

Step by step guide

Courtesy of M Wattiaux

Step 1: Search the paratext for information to contextualise the document

- What does the title and subtitle tell you about the topic of the document?

___ The title is factual and suggests the text will analyse the causes of the gender gap in maths at school.

- Who published the document? When was it published? Does this help contextualise it?

It was published in The Economist in their “Graphic Detail” section >> so one can assume it will focus on the results of a study, on a graph, on figures

Step 2: Study the document and prepare your synthesis

- What are the 2-3 main points developed by the document that you need to highlight in your synthesis? Rephrase them in your own words.

#	Main points
1	Although girls have been getting better at school and are more numerous at university, they are still <u>behind in maths</u>, which impacts their future careers The text presents <u>the results of a study</u> carried out by French researchers on the maths gender gap in schools. It shows that the gap appears very early. They use the results of a national assessment tests in first and second grades to see what happens ➤ WHEN THEY START SCHOOL there is no noticeable differences between girls and boys ➤ But the more time goes by, the more girls lag behind / the more the gap widens, starting after just a few weeks ➤ A surprising / counterintuitive finding was that the difference was bigger for children of well-off parents, and even more so if scientists
2	What may explain this surprising result? ➤ Maths is tested in a competitive way and girls tend to underperform if put under pressure ➤ Deeply rooted clichés / prejudices: boys are better at numbers ➤ May influence the teachers > May come from the parents too. The more parents are involved the more they may pass on those ideas!
3	This study is the first of its kind (showing it starts really early) But such gender gap affects about two thirds of the OECD countries
4	Debated solutions – Researches in Italy are looking for solutions ➤ smaller group with cooperation works ➤ Less stressful tests help ➤ The Economist insists new methods would help > Girls are not destined to be weaker!

- In which order will you structure these points (linear synthesis or not)? Number the items.

Order of the text! Except I will mention Point 3 at the end of my first Part

1/ Analysing the results of a study on the maths gender gap 2/ What are the factors behind such gap?

3/ Suggestions to try to bridge that gap

Step 3: Identify the point of view of the document

- Does the document defend a particular point of view? What tone does it use?

The text is fairly neutral and factual except at the very end: one feels The Economist is calling for better teaching and testing methods to be found to correct this wrong

- What type of document is this? _____

Step 4: Write your introduction

Teachers regularly lament about the lack of girls taking up maths as their major in high school. Companies and leaders complain about the lack of women in STEM fields, which directly impacts a country's economy. But could that reluctance come from? This factual article from The Economist focuses on the very origin of the gender gap in maths, analysing the results of a new French study carried out in primary schools. It presents the results, the causes and some suggestions for solutions.

Step 5: Take a step back from the document

Sample questions to ask yourself:

- Are there other positions or arguments that are not reflected in the document?
- Is the situation discussed in the document representative of a broader trend or not?
- Can you think of any other examples or counter-examples (including in other countries)?
- Is there a point in the document that needs to be explained in more detail?

Brainstorm ideas of arguments or examples you could use in your commentary:

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Step 6: Formulate your key question

- What are the 2-3 key concepts that are related to the topic of the document? Fill in the boxes.
- How are these key concepts related to one another? Annotate the links between the boxes, focusing on points of tension between them.
- What question encapsulates the tensions between these key concepts? Formulate your key question.

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graph TD; A[ ]
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Step 7: Write your transition

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graph TD; B[ ]
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graph TD; C[ ]
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Step 8: Prepare your commentary

- What 2-3 arguments will help you answer your key question?

#	Argument	Example
		↳ Exploitation:
		↳ Exploitation:
		↳ Exploitation:

- What concrete and precise example can illustrate each of your arguments?
- In which order will you structure your arguments? Number the items, starting with the one that is closest to the document this commentary is related to.

Step 9: Write your conclusion