General advice

**Planning**

* You have no more than 1h15
* The essay must be between 200 and 250 words in length. Indicate the number of words at the end. Do not go over or you will be penalised.
* You must do a plan before you start. Spend at least 15 minutes on this and make sure you keep a tight focus on the question asked (and NOT what you would like to say on the topic)
* Indicate clearly which essay you have chosen
* Copy the title correctly! Misspelling words or phrases from the title will not make a good impression!

**Focussing on the question**

* Do not turn the title into your own preferred question!
* When a title asks, for example, whether something benefits *everyone*, do answer the question, rather than listing the pros and cons.
* Generally, avoid merely listing the pluses and minuses, or the pros and cons. Keep a tight focus on all the words of the essay question.
* Pay attention to key words in the essay title, such as “ **pour tout le monde**”, “**spécial**”, “**trop de**”, “**problème**”, “**jeune**”, “**essentiel**”, “**importance**”, “**le but**”, “**seul/seulement**”
* For certain titles, pay attention to whether you are required to discuss the *causes* or the *effects*
* Address all aspects of the question
* When a title is an open title, try and contain the essay to a few well-chosen and well-presented views. If you try to cover too much, it will lead to a superficial essay.
* Avoid providing long lists of activities with little or no analysis.

**Presenting your arguments**

* Avoid being too personal in the essay (for ex., don’t talk about your hobbies)
* It is sometimes useful, when you are short of ideas, to put yourself in the shoes of someone else:
* What would a policeman/a lawyer/a foreigner/a parent/a politician/a scientist, etc think about the issue?
* If you’re a man, what would a woman think about this? Would they think differently? (not necessarily, but sometimes worth asking)
* What would a senior citizen / retired person / grand-parent think about this?
* What would someone from a different social class / cultural or ethnic background think about this?

You are not asked to discuss at length what all these different people may think, but it can be helpful in seeing different aspects of an issue. Then you can present a balanced argument and say what you think.

**Using accurate language**

* Base your essay on what you can say in French. Your range of expression is wider in English than in French. If you write first in English and then translate, you are setting yourself almost impossible problems of translation.
* Use topic-specific vocabulary
* Use some useful linking words and set expressions, but use them sparingly as you do not have too many words at your disposal.
* The limited word count requires you to go straight to the point and to be clear – no word should be wasted. Each one must count in terms of its linguistic value and its contribution to the argument.
* Do not make your sentences too long as you run the risk of losing your train of thought and confusing the issue

**Introduction:**

- A good introduction is brief and pertinent

- You should introduce the theme of the essay and the issues at stake

Example of an introduction: Au sujet des internats (Croyez-vous que la vie en internat soit benéfique?):

*La discipline associée à la vie en internat présente des avantages et des inconvénients. Les internats actuels ne sont plus ce qu’ils étaient il y a 50 ans, et beaucoup d’adolescents y trouvent un équilibre propice au travail. Mais cela depend de la personnalité, car pour certains, l’internat est synonyme d’isolement.* *Dans le climat actuel d’augmentation de l’échec scolaire et des suicides chez les jeunes, il convient en effet d’examiner la qualité de vie dans ces institutions.***(78 words)**

**Note: this is probably too long but it is to give you an idea of how you can introduce a topic and put it into a relevant context.**

Ways to start an introduction:

*Dans la société d’aujourd’hui…/ A notre époque…/ Depuis le début du 21ème siècle…/ De nos jours../ Le 21ème siècle a vu l’invention de…/ A présent… on peut constater que…*

**Main body**

* Aim to develop 2-3 points/examples for each side of the argument; or 3-4 well-chosen aspects of the issue
* If you have a two-part plan, aim for each side of the argument to be of approximately equal length, to ensure a balanced argumentation
* It is often a good idea to start with the point of view which is contrary to your own, and finish by giving the points supporting your point of view (which are likely to be stronger and leave the reader at the end with an impression of really good arguments)
* Equally, in essays which require an open plan with a list of arguments, rank them in order: from the least important to the most important. Finish with your strongest argument.

**Conclusion:**

* Refer back to the title but do not repeat it exactly
* Do not do a plain summary of what you have just said, but reflect upon the main points of the discussion and weigh up both sides of your argument
* End with a strong opinion
* Do not present new information but open up on a clear question for the future

Example of a conclusion: Sur l’uniforme scolaire (Que pensez-vous de l’uniforme scolaire?):

*Au coeur du débat sur les tenues vestimentaires à l’école, il y a la question de liberté, mais aussi celle de respect et de discipline. Meme si le lien n’a pas été établi scientifiquement entre l’uniforme et les bons résultats scolaires, je pense que l’uniformité diminue les sources de conflits et assure ainsi une meilleure productivité. Mais, finalement, le vraie question n’est-elle pas de savoir comment promouvoir le désir intérieur de respect des autres et l’autodiscipline?* **(76 words)**

**Different kinds of essay questions:**

*Note: Some of the following essay questions are much harder than what you would have to do in the WJEC FN2 paper. There are here to illustrate a certain type of question, and perhaps for you to answer as practice.*

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| **Ways to tackle the question** | **Examples of questions** |
| **Yes/No, For/against (binary plan)** | Est-il scandaleux d’inclure des moments de divertissements dans les prisons?“La télévision met la littérature en péril”. Etes-vous d’accord?L’art est-il réservé à une élite?Pensez-vous que la publicité devrait être interdite?“La liberté de presse doit connaitre des limites”. DiscutezLa technologie a-t-elle rendu l’homme plus heureux? |
| “Les medias nous ont enlevé nos facultés critiques”. Etes-vous d’accord?  |
| **Definition/Interpretation, analysis, is it a realistic/limiting view (Does asking or saying this reveal other issues?)** | “Lire, c’est vivre plus”. Partagez-vous cette opinion?“Tout ce qui compte dans le monde d’aujourd’hui, c’est l’argent”. Partagez-vous cette opinion?“Il n’est plus possible de conserver une identité nationale – aujourd’hui nous sommes tous citoyens du monde”. Que pensez-vous de ce point de vue?“La musique contemporaine est un instrument de crétinisation”. Etes-vous d’accord?“La télévision, de nos jours, c’est pour les imbéciles”. Que pensez-vous de cette opinion? |
| On ne peut pas être vertueux sans religion. Discutez“Notre société est obsédée par la trivialité”. Etes-vous d’accord? |
| **Explanation of context, analysis of a simple fact/data/event, personal view** | Est-ce que la discrimination positive vous parait juste?“Il est juste que les étudiants paient leurs études universitaires”. Que pensez-vous de cette affirmation? “La publicité est une activité immorale surtout quand il s’agit de certains produits comme l’alcool et le tabac”. Etes-vous d’accord? “Le mariage est une institution en péril?” Que pensez-vous de cette affirmation? “Le tourisme est un des maux de notre époque”. Etes-vous d’accord avec cette affirmation? |
| **Explanation of context (before/after), reflection on quantification (a little, a lot, not at all), new issues/problems created by level of quantification** | Dans quelles mesures le téléphone portable a-t-il changé la vie des jeunes?“L’équilibre familial est fragile”. Dans quelles mesures est-ce vrai? |
| Dans quelles mesures l’informatique incite-t-il les gens à la passivité?“A l’époque actuelle, il n’est plus nécessaire de voyager”. Que pensez-vous de cette affirmation? |
| **Definition, precise examples, evaluation** | Que pensez-vous du cyber-enseignement?Que pensez-vous des émissions de télé-réalité? |
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