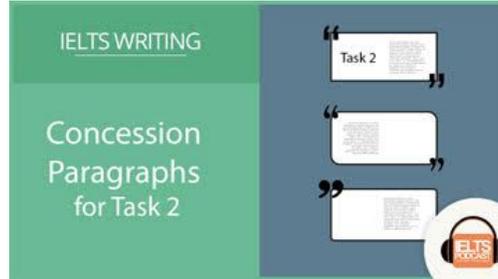


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INTRODUCTION

Ellen: Hi, everybody. This is Ellen here and I'm here to do a new tutorial for you all. In this tutorial, **we're going to talk about task 2 essays** and I want specifically to go over a question type that we see a lot in IELTS. So, the question type I'm looking at today is to what extent do you [agree or disagree essays](#).

This is a question type that really stumps not only IELTS test takers but also IELTS tutors because it's just not 100% clear what you should do. This is not the case with a lot of other essay types. For example, when you have a discuss the advantages and disadvantages and give your opinion essay, well that couldn't be clearer; advantages, disadvantages, opinion.



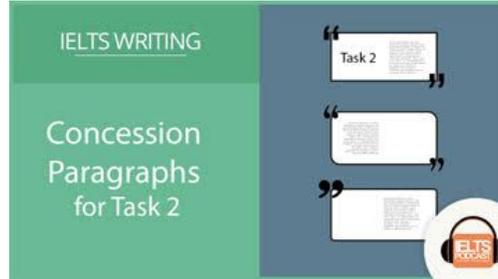
So, that's pretty simple, but here a lot of discussion has centered around well, do I talk about one side? Do I talk about that I totally agree? Do I talk about the fact that I totally disagree or do I do something in the middle? What I have found is that it's really all in the actual question.

CONCESSION

What do I mean? I mean that when you look at a nice sample of these questions you'll find that there's some word or some expression that's very extreme or very absolute and it generally oversimplifies the issue. So, this is where **concession** comes in. What do we mean by concession?

Well, **let's talk about what the word concession and its verb concede means.** Basically, **concession is when you may have your view point and you may have the side that you believe in, that you support. However, you can see how there is some validity to the other side as well.**

Now, why is this important? Basically, when you concede, you show an understanding of the actual debate, aware of the controversy and it shows that you are a mature thinker. It shows

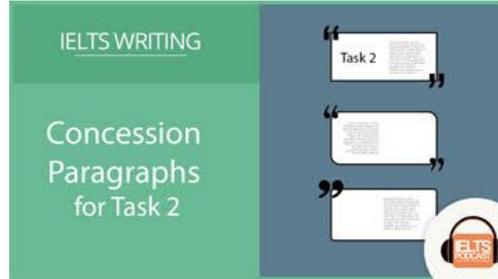


that you have looked at the issue from all of its sides and you can come up with a reasoned mature response.

So, you're probably thinking well, Ellen, I am taking an English test. Why is this important? Well, it is important if you are aiming for one of those higher band scores. So, **if you are aiming for a 7 or an 8, this is really important. You want to show that you can think and write complex ideas in English.** So, this is why we want to have a concession paragraph. What do we mean by that?

Basically, a **concession paragraph is one where you'll talk about the side you don't really support before going on to the side that you do support.** So, essentially what I'm telling you is yes, decide to talk about both sides of the issue. Okay.

So, in order to make my point a little clearer, I want to show you some IELTS questions that have come up. They are from different sources, really. Some are from the British Council, some are from Cambridge IELTS books, some are just kind of found on multiple sites on the internet. To show you what a concession paragraph would be in practice, I want to talk about some essay questions that I have found.



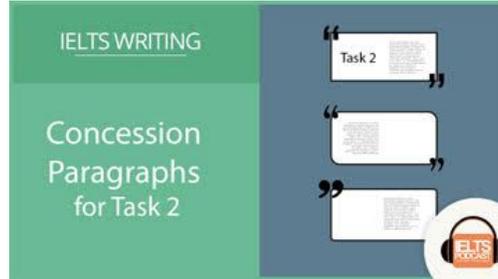
CONCESSION APPLIED ON SOME TASK 2 QUESTIONS

So, let's take a look at the first question which is from the British Council website. The question is: ***A person's worth nowadays seems to be judged according to social status and material possessions. Old fashioned values such as honor, kindness, and trust no longer seem important. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?***

This is one that's kind of wordy, so you have to definitely read the question a couple of times. You have this extreme position though. Look at some of the key words again with me. We are judged on social status and material possessions. So, it's taking this as a given and then it says honor, kindness, and trust no longer seem important.

