

## **Too informal for IELTS Writing**

*What is wrong with all the phrases on the page below?*

*Make all the expressions more suitable.*

*The expressions are divided into sections. Try to label each one by problem or kind of language.*

*Apart from the bottom three, the sections are all useful for IELTS Writing. Brainstorm other suitable phrases for each one.*

*What kind of language is generally too informal? What kind of language is more formal/ more academic?*

“... just jumps out at you/ leaps off the page at you”  
“The most important... is obviously...”

“heaps”/ “loads”/ “tons”/ “many many”/ “lots and lots”  
“millions and millions”

“The line looks like...”  
“wobbly (line)”  
“kind of flat”/ “kinda flat”  
“go through the roof”

“basically the same”  
“kind of like...”  
“much much bigger”

“I don’t really understand the question, but...”  
“I don’t know anything about this topic but...”

“Everybody’s talking about...”

“There’s no way it will work.”  
“This view is ridiculous/ nonsense.”/ “This statement is totally, completely and utterly wrong.”  
“You’d have to be an idiot to think that...”  
“The government have absolutely no idea what to do.”  
“It is so obvious that...”  
“Some people think that..., but they are wrong.”  
“IMHO”

“Basically everyone thinks that...”  
“No one really thinks that...”  
“Japanese people...”  
“absolutely always”

“The other day...”  
“A mate of mine...”  
“This guy I spoke to/ Some guy I met...”  
“There was this TV programme the other day...”  
“One day I...”

“Next, let’s have a look at...”

“The advantages are: (1)...”

“I guess...”/ “I suppose...”  
“A long long time ago”/ “Ages ago”  
“a couple of days ago”  
“when I was a kid”  
“in the 70s”

“The disadvantages are not worth considering”/ “The other things are too insignificant to be worth writing about.”

“As I wrote above somewhere”

“In a word,...”/ “So, basically...”

“It’s impossible to draw a conclusion”

“terrible”/ “awful”  
“really really”  
“so”  
“great”

“mum and dad”  
“teens”  
“oldies”

!

??

.And

.But

:)

:(

“ain’t”  
“I gotta...”  
“gonna”  
“wanna”  
“... or something”  
“lol”/ “rofl”  
“and lots of other things”  
“OK”  
“As you know,...”

## Suggested answers

### Selecting information to write about

“... just jumps out at you/ leaps off the page at you” – **“The most obvious...”**

“The most important... is obviously...” – **“The most important... seems to be...”**

**“... stands out.”**

### Numbers and amounts

“heaps”/ “loads”/ “tons”/ “many many”/ “lots and lots” – **“many”/ “very many”/ “a very large number of...”**

“millions and millions” – **“several million”**

### Trends

“The line looks like...” – **(you should talk about lines as figures rather than shapes)**

“wobbly (line)” – **“fluctuate”**

“kind of flat” – **“almost stable”/ “slight fluctuation”**

“go through the roof” – **“rocket”/ “rise very rapidly”**

### Comparing and contrasting

“basically the same” – **“almost the same”/ “almost identical”/ “very similar”**

“kind of like...” – **“in some ways similar to...”**

“much much bigger” – **“substantially bigger” “far bigger” “significantly bigger”**

### Dealing with difficult questions

“I don’t really understand the question, but...” – **“I am taking the question to mean..., in which case...”**

“I don’t know anything about this topic but...” – **“Although I am no expert on this topic,...”**

### Saying why the question is important/ interesting

“Everybody’s talking about...” – **“... is a much talked about topic” “... is a common topic of conversation” “... is often in the news”**

### Giving opinions

“There’s no way it will work.” – **“There doesn’t seem to be much chance it will work.”**

“This view is ridiculous/ nonsense.”/ “This statement is totally, completely and utterly wrong.” – **“I can’t see any merit in that view.”/ “I can’t think of any arguments in favour of that view.”**

“You’d have to be an idiot to think that...” – **“There doesn’t seem to be any reason to believe...”**

“The government have absolutely no idea what to do.” – **“The government don’t seem to be clear about what to do about...”**

“It is so obvious that...” – **“It seems clear that...”**

“Some people think that..., but they are wrong.” – **“The general view that... seems mistaken.”/ “I don’t agree with the common opinion that...”**

“IMHO” – **“In my honest opinion,...”**

### Generalising

“Basically everyone thinks that...” – “**Most people think that...**”

“No one really thinks that...” – “**Few if any people think that...**”

“Japanese people...” – “**The majority of Japanese people...**”

“absolutely always” – “**the vast majority of the time**”

### Giving evidence

“The other day...” – “**Recently**”

“A mate of mine...” – “**One of my friends...**”

“This guy I spoke to/ Some guy I met...” – “**Someone I know.../ “An acquaintance of mine...”**”

“There was this TV programme the other day...” – “**A recent television programme...**”

“One day I...” – “**I once...**”

“**In my experience,...**”

### Moving on to the next point

“Next, let’s have a look at...” – “**Looking at.../ “Moving on to...”**”

### Listing

“The advantages are: (1)...” – “**There are... advantages. Firstly,...**”

“**Secondly**”

“**Then/ “Next**”

“**Finally/ “Last of all**”

### Sounding uncertain

“I guess.../ “I suppose...” – “**It could be said that.../ “... perhaps...”**”

“**There’s a fair chance that...**”

“**could/ “may/ “might**”

### Talking about past and future times

“A long long time ago/ “Ages ago” – “**In the past.../ “In my grandparents’ generation,...**”/ “**In previous generations...**”

“a couple of days ago” – “**last week**”

“when I was a kid” – “**when I was a child**”

“in the 70s” – “**in the 1970s**”

### Quickly dealing with other points

“The disadvantages are not worth considering/ “The other things are too insignificant to be worth writing about.” – “**Although there are (other) disadvantages,...**”

### Referring back

“As I wrote above somewhere” – “**As I wrote above.../ “As I stated in the previous paragraph...**”

“**The former**”

“**The latter**”

### Summarising/ Paraphrasing

“In a word,...”/ “So, basically...” – “**To sum up,...**”

“**In other words,...**”

“**To put that another way,...**”

### Concluding

“It’s impossible to draw a conclusion” – “**Although it is (very) difficult to draw a conclusion,...**”

“**In conclusion**”

“**For the reasons given above,...**”

### Strong language

“terrible”/ “awful” – “**not the best**”/ “**far from ideal**”

“really really” – “**extremely**”/ “**exceptionally**”

“so” – “**very**”

“great” – “**excellent**”

### Informal vocabulary

“mum and dad” – “**parents**”

“teens” – “**teenagers**”/ “**people in their teens**”/ “**young adults**”

“oldies” – “**the elderly**”/ “**retirees**”

### Punctuation

! – “**It is somewhat surprising that...**”

?? – “**Could it really be true that...?**”

.And – “**and**”/ “**In addition,...**”/ “**Furthermore,...**”/ “**Moreover,...**”

.But – “**but**”/ “**However,...**”/ “**In contrast,...**”

:) – “**luckily**”/ “**fortunately**”

:( – “**unfortunately**”

### Spoken and SMS forms

“ain’t” – “**is not**”/ “**are not**”

“I gotta...” – “**I have to**”

“gonna” – “**going to**”

“wanna” – “**want to**”/ “**would like to**”/ “**would prefer to**”

“... or something” – “**or something similar**”

“lol”/ “rofl” – “**It is perhaps ironic that...**”/ “**some people might be amused by the fact that...**”

“and lots of other things” – “**and so on**”/ “**etc**”

“OK” – “**acceptable**”

“As you know,...” – “**As many people know,...**”