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Task 2 IELTS Writing

Academic/General Training Module by Adam Smith

First Published in 2015

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Academic and General Training Writing

About the Writing Test

The IELTS Academic/General Training Writing Test takes 60 minutes. You have to complete two writing tasks. In writing task 2 you must either argue, that is, you must present an opinion and give reasons to support your opinions or express the causes or consequences of a situation. Sometimes you should either predict what might happen in the future or give solutions to a problem. In task 2 you must organize your writing in a good standard manner and you must use appropriate language and ideas.

Task 2

- You have about 40 minutes
- You must write an essay of at least 250 words
- You are writing for an educated non-specialist audience and not a university lecturer. Therefore, your language does not need to be that formal.
- You are, in most cases, expected to give your opinion. You may also have to include your life experience and some relevant examples.

Points to Apply in Task 2, Essay Writing

- The topics of the questions will be of general interest, and no specialist knowledge is required. For example, topics can include travel, accommodation, current affairs, shops and services, health and welfare, health and safety, recreation, social and physical environment.
- You must write in complete sentences. Notes are not acceptable.
- Do not copy whole sentences or long phrases from the question. The examiner will recognize them, and they will not count towards the minimum number of words you must write.
- You may write on the question sheet if, for example, you want to underline key words or to write notes. The examiner who marks your writing will not see the question sheet.

A few key things to remember:

- Read the questions and the instructions carefully, no matter how many times you have seen them
- Analyze the topic and the task
- Brainstorm ideas to be used in your writing
- Decide what you think about the topic and take sides if you are asked to
- Fit your ideas into an essay plan divided into paragraphs
- Always have a plan before you start writing
- Begin writing your essay now

A Point To Ponder

You don't have to be a writer to write a good essay. This task may look even harder than letters or graphs, but it is only a first impression. Just follow the rules, keep the right structure, use some smart and topic specific words and practice a little. This way you can easily reach a level, where no matter what topic they give you, after 40 minutes you turn a beautiful 2 pages long essay and walk out of the room with a huge smile on your face!

The Structure of an essay

Every essay should have this exact structure:

- Introduction (1 paragraph in 2 or 3 sentences)
- Body Paragraphs (2 or 3 paragraphs each in 5 or 6 sentences)
- Conclusion (1 paragraph in 2 or 3 sentences)

It looks very simple; however, the structure and the paragraphing of your essay are very important because your grade is affected by them. Remember that practice and hard work make perfect.

Suggested timing for Task 2

Here is a suggestion of an ideal timing for Task 2. If you cannot make it for the first couple of your writings, don't panic. It will take time and practice to reach this plan.

You have 40 minutes for writing Task 2, and I suggest that you:

- Spend the first 10 minutes planning your essay structure and brainstorming ideas for the two main body paragraphs.
- Spend 5 minutes writing your 2-sentence introduction.
- Spend 20 minutes on the main body (10 minutes for each paragraph).
- Spend the last 5 minutes writing your conclusion and checking everything.

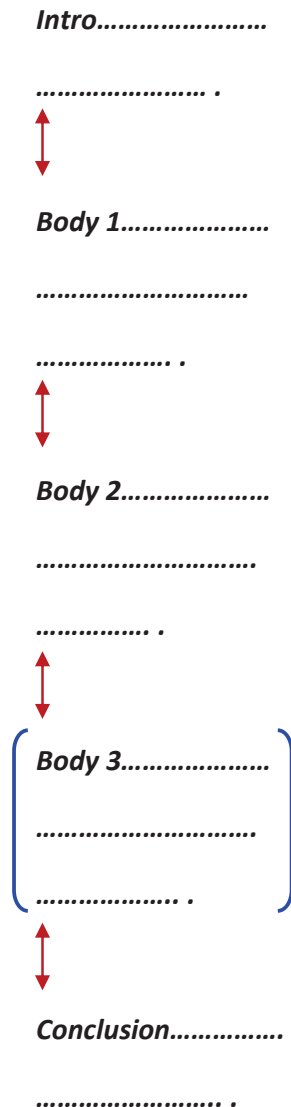
Through this pamphlet, we will look into it with more details.

Note: These are suggestions, not rules. Students are often surprised by the 10-minute planning time. A good plan helps you to write your essay much faster than you think.

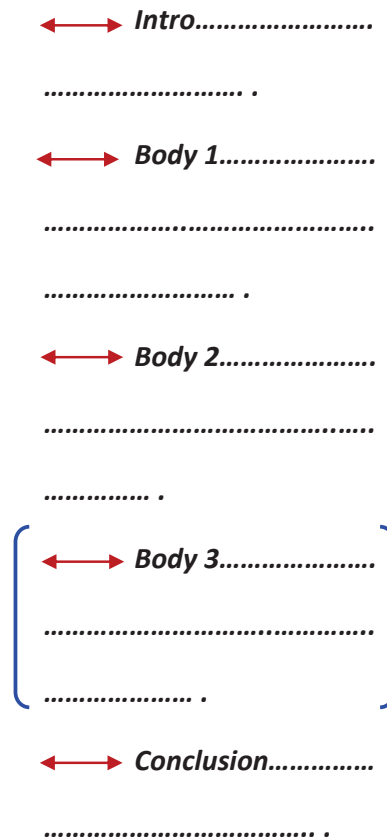
Paragraphing Styles

In writing essays, there are 2 possible paragraphing styles, as you see below. In style A, we start writing from the beginning of the line, and we leave one complete line blank and empty between the paragraphs. In style B, we do not start from the beginning of the line and instead we indent, we leave some space, at the beginning of the line, but then we do not leave any empty or blank lines between the paragraphs. There is no rule to this, and it more of a matter of personal preference. No matter what style you choose, but remember not to write a mix of these two styles. Stick to the one you are more comfortable with.

Style A



Style B



Note: It may not be necessary to have a 'Body number 3', and it depends on the length of your paragraphs.

Different Kinds of Task 2 Essays & Question Types

There are 5 different tasks that illustrate the different types of task 2 questions.

1. To what extent do you agree and/or disagree?

Some people think that the only purpose of working hard is to earn money.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

2. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Some believe that punishment is the only purpose of prisons, while others believe that prisons exist for various reasons.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

3. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages?

In some countries, governments are encouraging industries and businesses to move to regional areas outside the big cities.

Do the advantages of this trend outweigh the disadvantages?

4. What are the causes and give solutions.

Despite improvements in vehicle technology, there are still large numbers of road accidents.

Explain some of the causes of these accidents, and suggest some measures that could be taken to address the problem.

5. Multiple/Two part question tasks.

Many people around the world are choosing to move to live in cities.

What problems do people experience in big cities? Should governments encourage people to move to smaller towns?

When to give your opinion

Do the following questions ask for your opinion or not?

1. *To what extent do you agree or disagree?*
2. *Discuss the advantages and disadvantages.*
3. *Discuss both views and give your opinion.*
4. *Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?*
5. *Is this a positive or negative development?*
6. *What are the benefits and drawbacks?*

Note: Only two of the above questions DO NOT ask for your opinion. If the question doesn't ask for your opinion, don't give it. For the other four questions, you should make your opinion clear in the introduction and conclusion. Numbers 2 and 6 are DISCUSSION questions. Discuss both sides of the issue, but don't give your opinion about which side you agree with. Numbers 1 and 5 are OPINION questions. Give your opinion and support it. You don't need to mention the other side of the argument. Numbers 3 and 4 can be called DISCUSSION + OPINION questions. Discuss both sides and make your opinion clear too.

Brainstorming Ideas before Starting to Write

Before you start to write your essay, you need to collect your reasons, examples or ideas related to the topic, and you need to plan your introduction and body paragraphs. This is the first most important part of writing. Remember a good writer always knows where and when to finish a piece of writing before starting to write.

While brainstorming ideas, try to look at the topic from different points of views. For example, if the topic is about whether students should wear uniforms at school, try to look at it from the social, economic, cultural and the psychological points of views. Don't just rely on what you personally might think of the issue. Gather your ideas, prioritize them and make a good action plan. If a topic seems difficult, try to find some relevant examples for it and then find a title for the examples you have found.

It is very important to have good ideas in writing task 2 if you want to score well. Here are some topics with related vocabulary ideas (topic specific vocabulary) to help you what you are expected to write and how you are expected to develop your ideas.

Look at the example below.

Families who send their children to private schools should not be required to pay taxes that support the state education system. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Here are their ideas for a 'completely disagree' answer:

- difficult to calculate the tax reduction
- more government staff would be required for this process
- we all pay for public services that we may not need e.g. police
- poorer people would pay more tax than wealthy people
- state schools benefit the whole of society
- high quality state education leads to equal opportunities for all
- a well-educated workforce is the key to a prosperous nation
- companies need educated staff
- we should all be happy to contribute to public services

After brainstorming, we need to organize these ideas so that we have two paragraphs. There seem to be two main themes in the ideas above:

1. Reasons why we think the idea would not work, or would be unfair.
2. Reasons why everyone should pay taxes that support state education.

Another Example

More and more students are choosing to study at colleges and universities in a foreign country.

Do the benefits of studying abroad outweigh the drawbacks?

Here are some ideas:

Benefits of studying abroad:

- Many students travel abroad to study at a prestigious university.
- The best universities employ lecturers who are experts in their fields.
- Qualifications gained abroad can open doors to better job opportunities.
- Living in a foreign country can broaden students' horizons.
- Overseas students are exposed to different cultures and customs.
- They can immerse themselves in a language.

Drawbacks of studying abroad:

- Living away from home can be challenging.
- Students have problems with paperwork such as visa applications.
- The language barrier can cause difficulties.
- Students have to find accommodation and pay bills.
- Many students feel homesick and miss their families.
- Some students experience culture shock.

Looking at the topic from different points of views

Read the topic below. Then look at how the write is going to make his action plan by looking at the topic from different aspects.

Some people believe that it is wrong to keep animals in zoos, while others think that zoos are both entertaining and ecologically important.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

In the writer's opinion, you can also find some band 7 or higher vocabulary ideas which have been organized according to different perspectives.

Positives of keeping animals in zoos:

- 1. Environmental perspective:** Zoos play an important role in wildlife conservation. They help to protect endangered species. They allow scientists to study animal behavior.
- 2. Economic perspective:** Zoos employ large numbers of people. They provide job opportunities and income for the local area. The money raised can be used for conservation projects.
- 3. Personal perspective:** Zoos are interesting, educational and fun. They make a great day out for families. Children learn to appreciate wildlife and nature.

Negatives of zoos:

- 1. Environmental perspective:** Zoos are artificial environments. Animals lose their instinct to hunt for food. It would be better to save endangered species by protecting their natural habitats.
- 2. Moral perspective:** Keeping animals in cages is unethical. We have no right to use animals for entertainment. Zoos exhibit animals with the aim of making a profit.

Note: Thinking about topics from different perspectives is a useful technique. It helps you to generate a variety of interesting ideas. Use this technique before you start planning your essays.

'To what extent...' Topics

The following task question asks for your opinion. You can either have a strong opinion or a more balanced opinion, but make your position clear in your brainstorming to be able to write a well-organized introduction, which will be discussed further in the following lessons.

Example #1:

It is inevitable that as technology develops so traditional culture must be lost. Technology and tradition are incompatible – you cannot have both together.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? And give your own reasons.

Ideas for:

- Having less social contact
- Lack of warmth and affection e.g. SMS, email
- The growth of mass media
- Transferring various cultures and customs on a global scale e.g. fashion, clothing, eating habits

Ideas against:

- Technology and traditions are compatible
- In many countries people live side by side e.g. Japan
- Through history technology incorporated into traditional cultures e.g. tractors
- Technology can preserve traditional cultures e.g. ancient manuscripts

Note: The example above shows a balanced view position.

Example #2:

Some businesses now say that no one can smoke cigarettes in any of their offices. Some governments have banned smoking in all public places. This is a good idea but it also takes away some of our freedom.

Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer.

Reasons for (only):

- Health dangers to smokers and non-smokers
- Financial loss
- Smokers can still smoke in special areas (smoking areas)
- Banning smoking is good for public health

Note: The example above shows a strong view position that is mentioning only one side of the argument.

Example #3:

School uniforms should be abolished in all schools.

Discuss to what extent you agree or disagree with this statement.

For

1. Uniforms are expensive so not having to buy them saves money
2. Children can be more individual

Against

1. Uniforms reduce inequality, feeling of jealousy
2. Uniforms teach discipline

Example #4:

The internet will bring about a new freedom of information and so narrow the technology gap between developed and developing countries.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

For

- World-wide communication possible
- Greater access to information
- Makes copyright laws harder to enforce, so harder to keep new technology secret
- Difficult to censor

Against

- Only the rich can afford to access the internet
- Computing skills are necessary to operate the internet, so a new technology gap develops

Example #5:

As public safety is of the highest importance, it is often necessary to test new products on animals. It is better for a few animals to suffer than for human life to be placed at risk by untested products.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

For

- Realistic tests are necessary
- Better than animals suffer than humans
- Tests are necessary to find cure, medical breakthroughs

Against

- Not all animal tests are important
- Animals have rights
- Often computer simulations are possible

Example #6:

The quality of health care a person receives should not depend on the size of their bank balance. The government is responsible for providing a high level of health care for all its citizens.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

For

- Health is a fundamental right
- Good hospitals are governmental responsibility
- A healthy population is vital to national interest

Against

- Health is the responsibility of the individual
- Ageing population makes health care impractical

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your ideas deciding whether you would like to have a balanced view position or a strong one on your own.

If countries are serious about solving traffic problems, they should tax private cars very heavily and use the money to provide free or very cheap rail travel.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your ideas deciding whether you would like to have a balanced view position or a strong one on your own.

Some people think the main purpose of schools is to turn children into good citizens and workers, rather than to benefit them as individuals.

To what extent do you agree or disagree? Give your own reasons.

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your ideas deciding whether you would like to have a balanced view position or a strong one on your own.

People visiting other countries should adapt to the customs and behaviours expected there. They should not expect the host country to welcome different customs and behaviours.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your ideas deciding whether you would like to have a balanced view position or a strong one on your own.

Governments should not have to provide care or financial support for elderly people because it is the responsibility of each person to prepare for retirement and support him or herself.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your ideas deciding whether you would like to have a balanced view position or a strong one on your own.

As computers are being used more and more in education, there will soon be no role for the teacher in the classroom.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your ideas deciding whether you would like to have a balanced view position or a strong one on your own.

All high school students should be encouraged to take part in community service programmes.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Exercise: For further practice with 'To what extent ...' topics, refer to Cambridge IELTS books.

'Discuss both views ...' Topics

Example #1:

Some people believe that robots will play an important role in future societies, while others argue that robots might have negative effects on society.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

First view (Positive effects):

- do manual jobs quickly e.g. factory, packing
- cheap labour, more productive, no breaks (jobs that are boring, difficult for people)
- create free, extra time for people to spend doing what they want
- make life easier, improve our quality of life

Second view (Negative effects):

- become dependent on robots, we will lose skills e.g. cooking
- less human interaction, lazy, health problems
- unemployment will rise, people will be replaced by machines e.g. self-service, check-outs in supermarkets e.g. factory robots=fewer workers
- can lead to bigger problems e.g. poverty, crime, etc.

Example #2:

Some people think that in the modern world we have become more dependent on each other, while others think that people are now more independent.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

First view (we have become more dependent):

- Life is more difficult and expensive, and we are less self-sufficient
- Young people rely on their parents for longer
- Unemployed people receive state benefits
- Our jobs are much more specialised, and we need to work in teams

Second view (we are more independent):

- We rely on machines more than we depend on each other
- The Internet allows us to solve problems without needing help
- Families are more dispersed, and therefore provide less support
- Education gives us the freedom to make our own choices

Note: First, develop your ideas, and then give your own opinion.

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your own ideas.

Some people think schools should group pupils according to their academic ability, but others believe pupils with different abilities should be educated together.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your own ideas.

Many people say that we now live in 'consumer societies' where money and possessions are given too much importance. Others believe that consumer culture has played a vital role in improving our lives.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Exercise: Read the topic below, and develop your own ideas.

These days, internet-based courses have become a popular alternative to university-based courses. Some students prefer this type of learning because they do not need to attend lectures. Others, however, argue that it is important to stay at university.

Discuss both these views and give your opinion.

Exercise: For further practice with 'discuss both views' topics, refer to Cambridge IELTS books.

'Advantages & Disadvantages' Topics

Example #1:

It has been said that the world is becoming a global village in which there are no boundaries to trade and communication.

Do the benefits of globalisation outweigh the drawbacks?

Positives (advantages or pros) of globalisation:

- Business is becoming increasingly international.
- A global economy means free trade between countries.
- This can strengthen political relationships.
- Globalisation can also create opportunities for employment.
- It encourages investment in less developed countries.
- It could reduce poverty in the developing world.

Negatives (disadvantages or cons) of globalisation:

- Globalisation can also lead to unemployment and exploitation.
- Companies move to countries where labour is cheap.
- This creates redundancies, or job losses.
- Some companies exploit their employees in developing countries.
- Salaries are low and working conditions are often poor.
- Global trade also creates excessive waste and pollution.

Example #2:

There are more cars on the roads these days and more accidents. As a result, some politicians have suggested that people should take regular driving tests throughout their lives, rather than one single test.

What do you think the advantages of repeating driving tests are? Do these outweigh the disadvantages? Give reasons for your answer.

Advantages (merits or profits):

- Useful in case of older drivers
- Good for people who don't drive regularly

- Keep drivers up-to-date with road rules
- Raises driving standards
- May prevent young people from driving too fast
- Reduce accidents

Disadvantages (demerits or drawbacks):

- Extra costs
- Learner drivers might have to wait longer for a test
- It may not be possible to include a written test every time
- Difficult to organize

Exercise: Read the pros and cons topic below, and develop your own ideas.

More and more students are choosing to study at colleges and universities in a foreign country.

Do the benefits of studying abroad outweigh the drawbacks?

Exercise: Read the pros and cons topic below, and develop your own ideas.

