



**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 essay ideas and answers for writing task 2. Hello there. My name is Ben Worthington. In this tutorial, we will focus specifically on generating ideas for your IELTS writing task 2 questions. These questions that I'll be using and generating ideas for these are questions that have been recently seen on the exam and they were sent in to us by students.

What I will do in this episode is look at those questions and then basically give your ideas about what you could talk about and how you can get ideas for yourself and how we can organize these ideas into effective essay plans. I'm pretty much following the same structure that I teach on the online course, the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free online IELTS course that we have at [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com). I'm basically just giving you an overview, but in the course, we go into much more detail and it's broken down and there's the template which makes it really easy to do.

Let's jump straight into it. "Many people believe that it's better to learn something in a group rather than individually. Do you agree or disagree?" In this essay, what I will do I will put-- I immediately decided that I'm going to dedicate a paragraph to agreeing and a paragraph to disagreeing and I'll write a discursive essay.

The key thing that I find in making this whole process as painless as possible is to cut up the question and allocate a paragraph to each part of the question and then generate ideas around that fragment or that part of the question. If we stick like this we can make sure we're going to



get full points for task response. This is all in the essay planning process. By the way, if you're not planning your essays then you really need to start looking at how to plan your essays and once again there's a whole module on this in the online course.

Anyway, let's get back to the question. "Many people believe that it's better to learn something in a group rather than individually. Do you agree or disagree?" Right, I'm going to agree in my first paragraph. Learning in a group has many advantages. We can have elements of teamwork. You can utilize each person's skills. So, if one person is a good designer and the other is a good programmer then it's going to be more powerful than a team of just programmers, for example.

Disagree: individualism-- and this is my next paragraph. Disagree: individualism is better. You can be self-reliant. It's a good topic-specific vocabulary there. You can be self-reliant, which means you only depend on yourself and this would probably make the project maybe a little bit more efficient. You know, in some group projects, you have to wait for the designer to finish, then you have to wait for the marketing person to finish or you have to wait for the researcher to finish and if you are self-reliant, you own the result. You're not dependent on others.

Another point: it's more mature, more responsible because you are responsible now for the whole project, the whole task. Another reason why individualism is better or working individually is that there are no laggards. Laggards mean like the slow people in the group. You don't wait for them.



So, maybe I won't include every single point. The thing is, what I'm doing now is just generating ideas and some of these ideas I'll throw away and I won't use. Some of the ideas I want to use because maybe they come with a good collocation that I know. For example, I'm definitely going to use self-reliant and I want to use the word laggards as well because it's quite-- it's not very common and it will show the examiner that I've got an extensive range of vocabulary.

Also, I'm going to use the self-reliant argument; I'm not dependent on others because I can give a very easy to understand example just like the one I did that I don't have to be waiting for a designer, I don't have to be waiting for the researcher.

Then in the conclusion what I'll do is probably really just give my personal preference and my personal preference, in all honesty, is that I work much better as an individual. If you ever see me playing football you can see that it's immediately clear because I have no sense of teamwork whatsoever and I'm just running around on my own. So, that's why-- yes, but obviously, I'm not going to include that in the conclusion, I'm just going to make it as formal as possible.

Let's move on to the next one. "Some people think that men are naturally more competitive than women. To what extent do you agree or disagree?" This is a very sensitive topic. You really want to kind of-- maybe even just filter and double check what you're saying isn't sexist or isn't going to offend anybody.



So first of all, how do we start this? Well, we're going to make a plan for two paragraphs-- for the two paragraphs that we're going to include. By the way, you might have noticed that I'm kind of just skipping over the introduction and I'm kind of skipping over the conclusion as well. That's on purpose because once you get your ideas for the paragraph and once you've got your body paragraphs sorted then you can start thinking about how you're going to write your introduction and how you're going to finish.

Also, as everybody knows that the bulk of the points are body paragraphs. That's where we want to be focusing the bulk of our attention. That's where most of our focus should be going. Let's move on. So, I'm going to assign ideas to each paragraph. "Men are more competitive than women. Do you agree or disagree? To what extent do you agree or disagree?"

So, I'm just going to say I fully agree with this. Paragraph one: men are competitive. Look at-- and these are my arguments and of course, I've got to back up my arguments with or back up my claims with evidence. So one, men are more competitive. That's my claim. I'm going to back it up now with evidence. Look at sporting fans. Globally, most of them are male.

An additional point, if you look at sports historically only men have participated. Formula One, boxing, MMA; this is typically male dominated sports. Final point, the scientists have shown that men's psychological drivers include dominance, control, and competition.

