



my IELTS teacher
Speaking and Writing

Preparation for the IELTS Exam

This book is written for students aiming for an
IELTS score of 6.5 or higher



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About my IELTS teacher - Angela

With more than 15 years experience working as an English Language teacher to adults learning a second language.

I teach from Beginner to Advanced level, from General and Business English to IELTS and University preparation courses, and I've taught in a variety of private schools and universities in both Australia and Turkey.

My focus in IELTS exam classes has been to provide students with the strategies and exam training they need to achieve scores between 6 and 7.5 in their IELTS exam. The majority of these students have required these scores in order to satisfy university entry requirements for Masters programs, or for visa requirements for emigration purposes.

I also am the owner and writer of the website myieltsteacher.com which has been online for over 6 years.

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IELTS Speaking

Part 2 - The 2 minute topic

In this section of the speaking exam the examiner will hand you a booklet with a topic. Here is an example of what your topic will look like:

Describe a celebration you remember. Explain why it was memorable.

You can include:

- What event was being celebrated
- Where the celebration took place
- Who was there
- Why it was enjoyable

You will notice the topic is given in the first sentences. Then there are bullet points with suggested things to talk about.

You have 1 minute to make any notes you wish before you speak about this topic for 2 minutes.

My advice - Don't just sit there, make some notes!

I've watched too many students do nothing for 1 minute.

Then after 1 minute (or even 30 seconds) they start speaking.

They stop speaking after about another minute and look embarrassed.

Or they don't understand the topic and wait for one minute and then ask about the meaning of a word. So they haven't planned anything.

You are on your way to losing so many points if you do this. You are expected to speak for 2 minutes, without any questions from the examiner, so make sure you plan.

OK, so what should I do?

Look carefully at the topic and suggested bullet points and think about your personal experience.

After lots of preparation for this exam you should be able to think of something within 5 seconds. Make sure it's something you can easily talk about - so you need to know details. As long as you practice lots of different topics before the exam then this process should become easier for you.

Here are topics that you can practice with:

A	B
<p>Describe a job that you would like to do in the future, and explain why you would like this job.</p> <p>You should say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why you are attracted to this job• How much training would be necessary• What kind of personal qualities you would need	<p>Describe a present you bought that gave someone a lot of pleasure.</p> <p>You need to say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What the present was• Who it was for• Why you chose it• Why the person who received it was so pleased
C	D
<p>Describe a tourist trip you have been on that you particularly enjoyed.</p> <p>You should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where you went• Why you took the trip• What you remember most about it• Why you enjoyed it	<p>Describe a children's story that you know well.</p> <p>You can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you first read it• What you liked about it• Why you think it became popular
E	F
<p>Talk about some exciting news that you've received, either by phone or email.</p> <p>Please say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What it was• Who told you• Why it was so exciting	<p>Describe a city that you would like to visit in the future.</p> <p>You should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where the city is• How you would travel there• What you would do there• Why you want to go there

Use a variety of vocabulary

In the Part 2 you are normally asked to describe something - an object, a place, a person, an activity or event etc. So it's important that you can use a variety of interesting adjectives to do this.

So many of my students panic under pressure and repeat words such as 'good' and 'bad', even though they are Upper Intermediate level or above. So try to develop your vocabulary so that you can describe things in an interesting way.

- Listen to my 2 minute talk again and notice how I use these words

Adverbs used to develop adjectives	Adjectives	Topic-related / interesting vocabulary
really	terrible	memory
very	amazing	remember
extremely	fantastic	remind
almost (the best..)	delicious	sounds and smells childhood
	comfortable	atmosphere
	exciting	insist on
	pleasant	associate with
	happy	take place
		go off

Use a variety of grammar structures

Under pressure you may feel like using structures you are most comfortable with. That's why it's very important that you practice using a variety of simple and complex grammar structures when speaking, so that in the IELTS speaking exam you can comfortably use them.

- Listen to my 2 minute talk again and notice when I use these structures

Be going to for future plans

I'm **going to** talk about...

