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IELTS BAND 9 GRAMMAR SECRETS

Improve your Academic English
To Get
Band 9 in IELTS

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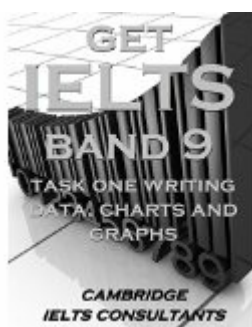
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Packed with advice, examples and Band 9 models for you to follow!

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Introduction from the authors

It is surprising how many people take the IELTS academic exam without studying how to write grammatically in Academic English. This is risky, because the examiners expect you to use the principles of this type of English. By practising the grammar of Academic English, you will have a much higher chance of achieving the band you need, even if your English is not perfect.

In this book, we have 10 Modules which explain the key concepts of Academic English. Each module has an IELTS Task 2 question, identical to the ones you will meet in the exam. Each module has a model essay written to Band 9 standard, and then three key grammar points to explain why the essay demonstrates a good use of Academic English. For example, Module 1 teaches you about: (1.1) structure (1.2) conjunctions and (1.3) impersonal style.

Each Module then has a practice Task for you to try using the methods you learn. Try to do these Tasks as you finish each Module, writing an essay of 250 words in 40 minutes. Because IELTS is still a paper-based exam, you should practice writing these essays by hand on paper, rather than on a computer.

By using all of the key points from these Modules, you will make a huge difference to the IELTS examiner's impression of your English grammar, your writing, and thus your final result.

Remember – you should also use these methods when you are writing your essays and reports at college, University or at work in any English-speaking situation.

If you need a dictionary while reading this book, we recommend the free [Cambridge Dictionaries Online from Cambridge University Press](#).

Don't just trust to luck in your IELTS exam – the key is expert advice!

Jessica Alperne & Peter Swires
Cambridge IELTS Consultants
cambridgeielts@outlook.com

Frequently Asked Questions about Academic English

What is Academic English and why is it important?

This is the type of English used in formal writing for exams and essays everywhere in the English-speaking world.

How is it different from normal, day-to-day English?

The vocabulary tends to be more formal, and the grammatical structures are more advanced. There are also high expectations of how you should present and explain your ideas, and the way that paragraphs and sentences are organised. This book explains these principles and shows you a wide range of examples.

What happens if I don't use Academic English in my IELTS Academic Writing test?

Unfortunately, it will be impossible to achieve over a Band 6 unless you show a reasonable command of Academic English. Remember, your essay does not have to be perfect, but you must show the examiner that you understand the principles of Academic English and you have tried to use them.

Do I have to use Academic English in the IELTS Speaking test too?

This question sometimes causes confusion. In the Speaking test, you should use the most advanced vocabulary you can, and give structured answers ([see our 'Band 9 Speaking' book for full information about this.](#)) However, you do not need to 'speak like an essay' or use formal words such as 'nevertheless' or 'moreover.'

Module 1: (1.1) Structure (1.2) Conjunctions (1.3) Impersonal style

Example writing Task

Some people believe that all children should have a pet or an animal to look after. Other people disagree, however, saying that this depends on a child's circumstances. Consider these opposing views, and give your own opinion.

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Discussion type Task. You should introduce the topic, discuss both sides of the argument, and give your opinion in the conclusion.

Band 9 model essay

It is often said that children benefit from caring for domestic animals, especially in today's technology-focussed world. However, the issue is not entirely straightforward, and arguments can also be made against the idea. This essay will discuss the debate, and give a concluding view.

On the one hand, those who support the ownership of pets cite the various benefits that the activity can bring to a child. These range from understanding nutrition, to learning about biology and daily routines. For example, food selection and exercise activities contribute to this strand of development, which adds greatly to a child's all-round education. Another argument is the emotional support that children receive from pets, meaning that the child feels more secure and thus more confident.

By contrast, opponents of this view point out that not all children live in a situation where pet keeping is advisable, or even possible. Examples can be seen in less affluent countries, where the expense of maintaining a pet may be prohibitive. In addition, many children live in unstable family environments, due to such issues as unemployment or political turbulence. For these families, pets would probably suffer neglect, meaning that it would be unfair to keep them, or possibly even dangerous. Finally, it must be said that not all young people actually want to keep a pet, because their interests lie elsewhere. For these youngsters, animal ownership should not be encouraged.

Overall, it seems advisable that the decision to keep a pet should be based on a child's interest, ability and family circumstances, rather than on a general view that 'all children' should have animals. It would appear that this serves the interests of both the children and the pets involved.

(278 words)

Module 1.1

Structure

This essay follows a classic Academic English structure for Opinion>Discussion Tasks, and the examiners will expect you to use something similar to this.

The introduction paragraph gives some background to the topic, and emphasises that this is an issue with differing arguments which the essay will consider. Because this is an Opinion>Discussion type essay, the candidate does not give an opinion in the first paragraph. Remember that in any Task 2 essay, two or three

sentences are sufficient for the introduction.

The main body is divided clearly into two large paragraphs, each one presenting one side of the debate. Each paragraph has two or three ideas to support the view being presented. There is continuity between the second main body paragraph (which is against the universal keeping of pets) and the conclusion (which is also against this.) Because this is an Opinion>Discussion type essay, the candidate only gives his opinion in the final conclusion.

In the IELTS Academic test, this Task type is the most common, so you should practice following this model structure.

Module 1.2

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are linking words or phrases which connect ideas and sentences. This essay uses some of the most important academic conjunctions to inform the reader that the ideas are changing:

However

On the one hand

Another argument is

By contrast

In addition

Finally

Overall

There are also conjunctions to show that the ideas are being illustrated with examples:

These range from . . . to . . .

For example

Examples can be seen in

When writing this type of essay, try to keep these words and phrases in mind, and use them in the way that this model essay uses them.

Module 1.3

Impersonal style

In Academic English, it is possible to say 'I think/I believe/I feel' etc to give your opinion, if the Task asks for your view. However, you will increase your score if you show that you can use impersonal ways to express a view in the conclusion. 'Impersonal' means that you don't refer to 'I' but you use alternatives. This essay uses:

Overall, it seems advisable that

It would appear that

The examiner will recognise that you are giving an opinion in an academic, impersonal way, and will be impressed by this. In Opinion type essays, try to use one of the following phrases at least once, to express your view:

It seems that

It would seem that

It appears that

It would appear that

It is logical to conclude that

It is sensible to conclude that

Module 1 practice Task

The following practice Task is another Opinion>Discussion type Task, like the example we saw in Module 1. Try to write an essay for it in 250 words in about 40 minutes, using these Module 1 learning points about structure, conjunctions and impersonal style.

Some people feel that boarding schools (where students or pupils live at the school during the term) are an excellent option for children, while other people disagree for a number of reasons. Consider both sides of this debate and reach a conclusion.