So-- and then I would leave it because I'm not going to go into-- I don't want to go into that topic much further. I could even possibly just forget that last point because my argument so far



is just based on facts and I'm going to qualify those facts later in the next paragraph. I'm going to say once again my next paragraph--

Oh, sorry. The reason why I'm going to possibly leave psychological of drivers is because it could sound sexist and I don't want to offend anybody and I'm not 100% certain whereas my other arguments, it's clear as day that only men participate. Historically, 90% of the participants in all of those sporting events that I have mentioned have just been men, but I'm going to qualify it later and you'll see.

So, moving on to the next paragraph: men are more competitive and this is in my notes. I'm just going to write it. Men are more competitive. Just to refresh and just to keep it present in my mind what I'm writing about. I'm going to acknowledge as well the fact that it might sound sexist and then I'm going to go on and just basically say it seems like this; that men are more competitive. Whether it is nature or nurture, it's difficult to say. However, whatever the factor is, it's clear today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or whatever, 21<sup>st</sup> century that most sports are male dominated and it's basically making more men enter these sports.

Okay, so this is really difficult and it just comes down to nature or nurture. In fact, what I could even do is just put it down to nature or nurture. The examiner would understand that argument instantly. Hopefully, you do as well. If you don't-- but it's going to be too much to get into the nature or nurture arguments and I'll just leave it at that, okay, because you could see me struggling when I was trying to explain.



By the way, nature or nurture: was the person born like that or did society influence them to grow up like that? That's the basic argument, but if I include or explain what nature or nurture means in the essay, I'm going way off topic. So, I'm just going to mention that point and I'm done. Also, it sounds very natural.

Conclusion: I very much agree as you've probably heard and we don't know. Okay, so the question says, "Are men naturally more competitive?" So, yes, I agree that men are more competitive. Whether it's natural or whether it's thanks to society, it's beyond this-- now let's see. How could I say that?

Whether it's-- I don't want to say nature and nurture again, so I'm going to say whether it's due to society or genetics... Beautiful there if I do say so. Whether it's society or genetics it's difficult to say, but the fact of the matter is that in 2019, it is clear that men appear to be more competitive.

Notice as well I did put the "appear to be more competitive" because there I'm just myself some wiggle room some room to wiggle and more academically known as hedging. By the way, the hedging is also another module that we go into in the course and it just helps students or advises students against making sweeping generalizations which are not academic at all.

Moving on, question three-- by the way, these are all very common topics in society at the moment. We're talking about men being more competitive. This is very much linked to the issue of those transgender women participating in competitions-- sorry, transgender men



participating in women's athletics competitions, about that South African athlete who's got high level of testosterone and yes...

If I had gone into those topics about what I just mentioned in that essay, I would have been opening up a whole can of worms. It just goes on and on and on and is endless and I'm not that knowledgeable about it. So, I'm just going to keep it basic to what I see is the sports: F1, boxing, MMA, etc., men's football. So, what I wanted to say is that most of the points and the-- sorry, most of the questions and the next question, these are all topics going on in the media at the moment.

We're talking about the-- how do you call it? Women and men in competition in athletics. We're talking about individual teamwork. We're talking about social media, mobile phones. These are all topics that are going on in society at the moment. We're talking-- the next questions we're going to be talking about mobile phones, social media. We're going to be talking about weddings. Some recent expensive weddings seems to be coming up a lot recently, which is a little bit strange and also now more than ever, we're talking about the environment. Almost every day there is a topic about the environment in the news.

If you don't know anything about these topics, it's really important to start spending a good ten minutes a day browsing BBC.com and I think BBC is the best place to start because it's got an overview and it just tells you just the right amount of information that you need. The Guardian as well is good or you can look at your national news source as well and from there you can see



the different topics. Just spend a few minutes in each different topic: sports, technology, in business, global politics, all of it and you'll see and you'll start generating-- you start filling up your head with the information that you need.

Right, let's move on. Question three: these days mobile phones and the internet are very important to the ways in which people relate to one another socially. Do the advantages of this development outweigh the disadvantages? So, that question is a bit of a mess, okay? Excuse my French, but it is a bit of a mess and we need to sort it out and simplify it so we can make an accurate plan.

So, let's just rephrase it. I'll give you the whole question again. "These days, mobile phones and the internet are very important to the ways in which people relate to one another." So, what we're saying is-- and then the next part, "Do the advantages of this development outweigh the disadvantages?" It just makes it really confusing, but what the question is basically saying is it more advantageous to relate socially to others via the phone?

First of all, the question says phones, internet are an important way to help people socialize, okay or how people relate to each other socially. What are the advantages or disadvantages of this? Or do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? Okay, so I'm immediately going to take a position and that's going to help me simplify the plan of my paragraph.