Tourism has become an important industry. This can damage traditional culture.

Do the benefits of tourism outweigh the drawbacks?

Exercise: Read the pros and cons topic below, and develop your own ideas.

In some countries, governments are encouraging industries and businesses to move to regional areas outside the big cities.

Do the advantages of this trend outweigh the disadvantages?

Exercise: Read the pros and cons topic below, and develop your own ideas.

In many cities, security measures, such as the use of video cameras in public places, are being increased in order to reduce crime, but some people believe that these measures restrict our individual freedom.

Do the advantages of this trend outweigh the disadvantages?

Exercise: For further practice with 'Advantage & disadvantage' topics, refer to Cambridge IELTS books.

'Cause/Effect & Solutions' Topics

Example #1:

Childhood obesity is becoming a serious problem in many countries.

Explain the main causes and effects of this problem, and suggest some possible solutions.

Causes:

- eat junk food e.g. hamburgers, chips, McDonald's / drink sugary soft drinks
- lack of exercise / sedentary life style/physical activity contributes to the obesity problem
- play computer games / chat on the net, rather than playing outside or doing sport

Effects:

- these problems lead to obesity / children are overweight, unhealthy, unfit
- a higher risk of diseases e.g. diabetes, heart disease, cancer
- put a strain on hospitals / they will be a burden on hospitals in the future

Solution:

- it is the parents', schools', governments' responsibility to ...
- give children healthy food, control what they eat, ensure that they have a healthy diet, limit junk food advertising
- restrict the time they spend playing computer games, encouraging them to take regular exercise

Example #2:

Many criminals re-offend after they have been punished.

Why do some people continue to commit crimes after they have been punished, and what measures can be taken to tackle this problem?

Causes of crime and re-offending:

- The main causes of crime are poverty, unemployment and lack of education.
- People who commit crimes often have no other way of making a living.
- The prison system can make the situation worse.
- Offenders mix with other criminals who can be a negative influence.
- A criminal record makes finding a job more difficult.
- Many prisoners re-offend when they are released.

Possible measures to reduce crime and re-offending:

- Prisons should provide education or vocational training.
- Rehabilitation programmes prepare prisoners for release into society.
- Community service is another way to reform offenders.
- It makes offenders useful in their local communities.
- They might be required to talk to school groups or clean public areas
- Offenders also need help when looking for accommodation and work.

Exercise: Read the problem and solution (cause & effect) topic below, and develop your own ideas.

Children's behaviour in schools is getting worse than before.

Explain the causes and effects of this problem, and suggest some possible solutions.

Exercise: Read the problem and solution (cause & effect) topic below, and develop your own ideas.

Despite improvements in vehicle technology, there are still large numbers of road accidents.

Explain some of the causes of these accidents, and suggest some measures that could be taken to address the problem.

Exercise: For further practice with problem and solution topics, refer to Cambridge IELTS books.

'Multiple/Two-part Questions' Topics

Example #1:

Many childhood diseases can now be prevented through the use of vaccines.

Should parents be made by law to immunize their children against common diseases or should individuals have the right to choose not to immunize their children?

First reason:

1. Preventive medicine is most effective, lives saved, diseases such as ... reduced

Second reason:

2. Immunization is part of human progress, have better hygiene and better medical program, we don't want to go backwards

Third reason:

3. No vaccines; therefore diseases return, law needed

Example #2:

In many countries, buying and selling guns for the public is legal.

Should the ownership of guns be limited or controlled or should everyone be allowed to trade guns easily?

First reason:

- Risk of accidents, danger to children, more violent crimes, criminals will use guns, police will need guns

Second reason:

- Higher suicide rates, guns create violent societies

Example #3:

Many people prefer to watch foreign films rather than locally produced films.

Why could this be?

Should governments give more financial support to local film industries?

First main paragraph: Why could this be?

1. Topic sentence - several reasons
2. First reason - budgets for action, special effects, spectacular locations
3. Example - Hollywood blockbusters like *Avatar* or James Bond films
4. Second reason - the most famous actors, actresses and directors
5. Final reason - poor quality local filmmaking in many countries

Second main paragraph: Should governments give financial support?

1. Topic sentence - governments should support local film industries
2. Explain why - talented local film-makers need opportunities
3. Explain more - they need money to pay film crews, actors etc.
4. Explain consequences - would lead to employment, income, tourism
5. Example - you can invent an example about your country.

Exercise: Read the 2-part question topic below, and develop your own ideas.

Many people around the world are choosing to move to live in cities.

What problems do people experience in big cities? Should governments encourage people to move to smaller towns?

Exercise: For further practice with 2-part questions topics, refer to Cambridge IELTS books.

Writing an introduction

For IELTS Writing Task 2, keep your introduction short and simple. Don't waste time writing a long introduction; the main body paragraphs are more important.

A good IELTS Writing introduction needs only 2 things:

1. A sentence that introduces the topic
2. A sentence that gives a short, general answer to the question (your opinion)

Example question #1:

All high school students should be encouraged to take part in community service programs.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Sample introduction:

Some people believe that high school students would benefit from doing unpaid work in their local communities. I completely agree that community service programs for teenagers are a good idea. (30 words)

Example question #2:

As computers are being used more and more in education, there will soon be no role for the teacher in the classroom.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Sample introduction:

It is true that computers have become an essential tool for teachers and students in all areas of education. However, while computers are extremely useful, I do not agree with the idea that they could soon replace teachers completely. (39 Words)

Example question #3:

People visiting other countries should adapt to the customs and behaviours expected there. They should not expect the host country to welcome different customs and behaviours.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Sample introduction

To a certain extent I agree that visitors to other countries should respect the culture of the host country. However, I also think that host countries should accept visitors' cultural differences. **(31 Words)**

Using 'I' in writing task 2 introductions

You **should** use phrases like "I believe" or "in my opinion" when the question asks for **your opinion**.

*e.g. To what extent do **you** agree or disagree?*

Some teachers tell students not to use "I" in academic essays, but this advice is really for university academic writing, not IELTS.

Look at these different examples. Pay attention to how the writer has used 'I' in his answer.

Question

The older generations tend to have very traditional ideas about how people should live, think and behave. However, some people believe that these ideas are not helpful in preparing younger generations for modern life.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?

Introduction

It is true that many older people believe in traditional values that often seem incompatible with the needs of younger people. While I agree that

some traditional ideas are outdated, I believe that others are still relevant and should not be forgotten.

Questions

Governments should not have to provide care or financial support for elderly people because it is the responsibility of each person to prepare for retirement and support him or herself.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Introduction

People have different views about whether or not governments should help senior citizens. I completely disagree with the idea that elderly people should receive no support from the state.

Strong view vs. Balanced view

Strong view: If the question asks whether you agree or disagree, it's often easier to have a strong opinion (completely agree or completely disagree) rather than trying to be "in the middle". Here's an example question:

Families who do not send their children to public schools should not be required to pay taxes that support universal education.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

There is almost no "middle answer" to this question: either you think that the parents should not pay tax (agree), or you think they should pay tax (disagree). When you have a strong opinion, you don't need to mention the opposite view.

Here's a plan for a 4-paragraph essay:

1. **Introduction:** 1 sentence to introduce the topic, 1 sentence to make your opinion clear (e.g. I completely disagree...)
2. **Main paragraph:** support your opinion with a reason
3. **Main paragraph:** support your opinion with another reason
4. **Conclusion:** repeat/summarise your opinion

Balanced view: Now, look at the balanced opinion essay below.

In the last century, the first man to walk on the moon said it was "a giant leap for mankind". However, some people think it has made little difference to our daily lives.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

For this question, you could write that "I partly agree" or that "I agree to some extent". Then you could write one main paragraph about each side of the argument:

1. **Introduction:** I partly agree. Make it clear that you have a balanced opinion.

2. **One side:** In practical terms, sending a man to the moon has not changed most people's lives. We have not benefited in terms of our standard of living, health etc. In fact, governments have wasted a lot of money that could have been spent on public services.
3. **Other side:** On the other hand, putting a man on the moon was a huge achievement that still inspires and interests people today. It showed us that we can achieve anything we put our minds to.
4. **Conclusion:** The fact that man has walked on the moon might not have had a direct effect on our daily lives, but it was an inspiring achievement.

Note: This is the most common question that students ask:

For "agree or disagree" questions, do I have to discuss both sides, or should I just support one side of the argument?

The answer is: it's your decision. If you completely agree, you don't need to mention the opposite view - just support your side of the argument. If you partly agree, you should write something about both sides.

Example #1:

Governments should not have to provide care or financial support for elderly people because it is the responsibility of each person to prepare for retirement and support him or herself.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Example introduction (Strong view):

People have different views about whether or not governments should help senior citizens. I completely disagree with the idea that elderly people should receive no support from the state.

Example Introduction (Balanced view):

People have different views about whether or not governments should help senior citizens. Although I accept that we all have a responsibility to save money for retirement, I disagree with the idea that elderly people should receive no support from the state.

Example #2:

Some people think the main purpose of schools is to turn children into good citizens and workers, rather than to benefit them as individuals.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Here are 3 different introductions. Notice that the opinion is clear in each one.

Example introduction (Strong view/Agree):

People have different views about what the main purpose of schools should be. Personally, I agree that a school's role is to prepare children to be productive members of society.

Example introduction (Strong view/Disagree):

Many people argue that the main role of schools is to prepare children for their future jobs. However, I believe that the purpose of education should be to help children to grow as individuals.

Example introduction (Balanced view):

To a certain extent I agree that the role of schools is to prepare children to be productive members of society. However, I also believe that the education process has a positive impact on us as individuals.

Note: A good way to write a balanced view introduction is:

To a certain extent I agree that However, I also think that...

By saying that you agree to a certain extent (not completely), you can now talk about both sides of the argument.

Exercise: To practice writing short and quick introductions, go back to previous exercises that you have done so far and write different introductions.

Organizing body paragraphs

By prioritizing your ideas, putting them in the right and the logical order and linking them together by adding a few details like linking devices such as besides, furthermore, moreover, etc., now you can write well-organized body paragraphs.

When you are writing main body paragraphs for IELTS writing task 2, try to aim for five or six sentences. Look at the example below. The structure of a well-organized body paragraph looks like this.

1. Topic sentence (e.g. There are several reasons why I believe...)
2. First reason/Explain why
3. Example (in more detail)
4. Second reason/Explain why
5. Example (in more detail)
6. Third reason/Explain why

Here is an example of how we can 'build' a paragraph using the above method.

Some ideas about the benefits of mobile phones:

1. The mobile phone is the most popular gadget in today's world.
2. We can stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues wherever we are.
3. Users can send text messages, surf the Internet, take photos and listen to music.
4. Mobiles have also become fashion accessories.
5. Mobile phones have revolutionized the way we communicate.

By linking these ideas and adding a few things, we can write a paragraph:

The mobile phone has become the most popular gadget in today's world. The reason for this is that it is portable and versatile. Mobile phones are now carried at all times by most people, allowing us to stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues wherever we are. Furthermore, they now have many more functions than a standard telephone; mobile phone users can send text messages, surf the Internet, take photos and listen to music, as well as making calls. Mobiles have become fashion accessories, and they have revolutionized the way we communicate.

(93 words)

From ideas to paragraphs

It's always recommended planning ideas for their main body paragraphs before starting to write. Let's look at how to put some ideas together to make a paragraph. Here's the question:

The main reason people go to work is to earn money.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Ideas for one main paragraph:

1. Agree that money is the main reason people work
2. People look at salary first, they rarely take a salary cut
3. Need to live, pay bills, food etc.
4. Look after our families, save for the future
5. Otherwise, most people would probably choose not to work

Full paragraph using the ideas above:

I agree that the majority of people work in order to earn money. Before taking any other factors into account, it is normal to first consider the salary that a particular post offers, and it is rare to hear of a person who happily takes a cut in pay when beginning a new job. We all need money to pay for our basic necessities, such as accommodation, bills and food. Many adults also have families who depend on the wages they earn, and at the same time they are conscious of the need to save for the future. If we no longer needed money, I doubt most of us would choose to continue in our jobs.

(116 words)

Another example

Many people prefer to watch foreign films rather than locally produced films. Why could this be?

Should governments give more financial support to local film industries?

First main paragraph: Why could this be?

1. Topic sentence - several reasons
2. First reason - budgets for action, special effects, spectacular locations
3. Example - Hollywood blockbusters like Avatar or James Bond films
4. Second reason - the most famous actors, actresses and directors
5. Final reason - poor quality local filmmaking in many countries

If you have a 5-idea plan, it should be relatively easy to write a paragraph. Just make each point in your plan into a sentence.

Full paragraph with 5-sentences (one for each idea)

There are several reasons why many people find foreign films more enjoyable than the films produced in their own countries. Firstly, the established film industries in certain countries have huge budgets for action, special effects and to shoot scenes in spectacular locations. Hollywood blockbusters like 'Avatar' or the James Bond films are examples of such productions, and their global appeal is undeniable. Another reason why these big-budget films are so successful is that they often star the most famous actors and actresses, and they are made by the most accomplished producers and directors. The poor quality, low-budget filmmaking in many countries suffers in comparison.

(106 words)

Another example

Some people believe that the salaries paid to professional sportspeople are too high, while others argue that sports salaries are fair.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

View 1: sports salaries are too high

1. Sports professionals earn too much money.
2. They do not provide a vital service.
3. Football players earn enormous salaries by simply kicking a ball.
4. We could all live happily without professional football.
5. We should value professionals such as nurses and teachers more highly.

Sample Body Paragraph

Many people believe that sports professionals earn too much money. They argue that sport is a form of entertainment rather than a vital public service. We could easily live without sportspeople, yet other professionals who contribute much more to society are undervalued and underpaid. For example, football players can earn enormous salaries by simply kicking a ball, while doctors, nurses and teachers earn a fraction of the money despite being essential for our health and prosperity. From this perspective, sports stars do not deserve the salaries they currently earn. (89 words)

Note: As you can see, the paragraph explains the view that sportspeople earn too much money. This came from a 'discuss both views' topic.

Exercise: Write a paragraph using the ideas below.

Water is a natural resource that should always be free. Governments should ban the sale of bottled water.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Here are some opinions that you could use to write your paragraph:

1. Some people believe that bottled water is healthier than tap water.
2. They also argue that it tastes better.
3. Other people believe that we should consume less bottled water.
4. Plastic water bottles add to litter and waste problems.
5. Companies should not be able to make a profit from a natural resource.
6. There is no difference in quality between bottled and tap water.
7. Governments should ensure that everyone has access to clean tap water.

Exercise: Write a paragraph using the ideas below.

In many countries, buying and selling guns for the public is legal.

Should the ownership of guns be limited or controlled or should everyone be allowed to trade guns easily?

Here are some opinions that you could use to write your paragraph:

1. Risk of accidents, danger to children
2. More violent crimes, criminals will use guns, police will need guns
3. Higher suicide rates
4. Guns create violent societies

Exercise: To practice writing body paragraphs, go back to previous exercises for which you have written introductions and write different body paragraphs.

Using transition words (Linking Paragraphs)

Transition words are words that guide the reader through the essay so that the reader can be aware where the essay is headed. They are similar to road signs which help you shift your way before you reach an exit. Below is a list of commonly used transition expressions, divided roughly according to meaning.

You must use transition within paragraphs and especially between paragraphs to preserve the logical flow of your essay. Transition is not limited to phrases like 'as a result, in addition, while . . . , since . . . , etc.' but it also includes repeating key words and the ideas. Transition provides the intellectual architecture to argument building. Transition words used between main body paragraphs usually appear at the beginning of the second, the third body if there is one, and the conclusion paragraphs. Usually, the introduction and the first body paragraphs do not need a transition word.

Addition:

moreover, furthermore, in addition, further, next, first, second, etc., firstly, secondly, etc., in the first place, in the second place, etc.

Contrast:

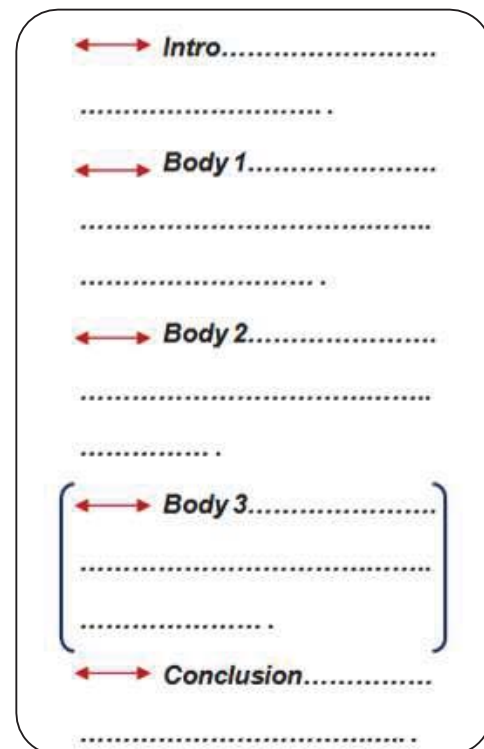
however, yet, in contrast, conversely, on the other hand, on the contrary, otherwise, nevertheless, notwithstanding, in spite of this, by contrast, whereas

Conclusion or Summary:

as a result, as has been noted, as I have said, as mentioned earlier, in conclusion, to conclude, in brief, finally, in other words, in short, in a/one word, on the whole, therefore, in summary, to summarize, to sum up, in a nutshell, all in all.

Comparison:

likewise, similarly, in the same way, in like manner



Cause, result, purpose:

therefore, thus, hence, consequently, after all, accordingly, knowing this, with this in mind

Example, restatement:

for example, for instance, more specifically, in particular, indeed, namely, specifically, to illustrate, in other words, in fact, that is, in brief

Time:

afterwards, soon, meanwhile, in the meantime, next, then, later, eventually, at the same time, in the same instant, today, nowadays, in the beginning, to begin, in time, in future, finally, initially, subsequently, simultaneously.

Read the following sample essay and pay careful attention to linking features (transition words) used. The transition words used between the paragraphs have been highlighted.

