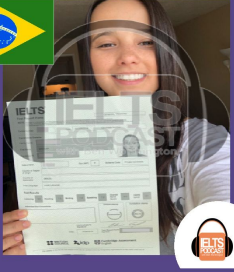



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IELTS Writing:
Mariana from Brazil
Scored 7.5
(Computer based!)

Mariana: Yes, like one point and I only had one month to study.

Ben: Wow! Wow! That is awesome. Well, done.

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.

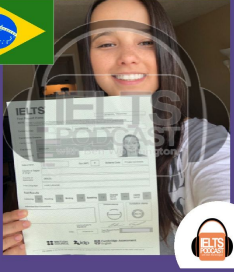

Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this episode, we're going to talk with Mariana and Mariana has got a fantastic story about how she passed IELTS. She's from Brazil. So, Mariana, could you just introduce yourself, please?

Mariana: Hi, Ben. First, I would like to appreciate you for giving me this opportunity today and as you said, I'm from Brazil. I'm 26 years old and I have finally passed IELTS thankfully to you and the amazing course. It was very good.

Ben: Thank you very much. Thank you. All right. So, why-- I know we just mentioned this previously, but for the listeners why are you taking the IELTS exam?

Mariana: I decided to take the IELTS because I am trying to immigrate to Canada and I needed at least sevens in all of the categories, right? All the parts and that's why I'm trying to immigrate to Canada and for immigration purposes I need to show a CLB 9 on the program and that requires good grades on IELTS.

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Ben: Right, right, I see. Can I ask you what your profession is?

Mariana: I have a major in marketing and communications and I used to work at a shoe company back in Brazil taking care of all the marketing events of the brand.

Ben: Interesting, Interesting. Are you working now in Canada in the same profession?

Mariana: No, currently, I'm not working. I'm still waiting for my immigration process to finish because that will give me the work permit, right? I will be allowed to work, so for now I'm just enjoying this beautiful country while I wait.

Ben: Excellent. Okay. Can you tell me how many times did you take the exam? Was it just first time or have you taken it a few times?

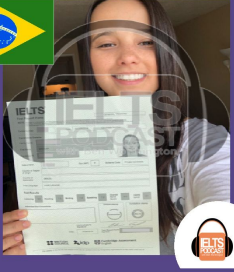

Mariana: So, I have taken the IELTS five times--

Ben: Wow! Right.

Mariana: The first time it was three years ago, so actually doesn't count, but it was my first trial so I had already some contact with it. Since I decided to immigrate to Canada I took four times. So, that was six months ago, so four times in a six months period: one in December, one in February, one in April, and now the successful one in June.

Ben: Right, right and this is in Canada, yes, not in Brazil?

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(Computer based!)

Mariana: Only the first one was in Brazil, in December. The other ones were all here in Canada and the final one was computer based because that's a new thing, right?

Ben: I see.

Mariana: They are kind of implementing the computer based still and since I had tried three times already and hadn't been successful, when I heard about the computer based, I thought it could be interesting because nowadays we type much faster than we write, right?

Ben: Yes, totally.

Mariana: And actually that gave me lots of extra time. I had 15 minutes to recheck all my work--

Ben: Wow!

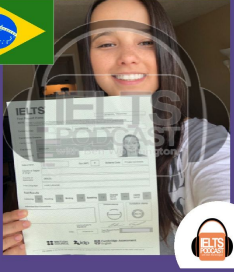

Mariana: --comparing-- when in comparison to the others I used to have three or four minutes.

Ben: Wow! Wow! That's--

Mariana: And that made a huge, huge difference for me. So, I would really recommend for everyone that they have like good computer skills. I definitely recommend it, yes.

Ben: Great advice. Great advice. I was thinking if I was taking the test, I would do exactly the same. It would have to become computer based because nowadays when we are writing pen and paper, most people, the most they are going to write is-- I don't know, 50 words unless you

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are in university, but even then if you are in university you're going to be typing up your essays and sending them.

So, you're never going to be writing more than 50 words. So, when it comes to IELTS and you've got to write 250-300 words for your task 2 and another 200 or whatever for academic task 1 then it's a challenge.