Past habits

My father **would wake** us up...
...that happy time we **used to spend** together.

Past simple

After that we generally **fell asleep**

Past obligation

...we **had to stand up** for the national anthem.

Present simple

I **remember** my grandfather insisting on...
This **is** a very strong childhood memory...

Zero conditional (using when instead of if)

When I smell them or **hear** them today, it really **reminds** me of that happy time...

There are, of course, many other structures you could include, depending on the topic you have. For example, after listening to my students do the test, I often encourage them to think about using relative clauses, passive sentences and conditionals. Because we focus on using these in the IELTS writing exam, (and hopefully they become more proficient at using them), then it is easier to use them in the IELTS speaking exam as well.

IELTS Speaking Exam

Part 3 - The discussion questions

In this part of the exam you are expected to answer discussion questions related to your topic from part 2. However, these questions are more abstract and you are expected to give opinions and explain why you have these opinions. You are not expected to have expert knowledge on the subject, but you are expected to be aware of global social situations and issues. This means you should be aware of what is happening in the world around you and be prepared to discuss it.

I completed a Part 2 topic on celebrations, so I'm going to look at some possible Part 3 questions that could follow on from this topic.

How do I answer these questions?

As the questions in this part of the exam can be long and complex, it's important that you focus on the key words in the question.

Have a look at these questions. Notice which words are important for you to focus on when you answer.

1. How important is it for families to get together and celebrate?
2. Can you compare the importance of family relationships to that of friendships?
3. Can you comment on the effect on society of changing family relationships?
4. How do you think this might develop in the future?

There is no time limit in this section. You are just expected to answer the question, making sure you give reasons for your answers.

You are not graded according to your opinions. You can express any opinion you feel, as long as you can explain your reason for it! You are graded on your ability to answer the question and the language you use.

Listen to a native speaker

Let's look at some of the language I used...

[Click here to listen](#)

1. How important is it for families to get together and celebrate?

Organising ideas and giving opinions
Well...I actually think... The main reason is that these days... I think another reason is that we... <i>I also used simpler phrases a number of times, such as:</i> ...because of... ...so that... ...again...
Interesting and varied vocabulary
...we spend so much time apart... ...the demands of our jobs... ...coming together... ...the kinds of lives that we lead... ...it becomes quite stressful on a daily basis...
Grammar
<i>Present simple</i> - ...we <u>spend</u> so much time apart from each other... <i>Subject using gerund form</i> - ... <u>coming together</u> is a really important part of life... <i>Defining Relative clause</i> - ...the <u>kinds of lives that we</u> lead... <i>Zero conditional using 'when'</i> ... <u>when you come together</u> as a group,... <u>that time helps</u> you to relax and enjoy life...
Finishing response
So yeah, I actually think it's really important.

IELTS Speaking Exam

Example student speaking tests with scores and assessment reports

Examiners have a special assessment table which they use to award you points. IELTS has produced a similar table for students to read, and you can download this from my website.

You can listen to my students' practice tests, review their scores and read their assessment.

There are 4 students to listen to, with the following scores:

IELTS 5

IELTS 6

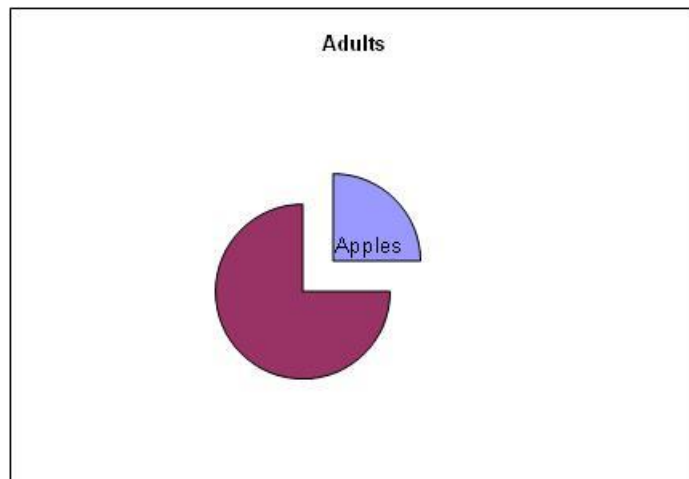
IELTS 6.5

IELTS 7.5

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic Task 1 - Graph vocabulary

