

ACADEMIC WRITING

Part 2



What we shall speak about

- What you have to do in writing task 2
- According to what criteria your task will be assessed
- What skills you need to develop to score well on this module and what you need to know about problems and approaches to essay writing
- What electronic resources may help you to achieve good results in writing task 2

What you have to do in writing task 2

You have to write an essay on a contemporary social issue containing at least 250 words in which you have to answer one or more questions

Typical tasks:

- Discuss advantages and disadvantages
- Outline the reasons for a problem
- Express views on an issue
- State whether you agree or disagree with a view
- Take side in an argument over an issue

The target skills

- Expressing and justifying a point of view on the topic
- Comparing and contrasting opinions based on personal experience
- Evaluating a situation or a development
- Discussing the causes of a problem and suggesting possible solution

According to what criteria your task will be assessed

You task will be marked in **four** areas:




- Task Response
- Coherence and Cohesion
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy

You get mark from **1 to 9**. Your final band for Task 2 will be an average of the four marks awarded in these areas.

Task Response

This mark grades you on the **CONTENT** of your essay.

You should:

-  Fully **address all parts** of task
-  Fully **develop** answer to the question given
-  **Support** your answer with relevant and extended ideas and facts

Coherence and Cohesion

You should:

- Logically organize your writing into **paragraphs** presenting **a clear central topic** within each paragraph
- Use a range of cohesive devices linking sentences using **appropriate conjunctions**

Lexical Resource

This area looks at your choice of words.

You should:



- Use the right words
- Use them at the right time
- Use them in the right place and
- Use them in the right way

Your word choice should be accurate, wide ranging, natural and sophisticated

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

This mark grades your appropriate, flexible and accurate use of grammatical structures.

You should:

-  Use a wide range of structures
-  Your spelling and punctuation need to be relatively accurate

Essential writing skills to score well on the writing module:

- In-depth knowledge of effective preparation and planning
- Appropriate style and tone
- The proper structure and format for the type of writing task

Sample IELTS topics

- Women and the family
- Sport and pastimes
- Employment and money
- The media and advertising
- Travel and transport
- Science and technology
- Education
- Government
- Globalization
- The environment and housing
- Health
- Language and culture
- Law and order

Writing process Stage I: Preparation

Step 1: *Read the task carefully. Make sure that you understand what you are required to write about :*

The first rule of IELTS essays is to **answer the question(s)**

Types of IELTS essay questions

- The discussion
- The proposal
- The argument

The Discussion

You are given a *social issue* or *problem* and asked directly to **discuss** it and to **suggest a solution** for it.

Examples

1. *In many countries schools have severe problems with students behavior.*

- What do you think are the causes of this?
- What solutions can you suggest?

2. *Many universities charge higher fees for foreign students.*

- Why do they do this?
- Do you believe that it is fair?

Typical problems

1. You are being asked for your **personal opinion**: it is not enough to talk generally about the topic.
2. You are often given **two tasks**: e.g. – to discuss causes and solution. You will be *penalised on Task Achievement* if you discuss only **ONE** of these.

The proposal

You are given an *opinion* about some *social issue* and you are asked **whether or to what extent you agree** with it.

Example 1

- 1. Fatherhood ought to be emphasized as much as motherhood. The idea that women are solely responsible for deciding whether or not to have babies leads on the idea that they are also responsible for bringing the children up.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Example 2

- 2. Currently there is a trend towards the use of alternative forms of medicine. However, at best these methods are ineffective, and at worst they may be dangerous.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Typical problems

1. The question is **too long**. It is difficult to understand it.

Example 1

1. *Fatherhood ought to be emphasized as much as motherhood. The idea that women are solely responsible for deciding whether or not to have babies leads on the idea that they are also responsible for bringing the children up.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Typical problems

1. The question is **too long**. It is difficult to understand it.
2. It can be easy **to confuse** the background information from the opinion. You must discuss the opinion (the bits in **red**).
*(if you only discuss the topic (the bits in **green**) you will be penalized on Task Achievement).*

Example 2

- 2. Currently there is a trend towards the use of alternative forms of medicine. However, at best these methods are ineffective, and at worst they may be dangerous.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Typical problems

3. You need to discuss the opinion in the question. **You cannot only give your opinion.**

The argument

- Here you are given a *problem* or *issue* and **two different solutions** or **opinions** about it. You are asked to decide **which** solution/opinion **is better**.
- There are **two types** of argument essay

Example 1

1. You get *two different situations/opinions (red)* and your task (*green*) is to *decide between them*

In some countries people pay different rates of tax depending on their salary, *in other countries* everyone pays the same rate.

Which do you believe is the best system?

