



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 task 2: recent questions with ideas and sample answers for you to use in your next IELTS writing task. So, in this tutorial, we are going to look at some recent questions and I'm going to give you some topic ideas. I'm going to give you an insight as to how I would attack each of these questions and if you listen to these enough, you'll see a pattern developing.

You can use this pattern for your own writing task 2 essays. I strongly recommend you do because it's straight forward and it's quite easy to use once you get the hang of it. The only issue though is if you've got no ideas about the subject. If you've got no ideas about crime, for example, and crime in society, then you need to identify-- first you need to identify that that is a weak spot then identify and become aware and realize that you don't know anything about crime in society and don't be ashamed.

It's completely normal. We do not wake up in the morning thinking I'd love to read a newspaper article about crime in Florida, for example. Just doesn't happen. So, don't worry about it. However, be worried about it if you want to pass the IELTS exam. So, you need to realize that you will probably have weak spots on topics that you dislike.

Common topics that people dislike are economics, crime, maybe employment, things like this. Just stuff that we probably wouldn't read that much about. So, what you need to do is start reading about it. Start collecting vocabulary about this topic. Start generating your own



viewpoints, your own opinions. For example, do you think capital punishment is a good thing or a bad thing? Just questions like this that you need to sort of like really start reading about the subject, understanding the pros and the cons of each of the subjects and then forming your own opinions.

Now, if you hear a question in this episode, in this tutorial and you still even after listening to me and you still don't know that much about it, then jump online and start filling your brain with this information. Right then, let's jump straight into it.

First question: Some people believe that if people are allowed to work after the age of 60, it will cause some problems. Do you agree or disagree? Now, I can hear a lot of people saying what? Allowing people to work after the age of 60? What! Who cares? I've never thought about this in my life. Don't worry. Don't worry. I can help you out here, but if that was you then jump online and just search for working or senior citizens working or working after the age of 60.

Anyway, here is my plan, my essay plan. I'm going to say it creates a lot of problems. I agree. It creates a lot of problems and then for paragraph two, I'm going to say I disagree. I'm going to say it doesn't cause problems. It's a good thing. Then for conclusion, I'm going to just give myself some wiggle room and basically just set up the conclusion and say yes, for some sectors people over 60 should not be allowed to work, but for other sectors they can work. All right?

Now, paragraph one, as I said, I'm going to say just a quick-- let's just rewind a few seconds there. I've got an idea and I've got a plan for each paragraph now and I know where I'm going



to finish. I'm not just freestyling. I'm not just making up as I go along and because I know what I'm going to be writing for paragraph one and for paragraph two, I've got it clear. Now I know what to write in my introduction and I also know where I'm going to finish with my conclusion.

This is insanely important because if you know what you're going to include, like I said, you can talk about what you're going to write about in your intro and you know where you're going to finish in your conclusion and because you know you're going to put this in your conclusion then you should know to keep on topic and to keep on track for both body paragraphs.

So, this is why the planning stage is insanely important and this is why we drill it into the students who do the online course. We absolutely drill it into them and say look-- when we give the feedback, we're really conscious and like hey, did you really do the planning? Did you really assign an idea or a few ideas for each paragraph? Because it looks as though random thoughts popped into your mind and you just included them in your paragraph.

We call students out if they are doing it like that because it's not a healthy way and it's not going to create coherent high-scoring paragraphs, which is what we want for you, okay? This is what we want and this is why I'm stressing over this simple idea of each sentence having a task to do and each body paragraph explaining one idea or one position. It's probably the best way to describe it.

So, let's jump into it. Some people believe that if people are allowed to work after the age of 60, it will cause some problems. Do you agree or disagree? Body paragraph one: I totally agree.



This is a crazy idea. It's going to cause lots of problems. Body paragraph two: I completely disagree. The old people in the workforce have lots to offer. My positions. Let's jump into it.

Paragraph one: yes, they're going to cause lots of problems because of their sight. It's generally accepted that the older you get, the poorer your senses are. You start losing your hearing. You start losing your vision. Your attention starts to-- your attention span-- good vocabulary, starts to decline. There is a technology gap. With new technology coming in it's sometimes harder for the older generation to adapt and this can be dangerous.

All of these points, all these biological factors that usually happen to the elderly are seriously important because if the elderly person is working with machinery, it opens the door to dangerous situations. Some very important vocabulary here; blue collar work and also a very important point.

I see a lot of students writing about old people. Old is a little bit dis-respectful, so we need to think of some synonyms. So, we're going to use senior citizens, the elderly, people of the third age. We can even say the grey workforce as well, but the important term I want to use in this paragraph is blue collar work. Blue collar work means on the factory floor handling machinery and usually physical work of some form.