Some people think that museums should be enjoyable places to entertain people, while others believe that the purpose of museums is to educate.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Sample Answer

People have different views about the role and function of museums. In my opinion, museums can and should be both entertaining and educational.

On the one hand, it can be argued that the main role of a museum is to entertain. Museums are tourist attractions, and their aim is to exhibit a collection of interesting objects that many people want to see. The average visitor may become bored if he or she has to read or listen to too much educational content, so museums often put more of an emphasis on enjoyment rather than learning. This type of museums is designed to be visually spectacular, and it may have interactive activities or even games as part of its exhibitions.

On the other hand, some people argue that museums should focus on education. The aim of any exhibition should be to teach visitors something that they did not previously know. Usually this means that the history behind the museum's exhibits needs to be explained, and this can be done in various ways. Some museums employ professional guides to talk to their visitors, while other museums offer headsets so that visitors can listen to detailed commentary about the exhibition. This way, museums can play an important role in teaching people about history, culture, science and many other aspects of life.

In conclusion, it seems to me that a good museum should be able to offer an interesting, enjoyable and educational experience so that people can both have fun and learn something at the same time.

(253 Words)

Defining 'Coherence and Cohesion'

If you look at the official band descriptors for writing task 2, you'll find this phrase in the band 9 description for 'coherence and cohesion':

"uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention"

So how do you connect your ideas (cohesion) without attracting too much attention? I think there are 2 possible ways:

1. Explain your ideas in a logical order so that you don't need many linking words. This is probably what you do when writing in your own language.
2. Use easy linking words like ***and, but, also, firstly, secondly, finally, for example***. These are so common that they attract almost no attention.

Read the following essay in this lesson, you will notice that there are not long linking phrases; however, the linking is subtle, and the focus is on answering the question with good ideas.

Wild animals have no place in the 21st century, so protecting them is a waste of resources.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Sample Answer

Some people argue that it is pointless to spend money on the protection of wild animals because we humans have no need for them. I completely disagree with this point of view.

In my opinion, it is absurd to argue that wild animals have no place in the 21st century. I do not believe that planet Earth exists only for the benefit of humans, and there is nothing special about this particular century that means that we suddenly have the right to allow or encourage the extinction of any species. Furthermore, there is no compelling reason why we should let animals die out. We do not need to exploit or destroy every last square metre of land in order to feed or accommodate the world's population. There is plenty of room for us to exist side by side with wild animals, and this should be our aim.

I also disagree with the idea that protecting animals is a waste of resources. It is usually the protection of natural habitats that ensures the survival of wild animals, and most scientists agree that these habitats are also crucial for human survival. For example, rainforests produce oxygen, absorb carbon

dioxide and stabilise the Earth's climate. If we destroyed these areas, the costs of managing the resulting changes to our planet would far outweigh the costs of conservation. By protecting wild animals and their habitats, we maintain the natural balance of all life on Earth.

In conclusion, we have no right to decide whether or not wild animals should exist, and I believe that we should do everything we can to protect them.

(269 words)

Better Linking

Linking isn't just about using words like 'firstly', 'furthermore' and 'moreover'. There are more sophisticated ways to **hold** a paragraph **together**. Here are some of them:

- Use this or these to refer to the idea in the previous sentence.
- Use pronouns like it and they to refer to nouns you have already used.
- Repeat a key word throughout the paragraph.
- Repeat a key idea in different ways.
- Develop an idea from 'general' to 'specific'.

You might not notice this type of linking because it seems so natural. To see a paragraph that demonstrates the 5 techniques described above, read the good example below.

Some art projects definitely require help from the state. In the UK, there are many works of art in public spaces, such as streets or squares in city centers. In Liverpool, for example, there are several new statues and sculptures in the docks area of the city, which has been redeveloped recently. These artworks represent culture, heritage and history. They serve to educate people about the city, and act as landmarks or talking points for visitors and tourists. Governments and local councils should pay creative artists to produce this kind of art, because without their funding our cities would be much less interesting and attractive.

Color key:

these, this = refer back to a previous idea

which, they = pronouns refer back to a noun or noun phrase (e.g. they = artworks)

art = key word repeated because it is the main theme of the paragraph

art projects = key idea that is repeated in different ways, showing variety of vocabulary

the state, the UK = general to specific: general idea which is developed in greater detail

Using firstly, secondly and finally to link ideas

My people may think using "firstly, secondly, finally" to organize a paragraph is too easy. However, using easy organizing language like "firstly, secondly, finally" allows you to focus on the real content of what you are writing - topic vocabulary, collocations and examples. This is what the examiner wants to see. You can get a band 9 using "firstly, secondly, finally" if the ideas between these linking words are good.

Some simple alternatives to "firstly, secondly, finally" could be:

- The main reason why I believe... is... / Another argument is... / Also,...
- One problem is that... / Furthermore,... / Another drawback is that...
- From a business perspective,... / In terms of education,... / From a social point of view,...

Read the following sample and pay careful attention to the simple linking features used.

Example

Nowadays the way many people interact with each other has changed because of technology.

In what ways has technology affected the types of relationships that people make? Has this been a positive or negative development?

It is true that new technologies have had an influence on communication between people. Technology has affected relationships in various ways, and in my opinion there are both positive and negative effects.

Technology has had an impact on relationships in business, education and social life. **Firstly**, telephones and the Internet allow business people in different countries to interact without ever meeting each other. **Secondly**, services like Skype create new possibilities for relationships between students and teachers. For example, a student can now take video lessons with a teacher in a different city or country. **Finally**, many people use social networks, like Facebook, to make new friends and find people who share common interests, and they interact through their computers rather than face to face.

On the one hand, these developments can be extremely positive. Cooperation between people in different countries was much more difficult when communication was limited to written letters or telegrams. Nowadays, interactions by email, phone or video are almost as good as face-to-face meetings, and many of us benefit from these interactions, either in work or social contexts. On the other hand, the availability of new communication technologies can also have the result of isolating people and discouraging real interaction. For example, many young people choose to make friends online rather than mixing with their peers in the real world, and these 'virtual' relationships are a poor substitute for real friendships.

In conclusion, technology has certainly revolutionized communication between people, but not all of the outcomes of this revolution have been positive.

(257 words)

Writing a conclusion

Write short, fast conclusions for IELTS Writing Task 2. The main body paragraphs are much more important, so don't worry too much about the conclusion; make it short, simple and fast. It's fine to write a really short conclusion for IELTS writing task 2. You don't need to say anything new; just paraphrase what you wrote in your introduction or summarise your overall answer to the question. Just paraphrase your ideas in other words. Don't save any surprises for the conclusion; don't add new ideas; don't introduce new reasons.

Here are some example conclusion phrases for different types of question:

1. 'To what extent ...' Topics (Opinion)

For the reasons mentioned above, I believe that... (+ repeat your opinion).

2. 'Discuss both views and ...' Topics (Discussion + Opinion)

In conclusion, there are convincing arguments both for and against... (paraphrased topic), but I believe that... (if the question asks for your opinion).

3. 'Advantages and Disadvantages' Topics (Do the ... outweigh the ...?)

In conclusion, I would argue that the benefits of... (paraphrased topic) outweigh the drawbacks.

4. 'Cause/Effect and Solutions' Topics (Problem and Solution)

In conclusion, it is clear that there are various reasons for... (paraphrased topic), and steps need to be taken to tackle this problem.

Sample Conclusions

Read the topics below. Then read the following sample introduction and conclusion paragraphs and carefully compare the answers to different question types. Pay careful attention to the paraphrased forms.

Example #1: 'To what extent ...' Topics

The older generations tend to have very traditional ideas about how people should live, think and behave. However, some people believe that these ideas are not helpful in preparing younger generations for modern life.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?

Sample Introduction:

It is true that many older people believe in traditional values that often seem incompatible with the needs of younger people. While I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated, I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten. (42 words)

Sample Conclusion:

In conclusion, although the views of older people may sometimes seem unhelpful in today's world, we should not dismiss all traditional ideas as irrelevant. (24 words)

Example #2: 'Discuss both views and ...' Topics

Some people think that strict punishments for driving offences are the key to reducing traffic accidents. Others, however, believe that other measures would be more effective in improving road safety.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Sample Introduction:

People have differing views with regard to the question of how to make our roads safer. In my view, both punishments and a range of other measures can be used together to promote better driving habits.

Sample Conclusion:

In conclusion, while punishments can help to prevent bad driving, I believe that other road safety measures should also be introduced.

Example #3: 'Advantages and Disadvantages' Topics

Modern societies need specialists in certain fields, but not others. Some people, therefore, think that governments should pay university fees for students who study subjects that are needed by society. Those who choose to study less relevant subjects should not receive the government funding.

Would the advantages of such an educational policy outweigh the disadvantages?

Sample Introduction:

In every country, there are fashions among students about which subjects are the best to the study at university. Sometimes the popularity of a subject is determined by how much money a graduate could subsequently earn in that field. Or subjects that are perceived as relatively 'easy' may also become popular, in spite of later difficulties of finding appropriate employment. It is up to governments to give incentives to students to choose subjects that match the needs of their society.

Sample Conclusion:

In conclusion, I think there are many other incentives for students that could be considered, such as making courses more interesting to take, or the job rewards greater after graduation. The education policy proposed above, however, would certainly have more long-term disadvantages than benefits for society.

Example #4: 'Cause/Effect and Solutions' Topics

In some countries the average weight of people is increasing and their levels of health and fitness are decreasing.

What do you think are the causes of these problems and what measures could be taken to solve them?

Sample Introduction:

Nowadays, obesity has become one of the outstanding problems in some countries especially in developed and developing ones in addition to the fact that the majority of people do not have healthy body.

Sample Conclusion:

To put in the nutshell, I personally believe that the more we eat nutrition foods or do regular exercises, the healthier body we have as well as a healthier mindset.

Example #5: 'Two-part Question' Topics

Many people prefer to watch foreign films rather than locally produced films.

Why could this be?

Should governments give more financial support to local film industries?

Sample Introduction:

It is true that foreign films are more popular in many countries than domestically produced films. There could be several reasons why this is the case, and I believe that governments should promote local film-making by subsidising the industry.

Sample Conclusion:

In conclusion, I believe that increased financial support could help to raise the quality of locally made films and allow them to compete with the foreign productions that currently dominate the market.

Example #6: 'Two-part Question' Topics

These days more fathers stay at home and take care of their children while mothers go out to work.

What could be the reasons for this?

Do you think it is a positive or a negative development?

Sample Introduction:

It is true that men are increasingly likely to take on the role of househusband, while more women than ever are the breadwinners in their families. There could be several reasons for this, and I consider it to be a very positive trend.

Sample Conclusion:

In conclusion, the changing roles of men and women in the family are a result of wider changes in society, and I believe that these developments are desirable.

Using 'while' clauses in introductions and conclusions

Notice that we often start our introductions with "It is true that", and we use a while sentence, clause, to give both views in the same sentence.

'while' introductions

If you want to mention both sides of the argument for an "agree or disagree" question, try including a 'while' sentence in your introduction. Here is the 'while' sentence formula:

While I accept (... argument A), I favor (... argument B)

Here's an example question:

Early technological developments helped ordinary people and changed their lives more than recent developments. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Sample introduction:

Technological progress has taken place throughout the course of human history. While early technologies certainly changed the lives of normal people, I believe that recent breakthroughs have had an even greater impact.

Note:

The 'while' sentence makes it clear that I favor one side of the argument, but it allows me to mention both sides in the main body of my essay.

'while' conclusion

You might already know that we tend to use the word while in our introductions. It is also possible to write a 'while sentence' for the conclusion. Take this question for example:

Some people think that strict punishments for driving offences are the key to reducing traffic accidents. Others, however, believe that other measures would be more effective in improving road safety. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Sample conclusion:

In conclusion, while punishments can help to prevent bad driving, I believe that other road safety measures should also be introduced.

Exercise: To practice writing conclusion paragraphs, go back to previous exercises for which you have written introductions and body paragraphs. And then write different conclusion paragraphs.

The step-by-step guide to essay writing

Exercise: Read the topic below and complete the body paragraphs of the essay using the ideas and reasons given here.

Some people believe that studying at university or college is the best route to a successful career, while others believe that it is better to get a job straight after school.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Introduction

When they finish school, teenagers face the dilemma of whether to get a job or continue their education. While there are some benefits to getting a job straight after school, I would argue that it is better to go to college or university.

Paragraph 1: benefits of getting a job

The option to start work straight after school is attractive for several reasons.

(**IDEAS/Reasons:** start earning money, become independent, gain experience, learn skills, get promotions, settle down earlier, afford a house, have a family)

Paragraph 2: benefits of higher education (writer's opinion)

On the other hand, I believe that it is more beneficial for students to continue their studies.

(**IDEAS/Reasons:** some jobs require academic qualifications, better job opportunities, higher salaries, the job market is very competitive, gain knowledge, become a useful member of society)

Conclusion

For the reasons mentioned above, it seems to me that students are more likely to be successful in their lives if they continue their studies beyond school level.

Exercise: Read the topic below and complete the body paragraphs of the essay using the ideas and reasons given here.

Differences between countries become less evident each year. Nowadays, all over the world people share the same fashions, advertising, brands, eating habits and TV channels.

Do the disadvantages of this trend outweigh the advantages?

Introduction

It is true that many aspects of culture are becoming increasingly similar throughout the world. Although this trend has some benefits, I would argue that there are more drawbacks.

First sentence of paragraph 2

On the one hand, the globalisation of fashion, brands, eating habits and other areas of culture has some benefits. (Explain the benefits)

First sentence of paragraph 3

On the other hand, I believe that the disadvantages of cultural globalisation are even more significant. (Explain the disadvantages)

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems to me that the drawbacks of globalisation, in terms of cultural habits such as the clothes we wear or the foods we eat, do outweigh the benefits.

Exercise: Write a full four or five paragraph essay for the topic above using the ideas and reasons given here. It is a good idea to keep track of time.

Homeschooling belongs to the past and is unacceptable in the modern society.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Brainstorming ideas:

For

- *Parents know their children best*
- *Learning is more enjoyable at home*
- *Children feel safe*

Against

- *Not specific approach e.g. associative learning*
- *Not every parent is capable*
- *Parents could forget materials*

Organizing the body paragraphs:

Introduction.....

.....

The side you don't agree with.....

.....

.....

The side you agree with

.....

.....

The side you agree with

.....

.....

Conclusion

.....

Exercise: Now read the sample essay about the homeschooling topic on the next page and pay attention to items below used in the sample essay.

- Organization and paragraphing
- Punctuation
- Development of ideas
- The range of structures used
- The range of topic specific vocabulary used
- Transition words
- Topic sentences
- Types of examples used

Sample Essay: Homeschooling

Everything has two sides and homeschooling is not an exception. In the past, it seemed like the most natural way of educating children, but today, many people criticize it.

We must acknowledge that parents know their children best. That gives them a good chance of knowing how to make their children understand certain concepts. Using the child's interest, parents can make the process of learning more enjoyable and effective. In addition, being at home makes children feel safe which can greatly contribute to their ability to concentrate on studying.

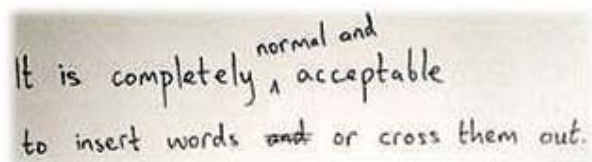
Nevertheless, many people believe that teaching should be done by professionals. There are many proven scientific approaches that produce good and effective results and without those techniques parents, who teach their children at home, have no chance. Associative learning is a good example of such a technique. Showing the child images while learning the alphabet for example 'Apple' for 'A' or 'Boy' for 'B' makes him or her remember the letters faster and more easily.

Furthermore, not every parent is capable of teaching his or her child at home, for the blind cannot lead the blind. Parents cannot teach the children something which they do not know themselves, and let's face it – not all of us have profound knowledge of history or geography even on a school textbook level. Eventually, even those moms and dads who had succeeded at school could forget the materials they studied as time went by.

In conclusion, I have more trust in abilities and experiences of professional teachers than I do on my own. **(258 Words)**

Correcting yourself

"In Japan, students are told to correct their work using an eraser. They are not allowed to insert words or cross words out," Takuya said. It is an interesting cultural difference; however, this is not true in the IELTS exam. You don't need to waste time using an eraser. Your writing needs to be clear, but not perfect.



It is completely ^{normal and} acceptable
to insert words ~~and~~ or cross them out.

Ways to prepare

Many students only do one thing to prepare for writing task 2. They write lots of full essays. Although it's obviously important to practice writing full essays, there are other things that I think you should be doing.

Here are some study ideas for writing task 2:

1. Break the task into parts

Instead of writing a full essay today, why not try writing 5 different introductions using my 2-sentence technique? Or challenge yourself to write 3 different main-body paragraphs about "advantages" (e.g. advantages of mobile phones, homeschooling and immigration) - use this lesson to help you. Or write 5 different conclusions - just one sentence each, summarizing your response to 5 different questions.

2. Do some research

Instead of worrying about one particular question, try to find 10 recent exam questions. Write the questions on a piece of paper, decide what the general topic is for each one (e.g. advertising, prisons, life expectancy) and do some research about those topics. Don't worry about the exact question; just try to "collect" good ideas and vocabulary for the overall topic. A quick search on Google or Wikipedia should give you what you need.

3. What do you believe?

A big problem for some students is that they don't have well-formed opinions. They are not sure what to write about topics like homeschooling, immigration or gun control. The good news is that there is no 'correct' opinion - the examiner is only looking at how well you express your opinions in English. So, after doing some research (see point 2 above), make sure you have an opinion of your own.

How to write faster

Here is some advice:

1. The first step is to write better, not faster. If you cannot get the score you need when it takes you 2 hours to write an essay, you will not be able to write a good essay in 40 minutes.
2. Read the following story about a student who started slowly and got faster with practice.

