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About the book

The book is designed to be a self-study guide; however, it can also be used as a guide to teaching IELTS if you are an IELTS instructor.

The book is aimed at all levels. The book contains the basic building blocks of creating a good essay so is suitable for those who are beginners to IELTS, but there are also tips and strategies that will help you move to the highest band scores (if you have the right grammar abilities).

Although there are essential grammar points in parts of the book (particularly Unit 10 on ‘Coherence and Cohesion’) the book is not designed as a grammar book. The book aims to develop specific skills that help you write an essay in a short space of time and the steps that are involved in this process.

Students often have particular problems with not answering the question properly and finding they do not have enough time in the test, so the book has a particular focus on explaining how to properly analyse and plan an essay and tips and strategies so that you can write essays faster.

The book contains a number of sample essays as illustrations of how to tackle different types of essays.

How to use the book

It is recommended that you work through the book unit by unit as each unit builds up different skills and they are then built further in the next unit. You can, though, look at specific units if you need particular help in one area.

Contents

Unit 1 gives an overview of task 2 and some general tips.

Unit 2 explains why it is so important to spend time analysing the essay questions and provides you with strategies, tips and exercises to do this.

Brainstorming is something candidates always have difficulty with so **Unit 3** provides useful tips on how to brainstorm ideas. **Unit 4** then shows you how to put these ideas into a plan.

You don't want to waste too much time on introductions and conclusions and you need to practice writing introductions quickly so **Unit 5** explains how you can do this and gives you a chance to practice writing them.

The most important parts of your essay are the body paragraphs but they can take a long time to write. **Unit 6** explains two types of paragraphs and methods for planning and writing them

quickly, which you can learn to help you be successful in IELTS. Again, you will have the opportunity to write your own paragraph using the methods you have learned.

Candidate's examples in IELTS are often too weak and so **Unit 7** gives you top tips and how to develop strong examples. There are guided exercises to help you do this.

Unit 8 presents you with a simple method for recognising different essay types and shows you how this is directly related to the way you will organise your essay. Recognising these different types will save you time in the test. You will have a chance to practice identifying different essay types. Also, model answers are provided for each essay type so you have templates for organising your essays.

Candidates find opinion essays particularly difficult so **Unit 9** is dedicated to providing you with tips on how to understand and plan for the different opinion type essays.

Finally, **Unit 10** focuses on what you need to do to have a coherent and cohesive essay. The different cohesive devices are explained with grammatical explanations of how to use them and practice exercises to improve how you use them.

***SAMPLE PAGES:* UNIT 2: Understanding IELTS Essay Questions**

In this section we'll look at how essay questions are usually constructed. We'll look at:

- The parts of an IELTS essay question
- Analysing the question

The Parts of an Essay Question – Identifying facts and opinions

An IELTS question will have at least one or more of the following:

1. Background Facts

This is factual information about a situation or matter. In other words, it is something that is generally accepted as being true. (Sometimes, there are no facts in the question. Only opinions and a task are given).

2. Opinion

This is someone's view about a situation or issue. As it's an opinion, it is possible to agree or disagree with it. (Sometimes, there are no opinions in the question. Only facts and a task are given).

3. Task

These are words telling you what you should do. There may be more than one task in an essay question, in which case both would need to be answered.

Knowing the difference between these will help you to analyse essay questions as you need to know the difference between a fact and an opinion and what the task is.

Now look at this essay question:

Advances in technology and automation have reduced the need for manual labour. Therefore, working hours should be reduced.

To what extent do you agree?

1. Are there any background facts? *(If so, put brackets around them)*
2. Is there an opinion some people have about a social situation or problem? *(If so, underline it)*
3. Is there a task? How many? *(If so, highlight it)*

(Advances in technology and automation have reduced the need for manual labour). Therefore, working hours should be reduced.

To what extent do you agree? *(1 task)*

As you can see, there are some background facts, an opinion, and then you are told what you need to do.

Exercise 1 – Identifying the Parts of an Essay Question

Look at the following essay questions. Identify what the task is and whether there are any facts or opinions or write ‘none’ if there are no facts or opinions. There will always be a task as this is the part that tells you what you need to do.

1. **In many countries the proportion of older people is increasing. Could this have more positive or negative effects on society?**

Facts	
Opinions	
Task/s	

MORE SAMPLE PAGES FROM UNIT 1

Identifying the task

Once you have identified the topic and details, then make sure you are very clear exactly what the *task* is.

As we saw in unit one, a question will always have a task because this is the part that tells you exactly what you need to do.

These are common tasks to see:

- What are the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of ...(topic)...?
- Do the **benefits** of this trend outweigh the **drawbacks**?
- To what extent do you **agree** or **disagree**?
- **Discuss both opinions** and give **your opinion**?
- What are the **causes** of ...(topic)... and what **measures** can governments and individuals take to respond to this problem?
- What are some of these **problems**? **What can be done** to reduce ...(topic)...?
- **How important** is it for individual countries to think about the future rather than focusing on the present? (in this example, the task is the whole question)

Again, it is common for candidates to completely miss a point they are being asked to discuss. So you need to look at the task very carefully.

You are often being broadly asked to look at two things. For example:

a) Advantages	a) Causes	a) Problems	a) Opinion 1
b) Disadvantages	b) Solutions	b) Solutions	b) Opinion 2

But the golden rule is **always read the question carefully** as it may not fit this pattern.

Once you are clear about the purpose of the essay you will be able to brainstorm and plan properly as the task will relate directly to your plan. We will look at this further in units 3 and 4.

Look at the example question again:

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 or disagree** with this statement?