Mariana: It just take too much time. Another thing that is important to consider is that when you're writing instead of typing you have to think of the sentence before you write because if you write something wrong, you have to erase everything and start again and you just waste too much time and another good point, the computer based counts the words for you--

Ben: Yes, yes, yes, I saw that on the--

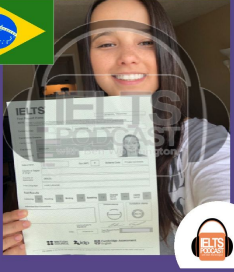

Mariana: --which is amazing.

Ben: Yes, I saw that on the screen shot. Yes, I totally agree. Just going back to what you said before about the editing that you can just like dump all your thoughts and then go back and edit. I don't think you can-- Can you copy-paste like copy--

Mariana: Yes.

Ben: Wow! That's a game changer, isn't it?

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(Computer based!)

Mariana: Yes, it's huge because you can just type whatever comes to your mind, I don't know, if you're not feeling so prepared you can just type whatever you want and then you can just edit the way you want it.

Ben: Wow! That's a game changer, isn't it? Can you take notes with pen and paper on the side at the same time?

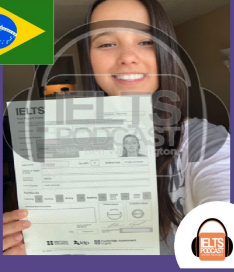

Mariana: Yes, they do give you a pen and paper. So, what I did was on the paper I wrote my main ideas for the paragraphs. So, I put like P1 this and that, P2 this and that and then I started typing, but it took me like two minutes tops to do that.

Ben: Wow! Wow! And also another advantage is you will be writing the essay exactly the same way as you were writing it when you were preparing for-- with the online course that you did, correct?

Mariana: Yes, because you were already-- like I was already practicing typing, right? While I was doing the course I was typing. I didn't write any of the essays by hand, so that's very good. I felt much more confident. I felt much more at ease. I didn't feel that much pressure as I did on the three other times.

Ben: Yes. Totally. Totally understand that. So, how were you preparing in the previous exams?

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Mariana: Well, for the first two in December and February, I didn't really thought it through and I thought that I could just do it by myself online like on YouTube or just revising some like friends materials and stuff because I felt like going from 6.5 to 7 should be super easy.

But no, it was the hardest thing I have ever done and so the first few times I didn't-- I just thought that preparing by myself would be fine and for the third time I got like online English speaking tutor which was good, but of course she showed me a couple of things, but not enough for IELTS.

The thing it's just-- you don't have to know how to speak English basically. You just have to know how to do the exam. It's like so insane. It's important to know the correct techniques and the correct structures of the sentences and how to build like a straight forward paragraph, right? They are very-- they are actually simple, right?

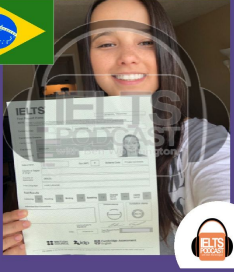

Ben: Exactly.

Mariana: You have mentioned that in many of your podcasts that I thought and it's very simple. So, this tutor was good, but she didn't show me the correct way I would say.

Ben: Right, yes. I've heard this a lot.

Mariana: And then-- sorry.

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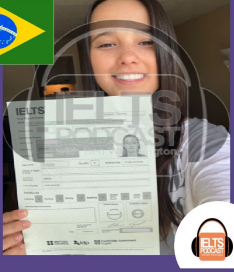

Ben: No, I was just going to say I heard this a lot and that a student will want to get ready for the exam, so they'll find a tutor online and the tutor will, as you said, will speak English perfectly probably, but that's not the same as having the exam knowledge and it's not the same as the ability to prepare students for an exam. It's-- of course, it's helpful, but you need more than helpful. You need a specific step by step plan for writing essays and also getting the feedback as well.

Mariana: Yes, the feedback is amazing and actually I remember when I heard the first feedback of my essay with you guys. Then for the first time I decided that I need some guarantee that's why I went to you guys and I remember hearing my first feedback with my boyfriend and he was like that's amazing. That's the most effective and greatest like detailed feedback that I have ever heard.

Ben: Wow!

Mariana: He was like that's so specific. I don't remember which one of them were correcting me the first time, but she was saying like, "Mariana, it's not this. That's not what you should put here. You should work on that-- this and that way." Actually guiding me and showing me the way. So, it's very good to have someone to not just saying it's right or wrong, but saying how to correct it and how to deal with that for a different subject or in different moments. That was very good.

