

IELTS Exam

Writing Task 2

How to organize your answer

Use the following guide to plan, organize and paragraph an essay in IELTS Writing Task 2



First paragraph: Introduction

- **Key technique:** Don't begin with your thesis statement.
- Never begin an essay with *I believe, I agree, or In my opinion* in IELTS Writing Task 2. These indicate your thesis statement and should go at the END of your introduction, after you have introduced the topic and problem to be discussed. As a rule, start generally and take several sentences to build to your main idea. Note that the style of thesis statement will vary depending on the question type. Study the question carefully first to determine if you should give your opinion in the introduction or in the conclusion.

- **Introductory sentence:** What topic is to be discussed? *Recently, there have been...*
- **Narrow the focus:** What issue concerning the topic is to be resolved? *However, some people argue that...*
- **Thesis statement (opinion essay):** What is your opinion on this issue? *This essay will argue that...*
- **Thesis statement (argument essay):** What will happen in this essay? *This essay will look at both sides of the argument before stating my own opinion.*
- **Thesis statement (problem/solution essay):** What are you going to write about? *The main problems are X and Y and I will propose solutions to both in this essay.*

Hint: You can choose either to write in the first person (*I believe...*) or third person (*This essay will...*). The third person sounds more objective and academic.

Hint: Don't include your main reasons or arguments in the introduction, these should go in each of the body paragraphs.

Body paragraphs

- **Key technique:** Make a paragraph plan
- In IELTS Writing Task 2, you will need to write between two and four body paragraphs. Each paragraph should express one main idea in relation to the thesis statement and how you order these paragraphs is also important for the overall coherence of the essay.
- In **an opinion essay**, if you express a strong opinion (*I firmly believe...*), then all body paragraphs should support it. However, if your opinion is weak (*I agree to some extent...*), consider writing one paragraph against followed by two paragraphs in favour .
- In **an argument essay**, it is best to give equal space to both sides of the argument, which means writing either two or four body paragraphs. If you write three body paragraphs, i.e. there is clearly a bias towards one side of the argument, make sure your final opinion is in favour of that side!
- In **a problem/solution essay**, make sure you give equal treatment to all parts of the question. Two problems and two solutions are enough. It is best not to write about problems you can't offer solutions to. There are many ways to organise such an essay. You can write about a problem and its solution in one paragraph or you can deal with all the problems first and the solutions later.

Once you have decided on a paragraph plan, make sure each paragraph is organised as follows:

- **Link to the previous paragraph:** *First, Furthermore, On the other hand*, etc.
- **Topic sentence:** Describe the main idea of the paragraph in general terms.
- **Supporting sentences:** Use examples or further explanation to support the claim made in the topic sentence.
- **Qualifying sentence:** Sometimes it is clear that an idea isn't perfect or there may be exceptions. You can point this out as long as you don't destroy your main idea completely.
- **Summarising sentence:** If you have included a qualifying sentence, or if you have written several supporting sentences, consider returning to your main point by paraphrasing your topic sentence at the end.
- **Hint:** If one of your body paragraphs goes against your main idea, put this paragraph first so that the remaining body paragraphs flow logically to your conclusion. The same is true in an argument essay. Discuss the side you don't agree with first, so that the opinion expressed in your conclusion follows naturally from what has come before.

Final paragraph: Conclusion

- **Key technique:** Give your reader something to consider.
- One habit of IELTS test-takers is to end with a simple summary of their opinion and main ideas. This is absolutely fine and can add essential extra coherence, but try also adding some kind of concluding comment. This will leave the examiner with a powerful final impression of your essay when he or she comes to score it.

A full conclusion should contain:

- **Concluding signal:** *In conclusion, In summary, Overall, etc.*
- **(Re)state opinion:** In an opinion essay, you can simply paraphrase your original thesis statement. In an argument essay, this is where you state your opinion, often using a phrase such as *Having considered both sides of the argument, I believe...*
- **Summary:** Paraphrase the main idea of each body paragraph in very brief terms. Never include examples or explanations. These go in the body of the essay.
- **Concluding comment:** Give the reader something to think about. Highlight the importance of the issue you have just discussed. Ask the reader to consider the future consequences if the issue is not resolved. Recommend a course of action that the reader or society should follow.
- **Hint:** Don't include anything in the introduction that is completely new or requires detailed explanation. This is also true for the concluding comment. Keep it obvious. Don't write an idea that you then need to explain.

Good luck!