My position in this, it is more advantageous to relate socially to others via the phone. Then I'm going to say that there are some disadvantages to this because that's what the question wants



me to do. It says, “Do the disadvantages outweigh the disadvantages?” So, my next paragraph I’m going to talk about the disadvantages and then I’ll reach a conclusion and later I can just draw my conclusion up after I’ve fully planned my body paragraphs.

I’ll probably go for the argument that is best explained. So, if I really explain the disadvantages in a much more coherent way, then I’m going to make my conclusion. Let’s have a look at the ideas anyway. I’ve simplified the question and I’ve got to the point where my position-- it is more advantageous to relate socially to others via the phone because one, you can have more frequent contact and you can have more frequent support with the person and you’re not limited to physical interactions which can be difficult especially if you leave further away.

Second one, it's possible to find others similar to you and this is useful for people with obscure or specialist interests. These are just arguments that if you are familiar with the internet, with the phone and you are aware of what is happening in society now these ideas will come to you much quicker. So, you might be wondering what I meant by “it's possible to find other similar to you useful for those with obscure specialist interests.”

So, for example, I really like motorcar racing, Formula One racing. I recently moved to Warsaw in Poland just for a change and now I want to find other people who are interested in Formula One. Now, imagine if I was doing that without the internet. I’d have to go walking around the city asking people, looking for bars, asking where they played it. Now, I can just jump on



Facebook and I can maybe do F1 viewing sessions, whatever and find the people that have similar interests to me.

Now, I don't want to use that example in my essay. Why not? Because it's not very academic. So, what I need to do is transform that into an academic example and I'm not going to do that right now because it's not the focus of this tutorial, but I've done it in previous tutorials and yes there's also a tutorial-- a whole module about this in the online course.

Anyway, let's go. Disadvantages: the disadvantages include cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is becoming a reality thanks to social media, mobile phones, and the internet. Teenagers are becoming addicted to phones even labeled as screenagers instead of teenagers. Definitely a good point there and this is quite a modern word, so it shows the examiner I'm up to date with these topics.

Then to demonstrate my point and there's a phenomenon called Instagram reality which shows the real life of pictures of people without the filters. Now, this is an easy topic to jump in and say it can have dangerous effects for teenagers especially for teenage girl and this can cause psychological issues such as body dysmorphia I think it's called because people see perfected versions of other people and then-- perfected versions because they are perfected by the filters in Instagram and whatever and the software-- and the camera software and then people wonder why they don't look the same when they look in the mirror.



It really is a mess and it's quite easy if you're following this topic, it's quite easy to start talking about it a lot and that's not what we want to do. We just want to organize our ideas and select a few. So, because-- now that I've started thinking about this whole phenomenon called Instagram reality I would probably develop that topic and give examples because I've got some good vocabulary there. I can talk about body dysmorphia, filters, teenagers at risk.

So, what I'd probably do for that paragraph is just briefly mention cyberbullying, teenagers becoming addicted and then I'd say, but perhaps the most serious phenomenon is called Instagram reality whereby teenagers-- and then I'd have to organize the sentences-- where teenagers are at risk of such psychological disorders such as body dysmorphia.

Instagram reality is caused by the gap between what a teenager may see in the mirror and what is published online after being filtered, doctored and photo shopped blah, blah, blah. So, you can see with that specific point, it's easier to go into much more detail.

By the way, my biggest tips for anybody doing the IELTS task 2 is to really brush up on these social media vocabulary just like what I mentioned now and the environment. These seem very common and it's useful vocabulary to have for the IELTS exam. So really, just consider that and start reading a few articles about it, circling the useful vocabulary that you spot, that you read and I think you'll definitely benefit from it.

Okay, last two questions because we're going a bit over the limit. "Weddings are more expensive in many countries nowadays when compared to the past. What's the reason behind



this? Is this a positive or negative development?" First of all, let's simplify the question. "The reason behind this" is a direct question that comes from the IELTS task 2 question.

So, what's the reason behind expensive weddings nowadays? Body paragraph one. Body paragraph two, I'm going to follow the plan laid out to me, given to me, directed to me, directed at me by the examiner which is is this a positive or negative development? So, I'm going to say that probably it's a negative development.

So, body paragraph one: the reason behind these more expensive weddings nowadays I think is social media and vapid attempts at self-promotion like keeping up with the Jones's. The main reason behind this is now it can be publicized. Now, people can publicize their own weddings. In the past, they couldn't. Now, there's an incentive to spend a lot of money. Now, all I did in that part was just generate ideas. I'd probably have to cut a few and then develop a few more in my essay planning stage, but for now, that's fine.

