

IELTS ACADEMIC & GENERAL

TASK 2

HOW TO WRITE AT A BAND 9 LEVEL



IELTS
Academic and General Task 2:
How to write at a band 9 level

Copyright (c) 2012 by Ryan Thomas Higgins

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form without the explicit permission of its author,
Ryan Thomas Higgins.

Layout by Daria Lacy

Cover by Dominique Gamelin

<http://www.ieltswritingblog.com>



FOREWORD

This book has been written to provide the IELTS student with a brief summary outlining how to write an effective essay in the Task 2 portion of the Academic and General IELTS exams. It is hoped that this book acts as a supplement to the student's repertoire of IELTS writing resources and not the student's sole source of guidance for their studies in essay writing. Although valuable, reading up on the subject of IELTS essay writing alone will not ascertain success on the Task 2 portion of the IELTS exam. Students should be actively practicing their essay writing skills on a regular basis with direct coaching from an IELTS instructor.

While reading this book, the IELTS student should remember that there is no single 'correct' essay format. Examiners award marks to the structural presentation of written language based on its ability to communicate a message, not the employment of a predetermined essay formula. It is for this reason the student needs to think critically about how they respond to their IELTS Task. Tailoring the essay structures taught in this book to fulfill an essay question may be needed.

No part of this work may be reproduced or sold in whole or in part, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the author, Ryan T. Higgins. Complete copies of this book may be retained electronically only by those who have purchased it from Ryan T. Higgins. For more information on how to obtain a hard or soft copy, please visit ieltswritingblog.com. Academic and General Task 1 books are available, too.

This work is the product of many months of hard work, classroom testing, writing, editing and rewriting and is distributed at a low price to allow access to students all over the world on many different budgets. Please don't bootleg!

Ryan T. Higgins

ieltswritingblog.com



CONTENTS

Foreword.....	3
1.1 What is required on the IELTS writing exam?.....	5
1.2 What is an essay?.....	7
1.3 Analyzing Task 2 essay questions.....	9
1.4 The thesis.....	13
2.1 How to write an introduction paragraph.....	18
2.2 Coherence and Cohesion.....	24
3.1 How to write supporting paragraphs.....	26
4.1 How to write a conclusion paragraph.....	35
4.2 Cohesion at the essay level.....	42
5.1 How to write a discussion essay.....	44
6.1 Writing about advantages and disadvantages.....	49
6.2 Writing about causes and effects.....	54
6.3 Double action questions.....	58
7.1 Frequently asked questions.....	62
8.1 Review what you have learned in this book.....	63
8.1 Review what you have learned in this book (Answers).....	66
About the author.....	69

1.1



WHAT IS REQUIRED

ON THE IELTS WRITING EXAM?

The writing portion of the IELTS exam is 60 minutes in length and requires the student complete two tasks (commonly referred to as Task 1 and Task 2). The student's overall writing band weights a third to Task 1 and two thirds to Task 2. Students are thus expected to allot 20 minutes to Task 1 and 40 minutes to Task 2.

The Academic and General writing exams are different. Task 1 of the Academic exam requires the student describe a graph, table, chart or diagram. Task 1 of the General exam requires the student write a letter. Students must write essays to fulfill Task 2 on both exams; however, General Module students may write their essay with a more personal tone.

Despite these differences between the Academic and General exams, the marking rubric examiners use to grade both tests is very similar. Students are assessed on their performance in four categories: Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resources and Grammar. These four sections tend to be interdependent, thus performing poorly in one often lowers grades in others. In the following section, we will briefly discuss each of these categories and how a student can fulfill them.

Task Achievement

This breadth gauges the depth with which the student is able to answer their essay question. The essay should make use of relevant examples, draw reasoned conclusions and exhibit a central theme throughout. Essay language should be assertive and the student's position on the topic presented should be clearly stated somewhere in the essay (this may either be in the introduction or conclusion paragraphs depending on what kind of essay is required). Students scoring well in the Task Achievement portion of the rubric tend to analyze the essay topic to a much greater degree than the average student. Fitting lexical resources and sentence constructions help to give the response an overall completeness.

Coherence and Cohesion

This section of the mark gauges the student's ability to write in a way that expresses a message fluently. Sentence structure, fitting vocabulary choices and grammar really contribute to how coherent a student's message is. Cohesive phrases help tie ideas together at the sentence, paragraph and essay level and solidify the overall theme of the essay.

Lexical Resources

This area refers to the accuracy and relevance of the vocabulary a student chooses to employ in their essay. Successful students exhibit the ability to use a variety of contextually accurate words and phrases without sounding unnatural or robotic. Word variation accuracy is also a defining trait of a successful student performing at a high band level.

Grammar

Grammar is often the area that holds students from moving into the upper echelons of IELTS bands. As a marker, keep in mind that students scoring band 7 and above are capable of composing grammatically accurate sentences at least 50% of the time. Grammar issues also influence a student's performance in other sections, too. For example, poor grammar can hinder the examiner's ability to understand what the student is writing, and this directly impacts the student's Coherence mark.

1.2



WHAT IS AN ESSAY?

Let's start with simplified definitions of these basic English structures:

What is a sentence?

A sentence is a group of words.

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a group of sentences.

What is an essay?

An essay is a group of paragraphs.

An essay supports or refutes an argument through the use of examples and reason. The purpose of an essay is to persuade the reader of a position on a topic, so it is vitally important that your writing is logical.

The easiest way to score well in your Task 2 response is to structure your writing in a solid essay format that allows you to make claims, give examples and draw conclusions. Strong essays are typically divided into four or more paragraphs. Each paragraph is also subdivided into several sentences. Each sentence carries out a specific job. Together, the sentences work towards a strong centralized argument.

To illustrate, look at this essay structure:

Paragraph 1 - Introduction

- Sentence 1 - Background statement
- Sentence 2 - Detailed background statement
- Sentence 3 - Thesis
- Sentence 4 - Outline sentence

Paragraph 2 - First supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 - Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - Example
- Sentence 3 - Discussion
- Sentence 4 - Conclusion

Paragraph 3 - Second supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 - Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - Example
- Sentence 3 - Discussion
- Sentence 4 - Conclusion

Paragraph 4 - Conclusion

- Sentence 1 - Summary
- Sentence 2 - Restatement of thesis
- Sentence 3 - Prediction or recommendation

This essay structure contains a total of 15 sentences and will put your essay at roughly 250-275 words, which is ideal. Each sentence should be short, written clearly and link to other ideas presented in the essay using cohesive phrases (see section 2.2).

Following an essay structure such as the above provides the IELTS student with numerous advantages. For one, it allows the student to save time in the examination room, as a decision on essay format has been made ahead of time. Secondly, this structure employs cohesion at the essay level, which directly benefits a student's Coherence and Cohesion mark. This in turn improves the student's Task Achievement mark, as using the structure promotes a fuller response to the essay question. Finally, simply having a structure in mind can be a huge confidence boost for students walking into the exam, and this always leads to better writing. Being versed in a strong essay structure therefore eliminates many of the writing exam's challenges and sets a foundation upon which a student can build their writing mark.

1.3



ANALYZING TASK 2 ESSAY QUESTIONS

Understanding the meaning of an essay question is essential to writing a solid essay in response. When interpreting essay questions, you should first pinpoint these three attributes: *keywords*, *qualifying words* and *action words*.

To demonstrate these three properties in action, take the following essay question:

Technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in the world today. In the not too distant future, technology will completely replace the teacher in the classroom. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Keywords are the topics that can be included in your written response. In this example essay question, ‘technology’ and ‘education’ are the two controlling keywords. Thus, only topics related to ‘technology’ and ‘education’ can be included in our essay. The direction of our writing has been set.

Qualifying words are the words in the question which tell the student how the various ideas relate together. They are often the words that present opinion. Here, we see the phrase ‘increasingly prevalent’. What does this tell us about technology? We also see ‘completely replace’. What does ‘completely replace’ tell us about the relationship between technology and the classroom? How are these qualifying words shaping the question?