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Ben: Yes, excellent. Excellent. I'm glad you liked that, but yes. We get it quite a lot that the students are quite surprised and it's sort of like the lights have been switched on when they get their essay back and also the essay correctors that we have they're ex-IELTS examiners as well. So, they know exactly--

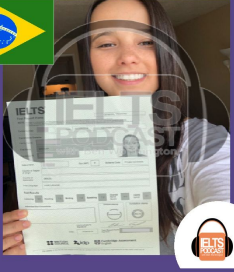

Mariana: Yes, that's very great.

Ben: Yes, they know exactly how to get the student to the next level. So, you were sending in your essays and you were getting some feedback, but before this you were with an online tutor. What about for the other sections? How were you preparing for the speaking, for example, or for the reading, for the listening?

Mariana: So, reading and listening I always practiced online. There are a bunch of good websites that you can find the whole test to try. Thankfully, I wasn't feeling so worried about it because the previous times I did very good like 8.5 or 8 so I wasn't feeling so stressed about it, but actually for this time I lost-- I lowered my reading and speaking a little bit with half a point because I think I was so focused on the writing that I couldn't think of anything else, but yes.

I always prepared for those sections online and speaking I used to practice with friends. So, what really worked with me, but only because I already felt safe is that a friend would send me a topic and I would practice the timing and the-- what I would say if I got that subject, that topic.

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Ben: I see.

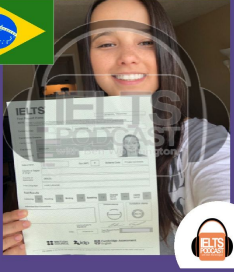

Mariana: But I would recommend having also feedback on the speaking. Mostly on the speaking then the reading and the listening because it's good to have like an examiner or a tutor telling you the right things. I only did that by myself because I wasn't feeling worried about it and because I think I have a good speaking, you know?

Ben: Yes, yes. I see.

Mariana: But I wouldn't recommend that for someone trying for the first time, for example, or if you don't feel very safe, go to someone that can give you some feedback and let you be more relaxed because it can be very stressful the speaking as well because you have to think about the topic like in one minute very fast and you have to be-- the thing is-- a good thing that I see is that you have to be giving details all the time and you cannot just say, "I live in Vancouver." Okay, so you have to extend that and talk in more details and more specifically instead of just giving out direct answers. So, it's good to have feedback.

Ben: Absolutely. Absolutely. Two points there. When you mentioned it and you said it perfectly you cannot say, "I live in Vancouver." You have to say, "I live in Vancouver in the northern part. Nearby there is a trains station that keeps me up in the evenings, but there's a beautiful park just to the west of our house and I quite enjoy it. We've got a few friends there etc. etc." I'm just--

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Mariana: That's exactly--

Ben: Yes, yes. The points you mentioned before about getting topics and practicing with your friends, so you-- I imagine you prepared for a whole wide range of topics so nothing could catch you unprepared. Is that right?

Mariana: Yes, yes. It's good to practice. In the same way with the writing, it's good to practice as many kinds of topics as you can because it can be the-- like anything. It could be anything. For the previous time, not this one, I got on the speaking, "Talk about a building in your neighborhood that is being renovated," like 14 minutes.

Ben: Wow!

Mariana: Yes, hard.

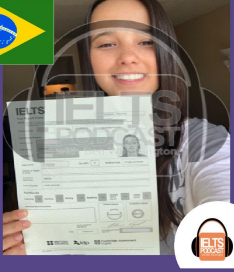

Ben: Awesome. Wow! That's a tricky one.

Mariana: This time was, "Talk about a time that you woke up very early."

Ben: Wow!

Mariana: So, why did you wake up very early? What did you do? How did you feel? Like one thing has nothing to do with the other.

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Ben: Wow!



Mariana: So, it's good to practice as much as you can because-- and I would say especially for the writing if there is one topic that you don't know anything about, practice that one as much as you can. Like for me for example, I don't know nothing about recycling, green energy, these kind of stuff and I did-- one of my essay that were corrected with you guys was about that and it took me forever to gather all the information that I wanted to put on my essay. So, the thing is practice the hard topics.