So, I've laid out my ideas. Now, I'm going to give an example and I'll say something like this situation or this lack of declining biological assets-- no, that's not the right word. This declining biological performance, which is common in senior citizens is so common and is a real life-- a



real part of life that-- so much so that in some countries senior citizens are required by law to retake their exam-- driving exam once they reach retirement age.

And that's a very strong example because it's a government law in some countries that if you're over 60 you need to retake the exam. No messing around because they've recognized that the elderly are losing the physical senses and they are becoming dangerous on the road. You might hear me smile there, but I know for a fact that it's the case and I think it's Norway actually where they require the citizens to retake the exam. How do I know that? Well, I was just browsing online and I just-- something caught my eyes, so I read it and for some reason it just stuck in my brain.

Anyway, part two-- body paragraph two: I disagree. I disagree because-- I disagree that-- I'm just going to go back to the question now. You should always be doing this. Always go back to the question to make sure that you are on topic. So, I disagree that people cause problems or that elderly people cause problems in the workplace. I disagree and I'm going to say that the elderly can be better qualified at the job because they might have more life experience, more insight, more wisdom.

Also, if people are not allowed to work once they reach 60, it could create a huge pension burden for the country especially in the west where we've got an aging population and we've got a lack of young people entering the workforce and we've got these people entering retirement and the workforce is shrinking especially in Japan.



So, what I'm going to say then is for example, most-- pretty much what I just said. Most western countries have a serious demographic deficit of an aging workforce. How beautiful was that sentence? Aging workforce, demographic deficit; these are band 9 phrases. Obviously, if you use them in your essay, it doesn't mean automatically you're going to get a band 9, but if you can use them grammatically-- in a grammatically accurate fashion and at the right time as in lexical resource, the right use then it's definitely going to help your score.

Also, the other word I used the pension burden. Burden means something like strain or something that you have to carry. I don't know. Looking after my younger brother when I was younger was a burden because I couldn't go out at night, whatever. All right?

So, anyway e.g. for example, most western countries have a serious demographic deficit of an aging workforce. A country simply cannot prosper if all of its wealth goes towards a pension. For example, in Japan, the retirement age used to be 55. There are talks in the legislative institutions of increasing this to 70 to compensate for the lack of workers entering the employment pool.

Why did I say employment pool? Because we've already used workforce and I don't want to be repeating myself. So, there we go and also why did I use legislative institution? Basically because it's points, all right? Basically because it sounded better than the government. Okay, so I've got my example and I've-- part one: it's going to be seriously dangerous for the workplace,



for blue collar work. Part two: it's fantastic because there is strains and burdens on the national economy and we need these older people to keep on working.

So, what's my conclusion? I'm going to say for some sectors it should be illegal or at least the workers should be medically tested, but for to other jobs, especially white collar work, it should be okay. I'll probably modify that last phrase. It should be okay because it's too informal. It's too relaxed. I'll probably say especially white collar. It could be a tremendous boon for the economy. It's a small upgrade there.

So, as you can see there, I kind of wiggled out of taking a set position. I said it's okay in these conditions and it's okay in these conditions. Probably slightly more complicated than it needed to be, but I knew I had strong arguments for both of the sides of the argument and also I really wanted to use blue collar work and white collar work.

White collar work is usually the office environment where people are using their minds and then blue collar work, as I said, is on the factory floor, maybe building cars, maybe in a food processing company, or whatever. So, there we go. I put a lot of time into planning that and I think you should do too.

If you don't have any ideas, jump online, start researching it, then write down your ideas. Don't worry if it's taking you forever just to make an essay plan for part one-- sorry, for task 2 because eventually, the process becomes much faster. If you're doing the online course with us, then it becomes so fast it's almost like muscle memory that you don't even realize what you're doing.



You're just like okay, see the question, cut it up, start thinking of ideas, drop them into the framework, straight forward, go, go, go, go, go, finish the essay in 35 minutes, 5 minutes to review your work and boost your score. How beautiful is that? Right then, let's move on.

Question number two: Some parents think it is good to have mobile phones for their children. Others disagree with it. Discuss both sides and give your opinion. Right. Hopefully, you know the structure. You know the process now. What are we going to do? Well, we're going to break down the question and we're going to assign ideas to paragraphs.

Some parents think it's a good idea to have mobile phones for the children. Yes, I completely agree. Paragraph two, others disagree. So, paragraph two is it's not a good idea to have mobile phones for their children. The question then says discuss both sides. I've done that. I've assigned a side for each paragraph and then in the conclusion, I'm going to give my opinion just because it's easier.

Now, paragraph one: it's a good idea kids have mobile phones. By the way, I would not use kids because kids is informal. I'll say children and I'll say it's a good idea because they can stay in contact with their parents, it's safer, and they can also be used for making a child's life better.