Module 2: (2.1) The introduction (2.2) Using conditionals (2.3)

Tentative phrases

Example writing Task

Many people today find that the cost of attaining a University-level education is extremely high for the students and their families. What are the causes of this situation, and how can governments, Universities and the students themselves overcome the problem?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Ideas>Mixed Task, asking for some ideas about the causes of a problem and also possible solutions. It does *not* ask for your opinion (for example, if you think that University is useful or worth the cost.) You should introduce the topic, suggest two or three causes, then two or three solutions, and then summarise.

The Task refers to solutions from “*governments, Universities and the students themselves*” and so you should think of an idea for each of these areas.

Band 9 model essay

While many young people aspire to attending University, the expense involved can be prohibitive in some cases. The causes of this appear to be focussed on three areas, and a number of solutions also appear to be possible.

Perhaps the major factor here is the reduction in government subsidy for University courses. For instance, in the UK, such courses were virtually free to the student until recently, but now cost around £30,000 per year. This pattern appears to be global, with the result that students and their families need to meet the costs directly. Another cause is the increasing cost of living in many countries, meaning that the cost of day to day life (in addition to fees) can be almost overwhelming for students. A third factor is the difficulty in finding part-time work while a student is studying. Such work tends to be poorly paid, while taking up time that students should use for their studies.

Turning to possible solutions, an obvious step would be to restore some element of state funding to courses. Although public budgets are under pressure these days, if we took this step it would greatly enhance access to courses for people on lower incomes. A second remedy might be for the Universities to offer shorter courses, or more courses with an element of professionally paid work experience included. If such courses were more available, it would reduce the issue of living expenses to some extent. Finally, students themselves should perhaps be more flexible in their attitude to education, and consider attending University at a later stage, or possibly only when they have accumulated sufficient funds to support themselves.

In summary, the factors of funding and cost of living appear to be the main causes. A coordinated response by the state, the institutions and the individuals may well lessen the severity of the situation.

(298 words)

Module 2.1The introduction

In any essay, the first sentence of the introduction paragraph should give some general background information about the topic, and if possible say why the topic is important. The second sentence should make it clear to the examiner that you understand the type of essay the Task requires. The simplest way to do this is to outline the content of the main body, so that the reader knows exactly what to expect next.

This essay says:

The causes of this appear to be focussed on three areas, and a number of solutions also appear to be possible.

This emphasises to the reader that the main body will deal with causes and solutions. Another way to do this, using this Task, would be:

The origins of this situation seem to stem from three factors, while several remedies appear to be open to us.

Notice that the candidate is using impersonal phrases here (*seem/appear* and not *I think*) and also that the sentence does not take vocabulary directly from the Task question. It is important to paraphrase as much vocabulary as possible, to avoid duplicating from the Task.

Useful words to talk about causes of a situation are:

Origins

Roots

Factors

Underlying factors/causes

The factors stem from/derive from/flow from

Useful words for solutions include:

Remedies

Ways to solve

Methods to address/deal with

Answers to a problem

At the end of your introduction (a maximum of three sentences) the examiner should perceive that you understand the topic, and you have communicated what to expect in the main body.

Module 2.2

Using conditionals

When presenting possible solutions, it is traditional in Academic English to use the third conditional structure (If + simple past + would + verb.) This essay says:

If we took this step it would greatly enhance . . .

If such courses were more available, it would reduce . . .

This shows that the writer understands that she is discussing a hypothetical situation, and not a case

that exists at the moment. Other examples of this are:

If governments were to ban smoking, this would affect . . .

If healthcare was cheaper, people could afford to . . .

When presenting solutions or recommendations, try to use this third conditional structure.

Module 2.3

Tentative language

‘Tentative’ means that you say that something might be true, or might happen, rather than saying that something is always true or always happens. This is important in Academic English because it shows you understand that situations are complex and there tend to be exceptions rather than 100% certainty in life.

There are many examples of tentative language in this essay (underlined here):

the expense involved can be prohibitive

Perhaps the major factor

the cost of day to day life (in addition to fees) can be almost overwhelming

Such work tends to be

A second remedy might be

students themselves should perhaps be

and consider attending University at a later stage

A coordinated response . . . may well lessen the severity

These expressions will achieve a much higher score than if you say *The expense is prohibitive/The major factor is/Such work is* and so on. This would be too simple to gain a very high score in IELTS.

In your essays, try to use this type of tentative language at least twice, to show the examiner that you understand it. For example, instead of:

The police should have guns, because this protects them

Try to say:

The police should consider having guns, because this tends to protect them.

Practice Task

Crime appears to be rising in most countries in the world, especially among young people. Identify the possible causes of this trend, and propose some solutions you think would be effective.

When writing this essay, try to use the learning from this Module about the introduction, conditionals and tentative language.

Module 3: (3.1) Concession (3.2) Linking the sentences (3.3) Academic vocab

Example writing Task

It is often said that retirement is the happiest time of a person's life. How far do you agree with this view?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Personal Viewpoint Task, asking if you support a given point of view. The structure is different from an Opinion>Discussion Task. You should introduce the topic, *give your opinion in the introduction*, and then explain your view. You should briefly consider the opposing view (this is called 'making a *concession*') and then restate your opinion in the conclusion.

Band 9 model essay

In many countries, the population is ageing consistently, and this presents the older people themselves with challenges as well as opportunities. It seems to me that retirement is not in fact the most contented period of life, and I will explain why in this essay.

Firstly, retired people have to contend with the major issue of health. No matter how optimistic a person is, and how conscientiously they try to keep fit, their health will inevitably decline as they grow older. This affects their mobility, their ability to interact with people, and their physical comfort when compared to the earlier stages of their life. A second negative factor is the whole question of finance. By this we mean that even people who have saved or invested carefully during their working lives will find their income in retirement reduced considerably, for example by relying on savings. This results in their leisure options being more restricted than in their younger years, even though they have more time to fill. This leads us on to the final, and perhaps most significant drawback to retirement, which is isolation. This happens when declining health and limited resources make people increasingly cut-off, even if they have surviving family members who seek to care for them. However much the family (or neighbours and social services) may offer support, this lack of contact will lead progressively to a less contented frame of mind.

It is true that there are some positives to retirement, most notably the time to pursue personal interests and the presence of grandchildren in many cases. Despite this, it seems that for many older people, these pleasures are outweighed by issues which can cause stress and depression.

To conclude, the problems of health, financial concerns and isolation combine together to make retirement a challenging and potentially difficult time for many, especially when compared to the prime period of life. This is not to say that all retired people suffer in this way, but it appears to be the case very frequently.

(343 words)

Module 3.1

Concession

In this Opinion>Viewpoint type Task, you should give your opinion in the introduction. Most of the

main body is then used to explain the reasons for your opinion. Notice that there is one large paragraph in the main body which does this.