Ben: Yes, totally agree with you there. Totally agree. I remember one student telling us that she wrote out answers for the speaking for all these different cue cards that she could find. She just wrote like a hundred word answers and like discovered her weak spots just by doing this. When you were practicing your speaking, did you write out your answers or were you just doing like voice recordings and sending them back and forth?

Mariana: No, I used to write it as well because it's important for you to know how to write in a fast way like in the one minute that you have and when I couldn't write like if I was practicing on the bus, I don't know, I would like put it on my cellphone. You know, like write it on my cellphone--

Ben: I see.

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Mariana: --instead of writing with a pen, like put it on the notes and then rewriting sometimes at home just to have that on-- like in my mind and being actually prepared for the situation that you go through during the exam, right, because you are so nervous and you don't know what to expect.

Sometimes what happens is the examiner he cuts you when you are talking when you are speaking. They cut you and that's fine, but the first time you do it you are not actually expecting that so you get even more nervous. So, the more information you can gather and the more you can study and practice, you're going to feel more safe-- safer.

Ben: Absolutely. You're going to build your confidence. Yes. So, the examiner cut you off when you were talking?

Mariana: Yes, that happened two times already.

Ben: Wow! Okay.

Mariana: On the previous one and this one as well they cut me off, but I heard that's fine until some point. Of course, you can't go like out of the topic, right?

Ben: Yes, yes, exactly.

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Mariana: But if they cut you because you are like giving more details and everything, if you already answered all the questions of the cue card, that's fine, but he cannot cut you if you-- it's not good if he cuts you and you didn't answer like the question fully.

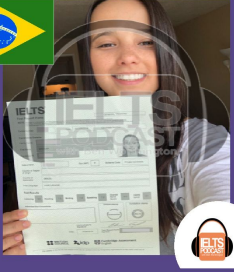

Ben: Absolutely. Absolutely. Totally agree there. Now, just going back to the climate change essay that you mentioned you said something-- you said one, it's a weak spot for you. That you're not very-- you don't know that much about it or you didn't know that much about it and when you got the question you researched about it before writing. Is that right?

Mariana: Yes, I did and instead of-- one thing that I used to do before was to look for the question that I got on Google and see other essays that were written about it. Instead of doing that, I started searching articles about the topic. So, like I don't know, the question was about green energy or like regular fuel sources, I don't know. Instead of looking for the question I used to look like what are the advantages of green energies in the modern world? I don't know, something like that to actually try to learn what the world is seeing on that topic, you know?

Ben: Yes, yes. I see.

Mariana: Because that was a very hard topic for me so I tried to go kind of deep on it. Also another topic that I found out from a friend that took the exam a little bit before me that she got a question about how immigration affects children and I felt like I never wrote anything about that.

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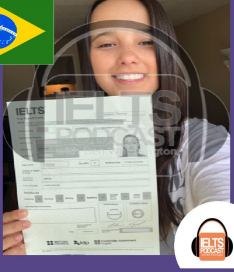

So, I went down onto Google and other sources to find out more-- especially like with the United States and everything that we know that is happening with immigration and stuff and I looked for all the articles that were talking about the children suffering to adapt and to immigrate and blah, blah, blah.

Ben: Yes, yes. This is really important because even-- you could be a native speaker and you could know the perfect exam strategy, but if you've got no idea about how to get ideas, if you've got no content in there you're still going to fail. And it's a very important, very often overlooked part of the exam. It's the ability to generate ideas.

So, I'm really interested in this because on the online course as you know, we've got that-- you've got to generate ideas for about 16 different essays as part of the starter. When you research them, do you put your answers into a word document? Do you form opinions? What happens there?

Mariana: Yes. I did especially when I was looking for these hard topics and essays, I wrote them down. Okay, I could say that, I could say this. A good topic in favor-- like a good argument in favor could be that children adapt easily to new cultures or new languages, but a disadvantage would be that, I don't know, like prejudice against different cultures, you know like. Things like that. I used to-- when I was researching for these contents I would write them down in case I

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had to write an essay about it. Also, another good thing about that is to get topic related vocabulary, right?

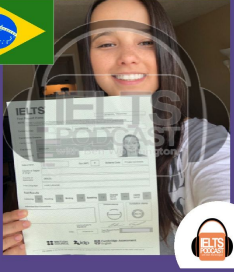

Ben: Exactly, yes.