Here are some other examples of qualifying words grouped by what they describe:

Contrast	despite this, while, whereas, however, on the other hand, differs from, in contrast to, conversely, unlike, although
Compare	in the same vein, likewise, similarly, this mirrors, just as, has in common, moves in tandem, parallels, alike, like, reflects, almost the same
Support	desirable, beneficial, advantageous, positive
Refute	undesirable, unbeneficial, disadvantageous, negative
Fast increase	climbed, increased rapidly, fast growth, spiked
Slow increase	gradual, climbed steadily
No change	steady, stable, unchanging, remain
Slow Decrease	gradual, declined modestly
Fast decrease	dropped, fell
Sudden change up/down	spiked, dived, nose-dived
Unstable figures	volatile, rapid changes, unstable, unpredictable
Figures that are similar or the same	in tandem, similar, mirror each other, in parallel
Maximum	peak, highest
Minimum	bottomed-out, trough
Unexpected results	bizarre, strange, against expectations
Expected results	normal, unexciting, as expected
Concurrent	while, during, at the same time, at this time, also
Degree	completely, somewhat

Action words are the words that elicit response from the student. In the above example essay question, our action words are ‘do you agree or disagree with this statement’, as it is this phrase that is calling the student to do something.

Here are some additional IELTS action words and what they are requesting from the student:

Asking the student to support	Support this statement... Back this statement... Prove this statement...
Asking the student to refute	Refute this statement... Disprove this statement... Show this statement to be untrue...
Asking the student to support or refute	Do you agree or disagree... Where do you stand... Take a stand... How do you see this situation... Come to a reasoned conclusion...
Asking the student to compare	Contrast these two ideas... Compare these issues... Discuss these ideas...
Asking the student to analyze	Present a discussion on this issue... Discuss this topic... Analyze this topic...

When engaging the exam, a misinterpreted question can instantly cause a student's writing to drop several bands. To avoid this, the student should mentally reword the question in their head to ensure they thoroughly understand it.

A fitting reword of the above essay question could be:

Do you agree or disagree that in the near future the role of teachers will be taken by technology?

Now that the question is fully understood, it can be responded to effectively.

Try it yourself!

Using your new understanding of keywords, qualifying words and action words, write your own IELTS Task 2 essay question. You will need to choose a topic and apply qualifying keywords and action words from the above charts.

1.4



THE THESIS

Now that we are able to digest our question into keywords, qualifying words and action words, we are ready to prepare our response. Every Task 2 response requires one sentence that explicitly addresses the action words. This sentence is referred to as a *thesis*.

An essay's thesis is only one sentence long, but it is the most important sentence in the entire essay. It is the sentence that connects the essay to the essay question, and if it is not composed correctly, it will cause the entire essay to be off-topic. Despite the criticalness of its role, a thesis is very easy to write. In fact, the thesis often borrows words directly from the essay question.

To illustrate, in the example question from section 1.3, the thesis can only be one of two things:

It is agreed that technology will replace teachers in the classroom.

or

It is disagreed that technology will replace teachers in the classroom.

Please note how closely this sentence resembles the action words of the essay question. This is an effective strategy to follow in that it ensures your examiner will clearly see the link between your essay question and your essay. In other areas of your essay, however, try to vary your vocabulary as much as you can.

Try it yourself!

Decide what the keywords, qualifying words and action words are for these sample Task 2 writing questions. Then write a fitting thesis for each:

Public transportation is a great way to travel, particularly within a metropolis. The metro is the most convenient way to get around a city. Do you agree or disagree?

Keywords:

Qualifying words:

Action words:

Thesis:

Increasingly, the western world has been outsourcing its labour-related jobs to cheaper alternatives available in less-developed countries. Although this creates opportunities for people in poorer nations, it is a policy that is criticized by many in the west. Write an essay response supporting the case for the outsourcing of labour related jobs.

Keywords:

Qualifying words:

Action words:

Thesis:

Violence among young people has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. This rise moves in tandem with a growth in violent media. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that violent media is the main cause of violence among young people. Refute this claim.

Keywords:

Qualifying words:

Action words:

Thesis

As more and more students enter universities, academic qualifications are becoming devalued. To get ahead in many professions, more than one degree is required. In the future it is likely that people will attain a number of degrees before even starting work. This is an undesirable situation. Take a stance and respond to this argument.

Keywords:

Qualifying words:

Action words:

Thesis:

Try it yourself! (Answers)

Public transportation is a great way to travel, particularly within a metropolis. The metro is the most convenient way to get around a city. Do you agree or disagree?

Keywords: public transportation, metro

Qualifying words: most convenient

Action words: Do you agree or disagree?

Thesis: *It is disagreed that a subway system is the most convenient way to get around a large city.*

Increasingly, the western world has been outsourcing its labour-related jobs to cheaper alternatives available in less-developed countries. Although this creates opportunities for people in poorer nations, it is a policy that is criticized by many in the west. Write an essay response supporting the case for the outsourcing of labour related jobs.

Keywords: international labour-related jobs, the developed and developing worlds

Qualifying words: creates opportunities, criticized by many

Action words: Write an essay response supporting the case for the outsourcing of labour-related jobs.

Thesis: *It is argued that the outsourcing of jobs in western countries is a phenomenon that is positive in nature.*

Violence among young people has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. This rise moves in tandem with a growth in violent media. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that violent media is the main cause of violence among young people. Refute this claim.

Keywords: violence over the past 50 years, violent media

Qualifying words: increased dramatically, moves in tandem, main cause

Action words: Refute this claim.

Thesis: *It is not agreed that violent media is the main cause of violence among young people.*

As more and more students enter universities, academic qualifications are becoming devalued. To get ahead in many professions, more than one degree is required. In the future it is likely that people will attain a number of degree courses before even starting work. This is an undesirable situation. Take a stance and respond to this argument.

Keywords: multiple university degrees, professions

Qualifying words: undesirable situation

Action words: Take a stance and respond to this argument.

Thesis: *It is agreed that in future people will need to complete several degrees to ensure their competitiveness in the workforce.*

2.1



HOW TO WRITE AN INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

The introduction paragraph acts as a roadmap for your essay. When an IELTS examiner reads the introduction to a essay, they should ***already know exactly what the rest of the essay will look like.***

Please review the four sentences that appear in an argument essay's introduction paragraph:

- Background sentence
- Detailed background sentence
- Thesis
- Outline

To illustrate these sentences in action, this same essay question will be used:

Technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in the world today. In the not too distant future, technology will completely replace the teacher in the classroom. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

The background sentence simply says something general about the topic given in the essay question. Typically, this sentence will use the keywords mentioned in the question. For example:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world.

Here, we have written a general sentence about one of the main keywords of our essay question: technology. The second sentence in our introduction paragraph is a more detailed background statement. So in this sentence, the student would include some information about the growing presence of technology in the classroom. For instance:

Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom.

Now that we've finished our background sentences, it is time for us to compose a comprehensive thesis. As you recall, the thesis is the most important sentence in your entire essay because it **answers the essay question directly**. But how do we decide whether to support or refute the idea of technology replacing the teacher in the classroom? Remembering that our ultimate goal on the IELTS is to maximize our band score, the student should use logical reasoning to decide which position (support or refute) is easiest to write. Choosing the easier essay position also helps curb the possibility of mistakes in grammar and coherence.

In the case of our essay question, we are being asked **if we agree or disagree that technology will someday take the place of a teacher in the classroom**. Let's think about this question for a second:

What will this mean?

...students will learn entirely from computers

Is this likely?

...probably not

Why not?

...because a robotic teacher would not be able to discipline misbehaving students

...because a robotic teacher would be unable to cater to a student's learning needs

...because a robotic teacher would not be capable of encouraging students as well as a human

...because a robotic teacher's classroom would be boring and would hinder learning

Is it easier to agree with this statement or disagree?

...disagree!

Now that the student has decided on a direction for the essay, they can confidently write a fitting thesis:

It is disagreed that technology will completely replace the teacher in the classroom.

Following this declaration of position, the student needs to state what points they will use in support. This is done in the fourth and final sentence in the introduction paragraph: *the outline sentence*.

Students are advised to use two points to support their thesis. Using more than two may lead the student to rush their writing, which will cause grammatical errors. Using only one point will be considered insufficient evidence. Each point is discussed separately in supporting paragraphs.

