OPINION ESSAY INSTRUCTIONS AND SAMPLE

Write about the following topic:

In the last 20 years there have been significant developments in the field of information technology (IT), for example the World Wide Web and communication by email. However, these developments in IT are likely to have more negative effects than positive in the future.

To what extent do you agree with this view?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge.

1. Introduction
2. Body Paragraphs
3. Conclusion

1) Introduction

Here is an example of introduction for the above essay question about IT:

The last two decades have seen enormous changes in the way people's lives are affected by IT, with many advances in this field. However, while these technological advances have brought many benefits to the world, it can be argued that these developments in IT will result in more negative impacts than positive.

As you can see, the first sentence makes sure it refers to the topic (IT) and uses facts about IT taken from the question. Note that these are paraphrased - you must not copy from the exam!

The second part then clearly sets out what the essay will be about and confirms the writer's opinion (some questions may not ask for your opinion, but this one does).

2) Body Paragraphs

For your body paragraph, each paragraph should contain one controlling idea, and have sentences to support this.

Let's look at the first paragraph for the essay about IT. The essay is about the benefits and drawbacks of IT, so these will need to be discussed in separate paragraphs.

Here is the first body paragraph:

To begin, email has made communication, especially abroad, much simpler and faster, resulting in numerous benefits for commerce and business. Furthermore, the World Wide Web means that information on every conceivable subject is now available to us. For example,
people can access news, medical advice, online education courses and much more via the internet. It is evident that these improvements have made life far easier and more convenient for large numbers of people and will continue to do so for decades to come.

The controlling idea in this first paragraph is the ‘benefits of IT’, and there are two supporting ideas, which are underlined. No drawbacks are discussed as the paragraph would then lose coherence.

Most of the essay will focus on the negative aspects of IT, as the writer says there are more negative effects in the introduction. So the next two paragraphs are about these.

The topic sentence in the next paragraph therefore tells us we are changing the focus to the negative points:

Nevertheless, the effects of this new technology have not all been beneficial. For example, many people feel that the widespread use of email is destroying traditional forms of communication such as letter writing, telephone and face-to-face conversation. This could result in a decline in people’s basic ability to socialize and interact with each other on a day-to-day basis.

The final body paragraph gives the last negative effect:

In addition, the large size of the Web has meant that it is nearly impossible to regulate and control. This has led to many concerns regarding children accessing unsuitable websites and viruses. Unfortunately, this kind of problem might even get worse in the future at least until more regulated systems are set up.

3) Conclusion

The conclusion only needs to be one or two sentences, and you can do the following:

- Re-state what the essay is about (re-write the last sentence of your introduction in different words)
- Give some thoughts about the future

Here is an example:

In conclusion, developments in IT have brought many benefits, yet I believe developments relating to new technology are likely to produce many negative effects in the future that must be addressed if we are to avoid damaging impacts on individuals and society.
The full Essay:

The last two decades have seen enormous changes in the way people's lives are affected by IT, with many advances in this field. However, while these technological advances have brought many benefits to the world, it can be argued that these developments in IT will result in more negative impacts than positive.

To begin with, email has made communication, especially abroad, much simpler and faster, resulting in numerous benefits for commerce and business. Furthermore, the World Wide Web means that information on every conceivable subject is now available to us. For example, people can access news, medical advice, online education courses and much more via the internet. It is evident that these improvements have made life far easier and more convenient for large numbers of people and will continue to do so for decades to come.

Nevertheless, the effects of this new technology have not all been beneficial. For example, many people feel that the widespread use of email is destroying traditional forms of communication such as letter writing, telephone and face-to-face conversation. This could result in a decline in people's basic ability to socialize and interact with each other on a day-to-day basis.

In addition, the large size of the Web has meant that it is nearly impossible to regulate and control. This has led to many concerns regarding children accessing unsuitable websites and viruses. Unfortunately, this kind of problem might even get worse in the future at least until more regulated systems are set up.

In conclusion, developments in IT have brought many benefits, yet I believe developments relating to new technology are likely to produce many negative effects in the future that must be addressed if we are to avoid damaging impacts on individuals and society.

(287 words)

Recuerda: en las PAU debes restringir el número de palabras a 150.