Mariana: That is something that you always talk about also. That gives you even more safety when you are writing about something that you don't know. If you know the vocabulary well it's better to write good sentences and a strong essay.

Ben: Absolutely. Absolutely. Very good points there that you mentioned, Mariana. I completely agree and yes, it just-- I wanted to know about like how you did develop your research and how you wrote it down and as you just very, very sharply mentioned you said not only was I researching for ideas and information about the topic, you developed that to the next stage of an opinion as you just did, "it can be good for the children because the children can adapt. It could be bad because the children might be exposed to prejudice" and then also the next level is extracting the vocabulary. So, when you were extracting the vocabulary, did you just highlight the useful terms, put them in the list? What did you do?

Mariana: Since I was trying to write-- trying to create-- I'm sorry. I lost the words. I was trying to create arguments I would write words that I didn't know and the translation in Portuguese. When I didn't know the exact translation I would write it down on the side. So, I would write the possible argument, the words, and the translation in Portuguese when I didn't know exactly

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what it meant. So, for me something that, I don't know, not everyone is the same, but for me something that really works is to write it down.

I have this crazy habit of writing everything down. So, if I have to remember something I'm going to write it down. I'm going to put it in my calendar. I'm going to write it on the mirror. I'm going to do something. Post it, for me it's something that actually works and I guess is a good study method. When you write it down your brain kind of absorbs better. So, that really worked for me.

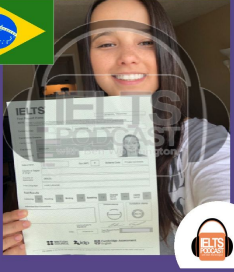

Ben: Absolutely.

Mariana: And it's something that I actually do on regular days. Like if I see a word that I don't know, I'm trying to read more books in English and sometimes I see these very different words and I-- even if I don't need them, if I don't need the words for anything, I go to the translator and I try to find out what it means and how to use it and I write it down.

Ben: Yes, absolutely. I was doing the same when I was in Spain and any new word that I found I would just write it down and I remember the-- when I first got to Spain I would go out with some new friends and we would go out to the bars and I would be writing down new words.

Then in the morning I would pull out my list and at the beginning of the list it as neat and tidy and then useful maybe like professional words and then-- but the quality just got worse and worse and worse as we went down the list and I was like okay, that was the progression of the

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night, but yes. It's useful to write them down to memorize them and I also find that if you can use them as well on the same day that definitely helps with the memorization. Yes.

Mariana: That is even better.

Ben: And just one other thing. I've got a Kindle and I'm still-- when I'm reading in English these words that I don't understand, these words-- vocabulary is so big in English and with the Kindle it's really good because you just tap it and you get the meaning, you get the definition and it saves--

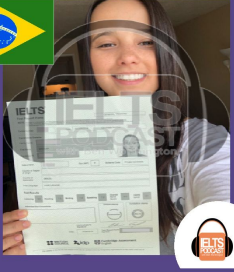

Mariana: That's good.

Ben: Yes, it saves those words as well and I've got a couple hundred to get through. I need to review them. Okay then. So, we've talked about your preparation. Now, let's quickly talk about what happened on your test day for the writing. It was on IELTS on computer. Do you remember your question?

Mariana: Yes, it was-- I don't remember like grammatically exactly how it was written, but it was older people is increasing. Some say that this brings advantages to the country. Others say that it can have negative-- it can have drawbacks. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

Ben: I see.

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Mariana: I have never wrote anything about that.

Ben: This is our next question. I was going to say had you researched it beforehand?

Mariana: No.

Ben: Right.

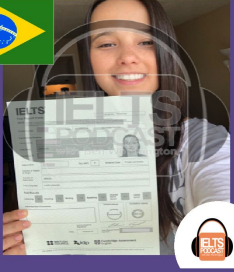

Mariana: I have never written anything about it.

Ben: Right.