Let's choose two points from our brainstorm session that we can find real examples for later on:

- a robotic teacher would be unable to cater to a student's learning needs
- a technology-driven teacher would have difficulty encouraging students

Now, we simply group these points into an outline sentence that declares a progression for the essay:

Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show this.

Congratulations! You have written your first introduction paragraph. Here it is in its entirety:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom. Despite this, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show this.

As you can see, anyone looking at your introduction paragraph knows exactly what you will talk about in the rest of the essay. The introduction paragraph introduces your topic (via your background sentences), presents your argument (as a thesis) and declares the supporting ideas you will use to prove your argument (stated in your outline sentence). To an examiner, an introduction like this clearly defines the student's position and plan for progression through the rest of the essay.

Try it yourself!

Look at the essay questions below. Brainstorm some ideas that support them and some ideas that refute them (if the question permits). Then choose to agree or disagree based on which path you think is easiest. Finally, write the introduction paragraph for an essay:

Public transportation is a great way to travel, particularly within a metropolis. The metro is the most convenient way to get around a city. Do you agree or disagree?

Increasingly, the western world has been outsourcing its labour-related jobs to cheaper alternatives available in less-developed countries. Although this creates opportunities for people in poorer nations, it is a policy that is criticized by many in the west. Write an essay response supporting the case for the outsourcing of labour related jobs.

Violence among young people has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. This rise moves in tandem with a growth in violent media. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that violent media is the main cause of violence among young people. Do you agree or disagree?

Try it yourself! (Answers)

Public transportation is a great way to travel, particularly within a metropolis. The metro is the most convenient way to get around the city. Do you agree or disagree?

Population dense cities around the world require developed transportation systems for public mobility. Underground rail has proven to be a very effective example of one such system. It is agreed that the metro is the most convenient way to get around a city. This will be shown by looking at how a metro seamlessly blends into a city's underground and allows the rider to avoid traffic.

Increasingly, the western world has been outsourcing its labour-related jobs to cheaper alternatives available in less-developed countries. Although this creates opportunities for people in poorer nations, it is a policy that is criticized by many in the west. Write an essay response supporting the case for the outsourcing of labour related jobs.

The twentieth century has seen a sharp increase in the number of jobs that have moved from developed countries to developing countries. This is a subject that is hotly contested by many. However, it is felt that this trend has more benefits than drawbacks. The jobs international and economic ties create through this practice will be analyzed to prove this thesis true.

Violence among young people has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. This rise moves in tandem with a growth in violent media. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that violent media is the main cause of violence among young people. Do you agree or disagree?

It is unfortunate that violence among young people has grown in many parts of the world. To connect this trend to television, however, is considered inaccurate. It is thus disagreed that the growing prevalence of youth violence comes as a result of rises in violent media. To prove this true, parental negligence and declining worldwide social network trends will be analyzed as more feasible causes.

2.2



COHERENCE AND COHESION

What does coherence mean?

Coherence is the logical ordering of words allowing the reader to easily understand what is written.

What does cohesion mean?

Cohesion is the linking of ideas in a manner that creates clear relationships and logical progressions between them.

The *Coherence and Cohesion* portion of your mark is a measure of how logical your ideas are presented in your essay and how well the ideas work together. Coherence is best achieved by employing short, grammatically correct sentences that are concise and to the point. Cohesion can be achieved by using *linking words* (often called ‘cohesive devices’) in your writing to create relationships between the various sentences and paragraphs in your essay.

Some examples of cohesive devices include:

To show similarity	likewise, similarly, also, as well as, in tandem with this, coupled with this
To show contrast	on the other hand, however, although, but, taken from another viewpoint, in contrast, conversely
To show series	first, second, finally, lastly
To show evidence	such as, for example, for instance, take the example of
To show result	thus, because of this, as a result, it is clear that, as can be seen, therefore, it is no surprise, consequently
To draw conclusion	finally, in conclusion, this shows, thus, therefore, in the end, to summarize, to sum up, to reiterate
To amplify	primarily, above all, of most importance is, notably
To extend	also, as well, further, to add to this, moreover

Linking words are very important in your essay. To score effectively on your IELTS exam, you should make an effort to implement short, concise sentences coupled

with linking words. *Almost every sentence in your essay should have a linking word of some sort.* In fact, the only sentence that can omit linking words is your background sentence, as there is no sentence preceding it that can be linked to!

The introduction paragraph written last chapter had several linking words in it. Can you identify them? Here, they have been outlined in red:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can **even** be seen in the classroom. **Despite this**, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show **this**.

Please note the manner in which these linking words help all sentences in the paragraph work as a team:

Even – This is used to narrow a topic. Here, it is being used to restrict the essay’s scope. We are not talking about all technology, we are talking about technology appearing in a classroom. Note how the word ‘even’ therefore evolves the ideas of our background sentence further.

Despite this – A phrase used to show concession. Although we acknowledge that technology is becoming more apparent in the classroom, we do not believe it will overtake all facets of the student’s educational experience.

This – ‘This’ refers to our thesis and states that the supporting ideas of lack of educational accommodation and the inability to motivate will act as proof of this thesis. Can you see how the word ‘this’ acts as a bridge between the outline sentences and the central argument of the thesis? The clarity with which the reader can see the writer’s argumentative progression is clear. Using ‘this’ declares a clear relationship between the thesis and the points to be used in support of the thesis.

For all remaining writing demonstrations you encounter in this book, please actively note how linking phrases are used to show the relationships between sentences and paragraphs.

3.1



HOW TO WRITE SUPPORTING PARAGRAPHS

Supporting paragraphs exist to help prove the thesis using real and factual information. To review, supporting paragraphs are made up of four sentences:

- Sentence 1 - Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - Example
- Sentence 3 - Discussion
- Sentence 4 - Conclusion

In section 2.1, an introduction paragraph was written. Let's read this paragraph again, paying close attention to the outline sentence:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom. Despite this, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show this.

This outline sentence (underlined) dictates the topics the student will use in their supporting paragraphs:

1. the inability of a technology-driven teacher to cater to students
2. the difficulty a machine would have motivating students

To prove the thesis effectively, the student needs to come up with real life examples that show each supporting point in action. It is important that the examples chosen by the student are real and tangible, otherwise they may not adequately convince the examiner of the position being argued. To illustrate the difference between good examples and bad examples, please refer to the following:

Good examples: companies, products, well-known people, historical events, cultural traditions, personal experiences

Bad examples: personal opinions, hearsay, generalizations, unspecific references

For each of the supporting points, a good example is needed to allow you to draw conclusions in support of the thesis. For our essay arguing technology will not replace teachers, here are some suggested examples and logical conclusions:

<i>Supporting point</i>	<i>Real world example</i>	<i>Discussion of example</i>	<i>Logical conclusion</i>
A technology driven teacher would not be able to cater to the needs of a classroom of people.	The world's most advanced robots, such as Honda Asimov, cannot recognize human physical cues.	Until human physical cues are recognized, machines will have difficulty catering their teaching to a dynamic classroom.	It will be a very long time before a machine can interpret student learning needs in a classroom setting.
A machine would be unable to motivate students.	American scientific theories of education state children learn faster when they have an emotional attachment to their teacher.	Young children express emotion in response to human attention, not mechanical stimulation.	Children would learn more slowly from machines.

Can you see how the examples and their discussion put a tangible face to the conclusion being drawn? These examples make our supporting points difficult to refute, and this boosts the overall strength of the essay. Note that your examiner is more concerned with the grammatical accuracy and relevance of your example than its factualness. Thus, if you find yourself in the exam room and unable to come up with a fitting example, make one up.

Now that examples have been decided upon, writing the supporting paragraphs becomes easy. The student only needs to write the four sentences, paying close attention to our coherence and cohesion. The first sentence declares the topic of the paragraph:

Firstly, a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have difficulty interpreting the educational needs of a classroom of students.

This *topic sentence* must very clearly state the point initially brought up in the introduction paragraph's outline sentence. Doing this establishes a clear connection between the introduction and supporting paragraphs.

