



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: Essay ideas and answers for recent task 2 questions. Now, in this tutorial, it doesn't get more recent than this. This question was literally posted like five hours ago from this recording in the Facebook group, our Facebook group called Recent IELTS Task 2 Questions.

There students go to find recent questions and when the questions they've seen they put them-- the questions they see after doing the exam hopefully they can remember them and they post them in the group to help other students. So, come along and join us there.

This question by Jonathan-- thank you, Johnathan, "Some people think the more money they have, the happier they will be. How is money important for happiness?" Thank you, Jonathan. So, let's have a look. How are we going to break this up? I guess, let's see. How is money important for happiness?

What I would do, same formula as before; two body paragraphs. Let's extract ideas from the question. Let's simplify the question. So, some people think the more money they have the happier they will be. How important is money for happiness? Let's dedicate the first paragraph to the first sentence of the question. More money equals more happiness or more problems according to the notorious B.I.G.



Anyway, let's see. More money equals more happiness. I guess we can agree with this just for the sake of the paragraph. So, my body paragraph for that is more money does equal-- No, actually I'm going to say that more money doesn't necessarily equate to more happiness, but it does make life easier and an easier life is probably more pleasurable, more enjoyable than a hard life.

That's going to be my point and then I'm going to explain this. I think it's quite straight forward to explain. I'd say this is true because with money you can have freedom to go on a holiday, maybe to quit your job, you don't have to worry, life is less stressful and then I'd probably just put in an example there.

Then my body paragraph number two would be how important is money or how is money important for happiness? I'd probably have to repeat the same argument, but give different points. So, maybe actually now and this is the beauty of doing it this way because we sort out our ideas before we actually jump into the paragraph.

In body paragraph one, I'll probably limit that to freedom; freedom to quit the job, freedom to live anywhere you want to, freedom to make better decisions because with better decisions-- because if you've got money there are less limitations.



Then on body paragraph two, I'll say how important is money for happiness. I'll say it's very important because... and then I will talk about an easy life versus a hard life and the fact that an easy life is most likely more enjoyable, more pleasurable, happier.

Now that I've got these two ideas, my ideas coordinated and I've got them in my mind and I know what I'm doing and I have organized them, then I'm going to make my body paragraphs. I'm going to plan my body paragraphs.

Hopefully there you've just seen how we should be organizing and the process that we should go through. If you need it in a more explicit way, if you need it sort of like spelled out step by step in a very easy way to follow then have a look at the online course. This is one part of the course. It's very popular with the students.

We give you feedback as well after you've tried-- after you've watched the tutorials, we give you an exercise to do and then we give you feedback on that tutorial or feedback on your exercises just to make sure that you are improving. This is not very much related to language skills or your grammar skills or anything like that. It is very uniquely IELTS focused, specifically for task 2 because we know after correcting so many essays and talking with so many students and doing this for so long that we know the students struggle with ideas.

Anyway, let's move on. Next question: scientists believe that in order to protect the environment people must use less energy in their daily lives. However, most people have not



changed the way they live. Why do you think many people have not taken individual action? What could be done to encourage them to take action?

Now, we've kind of got that distraction at the beginning of the question there. It's just a statement and then we've got two direct questions. These types of questions, task 2 questions, are quite easy I think to get ideas for and to write an answer for.

First of all, we simplify the question. This is the process. This is the system we teach in the sentence guide, the Jump to a Band 7 or It's Free online IELTS course. We simplify the question. People don't take action because...That's it. I've simplified the question there. Let me just tell you the question again.

“Scientists believe that in order to protect the environment, people must use less energy in their daily lives. However, most people have not changed the way they live. Why do you think many people have not taken individual action?”

Many people have not taken individual action to save less energy because... That's it. Now, we're going to specifically focus on the question. We're going to get full points for task response with this body paragraph. People are not taking action to protect the environment or use less energy because...

One, the danger is that it's not-- these are my ideas now. The danger is not immediately or directly facing them. What do I mean by this? Well, if I knew that... I don't know. If I didn't



switch off all my lights in my house before leaving, if I knew that my house would burn down when I came back, I would do that because that's a direct danger.

But if I know the consequences of leaving on the lights in my flat are not going to be felt directly or immediately by myself until at least like 10 years when the world is too hot, it's not an immediate danger. That's what I mean and it's not-- even then it's not ridiculously dangerous in front of me. It's not like a cyclone is going to come and hit my house and just tear it apart because I left all the lights on.

