

# Précisions sur les exigences de l'épreuve unique de production écrite du programme de base d'anglais, langue seconde

Compétence 3, *Écrire et produire des textes*

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## Introduction

Le présent document vise à soutenir les enseignantes et enseignants dans l'appropriation de l'épreuve unique de production écrite du programme de base d'anglais, langue seconde, et à aider les élèves à mieux comprendre l'article d'opinion.

La première partie, destinée aux enseignants, est présentée en français. La seconde partie, destinée aux élèves, est en anglais.

Ce document remplace toute version antérieure.

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## PREMIÈRE PARTIE – VERSION DESTINÉE AUX ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS

### RÉDACTION D'UN ARTICLE D'OPINION DANS LE CADRE DE L'ÉPREUVE UNIQUE DE PRODUCTION ÉCRITE DU PROGRAMME DE BASE D'ANGLAIS, LANGUE SECONDE

#### INTRODUCTION

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Dans le cadre de l'épreuve unique de production écrite de 5<sup>e</sup> secondaire du programme de base d'anglais, langue seconde, l'élève doit rédiger un article d'opinion en anglais destiné à un magazine Web, en réponse à **une** question choisie entre les deux qui lui sont proposées. Son article doit répondre à la question retenue, tenir compte du destinataire ciblé et de la politique éditoriale, et le contenu doit être organisé, développé et cohérent.

#### INTENTION DE COMMUNICATION ET DESTINATAIRE

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L'**intention de communication** et le **destinataire** sont étroitement liés, puisqu'il est pratiquement impossible de considérer l'un sans considérer l'autre.

L'**intention de communication** représente le but de l'élève. L'élève pourrait se poser la question suivante : Pourquoi est-ce que je rédige cet article d'opinion? Qu'est-ce que je dois accomplir? Dans l'épreuve unique de production écrite du programme de base d'anglais, langue seconde, le but de l'élève est de rédiger un article d'opinion en réponse à une des deux questions proposées, dans lequel il présente une opinion **éclairée** en vue de persuader le destinataire ciblé—les lecteurs du magazine, qui ont peu ou pas de connaissances du sujet.

L'élève doit donc planifier son article en fonction de l'intention de communication et du destinataire ciblé. Ainsi, il doit adopter une position ferme et choisir des éléments à l'appui crédibles. Il doit ensuite organiser ces informations de façon à produire un texte développé, cohérent et facile à comprendre. Il doit également se rappeler que même si c'est l'enseignante ou enseignant qui évaluera son article, le destinataire ciblé n'est ni l'enseignant, ni des lecteurs ayant lu les textes du *Preparation Booklet*.

#### SUJET, POSITION ET PRISE DE POSITION

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- Le **sujet**, c'est la question que choisit l'élève entre les deux qui lui sont proposées, par exemple *Do professional athletes make too much money?*
- La **position**, c'est le point de vue qu'adopte l'élève à l'égard de la question retenue, par exemple *Many professional athletes make too much money.*
- La **prise de position**, c'est le passage ou la phrase où l'élève indique clairement sa position au lecteur, par exemple *It is ridiculous to pay so many professional athletes such insanely high salaries.* Il s'agit également du point de vue que l'auteur veut faire valoir.

La prise de position de l'élève peut être nuancée, pourvu qu'elle soit ferme et claire. Comparer les exemples ci-dessous :

- ☺ *Most professional athletes rightfully deserve their high salaries, but many are paid too much money.*
- ☺ *Only a few professional athletes deserve their high salaries.*
- ☹ *Do professional athletes make too much money? It depends.*

## STRUCTURE

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L'article d'opinion comporte des éléments constitutifs « universels », c'est-à-dire que l'on trouve dans la plupart des types d'écrits, par exemple :

- un début, un milieu et une fin;
- une introduction qui est pertinente et suscite l'intérêt du lecteur;
- une intention de communication claire;
- un contenu pertinent, complet et organisé de façon logique;
- une mise en paragraphes appropriée;
- des mots charnières ou des phrases de transition reliant les idées entre elles et les paragraphes entre eux afin que l'article coule bien;
- un langage précis et idiomatique;
- un registre de langue approprié.

L'article d'opinion comporte également ses propres éléments constitutifs, lesquels sont expliqués en détail ci-dessous.

### Introduction

L'introduction a pour but de piquer l'intérêt du lecteur et de présenter le sujet et la prise de position.