The second sentence ties in the example of Honda Asimov:

For example, Honda Asimov, one of the world's most advanced robots, has trouble distinguishing simple human emotions.

Please note how the example directly supports the topic by presenting some factual, real-life info. Because of this, the claim that is being made is that much harder to counter. Thus, the essay as a whole is stronger.

Now a link must be made between the *example* sentence and the *topic* sentence. This sentence needs to show **why** this example proves this paragraph's topic. This is done in the discussion sentence:

If today's most advanced artificial intelligence cannot categorize these basic physical cues, it is difficult to believe that a robot could be capable of altering study plans and teaching styles in a dynamic classroom setting.

Please note how the discussion sentence clarifies what is being shown by the example. Also note how the logic in this sentence makes the overall argument of the paragraph stronger.

The final sentence in the supporting paragraph is the *conclusion sentence*. This sentence is very important, as it has to link the topic and argument presented in the supporting paragraph back to the *thesis*. It is the sentence that ties the paragraphs together and would be written something like this:

Thus, this makes it clear that a technology-driven teacher is not going to be operational anytime in the near future.

That is all there is to it! Now put the sentences of this supporting paragraph together:

Firstly, a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have difficulty interpreting the educational needs of a classroom of students. For example, Honda Asimov, one of the world's most advanced robots, has trouble distinguishing simple human emotions. If today's most advanced artificial intelligence cannot categorize these basic physical cues, it is difficult to believe that a robot could be capable of altering study plans and teaching styles in a dynamic classroom setting. Thus, this makes it clear that a technology-driven teacher is not going to be operational anytime in the near future.

Can you see how the sentences in this paragraph work together? Can you feel how the argument is strengthened through the use of a tangible example? Can you identify the linking words used to create fluency between the sentences and the paragraphs?

Try it yourself!

Now you are ready to try. Look at the steps we took to create the first supporting paragraph. Use the same process to come up with the content of the second supporting paragraph and write it below. Remember, the topic and example of this paragraph have already been decided. You will be writing about how a robotic teacher is incapable of encouraging young learners in the same way a human teacher is. You will be using the American scientific theory of education (children learn best when they have an emotional relationship with their teacher) as your example.

How did you do? Your paragraph should resemble something like this:

Secondly, a robotic teacher would not be able to establish the emotional connection needed to motivate students. The American scientific theory of education plays a good example here. This widely supported theory argues that young learners are most motivated when they share an emotional relationship with their instructor. As most would agree expecting children to form emotional ties to machinery is unrealistic, the argument that technology will replace the teacher in the classroom can be debunked.

Both supporting paragraphs of the essay are now finished. Joined to the introduction, here is the composition:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom. Despite this, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show this.

Firstly, a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have difficulty interpreting the educational needs of a classroom of students. For example, Honda Asimov, one of the world's most advanced robots, has trouble distinguishing simple human emotions. If today's most advanced artificial intelligence cannot categorize these basic physical cues, it is difficult to believe that a robot could be capable of altering study plans and teaching styles in a dynamic classroom setting. Thus, this makes it clear that a technology-driven teacher is not going to be operational anytime in the near future.

Secondly, a robotic teacher would not be able to establish the emotional connection needed to motivate students. The American scientific theory of education plays a good example here. This widely supported theory argues that young learners are most motivated when they share an emotional relationship with their instructor. As most would agree expecting children to form emotional ties to machinery is unrealistic, the argument that technology will replace the teacher in the classroom can be debunked.

Now let's read the essay again and look for signs of cohesion:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can **even** be seen in the classroom. **Despite this**, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show **this**.

Firstly, a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have difficulty interpreting the educational needs of a classroom of students. **For example**, Honda Asimov, one of the world's most advanced robots, has trouble distinguishing simple human emotions. If today's most advanced artificial intelligence cannot categorize **these** basic physical cues, it is difficult to believe that a robot could be capable of altering study plans and teaching styles in a dynamic classroom setting. **Thus**, this makes it clear that a technology-driven teacher is not going to be operational anytime in the near future.

Secondly, a robotic teacher would not be able to establish the emotional connection needed to motivate students. The American scientific theory of education plays a good example **here**. **This** widely supported theory argues that young learners are most motivated when they share an emotional relationship with their instructor. As most would agree expecting children to form emotional ties to machinery is unrealistic, the argument that technology will replace the teacher in the classroom can be debunked.

Be sure to note the way the sentences and paragraphs use linking words to tie themselves together. Here, cohesion at the sentence level is highlighted in red. Cohesion at the paragraph level is underlined. Each sentence is clear and builds the overall essay argument by tying ideas logically together.

Try it yourself!

Now, try this exercise yourself. Here we have an essay with an introduction paragraph and conclusion paragraph but no supporting paragraphs. Read the essay question and write the two missing paragraphs.

In achieving personal happiness, our relationships with other people (family, friends, colleagues) are more important than anything else. Issues such as work and wealth take second place. Argue in support of this claim.

The increasing pressures of today's money driven world can often cause people to gravitate toward material items. But personal happiness can never be achieved through such things as work, success and wealth. Although these things may be nice 'extras', it is argued that healthy relationships with family, friends and colleagues are the true secrets to personal happiness. This will be shown by analyzing the often lonely lives of many wealthy celebrities as well as the advice of older people who speak from experience.

As seen above, wealth cannot buy true happiness and this is a realization that all too often comes in old age. It is true, family, friends and colleagues and the relationships formed with them are the genuine catalysts to lasting happiness. Thus, as the old adage holds true: the more love a person gives, the more they get.

Try it yourself! (Answers)

In achieving personal happiness, our relationships with other people (family, friends, colleagues) are more important than anything else. Issues such as work and wealth take second place. Argue in support of this claim.

The increasing pressures of today's money driven world can often cause people to gravitate toward material items. But personal happiness can never be achieved through such things as work, success and wealth. Although these things may be nice 'extras', it is argued that healthy relationships with family, friends and colleagues are the true secrets to personal happiness. This will be shown by analyzing the often lonely lives of many wealthy celebrities as well as the advice of older people who speak from experience.

Firstly, the lives of wealthy celebrities often illustrate that money cannot buy happiness. For example, despite being fabulously wealthy, Robbie Williams and Kirsten Dunst suffered from clinical depression they attributed to loneliness. As their experiences show, the link between money and true happiness appears to not be as strong as the link between loneliness and unhappiness. Thus, relationships between people are more important than money.

The advice from many older people regularly reiterates this. For example, all four of my grandparents claim family and friends to be the things that brought them the greatest happiness in their lives. As these sorts of sentiments are common among the elderly of all countries and cultures, it is clear that as people age things of true importance are clarified. Thus, human relationships are much more likely to be precursors to personal happiness than money or careers.

As seen above, wealth cannot buy true happiness and this is a realization that all too often comes in old age. It is true, family, friends and colleagues and the relationships formed with them are the genuine catalysts to lasting happiness. Thus, the old adage holds true: the more love a person gives, the more they get.

4.1



HOW TO WRITE A CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH

The conclusion paragraph is the easiest paragraph to write in the entire essay because most of the information being presented is just a repetition of the information delivered in the introduction and supporting paragraphs. The conclusion paragraph only has three sentences:

- Sentence 1 - Summary
- Sentence 2 - Restatement of thesis
- Sentence 3 - Prediction or recommendation

The summary sentence restates the topics that were discussed in supporting paragraphs 1 and 2. It should begin with a linking phrase, such as ‘To summarize’ or ‘In summary’.

The restatement of thesis simply repeats the thesis in different words, reinforcing the central argument of the essay.

The final sentence can be written as a prediction (a logical guess as to what will happen to your essay subject in the future) or a recommendation (what you hope will become true concerning your essay subject).

The conclusion paragraph is sometimes confusing to students because they worry repetition will cause them to be docked marks. But remember that this is not *repetition* but *amplification*. It is also a strategy that creates essay unity.

Now take another look at the entire structure of the essay. Please note how the essay’s introduction and conclusion paragraphs are similar. Please also note the manner in which they work to frame the information given in the supporting paragraphs.