So, if you take that second statement, that's very extreme. We can all pretty much agree that social status and material possessions are important and we are judged by them often whether we like it or not, but if you look at the second statement, it does seem a little extreme and a little absolute that these values are no longer important or no longer seem important.

The first thing that I want to suggest is **how to write your position**. Those of you who have heard [some of my podcasts before on task 2](#) know that I say always, always, always make your position clear from your introduction. If you want to get a band 7 and higher in task



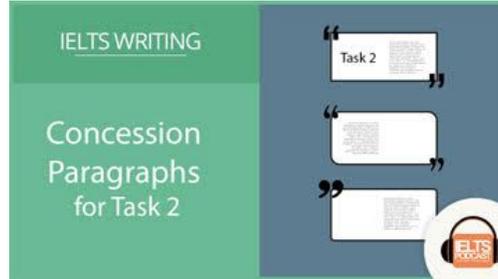
achievement then it's extremely important you do this. I want to give you some suggestions on how you could first write your position in your introduction on this particular question.

One of my favorite words to begin these sentences is while. It's a great word to show contrast, so pretty much all the sentences that I wrote here begin with while. They're nice, easy, clear, and it's pretty much like a catch all. Let's take a look at the sentence I wrote here in order to express my position.

While we clearly live in a materialistic society that puts great worth on money and status, principles like integrity and honesty remain a core part of who we are. What am I really saying here? I'm saying yes, it's true we are judged according to social status and material possessions, but we really place a lot of value on honor, kindness, and trust.

So, I'm disagreeing with that idea that they are no longer important. Yes, we are judged on our material possessions and status, but we're still people with integrity at the end of the day. So, it's a partial agreement. That's what I would write for my introduction here.

Now, one place where people kind of I guess run into some trouble when they decide to partially agree is in that concession paragraph and how they start it. The first thing that I want to say before I go into that is the order of your paragraphs. It's really important that the

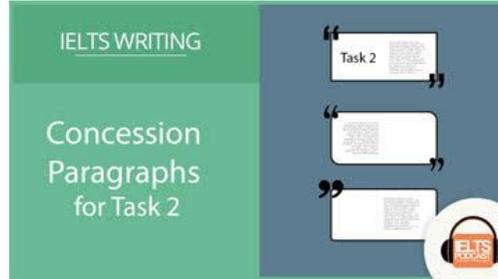


concession paragraph comes right after your introduction and then the second body paragraph would be the side that you support more.

Why is this important? Well, because this is a convention not only in writing but also in debate as well. We first we talk about the side that we disagree with and then we talk about the side that we do agree with. This gives our argument i.e. the side that we support, it gives it more weight, it kind of acts like an anchor, and it remains fresher in the mind of the reader.

So, the first thing we need to remember is that the concession paragraph is our first body paragraph. That's number one. The second thing that I want to remind everybody about is that we don't want to use words like some people think, some people say or there is a popular opinion that. Nobody asked you about other people's opinions. The essay specifically wants to know your opinion.

While it's appropriate to use these some people say, some people think or it is commonly believed etc. etc. in a discuss both sides and give your opinion essay, it would be okay to do that there. It's not okay to do it here because the only opinion we are concerned about is yours. So, we don't want to hear what other people think. We want to hear that this is your belief.

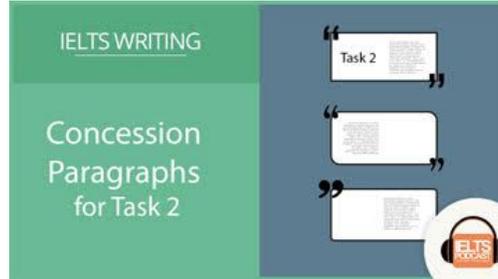


So, that's really important when you're writing a concession paragraph. **You need to express both sides of the issue as if they are your beliefs.** So, none of this some people think, some people say, it is commonly thought, it is commonly believed etc.