- Voici quelques-unes des techniques couramment utilisées pour **piquer l'intérêt** du lecteur dans un article d'opinion.
  - Poser une question : *Have you ever wondered how much professional athletes make per game?*
  - Présenter un énoncé percutant : *Alex Rodriguez will make more this year than all the Houston Astros combined—a lot more<sup>1</sup>.*
  - Recourir à une description : *In your average ball game, players get about three at-bats and they stand on the field for nine innings. Total game time: two to three hours. Win or lose, many players go home with thousands of dollars in their pockets.*
  - Recourir à une anecdote : *During the 2012 season, Yunel Escobar, who then played for the Toronto Blue Jays, was suspended for three games. The suspension cost him about \$90,000 in salary. That's \$30,000 per game. That's right: **per game**.*
  - Faire référence aux actualités : *The recent signing of a multimillion dollar contract by [name of athlete] has once again raised the question of the astronomical salaries in pro baseball.*
- Lorsqu'il présente le sujet, l'auteur doit parfois en exposer le contexte.
- La prise de position devrait être amenée de manière attrayante et se fondre dans l'introduction.
- L'introduction présente rarement le plan (sujet divisé), contrairement à ce que l'on peut trouver dans les écrits scolaires ou spécialisés.

Comparer les introductions ci-dessous.

Introduction efficace	<i>In 2011, Joe Mauer, catcher for the Minnesota Twins, earned \$23 million for the baseball season, motorcycle racer Valentino Rossi made about \$20 million and NBA star Kobe Bryant made over \$25 million. Such salaries may seem astronomical, but these athletes deserve every penny.</i>
Introduction peu efficace	<i>Professional athletes make a lot of money. Do they make too much? I think no and I will explain my opinion.</i>

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1. Source : Associated Press, *A-Rod will make more than Astros* [En ligne], [espn.go.com/mlb/story/\\_/id/9109596/alex-rodriguez-make-more-houston-astros-combined-salary](http://espn.go.com/mlb/story/_/id/9109596/alex-rodriguez-make-more-houston-astros-combined-salary) (Consulté le 21 octobre 2013).

## Corps du texte

C'est dans le **corps du texte** que l'élève élabore une argumentation convaincante. Il ne peut se contenter d'aligner des arguments ou d'analyser la problématique. Voici ce que l'élève doit faire :

- **Choisir des éléments à l'appui solides pour soutenir sa position.** Les arguments doivent concorder avec la position de l'élève, être logiques<sup>2</sup> et s'appuyer sur des éléments factuels (p. ex. : faits, statistiques, exemples ou expériences personnelles crédibles).

Prise de position : *It is ridiculous to pay so many professional athletes such insanely high salaries.*

Éléments à l'appui :

*Even if we consider that the career of a professional athlete is relatively short, many still make too much money (argument). Let's say the average person works for 30 years at an average of \$50,000 per year. This makes a total of \$1.5 million over this person's career. Many pro athletes make this much in a few weeks or months of work (exemple).*

*To pay high salaries, team owners must raise the price of tickets, which, in some cases, may hurt the team (argument). The price of tickets has skyrocketed and many stadium seats are left empty. Without fans, there are no games, and without games, there are no sky-high salaries (fait).*

- **Éviter de présenter des idées qui, bien qu'intéressantes, n'appuient pas sa position.** Laisser de côté les idées qui se rapportent au sujet de façon générale, mais pas directement à la position adoptée.
- **Élaborer l'argumentation en organisant ses idées et en montrant clairement comment les éléments à l'appui soutiennent sa position.**
- **Défaire les principaux contre-arguments.** Au lieu de ne pas tenir compte des points de vue contraires ou des objections possibles, un bon auteur les soulève et les défait.

Contre-argument : *The Habs games are almost always sold out.*

Réponse de l'auteur : *True, not all teams have difficulty filling their stadiums, but attendance should not be taken for granted. Many clubs are currently struggling to attract fans. Let's not forget what happened to the long-gone Montréal Expos, among others.*

- **Établir des liens explicites entre les idées.** Sinon, il revient au lecteur de le faire. Il y a alors de fortes chances que le lecteur abandonne sa lecture.

## Conclusion

La conclusion d'un texte de 225 mots peut compter une ou deux phrases. Son but consiste certes à clore l'article, mais aussi à produire un effet durable chez le lecteur en lui donnant matière à réflexion. Différentes techniques peuvent être employées, par exemple :

- Tirer une conclusion (réflexions finales) : *As long as sports fans are willing to pay and to support their teams, the question of whether or not pro athletes make too much money may be irrelevant.*
- Ouvrir le débat sur un contexte, un angle ou une perspective plus large : *With the steady increase in salaries, we can't help but wonder just how much money is enough.*
- Émettre une mise en garde : *If salaries continue to increase steadily, some teams, athletes and even fans could be in for a nasty surprise.*
- Formuler une recommandation : *Salary caps may be the solution to prevent already high salaries from skyrocketing further.*
- Poser une question pertinente : *How can teams survive if salaries keep increasing exponentially?*

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2. Des exemples d'erreurs de raisonnement sont présentés à la page suivante.