Mariana: Thankfully, I knew the words elderly which was very helpful and I tried to think of common sense and what I think about life expectancy getting higher and people living-- elderly people having healthier habits and thinking about even my grandfather and things like that. I actually just followed the question and I started with the advantages on the first paragraph second paragraph what could be the drawbacks. I talked about how new regulations and legislations would have to be put in place by the government to protect the safety of elderly people at work and I tried to follow that and I gave my opinion saying that it actually has many advantages to this development I would say and I got it. I actually give many-- basically all the credit to you guys and the C2 template that was amazing.

Ben: Excellent.

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Mariana: Very helpful. I passed 250 words easily which was a hard thing for me on the previous tests. I had a very-- it was very hard for me to go over 250 words and I was always worried about accomplishing that and it was very-- even though it was a hard topic, I think with the vocabulary that I had already and just common knowledge about quality of life and how people live nowadays, that was very good.

Ben: Yes, I think having this awareness of international affairs and just-- as you said a common sense approach to it. Just thinking through this logically and then sprinkling in the vocabulary that's going to help you boost your score like you just said like life expectancy and terms like this, the examiners they love, they love that.

Mariana: Because we cannot just create and invent crazy arguments, right?

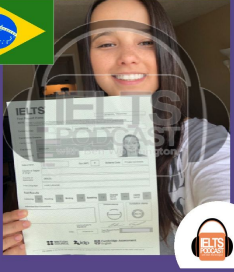

Ben: Exactly, yes.

Mariana: It has to make sense.

Ben: Two things: you mentioned you thought about your granddad, yes, but you didn't write in the essay my grandad will be 70 next year etc. etc., no?

Mariana: No, I don't know why I don't have-- it's not so easy for me to give examples from my life. I have seen many essays where people-- of course I said in my opinion blah, blah, blah, but

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(Computer based!)


of course, I've seen in other essays people saying like for example, my boyfriend and I live... something like that.

For me, it's not something that I can really apply on my essays. So, for me it's easier-- I remember you talking about one of your podcasts that sometimes it's easier to go opposite to what you believe. Sometimes it's easier to write about something that is opposite what you actually support or believe just to be easier to write and for me that's something that works. So, sometimes if the topic talks about gender equality even though I will support gender equality it may be easier for me to write the opposite.

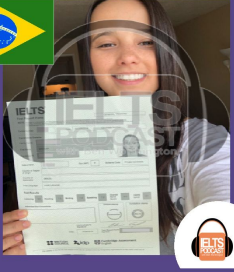
Ben: Right. Yes, yes and at the end of the day, we're looking for points in our ability to communicate, not for points in our beliefs and we don't need to communicate our beliefs, we just need to communicate a powerful argument. So, yes, yes. Okay, I was just asking at the granddad because what I see a lot is essays like you've been seeing online is like my girlfriend and I we live in ... or my granddad is turning 70 and I always recommend transforming these examples, personal examples into more academic examples. S

o, if it was something like, I don't know, my granddad is approaching 70 and will soon need assistance, we could say something like most adults-- most elderly or most senior people approaching 70 will most likely need assistance as they progress through the years etc. etc.

Mariana: Exactly. It's even easier to make it more coherent and more easier to read, right?

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Ben: Absolutely

Mariana: Instead of putting up personal example I think.

Ben: Exactly. Totally agree and then the other point that you mentioned earlier in our conversation that you sat there in the exam room and you had a pen and paper nearby and you just put your ideas for P1 and P2 and then started writing. Is that right?

Mariana: Yes, exactly. So, since I took the test computer based, I wrote it down everything on-- I typed it, but they give you a pen and paper. So, if you want to write anything in there, they are not going to consider that, but you can write anything you want. So, on the paper I just put my thoughts for the P1, my thoughts for the P2 with the examples that I was going to use and after that like it took me two minutes with the techniques that I learned from the course and after that I started typing and by the end I had 15 minutes to recheck everything.

Ben: Wow! That's beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. 15 minutes is a luxury.

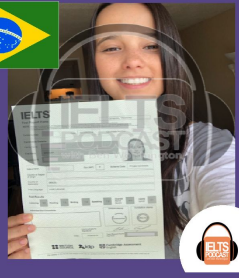
Mariana: I don't know how everyone feels, but I always start with the task 2.

Ben: Yes, yes.

Mariana: It's longer. So, I started with task 2. I remember when I finished task 2 I still had 30 minutes. The clock is counting on the computer as well. I still had 30 minutes then I did task 1 in

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15 minutes and then I still had the 15 minutes to correct which was great because I actually-- when you're typing, you can have-- you can type too fast and change one letter and I did that.