Describing static charts - those charts that show unchanging data



Sentence starters	Describing data
This pie chart <i>shows</i> that	a quarter of all adults eat apples. 1 in 4 adults eat apples.
This chart <i>illustrates</i> that	25% of adults eat apples.
<i>It can be seen that</i>	three quarters of adults eat other fruit. three out of 4 adults eat other fruit.
The data presented <i>indicates</i> that	75% of adults eat other fruit.

How to use this vocabulary accurately when describing dynamic graphs

Now that you have the necessary vocabulary to describe charts, it is important that you use it accurately in the exam. Below are a series of simple graphs with a few sentences to basically describe the data shown. The different verbs and nouns suggested earlier are written in **bold** in the chart sentences.

(Please note that these are not IELTS Task 1 answers, but sentences written for the purpose of teaching accurate use of vocabulary. How to answer IELTS questions will be dealt with later. All these sentences were written in 2010, and the correct verb tenses have been chosen for that year.)

Chart A

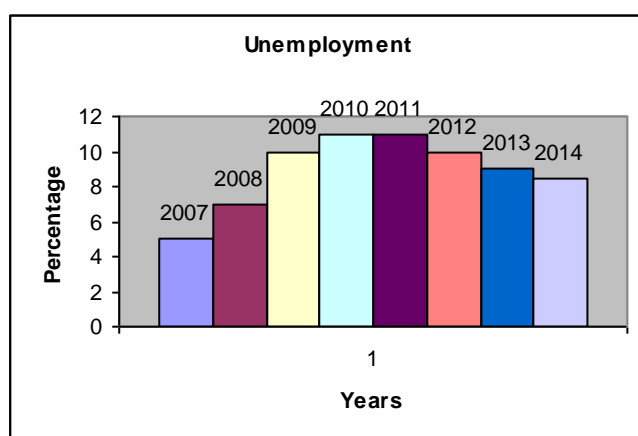


Chart A

The graph illustrates that the rate of unemployment **has risen** significantly over the last few years. It is predicted that it will **level off** next year, and then **fall** gradually over the following years.

Chart B

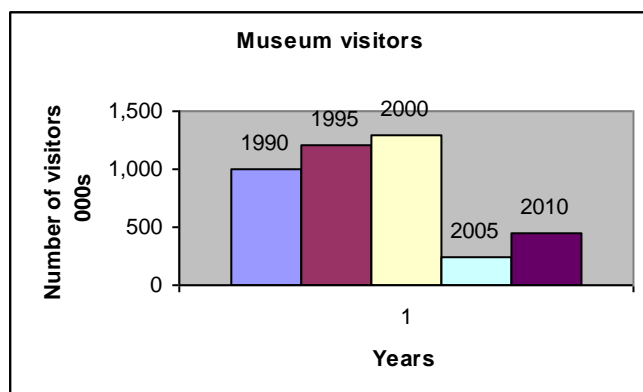


Chart B

The number of visitors to the museum **increased** steadily from 1990 to 2000, and then **dipped** dramatically in 2005. Since then, there has been a slight **increase** in numbers.

Using verbs and prepositions accurately.

Chart	Verb + preposition
C	The population grew from 23% to 50%
D	The exam pass rate remained stable during the 1990s
E	The rate of inflation increased by 2% from 2000 to 2003 it stabilized at 3%.
Noun + preposition	
B	a slight increase in numbers
E	reaching a low point of 1%
F	there was a drop of 10% during the first 6 months

Using accurate phrases to describe the data in the graph.

Chart	
A	The graph illustrates that the rate of unemployment...
B	The number of visitors to the museum...
C	The population...
D	The exam pass rate...
E	The rate of inflation...
F	The data shows...
G	Sales...