“I was worried that it took her 4 hours to write a band 7 essay for homework,” Kim said. In fact, spending 4 hours to write an essay is a good idea. This kind of hard work leads to great results! The important thing is to be able to write your first band 7 essay. At first it might take you 4 hours, but you will get faster with practice.

PS. The student mentioned above got a band 7 in her exam about 6 weeks later!
3. The next step is to break the 40 minutes into smaller parts. For example, you could practice writing introductions in only 5 minutes. Don't work on full essays, just practice the parts according to special task types. That's called focused practice.
4. Separate the 'thinking' from the 'writing'. Do all your thinking (planning or brainstorming) in the first 10 minutes. When you are happy with your essay plan, start writing. Try to stick to your plan so that you can focus on writing rather than more thinking.
5. Finally, remember that improvements happen gradually. You have to be prepared to do the hard work: practicing lots of essays and parts of essays, preparing ideas and opinions for topics, building your vocabulary repertoire, and learning from mistakes. Do the work and you'll get better and faster!

Band 7+ vocabulary

What do we mean by band 7.0 plus vocabulary? The term 'band 7 plus vocabulary' is used to explain:

1. First, when we say 'band 7 vocabulary', we are talking about vocabulary that could help you to get a band 7 or higher.
2. There is no list of band-7 vocabulary that you can use in any essay.
3. 'Band 7 vocabulary' refers to words and phrases that relate to the question topic. For example, a phrase like "delay the development of a child's first language" would be band-7 vocabulary, but a linking word like "moreover" would not.
4. Examiners are looking for 'less common' vocabulary. They wouldn't expect many students to write "delay the development of a child's first language", so this phrase would impress them.
5. Remember that we are not looking for 'big' words that are difficult to understand. We are looking for groups of words used naturally and accurately together. The phrase "delay the development of a child's first language" is easy to understand, but not many students would think to use it.

Following a good study order

Is there any specific study order that we can recommend? Yes! So here's what we think is a good and practical study order:

1. Essay structure and paragraphs

The first thing to do is find an essay structure that works for you. You probably know that I prefer to write 4 paragraphs, and maybe you've seen how I write 2-sentence introductions, 5-sentence main paragraphs and 1-sentence conclusions. Try this: take some essays that you have already written, and rewrite them so that they all have the same number of paragraphs and sentences.

2. Question types

You need to see examples of the main question types, and make sure you know how to answer each type using your preferred essay structure.

3. Planning, and isolated paragraph practice

Take several different questions, and practice planning ideas. Then spend some time focusing only on introductions e.g. write an introduction for five different questions. Then do the same with conclusions. Then try writing different types of main paragraph e.g. an 'advantages' paragraph, an 'opinion' paragraph, a 'problem' paragraph etc.

4. Topic ideas

When you are confident that you know how to write an essay, it's time to start working through as many common IELTS writing topics as possible. Even if you don't write a full essay for each topic, you should at least plan some ideas and opinions.

5. Mistakes, corrections and improvements

Try to find someone who can check your writing, highlight and explain your mistakes, and show you how to improve your essays.

Good Sample Answers Worth Reading

Sample essay 1:

Explain some of the ways in which humans are damaging the environment.

What can governments do to address these problems? What can individual people do?

Humans are responsible for a variety of environmental problems, but we can also take steps to reduce the damage that we are causing to the planet. This essay will discuss environmental problems and the measures that governments and individuals can take to address these problems.

Two of the biggest threats to the environment are air pollution and waste. Gas emissions from factories and exhaust fumes from vehicles lead to global warming, which may have a devastating effect on the planet in the future. As the human population increases, we are also producing ever greater quantities of waste, which contaminates the earth and pollutes rivers and oceans.

Governments could certainly make more effort to reduce air pollution. They could introduce laws to limit emissions from factories or to force companies to use renewable energy from solar, wind or water power. They could also impose 'green taxes' on drivers and airline companies. In this way, people would be encouraged to use public transport and to take fewer flights abroad, therefore reducing emissions.

Individuals should also take responsibility for the impact they have on the environment. They can take public transport rather than driving, choose products with less packaging, and recycle as much as possible. Most supermarkets now provide reusable bags for shoppers as well as 'banks' for recycling glass, plastic and paper in their car parks. By reusing and recycling, we can help to reduce waste.

In conclusion, both national governments and individuals must play their part in looking after the environment.

(250 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 2:

Some people believe that it is wrong to keep animals in zoos, while others think that zoos are both entertaining and ecologically important.

Discuss both views.

In this modern world, perspectives of how to keep animals are varied between people. Some people think about caging them in zoos or forests while others think it is illogical to limit animals' movements. I am going to discuss these views according to environmental, personal and economic perspectives.

Keeping some animals in zoos will protect them against predators, bad weather, and food availability. Nevertheless, keeping animals free is more logical than isolating them because if we keep animals caged, they would not be able to have fresh air and chase other animals. Therefore, it is cruel keeping animals confined in small spaces. It is advisable to put our efforts into keeping our creatures in their natural habitats, in order to give them the opportunity to experience normal life.

Keeping animals is essential because some animals are in fact becoming extinct. Although keeping these animals is costly, the profits made by keeping these animals are substantial. Take Indian lions for example; a wide range of people travel to India to see these animals in circuses in India. However, some people think that governments should invest the money in improving the infrastructure of their nations instead. Building new electrical power station, for instance, is more important than spending thousands of pounds to preserve certain creatures from extinction.

Lastly, keeping animals is important for study and research whereas others think we have no right to use animals for entertainment and in labs.

To conclude, keeping animals in zoos might have many values but it is irrational to keep these animals away from their natural habitat. The reasons are that besides they are not vulnerable creatures, they have the right to survive independently because of having feelings and emotions as human.

(289 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 3:

Universities should accept equal numbers of male and female students in every subject.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

In my opinion, men and women should have the same educational opportunities. However, I do not agree with the idea of accepting equal proportions of each gender in every university subject.

Having the same number of men and women on all degree courses is simply unrealistic. Student numbers on any course depend on the applications that the institution receives. If a university decided to fill courses with equal numbers of males and females, it would need enough applicants of each gender. In reality, many courses are more popular with one gender than the other, and it would not be practical to aim for equal proportions. For example, nursing courses tend to attract more female applicants, and it would be difficult to fill these courses if fifty per cent of the places needed to go to males.

Apart from the practical concerns expressed above, I also believe that it would be unfair to base admission to university courses on gender. Universities should continue to select the best candidates for each course according to their qualifications. In this way, both men and women have the same opportunities, and applicants know that they will be successful if they work hard to achieve good grades at school. If a female student is the best candidate for a place on a course, it would be wrong to reject her in favour of a male student with lower grades or fewer qualifications.

In conclusion, the selection of university students should be based on merit, and it would be both impractical and unfair to change to a selection procedure based on gender.

(265 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 4:

We cannot help everyone in the world that needs help, so we should only be concerned with our own communities and countries.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Some people believe that we should not help people in other countries as long as there are problems in our own society. I disagree with this view because I believe that we should try to help as many people as possible.

On the one hand, I accept that it is important to help our neighbours and fellow citizens. In most communities there are people who are impoverished or disadvantaged in some way. It is possible to find homeless people, for example, in even the wealthiest of cities, and for those who are concerned about this problem, there are usually opportunities to volunteer time or give money to support these people. In the UK, people can help in a variety of ways, from donating clothing to serving free food in a soup kitchen. As the problems are on our doorstep, and there are obvious ways to help, I can understand why some people feel that we should prioritise local charity.

At the same time, I believe that we have an obligation to help those who live beyond our national borders. In some countries the problems that people face are much more serious than those in our own communities, and it is often even easier to help. For example, when children are dying from curable diseases in African countries, governments and individuals in richer countries can save lives simply by paying for vaccines that already exist. A small donation to an international charity might have a much greater impact than helping in our local area.

In conclusion, it is true that we cannot help everyone, but in my opinion national boundaries should not stop us from helping those who are in need.

(280 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 5:

Happiness is considered very important in life.

Why is it difficult to define?

What factors are important in achieving happiness?

It is true that happiness is very important in people's life, but some people have different views about how to be happy. This essay will discuss the reasons that makes happiness difficult to understand and the things how to attain it.

There are things that can make a person happy, while others do not such as a stable job, a beautiful house, and winning a lottery. A person will be happy with his life if is able to feed his family by having a permanent job. Also, if the house is decent, he will be happy to see how comfortable life is to live in a place with wonderful furniture and appliances. Finally, winning a huge sum of money is a dream coming true for most people. However, others do not like to buy lottery tickets because some people believe that once they have won the lottery, they might put their family's life at risk, perhaps, they think somebody will try to kidnap their kids and ask for a ransom.

On the other hand, there are simple factors in attaining happiness. For example, when a family of five could meet the basic needs such as food, clothing and a house, these could make a family satisfied with what they already have in life as long as they are together. Another example is being able to pass an English proficiency test to be qualified to become a registered nurse in Canada. Most foreign workers would be very glad if they could pursue their career after passing such a test.

In conclusion, people have their own meaning of happiness and there are reasons why certain things make them happy such as basic needs or passing an examination test.

(286 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 6:

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the relationship between equality and personal achievement. Some people believe that individuals can achieve more in egalitarian societies. Others believe that high levels of personal achievement are possible only if individuals are free to succeed or fail according to their individual merits.

What is your view of the relationship between equality and personal success?

In my opinion, an egalitarian society is one in which everyone has the same rights and the same opportunities. I completely agree that people can achieve more in this kind of society.

Education is an important factor with regard to personal success in life. I believe that all children should have access to free schooling, and higher education should be either free or affordable for all those who choose to pursue a university degree. In a society without free schooling or affordable higher education, only children and young adults from wealthier families would have access to the best learning opportunities, and they would therefore be better prepared for the job market. This kind of inequality would ensure the success of some but harm the prospects of others.

I would argue that equal rights and opportunities are not in conflict with people's freedom to succeed or fail. In other words, equality does not mean that people lose their motivation to succeed, or that they are not allowed to fail. On the contrary, I believe that most people would feel more motivated to work hard and reach their potential if they thought that they lived in a fair society. Those who did not make the same effort would know that they had wasted their opportunity. Inequality, on the other hand, would be more likely to demotivate people because they would know that the odds of success were stacked in favour of those from privileged backgrounds.

In conclusion, it seems to me that there is a positive relationship between equality and personal success.

(260 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 7:

Some people think that museums should be enjoyable places to entertain people, while others believe that the purpose of museums is to educate.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

People have different views about the role and function of museums. In my opinion, museums can and should be both entertaining and educational.

On the one hand, it can be argued that the main role of a museum is to entertain. Museums are tourist attractions, and their aim is to exhibit a collection of interesting objects that many people want to see. The average visitor may become bored if he or she has to read or listen to too much educational content, so museums often put more of an emphasis on enjoyment rather than learning. This type of museum is designed to be visually spectacular, and it may have interactive activities or even games as part of its exhibitions.

On the other hand, some people argue that museums should focus on education. The aim of any exhibition should be to teach visitors something that they did not previously know. Usually this means that the history behind the museum's exhibits needs to be explained, and this can be done in various ways. Some museums employ professional guides to talk to their visitors, while other museums offer headsets so that visitors can listen to detailed commentary about the exhibition. This way, museums can play an important role in teaching people about history, culture, science and many other aspects of life.

In conclusion, it seems to me that a good museum should be able to offer an interesting, enjoyable and educational experience so that people can both have fun and learn something at the same time.

(253 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 8:

Some people believe that studying at university or college is the best route to a successful career, while others believe that it is better to get a job straight after school.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

When they finish school, teenagers face the dilemma of whether to get a job or continue their education. While there are some benefits to getting a job straight after school, I would argue that it is better to go to college or university.

The option to start work straight after school is attractive for several reasons. Many young people want to start earning money as soon as possible. In this way, they can become independent, and they will be able to afford their own house or start a family. In terms of their career, young people who decide to find work, rather than continue their studies, may progress more quickly. They will have the chance to gain real experience and learn practical skills related to their chosen profession. This may lead to promotions and a successful career.

On the other hand, I believe that it is more beneficial for students to continue their studies. Firstly, academic qualifications are required in many professions. For example, it is impossible to become a doctor, teacher or lawyer without having the relevant degree. As a result, university graduates have access to more and better job opportunities, and they tend to earn higher salaries than those with fewer qualifications. Secondly, the job market is becoming increasingly competitive, and sometimes there are hundreds of applicants for one position in a company. Young people who do not have qualifications from a university or college will not be able to compete.

For the reasons mentioned above, it seems to me that students are more likely to be successful in their careers if they continue their studies beyond school level.

(271 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 9:

Several languages are in danger of extinction because they are spoken by very small numbers of people. Some people say that governments should spend public money on saving these languages, while others believe that would be a waste of money.

Discuss both these views and give your opinion.

It is true that some minority languages may disappear in the near future. Although it can be argued that governments could save money by allowing this to happen, I believe that these languages should be protected and preserved.

There are several reasons why saving minority languages could be seen as a waste of money. Firstly, if a language is only spoken by a small number of people, expensive education programmes will be needed to make sure that more people learn it, and the state will have to pay for facilities, teachers and marketing. This money might be better spent on other public services. Secondly, it would be much cheaper and more efficient for countries to have just one language. Governments could cut all kinds of costs related to communicating with each minority group.

Despite the above arguments, I believe that governments should try to preserve languages that are less widely spoken. A language is much more than simply a means of communication; it has a vital connection with the cultural identity of the people who speak it. If a language disappears, a whole way of life will disappear with it, and we will lose the rich cultural diversity that makes societies more interesting. By spending money to protect minority languages, governments can also preserve traditions, customs and behaviours that are part of a country's history.

In conclusion, it may save money in the short term if we allow minority languages to disappear, but in the long term this would have an extremely negative impact on our cultural heritage.

(258 words) Band 9

Sample essay 10:

As most people spend a major part of their adult life at work, job satisfaction is an important element of individual well-being.

What factors contribute to job satisfaction?

How realistic is the expectation of job satisfaction for all workers?

In today's life, there is a wide range of people who work under flexible environment, while others are exposed to stressful conditions. It is unadvisable to proceed with any job, if the employer is not taking into account the vital paths required in convincing their employees to continue their jobs properly. In this essay, I am going to address the contributing factors to job satisfaction which are in terms of working hours, salaries and graduates.

It has been essential to understand individuals' commitments to exclude this particular fellow from 9 to 5 working hours. For example, some people cannot be punctual at work because they have disabled daughters or sons, who could not be able to travel to school independently. Therefore, it is important to change the original time schedule to give these people flexibility. So this type of help would give them more job contentment.

The fact that could not be denied and encourage the employee remarkably is the reliable salaries in addition to promotions to the highly achievable workers. For example, if a worker in a factory is able to fix a broken down one of the machines, it is illogical not to award this worker for his great help to the factory. Therefore, if we award this worker, he will be grateful and more confident to his job. Awarding and reasonable salaries are essential elements to job satisfaction.

It is essential to accommodate the right person at work on the right place according to their degree or certificate. If an individual has graduated as an accountant, it is unrealistic to work a job as a carpenter. One of the consequences of that is the worker is not going to like his job because there is no sensible relationship between this job and his main occupation.

To conclude, if every worker is able to take part in a job which suits him financially, vocationally and academically, it could contribute to climbing the career ladder successfully.

(327 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 11:

Some employers reward members of staff for their exceptional contributions to the company by giving them extra money. This practice can act as an incentive for some but may also have a negative impact on others.

To what extent is this style of management effective?

Are there better ways of encouraging employees to work hard?

In times of high unemployment, employers need to do very little to encourage their staff to work hard, but when job vacancies are scarce, they have to find effective ways of rewarding their staff to stop them from going elsewhere.

One obvious way of doing this is to offer extra money to employees who are seen to be working exceptionally hard and this is done in companies with a product to sell. For example, real estate agents or department stores can offer a simple commission on all sales.

This style of management favors people who can demonstrate their contribution through sales figures, but does not take into account the work done by people behind the scenes who have little contact with the public. A better approach is for management to offer a bonus to all the staff at the end of year if the profits are healthy. This, however, does not allow management to target individuals who have genuinely worked harder than others.

Another possibility is to identify excellent staff through incentive schemes such as 'Employee of the Month' or 'Worker of the Week' to make people feel recognized. Such people are usually singled out with the help of clients. Hotels, restaurants and tour operators may also allow staff to accept tips offered by clients who are pleased with the service. However, tipping is a highly unreliable source of money and does not favor everyone.

Basically, employees want to be recognized for their contribution - whether through receiving more money or simply some encouraging words. They also need to feel that their contribution to the whole organization is worthwhile. Good management recognizes this need and responds appropriately.

(275 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 12:

Popular hobbies and interests change over time and are more a reflection of trends and fashions than an indication of what individuals really want to do in their spare time.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

In comparison with even the recent past, the choice of leisure activities on offer today is vast, so it is reasonable to find that some of these activities reflect the trends and fads of the day.

People have far more money and time than before to pursue their interests but the ever-increasing number of activities does not automatically guarantee continuity. In fact, new hobbies come and go. For example, sports such as roller-blading lose their fascination after a few months. Similarly, although snowboarding has taken over from traditional skiing, it is doubtful whether its popularity will last. Other things like electronic games go out of date almost as soon as you have bought them because the manufacturers promote the fact that only the latest version is worth having. And so ensure continued sales.

On the other hand, not everyone is a victim of fashion in this way and people of all ages and backgrounds may take up hobbies for social reasons. Traditional hobbies range from participation in active sports like tennis to old favorites such as chess and stamp collecting, and these continue to be popular. By joining a club, people can make friends and feel part of a group with whom they can share a common interest and leisure time. Where sport is concerned, most people know what they like and participate out of love of the game, rather than because it is currently fashionable.

I believe, therefore, that while fashion may have an influence, particularly among the young, the majority of people enjoy their hobbies for their own sake.

(261 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 13:

As most foreign aid often benefits the donor more than the receiver, developing countries should refuse to repay their debts.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Over the past 30 years, many countries have sent most of their income repaying the interest on foreign debts. Many people consider the initial loans responsible for these debts to be more beneficial to the lender than to the borrower.

