

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 writing: recent task 2 questions and sample answers. In this tutorial, we're going to look at the new questions that have been recently added to the IELTS writing task 2 question list and we will break down each question and give you a sample essay plan.

I'll also show you how I attack these types of questions, how to break them down, and how to make it much easier for you to plan and write your essay. Let's jump straight into it. So, here's a recent question.

"The media is increasing interest in famous people who have ordinary backgrounds. Why do you think people are interested in the lives of famous people? Do you think this is a good thing?" Here we've got a statement, which I think is little bit distracting. So, when I'm planning my essay I'm going to pay attention to the fact that media, but basically, I'm going to write two paragraphs.

One answering question number one embedded in the question "why do you think people are interested in the lives of famous people?" Two, "Do you think this is a good thing?" It's quite straight forward. This is the process that I teach in the online course at ieltspodcast.com/onlineieltscourse.

Basically, we've got P1 and P2. Paragraph one: people are interested in others with ordinary backgrounds because... and then I can do my list: inspiration, it's motivational, it's real people without plastic surgery, blah, blah, blah because we've got to pay attention to the fact of ordinary backgrounds, okay.

So, first part of the question, "Why do you think people are interested in the lives of famous people?" Also, there's that part at the beginning about ordinary backgrounds. So, I didn't just ignore that. We're talking about famous people. People being interested in other famous people, but these famous people have real ordinary backgrounds so to speak. So, I'm mentioning that and I'm going to build my paragraph around that.

Yes, it's a good thing. Body paragraph two is going to be an agreement. "Do you think this is a good thing?" Yes, I think it is a good thing. It shows you what is possible. It shows you that famous people are just ordinary. So, I agree, but now I just put in a conjunction and I say 'although' okay?

As I said before, this is my plan. So, I'm sketching this down pencil and paper and then I'm going to basically drop it into the C2 framework in the sentence guide and it will basically come out with a coherent paragraph. So, these are my points. I'm going to say yes, it's a good thing. I'll give you a few reasons why. It shows you what's possible. It shows you famous people are just ordinary.

Then I'm putting in my conjunction as I said before. "...although it can be dangerous because nobody is perfect and people do make mistakes." Then I'm going to give an example, a real world example that proves my point. I'm going to talk about Lewis Hamilton, the F1 champion from Formula One race cars Grand Prix.

I'll say he behaved badly once in Australia and he got charged for dangerous driving. It's just an example that shows that famous people, although we admire them, that is a danger in our admiration if we follow them blindly, so to speak.

Number two: in today's times, the internet is making it easy to study online from home. Some prefer online courses to study and they think it's better. Others prefer classroom education. Discuss both views and share your opinion.

Let's just modify that, the internet. Okay, "In today's times, the internet is making it easy to study online from home." I guess that's kind of a distraction. Paragraph one: some prefer online course to study and they think it's better. Others prefer classroom education. Discuss both views and share your opinion.

View number one: online course is better. View number two: classroom education is better. Can you see? We dissect it and I'm ignoring pretty much the first sentence. I'm going straight to the core of this. Discuss both views. That's what it's asking me.

View number one: some prefer online courses to study and they think it's better. View number two: others prefer classroom education. Easy. Okay. Right. So, paragraph number one: advantages of studying online, basically. Some people prefer online courses. So, what am I going to talk about?

I'm going to say, well, if you do online education, if you do an online course, it's going to be, for example, I'm just going to use my own course here, for example, an online course can be specifically and solely focused on the exam. We could just focus on the IELTS whereas if you go to a classroom or an English academy, then they will have English conversation courses, they will have, I don't know, IELTS preparation courses, they will have intensive English courses. They'll have all three and more than likely they'll just interchange the teachers, so there's no specialization there.

Also, when you have an online course that's specialized in the discipline that you want to learn, the specialization can lead to more confidence, more experience and more powerful teaching techniques, okay? So, those are my reasons why online education or online courses especially specialist courses are better. That's body paragraph number one.

As a side note, I'm not going to write up these paragraphs until and unless I have plans for each paragraph. Body paragraph number two: others prefer classroom education. Why do they do that? Well, it's a traditional route and it's perceived as safer, but this methodology hasn't changed since Greece, since ancient Greece.