Paragraph 1 - Introduction

- Sentence 1 - Background statement
- Sentence 2 - Detailed background statement
- Sentence 3 - Thesis
- Sentence 4 - Outline sentence

Paragraph 2 - First supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 - Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - Example
- Sentence 3 - Discussion
- Sentence 4 - Conclusion

Paragraph 3 - Second supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 - Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - Example
- Sentence 3 - Discussion
- Sentence 4 - Conclusion

Paragraph 4 - Conclusion

- Sentence 1 - Summary
- Sentence 2 - Restatement of thesis
- Sentence 3 - Prediction or recommendation

In preparation for the writing of our conclusion paragraph, let's review the introduction and supporting paragraphs we wrote prior:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom. Despite this, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show this.

Firstly, a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have difficulty interpreting the educational needs of a classroom of students. For example, Honda Asimov, one of the world's most advanced robots, has trouble distinguishing simple human emotions. If today's most advanced artificial intelligence cannot categorize these basic physical cues, it is difficult to believe that a robot could be capable of altering study plans and teaching styles in a dynamic classroom setting. Thus, this makes it clear that a technology-driven teacher is not going to be operational anytime in the near future.

Secondly, a robotic teacher would not be able to establish the emotional connection needed to motivate students. The American scientific theory of education plays a good example here. This widely supported theory argues that young learners are most motivated when they share an emotional relationship with their instructor. As most would agree expecting children to form emotional ties to machinery is unrealistic, the argument that technology will replace the teacher in the classroom can be debunked.

As stated before, the first sentence of the conclusion paragraph should summarize the topics discussed in the supporting paragraphs.

- a robotic teacher's inability to cater to student educational needs
- a robotic teacher's inability to motivate students

Grouped into a single summary sentence this would read:

In summary, a robotic teacher would lack the classroom dynamism and emotional intelligence needed to be an effective instructor.

The second sentence must restate the thesis in new words. Here is our original thesis:

It is disagreed that technology will completely replace the teacher in the classroom.

And here is that same thesis in new words:

Thus, it is clear why having a class run entirely by a machine is an idea that will not be realized anytime soon.

The last sentence can be written as a recommendation or prediction:

It is predicted that computer technology will not replace traditional human teachers in the foreseeable future.

The conclusion paragraph is now complete. Assembled it reads:

In summary, a robotic teacher would lack the classroom dynamism and emotional intelligence needed to be an effective instructor. Thus, it is clear why having a class run entirely by a machine is an idea that will not be realized anytime soon. It is predicted that computer technology will not replace traditional human teachers in the foreseeable future.

Quickly scanning for cohesion, it can be seen that this paragraph links both among its sentences and among the former paragraphs of the essay.

Congratulations! You have written a well-structured, cohesive essay! Start to finish it reads:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom. Despite this, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show this.

Firstly, a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have difficulty interpreting the educational needs of a classroom of students. For example, Honda Asimov, one of the world's most advanced robots, has trouble distinguishing simple human emotions. If today's most advanced artificial intelligence cannot categorize these basic physical cues, it is difficult to believe that a robot could be capable of altering study plans and teaching styles in a dynamic classroom setting. Thus, this makes it clear that a technology-driven teacher is not going to be operational anytime in the near future.

Secondly, a robotic teacher would not be able to establish the emotional connection needed to motivate students. The American scientific theory of education plays a good example here. This widely supported theory argues that young learners are most motivated when they share an emotional relationship with their instructor. As most would agree expecting children to form emotional ties to machinery is unrealistic, the argument that technology will replace the teacher in the classroom can be debunked.

In summary, a robotic teacher would lack the classroom dynamism and emotional intelligence needed to be an effective instructor. Thus, it is clear why having a class run entirely by a machine is an idea that will not be realized anytime soon. It is predicted that computer technology will not replace traditional human teachers in the foreseeable future.

When looking at the essay as a whole, there are several things that should be noted:

- the introduction provides the reader with a map of the entire essay
- the essay's sentences link together flawlessly and create fluency when read
- cohesion exists between the paragraphs, creating a unity among all parts of the essay
- the supporting paragraphs provide real world evidence and draw logical

conclusions

- the conclusion paragraph mirrors the introduction paragraph and establishes cohesion at the essay level

Try it yourself!

Now try writing an essay from start to finish. Look to the essay we wrote together if you need some guidance.

Smart devices have put all of the world's information at our fingertips. What are the drawbacks of this development?

Try it yourself! (Answers)

Smart devices have put all of the world's information at our fingertips. What are the drawbacks of this development?

People today are capable of accessing the Internet through their mobile smart devices. This puts them in touch with an infinite amount of information. Although this trend has many positive ramifications, it is not without drawbacks. To illustrate this, the effect smart devices have on memory and privacy will be analyzed.

For one, smart devices have caused people to rely less on their memories. For example, sites like Wikipedia make it easy for smartphone users to quickly access information related to history and geography. The problem with this convenience is that these same people are committing fewer and fewer things to memory, and this makes them slaves to their devices. Thus, this is one of the main drawbacks to having a wide availability of information through smart devices.

In addition to this, smart devices have encroached upon people's privacy. For instance, last year a child in America was unknowingly filmed by his classmate while performing an embarrassing dance routine. After the video was uploaded, this child suffered extreme teasing, which ultimately led him to develop a mental disorder. As this shows, the exchanging of information through smart devices is not always a positive thing.

As the above makes clear, the access smartphones have to vast amounts of information poses some drawbacks. It is predicted that these weaknesses will continue to grow in size and scale into the foreseeable future.

4.2



COHESION AT THE ESSAY LEVEL

Take another look at the completed essay. In addition to having cohesion at a sentence level, the composition presents cohesion at an essay level:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom. Despite this, it is disagreed that technology will completely replace the classroom teacher in the foreseeable future. Analyzing the inability of a technology-driven teacher to both cater to student learning needs and instill motivation will show this.

Firstly, a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have difficulty interpreting the educational needs of a classroom of students. For example, Honda Asimov, one of the world's most advanced robots, has trouble distinguishing simple human emotions. If today's most advanced artificial intelligence cannot categorize these basic physical cues, it is difficult to believe that a robot could be capable of altering study plans and teaching styles in a dynamic classroom setting. Thus, this makes it clear that a technology-driven teacher is not going to be operational anytime in the near future.

Secondly, a robotic teacher would not be able to establish the emotional connection needed to motivate students. The American scientific theory of education plays a good example here. This widely supported theory argues that young learners are most motivated when they share an emotional relationship with their instructor. As most would agree expecting children to form emotional ties to machinery is unrealistic, the argument that technology will replace the teacher in the classroom can be debunked.

In summary, a robotic teacher would lack the classroom dynamism and emotional intelligence needed to be an effective designer. Thus, it is clear why having a class run entirely by a machine is an idea that will not be realized anytime soon. It is predicted that computer technology will not replace traditional human teachers in the foreseeable future.

In purple, the supporting paragraphs' topic sentences are shown linking back to the information presented in the introduction paragraph's outline sentence.

In blue, the link between the supporting paragraph and the essay's thesis can be seen.

In green, the summary sentence indicates a clear link back to both supporting paragraphs and the outline sentence in the introduction.

And finally in red, the restatement of thesis brings the essay to a close by reinforcing the argument made in the thesis at the beginning of the essay.

Thus, it is easy to see how the sentences throughout the entire essay work together as a team, allowing the essay to operate as one large, cohesive unit. This is the level of cohesion an examiner is looking for when marking your essay.

5.1



HOW TO WRITE A DISCUSSION ESSAY

There is a chance you will be asked on your exam question to analyze, critique or discuss a topic. These types of questions are difficult to fit into the argument essay format and thus must be responded to in a different manner.

The first thing to understand is exactly when an essay question requires a discussion-style answer. Recall from section 1.3 that essay questions can be understood by identifying three things: *keywords*, *qualifying words* and *action words*. However, to identify what type of essay to write, the student needs only look at the action words. To illustrate, please have a look at the task description of our original IELTS question:

Technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in the world today. In the not too distant future, technology will completely replace the teacher in the classroom. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

The action words here are instructing the student to choose a side: agree or disagree. Thus, the question is making it very clear that the student is to form an opinion and prove that opinion true. The argument essay structure is a natural fit for this scenario.