After this large paragraph, there is then a smaller paragraph which describes the opposing point of view, and then rejects it. This smaller paragraph is called a concession. It is important to make concessions in Academic English, because without this the essay would be too unbalanced and one-sided.

This essay makes the concession by saying:

It is true that . . . (to describe the opposing view) . . . *Despite this* (to reject the view, giving a reason for rejecting it.)

Other useful phrases for making concessions and then rejecting the viewpoint are:

Admittedly . . . Nevertheless . . .

It might be said that . . . However . . .

I accept that . . . In spite of this . . .

While it may be correct that . . . It still appears to be the case, however, that . . .

In this type of essay, remember to have a small concession paragraph of two or three sentences after the large main body paragraph, using phrases similar to these.

Module 3.2

Linking the sentences

IELTS examiners often say that a common weakness in Task 2 essays is that sentences begin without any connection to the previous sentence. This makes the essay difficult to follow. In Academic English, it is important to link your sentences together. If you read the essay again, you will see some examples of how this is done:

decline as they grow older. This affects their mobility

the whole question of finance. By this we mean that

by relying on savings. This results in

more time to fill. This leads us on to

isolation. This happens when

grandchildren in many cases. Despite this

the prime period of life. This is not to say that

In these examples, the candidate uses the word 'this' (or phrases with 'this') to refer back to the previous sentence, helping the reader follow the progress of the argument. The sentences beginning with 'this' usually give a definition, an explanation or a development of the previous idea.

In your essays, especially in the main body, try to use 'this' phrases in this way. This applies to all types of Opinion and Ideas essays, because in all of them you need to give definitions, explanations or developments

of your ideas.

Module 3.3

Academic vocabulary

In English, there are often two possible words for the same idea: an informal or neutral word (which is mostly Anglo Saxon in origin, such as ‘often’) and a more formal word (which is mostly Latin or French in origin, such as ‘frequently.’) In Academic English, we tend to use the more formal words, because they give the impression of professionalism and authority.

In this essay, the candidate has used a wide variety of formal/academic words. Here are ten of them, with the less formal alternative alongside:

Consistently (all the time = less formal)

Major (big)

Contented (happy)

Conscientiously (with a lot of care)

Decline (get worse)

Negative (bad)

Considerably (a lot)

Significant (big)

Pursue (go after)

Prime (best)

The IELTS examiners expect you to use this formal type of vocabulary rather than the very simple, less formal words such as ‘big’ or ‘small.’ The list of ten words above shows you some of the most frequent formal/academic words. You should definitely try to use most of these words in any Task 2 essay.

Practice Task

*‘Everybody should donate a fixed amount of their income to support charity.’
How far do you share this viewpoint?*

Remember to use the points in this Module about concession, linking your sentences and academic vocabulary.

Module 4: (4.1) Paragraph structure (4.2) Using evidence (4.3)

Reporting views

Example writing Task

Some people support the idea of imposing taxes on fossil fuels (oil, coal and gas) in order to reduce energy consumption. Others disagree with this approach.

Consider the debate and its arguments, and come to your own conclusion.

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Discussion type Task. You should introduce the topic, discuss both sides of the argument, and give your opinion in the conclusion.

Band 9 model essay

Most people agree that the use of fossil fuels should be reduced to some extent. However, imposing taxes is a controversial tactic which appears to have a number of contradictory effects. We will consider both sides of the discussion in this essay.

On the one hand, those who support taxation of fossil fuels promote the idea that higher prices will lead to lower consumption and thus lower emissions. They point to evidence from countries such as Sweden where this appears to be the case, and urge other nations to follow suit. Furthermore, proponents of fuel taxes claim that the funds raised can then be used to subsidise renewable energy projects such as solar and localised biofuel reactors. To the supporters of the idea, these benefits are convincing.

However, opponents of fuel tax are able to cite evidence from other countries (including France and Italy) where higher tax has apparently not reduced demand for such fuels. In these cases, the effect has been to force people to pay more for the same volume of energy, which appears to penalise those who can least afford it. Moreover, critics of fuel tax also highlight the difficulty in governments promising renewable schemes without interfering in the entire energy market. If the state was to control the entire market for fuels, they say, this would force suppliers to leave the market, thus reducing competition and efficiency. This argument also appears to be quite powerful.

Overall, I would tend to side with the opponents of fuel taxation. It seems to be unreasonable to force vulnerable consumers to pay more for a commodity which is essential to them, without a real infrastructure for renewable energy being in place. It would be more logical to improve availability of renewables first, which would allow consumers to make a genuine choice.

(297 words)

Module 4.1Paragraph structure

In any IELTS essay, the main body paragraphs must be carefully organised. The classic pattern is to have two or three ideas in each paragraph. If you have more than three ideas in each paragraph, you will

probably not be able to finish the essay in forty minutes. This applies to all types of essay, both Opinion and Umbrella Ideas types. In this essay, the candidate has used two ideas in each main body paragraph, to present the possible arguments on each side.

Notice how the ideas are presented: the writer uses a conjunction to introduce each idea (eg *On the one hand* or *Moreover*) and then states the idea, followed by a simple example and/or an explanation of the idea. Each idea is generally presented and/or exemplified/ explained in two or three sentences:

On the one hand, those who support taxation of fossil fuels promote the idea that higher prices will lead to lower consumption and thus lower emissions. They point to evidence from countries such as Sweden where this appears to be the case, and urge other nations to follow suit.

When you are writing your main body paragraphs, try to organise them like this. Have two or three ideas, each idea being presented and/or exemplified/explained in two or three sentences. Remember to use conjunctions to introduce the ideas.

Module 4.2

Using evidence

In the Task 2 instructions on the IELTS exam paper, the test tells you to ‘use examples and evidence from your own knowledge and experience’ (the exact words may vary, but the general instruction is always the same.) Remember that ‘your own knowledge and experience’ does not mean events that have happened to you personally or your friends and family. It means facts that you have read about in the media, or that you know from your own education.

In this essay, the candidate has used evidence from Sweden, France and Italy, but she has not given lots of statistics or numbers, which would be too detailed. In any Task 2 essay, try to use evidence in this way: refer to facts that you know about (not personal stories) and do not give too many statistics. In this way, your essay will be convincing and still easy for the examiner to read.

Module 4.3

Reporting views

When you are discussing different sides of an argument, it is a good idea to imagine how the supporters of one side would justify their views:

On the one hand, those who support taxation of fossil fuels promote the idea that . . .

Furthermore, proponents of fuel taxes claim that . . .

However, opponents of fuel tax are able to cite evidence . . .

Moreover, critics of fuel tax also highlight the difficulty . . .

By reporting other people’s opinions in this way, your essay will be more interesting and the examiner will feel that you are able to balance arguments well.