Next point: tragedy of the commons. Hopefully, you know what this means, but the tragedy of the commons basically means that when it's free and available to everybody, everybody uses and abuses it and there's basically no point in doing it. For example, if the government gave free cars to everybody to use, they'd probably be destroyed in a lot of societies.

They'd probably be-- I don't know why I'm laughing. I'm probably laughing because of the stupidity of it. But if the government did give cars to everybody for free and just let them use them publicly, then they'd probably get destroyed rather quickly and this is the tragedy of the commons. This is exactly what we're facing with the environment. At the moment, basically the environment is free so everybody is abusing it and using it.

At the moment and at this stage I'm just generating ideas. Perhaps it's probably a bit too long to go into that whole argument, but I can decide afterward. At the moment I'm just brainstorming.



The next reason why people don't take individual action to protect the environment or use less energy is because it's a collective problem. It's easier to shirk responsibility.

Now, the reason why I like that idea is because it gives me the opportunity to use the phrase "to shirk responsibility" and it's not a very common term, but it does explain the situation rather eloquently and accurately.

Shirking responsibility basically means no, it's not my problem. It has nothing to do with me. I'm just a consumer. I'm just an individual and it's easy to do that when the problem engulfs and everybody is responsible for it. It's easy for one person or on an individual level to say it's nothing to do with me.

As I said, these are just ideas. I'm just brainstorming. Later, I'm going to select the winners. Maybe the winners are the easiest to explain. Maybe the winners allow me to use certain vocabulary or phrases that I know are higher level, but I'll tell you now. The winners are definitely not the most intelligent arguments.

This is not an intelligence exam. This is a communication exam, a language exam. So, we want to go for ideas that are easy to communicate, easy to express. Now that I've said that, maybe the tragedy of the commons, I could mention it because it's a useful phrase, but I won't go into detail explaining. I'll make a point not to go into detail if I do mention it.



Next one: body paragraph 2. What could be done to encourage them to take action? Okay, what could be done to encourage individuals to take action? This is very easy I thought. By the way, this is a really good answer which you could use for lots of different arguments. It's a really good idea. Media campaigns by the government. Get the government to persuade.

Next idea: legislation, regulations, and taxes by the government. You've probably heard me talk about that before in other ideas about climate change and about the environment or about globalization or anything. This is a really good copy paste answer.

It's the government's fault and they can solve it by legislating, which means making new rules and adding new regulations, basically the same, introducing fines like financial punishments and taxes to discourage this action. Maybe they could-- I don't know, carbon tax, plastic bottle tax, a single-use tax, recycling incentives.

Like I said before, all this kind of vocabulary is really useful. That's a really good point that I want to make. Just blame it on the government whatever the issue and the government can change it by financial incentives, taxes, legislation, regulation, whatever.

As I've said before, I'm just brainstorming then I'm going to select the winners and the winners will go to my body paragraph which I've got an easy framework to follow for the essay writing.

Let's move on. "In many countries, small shops and town centers are going out of business because people tend to drive to the large out-of-town stores. This results in an increase in car



use and it also means that people without cars have limited access to out-of-town stores. Do you think the advantages of such a development outweigh its disadvantages?"

There's such a-- like a mash of information you've got to hold in your brain and then reprocess it and simplify it and then you can generate ideas. Fortunately, I've done this already. The advantages of out-of-town shopping centers are very limited. Body paragraph one: let's see. That's going to be my position there. Let's just review the question again to see if I have got the gist of the argument.

This is a skill in itself; the ability to reduce the question to its bare essentials for you to-- in order for you to develop and generate ideas. I'll say that again. It's a really important skill to develop. The skill is to reduce the questions to the core elements so you can understand them and then start generating ideas because we can't generate ideas when the question is 30-words long. We need to reduce it and then we can start brainstorming.

Let's go into the question. "In many countries, small shops and town centers are going out of business because people tend to drive to larger out-of-town stores. This results in an increase in car usage. It also means that there's limited access for people without cars." Just simplifying it there.

"Do the advantages of such a development outweigh its disadvantages?" What are the advantages of out-of-town shopping centers? That's what it's saying there and I can't see-- I'm



going to argue that there are not that many advantages. Now it's easy then to talk about the disadvantages. The advantages-- this is my plan.