How can they make the child's life better? Well, they can download an algebra app. A child can download a language learning app. A child can download IELTS podcast Android or iPhone app, okay? So, what I'm saying is that they can download apps that enable the child to make use of downtime and let the child study and learn something in their free time rather than just, I don't



know, maybe playing games on the streets, which obviously have their value, but as we move towards a more information orientated economy, then the value of developing mental capabilities has definitely increased, whatever.

So, anyway, the main point is that it's a good idea because it's safer, because the child can keep in contact with the parents and also it enriches a child's life. Originally, I did write making better, but then I thought enriching was a higher, better word to use. And it enriches a child's life because they can start learning new things that they have an interest in and before they couldn't do it because they just had a boring textbook. Now, they have interactive-- that would be a good phrase to use as well.

And then I can just give an example. Recent studies showed students learned 26% faster when using the IELTS podcast Android and iPhone apps. Obviously, I wouldn't write that, but you can give an example. Recent studies show students learned 33% faster when using memory game apps on the app store, whatever.

Paragraph two: phones are bad. They are undoubtedly detrimental. I just wanted to use undoubtedly there. All I'm saying is that without question, they are bad. Also, I upgraded the word bad to detrimental because I wanted to get more points for lexical resource and I'm going to use some other useful vocabulary.

I said teenagers are quickly becoming screenagers and missing out on physical interactions and games. So, screenagers is just teenagers constantly looking at their phone. Also, I changed



quickly to swiftly. Teenagers are swiftly becoming screenagers missing out on physical interactions and games. That's fine and now what I can do is going to an example.

Social media has a negative or has been shown to have is probably the better phrase there-- has been shown to have a negative impact on confidence and contributes to cyberbullying. So, some really good terms there. Instead of saying bad, I said a negative impact on... Instead of saying mobile phones, I said social media. I could even say mobile phone social media. Then also I said cyberbullying which is another topic specific vocabulary term.

So, has a negative impact on confidence and contributes to cyberbullying and other trends such as body dysmorphic disorder. I did have to research that term, but it's a very useful term; body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). And then I can go into an example that I'll probably just invent.

For example, a recent Harvard study showed that students with mobile phones were three times more likely to suffer from anxiety, BDD, or cyberbullying than their counterparts who did not have a mobile phone. Evidence that proves my case. Although it's just invented, it sounds credible and that's perfectly fine.

The examiner is not going to fact check you, but it does have to be believable as I've said a million times before. You cannot say something like, for example, recent studies show that students with mobile phones-- all students with mobile phones undoubtedly end up studying at



Harvard because of the improvement in their school scores. That's just completely unbelievable, but the other example I gave was credible.

Now then, my conclusion. Obviously, I'm just going to briefly mention both cases and then I'm going to say just for simplicity case-- for the argument of simplicity, I'm going to say although there are some dangers, the dangers only come with overuse and therefore the advantages such as increased education opportunities definitely outweigh the disadvantages.

I got to make sure that I've got my opinion in there, in my conclusion. So, I'm going to say that they are good. That they are good and I'm going to say that phones are bad, but only when they are overused because you probably cannot suffer from cyberbullying if you're only on your phone for ten minutes, five minutes a day. You could probably suffer from cyberbullying and BDD if you're on your phone six hours a day, for example. So, it's quite a logical conclusion there.

Final one, here we go. Some people think that schools should select students according to their academic capabilities. Probably going to be my paragraph one. Others believe that it is better to have students with different abilities study together. Probably going to be paragraph two. Discuss both views and give your own opinion. So, you know the deal now. We're splitting up the question and we're assigning parts of the question to paragraphs. So, paragraph one: students-- where is it now? Schools should select students on their academic ability. Good idea



because same speed for the whole class, can go fast as possible, selecting them on their academic ability is much fairer as well.

Three points and then what I'll do is develop one of those points usually with an example. For example, if-- and this is a hypothetical example. If you can do this, fantastic. You can just employ the conditional tense-- the conditional into your paragraph. You're probably going to pick up points. We've got a module about how to do this because it is a very useful technique.

Here we go. For example, if the student has behaved badly the entire year and subsequently got lower grades, why should that student be placed in a class with hard working dedicated students? I could probably rephrase that actually so we don't have the why, but as you can hear, we've just got the hypothetical example there that proves the case. We could even maybe add, for example, recent studies have shown...

Actually, I did and I put furthermore, studies show that schools that make classes based on ability have much higher levels of student satisfaction. What I wanted to do was just upgrade from much higher levels of student satisfaction to schools who make classes based on ability have statistically higher levels of student satisfaction. How much better does that sound?