Example 2

2. You get *a solution* (red) to a *situation* (blue) and then your task (green) is to *discuss the advantages and disadvantages* of that solution

Unemployment is one of the most serious problems facing developed nations today. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of reducing the working week to thirty five hours?

Typical problems

1. If the essay discusses the problem *generally* and doesn't talk about *advantages or disadvantages* or make a choice between *the two options* you will **be penalised** under Task Achievement.
2. If the essay *only* looks at the advantages or the disadvantages and does not look at *both sides* of the question you will **be penalised** under Task Achievement.

Example 2

2. You get *a solution* (red) to a *situation* (blue) and then your task (green) is to *discuss the advantages and disadvantages* of that solution

Unemployment is one of the most serious problems facing developed nations today. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of reducing the working week to thirty five hours?

Writing process Stage I: Preparation

- **Step 1:** Analyze the essay question
- **Step 2:** Brainstorm and note your ideas
Do not write complete sentences. Write anything relevant to the task
- **Step 3:** Plan your essay – select, prioritize and group your ideas according to the genre and suggested layout for your essay

Stage I takes 10 min.

Writing process stage II – drafting, stage III - reviewing

Stage II

- **Step 4:** Write your essay following your plan in the answer sheet

stage II takes 20 min.

Stage III

- **Step 5:** Review and improve your essay – check it grammar and spelling

stage III takes 10 min.

Academic style and tone

For Academic writing you should use formal style and impersonal tone.

See your handouts

Essay structure

Basic elements of an essay:

1. Introduction
2. The body
3. Conclusion

Introduction

You should include a general or neutral statement about the topic.

Avoid using the exact words from the task rubric. Try to *paraphrase the statements* given in the task.

You can include your opinion if the approach you choose is *thesis-led**

Body

The main body should have *at least two* paragraphs which discuss both views.

Each paragraph should have *a topic sentence* and *supporting evidence*.

You should use *specific ideas or examples* to support the views from the task rubric.

Sentences must be *logically connected and punctuated*.

Conclusion

There you should summarize the main points discussed in the body of your essay.

Include statements offering a solution, prediction, result or recommendation.

You **do not need** to add any new arguments or information.

You **can** include your point of view in the conclusion.

Approaches to essay writing

Question: *“Nowadays we are producing more and more garbage”.*

An argument–led

1. Why do you think this is happening?
2. What can government do to help reduce the amount of garbage produced?

A thesis–led approach

1. What can government do to help reduce the amount of garbage produced?

An argument-led approach

Use it if you have to give several reasons for a problem and give several solutions, *discuss different views* or *compare advantages and disadvantages*.

You must show evaluate the argument logically, supporting both opinions with clear supporting evidence.

An argument-led approach (sample)

Step 1

Underline key words in the exam question

It will help you to focus your answer on the key points.

Then brainstorm ideas for both sides of the argument
(for and against the issue)

Celebrities such as actors, athletes and musicians earn large salaries compared to other professionals. Some people consider this unfair, while others think that celebrities deserve to be paid a lot for the work they do. Discuss both points of view and give your opinion on the subject.

An argument-led approach (sample)

Step 2

Show clear links between the main argument and the supporting argument. In your introduction reword the question showing the topic clearly and state the opinion(s) that you will go on to discuss.

An argument–led approach (sample)

Famous movies stars, popular musicians and athletes often get paid a lot more than other professionals. While this may seem fair to many, it is a matter of debate with several strong arguments for and against celebrities earning a lot more than people in other professions.

An argument-led approach (sample)

Remember!

- Each paragraph should have one main argument. Start a new paragraph when you start a new main idea.
- Develop contrasting views, problems and solutions, advantages and disadvantages.
- Make sure you justify each point with clear supporting material.
- Do not forget to provide a logical argument when you refuse the opposing opinion.

An argument-led approach (sample)

Step 3

Provide a strong conclusion.

The objective of the conclusion is usually to restate your final opinion. Your conclusion must logically follow the arguments you have presented in the body paragraphs. It should not contain any point or explanation or add any new information. It should never lead to another discussion.

On balance, having considered the points employed by both sides of the argument, I feel that the income that these stars receive is proportional to the economic benefits they create.

What electronic resources can help you in writing task 2

- Dominic Cole's IELTS and Beyond (A blog to help self-access language learners) - <http://www.dcielts.com/ielts-essays/ielts-poverty-essay-writing-competition/#ixzz2N85rUzx8>
- http://www.englishonlineaustralia.com.au/ielts_lesson_download.php
- <http://ielts.studyhorror.com/ielts-writing-samples-task-2>
- Kaplan IELTS 2009-2010 Edition