The advantages of out-of-town shopping centers are very limited. They might have slightly cheaper prices. However, the new developments contribute to the urban sprawl of cities. Urban sprawl means when cities just continue expanding and expanding outward and just get to big ugly grey dots on the map.

Out-of-town shopping centers usually contribute to urban sprawl. It's a good vocabulary term. This, in turn, reduces investment in city centers and the city centers are much more important than just places for shopping. For example, Vienna city center regularly has art exhibitions in the city center.

Although there are some advantages to these out-of-town shopping centers, such as slightly cheaper prices, the disadvantages are huge. In this paragraph, I'm going to talk about the disadvantages are huge. Remember the question: do you think the advantages of such developments outweigh its disadvantages?

So, that's one advantage; cheaper price, but the disadvantages are urban sprawl and city centers are jeopardized because shops could move out and they become uninhabited, the city center and that's a shame because city centers are important per city e.g. Vienna has art exhibitions in the city center.



Body paragraph two: I'm going to focus on what is said in the question. Those without transport are disenfranchised. I'm going to carry on. Other disadvantages include people without transport are disenfranchised, there's more traffic on the roads, and I'm just going to say although some people may say these shopping centers create jobs, what it probably is just doing is shifting employment from the city center to other areas and therefore negating this point. For example, recent studies showed...

You might think those ideas are a little bit disjointed and I would agree with you there. They do need to be slightly more organized into a paragraph, but as I said before, what we're doing now is brainstorming ideas and later, we're going to worry about organizing them.

I'm going to probably reduce some ideas, kill some ideas, expand on some ideas. It all depends on if they are easy to communicate, if they respond to task response and if I've got some good vocabulary to include.

There we go and as I've said before, the quality of the ideas is important, but it's not as important as your ability to communicate the idea. I've said it before and I'll say it again. The quality of the idea is secondary to your ability to communicate it. So if you've got a fantastic idea that is going to revolutionize city centers and out-of-town shopping centers it doesn't matter.



The examiner doesn't care about your fantastic idea or your intelligence regarding this topic. The examiner cares about your ability to communicate any idea because this is a language exam and language only exists for communication.

Next question: films and computer games which contain violence are very popular. Some people believe they have a negative effect on society and should be banned. Other people, however, say they are just harmless and help people to relax. Discuss both of these viewpoints and give your own opinion.

Quite straightforward this; we've got the instructions in the question. Body paragraph one: people believe computer games have a negative effect on society should be banned. Body paragraph two: they are harmless and help people to relax. These are not too bad, these types of questions.

We just need to, as I said before, deconstruct the question, probably simplify it into an easier phrase that we can grasp in our minds and then check that our transformation or simplification of the question is still similar. This way we're going to stay on topic, get full points for task response and then we're going to brainstorm ideas and we're going to organize those ideas and then we drop them into the framework. It's as easy as pie.

Let's move on. "Some people believe they have a negative effect on society and so should be banned." I disagree with this. There is no strong scientific study and globally these games have



been around for the last 10 years and there are no serious-- the last 20 years, it doesn't seem to be any notable increase except in the US, but that's a different case because of gun violence issues in that country.

Final point, banning usually has the direct opposite of its intentions. This might be an idea that I kill because I'd have to explain it. I'd have to talk about prohibition in the U.S., alcohol prohibition. When alcohol was banned in the U.S. in the '20s it created a huge black market. Now I'm going off topic, so I probably would kill that idea, but at the beginning when I'm brainstorming I just want to get my idea generation motor up and running.

Another point that just popped into my mind is that in the past in Europe, we used to burn people if we thought they were witches. Nowadays, we don't do that, but we do have these computer game violence and we're not doing that anymore so, go figure. Obviously, you can't put that in the essay, but go figure. It is an interesting point that I might want to develop in a more academic fashion when it comes to organizing my ideas.

Next, body paragraph two. "Violent computer games are harmless and help people to relax." Seems a bit weird that sentence, doesn't it? I'm going to agree with this. I'm going to say people need a distraction from their work and I'm also going to go a little bit higher level and I'm going to say with every new development-- every new generation brings a new development and the older generation is usually worried.



When the Beatles, the music group, came out, the older generation were worried. They said it's corrupting our youth. When heavy metal came out, the older generation said it's corrupting our youth. When hip-hop exploded, people said it's corrupting our youth. So, that's a valid argument and I can use that.

