

IELTS Academic Writing Task Two tips and useful phrases

What advice would you give on writing IELTS Writing Task Two essays?

Possible topics to give advice on:

- Before the exam
- Analysing the question
- Planning/ Paragraphing
- Introduction
- Writing
- Summary/ Conclusion
- Editing

Cross off any of the tactics below which are bad ideas/ which are not true.

Preparation for the test

- It's worth doing extra timed writing practice even if no one can correct it
- The answers at the back of exam practice books are perfect models which you should copy as much as possible
- Memorise model answers from the internet and just change a few words and sentences to make your answer in the exam
- Make a note of your typical errors in IELTS Writing and go back to them many times to check that you can remember the correct versions

Analysing the question

- Always underline important words in the question
- There's no need to read and underline instructions like "Give reasons" because they are the same in every question
- "To what extent do you agree or disagree?" questions are basically the same as "Look at both sides and then..." questions
- With "To what extent do you agree or disagree?" questions, you always have to look at both sides of the argument
- With "To what extent...?" questions, you must say *how strong or weak your opinion is*
- With a looking at both sides question like "What are the advantages and disadvantages of...?", one advantage and one disadvantage is enough
- If a question includes a word with -s like "causes", "reasons", "effects", "solutions" or "advantages", then you have to write about more than one

Planning/ Paragraphing

- If you can think of a good paragraph structure/ organisation/ plan right away, there is no need to do any brainstorming, and you should avoid brainstorming if you can
- Brainstorm as many ideas as you can before deciding on the structure of your essay/ your plan
- Spend about 10 minutes planning
- Most IELTS essays have four paragraphs (two main paragraphs in the body plus an introduction and summary or conclusion)
- If you are only looking at one side of the argument, you can have three main paragraphs in the body, with one paragraph for each of the reasons for your opinion
- If you look at two advantages and two disadvantages, you need four paragraphs in the body (i.e. six paragraphs in total)

Introduction

- Rephrase the question in your introduction
- Before rephrasing the question, you might need to *give background to the question* (why it is important, relevant, something that you might want to write about, etc)
- Any background sentence is okay, so you can always use "... is a controversial topic"
- Spend a couple of minutes to make sure you don't repeat any words from the question when you are rephrasing it
- If you can't think of a word with the same meaning as one in the question when you are rephrasing, just change the grammar (e.g. change from a verb to a noun)

- If you can't think of a word with the same meaning as one in the question when you are rephrasing, just use one with more or less the same meaning
- Give your own opinion in the introduction if you will only look at one side of the argument
- Give your own opinion in the introduction if you will look at both sides of the argument
- End the introduction with *a sentence that explains the structure of the essay/ the topic of each paragraph below*

Writing

- Use *different kinds of support (personal experience, other people's experiences, things you read or heard, data, logical arguments such as cause and effect, etc)* for each argument that you mention
- Make up imaginary data to support your arguments
- Make up quotes and the places they came from to support your arguments
- If you happen to know very relevant data, quotes, sources, etc, you should probably explain why, to show that it isn't made up
- One or two sentences is enough support for each argument that you write about
- Make sure that the body paragraphs are similar lengths to each other

Summary/ Conclusion

- All IELTS Academic Writing Task Two essays should end with a summary and then your own opinion
- One sentence is okay for a final paragraph
- If you looked at both sides, you need to *clearly show why one side is more important* (for young people, in your country, in the future, etc) when you come to a conclusion
- If what you have written leads to a conclusion that is the opposite of your own opinion, write the former rather than the latter
- It's okay to totally sit on the fence between two positions in your conclusion

Editing

- Make sure you leave at least three or four minutes for a final edit
- Count the exact number of words to check that you have reached the word limit
- Count the number of words in two lines, calculate how many words per line, then count how many lines to check that you have reached the word limit
- Make sure that the examiner can understand without having to read anything twice
- Make sure that your essay is really neat (= tidy = not messy)
- Use an eraser to get rid of all mistakes
- It's okay to correct by crossing things out, using triangles/ arrows to add words, etc
- You can insert one or two extra sentences with an arrow to improve the structure or reach the minimum number of words
- Add higher level language/ more impressive language while you edit
- Also get rid of repetitions (rephrasing, using reference expressions, etc) while editing

Hint: 22 tips above need to be crossed off.

Compare your ideas with the suggested answers below.

Suggested answers

The bad advice is in bold.

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- Brainstorm useful phrases for doing the things in italics above.*