Useful phrases to report views are:

Supporters of/ Proponents of/ Those who support x

Opponents of/ Critics of/ Those who oppose x

Supporters etc cite/refer to/highlight/point to x

Supporters etc claim that/ say that/ insist that x is correct

Supporters etc deny that/ reject that/ do not accept that x is correct

In your essays, try to use this type of 'reporting' method at least once in the main body.

Practice Task

Some countries today have passed laws against smoking tobacco in public buildings such as offices and restaurants. Other countries have no intention of doing this.

Consider the possible arguments on both sides of this debate, and reach your own conclusion on which side you favour.

Remember to use the points we studied in this Module about paragraph structure, using evidence and reporting views.

Module 5: (5.1) Passives (5.2) Complex adjectives (5.3) Cause and effect

Example writing Task

Many countries today are experiencing problems associated with noise pollution (excessive noise above a normal background noise.) What are the causes of this phenomenon, and what effects does it have on the people affected?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Ideas>Cause/Effect essay. You should introduce the topic, then suggest two or three causes, plus two or three effects, and then summarise in the conclusion. Remember that this type of Task is not asking for your *opinion* (eg whether you think noise pollution is important or not) but for some *ideas* about causes and effects. Notice that this particular Task does not ask you to suggest any solutions.

Band 9 model essay

Noise pollution is a less-discussed form of pollution, but one which can have depressing effects on the people concerned. There seem to be two main causes, and a number of effects, which we will discuss here.

Possibly the main cause is the increased volume of traffic moving through and over our countries, especially the urban areas. The ever-rising use of road vehicles and aircraft leads to high noise levels throughout the day and night, which can be exacerbated by poor levels of sound insulation in homes, schools and other buildings. A further well-known cause is the amount of construction taking place, where roads and other facilities are built in rapid timescales. The use of machinery for this purpose results in decibel levels which can be dangerously high.

The effects of this problem on people can be quite serious. Firstly, increased stress levels are experienced because of the difficulty in thinking properly with high background noise. This can be especially damaging for children, whose academic performance can be affected in some cases. A further widely-observed impact is lack of sleep, which can be seen in cities which suffer noise pollution, such as London or Moscow. In these cases, local people start work tired and demotivated, which, in the case of workers who need high levels of concentration, can be dangerous for people around them. Finally, there is the long-term impact of depopulation, as people move away from flight paths and busy roads. Properties in these areas are often left derelict, or are taken over by squatters who then live in undesirable conditions.

Overall, traffic and construction seem to be the main causes, and they affect both individuals and the movement of population in the areas affected.

(290 words)

Module 5.1

Passives

. . . roads and other facilities are built in rapid timescales.

In Academic English, the use of passive structures like this is extremely important. The examiner will

look for passives in your essay, and you will not be able to achieve over Band 7 unless you show that you can use them properly.

As a general rule, try to use a passive structure at least once in each paragraph of your main body, for every type of essay. It is not a mistake to say 'companies build roads' or 'people build roads' provided that you *also* show use of the passive.

Remember that you can use the passive in any tense:

Roads were built in the nineteenth century.

Roads have been built since the 1800's.

Roads are being built these days.

Roads will be built to meet demand.

And so on.

Module 5.2

Complex adjectives

Complex adjectives have an adjective plus another word (frequently an adverb), such as in this essay:

A less-discussed form

The ever-rising use

A well-known cause

A widely-observed impact

A long-term impact

These phrases are usually written with a hyphen (-) although you may read some books or articles where the writer does not use a hyphen. Using complex adjectives like this shows the examiner that your Academic English is advanced and you have a wide range of vocabulary. Other useful complex adjective phrases are:

There should be a wide-ranging discussion about . . . (= a discussion covering many topics)

The ever-present danger of . . .

X is a much-discussed problem.

X is a constantly-evolving field of research.

There is a widely-held concern that . . . (= many people share this concern)

Many long-established traditions have been lost.

You do not need to use these complex adjectives all the time, of course, but try to use at least one in your Task 2 essay.

Module 5.3

Cause and effect

You will need to discuss causes and effects in an Ideas>Cause/Effect type essay, but the language involved is useful for all the other essay types as well. This essay shows you some of the most common phrases. Some of the other useful ways to describe causes and effects in Academic English are:

X causes Y

X leads to Y

X results in Y

X brings about Y

X contributes to Y (= it is not the only cause)

X affects Y

X has an effect on Y (remember that *an effect/to affect* are spelled differently)

X impacts (on) Y / *X has an impact on Y*

X exacerbates Y (= makes a problem worse)

X undermines/weakens Y (= makes it weaker)

X damages Y

X lessens Y (= makes it smaller or less frequent)

X improves Y

X ameliorates Y (= makes a problem better for the victim)

These are all formal, academic phrases which the IELTS examiners will be pleased to see in your Task 2 essay.

Practice Task

Illiteracy continues to be a concern for many countries in the world today. What are the causes of illiteracy in the modern world, and what effects does it have on the people concerned and on society as a whole?

Remember to practise the language we have studied in this Module, and use passives, complex adjectives and phrases for cause and effect.

Module 6: (6.1) Avoiding emotion (6.2) Evaluating evidence (6.3) Noun persons

Example writing Task

'Healthcare should always be funded by governments, and it should always be free for people to use.' To what extent do you agree or disagree with this idea?

Explanation of the Task

This is another Opinion>Personal Viewpoint Task.

You should introduce the topic and give your opinion in the introduction. The main body should explain your view, giving two or three reasons. You should briefly consider the opposing view ('making a concession') and then restate your opinion in the conclusion.

Band 9 model essay

Few topics are more important than a nation's healthcare, and the issue of payment will probably always be controversial. It seems to me that the sheer cost of universal, free healthcare makes this an impractical aspiration, no matter how much we might admire the idea.

The main obstacle would appear to be the number of recipients of healthcare compared to the taxpayers who need to fund it. Especially in countries with ageing populations such as Europe, the tax burden on workers becomes intolerably high, and can eventually stifle economic growth. These painful lessons, shown by states such as France, seem to demonstrate that completely free healthcare is economically unsustainable. A further issue relates to the cost of modern medicines, which can be extremely high if the latest drugs are used by health providers. This means that the cost of providing treatment rises almost without limits, making the permanent supply of free treatments unaffordable. One final point against this proposal is the added issue of globalisation, by which people move increasingly freely between countries. If this means the taxpayers of one nation are now obliged to fund the healthcare of users from many other nations, this is surely a further significant factor which clearly makes a universal health service impractical.

Admittedly, I agree with those who argue that free health service is a worthy ambition for a country to have, and that we should all contribute something to the welfare of our fellow citizens. However, this aspiration suffers significantly when confronted with financial reality.

To summarise, it seems reasonable for the state to fund as much as possible of the nation's healthcare. However, due to demographics and costs, this needs to be supplemented by other methods, such as private insurance.

(288 words)

Module 6.1

Avoiding emotion

It is an important feature of Academic English that the writer does not use emotion or humour. Even if the topic is one that you feel strongly about, there are ways to show how you feel without using emotion.