I wrote world with the 'l' in the wrong place. So, that also gave me time to recheck and see if it was coherent. One thing for me that I found out with your course is that I wasn't being-- on my first essays I wasn't accomplishing the task achievement requirement. So, I had the time to recheck and see if I was actually answering the question the correct way and if I wasn't going off topic.

Ben: Absolutely yes. This is a very important factor as well: to double triple check that we are on topic. Okay, well that is fantastic. So, in the end, what were your scores, Mariana?

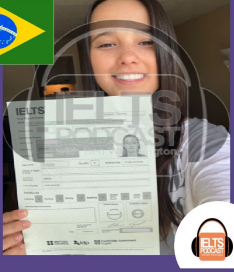

Mariana: Well, in the end after three 6.5s I jumped to 7.5 in the writing.

Ben: Wow! Wow! That is awesome. Well done, Mariana. Fantastic.

Mariana: Thank you very much. I'm very happy. Finally, like I'm feeling actually relieved and it was-- I'm very grateful that I found you guys even though I wish I had found you earlier so I didn't have to spend so much money because for the other times apart from spending money with the tests, I asked for a remark two times.

Ben: Wow! Okay. Wow!

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Mariana: So more money there and I'm very happy to jump to 7.5.

Ben: Yes, absolutely and now you can move on to the next challenge, yes?

Mariana: Yes, exactly.

Ben: Excellent and final question before we finish, what would you say to anybody who's thinking about joining the online course?

Mariana: Really put an effort on it because even if the course is amazing, if you don't actually dedicate your time and actually you know make a decision to study and understand the feedback. It's all worth it. Actually put your effort on it and write your essays and ask questions if you had-- I remember that I sent several emails with questions because I had doubts or if I didn't understand something. Ask, go after it and don't give up. It's going to work out.

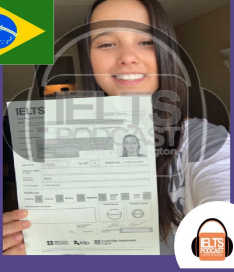

Ben: Absolutely. Yes, yes. And just to clarify, when you get the feedback put effort into studying the feedback from the--

Mariana: Yes.

Ben: Exactly. Right. Right.

Mariana: Definitely. After you receive-- of course the first time you're not going to have feedback before the first test, right, but the minute you get the first feedback, put your effort

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on it. If you don't understand ask and write the second feedback-- and write the second essay I'm sorry as fast as you can and really-- if you work and if you put your effort on it, you're going to get it.

Ben: Absolutely, yes. Absolutely and a whole band score improvement. That is just genius. Fantastic.

Mariana: Yes, like one point and I only had one month to study.


Ben: Wow! Wow! That is awesome. Well done, but one very important thing that you mentioned and I think a lot of-- all of us we kind of forget this. That IELTS and just like any test and any big challenge, it's not a spectator sport, you have to get in there and you have to get involved. Just binging on YouTube videos isn't preparation, but studying your feedback, studying your answers, doing research on possible topics, all of this is getting the--

Mariana: Practicing the hard topics that you don't know anything about.

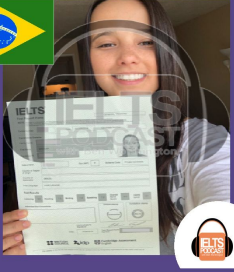
Ben: Exactly, exactly.

Mariana: Because you can be anything. You can get anything.

Ben: Exactly. When I send a question out to the student and they reply "This question is a bit hard. Can I write about this topic instead?" I'm like come on. Come on! "Okay, yes. I'll send you

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this question. It's a bit easier." In the exam you can do the same, put your hand up and ask them if they can have an easier topic.

Mariana: Of course, I wish that we could choose on the exam day. That would be amazing, but since life is not as easy as we want, practice as much as you can and the course is definitely worth it. It's definitely very good to have someone like people with actually real knowledge on the test and how to get the best preparation.

Ben: Absolutely. I completely agree there. Okay, Mariana. Well, thank you very much for doing this recording.

Mariana: Thank you very much.

Ben: And that we wish you all the best with your Canada application.

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com