Now look at this variation on the above question:

Technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in the world today. In the not too distant future, technology will completely replace the teacher in the classroom. Analyze both sides of this argument.

Although the keywords and qualifying words are the same, the action words have changed. They are now instructing the student to look at both sides of the statement. Unfortunately, an argument essay structure does not comfortably allow for discussion, so the organizing of the student's essay needs to change. The structure that allows for the analyzing of opinions is called a *discussion essay*.

Discussion essay structure is in many ways the inverse of argument essay structure. To illustrate, look at the following table comparing the two:

<i>Argument Essay</i>	<i>Discussion Essay</i>
<p>Paragraph 1 - Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Background statement ● Sentence 2 - Detailed background statement ● Sentence 3 - Thesis ● Sentence 4 - Outline sentence 	<p>Paragraph 1 - Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Background statement ● Sentence 2 - Detailed background statement ● Sentence 3 - Statement of points of view to be analyzed ● Sentence 4 - Outline sentence
<p>Paragraph 2 - First supporting paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Topic sentence ● Sentence 2 - Example ● Sentence 3 - Discussion ● Sentence 4 - Conclusion 	<p>Paragraph 2 - First supporting paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Statement of first point of view ● Sentence 2 - Example supporting this point of view ● Sentence 3 - Discussion ● Sentence 4 - Conclusion
<p>Paragraph 3 - Second supporting paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Topic sentence ● Sentence 2 - Example ● Sentence 3 - Discussion ● Sentence 4 - Conclusion 	<p>Paragraph 3 - Second supporting paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Statement of second point of view ● Sentence 2 - Example supporting this point of view ● Sentence 3 - Discussion ● Sentence 4 - Conclusion
<p>Paragraph 4 - Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Summary ● Sentence 2 - Restatement of thesis ● Sentence 3 - Prediction or recommendation 	<p>Paragraph 4 - Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sentence 1 - Summary ● Sentence 2 - Statement of position ● Sentence 3 - Prediction or recommendation

When looking at the two outlines, several similarities can be seen. For one, both essays have the same number of sentences: fifteen. Many of the sentence types in the essays are also similar or exactly the same. However, one major difference is that the discussion essay lacks a thesis! As learned in section 1.3, the thesis is the most important sentence in the essay. So how can an essay exist without one?

To answer this, a look into the purpose of the essay needs to be made. An argument essay's purpose is to state an opinion and prove it. However, a discussion essay's purpose is to reach an opinion after analyzing the opinions of others. Thus, where an argument essay is *subjective*, a discussion essay is *objective*. With the writer's opinion shared in the 'statement of position' sentence in the concluding paragraph, this essay style can be seen as an inverted version of the argument essay.

To illustrate this in action, please read this sample discussion essay, which follows the structure outlined above. While reading, try to distinguish each of the fifteen sentences:

The use of technology is increasing rapidly in the modern world. Growing technological influence can even be seen in the classroom. The argument that technology will completely replace the teacher in the classroom is a subject that is both supported and refuted by many. Both sides of this argument will be analyzed before a reasoned conclusion is drawn.

Firstly, it is easy to see the progressive rate at which technology is able to mimic the teaching abilities of human beings. For example, several iPhone applications are able to hold the attention of young children for hours at a time, while concurrently teaching them things. Thus, it is clear that on a small scale, machines can act as effective teachers. The possibility for a robotic teacher in the future can therefore be seen.

However, on the other side of this argument, it must be remembered that a teacher powered by artificial intelligence would have little to no control over its students. For example, it is commonly understood that children require the watchful eye of a teacher to ensure that they are indeed completing their class work and not fooling around during class time. Unfortunately, this is something that a robotic teacher simply cannot provide. Thus, this makes it clear why the argument that technology will never completely replace the teacher in the classroom could also be possible.

In summary, both sides of the argument regarding the possibility of a technologically driven classroom have strong support. However, after analyzing the two camps it is clear that the idea of having a class run entirely by a machine is unlikely to materialize anytime soon. As such, it is predicted that the plausibility of technology-based classroom teachers will remain weak.

In this essay, evidence and discussion are given for both sides of the argument. It should be noted, however, that the writer does not fully disclose their personal position on the subject until the statement of position sentence at very end of the essay. This is done to preserve the objective nature of the essay style and is a quality that should be present in all discussion essays.

Try it yourself!

Try writing a discussion essay in response to this essay question:

Some believe museums should entertain people, while others believe their purpose is to educate. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Try it yourself! (Answers)

Some believe museums should entertain people, while others believe their purpose is to educate. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Museums often represent different things to different people. On the one hand, many people feel a museum's primary purpose is to entertain. However, others feel they function to spread understanding. The merits of both arguments will be analyzed before a conclusion is decided upon.

Firstly, some argue a museum's main purpose is to amuse. For example, the Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa minimizes the written descriptions normally found next to exhibits in an effort to provide visitors with a demonstrational experience to illustrate a scientific or historical point. Although this setup leaves their museum visitors stimulated, it does little to provide them with a deeper understanding of the scientific, historical or cultural topics the museum houses. Thus, the merits of this opinion are hard to support.

However, many other people see museums as powerful educational resources. For example, the British Museum in London, England is arranged to provide its visitors with a very informed look at the roots of humanity. Patrons leave this museum with a much richer understanding of historical topics, and this understanding is something they can apply to their everyday endeavors. Thus, the heightened benefits of this opinion regarding the role of museums can clearly be seen.

After looking at these two opposing points of view, it is felt that museums better serve the public when they are established to educate as opposed to entertain. Thus, it is hoped that the museums of the future are arranged primarily for this purpose.'

6.1



WRITING ABOUT ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

A common question students ask is how to respond if an IELTS Task 2 description requests the exam taker look at the advantages and disadvantages of a topic. Although applying an entirely different essay structure is often suggested, this is not actually necessary. An accurate response can be written using argument or discussion essay structure.

To begin, look at example action words that commonly accompany advantage and disadvantage type questions:

1. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of this and form an opinion.

or

2. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of this topic?

or

3. Do you feel this topic has more advantages than disadvantages?

All three of the above groupings of action words state that an examination of the advantages and disadvantages needs to take place in the student's essay. However, they qualify this examination differently.

In the first example, the student is asked to analyze both the advantages and disadvantages of a topic. Naturally, this would call for a discussion style of essay. The student would use one of their supporting paragraphs to analyze the advantages and the other supporting paragraph to analyze the disadvantages. The student's final opinion would be declared in the conclusion paragraph.

The second example is very similar to the first in that both supporting paragraphs would look at the advantages and disadvantages in turn. But here the student could comfortably share their opinion as a thesis at the beginning of the essay or as a statement of position at the end of the essay. Thus, these action words allow for either essay style.

The third example, however, changes things completely. Here the student is being asked to comment directly on whether the topic has more advantages than disadvantages. Thus, to directly answer the essay question, the student would need to write a concise thesis that states a position on whether the topic indeed 'has more advantages'. The supporting paragraphs would provide evidence proving this thesis by exemplifying the advantages and belittling the disadvantages.

To illustrate how to respond to questions similar to the first and second examples, look at this mock IELTS question and answer:

The advent of the Internet has made it possible for people to work from home. Write an essay looking at the advantages and disadvantages of this professional arrangement. Share personal examples in your essay.

The Internet has revolutionized the world in many different ways. Among these, it has made it possible for people to work from home. This essay will analyze the advantages and disadvantages that arise when a person lives and works in the same place. Following this look, a reasoned conclusion will be shared.

On the one hand, working from home gives people the flexibility to set their own hours, which can allow for the arranging of a schedule that makes a person more productive. For example, a friend of mine freelances as a programmer from home and has discovered he is most productive when he works late at night. As such a schedule would not be possible at a normal 9 to 5 desk job, the positive effects his home office arrangement have on his productivity can be seen. Examples like this clearly show the advantages that can derive from working at home.

However, working from one's abode can often be the cause of mental anguish. For instance, I recall once collaborating with an online team from the comforts of my apartment. Although this arrangement allowed me to make my own schedule, it also meant that I had to constantly be on call, as my co-workers contacted me day and night with their work-related problems. Thus, some jobs done from home may make it difficult for a person to detach themselves from their professional commitments.