In the past, most developing countries were short of ready funds to build the infrastructure necessary for development. Therefore, foreign countries were asked to provide loans for projects to help the countries become self-reliant. However, this money was often used to make quick profits for developers or to line the pockets of corrupt officials. Once the money is used, the problem of repayment begins.

Since the 1970s many developing countries have found that they cannot pay back the loans or even the interest is accumulated on the loans. Consequently, the countries have borrowed more money to pay back the interest. This gave western countries the power to dictate government policy through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These financial institutions are only interested in balance sheets. Therefore, nations have been forced to adopt policies which do nothing to develop their resources or improve the lives of the local people.

Countries that get caught in this debt spiral have no chance of paying back the initial money borrowed, while the banks making the loans make two or three times the money lent after the interest payments are taken into account. As most donor countries have already been repaid, both in terms of money and in terms of economic interest, it is morally right for developing countries to refuse to pay back foreign loans.

(264 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 14:

In some countries the average weight of people is increasing and their levels of health and fitness are decreasing.

What do you think are the causes of these problems and what measures could be taken to solve them?

Nowadays, obesity has become one of the outstanding problems in some countries especially in developed and developing ones in addition to the fact that the majority of people do not have healthy body.

In this modern world, the individual's activities are so limited. It is obviously clear that the technology donates some benefits to the society like the availability of doing business at home on the Internet or utilizing vacuum cleaners or dishwashers which cause people to become so lazy. In this case, the lack of physical movements leads to having excess weight. Another reason to gain extra weight and to be unhealthy could be because of eating foods especially inorganic fruits and vegetables which are grown by harmful chemical fertilizers and artificial substances such as pesticides or substances used in order to boost the harvest process. These seemingly technological achievements can seriously harm humans' health.

To halt these irrecoverable influences or reduce the detrimental effects on our body, some pragmatic measures must be taken. Doctors believe that exercise is one of the best solutions to decreasing obesity and being healthy. By doing exercises just one hour per day, we will be able to improve our lifestyle remarkably. Another step towards health could be to eat nutrition foods instead of fast foods. Vegetables and fruits help our body to have better metabolism. It is proved that digesting these kinds of foods is simpler for the digestive system of our body than animals' meat.

To put in the nutshell, I personally believe that the more we eat nutrition foods or do regular exercises, the healthier body we have as well as a healthier mindset.

(273 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 15:

People who travel to another country to live, work or study for a period of time often suffer badly from homesickness.

Why is it?

What are the best ways to reduce this problem?

I think most people who travel away from home for any length of time will feel homesick at the beginning because missing their own home and country is a natural reaction.

However, I think it becomes less of a problem as people adapt to the new environment and start to enjoy new relationships and experiences. Today many young people study abroad and for them it is probably their first time away from family, friends and everything that is familiar.

The country they have moved to may have completely different culture and language, so they need to adjust to this and learn how to communicate in the ways. This can be very tiring, but until they can do so, they will feel out of place and unable to form new relationships.

Professionals who have moved abroad for work may have left older parents behind, or even young children. For them the separation can be worse because they feel so far from the people they feel responsible for.

I personally think that people should try and prepare themselves for study or work abroad. They need to learn the new language and try to be as adaptable and independent as they can. At the same time, however, they need to set up ways of communication quickly and easily with people back home, by using emails for instance, so that they know what is happening there and do not need to worry. If people are aware of the problems, they can do a lot to reduce their homesickness and make their stay abroad a positive, exciting experience.

(265 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 16:

The exploration and development of safe alternatives to fossil fuels should be the most important global priority today.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

It is true to say that fossil fuels are still our main source of energy today, and as more countries develop their industries and their economies, the scale of their use continues to grow.

However, we are now well aware of the consequences of relying on this energy source for our natural environment. Global warming and the damage to the protective ozone layer are caused by carbon dioxide and other by-products of fossil fuels. So I certainly agree that these problems are global rather than national ones. They threaten our whole planet and no action by a single country could solve them. Furthermore, these problems are urgent as nobody knows when our natural world will be so damaged that it will no longer be able to support us.

While some countries already use safer alternative energy sources, such as wind, water or solar power, it seems that there has not been sufficient investment in developing the technology to make such alternative viable for all. So it should definitely be a global priority to invest in such research and development.

Of course there are other global priorities that we also need to address, such as poverty and diseases. But while it may be the case that these problems are just as important as the energy problem, there is a sense that time is ticking away for our planet and any solutions to the energy issue will take some time to achieve.

So in conclusion, I would agree that finding alternatives to fossil fuels is certainly the most pressing global priority, if not the most important one for our world today.

(269 words) Band 9

Sample essay 17:

In recent years some countries have experienced very rapid economic development. This has resulted in much higher standards of living in urban areas but not in the countryside. This situation may bring some problems for the country as a whole.

What are these problems?

How might they be reduced?

From the evidence of developing countries all over the world, it seems inevitable that economic growth is generated in the business and industrial centers of the major cities. As a result, urban citizens have access to jobs and facilities that improve their living standards considerably. However, it is usually the case that these are not equally enjoyed by people in the countryside and this generates several problems for the countries concerned.

First of all, people from the countryside will try to move to the cities to get more employment opportunities and better access to facilities available there. However, this increase in the urban population puts great pressure on housing and services, and leads to the creation of massive slum areas where conditions may be lower than standards in the rural villages which are often left under-populated. This can impact food production and can have severe affects for people in both urban and rural areas.

Finally, as a country's economy develops, there may be an increasing sense of inequality as the towns get richer and the villages get poorer, and this may lead to more crime and even civil unrest. The key to reducing these problems seems to lie in improving the standard of living and the facilities available in the countryside. Perhaps incentives can be offered to factories and companies to relocate; road and rail networks can be built to make such relocation possible; doctors and teachers could be required to spend part of their professional lives in rural areas.

In conclusion, however, improving rural living standards requires investment and political will that is sometimes not easy to generate.

(272 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 18:

Music is played in every society and culture in the world today. Some people believe that music brings only benefits to individuals and societies. Others, however, think that music can have a negative influence on both.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Generally, music is considered to be one of the most popular and ancient modes of human expression. It features largely in all histories and all cultures and indeed has been one of the main ways of passing on cultural traditions to new generations.

Many people view music as a positive influence for societies. They also believe that the influence on individuals is wholly beneficial as it is a long-established way of communicating and helping us to understand the whole range of human emotion and experience in a more spiritual language than words can represent.

However, there are different kinds of music and the qualities of classical music traditions are not necessarily part of the music many people experience today. In the modern world, there is a huge music industry that sells piped music to supermarkets and advertisers. We are also constantly exposed to loud modern music from people's CD players, iPods or car radios. So the view of music today as a kind of noise pollution produced by selfish people, is also a common and negative one, but it is difficult to think of a world without music.

Certainly, there is bad music that may have negative influences, particularly on the young. But people's taste in music tends to change as they get older, and it would be difficult to find someone who had no positive musical associations at all.

In conclusion, I think that music can have both positive and negative influences on people and society, but it is an integral part of human expression that we cannot really separate from our lives.

(267 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 19:

Young people in the modern world seem to have more power and influence than any previous young generation.

Why is this the case?

What impact does this have on the relationship between old and young people?

I would agree that young people today play a bigger role in society than their parents' or grandparents' generation did. This is mainly due to the larger social and technological changes that have increased the experience gap between the generations.

Young people today are generally better educated, and because they have been trained from a young age to use computer technology, they have internet access to information in a way that was unimaginable for earlier generations. This means that they are probably better informed than their parents' grandparents were at their age, and their hi-tech skills give them confidence in dealing with the very rapid changes in technology that are so uncomfortable for older people.

In addition, younger people are often the most affected by globalization. They follow fashions in clothes, music and social habits that are common among young people throughout the world. So they have become powerful consumers who influence big global markets today.

As a result of these developments, relationships with older people are often difficult. Teachers and parents are no longer treated with respect, and experience is undervalued because young people think they know everything, or at least can learn about everything from the internet. In many cultures, this has led to a lack of discipline in schools, family breakdowns and even serious social problems.

However, the current generation gap is the responsibility of both younger and older generations. Both have to make efforts to understand each other and a good starting point would be for families to spend more time together than they normally do today.

(264 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 20:

Modern societies need specialists in certain fields, but not others. Some people, therefore, think that governments should pay university fees for students who study subjects that are needed by society. Those who choose to study less relevant subjects should not receive the government funding.

Would the advantages of such an educational policy outweigh the disadvantages?

In every country, there are fashions among students about which subjects are the best to study at university. Sometimes the popularity of a subject is determined by how much money a graduate could subsequently earn in that field. Or subjects that are perceived as relatively 'easy' may also become popular, in spite of later difficulties of finding appropriate employment. It is up to governments to give incentives to students to choose subjects that match the needs of their society.

Obviously one way to do this would be for the government to pay the fees of those choosing such subjects. The advantage would certainly be that higher number of students would enroll and would later fill the employment gaps.

However, the disadvantages of such a policy would be considerable. For example, the students attracted by the funding may not have any real interest in or aptitude for that subject. Such students may drop out before graduation or after working only a short time in a related job. Furthermore, funding one group of students but not other would penalize those with a genuine interest and ability for another field. Such discrimination would certainly affect the whole of higher education of the country, and students would develop very negative attitudes towards going to university altogether. This would be very counter-productive for any country.

In conclusion, I think there are many other incentives for students that could be considered, such as making courses more interesting to take, or the job rewards greater after graduation. The education policy proposed above, however, would certainly have more long-term disadvantages than benefits for society.

(267 Words) Band 9

Sample essay 21:

The only way to reduce the amount of traffic in cities today is by reducing the need for people to travel from home for work, education or shopping.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

It is certainly true that today traffic in cities throughout the world has become a major problem. This is obvious from the number of vehicles on our roads and the amount of pollution they cause. Probably the traffic problem is due to individuals travelling for work, study or shopping purposes and this is evident in the rush hours we experience every morning and evening.

It is also true that today such daily commuting is not always necessary because people can do these things from home, we can see this in the options Information Technology gives us today. For instance, on-line work, distance learning and shopping facilities are all available via the internet.

However, even if everyone had access to the technology and the opportunity to work from home, it is unrealistic to think that everyone would want to. Even though the technology for working, studying or shopping on-line makes this option a possibility, it would mean people had less freedom of choice and less social contact in their lives. This would have a large impact on society as a whole.

So, in conclusion, I think that while this practice could reduce the traffic problems in our cities, it is most unlikely to be an acceptable solution. In terms of other solutions, perhaps we need to think more carefully about facilitating public transport and limiting private cars in our city centers. The development of public transport that is not road-based, such as sky trains or subways would probably be a more acceptable alternative measure to reduce jams on our roads.

(260 Words)

Sample essay 22:

Nowadays the way many people interact with each other has changed because of technology.

In what ways has technology affected the types of relationships that people make? Has this been a positive or negative development?

It is true that new technologies have had an influence on communication between people. Technology has affected relationships in various ways, and in my opinion there are both positive and negative effects.

Technology has had an impact on relationships in business, education and social life. Firstly, telephones and the Internet allow business people in different countries to interact without ever meeting each other. Secondly, services like Skype create new possibilities for relationships between students and teachers. For example, a student can now take video lessons with a teacher in a different city or country. Finally, many people use social networks, like Facebook, to make new friends and find people who share common interests, and they interact through their computers rather than face to face.

On the one hand, these developments can be extremely positive. Cooperation between people in different countries was much more difficult when communication was limited to written letters or telegrams. Nowadays, interactions by email, phone or video are almost as good as face-to-face meetings, and many of us benefit from these interactions, either in work or social contexts. On the other hand, the availability of new communication technologies can also have the result of isolating people and discouraging real interaction. For example, many young people choose to make friends online rather than mixing with their peers in the real world, and these 'virtual' relationships are a poor substitute for real friendships.

In conclusion, technology has certainly revolutionised communication between people, but not all of the outcomes of this revolution have been positive.

(257 words)

Sample essay 23:

***Some people believe that hobbies need to be difficult to be enjoyable.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?***

Some hobbies are relatively easy, while others present more of a challenge. Personally, I believe that both types of hobby can be fun, and I therefore disagree with the statement that hobbies need to be difficult in order to be enjoyable.

On the one hand, many people enjoy easy hobbies. One example of an activity that is easy for most people is swimming. This hobby requires very little equipment, it is simple to learn, and it is inexpensive. I remember learning to swim at my local swimming pool when I was a child, and it never felt like a demanding or challenging experience. Another hobby that I find easy and fun is photography. In my opinion, anyone can take interesting pictures without knowing too much about the technicalities of operating a camera. Despite being straightforward, taking photos is a satisfying activity.

On the other hand, difficult hobbies can sometimes be more exciting. If an activity is more challenging, we might feel a greater sense of satisfaction when we manage to do it successfully. For example, film editing is a hobby that requires a high level of knowledge and expertise. In my case, it took me around two years before I became competent at this activity, but now I enjoy it much more than I did when I started. I believe that many hobbies give us more pleasure when we reach a higher level of performance because the results are better and the feeling of achievement is greater.

In conclusion, simple hobbies can be fun and relaxing, but difficult hobbies can be equally pleasurable for different reasons.

(266 words)

Sample essay 24:

Some people think that all teenagers should be required to do unpaid work in their free time to help the local community. They believe this would benefit both the individual teenager and society as a whole.

Do you agree or disagree?

Many young people work on a volunteer basis, and this can only be beneficial for both the individual and society as a whole. However, I do not agree that we should therefore force all teenagers to do unpaid work.

Most young people are already under enough pressure with their studies, without being given the added responsibility of working in their spare time. School is just as demanding as a full-time job, and teachers expect their students to do homework and exam revision on top of attending lessons every day. When young people do have some free time, we should encourage them to enjoy it with their friends or to spend it doing sports and other leisure activities. They have many years of work ahead of them when they finish their studies.

At the same time, I do not believe that society has anything to gain from obliging young people to do unpaid work. In fact, I would argue that it goes against the values of a free and fair society to force a group of people to do something against their will. Doing this can only lead to resentment amongst young people, who would feel that they were being used, and parents, who would not want to be told how to raise their children. Currently, nobody is forced to volunteer, and this is surely the best system.

In conclusion, teenagers may choose to work for free and help others, but in my opinion we should not make this compulsory.

(250 words)

Sample essay 25:

There are many different types of music in the world today. Why do we need music? Is the traditional music of a country more important than the international music that is heard everywhere nowadays?

It is true that a rich variety of musical styles can be found around the world. Music is a vital part of all human cultures for a range of reasons, and I would argue that traditional music is more important than modern, international music.

Music is something that accompanies all of us throughout our lives. As children, we are taught songs by our parents and teachers as a means of learning language, or simply as a form of enjoyment. Children delight in singing with others, and it would appear that the act of singing in a group creates a connection between participants, regardless of their age. Later in life, people's musical preferences develop, and we come to see our favourite songs as part of our life stories. Music both expresses and arouses emotions in a way that words alone cannot. In short, it is difficult to imagine life without it.

In my opinion, traditional music should be valued over the international music that has become so popular. International pop music is often catchy and fun, but it is essentially a commercial product that is marketed and sold by business people. Traditional music, by contrast, expresses the culture, customs and history of a country. Traditional styles, such as ...(example)..., connect us to the past and form part of our cultural identity. It would be a real pity if pop music became so predominant that these national styles disappeared.

In conclusion, music is a necessary part of human existence, and I believe that traditional music should be given more importance than international music.

(261 words)

Sample essay 26:

Some people regard video games as harmless fun, or even as a useful educational tool. Others, however, believe that video games are having an adverse effect on the people who play them. In your opinion, do the drawbacks of video games outweigh the benefits?

Many people, and children in particular, enjoy playing computer games. While I accept that these games can sometimes have a positive effect on the user, I believe that they are more likely to have a harmful impact.

On the one hand, video games can be both entertaining and educational. Users, or gamers, are transported into virtual worlds which are often more exciting and engaging than real-life pastimes. From an educational perspective, these games encourage imagination and creativity, as well as concentration, logical thinking and problem solving, all of which are useful skills outside the gaming context. Furthermore, it has been shown that computer simulation games can improve users' motor skills and help to prepare them for real-world tasks, such as flying a plane.

However, I would argue that these benefits are outweighed by the drawbacks. Gaming can be highly addictive because users are constantly given scores, new targets and frequent rewards to keep them playing. Many children now spend hours each day trying to progress through the levels of a game or to get a higher score than their friends. This type of addiction can have effects ranging from lack of sleep to problems at school, when homework is sacrificed for a few more hours on the computer or console. The rise in obesity in recent years has also been linked in part to the sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise that often accompany gaming addiction.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the potential dangers of video games are more significant than the possible benefits.

(258 words)

Sample essay 27:

In the developed world, average life expectancy is increasing. What problems will this cause for individuals and society? Suggest some measures that could be taken to reduce the impact of ageing populations.

It is true that people in industrialised nations can expect to live longer than ever before. Although there will undoubtedly be some negative consequences of this trend, societies can take steps to mitigate these potential problems.

As people live longer and the populations of developed countries grow older, several related problems can be anticipated. The main issue is that there will obviously be more people of retirement age who will be eligible to receive a pension. The proportion of younger, working adults will be smaller, and governments will therefore receive less money in taxes in relation to the size of the population. In other words, an ageing population will mean a greater tax burden for working adults. Further pressures will include a rise in the demand for healthcare, and the fact young adults will increasingly have to look after their elderly relatives.

There are several actions that governments could take to solve the problems described above. Firstly, a simple solution would be to increase the retirement age for working adults, perhaps from 65 to 70. Nowadays, people of this age tend to be healthy enough to continue a productive working life. A second measure would be for governments to encourage immigration in order to increase the number of working adults who pay taxes. Finally, money from national budgets will need to be taken from other areas and spent on vital healthcare, accommodation and transport facilities for the rising numbers of older citizens.