Also, I could use an argument that ties guns never seems to be a problem and video games are a modern interpretation of toy guns. I'd probably go with that argument that I just mentioned because it's easier to explain, it's easier to grasp, and it gets to the point. So, I'm going to say they are definitely harmless and they are just a modern incarnation of the original traditional toy guns.

So, there are two really useful phrases that I-- if I skillfully organize my paragraph, I can include both of those phrases which are good: a modern incarnation or a modern interpretation and the other one corrupting our youth. Two beautiful collocations there.

In the conclusion I'm just going to say yes, I don't think they should be banned. Society always gets excited about any new modern developments and second point, let's see... These are just modern interpretations of traditional brain games; something like that. That's my conclusion which I will put in the end and I will include my opinion there of course because it specifically asked me.



I probably won't include my opinion in my introduction either. There's no right or wrong answer for this. Some tutors say include your opinion at the beginning. Others say don't bother; put it at the end. It's your choice. You can put it at the beginning or at the end. Put it at the end. Let the examiner know your position at the end. Keep them guessing or you put it at the beginning so the examiner knows where we are going. Both are okay, it's fine.

“Many doctors say that people in today's world do not do enough physical exercise. What do you think are the causes of this? What solutions are there to the problem?” Easy, body paragraph one: the causes of not doing enough physical exercises are point 1, point 2. Solutions to this problem: point 1, point 2.

So, I've simplified the question. When we've got two questions it's the easiest to-- it's the easiest task 2, I think, because we just need to dedicate the body paragraph one to the question one, body paragraph two to question two.

So, what are the causes of not doing enough physical exercise? Nowadays, there are no natural predators. Wolves, lions, and tigers and elephants are no longer roaming around to kill the people who can't run away from them. I'm just joking. We can't have that kind of argument. We can't have it because it's not serious. I just wanted to put that in there.

The causes of not doing enough physical exercise are: one, sedentary lifestyle in the office and possibly even a lack of time for sport in modern lifestyles because we're doing 40 hours a week.



Nowadays, a lot of people commute to work which easily takes from five to ten hours-- it takes five to ten hours away from the employee which they could use to do some sport.

What else could I argue? I'd probably just stick with those two and then develop those two points a little bit further. Remember, it's not like the quantity of ideas we generate-- it's not the quality of ideas that we generate. It's just the quality of the communication. This is a language exam.

Sedentary lifestyle is an easy point to explain and also lack of time to do sport because of modern lifestyles. How do I develop that point? Well I just say the same in an example. A recent study by Cambridge University showed that 8 out of 10 city workers spend more than 10 hours a week commuting and this time could have been used to do sport instead of driving in a car or travelling in a train or walking to work and so on and so forth.

What solutions are there to this problem? I'll be serious. Some ideas did pop into my mind, let's keep it on topic. Solutions to this problem: media campaigns by the government, tax or financial incentives by the government to change the situation. Sugar tax-- actually, I wouldn't say sugar tax because we want to talk about physical exercise not healthy lifestyle.

So, I'd say-- we want to encourage physical exercise so I'd say financial legislations, tax free gyms and subsidies to sports companies to encourage more people into sports and media campaigns. Now, you've probably heard me say before that blame it on the government and



the government can solve this problem of fat people. The government can solve this problem of environmental warning. Blame it on the government. Rules and regulations, tax incentives, VAT.

Easy argument and it's believable, it's logical and you can probably get a lot of topic-specific vocabulary in there. Legislation, legislate, regulations, regulate, all these different kinds of vocabulary. It's the same vocabulary we can use to talk about solutions for global warming, solutions for climate change, solutions for too much plastic in society.

Right, that's it for me today. I hope you got a lot of value from this podcast. I imagine you did. If you've got any ideas or any questions that you'd like or any tutorials that you'd like us to prepare an episode about, then just send them in. That would be fantastic.

If you want more recent IELTS task 2 questions, join us on Facebook through the recent group. We're also going to start one on WeChat pretty soon. Remember you are not alone with this. You've got us here at IELTS podcast to help you. We can offer you some feedback. We're every week twice a week publishing more tutorials to help you and remember you can do this. You're not alone.

You've probably achieved a lot in your life. Take a moment to think about what you've achieved and you probably realize that sooner or later, you're going to achieve the IELTS score that you want as well. All right, have a great day. Keep studying and as we say in England, chin up. That just means keep your head high and keep working at it. All the best.



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IELTS WRITING

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