

Continuous Writing — Types of Composition

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE TYPE FROM THE PROMPT

Prompt phrasing	Type
"Write about a time when..." / "Describe an experience where..."	Narrative / Personal Recount
"Write a story about..." / picture with clear action/characters	Narrative
"Describe a place/person/scene..."	Descriptive
"Do you agree that...?" / "Should...?" / "Discuss..."	Argumentative / Discursive
Picture prompt with no clear story, just a setting/mood	Descriptive (or narrative — your choice)

TYPE 1 — NARRATIVE

[What it is] → A story with a clear plot: beginning, conflict, climax, resolution.

[Core features]

- Chronological (usually) — can use flashback for a stronger opening
- 1st person ("I") is common and easier to control emotion/reflection
- Needs CONFLICT — no conflict = no story = weak content marks
- Show, don't tell (sensory + action details, not just stating feelings)

[Structure] → Orientation → Build-up → Climax → Resolution → Reflection

[Where marks are won] → the climax paragraph (most vivid writing) + a meaningful reflection/insight at the end, not just "and then I went home."

TYPE 2 — PERSONAL RECOUNT

[What it is] → Similar to narrative but rooted in a REAL or realistic personal experience — often tied to growth, values, or lesson learnt (e.g. VIA project, a failure, a turning point).

[Difference from pure narrative]

- Reflection is MORE central — examiners look for genuine insight, not just event description
- Emotional honesty > dramatic plot twists
- Often ends with "what I learnt" / "how I changed"

[Structure] → same shape as narrative, but weight more of your word count toward the internal reaction and final reflection, not just external events.

TYPE 3 — DESCRIPTIVE

[What it is] → No real "plot" — focus is on painting a vivid picture of a place, person, object, or experience through sensory detail and mood.

[Core features]

- ONE dominant mood/atmosphere sustained throughout (pick it before writing: nostalgic, eerie, joyful, tense, peaceful...)
- Organise spatially (near→far, left→right) or by sense or by sequence of noticing things
- Heavy use of imagery: sight, sound, smell, touch, (taste if relevant)
- Figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification) — but purposeful, not decorative

[Structure] → Overall impression → zoom into 2-3 specific focal points (one per paragraph) → closing image/mood tie-back

[Common trap] → Descriptive essays that turn into narrative halfway (suddenly things "happen"). Decide upfront which type you're committing to.

TYPE 4 — ARGUMENTATIVE (Persuasive)

[What it is] → You take ONE clear stance on an issue and persuade the reader.

[Core features]

- Thesis stated clearly in intro — no fence-sitting

- Each body paragraph = ONE point, using PEEL (Point, Explain, Example, Link)
- Can acknowledge counterargument briefly then rebut it (strengthens persuasion)
- Confident, assertive tone throughout

[Structure] → Intro (hook + stance) → 2-3 body points (PEEL each) → brief counter + rebuttal (optional but strong) → conclusion (restate stance + broader implication)

TYPE 5 — DISCURSIVE

[What it is] → Discuss BOTH sides of an issue in a balanced way. Sometimes you give your opinion at the end, sometimes the prompt wants pure balance — read the prompt carefully.

[Difference from argumentative]

- Argumentative = pick a side and persuade
- Discursive = explore both sides fairly, only concluding with a stance at the very end (if asked)

[Structure] → Intro (state the issue, no stance yet) → 2 paragraphs FOR → 2 paragraphs AGAINST → conclusion (your balanced take/stance)

QUICK COMPARISON TABLE

Type	Plot?	Stance?	Main skill tested
Narrative	Yes	No	Storytelling, pacing, climax
Personal Recount	Yes (real-based)	No	Reflection, emotional honesty
Descriptive	No	No	Imagery, mood, sensory language
Argumentative	No	Yes (one side)	Persuasion, logical structure
Discursive	No	Balanced, then optional stance	Balance, fairness, nuance