Using tenses appropriately.

Chart	
A	Period 2007 - 2014. <i>Present perfect and future structures.</i>
B	Period 1990 - 2010. <i>Past simple and present perfect.</i>
C	Period past to present day. <i>Past simple and past simple.</i>
D	Period 1990 - 2010. <i>Past simple.</i>
E	Period 2000 - 2009. <i>Past simple.</i>
F	Period 2005. <i>Past simple.</i>
G	Period 1990 - 2000. <i>Past simple.</i>

(The chart sentences were written in 2010, therefore the tenses were chosen according to that time frame. It is possible in some instances to use alternative tenses in these sentences. However, some uses of the present perfect and future structures would need to change if the sentences were written before or after 2010.)

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic Task 1 - How to structure your answer

If you look at a variety of Task 1 questions you will notice that the instruction is always the same:

- **write a report and describe the information.**

So your answer should follow a "report" style of writing, not an essay format, and you should describe what you can see, not analyse the results in the graph.

How you organise this description is important, and so my aim is to provide you with a "formula" that you can use for your answer.

The basic formula

Paragraph 1

What does the graph show? (using present simple)

What is the overall trend? (using appropriate tenses depending on the dates shown)

Paragraph 2 (and 3 if appropriate)

Choose significant data from the chart (using appropriate tenses depending on the dates shown)

Final sentence

Your overall impression from the data (using appropriate tenses as in the second paragraph)

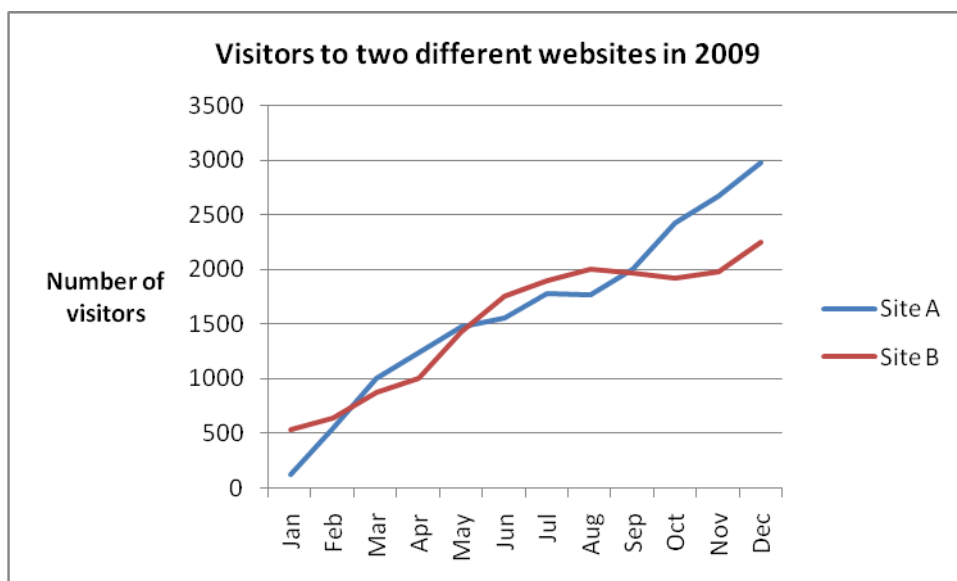
Please note that the graphs in the exam will be more complex than those shown in this section, or will include several sets of data for you to compare. As a result, your second/third paragraph(s) will be much longer than those in these examples. The examples given here are only for training purposes.

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic Task 1 - How to select and compare data in your answer

Comparing data in one chart

Look at the graph below.



I start my IELTS answer by answering these questions:

1. What does the graph show?
2. What is the overall trend?

The graph shows the number of people who viewed two web pages during 2009. It can be seen that this number increased dramatically from January to December, for both companies.