In conclusion, various measures can be taken to tackle the problems that are certain to arise as the populations of countries grow older.

(265 words)

Sample essay 28:

Nowadays animal experiments are widely used to develop new medicines and to test the safety of other products. Some people argue that these experiments should be banned because it is morally wrong to cause animals to suffer, while others are in favour of them because of their benefits to humanity.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

It is true that medicines and other products are routinely tested on animals before they are cleared for human use. While I tend towards the viewpoint that animal testing is morally wrong, I would have to support a limited amount of animal experimentation for the development of medicines.

On the one hand, there are clear ethical arguments against animal experimentation. To use a common example of this practice, laboratory mice may be given an illness so that the effectiveness of a new drug can be measured. Opponents of such research argue that humans have no right to subject animals to this kind of trauma, and that the lives of all creatures should be respected. They believe that the benefits to humans do not justify the suffering caused, and that scientists should use alternative methods of research.

On the other hand, reliable alternatives to animal experimentation may not always be available. Supporters of the use of animals in medical research believe that a certain amount of suffering on the part of mice or rats can be justified if human lives are saved. They argue that opponents of such research might feel differently if a member of their own families needed a medical treatment that had been developed through the use of animal experimentation. Personally, I agree with the banning of animal testing for non-medical products, but I feel that it may be a necessary evil where new drugs and medical procedures are concerned.

In conclusion, it seems to me that it would be wrong to ban testing on animals for vital medical research until equally effective alternatives have been developed.

(270 words)

Sample essay 29:

Some people think that governments should give financial support to creative artists such as painters and musicians. Others believe that creative artists should be funded by alternative sources. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

People have different views about the funding of creative artists. While some people disagree with the idea of government support for artists, I believe that money for art projects should come from both governments and other sources.

Some art projects definitely require help from the state. In the UK, there are many works of art in public spaces, such as streets or squares in city centres. In Liverpool, for example, there are several new statues and sculptures in the docks area of the city, which has been redeveloped recently. These artworks represent culture, heritage and history. They serve to educate people about the city, and act as landmarks or talking points for visitors and tourists. Governments and local councils should pay creative artists to produce this kind of art, because without their funding our cities would be much less interesting and attractive.

On the other hand, I can understand the arguments against government funding for art. The main reason for this view is that governments have more important concerns. For example, state budgets need to be spent on education, healthcare, infrastructure and security, among other areas. These public services are vital for a country to function properly, whereas the work of creative artists, even in public places, is a luxury. Another reason for this opinion is that artists do a job like any other professional, and they should therefore earn their own money by selling their work.

In conclusion, there are good reasons why artists should rely on alternative sources of financial support, but in my opinion government help is sometimes necessary.

(262 words)

Sample essay 30:

Foreign visitors should pay more than local visitors for cultural and historical attractions. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

It is sometimes argued that tourists from overseas should be charged more than local residents to visit important sites and monuments. I completely disagree with this idea.

The argument in favour of higher prices for foreign tourists would be that cultural or historical attractions often depend on state subsidies to keep them going, which means that the resident population already pays money to these sites through the tax system. However, I believe this to be a very shortsighted view. Foreign tourists contribute to the economy of the host country with the money they spend on a wide range of goods and services, including food, souvenirs, accommodation and travel. The governments and inhabitants of every country should be happy to subsidise important tourist sites and encourage people from the rest of the world to visit them.

If travellers realised that they would have to pay more to visit historical and cultural attractions in a particular nation, they would perhaps decide not to go to that country on holiday. To take the UK as an example, the tourism industry and many related jobs rely on visitors coming to the country to see places like Windsor Castle or Saint Paul's Cathedral. These two sites charge the same price regardless of nationality, and this helps to promote the nation's cultural heritage. If overseas tourists stopped coming due to higher prices, there would be a risk of insufficient funding for the maintenance of these important buildings.

In conclusion, I believe that every effort should be made to attract tourists from overseas, and it would be counterproductive to make them pay more than local residents.

(269 words)

Sample essay 31:

Some people think that in the modern world we are more dependent on each other, while others think that people have become more independent. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

People have different views about whether we are more or less dependent on others nowadays. In my view, modern life forces us to be more independent than people were in the past.

There are two main reasons why it could be argued that we are more dependent on each other now. Firstly, life is more complex and difficult, especially because the cost of living has increased so dramatically. For example, young adults tend to rely on their parents for help when buying a house. Property prices are higher than ever, and without help it would be impossible for many people to pay a deposit and a mortgage. Secondly, people seem to be more ambitious nowadays, and they want a better quality of life for their families. This means that both parents usually need to work full-time, and they depend on support from grandparents and babysitters for child care.

However, I would agree with those who believe that people are more independent these days. In most countries, families are becoming smaller and more dispersed, which means that people cannot count on relatives as much as they used to. We also have more freedom to travel and live far away from our home towns. For example, many students choose to study abroad instead of going to their local university, and this experience makes them more independent as they learn to live alone. Another factor in this growing independence is technology, which allows us to work alone and from any part of the world.

In conclusion, while there are some reasons to believe that people now depend on each other more, my own view is that we are more independent than ever.

(279 words)

Sample essay 32:

When choosing a job, the salary is the most important consideration. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many people choose their jobs based on the size of the salary offered. Personally, I disagree with the idea that money is the key consideration when deciding on a career, because I believe that other factors are equally important.

On the one hand, I agree that money is necessary in order for people to meet their basic needs. For example, we all need money to pay for housing, food, bills, health care, and education. Most people consider it a priority to at least earn a salary that allows them to cover these needs and have a reasonable quality of life. If people chose their jobs based on enjoyment or other non-financial factors, they might find it difficult to support themselves. Artists and musicians, for instance, are known for choosing a career path that they love, but that does not always provide them with enough money to live comfortably and raise a family.

Nevertheless, I believe that other considerations are just as important as what we earn in our jobs. Firstly, personal relationships and the atmosphere in a workplace are extremely important when choosing a job. Having a good manager or friendly colleagues, for example, can make a huge difference to workers' levels of happiness and general quality of life. Secondly, many people's feelings of job satisfaction come from their professional achievements, the skills they learn, and the position they reach, rather than the money they earn. Finally, some people choose a career because they want to help others and contribute something positive to society.

In conclusion, while salaries certainly affect people's choice of profession, I do not believe that money outweighs all other motivators.

(275 words)

Sample essay 33:

Nowadays celebrities are more famous for their glamour and wealth than for their achievements, and this sets a bad example to young people.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

It is true that some celebrities are known for their glamorous lifestyles rather than for the work they do. While I agree that these celebrities set a bad example for children, I believe that other famous people act as positive role models.

On the one hand, many people do achieve fame without really working for it. They may have inherited money from parents, married a famous or wealthy person, or they may have appeared in gossip magazines or on a reality TV programme. A good example would be Paris Hilton, who is rich and famous for the wrong reasons. She spends her time attending parties and nightclubs, and her behaviour promotes the idea that appearance, glamour and media profile are more important than hard work and good character. The message to young people is that success can be achieved easily, and that school work is not necessary.

On the other hand, there are at least as many celebrities whose accomplishments make them excellent role models for young people. Actors, musicians and sports stars become famous idols because they have worked hard and applied themselves to develop real skills and abilities. They demonstrate great effort, determination and ambition, which is required for someone who wants to be truly successful in their chosen field. An example is the actor and martial artist Jackie Chan, who has become world famous through years of practice and hard work. This kind of self-made celebrity can inspire children to develop their talents through application and perseverance.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the influence of celebrities on young people can be positive as well as negative.

(271 words)

Sample essay 34:

Families who send their children to private schools should not be required to pay taxes that support the state education system.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Some people believe that parents of children who attend private schools should not need to contribute to state schools through taxes. Personally, I completely disagree with this view.

For a variety of reasons, it would be wrong to reduce taxes for families who pay for private education. Firstly, it would be difficult to calculate the correct amount of tax reduction for these families, and staff would be required to manage this complex process. Secondly, we all pay a certain amount of tax for public services that we may not use. For example, most people are fortunate enough not to have to call the police or fire brigade at any time in their lives, but they would not expect a tax reduction for this. Finally, if wealthy families were given a tax discount for sending their children to private schools, we might have a situation where poorer people pay higher taxes than the rich.

In my opinion, we should all be happy to pay our share of the money that supports public schools. It is beneficial for all members of society to have a high quality education system with equal opportunities for all young people. This will result in a well-educated workforce, and in turn a more productive and prosperous nation. Parents of children in private schools may also see the advantages of this in their own lives. For example, a company owner will need well qualified and competent staff, and a well-funded education system can provide such employees.

In conclusion, I do not believe that any financial concessions should be made for people who choose private education.

(269 words)

Sample essay 35:

Wild animals have no place in the 21st century, so protecting them is a waste of resources. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people argue that it is pointless to spend money on the protection of wild animals because we humans have no need for them. I completely disagree with this point of view.

In my opinion, it is absurd to argue that wild animals have no place in the 21st century. I do not believe that planet Earth exists only for the benefit of humans, and there is nothing special about this particular century that means that we suddenly have the right to allow or encourage the extinction of any species. Furthermore, there is no compelling reason why we should let animals die out. We do not need to exploit or destroy every last square metre of land in order to feed or accommodate the world's population. There is plenty of room for us to exist side by side with wild animals, and this should be our aim.

I also disagree with the idea that protecting animals is a waste of resources. It is usually the protection of natural habitats that ensures the survival of wild animals, and most scientists agree that these habitats are also crucial for human survival. For example, rainforests produce oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide and stabilise the Earth's climate. If we destroyed these areas, the costs of managing the resulting changes to our planet would far outweigh the costs of conservation. By protecting wild animals and their habitats, we maintain the natural balance of all life on Earth.

In conclusion, we have no right to decide whether or not wild animals should exist, and I believe that we should do everything we can to protect them.

(269 words)

Sample essay 36:

These days more fathers stay at home and take care of their children while mothers go out to work. What could be the reasons for this? Do you think it is a positive or a negative development?

It is true that men are increasingly likely to take on the role of househusband, while more women than ever are the breadwinners in their families. There could be several reasons for this, and I consider it to be a very positive trend.

In recent years, parents have had to adapt to various changes in our societies. Equal rights movements have made great progress, and it has become normal for women to gain qualifications and pursue a career. It has also become socially acceptable for men to stay at home and look after their children. At the same time, the rising cost of living has meant that both marriage partners usually need to work and save money before starting a family. Therefore, when couples have children, they may decide who works and who stays at home depending on the personal preference of each partner, or based on which partner earns the most money.

In my view, the changes described above should be seen as progress. We should be happy to live in a society in which men and women have equal opportunities, and in which women are not put under pressure to sacrifice their careers. Equally, it seems only fair that men should be free to leave their jobs in order to assume childcare responsibilities if this is what they wish to do. Couples should be left to make their own decisions about which parental role each partner takes, according to their particular circumstances and needs.

In conclusion, the changing roles of men and women in the family are a result of wider changes in society, and I believe that these developments are desirable.

(274 words)

Sample essay 37:

Some people think that strict punishments for driving offences are the key to reducing traffic accidents. Others, however, believe that other measures would be more effective in improving road safety. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

People have differing views with regard to the question of how to make our roads safer. In my view, both punishments and a range of other measures can be used together to promote better driving habits.

On the one hand, strict punishments can certainly help to encourage people to drive more safely. Penalties for dangerous drivers can act as a deterrent, meaning that people avoid repeating the same offence. There are various types of driving penalty, such as small fines, licence suspension, driver awareness courses, and even prison sentences. The aim of these punishments is to show dangerous drivers that their actions have negative consequences. As a result, we would hope that drivers become more disciplined and alert, and that they follow the rules more carefully.

On the other hand, I believe that safe driving can be promoted in several different ways that do not punish drivers. Firstly, it is vitally important to educate people properly before they start to drive, and this could be done in schools or even as part of an extended or more difficult driving test. Secondly, more attention could be paid to safe road design. For example, signs can be used to warn people, speed bumps and road bends can be added to calm traffic, and speed cameras can help to deter people from driving too quickly. Finally, governments or local councils could reduce road accidents by investing in better public transport, which would mean that fewer people would need to travel by car.

In conclusion, while punishments can help to prevent bad driving, I believe that other road safety measures should also be introduced.

(269 words)

Sample essay 38:

Many people prefer to watch foreign films rather than locally produced films. Why could this be?

Should governments give more financial support to local film industries?

It is true that foreign films are more popular in many countries than domestically produced films. There could be several reasons why this is the case, and I believe that governments should promote local film-making by subsidising the industry.

There are various reasons why many people find foreign films more enjoyable than the films produced in their own countries. Firstly, the established film industries in certain countries have huge budgets for action, special effects and to shoot scenes in spectacular locations. Hollywood blockbusters like 'Avatar' or the James Bond films are examples of such productions, and their global appeal is undeniable. Another reason why these big-budget films are so successful is that they often star the most famous actors and actresses, and they are made by the most accomplished producers and directors. The poor quality, low-budget filmmaking in many countries suffers in comparison.

In my view, governments should support local film industries financially. In every country, there may be talented amateur film-makers who just need to be given the opportunity to prove themselves. To compete with big-budget productions from overseas, these people need money to pay for film crews, actors and a host of other costs related to producing high-quality films. If governments did help with these costs, they would see an increase in employment in the film industry, income from film sales, and perhaps even a rise in tourist numbers. New Zealand, for example, has seen an increase in tourism related to the 'Lord of the Rings' films, which were partly funded by government subsidies.

In conclusion, I believe that increased financial support could help to raise the quality of locally made films and allow them to compete with the foreign productions that currently dominate the market.

(294 words)

Sample essay 39:

The older generations tend to have very traditional ideas about how people should live, think and behave. However, some people believe that these ideas are not helpful in preparing younger generations for modern life.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?

It is true that many older people believe in traditional values that often seem incompatible with the needs of younger people. While I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated, I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten.

On the one hand, many of the ideas that elderly people have about life are becoming less relevant for younger people. In the past, for example, people were advised to learn a profession and find a secure job for life, but today's workers expect much more variety and diversity from their careers. At the same time, the 'rules' around relationships are being eroded as young adults make their own choices about who and when to marry. But perhaps the greatest disparity between the generations can be seen in their attitudes towards gender roles. The traditional roles of men and women, as breadwinners and housewives, are no longer accepted as necessary or appropriate by most younger people.

On the other hand, some traditional views and values are certainly applicable to the modern world. For example, older generations attach great importance to working hard, doing one's best, and taking pride in one's work, and these behaviours can surely benefit young people as they enter today's competitive job market. Other characteristics that are perhaps seen as traditional are politeness and good manners. In our globalised world, young adults can expect to come into contact with people from a huge variety of backgrounds, and it is more important than ever to treat others with respect. Finally, I believe that young people would lead happier lives if they had a more 'old-fashioned' sense of community and neighbourliness.

In conclusion, although the views of older people may sometimes seem unhelpful in today's world, we should not dismiss all traditional ideas as irrelevant.

(299 words)

Sample essay 40:

Smoking can cause serious illnesses and should be made illegal.

To what extent do you agree?

There are clear arguments for banning smoking, based largely on health, but there is perhaps a stronger case to be made for maintaining the current situation, as will now be explained.

The most important factor for keeping smoking legal is that the decision to smoke is not something that should be controlled by the government, but by the individual. If a person decides to smoke, they do so of their own free will and this should be respected, as it is the government's role to advise against harmful practices, but ultimately not to make decisions for its citizens.

The other reason for allowing smoking is that by making laws against it is more likely to result in the sale of tobacco moving to the black market, and consequently increasing the level of associated crime. There will still be people who cannot overcome their addiction, and will search for any means available to access cigarettes. A clear example of this reaction can be seen in the illegal sale of other drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.

Of course, there is the fact that smoking is known to have adverse health effects on both the smoker and those around them who are affected by passive smoking. Yet there are other lifestyle choices that also have a negative impact, such as fast food and alcohol, and banning these items would restrict the choice available to the consumer.

In conclusion, the decision to ban smoking, although having some advantages, would be more likely to have an overall negative effect. It would therefore be better for the government to continue campaigns that educate people about the potential dangers of the habit.

(278 words)

Sample essay 41:

We no longer need to have animals kept in zoos, so zoos should be closed. Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

There has long been an argument against maintaining zoos in which animals are kept away from their natural habitat, and there is strong evidence to suggest that technology has developed to a point where such institutions are no longer needed, as will now be argued.

Traditionally, the principal argument voiced by those who wish to retain zoos was that it allowed children and adults to see animals which they more than likely would not have had a chance to do if this had required visiting the creature's natural environment. Yet there are now online videos and websites where these animals can be seen in high definition, therefore no longer needing to go to enclosures to see the animals. This is clearly evident by the declining number of visitors in recent years.

In addition, there are many cases in which animals held in captivity are not well cared for and are used solely to exploit them for profit. In some rare cases, the animals can suffer from neglect or malnutrition, and rather than being kept healthy are simply replaced when they are no longer of any value.

Granted, there are situations in which endangered species are protected and their numbers allowed to rebuild by housing them in the security of a zoo. However, in most cases the same effect is better achieved by using more open plan wildlife parks rather than traditional caged enclosures.

In sum, the factors which first led to the creation of zoos have been reduced by the ability of technology, so unless there is some advantage for the species itself, then the use of zoos should no longer be supported.

(273 words)

Sample essay 42:

In many countries, people do not recycle their rubbish as much as they could.

Why do you think this is? What can be done to change this?

With an increasing world population and subsequent environmental concerns, it is important to dispose of trash in an eco-friendly manner, yet there are a significant number of places around the world that fail to do so.

There are a number of reasons that mean that recycling is not done as effectively as it could, the primary problem being the attitude of the general public. Lethargy or lack of knowledge leads people to throw all of their rubbish into one place, meaning that material that could have been sorted and reused is buried in landfills. In the UK, for example, over 20 million tonnes of waste is buried whilst less than 1 per cent of that amount is actively recycled. There is also the matter of availability, as there are situations in which recycling facilities are either extremely limited or nonexistent.

