The *Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*: Using the *Wordpower* iWriter

Introduction

At intermediate level, students may be taking their first hesitant steps towards writing longer pieces of English. They may need support with the transition from single sentences to short essays, articles, or letters.

Oxford iWriter is an interactive tool designed to help students develop their writing skills. Following in the footsteps of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* iWriter, the new Wordpower iWriter has been specially tailored to the needs of intermediate students.

Wordpower Oxford iWriter guides and supports students at intermediate level with planning, writing, and reviewing their essays, articles, reviews, letters and emails. Students can use models to see how to plan and structure their written work, and get helpful advice, for example on choosing the right language in order to sound more formal or objective, or to avoid repetition.

The iWriter has a strong focus on the types of writing tasks that are typically set in examinations, but the iWriter will be of help to any student who needs to produce coherent, well-structured writing, including types of writing needed in business or non-academic settings.

About this lesson

This lesson helps you walk students through their first experience with using Oxford iWriter to write their own argument essay on a sample topic. The Write mode on the iWriter will assist them in planning, writing, and checking their own work. As an awareness of the organization of written work is essential for examination success, as well as for most types of writing that a student will need to produce, the iWriter helps students structure their essay in a clear and logical manner, including an introduction, main paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Once students are familiar with the iWriter and its many useful features, they can use it to write essays of any type on any topic of your or their choice – either as classroom tasks, for homework, or on their own for individual practice.

Procedure

Level	Intermediate
Time	60 minutes
Aim	To guide students in using the Oxford iWriter software to structure an argument essay in a clear and logical manner, including an introduction, main paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Lesson Summary

Students will break into small groups, and each group will use the iWriter to write a paragraph of an argument essay. There are four different paragraphs, so ideally you would have four groups of students. These paragraphs will then be combined to create a complete essay, and the iWriter will be used to add any missing transitions and check students' work.

[For smaller classes, each group can write more than one paragraph.]

Materials

- Enough copies of the Oxford iWriter on separate computers (one for the teacher, and one for each small group)

- An interactive whiteboard (IWB) or laptop projector to be used with the teacher's computer will be very useful (but is not essential)

- Access to email or USB memory sticks on each computer would also be helpful (but is not essential)

- Optional: copies of the *Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*

Preparation

Take a couple of minutes to familiarize yourself with the iWriter software's **Writing mode**. Refer to the "Orientation" activity below for step-by-step instructions on accessing the **Writing mode**.

Lead-in [5 mins]

Break students into four groups. Discuss first within small groups, then feed back to the whole group:
    "What are the 3 main parts of an argument essay?"
    (Answer: introduction, arguments and conclusion)

Discuss first within small groups, then feed back to the whole group:
    "Which part do you find the most difficult to write, and why?"

Activity: Orientation [10 mins]

Guide students into opening the **Writing mode** of the iWriter with the **Argument** essay selected.

1 Start the iWriter software.
2 On the welcome screen, select **I want to do my own writing**.
3 In the list of types of writing, select **Argument**.
4 In the main content pane, select **Click here to create a new project**.

Briefly present an overview of the main content pane of the iWriter. Point out the structure (red), notes (green), and content (blue) fields included for each paragraph of the planned essay. The (green) notes fields and (blue) content fields are where students can key in their own text.

Discuss the paragraph structure for the **Argument** essay as it is presented in the iWriter.

1 Introduction

2 Advantages, or arguments for the question or statement

3 Disadvantages, or arguments against the question or statement

4 Summary and conclusion

Activity: Planning to write [10 mins]

Choose an issue for discussion that students will be familiar with. Topics recently dealt with by their course book, or current debates in the media, for example, may provide good topics, as students will already know a certain amount of topic-related vocabulary. Discussion questions taken from past examination papers can also be a useful source of inspiration.

Ideally, the issue chosen should be stimulating and worthy of discussion, but perhaps not too provocative, unless you think your group will respond well to provocation! The title of the discussion can be phrased as a question, or as a contentious statement. For example, depending on the interests (and topic vocabulary) of the class, some suitable titles could include:

• Should nurses earn more money than bankers?

• Which is better, living in a city or in the country?

• Nuclear power is better than using oil.

• Students should be allowed to wear whatever they want to school.

In the panel on the left of the iWriter screen, you will see a heading 'Before you start'. This will give guidance on preparing to write, including 'Brainstorm your ideas on the question'. Ask your students to look at this panel, then as a class, brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages, or arguments for and against, one of the prompts. As ideas are presented, make notes in the appropriate (green) Notes fields in the iWriter on your computer. Instruct students to similarly make notes in their own versions of the iWriter. Be sure to make notes for each of the two main paragraphs.

Tip The Topics Dictionary on the *Wordpower CD-ROM* can help students find words related to a particular topic. In the A-Z part of the dictionary the topic notes, showing common words and ideas within a range of domains, can also help students to find words that are appropriate for a given context. Topic notes are found at many entries, e.g. **book**, **computer**, **pet**, and a complete list of all the topic notes can be found on page R63-64 of the printed *Wordpower*.

Activity: Writing [20 mins]

Assign each small group a paragraph as follows:

• Group 1: introduction

• Group 2: arguments for

• Group 3: arguments against

• Group 4: conclusion

Inform each small group that they have exactly 15 minutes to write their paragraphs for this essay. One person in each small group will key the text into the (blue) content field for their paragraph, but everyone in the group must contribute to the paragraph.

Whilst they are writing, students should be aware that they are need to use formal language in writing. Encourage them to refer to the **Choose Your Language** panel in the iWriter to find suitable ways of writing.

Students should also be encouraged to use Genie, the pop-up dictionary, as they work. Clicking on **Genie** on the main *Wordpower CD-ROM* window allows them to look up words, examples, collocations and helpful notes from the A-Z whilst they are writing their essay.

Tip As students use the iWriter template to write their own essay, they can double-click any word on the screen at any time, including words that the students have keyed into the iWriter themselves, to see the entry in the dictionary.

When 15 minutes have passed, instruct the small groups to stop writing. Each group should then transfer (perhaps by copying and pasting into an email or onto a USB memory stick) their text to the teacher's computer.

While the teacher takes a few minutes to copy and paste each group's paragraph into the iWriter software on her computer, each small group can either:

 • rotate around from one computer to the next to read the paragraphs written by each group, or

 • read their paragraphs aloud to the whole group, in order, beginning with the introduction.

Activity: Adding Transitions and Checking [15 mins]

With all the text pasted into the teacher's iWriter screen, click the **While you are writing** line in the upper left corner. Clicking the first **tell me more…** button will bring up a list of linking words and phrases that can be used to connect the paragraphs to one another. Clicking the second **tell me more…** button will bring up a checklist of overall points to consider in written work, and tells students how using the dictionary can help with these points. Go through the checklist with the students, and refer the points back to the paragraphs that they have written.

Ask the students to click on the **Check** button in the left-hand panel and consider each of the points to see whether they have completed the task in the best possible way.

When you have finished checking, click the **Export** link to output the essay to a text file, which you can then email to or print out for your students.

Homework [optional]

Instruct students to take the essay that you have written as a class and make it their own. They can edit, proofread, and add or delete text as they like. If students are preparing for a timed examination, you may want to consider instructing them to time themselves for this task, giving themselves perhaps 5 or 10 minutes to edit and proofread.