So, let's just go and have a look at the word 'perceive' because hopefully, you picked up on the fact that we did have the word perceive in there. As I thought, perceive is a C1 verb and hopefully, you know what I mean when I say C1. C1 basically means between band 8 and band 9 as checked by Cambridge-- I think it's Cambridge dictionaries.

Cambridge board is part owner of the IELTS exam. They provide the exams, the materials and things like that. Fortunately, they also have a dictionary, Cambridge dictionary, and they can class certain verbs at different levels. Perceive is classed as a C1 verb. So, using that is going to--

obviously, it's not going to guarantee you a band 9 or a band 8, but it definitely increases your chances.

Anyway, back to body paragraph two. Others prefer classroom education, it's traditional, it's perceived as safer. However-- another conjunction in there. In my notes I've put '...but this methodology...' Obviously, in my writing I'm going to transform that to however because it sounds more formal.

I'll say, however, this methodology has not changed since ancient Greece. There are lots of drawbacks with this methodology. There are mixed ability students and you might go at the slowest-- you might go at the pace of the slowest learner in the class.

Also, many times they do not offer a guarantee unlike certain online courses that promise jump to band 7 or it's free. Anyway, I'll just mention that. With the online course, as you know-- I'll just mention it briefly and move on. So, you watch the tutorials, you get your-- you email in your essay for essay correction, you get your essay back along with some feedback. It's a fast way to improve.

Then you watch the next modules, watch some more advice, watch some more tips and tutorials, send in more essays and then you get your essay back and you get more feedback. This is how we manage to improve your essays through positive feedback. This is also why we can offer the guarantee.

I personally think it's much more effective than going to the classroom because we've got specialist tutors. As I said in my essay argument, specialist tutors who are only focused on the writing. Let's move on.

"Science will soon make people live up to 100 or even 200 years. Some believe this is a good thing while others disagree. Discuss both views and give your own opinion." Body paragraph one: some believe this is a good thing; that living up to 100 or 200 years while others disagree. So, they think it's a bad thing. I'm going to discuss both views.

Body paragraph one: it's great that people are living up to 100, almost 200. Body paragraph two: it's terrible. Conclusion, I don't know. I'll make up my conclusion afterward. Let's just have a look at my notes. Body paragraph one: 100 to 200-year-olds is great. As you can tell, these are my notes. You can spend more time with the loved ones. Collective knowledge should increase.

I'm also going to just put in a clause here. It's going to be like a more sophisticated writing technique. It's only the conditional, but I'm going to put, "It's a good thing if they are allowed to grow old with dignity." That means-- what I'm basically saying here is that living up to 150, 200 years old is fantastic if they can do it by maintaining the high quality of life.

If they're just rolling around in a wheelchair and in a vegetative state, then it's terrible. You're just prolonging a very uncomfortable situation. Who wants to spend 50 years in a wheelchair with only half of your mental capacity? That's just torture. This is why I'm going to say it's a good thing if they are allowed to grow old with dignity and maintain a high standard of life. For example, prolonging life by 50 years to spend in a wheelchair is hardly dignifying, is hardly an experience to look forward to.

Also note that in my notes, I'm using quite basic language. "It's a good thing if they're allowed to grow old." I'm going to probably rephrase this in the-- when I write up my paragraph and say, "It's a hugely positive development..." Doesn't that sound much more sophisticated than "it's a good thing?" "It's a hugely positive development on the condition that they are allowed to age with dignity i.e. maintain full physical mobility, etc., etc."

Body paragraph two: 100 - 200-year-olds is a bad thing because it's a strain on society's limited resources. Can the world feed and look after so many people? Also, I would argue that the world is currently not ready. For example, we might need new driving regulations. We might need new health insurance policies. We got to prepare and adopt for this if it is a certainty.

Conclusion: I will say basically something similar to what I said in paragraph one. Actually, I'll put in a conclusion that envelops all of my arguments and I'll say, "This is excellent if they are allowed to grow old with dignity and if governments have fully prepared or if society is fully prepared." There we go.

Also, as a side note just so you don't forget, we look at the question, we dissect it into body paragraphs and then we-- even when we dissect it, then we do a brainstorm and we jot down our ideas, what we're going to do for each paragraph and probably even a conclusion and the introduction. I'm not going into the conclusion and introduction in this tutorial. I just want to look at questions. Let's have a look at the next one.