In order to combat these issues, the first step would be educating the general public about the facts of waste disposal and recycling, perhaps even enforcing participation by levying a fine against those who do not separate their rubbish into different types. Hand in hand with this, making recycling centres more available would also help, or perhaps adopting a system used in some Asian countries where households are given a number of different containers into which to sort their rubbish for collection.

Overall, it seems that a change of attitude is needed as well as more resources to manage different recyclable materials. This can be achieved through a combination of education and penalties, as well as ensuring better access to facilities.

(261 words)

Sample essay 43:

In some countries, people are forced to retire when they reach a certain age.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

Compulsory retirement is common in many countries when members of the workforce reach 65 or 70, and this has both pros and cons as will now be considered.

The main advantage of requiring people to leave their job at a certain age is that it provides opportunities for younger members of staff to join the company, often meaning that the company benefits from having lower wages to pay for the new recruit and also having younger, potentially more dynamic employees. This in turn could well give the company the required boost to continue being profitable.

Another advantage is that some older people may choose to keep working more out of habit than enjoyment, and therefore a mandatory retirement may encourage them to enjoy their life more, having the free time to engage in hobbies and interests such as gardening, which they may not have previously had time for up to that point.

Yet there are significant disadvantages in forced retirement. Older staff members often have more experience, and may have no desire to leave their job. Requiring them to leave could mean a skill shortage for the company as well as a feeling of discontent from the employee. Added to that is the rising number of older people and the subsequent drain on resources if they are not working; if there are more elderly people on pensions or other benefits, the increased tax burden falls on the younger generation.

In conclusion, there are both social and economic benefits in allowing older people to remain in employment if so desired, so compulsory retirement would not be recommended.

(266 words)

Sample essay 44:

In many countries, schoolchildren are required to wear school uniforms.

Do you think this should be enforced in all schools?

In many countries, pupils are required to wear uniforms when attending school, and this is something that should be enforced for the following reasons.

Primarily, students, especially those in their teenagers years, are under pressure both academically and socially; insisting on a standardised uniform within the school alleviates some of this as it means that the student does not have to worry about whether their peers think that they are dressed well or in the latest fashions. This has the added advantage for those from lower income families who may simply not be able to afford the clothes worn by those from more affluent families.

Not only does it remove the social pressure, but wearing a school uniform also has a psychological advantage, as the student is dressed in the mode of attire used for study. Much like wearing a suit and tie may signal going to work for many people, wearing a school uniform prepares the child for the day of learning.

However, this perhaps works best for younger students. By age 16 or 17, it may be appropriate for the student to wear more casual clothing when they reach their later teens, as the idea of 'conforming' by wearing a uniform could discourage the student from pursuing further education and this is often the time in which young adults are looking to establish their own clear identity. It is at this point that it may be more productive to allow more relaxed clothing such as jeans.

In conclusion, although a school uniform does have advantages at certain stages of a student's academic career, there is also a time when the enforcement of a standardised set of clothing may be counterproductive.

(282 words)

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(282 words)

Sample essay 46:

In many cities, there are areas of land that are used as parks. With increasing population levels, these areas would be better used to provide more housing.

Do you agree or disagree?

In many major metropolitan areas, land is set aside for all members of the public to enjoy, and this is something that should remain as will now be discussed.

The main reason in support of retaining parkland is that it provides a communal area for people who may otherwise live in apartments or small houses without access to a garden. It has been well documented that time spent outdoors has clear health benefits, not only for exercise and fresh air, but also for mental health.

Another reason is that increasing populations in urban areas has a number of negative subsidiary effects, such as pressure on sanitation and clean water supplies. Replacing parks with more housing will only further compound this problem. In Mexico City, for example, the population is so dense that in many areas, delivery of fresh water supplies is under extreme pressure. On a related note, there is also an environmental advantage in having park land, as it is a source of oxygen production which may otherwise be lacking in urban areas.

Admittedly, the level of the population relocating to urban areas is increasing for employment reasons as there are often more jobs available, and for this to be possible, additional land will need to be used for housing and this needs to be sourced near the place of work to avoid excess travel. However, it is arguable that it would be better to create larger suburbs than overcrowd the centre of cities.

Overall, it is clear that there are no substantial advantages in removing these green areas, and given their advantages, they should be retained, and even expanded, wherever possible.

(273 words)

Sample essay 47:

We have become a disposable society, preferring to buy new products rather than repair existing items.

Why do you think this is? How can this trend be reversed?

It has become common not to try to extend the life of items but rather to purchase replacements, and this can be attributed to a number of social changes, as will now be presented along with some thoughts on how this attitude can be altered.

Of the many reasons why society in general opts not to repair items, perhaps the most influential is changes in technology. Modernised production methods allow goods to be mass produced at a lower cost, but often at the expense of quality; this means that although they may not have the longevity of handmade items, they are cheaper and thus can be replaced. In addition, evolutions in technology are now rapid, and the impulse to own the latest gadget encourages purchasers to continually buy new items. A clear indication of this is mobile phones, where in the last decade new features and abilities are released constantly.

To address this, there are a number of potential approaches. One is that governments could raise the level of tax on brand new items whilst lowering the taxation on repair shops, therefore supporting those who are happy with their existing technology and penalising those who constantly race to acquire the very latest model. In turn, this would encourage the companies producing such items to build them in a way that new developments can be incorporated into it, rather than requiring it to be disposed of.

To conclude, it is only by a change in attitude that we can decrease the continued consumption of new items and increase the retention of those that may need some repair.

(273 words)

Sample essay 48:

It is very important for people to be able to speak more than one language. Therefore, children should start learning a foreign language as young as possible.

Do you agree or disagree?

Increasing globalisation has made it almost essential for many people to learn more than their native tongue so they can converse with people from other countries, and there are strong arguments to be made in support of acquiring second or even third languages as a young child, as will now be considered.

Perhaps the most persuasive reason is that children have a far better ability to learn when young compared to later on in life. Information is more readily absorbed and put into practice, and younger children are able to retain what they are taught. It has also been proven that when learning a language at a young age, a child is able to better pronounce words or sounds that may be absent in their own language.

In addition, younger children also have fewer external concerns to contend with. To illustrate, a parent with a job, bills and the responsibilities of looking after their children will be less able to focus on learning a new language compared to a child who is simply attending school. The younger the better, as this also means that they are not yet overwhelmed with homework and other preoccupations common to students in their early and mid teens.

Granted, there is an argument that attempting to learn an additional language at an early age may result in the child confusing the primary and secondary language, meaning they may not have as good a grasp on their home language as other children. However, this can be negated by having specific and separate classes for each language, improving skills in both.

In conclusion, assuming the classes are well taught, then the advantages outweigh the negatives.

(278 words)

Sample essay 49:

Driving a car is a valuable skill and should therefore be taught in schools.

Do you agree or disagree?

There are many important life skills such as the ability to operate a vehicle that are developed both through childhood and early adulthood, but teaching these should not necessarily be left to education departments, as will now be argued.

The principal provider of knowledge to a child should be the parent, and although more academic subjects such as science and languages should be left to professionals, abilities like driving and swimming are best taught by parents, at least initially. If the parent feels they are not suited to the task, or the law in that country does not allow parents to teach their children to drive, then a driving instructor should be sought, not a school.

In addition, it could be argued that although operating a car is a useful skill, it is not essential and should be something that each individual decides rather than being a compulsory part of their education. Other subjects which provide a more rounded education should be emphasised, as this will allow the student to be able to find a position of employment more easily once they graduate from school or further studies.

However, an argument could be made that the ability to drive could be required in an emergency situation, and therefore should be taught. Yet situations where this would actually be required would be rare, and less valuable than other skills such as first aid.

To conclude, it would be better for schools to focus on academic topics, leaving the parents or the student to decide when and how to learn other skills like driving.

(261 words)

Sample essay 50:

Compared to previous generations, an increasing number of people are traveling overseas for holidays.

Why is this? Is this a positive or negative trend?

There are a number of factors which explain the rising tendency for people to take trips overseas for pleasure, and this has both advantages and disadvantages as will now be discussed.

Innovations in technology have made overseas travel not only faster, but also more accessible for those on a limited budget, meaning that in some cases a family can holiday in a different country with less inconvenience and a better price than staying in their home country. A flight from the UK to Spain, for example, can be accomplished in less time than it takes to get from one side of England to the other.

One of the clearest advantages here is that it gives people the opportunity to experience different cultures and customs, giving a broader perspective of the world. By visiting other countries, people become more understanding and tolerant of other cultures, and can learn to appreciate the cultural differences that exist. There are also benefits for the holiday itself, as many people tend to holiday in destinations that have better weather.

However, there are disadvantages for the country, as citizens are spending their money overseas rather than in the domestic market. However, this is negated by the fact that although people leave their own country for a holiday, other people visit their country for the same reason. In New Zealand, for example, money spent overseas by people leaving the country is replaced by those who visit the country for their holiday.

To conclude, advances in technology have given the consumer more choice in overseas holidays, and this has both positive and negative ramifications.

(266 words)

Sample essay 51:

In some countries, people who are unemployed receive a sum of money each week in the form of a benefit. While some support this, other people believe that this money should not be given.

Discuss both points of view and give your own point of view.

The payment of a benefit for those who are out of work is a sensitive issue with strong opinions for and against. This essay will now examine both sides of the argument and present a final conclusion.

Those in favour of this financial support argue that in some cases, it is not the fault of the unemployed person, and that the assistance is needed for them to survive while they continue to look for work. Without this, there is the potential concern that crime would increase due to a lack of alternatives. To illustrate, if a parent with dependent children could not find work and had no other help, they would have little option but to resort to theft to prevent their children from going hungry.

On the other hand, there are those that argue that paying someone who does not work simply encourages people to remain unemployed, especially when the alternative could be a relatively low paid job. There are situations where people are simply not interested in finding a position of employment as it offers very little additional money compared to doing nothing at home and receiving free handouts. This situation could escalate as people who are on a low income may resent paying a portion of their tax payments to support those who make little or no effort to find employment.

Considering both points of view, it seems that a compromise may be the best solution. Payment of the unemployment benefit should be limited to a short period of time, after which the amount received should be progressively reduced. This would encourage those receiving the benefit to be more proactive when looking for work.

(277 words)

Sample essay 52:

Teenagers are spending an increasing amount of time on the Internet, and this is having a negative effect on their social skills.

Do you agree or disagree?

It is not uncommon these days for younger people to spend an hour or more a day online, and although this does detract from time spent taking to family members, it is not necessarily affecting their social development as will now be discussed.

The primary reason to disagree with the statement is that a considerable amount of time that youngsters are on the internet is actually spent on social networking sites such as Facebook. As these sites are specifically designed for social purposes, the argument that social skills are declining would appear to be invalid. It is only when the time online is spent playing single player games or generally surfing for entertainment without interacting with others online that this could be considered unsociable.

In addition, an increasing dependence on the internet for a broad range of tasks from completing homework and studies to checking bank balances and searching for employment means that being online is often simply an alternative manner of working or completing necessary chores, and should not be considered related to social skills at all.

Admittedly, if too much time is spent online playing games or looking at websites, then there is the potential for surfers to become less able to interact with people directly. However, this can be negated by ensuring that time online is limited to a reasonable amount, and can even be controlled by using technology that actively records the amount of time online.

To sum up, it is not that the internet is causing us to become less sociable, it is simply that the nature of social interaction is changing.

(267 words)

Sample essay 53:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having older people living in the family home?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

In many traditional cultures, members of the same family will live together from childhood to old age. In many cases, older family members living at home is a trend which has both positive and negative aspects.

A significant point in favour of this is that it provides a good support network for parents, both of whom may work outside of the home. Having grandparents on hand to look after the children can potentially provide a more stable environment as the child will have a familiar face at home until the parents have finished working.

Influence of the grandparents extends beyond simple babysitting, however. They are able to provide a source of advice and knowledge that can greatly benefit all members of the family on a range of subjects, especially for when there are new born babies in the home as this can be a stressful time for new parents.

There are, of course, also disadvantages in having older people at home. There is the issue of space, as the family home may not be big enough to accommodate everyone comfortably. There is also the issue of deciding which members of the family should live together, as both the husband and wife may both have surviving parents.

To conclude, there are clear positives and negatives to having older members of the family living in the same house. Although at times there may be frictions typical when people live together, this is arguably outweighed by the advantages of the support and knowledge older people are able to offer.

(256 words)

Sample essay 54:

Medical procedures for cosmetic purposes should not be allowed.

Do you agree or disagree?

There is a rising tendency for people of all ages to have surgery to improve their appearance, although there are a number of arguments against this as will now be examined.

The main reason that such procedures should be discouraged is that people should be more confident in themselves, and not be swayed by images in the media. People are constantly bombarded with pictures of people looking glamorous, but these photos have often been digitally altered for the best effect. Many young people, however, suffer from low self-esteem and feel that through operations they could look like the celebrities they see.

Another argument against cosmetic procedures is that this diverts resources from more necessary surgeries, which in turn causes longer delays for those in desperate need. Even though such procedures may be done privately, it still requires the attendance of medical staff that would perhaps otherwise be available to the public health system. This can be seen in the waiting lists in the UK, for example, where it can take several months or longer to have a hip replacement operation.

However, there are situations when cosmetic surgery can vastly improve the patient's quality of life, such as those who have suffered significant burns or other disfigurements. There are many examples of people for whom surgical work has allowed them to rebuild their life in ways which would have been exceptionally difficult or impossible otherwise.

To conclude, it would perhaps be better if cosmetic surgery was discouraged unless it offered significant improvements to the patient's quality of life, and should perhaps also be limited to people between a certain age.

(270 words)

Sample essay 55:

Traditional methods of food preparation are becoming less popular.

Why do you think this is?

Meals made in a time honoured fashion are not as common these days for a number of different reasons, as will now be explained.

The primary factor is that more modern variants of traditional dishes are often less time consuming to prepare. It is not uncommon for both parents to work outside of the home, meaning that there is less opportunity for people to spend the hours required in shopping, preparing and cooking, so opting for a quick and easy meal is often preferred.

Another significant cause for this decline is that the skills that in previous generations were handed down from parents to children are no longer considered as valuable, and as such, many younger people simply lack the required knowledge. Already many traditional skills such as bread making are no longer passed on, and this is illustrated in the rising consumption of convenience food among younger people.

A third contributor to the fall in traditional food preparation is also related to the modern global nature of most societies. Historically, traditional meals were common because the required ingredients were all that was available locally. These days, however, most large cities have shops and restaurants with food from all over the globe. A clear example of this influence is in the United Kingdom, where the most popular takeaway food is Indian cuisine.

Ultimately, there are many factors both societal and economic that are leading to the decline in traditional meals, and this is a trend that is likely to continue into the future.

(254 words)

Sample essay 56:

Traffic problems are increasing in most cities.

What can be done about this?

Increasing urban populations have led to a corresponding increase in the number of vehicles on the road, resulting in rising congestion in city centres. There are a number of potential solutions to the problem, as will now be discussed.

Perhaps the first step to take would be to improve the availability of public transport and install bus lanes throughout the city. Whilst this would, in the short term, increase the pressure on the roads, it is likely to result in more people using public transport and leaving their vehicle at home. One way of encouraging people to adopt buses and trains is to lower the price and expand the timetable.

Following that, local councils or the government could make it more difficult for car drivers to use their car by either charging a levy or only allowing certain vehicles in city areas on certain days. A similar system has been running in London for some time, and has resulted in fewer vehicles on the roads.

An alternative idea, one which is more extreme than levies and selective use, is to simply prevent private passenger vehicles from entering the city at all. By having only public transport options, there would be no problem with congestion and would allow for more pedestrian areas in the metropolitan areas.

To sum up, there are a range of options available to reduce the number of cars in the centre of cities, but ultimately they all rely on an increased public transport system and encouraging drivers and their passengers to use it.

(256 words)

Sample essay 57:

Studying business or science related subjects at university level is more important than arts related courses like literature.

Do you agree or disagree?

When considering tertiary level education, there is a school of thought that believes that studying more concrete topics such as commerce, physics or biology is more valuable to society than spending time focussed on novels and other literary subjects. However, this argument is flawed for a number of reasons as will now be presented.

Although certain fields of study lead more directly into a position of employment, university education is valuable not only for the education learned but also as an indication that the person has the ability to learn, and as such it is irrelevant whether it is a career based course of study or something more intangible, like the arts. It suggests to potential employers that person can learn new skills, and this is often as important as what is already known.

Moreover, those that complete an arts related degree could potentially go on to be writers, poets or playwrights, for example, and thus contribute to society in a cultural form rather than financially or technologically. The opinion that the writer is of less worth than the scientist is very biased, especially when it comes to a contribution to society.

Admittedly, there is the point that science and business related education can financially benefit a country, whereas art and literature does not offer the same value economically. However, a country's wealth is not calculated in financial terms alone.

In sum, therefore, both types of education offer advantages to the country, so neither should be preference over the other as both have a degree of value to society.

(259 words)

Sample essay 58:

People who start a university course but do not complete it should be fined.

Do you agree or disagree?

Of the number of undergraduates that begin a course of tertiary study, there is a percentage of those that do not finish the course, but the argument that they should therefore be financially penalised is riddled with potential problems.

It needs to be considered first of all what motivated the student to leave their studies before they have graduated. If the decision was made due to financial constraints, then clearly adding an additional fine is simply adding to the pressure. For example, there are many older people who decide to go back to university but may already have a mortgage and dependent children, and may consequently find that their income is insufficient to cover their needs.

Moreover, rather than attempting to make the student pay, it might be better to consider whether the student was actually given sufficient support during their studies. There are situations where the student may feel that they are not following the course and are unable complete the required assignments, and therefore leave the course. Retention rates may be improved if there were personal tutors on hand to offer advice to those students who are losing confidence in their ability to remain on the course.

On the other hand, there is an argument that the risk of a penalty would dissuade people from starting courses that they were not particularly motivated to complete in the first place.