By the way, vapid attempts at self-promotion, vapid just means like almost useless; these silly attempts. It's not my personal viewpoint, but it's a possible viewpoint to take and the beauty of that-- and this is a podcast we'll be doing in a few weeks coming up shortly. If I say vapid attempts at self-promotion, vapid means almost worthless and you can see from there that I'm definitely not in agreement.

I definitely disagree with this point and the beautiful thing is that I didn't have to say I strongly disagree. I can just say the reasons behind more expensive weddings nowadays are basically



vapid attempts at self-promotion and the examiner-- and any reader can instantly understand my position and this is powerful. This is very higher-- this is higher level writing where you don't have to explicitly say your opinion. Anyway, we're going to go into that later in another podcast coming up shortly.

Body paragraph two: definitely a negative development, but I'm going to just acknowledge the fact that this is a memorable day and it should be cherished. Why am I going to acknowledge it? Because I want to use the terms memorable day and cherished; it should be favored, it should be saved, should be memorized for eternity so to speak.

So, I'm going to just put that as a counterpoint, but only briefly and then I'm going to jump in to the whole argument about most families starting a new life, there's a financial mountain ahead, babies, a mortgage, and spending large amounts of money on one specific day is rather frivolous. Some more vocabulary for you there. So, I'm not going to go into the details now about how we'd organize those paragraphs. We're just generating ideas.

Next one: some people believe that it is the responsibility of the people to take care of the environment. Others say it is the government that should take care of the environment. Discuss both views and state your opinion. Body paragraph one: I'm going to do exactly as I have been doing. I'm going to simplify the question. "People should take care of the environment." That is my topic. That is my position for this body paragraph. Now, my ideas are just going to be



around this position. People should take care of the environment because we are the consumers, we vote with our wallets.

That basically means if we strongly disagreed with Coca-Cola producing plastic bottles and polluting the environment, if we really strongly agreed with it, we would stop-- if we really strongly disagreed with it, we would stop buying plastic bottles, but obviously we don't feel so strongly about it and we carry on buying these bottles and so it's our fault. We should be taking care of the environment because we have the power to vote with our wallets. That's what I'm saying. We can vote with our purchases.

The next one: the throwaway culture has become considerably too prevalent. Consumers are causing horrendous damage; the Pacific garbage patch. That idea doesn't yet bond with that earlier idea about voting with our wallets. So, what I need to do now at the essay planning stage is reorganize those ideas into a way that's going to make a coherent argument. I'm not going to do it at the moment because this topic is-- this essay-- this tutorial is mainly focused on generating ideas.

Body paragraph two: let's go back to the question. "Some people believe that it is the responsibility of people to take care of the environment. Others say it is the government that should take care of the environment. Discuss both views and state your opinion." Body paragraph two: government should take care of the environment because... It's just written in shorthand form like that on purpose. I know that now I need to stick to this topic. I need to stick



to this idea. The idea was extracted directly from the question and I just put it in a simplified form so I could generate ideas.

What were my ideas? Well, government should take care of the environment because government has the power to legislate; to make rules and regulations. Government has the-- next point, government can impose fines and taxes on polluters and final point, governments are supposed to be guardians of the country which means collectively, they are—globally, they are guardians of the earth. This is only theoretical. In reality, it's not really turning out like that.

Once again, here I've just got a collection of random ideas that I need to organize now into a coherent paragraph. My conclusion: both should be doing more. As I said before, personally, you can usually get your conclusion after you've done your essay planning and you've discovered which argument you can argue the most strongest.

So, there we have it. We've got five ideas-- sorry, we've done five questions and we've looked at generating ideas for each one and I strongly recommend you do the same. That you get the list of questions, ideally recent questions and you go through methodically just brainstorming ideas, possible ideas as well.

In the online course, we have a module that does specifically this. You send in your ideas and then we review those ideas and we say okay that looks great, that looks terrible and, but we give you the list of questions and everything. We help you. We guide you through it and it's only through this feedback that we've been able to improve scores and improve student's



motivation, improve their essay writing, not just language-- not just like grammatically, but also the exam skills as well.

So, thank you very much for following along with this tutorial and as I've said before, you can get the full transcripts from our official app which is available now in the Google Play store and in the iOS store if you just search for Ben Worthington IELTS.

If you're having any struggles-- if you're having any difficulties with IELTS, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us. We'd love to help you and remember you can do this. You learned your own language. You've probably passed all your school subjects as well otherwise you wouldn't be at this level studying for IELTS. It's just a matter of putting in the work and getting your English up to scratch, getting it to that level. So, all the best. Good luck and thank you for joining me today.

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