

### General

Good writing comes from 3 things;

*Content* = what you say.

This is the information you get from texts and lectures. To improve this, focus on reading and listening.

*Structure* = where you say it.

This is the organisation of your information.

*Style* = how you say it.

This is the way you write your information, the words and grammar you use.

The units of the writing module cover the basics of the last two, *structure* and *style*;

### Structure;

Academic essays/reports have three main parts; introduction, body and conclusion.

### Introduction; general sentences<sup>1</sup>

Start with some very general words on the topic.

### Introduction; thesis statements<sup>2</sup>

Say the main areas that the essay is going to look at.

### Body; topic sentences<sup>3</sup>

Start each paragraph by saying what it is about.

### Body; details and proof<sup>4</sup>

Develop your topic sentence with more detail, examples, quotes etc. If this comes from other peoples' work, you need a reference<sup>a</sup>.

### Body; linking sentences<sup>5</sup>

Refer to the previous paragraph if it helps improve the flow of your essay.

### Body; concluding sentences<sup>6</sup>

Summarise your findings after every few paragraphs, especially in longer essays. Try to relate back to the title as it helps the reader follow your argument.

### Conclusion; summary<sup>7</sup>

Summarise your main points, but be more opinionated than in your thesis statement.

### Conclusion; future reference<sup>8</sup>

Maybe finish your essay with a recommendation, a suggestion or a warning.

### Structure

#### Would a ban on violent video games be useful?

Video gaming is becoming an increasingly important form of recreation, especially for young men. However, some people are now beginning to question the influence of particular games, especially those involving warfare and killing, citing the role that such games allegedly played in certain murder cases<sup>1</sup>. While some believe that such games are harmless fun, others believe they damage society and consequently should be banned<sup>2</sup>.

Supporters of these games, such as the companies who produce them, claim that there is no need for concern<sup>3</sup>. To support their opinion, they cite studies by psychologists which indicate that gamers are no more likely to commit violent crime than non gamers. A report by Braxton University in the United States found that among 234 gamers, arrest and conviction levels for any form of crime were actually 0.2% lower than for non gamers<sup>4</sup> (Brown, 1998)<sup>4a</sup>. Both those who produce, and those who play the games, claim they are being unfairly blamed for the problems of society, and point out that no one would ever demand that books with violent themes should be banned for their negative influence.

On the other hand, a growing number of people reject this view<sup>5</sup>. They argue that studies such as the one above can only measure the short term direct influence. They suggest that on certain vulnerable people, the watching and playing of violent scenarios for long periods of time, must have an effect. They cite the recent court case in Addington, Scotland where the defendant himself claimed to have been directly influenced by the game he had been playing continuously before attacking his best friend (Crowley and Stich, 2001). Furthermore, they point out that many male teenagers will have spent over a year of their life playing video games by the time they are 18, (Crowley and Stich, 2001) and common sense suggests this must have an effect.

The issue of regulation, therefore is a difficult one as not everyone believes that action is necessary. Also, even if it were agreed that a ban on certain games was beneficial, there is the question of enforcement. Young people would still be able to buy games because of CD piracy, plus could buy them over the internet from countries where they had not been banned. Consequently, a ban would be completely ineffective<sup>6</sup>.

In conclusion, evidence on the influence of violent games seems inconclusive, and unlikely to change the mind of those who already have a strong opinion on the subject. Yet even if it were decided that a ban was desirable, circumstances indicate it would not work<sup>7</sup>. Hence, it would seem that the problems we have with violence in our society will have to be addressed in a more imaginative way than simply banning potential culprits<sup>8</sup>.

**Style;**

Academic writing uses certain grammar and vocabulary;

**Grammar; fewer questions<sup>1</sup>**

Avoid direct questions (eg 'What is the influence of particular games?') as they can sound too informal.

**Grammar; passive<sup>2</sup>**

Occasionally use this to sound more formal than the active (eg 'We should ban them') but don't overuse it.

**Grammar; long forms<sup>3</sup>**

Use the full form of the verb (eg 'there is' not 'there's')

**Grammar; longer sentences<sup>4</sup>**

Use a mix of sentence lengths and types, including complex sentences. These have more varied grammar.

**Grammar; third person<sup>5</sup>**

Avoid 'I' (the 1<sup>st</sup> person) in academic writing. Instead, use some form of 'they'/'he' etc (the 3<sup>rd</sup> person) Never use 'you' as it is too informal.

**Vocabulary; abstract words<sup>6</sup>**

Use these to describe the general rather than the particular, ie the whole idea rather than the actual thing. Compare 'traffic' (abstract) and 'cars' (not abstract), or 'regulation' (abstract) and 'laws' (not abstract).

**Vocabulary; formal words<sup>7</sup>**

Use words that sound academic and formal – here a less formal phrase would be 'a good idea'.

**Vocabulary; linking words<sup>8</sup>**

Use these to help the reader to see links between your information, eg words like 'however', 'despite' etc Also use other words like relative pronouns, participles and conditionals to do the same.

**Vocabulary; adverbs<sup>9</sup>**

Use words like 'slightly', 'perhaps' 'sometimes' etc to add information to verbs and adjectives. They make your work sound more precise and balanced.

**Vocabulary; 'soft' verbs<sup>10</sup>**

Use words like 'seem', 'appear', 'would seem' etc to again make your work sound more balanced.

**Style**

**Would a ban on violent video games be useful?**

Video gaming is becoming an increasingly important form of recreation, especially for young men. However, some people are now beginning to question the influence of particular games<sup>1</sup>, especially those involving warfare and killing, citing the role that such games allegedly played in certain murder cases. While some believe that such games are harmless fun, others believe they damage society and consequently should be banned<sup>2</sup>.

Supporters of these games, such as the companies who produce them, claim that there is<sup>3</sup> no need for concern. To support their opinion, they cite studies by psychologists which indicate that gamers are no more likely to commit violent crime than non gamers<sup>4</sup>. A report by Braxton University in the United States found that among 234 gamers, arrest and conviction levels for any form of crime were actually 0.2% lower than for non gamers (Brown, 1998). Both those who produce, and those who play the games, claim they are being unfairly blamed for the problems of society, and point out that no one would ever demand that books with violent themes should be banned for their negative influence<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, a growing number of people<sup>5</sup> reject this view. They argue<sup>5</sup> that studies such as the one above can only measure the short term direct influence. They suggest that on certain vulnerable people, the watching and playing of violent scenarios for long periods of time, must have an effect. They cite the recent court case in Addington, Scotland where the defendant himself claimed to have been directly influenced by the game he had been playing continuously before attacking his best friend (Crowley and Stich, 2001). Furthermore, they point out that many male teenagers will have spent over a year of their life playing video games by the time they are 18, (Crowley and Stich, 2001) and common sense suggests this must have an effect.

The issue of regulation<sup>6</sup>, therefore is a difficult one as not everyone believes that action is necessary. Also, even if it were agreed that a ban on certain games was beneficial<sup>7</sup>, there is the question of enforcement. Young people would still be able to buy games because of CD piracy, plus could buy them over the internet from countries where they had not been banned. Consequently<sup>8</sup>, a ban would be completely<sup>9</sup> ineffective.

In conclusion, evidence on the influence of violent games seems<sup>10</sup> inconclusive, and unlikely to change the mind of those who already have a strong opinion on the subject. Yet even if it were decided that a ban was desirable, circumstances indicate it would not work. Hence, it would seem that the problems we have with violence in our society will have to be addressed in a more imaginative way than simple banning potential culprits.