For example, it would be wrong to write something such as:

Free healthcare is a wonderful/brilliant idea

Free healthcare is a terrible/ludicrous idea

Words such as this are too emotional and should never be used in IELTS academic writing, even though we may use them in conversation.

In this essay, the writer shows his strong feeling for or against an idea by using unemotional phrases such as:

the sheer cost (= the cost is very high and is a factor by itself)

an impractical aspiration (= would not work in reality)

the tax burden on workers becomes intolerably high (= people would not accept it)

These painful lessons (= causing serious problems)

unaffordable (= cannot be afforded)

this is surely a further significant factor (= most people would agree with me)

If you use vocabulary such as this, the IELTS examiner will recognise that you have a strong opinion and you are expressing it in a professional, academic way. Other useful academic phrases to express a strong opinion include:

This idea would surely be unacceptable to most people (= most people would disagree strongly)

It cannot be denied that/ It is undeniable that . . . this idea is positive/helpful/imaginative etc
(= I think this and most people would agree.)

It is an inescapable fact that . . . (nobody can say this is not true.)

The benefits of this approach appear to be overwhelmingly positive. (= so positive that most people would support it.)

This concept seems to be somewhat inadequate. (= not really good enough for its purpose.)

It is almost universally accepted that . . .

There is an almost universal consensus that . . .

In Opinion type essays, try to use vocabulary such as this at least once when you give your opinion. The examiner will give you marks for avoiding emotion and using advanced academic language.

Module 6.2

Evaluating evidence

In Module 5, we saw the method of presenting an idea and then giving an example or explanation as evidence. In this essay, look again at the way the writer evaluates the evidence. ‘To evaluate’ means to give a judgement on something compared to other things. Some examples from this essay are:

These painful lessons, shown by states such as France, seem to demonstrate that completely free healthcare is economically unsustainable.

The candidate uses ‘seem to demonstrate’ to emphasise that the evidence supports his view.

This means that the cost of providing treatment rises almost without limits, making the permanent supply of free treatments unaffordable.

The candidate uses ‘This means that . . . making . . . + adjective’ to explain how the evidence is another example of his argument.

. . . this is surely a further significant factor which clearly makes a universal health service impractical.

The candidate uses ‘clearly makes’ to evaluate (= give a judgement on) the evidence he presents.

However, this aspiration suffers significantly when confronted with financial reality.

In this concession paragraph, the candidate uses ‘However’ to introduce a rejection of the opposing idea.

Try to use *demonstrates/means that . . . making/clearly makes* and suitable conjunctions to comment on the evidence you present and explain how and why the evidence supports your argument.

Module 6.3

Noun persons

‘Noun persons’ are nouns used to identify people by their role in a situation. For example in this essay, we have:

taxpayers

workers

health providers

those who argue that

This is a frequent method in Academic English, because it avoids the use of ‘people’ (*people who pay tax/work/provide health/ people who argue that* etc)

Other very frequent noun persons useful for IELTS essays are:

Those who support x/Those who oppose x

Those who accept x/Those who reject x

The authorities (= the government, police and courts)

Contributors to x

Recipients of x

Observers (= journalists and analysts who comment on situations)

Researchers

It is not a mistake to say ‘people who + verb.’ However, as always in IELTS academic writing, to achieve a high score you must show that you can use at least some of the noun persons explained here.

Practice Task

‘All children should learn to speak a foreign language as soon as they start school.’ How far do you agree with this proposal? How important is it for a child to learn a foreign language?

Remember to practise using the language for avoiding emotion, evaluating evidence and the noun persons that we have seen in this Module.

Module 7: (7.1) Rejecting arguments (7.2) Topic-specific vocabulary (7.3) Conclusions

Example writing Task

Should companies (businesses) ensure that they employ a quota (or fixed percentage) of women in all jobs, or is this an impractical concept?

Discuss both sides of this debate, and reach a conclusion based on your own opinion.

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Discussion type Task. It asks you to focus in particular on the key word ‘impractical’ and to consider whether or not the ‘quota/fixed percentage’ idea is impractical (*impractical* = it would not work in reality.)

You should keep this in mind when discussing both sides in the main body.

Band 9 model essay

Workplace quotas have been suggested for some time now, in an attempt to encourage gender equality in the workforce. The idea provokes strong arguments, which I will consider here.

On the one hand, it can be said that quotas would allow women to enter traditionally male professions, ranging from surgeon to airline pilot. This, it is argued, would expand the pool of people available to do these jobs, and reduce inequality between the sexes. Furthermore, supporters of quotas claim that the procedure would encourage women into the workforce generally, thus increasing family incomes and improving the standard of living of many people and families.

The other side of this debate is that gender quotas may simply be unenforceable in practical terms. This is because the number of women who wish to be (for instance) airline pilots or surgeons appears to be substantially lower than the number of men. This being the case, it would appear to be impossible to enforce a quota in many areas. A second point is that a quota should logically work for both genders, and thus men would have to be employed in traditionally female roles such as primary teaching or nursing. Again, we would find ourselves asking men to take on jobs which they are not inclined to do. A final point is that the reduction of inequality should start at an early age, with equality of qualifications, career and life choices, rather than being enforced retrospectively by employers or the state.

To conclude, it appears that the aim of these quotas is admirable, but they are unworkable in realistic terms due to the differing wishes of the existing workforce. A longer-term and more thoughtful programme is surely needed.

(284 words)

Module 7.1

Rejecting arguments

In the first main body paragraph, the candidate presents some ideas in favour of the ‘quota’ idea. In the second main body paragraph, the candidate addresses the point about the ‘impractical’ instruction in the

Task. He presents three ideas against the ‘quota’ and then gives examples and explains why each idea that the idea is not really practical. He uses the third conditional to *imagine the consequences* of implementing the idea:

. . . men would have to be employed . . .
. . . we would find ourselves asking men to take on jobs . . .

He also uses the tentative language which we studied in Module 2 in order to show that he understands the situation is complex, and he is basing his arguments on careful evidence:

quotas may simply be unenforceable
appears to be substantially lower than
it would appear to be impossible to enforce
it appears that the aim of these quotas is admirable

Notice also that he uses ‘surely’ to show that he has a strong opinion without using emotion:

. . . programme is surely needed.

In a ‘Discussion’ type essay such as this, you may find it useful to use the second main body paragraph to reject the argument in the first main body paragraph, using the type of language explained here.

Remember that your view in the second main body paragraph should connect with your view in the conclusion. For example, if this candidate felt that quotas are in fact *practical*, he would have this argument in the *second* main body paragraph, connecting with his conclusion which would be in favour of quotas.

