Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host Ben Worthington.

Ben: IELTS paragraphing. In this tutorial, we're going to look at IELTS Writing Task 2 and the paragraphing skills you'll need in order to pass IELTS at a band 7 or higher. I'll give you a brief summary of what we will cover, well, what good paragraphing is.

So, a good paragraph isn't too long and it's not too short. We usually limit it to one argument as well per paragraph. The paragraphs should be unified i.e. they should all be on a single topic. Final point, paragraphs shouldn't really split the sentences. The sentences are either logically connected or illustratively connected.

Before we get into this, let's have a look at some tips that will help you write better paragraphs and then we'll jump into some examples and some brief information about how you can write better.

So, first tip. You want to make the first sentence of your paragraph the general point. This is often called your thesis, okay? Now, from there what you want to do is build it up, okay? Make the other sentences offer evidence, give examples, stay-- enforce your initial claim in your thesis sentence. If you're really skilled, you'll be grouping each stage of your argument into one paragraph and making and building a convincing claim.

So, I go into this in more detail in a tutorial about argumentative essay writing, which is a very useful skill to have for the IELTS writing task. Now, the criteria of excellent paragraphing skills is-- well, for band 9, it says in the criteria that skillfully manages paragraphing. So the definition of paragraphing is the organization of a number of sentences into a block of sentences.

Now, paragraphs are set apart from each other by a small indentation, a small space at the beginning of each paragraph. So, what I usually do is just imagine the word 'the'. If you are writing this with pen and paper, usually the word 'the' is enough space. We are talking about three letters then another space and then we start the paragraph.

Right. So, you'll see if you're watching the tutorial-- if you're watching the video that each of the paragraphs have this small indentation, the ones we are looking at. So, what is skillful paragraphing? Skillful paragraphing means grouping words together so that they seem to belong naturally together.

We don't want a paragraph to come between two sentences, one of which follows from or illustrates the other. Conversely, we don't want sentences which seem to have nothing to do with each other to be included in the same paragraph. Let's illustrate this by looking at an example, a sample block of text and seeing how we might best paragraph this block of text.

If you are listening to the podcast of this, what we have now is a block of text. There's no indentation, there's no spacing, there's no logical grouping. It's just a lump of text. Now, those watching the video tutorial will be able to see. We have this lump of text and it's about the ozone.

Have a quick read of it and possibly you might be able to even break it up already into logical paragraphs. In practice, of course, you will divide your work into paragraphs as you are writing rather than first writing a block of text as we've done just before. With your text, you'll divide it into paragraphs.

The block of text shown before is a useful way of illustrating some dos and don'ts of paragraphing, which we're going to dive into right now. One approach, which I don't recommend, is to make every single sentence a paragraph. That's very, very basic and also it doesn't read very well.

Now, if you are on the online course, we've got this basically mastered into a process which makes it much easier and straight forward because as you can see here generally when you are writing you will start paragraphing your work. That's one approach. In the online course, we recommend that you formulate your ideas first and then you group your ideas into paragraphs.

This is quite a straight forward process, but if you're struggling with coming up with ideas and you're struggling with organizing your paragraphs, then the online course is really useful for you for this part of the IELTS essay writing process. In the online course, there is a set process to

follow and we build ideas, we did paragraphs around ideas. Also, a lot of focus and attention is given to the right ideas, so we do not lose points on task response.

Now, then-- so, we've broken up our paragraph into sentence paragraphs and I see this a lot when I'm correcting essays. It's not recommended. It's definitely not recommended for IELTS writing essay. It looks as though we're over pausing. It's over-emphatic.

Here we've got a better version. We've separated the sentences and we've grouped some of them together. The balance between the text and the paragraph breaks looks better, at least superficially. We've got a reasonably balanced ration of text to breaks. Instead of having either too few or too many, it's balanced. It's separated into three.

For those listening, generally we've gone for about four paragraphs and two of those paragraphs have two sentences in each. The problem with this separation that we've got is the placement of these breaks. Now, the break should not come in the middle of a point which you are making. So, let's go back. I'll illustrate this.

So, if for example a paragrahp break is placed between "...the melting of the ice cap would cause sea levels around the world to rise leading to floods." Then the next paragraph starts and it states, "Some low-lying countries would probably be completely inundated and become uninhabitable."

The second sentence though is exploring the consequences of the first. You see here? In the first sentence, we talked about the melting of the ice caps then in the second paragraph, because this is a new paragraph, we've talked about some low-lying countries will probably be completely inundated. So, the two sentences naturally belong together in the same paragraph.