SAMPLE PAGE: UNIT 3: Brainstorming

Using Focus Questions

As we have discussed already, you can develop *focus questions*, which are a simplification of the essay question.

These will help you to brainstorm as they will make sure you focus on exactly what you need to write to ensure you are answering the question.

Here is an example that you have already seen from the previous unit:

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 or disagree with this statement?

Focus Question:

Should the government invest money for the arts into public services instead?

Here is another example with an essay asking about advantages and disadvantages:

In many countries the proportion of older people is increasing.

Could this have more positive or negative effects on society?

Focus Questions:

What are the positive effects of an increasing older population?

What are the negative effects of an increasing older population?

SAMPLE PAGE: UNIT 5: Introductions & Conclusions

Introductions

Some students spend a lot of time writing an introduction to their essay, and then don't finish the essay because they run out of time.

You need to write a good introduction in order to have a coherent essay, but most of the marks on the IELTS grading sheet do not come from the introduction. Most of them focus on the paragraph e.g. their coherency and whether ideas are extended and supported.

So you need to write your introduction quickly, and here are some tips on doing that.

Have a look at this question:

Fresh water has always been a limited resource in some parts of the world. Today, however, growing worldwide demand has made this a global problem.

What are the causes of the increased demand, and what measures can governments and individuals take to respond to this problem?

You just need to do two things:

- 1. Give some background to the topic and refer to the **topic of the essay** using some facts (taken from the question if they are included). Reverse some of the information, paraphrase, and use some synonyms.*
- 2. Tell the reader what will be in your essay.*

Example:

Introduction:

In some areas around the world, there has always been a lack of fresh water, but this is now a global problem due to the growth in worldwide demand. Several factors have led to this increase, but there are measures that governments and individuals can take to solve this problem.

The *first sentence* introduces the topic and the information is taken from the question (but you must paraphrase – *don't copy from the question!!!*).

SAMPLE PAGE: UNIT 6: Developing strong paragraphs quickly

40 minutes is not much time to write a whole essay even though it is only a short essay. You need to do the following things in your 40 minutes:

1. *Analyze the question*
2. *Brainstorm ideas*
3. *Organise your ideas*
4. *Write the essay*
5. *Check the grammar*

It's common for students to either miss or just spend a few minutes on parts 1-3 as the temptation is to start writing as soon as possible.

This is a **big mistake** and you should not do this. If you do, you are in danger of:

- Not answering the question properly
- Having poor ideas that are badly supported or unsupported
- Producing a badly organized incoherent essay

All of these will likely lead to a low band score. Remember:

Quality not Quantity

A well-written, well-supported, well-organized, coherent essay that is 260 words is going to get a better band score than one that is 300 words but weak in lots of other ways because it has not been planned properly.

So how can you do these things in a short space of time?

There are two ways that you can organize a paragraph (though in reality you may see a mix of the two) and for explanation we'll call these "**one idea paragraphs**" and "**multiple idea paragraphs**" (the second can be referred to as a '**listing paragraph**'). We can call these OIPs and MIPs!

Elements of a strong paragraph

Before we look at these, it is important to remember the key elements of any good paragraph:

- **Unity:** *A paragraph should focus around one main idea*
- **Development:** *This idea should be developed (explained) in the other sentences*
- **Coherence:** *The idea should be explained in a clear and logical way*

SAMPLE PAGE: UNIT 7: Fully-developed Examples

Examples are an important part of the support when you are writing a task 2 essay.

This is what the IELTS writing rubric says:

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

However, a problem candidates often have is that they provide weak, undeveloped ideas and examples. Let's look at the same essay question from the previous section:

There have been major advances in technology over recent decades and this has led to significant improvements in people's lives.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Imagine someone is writing about the disadvantages of improved technology, and they write:

"For example, increased automation¹ means that businesses need less staff".

This is just a **general idea** and it needs to be explained. Examples should be **specific**.

An example is usually longer than the one above, and it often gives names of specific people, places, times etc. Examples are used to help clarify exactly what you mean when you give an idea by using a specific case. It turns a general idea into something more concrete.

Have you thought about how you make something clear to someone if you are explaining something new? If it is difficult to understand, you will give an example. In the same way, you are explaining something to the person reading your essay and you need to make it clear. A specific example will do this.

It will also make your writing more interesting and provide better support for your arguments.

Solution

On the next pages, we'll look at an effective solution to this problem.

¹ to make a process in a factory or office operate by machines or computers, in order to reduce the amount of work done by humans and the time taken to do the work

SAMPLE PAGE: UNIT 10: Coherence and Cohesion

Cohesion

You will also get marked on your essay's cohesion. Cohesive devices are used to signal the relationship between different ideas or parts of your writing. These help someone who is reading to see how everything is connected together.

Writers use the following devices to make their writing more coherent:

1. *Referent pronouns*
2. *Synonyms and other phrases*
3. *Linking words*

First, let's look at each of these, and then we'll examine how they can be used in an essay.

There will be references made to sentence clauses, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and transitions in this unit. This would take another eBook in itself to explain all of these and, although we'll cover some grammar points in this section, the focus of this eBook is not on grammar.

If you are unsure of what these are you can find an explanation at www.ieltsbuddy.com/ielts-grammar.html

1. Referent pronouns

A *referent* is a pronoun that refers back to a noun that was previously used in that sentence or in another sentence. Referents include:

- Personal pronouns: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they, one, them.*

***Global warming** is now top of the agenda for most governments. However, they are unlikely to take the steps necessary to tackle **it**.*

- Demonstrative pronouns: *this, that, these, those.*

*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..*

- Possessive adjectives: *my, your, his, her, their, one's, its, our.*

***Parents** also have to take more responsibility for **their** children's actions.*

Exercise 1