Module 7.2

Topic-specific vocabulary

All IELTS Task 2 Academic Tasks relate to a small number of topics which appear throughout the IELTS exam. These topics are:

Work

Education

Children and families

The environment and energy

Culture, art and traditions

Health and sport

Global and social problems

Cities and the countryside, including infrastructure and agriculture

Government and the authorities

Task 2 will never ask you to comment on specifically detailed scientific or technical issues (except issues which are of general interest, such as space exploration or GM crops.)

It is useful for you to have in mind just a few words and phrases relevant to each of these topics, so that you can show the examiner you have a strong range of topic vocabulary.

In this essay (which is on the **W o r k** topic) the candidate uses:

Workplace

Workforce

Professions

Roles

Equality/inequality

Using this small number of topic-specific words in Task 2 will improve the credibility of your essay considerably. Here are some other key topic-specific words which are very useful for Task 2:

E d u c a t i o n: formal education, higher education, syllabus, curriculum, testing

C h i l d r e n a n d f a m i l i e s: nuclear family, extended family, role model, upbringing, child development

T h e e n v i r o n m e n t a n d e n e r g y: emissions, fossil fuels, greenhouse gases, renewable energy, subsidies

C u l t u r e , a r t a n d t r a d i t i o n s: folklore, handicrafts, fine art, mythology, rituals

H e a l t h a n d s p o r t: obesity, sedentary lifestyle, fitness, spectator sports, competitiveness

G l o b a l a n d s o c i a l p r o b l e m s: unemployment, endangered species, erosion, deforestation, natural habitat

C i t i e s a n d t h e c o u n t r y s i d e , i n c l u d i n g i n f r a s t r u c t u r e a n d a g r i c u l t u r e: urban sprawl, depopulation, rural migration, transport hubs, facilities

G o v e r n m e n t a n d t h e a u t h o r i t i e s: the courts, sentencing, policy, initiative, programme

Of course, there are many more words and phrases relevant to these IELTS topics. As you are reading IELTS practice papers or the general media, make a note of vocabulary relevant to these topics and try to remember them. If you can use just a small number in your essay, the examiner will raise your score.

Module 7.3

Conclusions

In any Task 2 academic essay, the conclusion paragraph should be a maximum of three sentences (two sentences are usually enough.)

You should try to summarise the main ideas from the main body, but you should paraphrase (= use words which mean the same) so that you do not repeat vocabulary. In this essay, the candidate has paraphrased from the main body (main body words in brackets):

To conclude, it appears that the aim (an attempt) of these quotas is admirable, but they are unworkable in realistic terms (unenforceable in practical terms) due to the differing wishes of the existing workforce. (jobs which they are not inclined to do.) A longer-term (start at an early age) and more thoughtful programme is surely needed.

When writing your conclusion, remember that you should not include any new ideas or evidence, but only summarise and paraphrase the main body ideas.

Practice Task

In many countries, old or traditional languages are dying out or being forgotten, especially by younger people. Is this an acceptable development which occurs inevitably, or is it something which we should try to prevent?

Practice using the ideas from this Module about rejecting arguments, topic-specific vocabulary and conclusions.

Module 8: (8.1) Problems (8.2) Solutions (8.3) Time & probability qualifiers

Example writing Task

Many people today find they have insufficient time to spend with their families, because of pressures of work. What problems does this create for individuals and their families? What solutions can you propose? Which would be the most effective solution, in your view?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Ideas>Problem/Solution type essay. You should introduce the topic, then give two or three problems, two or three solutions, and then summarise in the conclusion. Notice that the Task asks you to think about *individuals and their families*, and also to identify *the most effective solution*.

Band 9 model essay

Excessive time spent at work can ultimately take a serious toll on workers and their families in various ways. We will discuss the most serious problems arising, and also two ways in which the situation can be improved.

Arguably the gravest problem caused by overwork is the stress that the workers themselves suffer from. When a person is working long hours, and thinking about work even outside that time, the ability to relax is severely curtailed. This can rapidly lead to physical exhaustion and mental anxiety, which eventually undermine the victim's overall wellbeing. A further serious impact is the disruption to family relationships, especially with a spouse and children. Family members may soon become accustomed to the absence of a father or mother, damaging the natural bonds which bind a family together and potentially eroding the security of the family unit itself. The long term consequent problems of family breakdown may include depression, poor self-esteem and academic underperformance.

To counteract these dangers, perhaps the most effective and most immediate solution would be for employers to incorporate a fixed amount of free time into their workers' schedules. For example, companies might commit to a 'no work, phone calls or emails after five pm' policy, as is being suggested in Germany at present. This would lessen the anxiety of high workloads and preserve family time. Another remedy may be to promote the use of relaxation techniques among workers, so that they make the most of the free time that they have. Activities ranging from sport to yoga or family events can be used to maximise any opportunities for de-stressing that already exist.

In conclusion, the main problems seem to be stress and potential family breakdown. The key solution would be the formal protection of leisure time, together with better use of it by workers themselves.

(302 words)

Module 8.1

Problems vocab

You may need to explain the problems in a situation in any Task 2 essay. This essay shows some of the classic Academic English ways to describe problems:

... *the gravest problem* ... (= most serious)

... *the ability to relax is severely curtailed* (= restricted, limited)

This can rapidly lead to ...

... *undermine the victim's overall wellbeing.* (= make weaker)

A further serious impact is ...

... *disruption to ...* (= breaking up an ordered system)

... *damaging the natural bonds ...*

... *potentially eroding the security ...* (= gradually removing)

The long term consequent problems ... may include ...

Other useful phrases to discuss problems are:

X destroys Y

X eliminates Y

X makes Y deteriorate (= become worse)

X dilutes Y (= makes it weaker, less focussed)

Other words which can be used to paraphrase problem include:

Crisis

Issue

Question

Concern

Anxiety

Challenge

Almost any Task 2 essay will need to use some of these phrases, especially for Tasks which ask about situations which could be negative for people or society.

Module 8.2

Solutions vocab

The second main body paragraph in this essay shows some useful ways to present and explain solutions:

To *counteract these dangers* (= fight against)

This would *lessen the anxiety of* (= reduce)

Another *remedy may be to* (= solution or step)

To *maximise opportunities* (= to make the most of)

Other useful words which can be used to paraphrase *solutions* are:

Measures

Steps

Initiatives (= a new idea, usually from the authorities)

Policies

Programmes

Useful phrases to talk about how solutions work include:

To *penalise people for doing X* (= to make them pay a penalty for it)

To *ban or outlaw X* (= to make it illegal)

To *curb/restrict X*

To *prevent people from doing X*

To *promote or encourage X*

To *raise awareness of X*

To *force/oblige people to do X*

Try to use these academic words, rather than say *We should stop people doing X* or *We should get people to do X*, which is too simple to achieve a high score.

Module 8.3

Time and probability qualifiers

This essay uses some effective language to talk about the probability of something or the timescales in which things happen:

ultimately (= eventually, finally)

rapidly

soon

potentially

long term

immediate

It is easy to include some of the qualifiers in your ideas, to show that you have thought about the probability and/or timescales of the events.