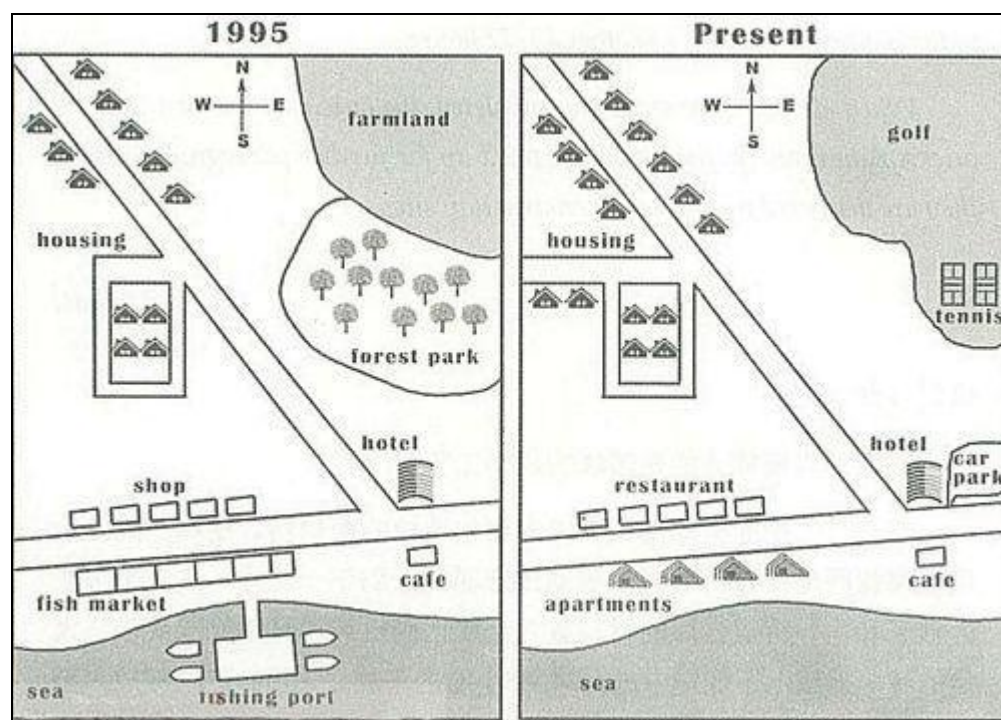
I then select the most significant data on the chart that I want to write about. I do this by circling various parts of the graph and numbering them. These numbers represent the order I will describe them in my answer, and need to follow each other in a logical order.

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic Task 1 - How to describe a process

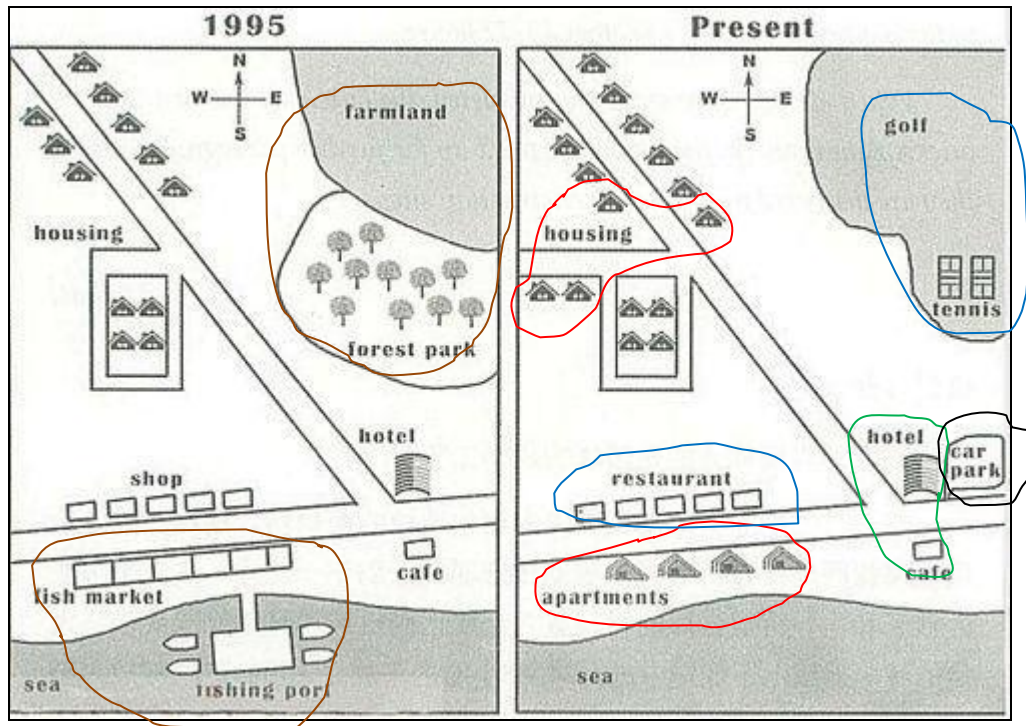
Sometimes the graph question is replaced with a picture or diagram. Most often these diagrams show a process with a start and finish point. However, there are also process questions with 2 pictures and generally these show the changes at a location over a time period. We will look at this type of question first.

