Michigan ECCE Essay Writing

Useful phrases for writing an essay describing or discussing an issue

Introduction

In the Michigan ECCE examination, candidates have to produce one piece of writing in thirty minutes, using a prompt (a short piece of writing which describes a situation or problem) which is given on the examination paper. The prompt is usually one or two paragraphs and is written in fairly easy English so that all candidates can understand it without much difficulty. Candidates read this prompt and then the two writing topics which follow it. One is a letter, often to a newspaper or magazine column, offering advice or giving an opinion, and the other is an essay, in which the candidate must express his or her ideas about the situation or problem described in the prompt. The candidate must choose one of the topics to write.

Both sorts of writing exercise (letter and essay) must follow a particular development, and the use of clear paragraphs is essential. Candidates must be sure about what ideas they are going to include in their writing before they start writing and how they are going to lay their ideas out. Candidates must also use examples to support their ideas.

It is an excellent idea to learn and use particular phrases which can be included in the writing exercise, such as how to offer advice to somebody, how to express and understanding of a problem, how to offer a personal opinion about a situation, and so on. Below is a list of such phrases which students should find useful when writing an essay describing or discussing an issue and presenting the advantages and disadvantages in the Michigan ECCE examination. It is good practice to use phrases like these in your writing. However, it is equally important to avoid errors (grammatical, spelling, expressional) in the information you write between the phrases!

Useful phrases

A) Introducing an issue or situation in the first paragraph

Basic idea: “The car is an important invention”
One of the most important inventions in the history of mankind is the car.
The car has made great changes to human society.
Society has been deeply affected by the car/by the invention of the car.
Since the invention of the car, our society has changed radically.
The importance of the invention of the car must not be underestimated.

Basic idea: “What I mean is…”
That is to say, …
In other words, …
To put it another way, …
Put another way, …
By this we mean that …

Basic idea: “But this is not always true.”
However, this is not always the case.
Nevertheless, this is not necessarily the whole truth.
There are, however, aspects which show that this is not always true.
Sometimes this is not the case, however.
The reality of the situation may, however, not be so.
Basic idea: “The situation is not as simple as this.”
Things are not quite as simple as they are, though.
The situation is rather more complicated, however.
Put that way, the situation seems simple, but it is not.
The situation is, however, more complicated than it first seems.

Basic idea: “Let’s look at the advantages and the disadvantages of the car.”
The purpose of this is to examine the advantages and the drawbacks of the car.
What, then, are the advantages and the disadvantages/drawbacks of the car?
The advantages and disadvantages/drawbacks are as follows.
Let us examine why the car is both an advantage and a disadvantage.

B) Examining the situation’s advantages and disadvantages (second and third paragraphs)

Basic idea: “One advantage of the car is that…”
An initial advantage of the car is that …
What most people think is positive about the car is that …
The car is considered positive in that …
A positive aspect of the car is that …

Basic idea: “But this advantage has a bad side.”
This advantage is not without its negative side, though.
There is another, negative side to this advantage, however.
If we look closely at this advantage, we will see that it is not all positive.

Basic idea: “Another advantage of the car is that…”
A further advantage to the car is that …
What is a further advantage of the car is that …
It is also an advantage of the car that …

Basic idea: “But there are certainly also disadvantages of the car.”
That said, disadvantages of the car do exist.
There are, however, drawbacks to the car.
Drawbacks to the car are there to be found, however.
It is not hard to find disadvantages to the car, naturally enough.
We don’t have to look far to find drawbacks to the car.

Basic idea: “That is an important disadvantage, and what I am going to say next is an important disadvantage too”
To add to this serious disadvantage, there is another significant drawback.
As if this weren’t serious enough a disadvantage, there is yet another grave drawback.
This serious disadvantage is accompanied by another, equally grave drawback.

Basic idea: We must try to see if the advantages are more important than the disadvantages.
It is essential that we weigh up the advantages and disadvantages in order to see which are more significant.
Whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages is what we must establish.
What must be established is whether the advantages are enough to make the disadvantages acceptable.

Basic idea: But this is not easy to do.
However, this is not an easy task.
Nevertheless, this is easier said than done.
That is something which requires careful thought.
C) Linking words which develop ideas about advantages and disadvantages

1. **Results**
   Therefore, …
   As a result, …
   Consequently, …
   As a result of this, …
   As a consequence of this, …
   It is a result/consequence of this that …

2. **Opposition**
   However, …
   Nevertheless, …
   Nonetheless, …
   That said, …
   Having said that, …
   Despite that, …
   In spite of that, …

3. **Exemplification**
   For example, …
   For instance, …
   As an example, …
   An instance of this is …
   This can be seen in/by …
   … is an example/instance of this.

4. **Elaboration**
   In other words, …
   To put it another way, …
   Put another way, …
   What this means is …
   In essence, this means that …
   The meaning behind this is that …

D) Summing your ideas up

Basic idea: “We have looked at the advantages and disadvantages of the car and we can conclude that…”
These, then, are the pros and cons of the car and it can be said that …
Having examined the advantages and the disadvantages of the car, we can conclude that …
After studying the advantages and the drawbacks of the car, one can draw the conclusion that …
It can be concluded, after looking at the above advantages and disadvantages of the car, that …
To sum up, examination of the pros and cons of the car shows that …
In summary/In conclusion, what has been said above about the advantages and the drawbacks of the car tells us that …