Other typical examples of these words are:

X may possibly happen

X will inevitably happen (= it cannot be prevented)

X will undoubtedly happen

X will gradually/steadily happen

X will happen step by step

X will suddenly happen

X will spontaneously happen (= without outside help)

In your essays, try to include some of these qualifiers; this is a straightforward way to improve the examiner's perception of your writing.

Practice Task

The use of violence in music lyrics, video games and films seen by children is causing concern in many societies. What problems may be caused by this type of violent imagery, and what steps could be taken to lessen the impact on young people?

Remember to include the language in this Module for problems, solutions and time/probability qualifiers.

Module 9: (9.1) Presenting disadvantages (9.2) Presenting alternatives (9.3) Collocations

Example writing Task

'The key to reducing crime is to have more police patrolling the streets.' How far do you support this proposal? What other ways of reducing crime may be effective?

Explanation of the Task

This is another Opinion>Personal viewpoint Task. It asks you to agree or disagree with the proposal, and also to suggest some alternative methods. The IELTS writing test sometimes adds an extra element to the Opinion Tasks in this way.

You should introduce the topic, state your view, explain your view and then suggest some alternatives, finishing with a summary conclusion that restates your view.

Because of the extra element in the Task, the examiner will not object if you do not have a concession paragraph in this particular essay.

Band 9 model essay

We are all concerned about high crime levels and possible ways to reduce crime, especially in cities. The idea of having high numbers of visible police officers may be initially appealing, but some analysis will show that it is not the key method and that other options are preferable.

Firstly, we should ask what the purpose of extra police in public would be. It is probably true that this tactic would reduce minor crime such as littering and unsocial behaviour, but determined criminals such as thieves and muggers will inevitably find ways to operate despite the police presence. The example of New York shows that police patrols initially reduce crime to some extent, but crime then levels off and persists at the lower rate, no matter how many more police are added. Secondly, it must be said that many crimes which worry the public today, such as identity theft or financial hacking and fraud, are not carried out on streets and thus would be invisible to police patrols anyway. This means there is a danger that we would be responding to a current threat with an outdated tactic.

Turning to possible alternatives, probably the most effective would be to improve the efficiency of existing police rather than increase their numbers, for instance by better training in computer-based crime. This would generate improved rates of detection for crimes and more efficient use of the vast amount of technology available. Another viable option would be to increase penalties for criminals, which would have the benefit of deterring them from committing crime at all. Both these alternatives would be comparatively cheap, and would address the root of the problem rather than seeking to suppress the symptoms.

Overall, we have seen that increased patrols are of limited effectiveness because they are superficial in nature. Better training and stronger sentencing would appear to be far more robust alternatives these days.

(314 words)

Module 9.1

Presenting disadvantages

In this essay, the candidate points out the disadvantages of some ideas:

It is probably true that . . . but . . .

Secondly, it must be said that . . . and thus would be . . .

This means there is a danger that we would . . .

Other ways to present the disadvantages of an idea are:

It may be true that X is cheaper; nevertheless, in the long term it would be a more expensive option.

While X may have some advantages, these appear to be outweighed by the costs . . .

It might initially appear desirable to do X, but on closer inspection the idea suffers from several problems.

There seem to be a number of drawbacks associated with X, the most significant of which is . . .

Notice that when writers discuss disadvantages, they often begin by conceding that there are some small advantages (*It may be true that . . .* for example.) This helps the essay appear very balanced and objective, especially in this example where there is no concession paragraph. Try to do this at least once when you are explaining the disadvantages of an idea or proposal.

Module 9.2

Presenting alternatives

Task 2 frequently asks you to suggest some alternative ways of achieving something. It is best to present these alternatives in a smaller, self-contained paragraph after the main body. If you try to put your alternatives in the main body ideas, the essay will probably become confusing for the reader.

This essay shows you the importance of using a conjunction phrase to introduce the paragraph presenting the alternatives:

Turning to possible alternatives, probably the most effective would be . . .

This helps the examiner to expect what is coming next. Other ways to introduce a paragraph giving alternatives are:

Regarding other possible options, . . .

If we now consider other ways to do this, . . .

On the subject of alternatives, . . .

Of course, there are also alternatives, including . . .

You should then give examples and explain the alternatives, as you would do with ideas in the main body. Some useful ways to introduce two or three possible alternatives are:

Another possible option would be to do X, which would achieve . . .

A further possibility seems to be X, which might achieve . . .

Alternatively, we could also do X, which would have the effect of achieving . . .

In the exam, make sure you read the Task instruction carefully to check whether it is asking you to suggest alternative ways of doing something. This might be included at the end of the instructions for both Ideas and Opinions type essays.

Module 9.3

Collocations

A 'collocation' is a set of words which traditionally are used together. Examples from general English are 'extremely happy' and 'deeply disappointed.' In IELTS writing, you will increase your score if you can use some of the Academic English collocations which are used in formal writing. This essay has some good examples:

minor crime

to some extent

current threat

possible alternatives

improved rates

viable option

suppress the symptoms

limited effectiveness

robust alternatives

By using these collocations, the writer shows that she can write in the formal, academic style used in business, colleges and universities. Some of the other very frequent academic collocations which you should use in your IELTS essays are:

There is widespread concern about . . .

It is virtually certain that . . .

It is barely conceivable that . . . (= it is very hard to imagine this happening)

There is universal consensus that . . . (= everybody agrees on this)

It is of paramount importance that . . . (= maximum importance)

It seems highly likely/unlikely that . . .

It is generally accepted that . . .

Try to use these collocation phrases wherever possible in your essays, and the examiner will recognise that you are using advanced Academic English.

Practice Task

'The best way to educate children is by using the Internet in every lesson.'

To what extent do you share this opinion? What other ways are there of making lessons effective for children?

Try to practice the lessons from this Module regarding presenting disadvantages, alternatives and using collocations.

Module 10: (10.1) Complex sentences (10.2) Academic phrases (10.3) Balanced conclusions

Example writing Task

It might be said that protecting the environment is the most important challenge facing governments today. How important do you feel this issue is? Are there other challenges which are of equal or greater importance?

Explanation of the Task

This is an Opinion>Evaluate type essay. You should introduce the topic, say how important the topic issue is, and then explain why you think that other issues are more (or less) important. The conclusion should be a brief summary of the main points.

Band 9 model essay

Environmental issues are a concern for almost everyone today, as we see the natural world suffering increasing damage from pollution, construction and other human activity. However, to say that governments should regard this one issue as their main priority may be a rather simplistic view.

Admittedly, it is correct that environmental protection should be among our greatest concerns. Without coordinated measures from national and global organisations, the environment will continue to deteriorate, leading to a more unstable world for us all. However, by focussing on this topic to the exclusion of others we run the risk of neglecting a range of other, equally grave challenges.