Pictures with changes



First of all I recommend drawing a circle around the differences. If you do this you can tick them off as you finish writing about them, so that you don't forget any important changes. If you forget to write about something this can seriously affect your Content / Task Achievement result.

After this you can then decide which of these changes you can group together. Remember, like the graph answers, the examiner wants to see you group ideas together and make comparisons. They don't want to see a list of changes.



Planning what to write

I have circled the changes in different colours on the two pictures to highlight the different categories, or groups of changes.

So there has been an increase in **housing**, and **entertainment facilities**, and the **fishing industry**, **farmland** and **natural forest** have been removed completely. The **hotel and cafe** at the beach haven't changed, and a **car park** next to the hotel has been added.

You should also notice they include a compass with **North**, **East**, **South** and **West** directions shown. This means the examiner expects to see reference to these directions in your answer. Finally, the dates shown are **1995** and the **present**. This means you will need to use past tenses and present perfect.

Unlike the graph answers you can't use lots of specialized vocabulary that you've learnt for those type of Task 1 questions. You will need to use the vocabulary from the picture but add your own variety. If you only copy the words from the picture then you won't score high points in the Vocabulary/Lexical Resource section.

In addition, these types of answers require lots of passive sentences. Why? Because most of the time you are writing about the importance of industries or products or activities, rather than the people that do these things.

IELTS Writing Exam

General Task 1 - Brainstorming and writing your letter

Take a look at the IELTS question below and see how I have created my own details for each of the bullet points:

An old car was left on the street near your apartment block several weeks ago. You telephoned the local Council to get them to take it away, but nothing has been done about it. The car is now causing a problem for residents.

Write a letter to the Council. In your letter

- describe the car
- outline the problems it is causing
- tell the Council what you want them to do about it

Describe the car

- Make - Nissan Micra
- Colour - blue
- Number plate - 38 PR 3022
- Anything else? - broken passenger window, 3 flat tyres

Outline the problems it is causing

- Not much parking space so it's a problem for residents
- Looks bad in a residential street
- Youths are stealing parts from it
- The broken glass is dangerous for children

Tell the Council what you want them to do about it

- Tell the police?
- Organise someone to take it away?

You can use the 3 bullet points from the question as a guide to organising the paragraphs of your essay. With brainstorming you are just generating ideas. That means, in your final writing you only include the best ideas.

When you look at the question, you need to decide what is the purpose and tone of the letter. In the letter question above you are going to write a complaint letter so you need to use appropriate letter expressions. You will also need to focus on using formal expressions as you are writing to a council employee - see the phrases in the previous chapter.

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic and General Writing Task 2 - Essay

How do I brainstorm?

To brainstorm ideas I often ask myself these questions:

What?

Why? or How?

You can apply these questions to most IELTS essays.

- The aim of brainstorming is to write down as many ideas as you can that are related to the topic question.
- You should have more ideas than you need for your essay. This is because when you plan your essay you will find some of your ideas are inappropriate or lack detail, and so you will delete them.
- In the IELTS exam this process should take you about 5 minutes.