The above look illustrates that certain jobs and certain people may be more fitted for the home office arrangement. It is thus recommended that prospective home office workers weigh the pros and cons before engaging such a commitment.

Notice the manner in which this essay fulfills the Task 2 description. Both an advantage and disadvantage are shared and a comment is made on what course of action a person should take regarding this topic.

Try it yourself!

The following essay question requires the writer to take a stance. It is thus not going to be responded to using a discussion essay style. As the topics are the same, you may use ideas from last essay if you wish:

The advent of the Internet has made it possible for people to work from home. Do you feel this working arrangement has more advantages or disadvantages? Share personal examples in your essay.

Try it yourself! (Answers)

The advent of the Internet has made it possible for people to work from home. Do you feel this working arrangement has more advantages or disadvantages? Share personal examples in your essay.

The Internet has revolutionized the world in many different ways. Among these, it has made it possible for people to work from home. Despite the many advantages that may derive from this arrangement, it is felt that working from home is predominantly disadvantageous to the professional. This will be proven by looking at how the home sets professionals up to be both distracted and unable to detach themselves from work.

For one, although working from home may be effective for many, most people are likely to get distracted under these conditions. For example, a former manager of mine once delegated a writing task to me and instructed me to complete it at home. When I went to engage the project, I found it difficult to stay focused in an environment I traditionally relaxed in, and as a result the quality of my work suffered. My experience clearly shows that for people like myself, working from home is disadvantageous to productivity.

In addition to this, the stay-at-home worker often finds it challenging to distance themselves from their work, and this can be mentally exhausting. For instance, a colleague of mine started his own business from home. Within the first few months, he was receiving telephone calls, emails and faxes at all times of the day and night. In the end, he felt forced to migrate this professional pursuit to a rented office apartment simply because it was taking over his life. As this story illustrates, the disadvantages of a home-based job are numerous.

To conclude, despite advantages of lower overhead and independence, working from home has many more drawbacks than favourable points. It is thus hoped that professionals everywhere think carefully before settling on this working arrangement.

As the above essay illustrates, there are occasions when advantage/disadvantage essay questions must be responded to in more of an argument than discussion essay structure. Note the manner in which a thesis is used. Also note the instances of concession that are shared (but not thoroughly discussed) in the essay, which can be a balancing factor in the advantage/disadvantage essay style.

This is a solid and thorough response to the task description.

6.2



WRITING ABOUT CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Some IELTS Task 2 descriptions will request the student outline the causes and effects of a certain subject. In most cases, the cause and effect essay question is responded to using a discussion essay structure. This essay structure allows the student to objectively look at the causes of a certain subject in the first supporting paragraph and the effects of the same subject in the second supporting paragraph.

Take the following question and answer as an example:

The world's air pollution levels are rising year on year. Discuss what you feel are the causes and effects of this disturbing trend.

The growing level of airborne pollutants has proven to be a major obstacle for humanity in the 21st century. To address this issue, encouraging popular understanding is a paramount first step. This essay will examine the major causes and effects of atmospheric pollution.

Firstly, the greatest causes of airborne pollution growth today come as a result of both progression in the developing world and wastage in the developed world. For example, as the affluence of over 2 billion Indian and Chinese people continues to grow, sales of pollution-causing vehicles will move in tandem. As this phenomenon compounds with the tremendous levels of pollution already coming out of the developed world, a recipe for unshrinking levels of air pollution can be seen. Thus, demand for petrol vehicles in the developing world and resource wastage in the developed world can be concluded today's greatest causes of airborne pollutants.

The effects of these airborne pollutants tend to manifest themselves as health issues. For instance, it is estimated that a larger percentage of children have asthma today than ever before in human history. To make matters worse, scientists are now finding air pollution can cause abnormal foodstuffs growth among farming popula-

tions the world over, and consumption of these foods has been linked to cancer. Thus, growing asthma and cancer rates are the most chilling effects of the world's rising air pollution.

Following this look, unfortunate trends in the developed and developing worlds are inciting swelling numbers of asthma and cancer sufferers. These are considered to be the most significant causes and effects of the planet's air pollution levels. Thus, controlling byproducts of human activity has to become central to humanity's collective strategy for the 21st century.

In this essay response, the first supporting paragraph is dedicated to describing the causes. The second supporting paragraph is dedicated to the effects. Although several different causes and effects can be shared in each paragraph, it is recommended that students try to shape each paragraph by a theme, as this curbs the chance of the student making structural or grammatical errors. The themes that appear in this essay are (1) lifestyle trends in the developed and developing world and (2) the health issues that result from airborne pollution.

Try it yourself!

Give this cause and effect essay an attempt:

All over the world, the number of overweight people is growing. What do you feel are the main causes of this? What are the effects?

Try it yourself! (Answers)

All over the world, the number of overweight people is growing. What do you feel are the main causes of this? What are the effects?

Global obesity rates have been swelling for several decades now. This is a trend that is having devastating effects on populations everywhere. Although often debated, it is felt the food a person eats and the lifestyle they live are the base precursors to this problem. In this essay, a look at these causes and their effects will be made.

Firstly, diet and lifestyle are the two most major catalysts of obesity. Evidence of this can be seen in any developing country. For example, in China, growing affluence has led people to consume more fast food and live more sedentary lifestyles. This trend moves in tandem with a steady growth in the number of overweight people. Thus, as this makes clear, changing dietary practices and levels of activity are at the root of swelling waistlines.

The major effects of this are entirely negative. As evidenced in the United States, growing obesity rates lead to growing rates of diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. This has led to the first generation of Americans ever with shorter life expectancies than their parents. Thus, it is clear that these effects need to be countered to enhance the quality of life for future generations.

Following this look at the causes and effects of obesity, it is felt that education is the single most important counter to this problem. Thus, it is hoped schools everywhere encourage children to eat a nourishing diet and practice a healthy lifestyle in an effort to change this disturbing global health trend.

6.3



DOUBLE ACTION QUESTIONS

In double action questions, the student is being instructed to do more than one thing in their response. As there is no set formula for these sorts of questions, it is important the student recognizes that they will need to tailor their essay structure to match what their question is asking.

Typically, one of the two calls to action will ask the student for their opinion on something and this is answerable in a single sentence. This can be done in either the introduction or conclusion paragraphs of the essay, depending on what kind of essay the student is required to write. In these cases, the second call to action can be focused on in the supporting paragraphs. To illustrate this, please refer to the following task description:

In order to improve a country's education system, young students should be allowed to openly criticize their teachers during class time. What is your opinion? What are some other ways education systems could be improved?

Did you notice the two sets of action words? They are:

1. *What is your opinion?*
2. *What are some other ways education systems could be improved?*

The 'do you agree or disagree' portion of the question is asking for the student's position on the subject, and this can be answered in a single sentence.

The 'what are some other ways education systems could be improved' question requires a more in-depth response.

In the following example essay, blue and green text has been used to indicate precisely where the essay addresses each of the task's questions:

In order to improve a country's education system, young students should be allowed to openly criticize their teachers during class time. What is your opinion? What are some other ways education systems could be improved?

Arguments over how to best improve education systems have been going on since the practice of teaching began. **The idea that young students should be allowed to openly criticize their teachers in an effort to better an education system is considered preposterous.** The alternatives of altered school scheduling and teacher monitoring through video will be analyzed for viability.

Firstly, modified school scheduling would promote educational benefits in a way that openly criticizing could not. For example, many Scandinavian school boards run education systems that take periodic three-week breaks throughout the academic year instead of an extended two-month break at summertime. Overall, students have just as much holiday time as their peers in traditional school arrangements, but there is not such a long, education-detering break at summer, and this allows students to mentally retain more of their studies. This example is clearly a more plausible alternative to the argument that students should be allowed to criticize their teachers.

In addition to this, schools should consider videotaping classes to both monitor teacher performance and student conduct. For instance, I once taught at a school with this arrangement and this made it easy for the students' parents to stay attune to both their children's lessons and conduct during class time. This sort of educational adjustment would do more for improving a child's education than open student criticism of instructors. Thus, the plausibility of this alternative is clear.

