



This exercise sheet accompanies my video: “Writing Elegantly”. In the video, I show how to make your essays more elegant by getting rid of excessive signposting, compulsive hedging, and normative arguments. Watch the video and have a go at the exercises below.

Part A: For each of the following statements, underline any words that indicate (a) excessive signposting, (b) compulsive hedging, and (c) normative arguments.

1. I would argue that endogenous growth theory is fairly problematic.
2. Donald Trump is the worst president ever, but Hillary Clinton is downright evil.
3. First, I am going to define my key terms and consider which definition of ‘development’ is most appropriate, and then I am going to assess how useful the human development index is.
4. The last paragraph argued that David Hume’s skepticism is to some extent warranted.
5. Arguably, King Edward I should never have joined the Ninth Crusade.
6. Hollywood celebrities: what do they know? Do they know stuff? Let’s find out!
7. We have been asked to consider which glacial landforms are depositional and which ones are erosional. We will start by considering what ‘depositional’ and ‘erosional’ mean and then move on to discuss which landforms count as ‘depositional’ and which as ‘erosional’.
8. In my opinion, enclosure of arable land in the 16th century was wrong.
9. In order to answer the question at hand, we need to define our core concepts and consider any underlying assumptions, before moving on to a conclusion that follows from the argument I am going to make.

PART B: In the sentences below, underline the compulsive hedge and use the fact box provided to re-write the sentence so that it *qualifies*, rather than hedges.

Qualifying a sentence means spelling out what a statement means and the circumstances in which the statement does or does not hold.

UK quick facts: Population = 66 million (2017), 59 million (2000), 57 million (1990). A unitary parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. Four constituent countries. Devolved governments in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. World's fifth largest economy (nominal GDP) or ninth-largest (purchasing power parity). Sixth largest military expenditure in the world.

10. The United Kingdom is quite large and powerful.
11. Apparently the UK is monarchical, but mostly it is not.
12. I would argue that the UK seems to be politically split into various components.
13. The UK is relatively developed.
14. To some extent, you could say that the UK has grown a bit recently.

PART C: Which of these elements do you need in a good empirical social science essay?

- (a) Exact re-statement of the question, using the same words
- (b) Introductory statement of the argument, in a nutshell
- (c) Formal academic prose
- (d) Vivid personal statement concerning how you feel, morally, about the subject
- (e) Always put 'in my opinion' to indicate which parts are your view
- (f) Always convey the magnitude of any effects explicitly