## LANGAGE

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Pour convaincre, l'article d'opinion doit être écrit sur un ton persuasif et présenter une position ferme. Toutefois, un ton vif ne signifie pas un langage inapproprié ou injurieux. Les opinions peuvent être exprimées avec force, mais de façon respectueuse.

L'article d'opinion rédigé dans le cadre de l'épreuve unique est un texte courant. L'élève ne doit donc pas rédiger son texte en adoptant le ton plus soutenu des essais.

## EXIGENCES À L'ÉGARD DE L'ÉLÈVE

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- Comprendre le sujet à l'étude.
- Adopter une position ferme.
- Étayer sa position au moyen d'éléments à l'appui crédibles, sur un ton persuasif, en allant au-delà de l'évidence. Il faut donc choisir avec soin l'information à présenter.
- Organiser l'information et les idées de manière à produire un texte cohérent et convaincant.
- Relier les idées entre elles.
- Faire appel à son raisonnement.

### ERREURS DE RAISONNEMENT

Voici des erreurs de raisonnement souvent relevées dans les textes des élèves.

1. Généralisation excessive : supposer qu'un principe qui s'applique à un petit groupe s'applique à tous (sauter aux conclusions).  
Ex. : *All professional athletes make millions and millions of dollars.*
2. Simplification excessive : limiter son argumentation à un seul élément alors qu'il y a plusieurs éléments à prendre en considération.
3. Ne pas tenir compte d'une partie importante des éléments qui pourraient servir à réfuter la position ou laisser de côté certains faits, ce qui aura pour effet d'induire le lecteur en erreur.
4. Soulever un argument sans lien avec la question à l'étude.  
Ex. : *Not all professional athletes are in it for the money.* (C'est vrai, mais là n'est pas la question.)
5. Présenter des opinions comme s'il s'agissait de faits.  
Ex. : *Professional sports are fun to watch.*
6. Servir des arguments contradictoires pour appuyer une position.
7. Croire une information en tenant pour acquis que la source est fiable ou infaillible.  
Ex. : *I read it on the Internet, so it's true.*  
*Ms. X (who is not an expert) said it, so it's true.*



## DEUXIÈME PARTIE – VERSION DESTINÉE AUX ÉLÈVES

### WRITING AN OPINION PIECE AS PRESENTED IN THE SECONDARY V CORE ESL UNIFORM EXAMINATION

#### INTRODUCTION

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In the uniform written examination for the Secondary V Core ESL Program, students write a short opinion piece, in English, in response to **one** of two questions put forward by an online magazine to its readers. The text must be written in light of the question selected, the target audience and the writing guidelines, and the content must be well organized, developed and coherent.

#### PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

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**Purpose** and **audience** go hand in hand, as it is virtually impossible to address one without addressing the other.

The **purpose** is the students' ultimate goal. Students may ask, "Why am I writing this article? What do I need to accomplish?" In the Secondary V Core ESL uniform written examination, the students' goal is to write an opinion piece in response to one of the two questions put forth, in which they present an **informed** opinion in order to persuade the target audience—readers of the magazine, who have little or no prior knowledge of the topic.

Therefore, students must plan their articles with both the purpose and the target audience in mind. They must take a firm position and select supporting evidence that is credible. In addition, they must organize this information and craft a text that is developed, coherent and easy to understand. Students must also keep in mind that although their work will be assessed by the teacher, their target audience is not the teacher, nor is it readers who are familiar with the texts in the Preparation Booklet.

#### TOPIC, POSITION AND POSITION STATEMENT

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- The **topic** refers to the question the student selects from those put forth, e.g. *Do professional athletes make too much money?*
- The **position** refers to the stand the student takes regarding the issue in the question, e.g. *Many professional athletes make too much money.*
- The **position statement** refers to the sentence or sentences that clearly informs readers of the student's stand on the issue, e.g. *It is ridiculous to pay so many professional athletes such insanely high salaries.* It is also the viewpoint the student will develop in his or her text.

Students do not have to be entirely for or against the issue. They can present a nuanced position, as long as they clearly let the reader know where they stand.

