. • A closing summary or statement and sometimes a recommendation or conclusion.
Language Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written in simple present tense as commonly accepted facts. • Generalises participants and things ('Some people think...' 'Most students...') • Use of reinforcing and opposing adverbial conjunctions to link ideas between sentences and paragraphs. (EG 'However...' 'Therefore...' 'As a result of...') • Generic statements often followed by specific examples. ('Many people feel this goes too far. Local resident, Bob Smith thinks that...') • Images etc may provide additional evidence and information.
Knowledge for the Writer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Titles can be phrased as questions. • Use introduction to explain why the issue merits discussion. • Important to be fair when presenting different sides of the argument. • Support all perspectives with reasons and evidence. • If you opt to give a personal view in the conclusion, you must also give reasons for this.
Key Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking and listening before reading and writing. • Teacher modelling, scribing and shared writing before children's independent attempt. • Increased understanding by the children of the form and features of discussion writing and then increasing ability to manipulate elements of writing to present a balanced argument, with or without a personal conclusion. • Increasing complexity, subtlety, challenge of task (moving from simple for or against to arguments with multiple viewpoints or more subtle differences). • Increasing ability to recognise discussion and understand the devices used in the writing of others; in their own writing to discuss effectively as appropriate to their purpose and audience.

Reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that others might think, feel, react differently and talk about this in the context of eg stories and pictures Listen and respond to ideas and opinions of others and orally express and discuss preferences Communicate opinions through simple sentences, show awareness of listener and use the personal pronoun 'I' as well as joining words like and/but/because
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through talk and role play understand that others might think, feel, react differently In reading, explore how different characters might think, feel, react Write a sentence (or more) to convey opinion and a sentence (or more) to convey the contrasting opinion of another
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral rehearsal of sentence structure Writing in first and third person Joining words and clauses including 'and' and 'because' Sequencing sentences to form short passages Word spaces, capital letters and full stops in sentences Capital letters for names and the pronoun 'I'
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through reading, role play, drama and real life recognise that different people and characters have different thoughts/feelings/views/responses (eg Little Red Riding Hood will see the story differently to the wolf!) Write a series of sentences to convey own opinion and a series of sentences to convey contrasting opinion of another
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statements, commands, exclamations and questions as sentence types. Expanded noun phrases to describe and specify, choosing adjectives to provide relevant extra information Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (and, or, but, when, if, that, because) Correct use of present tense, presenting information as commonly accepted fact Capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks to demarcate sentences Commas in a list Apostrophes for singular possession Use of suffixes 'ness' and 'er' Use of 'er' and 'est' as comparative adjectives
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through reading, role play, drama explore how different views might be expressed/explained/justified – and infer feelings, thoughts and motives from this Write a traditional tale (or other narrative) from two different character viewpoints -discuss both perspectives and express own opinion on who is right Write own simple discussion texts, looking at an issue from two contrasting perspectives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subordinate clauses using subordinating conjunctions Prepositions and conjunctions to express time and cause Rhetorical questions Introduction of paragraphs as a way to organise information – esp to introduce or to group arguments for and against Inverted commas to punctuate direct quotes Consolidation of ks1 punctuation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of 'a' or 'an' according to whether the next word starts with a vowel • Formation of nouns with range of prefixes ('super', 'anti', 'auto')
Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through questioning and debate, continue to explore different perspectives and views • Write own discussion texts, looking at an issue from two contrasting perspectives and possibly reaching – and justifying – their own conclusion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider range of subordinating conjunctions • More precise language to express time, place, manner or frequency • Further expanded noun phrases using modifying adjectives and verbs (most people with an understanding of the subject...') • Conjunctions used to link persuasive points together, provide further explanations or justifications and show cause and effect (so that, therefore) • Paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme • Appropriate use of pronouns or nouns within and across sentences to aid cohesion and avoid repetition • Standard English for verb inflections (we were NOT we was) • Use of articles (a, an, the) and possessive pronouns (my, his, her) • Commas after fronted adverbials • Apostrophes for plural possession
Year 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiment with presentation of different views (own and others) through discussion, drama, debate • Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, noting strong or weak justifications • Plan, compose, edit own discussion texts, presenting both sides of an argument clearly and with justifications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative clauses beginning who, which, where, when, whose, that • Expression of degrees of possibility (perhaps, surely, might, should, will, must). EG Perhaps, with the growing scientific evidence, this issue might finally be resolved. • Devices, such as time conjunctions, to build cohesion within a paragraph • Conjunctions used to link ideas between sentences and across paragraphs • Use of correlating conjunctions (not only, but also) • Brackets, dashes and commas to indicate parenthesis • Commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity • Conversion of nouns or adjectives into verbs using suffixes 'ate', 'ify' and 'ise' • Verb prefixes 'dis', 'de', 'mis', 'over', 're'
Year 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the difference between persuasive presentation of an issue (even one recognising the other side) and balanced presentation • Write a balanced report of a controversial issue, choosing appropriate style and form to suit audience and purpose and including diagrams, statistics etc to give additional evidence where appropriate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference between formal and informal vocabulary and structure • Formal verb inflections • Use of modal verbs to indicate degree of certainty • Passive voice • Subjunctive form – to express things that could or should happen (If it were me making this decision, then...) • Wider range of cohesive devices to link ideas across paragraphs such as repetition of word/phrase, ellipsis, wider range of conjunctions, paired arguments versus grouped arguments • Management of paragraphs in such a way as to support whole structure/meaning of text • Use of colon, semi colon or dash to mark boundaries between clauses • Use of bullet points, colons and semi colons to punctuate lists