"Some people believe that after a hundred years, life will be easier for most people while others are unsure. What is your opinion?" Let's have a look at that again. "Believe that after a hundred years, life will be easy for most people while others are unsure."

Okay, let's see my notes. I basically put the same notes as last time, which is not correct. I misread the question. So, what is my opinion that life after a hundred years will be good? I can use similar arguments, but I'm not going to use the same ones. So, what is my opinion? I'm going to just simply go with the fact that life will be easier for most people after a hundred years.

So, body paragraph one: life will be easier after a hundred years because technology will have solved a lot of the challenges, people will be wiser and the collective consciousness of environmentalism will have grown further, okay? Concern about the earth will have grown into a more serious issue. For example, recent data shows that youngsters-- adolescents now list the environment as one of the prime concerns for the future.

Body paragraph two: life will be easier for most people in a hundred years because... I'm trying to use words from the question in my paragraph planning to make sure I stay on topic. Let's do that again. "Life will be easier for most people after a hundred years because-- what else could we say?"

We could say, "...interplanetary discovery and settlement will have accelerated and the strain on earth's resources may have been significantly reduced. For example, Elon Musk has a goal to reach Mars before he reaches 70. I'm not so sure if that's entirely correct. However, it's believable."

Everybody knows that Elon wants to get to Mars. So, I'm going to say, "Therefore, it is very likely that earth might actually have a smaller population and the strain on earth's resources will be significantly reduced." That is my opinion, okay? Conclusion: life after a hundred years-- life in a hundred years' time will be easier for most people. Job done. Let's have a look at the next one.

"Some people think it is important to spend a lot of money on a wedding celebration while others disagree. Discuss both views and give your opinion." View number one: it's important to spend a lot of money on a wedding celebration. View number two: it is not a good idea to spend a lot of money on a wedding celebration.

Now I've dissected it into both views, which is exactly what the question is asking from me. I will not lose points in task response. I refuse to. It's nothing to do with English. Well, I guess it is in understanding the question, but it's more to do with just focus, understanding and your essay planning ability, task response, task achievement.

Let's have a look. So, yes-- body paragraph one: yes, spend a lot on a wedding. Body paragraph two: do not spend a lot of money on a wedding. Body paragraph one-- also, as a side note, I'm organizing my paragraphs in the order that I see the question prompts in the question.

So, first in the question, we're talking about it's important to spend a lot of money on a wedding celebration; body paragraph one. Body paragraph two: while others disagree. You see, I'm not putting the disagree first. This just helps with cohesion and coherence. It's easy to follow.

So, "Yes, you should spend a lot of money on a wedding because 1) it's a once in a lifetime opportunity; 2) it's a massive opportunity to catch up with old acquaintances." Also, note I'm not using old friends and family. I'm just saying acquaintances. It's much more sophisticated.

The final point, I'm going to put in just a contrast, just a counter thought so to speak, but it also depends on the culture of the country. "In some countries, an envelope of cash is expected as a gift to the bride and groom. Therefore a big event is expected."

For example, in Spain, when you go to a wedding, you have to turn up with an envelope and it has to be full of money, I think about €100, €150 and if you did that and you turned up to somebody's flat with just an envelope of cash and all they did was put on a small buffet, it's very impolite.

You turn up to a wedding with €100 in cash or whatever it is and the Spanish way is you sit down in a big tent or a big hall and you eat and drink and eat and drink and eat and drink. So, although you are giving €150 or whatever, you're probably getting a good chunk of that back in the celebration. Anyway, let's move on.

Body paragraph number two: do not spend a lot of money on a wedding. My reasons are if it is real love, is it actually necessary? The money could be used elsewhere perhaps a deposit for a house, even possibly to buy a house.

Also, if you have your wedding abroad, an expensive tropical wedding could be a financial burden for some people. For example, if I decide to have my wedding in the Philippines and now I've invited all my friends and family from the UK to the Philippines. It's a very big ask for everybody to do.

You've got to find the holidays, you've got to find the money and you could even say it's not very fair. Of course, spending a lot of money-- and of course you'll probably spend more money having a wedding in a foreign country than you would in your own country. Flights alone are going to impact the cost. So, just keep that in mind.