The online course is full of tutorials and examples and basically words which you can substitute and upgrade your language for. So, if you know that your writing sounds pretty basic, then you can have a look at the online course. Have a look at the framework we've got there. We've got



the C2 template and you can see that you can easily incorporate higher level words and higher level sentences just by substituting them exactly as I've done before, all right?

So, just that last part of the paragraph is furthermore, the good linking device there. Furthermore, studies show that schools who make classes based on-- I wouldn't say make. How can I say? Who formulate? Who register? Who-- I don't know. I'd have to rephrase that. Who make classes based on ability have statistically higher levels of student satisfaction. How good does that sound?

Paragraph two: different abilities studying together is a bad idea. It's a terrible idea. For example, language learning. If you have different students-- sorry. If you have students at a different ability, some are severely bored and others are severely challenged and can just give up. So, it's a terrible idea.

Then I can just talk about for example, a report on traditional classroom language environment showed that... and then I'll just rephrase what I just said before. If it's too easy, they switch off. If it's too hard, they give up. So, this is why there are better alternatives. So, just going back to the question is different abilities studying together is a bad idea because the class isn't suitable for everybody.

Then I could even give a suggestion, which would be much better to choose specialist online courses where students work at their own pace or at their own speed. Just a subtle hint there. Hope you don't mind, but I do feel strongly about this, so that's why I wanted to mention it. I



did a podcast with a Brazilian podcaster just yesterday actually and you can hear me rant about yes, traditional classrooms are terrible. You get put in there with I don't know, two Saudis, three Chinese, four Germans, and then you are expected to learn the language blah, blah, blah and we-- I was ranting because we were in agreement, so anyway-- And we kind of concluded that online courses are the modern way and the most suitable way to teach and to learn nowadays.

Anyway, conclusion: Selecting students based on ability does not only improve class effectiveness, student happiness, but also increases engagement. Therefore, it is predicted that this style of classroom organization is set to prosper and then just... that's enough. Let me just go back to the question. Discuss both views and give your own opinion. So yes, I think I do give my own opinion there because in both cases-- no, I didn't actually.

Paragraph one: I said it's a good idea. Paragraph two: it's a bad idea. Because I've done two sides of the coin, I definitely explicitly need to say which one I favor, okay? So, I'll put something like to conclude, I'm strongly in favor of selecting students based on ability because it not only improves class effectiveness and students happiness, but also increases engagement. I need to rewrite that just to make it stronger and crystal clear that this is my position. This is where I stand on the issue.

Right, that is everything from me today. Thank you very much for listening. If you enjoyed the podcast, please go over to iTunes, to Spotify, to Google Play and give us five stars. We are



climbing up the rankings and it's all thanks to you. I think we're number one in all of them. I want to keep that because we're doing a good job all of us.

The team, the essay correctors, Nadyne, Helen, Cate, we're on a winning path and I want to keep going. We've got momentum and it's just like when you're preparing for IELTS. If you get momentum, you get feedback, you realize where you're going wrong and you implement what you've learned and then you write your essay immediately. The faster you go, the more momentum you get, the easier it gets as well, okay?

And as I said before, keep working. Try and get into a habit. Try and get like a streak-- one of those habit apps you know where you can just check in each day and you get a streak of five days on the track. It's really motivating. It's really motivating. Trust me on this one. So yes, if you enjoyed the podcast, please give us those five star reviews.

Also, come to ieltpodcast.com. We can help you there as well. There's lots of model essays. There's lots of tutorials and probably the best thing you can do while you are there is sign up for email list.

Final thing that I'd like to mention is if you know anybody who's struggling, please send them the link and get them to start listening to IELTS podcast. We'd love to help them too. Remember we've got the online course with the guarantee of Jump to Band 7 or It's Free.



That's really straight forward and you can complete it in about two weeks or two years as long as you want to because what happens is you watch the tutorials. You implement what you've learned. Then you send us the work. Our ex-IELTS examiners review your work, give you feedback and in the meantime you're watching the next tutorials and then you implement the new material that you've learned into your next essay writing assignment and this is how you progress through the course and this is how you improve through feedback and it's a powerful effective way. That's why every month, we've got successful students coming on the show and sharing how they did it.

Also, remember you can get your essays corrected at ieltspodcast.com/essaycorrectionservice. Have a look at that service if you want some feedback and if you're looking to improve. That's me-- that's everything from me today. Thank you very much for listening. If you've got any suggestions or ideas for future episodes, please get in contact. We've got some fantastic episodes coming up actually. I'm quite excited. Some new guests, some new topics and we're going to do a speaking series with a speaking expert which I'm quite excited about. So, that's everything. Have a great day. Keep chin up. Keep working. You will get there. Take care.

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