Let me just emphasize this again. The first sentence is exploring the-- sorry, the first sentence is stating what would happen and then the second sentence is exploring the consequences. So, these are logically linked and that's how they should be-- that's why they should be together in the paragraph.

Also, hopefully, you'll have noticed in the-- for those watching the tutorial, that we have a similar point in the second paragraph, okay? There's a paragraph break between ozone products-- ozone protects the earth from the sun's rays, okay? That's the last sentence of the second paragraph. "Without an ozone layer, the earth would quickly heat up and it's ice caps, for example, would melt."

Now, the topic of ozone in this example is spread over two different paragraphs. To make it even worse, the last sentence is talking about ozone then the first sentence in the next paragraph is also talking about ozone. So, this is a complete lack of cohesion and coherence with regards to paragraphing.

The effect is that the paragraph break impedes the reader; it stops the reader from following the flow of the argument instead of assisting the reader to follow it. So, let's try again with another paragraph. We've got two sentences in the first paragraph and three sentences in the second paragraph. Now, this is better-- sorry, we've got the final paragraph as well.

So, we've divided it up into three paragraphs and this is much better because it provides you with paragraphs of good size, that's between two to three sentences, as a general rule. Do not take that as the set rule. The paragraphs are neither too large nor too small. Also, groups each stage of the arguments in a separate paragraph. This is fantastic.

Let me just repeat this because it's very important. It also groups each stage of the arguments in a separate paragraph. Once again, this is a very important skill to have. Restricting basically one argument per paragraph is a good guide to follow for your paragraphing. This is exactly what we teach in the online course.

We might have a few points in each argument, in each paragraph, but generally, we are following one argument per paragraph. This usually forms well balanced, clear, cohesive essays especially if they're following the C2 template, the sentence guide structure for paragraphing for essay writing, then it's much easier than you might imagine.

So, let's have a quick summary. Good paragraphing has a number of features. 1) The paragraphs are neither too long nor too short. They should be longer than a single sentence

though, but not longer than a page, obviously. 2) Paragraphs should be unified. All the material within a paragraph should concern a single topic.

As I've said before, and this is also what I teach in the online course, if a new idea comes to you while you are writing and you've already planned that paragraph, think twice about including it into your work because it might not lend itself, it might not be suitable to the logical argument and the logical flow of points and arguments and evidence and examples that you've written in your IELTS essay. So, be careful.

If you can squeeze it in a logical way, and of course it corresponds to task achievement, then include it, but as a general rule, I try-- I encourage students to ignore these thoughts that just pop into their mind while they are writing the paragraphs.

Third point. Paragraph breaks should not split apart sentences which are logically or illustratively connected to each other. That's a point I just demonstrated a few minutes ago when we spread the idea of ozone layer between two paragraphs. That was a fatally flawed and disastrous way to build your paragraphs.

Now, one final tip in two parts. One excellent way of constructing good paragraphs is to do the following: make the first sentence of your paragraph the statement of your general point that you are trying to make. This is what I mentioned at the beginning. We make it the thesis statements.

Then make your other sentences in that paragraph set out the evidence and examples which support your general point. As I've said before we go into this in sufficient detail in the online course, but also, more importantly, we've got a very easy process to follow for this in the sentence guide. As I've said before, you just drop your ideas into this formula and hey, presto! You've got a very strong and coherent essay.

Second part of the final tip. Get each thesis sentence alone and separate it. This is obviously easier to do if you are writing on a computer and you just copy-paste your three or four

statements, your thesis statements. Copy-paste those into one document and read them and then you should get an accurate overview of what your essay is communicating or arguing.

Of course, it does not work for all of them, but it's a good guideline especially when you are preparing. You're not going to do this in the exam center-- in the exam room, but you can do this while you are preparing.

So, that's everything from me. Thank you very much for listening or watching this tutorial. If you need more help, go to ieltspodcast.com and you can sign up and get lots of IELTS materials and also don't be afraid of getting feedback for your work. That's a very fast way to improve.

If you need more tutorials, more guidance, have a look at the online course. It comes with full tutorials and expert essay feedback. So, you can submit your essays and we have an expert here looking at them. You can get feedback. She'll give you tips, improvements-- tips for improvements and it just makes the whole process easier and faster. Of course, you will improve much quicker and more effectively.

So, that's it for me. Have a great day and good luck with your IELTS preparation.

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