Examples:

- ☺ *Most professional athletes rightfully deserve their high salaries, but many are paid too much money.*
- ☺ *Only a few professional athletes deserve their high salaries.*
- ☹ *Do professional athletes make too much money? It depends.*

## STRUCTURE

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Opinion pieces have universal text components that are found in most types of writing, for example:

- a beginning, a middle and an end
- an introduction that is significant and engaging
- a clear purpose
- content that is purposeful, complete and organized logically
- appropriate paragraphing
- transitions between ideas and from one paragraph to the next to ensure flow
- language that is accurate and idiomatic
- an appropriate language register

They also have specific text components, which are explained in detail below.

### Introduction

The introduction must hook the reader and introduce the topic as well as the student's position.

- Some of the most popular techniques used to **hook** the reader in opinion pieces are listed below:
  - asking a question: *Have you ever wondered how much professional athletes make per game?*
  - using a powerful statement: *Alex Rodriguez will make more this year than all the Houston Astros combined—a lot more.*<sup>1</sup>
  - using a description: *In your average ball game, players get about three at-bats and they stand on the field for nine innings. Total game time: two to three hours. Win or lose, many players go home with thousands of dollars in their pockets.*
  - using an anecdote: *During the 2012 season, Yunel Escobar, who then played for the Toronto Blue Jays, was suspended for three games. The suspension cost him about \$90,000 in salary. That's \$30,000 per game. That's right: **per** game.*
  - referring to current events: *The recent signing of a multimillion dollar contract by [name of athlete] has once again raised the question of the astronomical salaries in pro baseball.*
- When introducing the topic, students may need to provide background information.
- The position statement should be worded in a clear but engaging manner and be integrated into the introduction.
- The introduction rarely presents the plan or structure of the piece, as opposed to what is seen in academic or specialized writing.

Compare the following introductions:

Strong introduction	<i>In 2011, Joe Mauer, catcher for the Minnesota Twins, earned \$23 million for the baseball season, motorcycle racer Valentino Rossi made about \$20 million and NBA star Kobe Bryant made over \$25 million. Such salaries may seem astronomical, but these athletes deserve every penny.</i>
Weak introduction	<i>Professional athletes make a lot of money. Do they make too much? I think no and I will explain my opinion.</i>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Associated Press, *A-Rod will make more than Astros*, [espn.go.com/mlb/story/\\_/id/9109596/alex-rodriguez-make-more-houston-astros-combined-salary](http://espn.go.com/mlb/story/_/id/9109596/alex-rodriguez-make-more-houston-astros-combined-salary), accessed October 21, 2013.



## Body

It is in the **body** of the text that students craft a convincing case. Simply listing arguments or analyzing the issue is not enough. Students must do the following:

- **Select strong supporting evidence to back up their position.** Arguments must directly relate to the student's position, be based on logic,<sup>1</sup> and be backed up with factual information (e.g. facts, statistics, examples, credible personal experiences).

Position statement: *It is ridiculous to pay so many professional athletes such insanely high salaries.*

Supporting evidence:

*Even if we consider that the career of a professional athlete is relatively short, many still make too much money (argument). Let's say the average person works for 30 years at an average of \$50,000 per year. This makes a total of \$1.5 million over this person's career. Many pro athletes make this much in a few weeks or months of work (example).*

*To pay high salaries, team owners must raise the price of tickets, which, in some cases, may hurt the team (argument). The price of tickets has skyrocketed and many stadium seats are left empty. Without fans, there are no games, and without games, there are no sky-high salaries (fact).*

- **Avoid ideas that may be interesting but do not support the position stated.** Students must avoid using ideas that are related to the topic in general but not directly to their position.
- **Build a case by sequencing ideas and clearly showing how the supporting evidence backs the position stated.**
- **Dissect obvious counterarguments.** Instead of ignoring the opposite viewpoint or the objections of others, good writers address them and then shoot them down.

Counterargument: *The Habs games are almost always sold out.*

Writer's response: *True, not all teams have difficulty filling their stadiums, but attendance should not be taken for granted. Many clubs are currently struggling to attract fans. Let's not forget what happened to the long-gone Montréal Expos, among others.*

- **Make explicit links between ideas.** Failing to do so means the reader has the burden of determining how ideas relate to one another—of “connecting the dots.” Chances are the reader will give up trying to read such a piece.