Foremost among these other challenges appears to be the question of overpopulation, by which I mean the growth of human numbers beyond the ability of the human race to support itself. If this problem is not addressed, we potentially face the collapse of modern human society, and consequently the ability of the human race to combat the environmental damage which has already taken place. Another challenge which is at least equal to the environment is the need to reduce poverty and disease in less developed countries, which again would enable those populations to play a larger part in attempts to preserve nature. Finally, there is the question of unemployment and the need to find ways to reduce this problem. By increasing the number of people in work throughout the world, governments would create the revenues and economic stability required to make environmental protection more viable.

Overall, the environment is certainly a major priority. However, it should be seen as one among a range of issues to be solved, and the solutions themselves could lead to better preservation of nature.

(284 words)

Module 10.1

Complex sentences

A complex sentence simply means a sentence with two or more ideas contained in it. One of the most common weaknesses which IELTS examiners say they find in essays is that *all* the sentences are too short or too basic. In this essay, the candidate has shown several times that, although some of his sentences are quite

short, he can also use complex sentences such as these:

Without coordinated measures from national and global organisations, the environment will continue to deteriorate, leading to a more unstable world for us all.

Foremost among these other challenges appears to be the question of overpopulation, by which I mean the growth of human numbers beyond the ability of the human race to support itself.

Using *leading to* and *by which I mean* are good ways to show the examiner that you can write complex sentences.

Other useful ways to build these sentences are:

While X may be positive in some respects, we should also consider its negative aspects, namely A, B and C.

We face a number of challenges in this field, ranging from A to B and even, in the long term, C.

We should not only do X, but also consider doing Y as well.

Although it may be useful to do X, this would result in Y, causing . . .

In any IELTS essay, try to make sure that the *majority* of your sentences are complex ones. Remember that using *leading to/causing/resulting in* is often the easiest way to do this.

Module 10.2

Academic phrases

Just as academic collocations (sets of words which traditionally go together) show that your writing is advanced, there are also some academic phrases which are widely used. This essay uses:

It is correct that . . .

. . . by focussing on this topic to the exclusion of others . . .

. . . we run the risk of . . .

Foremost among these other challenges . . . (= the most important)

. . . one among a range of issues . . .

Other useful academic phrases for you to use include:

By no means (= certainly not)

Eg Pollution is by no means the only challenge that we face (= pollution is certainly not the only one)

Above all (= the most important or most urgent thing)

Eg *Above all, we must try to reduce crime, because . . .*

Regardless of (= it does not matter)

Eg *Governments should create a high quality transport infrastructure, regardless of the cost* (= the infrastructure is so important that the cost does not matter)

By this we mean that . . .

This is not to say that . . . (= this does not necessarily mean that . . .)

Eg *Crime is a major concern, but this is not to say that it should be the only focus for the authorities.*

Try to remember these phrases, and use them at least twice in your Task 2 essay. If you use them correctly, the examiner will give you credit for using Academic English.

Module 10.3

Balanced conclusions

A balanced conclusion means that your summary or conclusion recognises that a situation is complex, and that a number of factors are involved:

Overall, the environment is certainly a major priority. However, it should be seen as one among a range of issues to be solved, and the solutions themselves could lead to better preservation of nature.

This is more in the tradition of Academic English than saying 'The environment is certainly the major priority' or similar.

Another useful way to write a balanced conclusion is to use *Provided that* or *As long as* to set a condition on your conclusion. For example:

Overall, it seems that video games can be a useful part of a child's education, provided that the content is monitored by parents and teachers.

To sum up, it appears that tourism is a benefit to less developed countries, as long as some of the profits are reinvested in the local infrastructure.

In any conclusion to a Task 2 essay, try to have a balanced conclusion. The simplest way to do this is to use *one among a range of/as long as/provided that*.

Practice Task

Some people feel that public money should not be spent on cultural amenities such as museums, theatres and art festivals. How important do you think these things are to society as a whole? Are there any areas which are more important for the government to fund?

Remember to practise the points we have studied about complex sentences, academic phrases and having a balanced conclusion.

The 10 most common mistakes in IELTS academic writing

Using contractions (for example ‘*I don’t think*’ or ‘*We can’t say*’) instead of the full form (‘*I do not think*’ or ‘*we cannot say*.’) Never use contractions in academic writing.

Writing too few words. If you write much less than the required word count, the examiner has to reduce your score, even if your essay is good quality. You should count the number of words in your essay after each paragraph and keep a continuous total; this way, you can be sure of reaching at least 250 words in 40 minutes.

Writing too many words. The examiner is paid to mark on an ‘essay per hour basis,’ and so will not read the end of an essay if it exceeds the minimum word count by more than about 100 words. This means he or she will not see the end of your argument, and your score will reduce considerably. Remember: 250 words minimum, and about 350 words maximum in Academic Task 2 writing.

Having handwriting that is difficult to read. IELTS is still a handwritten exam, and the examiners will not spend time trying to understand your writing. You must make sure that your handwriting can be read quickly. You should focus on writing clearly when you do your practice essays. Ask friends or other students to give you an honest opinion about whether your writing is easy to read.

Using informal words (for example ‘a *nice* idea’ or ‘a *silly* thing to do’) instead of academic words (for example ‘a *positive* idea’ or ‘a *regrettable* thing to do.’) Remember that academic vocabulary is different from the language you would use in English when talking to friends.

Giving personal opinion in an IDEAS type Task. Check if the Task is asking for your opinion or not. The first question you should ask yourself is ‘*Is this an OPINION or an IDEAS Task?*’

Telling stories about your personal history, friends or family. The Task tells you to use ‘*examples from your own experience*,’ but this does not mean describing stories from your life or people you know. It means describing examples of things in the world that you know about, have studied or have learned about in the media.

Giving evidence which is too detailed or specific to a subject. You may be an expert in a particular social or scientific field, but the examiner probably has a different specialty. You need to make your ideas and examples accessible to a general reader. For example, if the Task topic is about money and you are an accountant, do not use specialized accounting terms.

Being emotional or too dramatic when giving your opinion in an OPINION Task. You may feel strongly about issues such as animals or crime, but academic writing must be unemotional. So avoid phrases such as ‘*a disgusting idea*’ or ‘*I detest this concept*.’ It is much better to say ‘*an unacceptable idea*’ or ‘*I disapprove of this concept*,’ which is more impersonal and academic; similar to the type of writing that people use in business reports or university essays.

Not following the basic structures presented in this book. The examiners want to see a clear, well-structured essay that is easy to read. They are accustomed to seeing the structures we have presented in this book, and they will feel more positive about your essay if they can recognize these structures in what you write. Remember: the *topic* under discussion will be different every time, but the basic concept behind the Task and the essay will be the same. Give the examiners what they want, and they will reward you with a high score, even if there are some grammatical mistakes in your English.

Help from the experts

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