So let's start with an essay question.

(I've highlighted the key words in red - these are the words you should circle in the IELTS exam.)

Schools should **concentrate more** on teaching **academic subjects** because they are of greater **benefit** for **children** in the **future**. **Less importance** should be given to **non-academic** subjects such as sports and music.

Do you agree or disagree?

Please note that the ideas for this essay are my own ideas based on my own opinions. There is no perfect answer as everyone has different opinions. Some of these ideas will be deleted at the next stage of essay planning.

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic and General Writing Task 2 - Essay

From brainstorming to writing paragraphs

What is an Academic paragraph?

An academic paragraph should consist of a main idea, supporting sentences and maybe an example if necessary.

Main idea	This is one of your main arguments/discussion points related to the topic and question. This is normally the first sentence of your paragraph.
Supporting sentences	Generally 1 or 2 sentences that explain what your main idea means.
Example	Sometimes it helps to write a sentence with a real example that adds detail to your supporting sentences.

Here is a clear example of an academic paragraph from one of my students. This was her second main paragraph of an essay discussing the arguments for and against keeping pets. I have colour-coded the sentences to show you how she used the paragraph structure correctly.

In addition, pets provide excellent social opportunities for both adults and children. They can improve our exercise routine depending on the type of pet we own. For instance, we can walk around the park or enter competitions with them. They also provide opportunities for us to meet new people and begin new hobbies.

1. Main idea = pets provide social opportunities. In addition = this is the second paragraph about positives
2. First supporting sentence = social opportunities means doing exercise
3. An example of exercise
4. Second supporting sentence = social opportunities means meeting new people and starting hobbies

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic and General Writing Task 2 - Essay

Writing Introduction paragraphs

The easiest way to write an introduction for the IELTS essay is to follow this formula:

- Write 1 sentence to start the topic
- Re-write the statements from the question using your own words
- State your opinion

Your introduction

The examiner should be able to read it and know:

- **what the topic is**
- **how you feel about it.**

Your essay

The examiner will read it and expect to see:

- **the topic discussed**
- **more positive or more negative ideas, or a balance of both, depending on how you stated your opinion.**

To help you understand how to apply this formula let's look at a variety of IELTS essay questions and possible introduction paragraphs.

IELTS Writing Exam

Academic and General Writing Task 2 - Essay

Writing Conclusion paragraphs

The easiest way to write a conclusion for the IELTS essay is to follow this formula:

- Start with a conclusion phrase
- Repeat the main ideas from your essay - although try to use different words if possible
- State your opinion

- Start with a conclusion phrase

Starting your last paragraph of your essay with a conclusion phrase tells the examiner that this is not a main paragraph. It prepares the examiner for the conclusion, so they expect to see a summary of your essay.

Typical phrases include:

In conclusion,...

In short,...

To summarise,...

Overall,...

Try to avoid:

As a result,.... This is far better in the main part of the essay, meaning 'so'

Finally,.... This is far better in the main of the essay, suggesting the last in a series of ideas.

You only write 1 essay in the IELTS exam, so just learn and use 1 phrase.

- Repeat the main ideas from your essay - although try to use different words if possible

Main ideas are very important in your essay, as I explained in the chapter on Writing Paragraphs, and again they are important at the end of your essay. They should be clearly stated in your main paragraphs so they are easy for you to find and therefore repeat. Try to use different words if you can, as this shows your variety of vocabulary.

IELTS Writing Exam

Student Example answers

I've helped many students over the years with their IELTS preparation. I've selected some of their writing, marked them, and given advice on how to improve their score.

Task 2 Essays

IELTS 8

IELTS 7

IELTS 6.5

IELTS 4.5

Task 1 Academic Graph

IELTS 7.5

IELTS 6.5

IELTS 5.5

Task 1 General Letter

IELTS 8

IELTS 6.5

You can see these samples with feedback on my website.