In conclusion, therefore, although the idea of being charged for non completion of a course would perhaps reduce the number of uncommitted enrolments, it is not an advisable solution for genuine students.

(263 words)

Sample essay 59:

Computers have changed the way people study.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using computers as study aids?

Advancements in technology have made a significant difference to the way in which people are able to learn, and though this is mostly beneficial, there are also some negative aspects that will also be considered.

Beginning with the positive points, the ability to work on assessments and coursework on a computer means that work can be saved safely and transported from place to place. Before the arrival of computers, students traditionally had files and folders with their course notes, and this took up a considerable amount of room and was difficult to keep track of; now, complete lecture notes and much more can be stored on a flash drive that can be easily put in a pocket or bag.

In addition, lectures and learning material can be made available online, allowing for a multimedia educational environment. This is likely to engage a wider range of students as it has the ability to cater for a wider range of learning styles. For example, some students study best by repeatedly listening to a teacher, and this can now be achieved more conveniently by having videos available.

On the downside, there are occasions where information stored digitally can be deleted, overwritten or corrupted, all situations that do not occur on traditional paper based work. There is also the concern that material can be garnered from the Internet and passed off as the students own work, making plagiarism a potential issue. However, the concept of plagiarism has long been a problem, and there are computer programs available today that will pinpoint the source of non original work.

In conclusion, although there are potential disadvantages, they are outweighed by the positives.

(276 words)

Sample essay 60:

Some of the methods used in advertising are unethical and unacceptable in today's society.

To what extent do you agree with this view?

The world that we live in today is dominated by advertising. Adverts are on television, on the World Wide Web, in the street and even on our mobile phones. However, many of the strategies used to sell a product or service can be considered immoral or unacceptable.

To begin with, the fact that we cannot escape from advertising is a significant cause for complaint. Constant images and signs wherever we look can be very intrusive and irritating at times. Take for example advertising on the mobile phone. With the latest technology mobile companies are now able to send advertising messages via SMS to consumer's phones whenever they choose. Although we expect adverts in numerous situations, it now seems that there are very few places we can actually avoid them.

A further aspect of advertising that I would consider unethical is the way that it encourages people to buy products they may not need or cannot afford. Children and young people in particular are influenced by adverts showing the latest toys, clothing or music and this can put enormous pressure on the parents to buy these products. In addition, the advertising of tobacco products and alcohol has long been a controversial issue, but cigarette adverts have only recently been banned in many countries. It is quite possible that alcohol adverts encourage excessive consumption and underage drinking, yet restrictions have not been placed on this type of advertising in the same way as smoking.

It is certainly true to say that advertising is an everyday feature of our lives. Therefore, people are constantly being encouraged to buy products or services that might be too expensive, unnecessary or even unhealthy. In conclusion, many aspects of advertising do appear to be morally wrong and are not acceptable in today's society.

(296 words)

Sample essay 61:

Currently there is a trend towards the use of alternative forms of medicine. However, at best these methods are ineffective, and at worst they may be dangerous.

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Alternative medicine is not new. It is accepted that it pre-dates conventional medicine and it is still used by many people all over the world. I am unconvinced that it is dangerous, and feel that both alternative and conventional medicine can be useful.

There are several reasons why the conventional medical community is often dismissive of alternatives. Firstly, there has been little scientific research into such medicine, so there is a scarcity of evidence to support the claims of their supporters. Furthermore, people often try such treatment because of recommendations from friends, and therefore come to the therapist with a very positive attitude, which may be part of the reason for the cure. Moreover, these therapies are usually only useful for long-term, chronic conditions. Acute medical problems, such as accidental injury, often require more conventional methods.

On the other hand, there remain strong arguments for the use of alternatives. Despite the lack of scientific proof, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence to suggest that these therapies work. In addition, far from being dangerous, they often have few or no side effects, so the worst outcome would be no change. One of the strongest arguments for the effectiveness of alternative therapies in the West is that, whilst conventional medicine is available without charge, many people are prepared to pay considerable sums for alternatives. If they were totally unhelpful, it would be surprising if this continued.

I strongly believe that conventional medicine and alternative therapies can and should coexist. They have different strengths, and can both be used effectively to target particular medical problems. The best situation would be for alternative therapies to be used to support and complement conventional medicine.

(280 words)

Sample essay 62:

Some people believe the aim of university education is to help graduates get better jobs. Others believe there are much wider benefits of university education for both individuals and society.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

These days, more and more people are making the choice to go to university. While some people are of the opinion that the only purpose of a university education is to improve job prospects, others think that society and the individual benefit in much broader ways.

It is certainly true that one of the main aims of university is to secure a better job. The majority of people want to improve their future career prospects and attending university is one of the best ways to do this as it increases a person's marketable skills and attractiveness to potential employers. In addition, further education is very expensive for many people, so most would not consider it if it would not provide them with a more secure future and a higher standard of living. Thus job prospects are very important.

However, there are other benefits for individuals and society. Firstly, the independence of living away from home is a benefit because it helps the students develop better social skills and improve as a person. A case in point is that many students will have to leave their families, live in halls of residence and meet new friends. As a result, their maturity and confidence will grow enabling them to live more fulfilling lives. Secondly, society will gain from the contribution that the graduates can make to the economy. We are living in a very competitive world, so countries need educated people in order to compete and prosper.

Therefore, I believe that although a main aim of university education is to get the best job, there are clearly further benefits. If we continue to promote and encourage university attendance, it will lead to a better future for individuals and society.

(279 words)

Sample essay 63:

Some people think that the best way to reduce crime is to give longer prison sentences. Others, however, believe there are better alternative ways of reducing crime.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Crime is a serious and growing problem in most societies. Although many people believe that the best way to tackle this is to place people in prison for longer periods, others are of the opinion that other measures will be more effective.

There are benefits of giving offenders longer prison sentences. Firstly, spending a long time in prison provides an opportunity for the prison services to rehabilitate a prisoner. For example, someone who has committed a serious offence such as assault will need a long time in prison in order to be sure they can be re-educated not to re-offend. In addition to this, longer prison sentences will act as a deterrent for someone who is thinking of committing a crime.

However, some people argue that leaving people in prison for a long time means that they will mix with other criminals and so their character will not improve. One alternative is community service. This gives an offender the opportunity to give something positive back to society, and so it may improve their character. Also, the government could focus its resources on the causes of crime, which would lead to less crime in the future.

In my opinion, it is important to look at alternative methods. Many countries have lengthy prison sentences, but crime has continued to increase throughout the world, so it is clear that this is not completely effective. That said, long prison sentences should remain for those who commit serious crimes such as assault or murder, as justice for the victim and their family should take priority.

To conclude, there are good arguments for and against long sentences, so governments must continue to research the various methods of crime reduction to ensure effective policies are in place.

(290 words)

Sample essay 64:

Government investment in the arts, such as music and theatre, is a waste of money. Governments must invest this money in public services instead.

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

These days, the government spends a large part of its budget not only on public services, but also the arts. Although I agree that it is important to spend money on public services, I do not think spending on the arts is a waste of money.

There are several reasons for spending a significant amount of the government budget on public services. First and foremost, public services are the things such as hospitals, roads and schools, and these things determine the quality of life that most of us will have. For example, if the government does not spend enough money on hospitals, the health of our society may decline. Similarly, if not enough money is spent on schools, our children may not be properly educated. Also, it will be the poor in our society that will be affected more if we do not spend enough on these things because they are the ones more dependent on such services.

However, this does not mean that the arts should be completely neglected. To begin, it is difficult for many arts institutions to generate much profit, so without some help from the government, many theaters and other such places may have to close. Moreover, the arts also have an important impact on our quality of life. Many people get great pleasure in going to see music and theatre performances so it is important that the government assists such institutions so that they can continue to provide entertainment to the public.

To sum up, there are clear benefits of ensuring a large amount of investment goes into public services as this influences the quality of life for nearly all of us. That said, I do not believe spending money on the arts is a waste of money as this too provides important benefits.

(299 words)

Sample essay 65:

Levels of youth crime are increasing rapidly in most cities around the world.

What are the reasons for this, and suggest some solutions.

Over the last few decades, many cities around the world have seen alarming increases in the levels of youth crime. This essay will discuss the reasons for this and provide some possible solutions.

The first reason is connected with the family. In order for a child to grow up in a balanced way, it is very important that he or she is nurtured well by his or her parents. However, these days, it is often the case that children are neglected. This may be because of the fact that many parents in cities now both have to work so are often not around to give their children support when needed. Another factor is the increasing levels of poverty around the world. We have seen with globalization the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, and this inevitably means that those who are poorer will have to resort to illegal means to get what others have. Of course, this will include the children in the poorer families.

However, there are ways to tackle such problems. Firstly, one of the ways to combat the problem is to have stricter punishments. Although, as discussed above, it can be outside factors that lead to crime, it is still important to have severe punishments to deter teenagers from crime. All too often, because they are young, the courts are too lenient. Parents also have to take more responsibility for their children's actions. They too should be punished if their children commit crime.

To sum up, several factors have led to increases in youth crime, but measures are available to tackle this problem.

(267 words)

Sample essay 66:

In order to solve traffic problems, governments should tax private car owners heavily and use the money to improve public transportation.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a solution?

Traffic congestion in many cities around the world is severe. One possible solution to this problem is to impose heavy taxes on car drivers and use this money to make public transport better. This essay will discuss the benefits and drawbacks of such a measure.

One of the first benefits of such a measure is that the heavy taxes would discourage car owners from using their cars because it would become very expensive to drive. This would mean that they would begin to make use of public transport instead, thus reducing traffic problems and pollution as well. Another benefit would be that much more use would be made of public transport if it was improved. It is often the case that public transport in cities is very poor. For example, we often see old buses and trains that people would rather not use. High taxes would generate enough money to make the necessary changes.

Nevertheless, there are drawbacks to such a solution. First and foremost, this would be a heavy burden on the car drivers. At present, taxes are already high for a lot of people, and so further taxes would only mean less money at the end of the month for most people who may have no choice but to drive every day. In addition, this type of tax would likely be set at a fixed amount. This would mean that it would hit those with less money harder, whilst the rich could likely afford it. It is therefore not a fair tax.

To conclude, this solution is worth considering to improve the current situation, but there are advantages and disadvantages of introducing such a policy.

(277 words)

Sample essay 67:

Overpopulation of urban areas has led to numerous problems.

Identify one or two serious ones and suggest ways that governments and individuals can tackle these problems.

Many countries of the world are currently experiencing problems caused by rapidly growing populations in urban areas, and both governments and individuals have a duty to find ways to overcome these problems.

Overpopulation can lead to overcrowding and poor quality housing in many large cities. Poorly heated or damp housing could cause significant health problems, resulting in illness, such as bronchitis or pneumonia. Another serious consequence of overcrowding is a rising crime rate as poor living conditions may lead young people in particular to take desperate measures and turn to crime or drugs.

In terms of solutions, I believe the government should be largely responsible. Firstly, it is vital that the state provides essential housing and healthcare for all its citizens. Secondly, setting up community projects to help foster more community spirit and help keep young people off the street is a good idea. For example, youth clubs or evening classes for teenagers would keep them occupied. Finally, more effective policing of inner city areas would also be beneficial.

Naturally, individuals should also act responsibly to address these problems, and the motivation to do this would hopefully arise if the measures described above are put into place by the government. This is because it will encourage people to have more pride in their own community and improve the situation.

Therefore, it is clear that the problems caused by overpopulation in urban areas are very serious. Yet if governments and individuals share a collective responsibility, then it may well become possible to offer some solutions.

(254 words)

Sample essay 68:

The percentage of overweight children in western society has increased by almost 20% in the last ten years.

Discuss the causes and effects of this disturbing trend.

Over the last ten years, western societies have seen close to a 20% rise in the number of children who are overweight. This essay will discuss some reasons why this has occurred and examine the consequences of this worrying trend.

The main cause of this problem is poor diet. Over the last decade there has been a prolific increase in the number of fast food restaurants. For example, on nearly every high street there is a MacDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut. The food in these places has been proven to be very unhealthy, and much of the advertising is targeted at children, thus ensuring that they constitute the bulk of the customers of these establishments. However, it is not only due to eating out, but also the type of diet many children have at home. A lot of food consumed is processed food, especially with regards to ready-made meals which are a quick and easy option for parents who are working hard.

The effects of this have been and will continue to be very serious. Firstly, there has been a large increase in health related diseases amongst children, especially diabetes. This debilitating illness means a child has to be injected with insulin for the rest of their life. Not only this, very overweight children often experience bullying from other children, which may affect their mental health. The negative stigma of being overweight may also affect self-esteem.

To sum up, it is evident that there are several causes of obesity amongst children, and a variety of negative effects. Society must ensure steps are taken to prevent this problem from deteriorating further.

(275 words)

Sample essay 69:

As people live longer and longer, the idea of cloning human beings in order to provide spare parts is becoming a reality. The idea horrifies most people, yet it is no longer mere science fiction.

To what extent do you agree with such a procedure?

Have you any reservations?

The cloning of animals has been occurring for a number of years now, and this has now opened up the possibility of cloning humans too. Although there are clear benefits to humankind of cloning to provide spare body parts, I believe it raises a number of worrying ethical issues.

Due to breakthroughs in medical science and improved diets, people are living much longer than in the past. This, though, has brought with it problems. As people age, their organs can fail so they need replacing. If humans were cloned, their organs could then be used to replace those of sick people. It is currently the case that there are often not enough organ donors around to fulfil this need, so cloning humans would overcome the issue as there would then be a ready supply.

However, for good reasons, many people view this as a worrying development. Firstly, there are religious arguments against it. It would involve creating another human and then eventually killing it in order to use its organs, which it could be argued is murder. This is obviously a sin according to religious texts. Also, dilemmas would arise over what rights these people have, as surely they would be humans just like the rest of us. Furthermore, if we have the ability to clone humans, it has to be questioned where this cloning will end. Is it then acceptable for people to start cloning relatives or family members who have died?

To conclude, I do not agree with this procedure due to the ethical issues and dilemmas it would create. Cloning animals has been a positive development, but this is where it should end.

(276 words)

Sample essay 70:

A growing number of people feel that animals should not be exploited by people and that they should have the same rights as humans, while others argue that humans must employ animals to satisfy their various needs, including uses for food and research.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Some people believe that animals should be treated in the same way humans are and have similar rights, whereas others think that it is more important to use them as we desire for food and medical research. This essay will discuss both points of view.

With regard to the exploitation of animals, people believe it is acceptable for several reasons. Firstly, they think that humans are the most important beings on the planet, and everything must be done to ensure human survival. If this means experimenting on animals so that we can fight and find cures for diseases, then this takes priority over animal suffering. Furthermore, it is believed by some that animals do not feel pain or loss as humans do, so if we have to kill animals for food or other uses, then this is morally acceptable.

However, I do not believe these arguments stand up to scrutiny. To begin, it has been shown on numerous occasions by secret filming in laboratories via animal rights groups that animals feel as much pain as humans do, and they suffer when they are kept in cages for long periods. In addition, a substantial amount of animal research is done for cosmetics, not to find cures for diseases, so this is unnecessary. Finally, it has also been proven that humans can get all the nutrients and vitamins that they need from green vegetables and fruit. Therefore, again, having to kill animals for food is not an adequate argument.

To sum up, although some people argue killing animals for research and food is ethical, I would argue there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this is not the case, and, therefore, steps must be taken to improve the rights of animals.

(Words 290)

Sample essay 71:

Many old buildings protected by law are part of a nation's history. Some people think they should be knocked down and replaced by new ones.

How important is it to maintain old buildings?

Should history stand in the way of progress?

Most nations around the world have at least some, or possibly many, old buildings such as temples, churches and houses in their cities, villages and surrounding areas which have historical significance. In my opinion, it is very important to maintain these, but this does not mean progress should stop.

Preserving certain old buildings is important for several reasons. Firstly, these structures provide an insight into the history of our countries, showing us how people many centuries ago lived their lives. Without them, we could only learn by books, and it would undoubtedly be sad if this were the only way to see them. Many of these buildings are also very beautiful. Take for example the many religious buildings such as churches and temples that we see around the world. Not only this, but on a more practical level, many of these buildings provide important income to a country as many tourists visit them in great numbers.

However, this certainly does not mean that modernization should be discouraged. I believe that old buildings can be protected in tandem with progress. For example, in many circumstances we see old historic buildings being renovated whilst maintaining their original character, and being used for modern purposes. Also, in no way does history hinder progress, and in fact it is the opposite. By studying and learning about our history, we understand more about the world we live in, and this helps us to build a better future.

To conclude, I believe that it is very important to protect and preserve old buildings as we can learn about our history as can others from other countries. Such knowledge can also help us to understand how to modernize our countries in the best way.

(Words 287)

Sample essay 72:

Do the dangers derived from the use of chemicals in food production and preservation outweigh the advantages?

Most foods that are purchased these days in small stores and supermarkets have chemicals in them as these are used to improve production and ensure the food lasts for longer. However, there are concerns that these have harmful effects. In my opinion, the potential dangers from this are greater than the benefits we receive.

There are several reasons why chemicals are placed in food. Firstly, it is to improve the product to the eye, and this is achieved via the use of colourings which encourage people to purchase food that may otherwise not look tempting to eat. Another reason is to preserve the food. Much of the food we eat would not actually last that long if it were not for chemicals they contain, so again this is an advantage to the companies that sell food as their products have a longer shelf life.

From this evidence, it is clear to me that the main benefits are, therefore, to the companies and not to the customer. Although companies claim these food additives are safe and they have research to support this, the research is quite possibly biased as it comes from their own companies or people with connections to these companies. It is common to read reports these days in the press about possible links to various health issues such as cancer. Food additives have also been linked to problems such as hyperactivity in children.

To conclude, despite the fact that there are benefits to placing chemicals in food, I believe that these principally help the companies but could be a danger to the public. It is unlikely that this practice can be stopped, so food must be clearly labeled and it is my hope that organic products will become more readily available at reasonable prices to all.

(Words 298)

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First Published in 2015

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