## Conclusion

In a 225-word article, the conclusion may consist of only one or two sentences. The goal is obviously to bring the article to a close but, more specifically, it is to leave the reader with a lasting impression. Various techniques can be used, such as the following:

- Drawing a conclusion (final thoughts): *As long as sports fans are willing to pay and to support their teams, the question of whether or not pro athletes make too much money may be irrelevant.*
- Opening up the debate to a wider context, angle or perspective: *With the steady increase in salaries, we can't help but wonder just how much money is enough.*
- Ending with a warning: *If salaries continue to increase steadily, some teams, athletes and even fans could be in for a nasty surprise.*
- Ending with a recommendation: *Salary caps may be the solution to prevent already high salaries from skyrocketing further.*
- Asking a relevant question: *How can teams survive if salaries keep increasing exponentially?*

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<sup>1</sup> See the following page for examples of fallacies.

## LANGUAGE

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Persuasive writing uses strong language to take a firm stand. However, strong language does not mean inappropriate language or name-calling. Opinions can be stated forcefully but respectfully.

The opinion piece that students are required to write in the uniform examination is a popular text. Therefore, they must not write their text using the academic tone of essays.

## WHAT WRITING AN OPINION PIECE REQUIRES STUDENTS TO DO

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- Understand the issue addressed.
- Take a firm stand.
- Support their position using solid evidence and persuasive language, going beyond the obvious (i.e. carefully selecting which information to include).
- Organize the information and ideas in order to craft a coherent, convincing piece.
- Connect ideas within the piece.
- Use reasoning skills.

### FALLACIES

Here are some of the fallacies—errors in reasoning—often observed in student writing.

1. Overgeneralizing by assuming that because something is true for a small group, it is true for all (jumping to conclusions).  
*All professional athletes make millions and millions of dollars.*
2. Oversimplifying: reducing a line of reasoning to a single element when there are in fact several elements at play.
3. Ignoring a large portion of evidence that may contradict the writer's position or ignoring facts, thereby misleading the reader.
4. Using an argument that does not address the issue at hand.  
*Not all professional athletes are in it for the money. (True, but that's not the question.)*
5. Presenting opinions as facts.  
*Professional sports are fun to watch.*
6. Using contradictory arguments to support a position.
7. Claiming that something is true by assuming the source is reliable or infallible.  
*I read it on the Internet, so it's true.*  
*Ms. X (who is not an expert) said it, so it's true.*

## EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

**Theme:** *Salaries of professional athletes*

**Topic (question):** *Do professional athletes make too much money?*

**My position:** *Many of them make too much money.*

**Wording of my position statement:** *It is ridiculous to pay so many professional athletes such insanelly high salaries.*

<b>Reasoning</b>	<b>Supporting evidence (arguments and factual information to back them up):</b>		
	<p><b>Argument 1:</b> <i>Even if we consider that the career of a professional athlete is relatively short, many still make too much money.</i></p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>Let's say the average person works for 30 years at an average of \$50,000 per year. This makes a total of \$1.5 million over this person's career. Many pro athletes make this much in a few weeks or months of work.</i></p>	<p><b>Argument 2:</b> <i>To pay high salaries, team owners must raise the price of tickets, which, in some cases, may hurt the team.</i></p> <p><b>Fact:</b> <i>The price of tickets has skyrocketed and many stadium seats are left empty. Without fans, there are no games, and without games, there are no sky-high salaries.</i></p>	<p><b>Argument 3:</b> ---</p>
	<p><b>How do the ideas in my reasoning relate to one another and to my position statement, and how do I make these links explicit in my text?</b> <i>My first idea is about the high salaries that many professional athletes make in a short period of time. My second idea explains how these high salaries could one day lead to these athletes making low salaries or no salaries at all.</i></p>		
<p><b>Main counterargument:</b> <i>For some teams, like the Habs, games are almost always sold out.</i></p> <p><b>My response:</b> <i>True, not all teams have difficulty filling their stadiums, but attendance should not be taken for granted. Many clubs are currently struggling to attract fans. Let's not forget what happened to the long-gone Montréal Expos, among others.</i></p>			

**Conclusion:**

**Opening up the debate:** *With the steady increase in salaries, we can't help but wonder just how much money is enough for professional athletes. How much money does an athlete deserve for having extraordinary talent? For entertaining thousands or even millions of sports fans?*

## EXAMPLE OF A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER TEMPLATE

Theme:
Topic (question):
My position:
Wording of my position statement:

<b>Reasoning</b>	Supporting evidence (arguments and factual information to back them up):
	How do the ideas in my reasoning relate to one another and to my position statement, and how do I make these links explicit in my text?
	Main counterargument:  My response:

Conclusion:
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