Now, let's have a look at an ultimate question. "Successful companies use advertising to make more sales. What can make an advertisement very effective?" Body paragraph one. "Do you think this is a bad thing or a good thing for the society?" Body paragraph two.

Hopefully, you are learning by listening to this tutorial, by watching this tutorial, you are learning how we break down the questions. This is a very useful technique and it's one that I teach in more detail in the online course. It's actually one of the exercises-- I'm just going back here, it's one of the exercises we ask the students to do. You watch the tutorials and then we basically challenge them on the question or on the ability to dissect the question or transform

the question into coherent body paragraph ideas. This is exactly what we're doing here. Very similar.

So, body paragraph one: what can make an advertisement very effective? Body paragraph two: is it good or is it a bad thing? So, I'm just going to probably choose it's a bad thing for society. I don't want to get into a full debate. I'm just going to take one position that's it. Let's have a look.

Body paragraph one: what makes an advertisement effective? True stories of success. If I can see somebody has used this product or this service and they've had success with it, now I believe. It's more plausible, it's more believable for me that I will have the same effect.

This is why celebrity endorsement-- topics for specific vocabulary there. For example, if I see Chuck Norris using, I don't know, some body spray then I'll probably be more likely to use it. Celebrity endorsement is a powerful factor in advertising, that's why it's used and a guarantee for success.

So, if I see that a product has a guarantee, I think wow! The suppliers, the sellers must be confident, otherwise, they wouldn't offer a guarantee. By the way, this is why we offer jump to band 7 or it's free for our courses because we know from experience that if students follow this process, there's a very high chance that we can up their grade; that we can transform them.

Let's go. Body paragraph two: is it a good thing or a bad thing for society? I'm going to go with one view point here. It's simple. I'm just going to say, "It's good because it informs the potential buyer about the choices. It can be a source of education and-- I'm just going to put in one condition here, it can-- we should use it with caution."

Then I'm going to give a real world example about the scandal related to Cambridge Analytica and Facebook, which is all about-- if the police also heard me talking about the... as soon as I mention the scandal, that's good timing.

So, anyway, with Cambridge Analytica, there's a whole scandal about a research agency using data that really should be used for marketing. They were using it in the political fight, in a

political way. Probably if they had a chance to do some more research on that-- You've got a good case study, you've got a real world recent example to use in your essay.

Final point-- final question. "Some people think that giving gifts and presents to friends and family is important to show them that we care." I would say that's a distraction sentence. "Others think that there are more important ways. Discuss both views and give your opinion."

Let's see. Let's just dissect this in two body paragraphs. Let's see. "Some people think that giving gifts and presents to friends and family is important to show them that we care"; body paragraph one.

Body paragraph two: there are better ways than giving gifts and presents. So, let's see. We can say that body paragraph one: giving a physical gift can stand the test of time and it would be a memory that never fades. I can give you a watch and it's probably going to last a lifetime if you don't lose it. So, it could be passed on from one generation to the next. Also, the present doesn't have to be expensive. It could be something that I carved; I knitted or sewed, a piece of art, okay? I would say it is important to show them that we care and it doesn't necessarily have to be expensive.

Body paragraph two: others think that there are more important ways. Discuss both views and give your opinion. Body paragraph two: others think that there are more important ways. Here, I'm going to talk about experiences. Spending time together is probably enough for most families. So, what I'm saying is perhaps you do not need to go out and buy your son an expensive watch. Maybe just spending an afternoon together, going for a walk in the park is probably just as valuable for the child. So, here an expensive gift is not necessary. Spending quality time is more important.

So, here we are. We've dissected the question. I'm pretty certain we've answered everything. It says discuss both views. We extracted both views from the question and we got our answer. From both views, we got two paragraphs. Now, all I have to do, as I said before, is add the introduction and add the conclusion.

So, we'll probably be releasing another tutorial about recent questions. When you do see questions in your exam, then send them in to us and we can keep our list updated of recent questions. Remember if you go to ieltspodcast.com, you can sign up for free IELTS materials. There's a big PDF there full of vocabulary, sample essays, tutorials. You can also have a look at the online courses and as you probably know, we do offer an essay correction service as well. The essay correction service works best with the online course.

So, that's everything from me today. Have a fantastic day. Keep on studying. Keep on working hard and eventually, you will get there. Have a great day. All the best.

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com