It can be concluded that both scheduling and class transparency would be more positive alterations to the current education system than a system of public ridicule. It is thus hoped these changes gain support in the foreseeable future.

As can be seen, both of the tasks are addressed in the essay, albeit in different sections. The first question is responded to in the thesis, which is amplified in the concluding sentences of each supporting paragraph and the restatement in the concluding paragraph. The second question is answered in the supporting paragraphs.

Try it yourself!

Try responding to this double action question yourself:

The world is heavily dependent on oil for energy, which is unsustainable due to global warming. What future resource do you think will take oil's place? Why do you think this?

Try it yourself! (Answers)

The world is heavily dependent on oil for energy, which is unsustainable due to global warming. What future resource do you think will take oil's place? Why do you think this?

Most would agree that oil will not remain the world's main energy source indefinitely. With major breakthroughs in humanity's ability to harvest power from the sun, it is argued that solar power will one day become a cheaper and healthier alternative to petrol. This will be shown viable by looking at how the price of solar energy per watt has almost decreased to that of oil and how companies producing solar technology have specialized their skill.

Firstly, the power of energy produced by oil is almost equal to that of energy produced by solar wafers. For example, a recent study published in *Scientific America* magazine predicted that the rising price of oil energy and the falling price of solar energy would meet in 2020. What this means is that from 2020 onwards, it would be more economical for a person to fuel their car using solar energy than it would using oil. As people are driven by price, it is clear how solar energy will take the place of oil as humanity's next major energy resource.

Secondly, as solar technology develops it is becoming a much more versatile energy producer. For instance, traditional solar panels were large, square boards that had to be facing the sun directly to produce energy. Today, solar collectors come in all shapes and can be contoured to fit a range of product designs, from the rounded exterior of a car to the back of an iPhone. This flexibility is yet another reason that illustrates why solar energy is fit to take over oil as the world's top energy source.

After looking at both its increasingly competitive price and versatility, it is clear why solar power will replace oil. For the sake of the world's health, it is hoped this transfer happens sooner rather than later.

7.1



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Should I indent the paragraphs in my essay?

Indenting is optional on the IELTS exam. Students should, however, skip lines between paragraphs to clearly indicate where one paragraph ends and another begins.

Can I score band 9 with only 250 words in my essay?

Yes. Many students make the mistake of thinking that essays have to be long to impress an IELTS examiner. If you fulfill all sections of your examiner's marking rubric at a band 9 level and you write an essay 250 words or more in length, you will receive band 9.

Can I use contractions in my essay?

Style is very important in the IELTS exam. Task 2 of the essay is expected to be completed using a formal style of writing. The student is therefore best to avoid using contractions in their writing, as this runs the risk of losing marks for style.

I keep getting band 6. What am I doing wrong?

If you have read and implemented the lessons in this book and are still receiving band 6 on your exam, it is likely that your grammar is weak. To fix this, read sample essays and make note of the manner in which they are worded. Note verb tenses, article and preposition usage and cohesive phrases. Committing these resources to memory will make it likely that you will repeat them when you go to write your own essay.

I have trouble thinking of examples. What should I do?

If you cannot think of a worthy example, make one up. Ensure the example is relevant and delivered in a convincing and grammatically accurate manner. Your examiner is more interested in the quality of your writing than the factualness of your examples.

Can I use personal pronouns in my essay?

This is again a matter of style. Overuse of personal pronouns in your essay will make your writing sound too personalized, and this will cause the style of your essay to suffer. It is best to avoid using personal pronouns unless sharing an example that requires them.

8.1



REVIEW WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED IN THIS BOOK

What are the three areas you should look for when interpreting IELTS Task 2 writing questions?

How many paragraphs should your IELTS Task 2 response be?

What is the most important sentence in an argument essay? What does this sentence do?

Name one way argument essays and discussions essay are different.

What is cohesion?

Fill in the missing information in this argument essay outline:

Paragraph 1 – Introduction

- Sentence 1 - _____
- Sentence 2 – Detailed background statement
- Sentence 3 - _____
- Sentence 4 – Outline sentence

Paragraph 2 – First supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 – Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - _____
- Sentence 3 - _____
- Sentence 4 – Conclusion

Paragraph 3 – Second supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 – Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - _____
- Sentence 3 - _____
- Sentence 4 - Conclusion

Paragraph 4 – Conclusion

- Sentence 1 - _____
- Sentence 2 – Restatement of thesis
- Sentence 3 - _____

8.1



REVIEW WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED IN THIS BOOK (ANSWERS)

What are the three areas you should look for when interpreting IELTS Task 2 writing questions?

- *Keywords*
- *Qualifying words*
- *Action words*

How many paragraphs should your IELTS Task 2 response be?

- *Four*

What is the most important sentence in an argument essay? What does this sentence do?

- *The thesis is the most important sentence in an argument essay. It acts as a direct answer to the essay question and presents the writer's opinion or argument.*

Name at least one way argument essays and discussions essay are different.

- *Argument essays present the writer's opinion in the introduction paragraph (via the thesis). Discussion essays present the writer's opinion in the conclusion paragraph (via the statement of position). Argument essays state and prove an argument, while discussion essays analyze the opinions of others.*

What is cohesion?

- *Cohesion is the process of writing with fluent, linking ideas.*

Fill in the missing information in this argument essay outline:

Paragraph 1 – Introduction

- Sentence 1 – **Background sentence**
- Sentence 2 – Detailed background statement
- Sentence 3 - **Thesis**
- Sentence 4 – Outline sentence

Paragraph 2 – First supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 – Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - **Example**
- Sentence 3 - **Discussion**
- Sentence 4 – Conclusion

Paragraph 3 – Second supporting paragraph

- Sentence 1 – Topic sentence
- Sentence 2 - **Example**
- Sentence 3 - **Discussion**
- Sentence 4 - Conclusion

Paragraph 4 – Conclusion

- Sentence 1 - **Summary**
- Sentence 2 – Restatement of thesis
- Sentence 3 – **Predication or recommendation**

Write an essay in response to this essay question:

Describe some of the problems overreliance on cars can cause and suggest a possible solution.

In the modern world, humanity's reliance on motorized vehicles has reached levels never seen before in history. With the rise of the developing world, these numbers are only going to continue to swell. It is felt that pollution and the draining of world resources are the most serious problems caused by this trend. Carpooling will be argued a feasible response to these challenges.

Firstly, pollution and the reduction of natural resources are major problems caused by human overreliance on cars. For example, the world's collective car exhaust has now dissolved the ozone and raised temperatures so much that certain island nations like the Kiribati may cease to exist. In addition to this, a statistic was recently released stating that there simply is not enough steel in the world to build cars for all of China and India's adults. As these examples show, if humanity's consumption of cars is not curbed, it will have extreme repercussions on both pollution and natural resource levels. Thus, something must be done to stop this development.

A suggested solution to the above is carpooling. In many Western countries, for example, reserved lanes make the practice of carpooling attractive, and this has had substantial effects on the levels of exhaust pumped into the atmosphere every day. Thanks to carpooling, it is estimated that car fumes are almost 10% lower today than 5 years ago in countries like the UK and Canada. As this shows, carpooling could be a plausible solution to humanity's overdependence on motorized vehicles.

Following this look at the challenges and potential solutions to this topic, it is clear that something has to be done in order to reduce the world's reliance on motor vehicles. It is thus hoped carpooling lanes are introduced in all big cities the world over.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born and raised in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Ryan began his teaching career tutoring English to newly arrived Canadian immigrants. After finishing university, he relocated to Dubai in the summer of 2005 and started teaching IELTS essay writing at a number of international universities. His work with many students in preparation for their IELTS exams led him to realize that there were very few quality IELTS writing resources available free of charge online. With some encouragement from his students, he compiled all essential IELTS writing information into a series of tutorial videos and made these videos available for Internet viewing. Since then, Ryan's videos have been viewed over 4 million times and his IELTS writing strategies have been used with success the world over.



In 2007, Ryan relocated to Shanghai, China. He currently lives with his wife in Doha, Qatar.