MORE AGREE OR DISAGREE ESSAY TYPES

Let's look at some more of these to what extent do you agree or disagree essay types, so we can come up with some more position statements. The next one comes from Cambridge 13. The question states: ***Some people believe that nowadays we have too many choices. To what extent do you agree or disagree?***

Now again, this is one of those where you could-- some people would be tempted to agree; say yes, we have too many choices. We have this option, we have-- I don't know, Netflix, we have HBO, we have the internet which gives us so much information. Yes, this is too many... It's very tempting to do that and to just side with one side of the argument here; either for it or against it, but again, I want you to remember what I said about absolute words and extreme words.

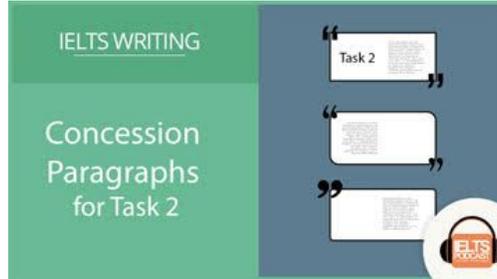


Here for me, the phrase that really needs to be underlined is there's too many choices. It's not saying that we have a lot of choices. It's saying that we have too many. So, the underlying meaning here is that this is a negative thing. We have so many choices that it is bad for us.

So, when you look at it like this, you have to ask yourself, is it damaging for us to have so many choices? Again, you can use this partial agreement with it and this is again where you'll want to use a concession paragraph. So, my position statement reads like this: While it is true that we have many choices in our life and this can lead to confusion, on the whole, I believe this is more of a benefit than a hindrance.

Clearly, I have rephrased the question and I've shown that I can see both sides of the issue. So, what did I say here to show that I partially agree? I said that we have many choices and this can lead to confusion. Yes, I accept. I concede that there isn't a negative aspect to having so many choices. However, in the end, I support this. I think this is a better thing.

In my concession paragraph, I would probably say something like nowadays, we are spoiled for choice in every aspect of our lives; from what we choose to study at university to what kind of career we want. Even our family choices, our personal life choices have really opened up with more and more people deciding to stay single or never get married and have children. There are so many options for us that this sometimes leads to confusion because people don't know



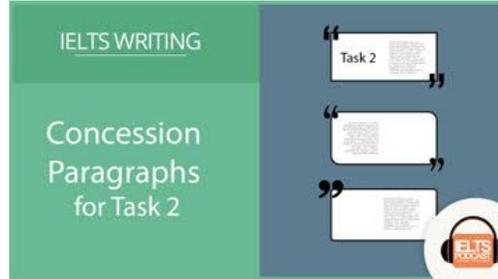
what the right choice for them is and this can lead people to sometimes making bad mistakes etc. etc.

And then in the other paragraph where I discuss my view point, I would say despite the confusion that may be caused by having many choices, in the end it allows us to lead lives that are more in line with our beliefs and our desires. So, that's how I would talk about the paragraphs-- that's how I would basically begin the concession paragraph and then how I would begin the paragraph that I actually support.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE

Let's look at another one of these. The next one comes from Cambridge 9, IELTS 9. ***Some people believe that unpaid community service should be a compulsory part of high school programs. To what extent do you agree or disagree?*** Again, the word that I've underlined here is the word compulsory.

What I have decided to do is say yes, you know community service is great, but I don't think it should be compulsory. So, let's have a look at how I wrote that. Again, starting with my favorite



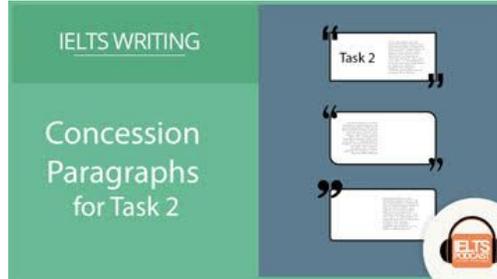
word while, my position statement reads like this. While it is true that both the society and student benefit from community service, I do not believe this should be obligatory.

Another thing that you'll notice here is that I've used some pretty good synonyms for some of these words. For example, I used the word society and student rather than community. Instead of compulsory I decided to use the word obligatory. So, you do want to do some things like this as well, okay? Remember to use some of your own words, some of your own language.

Then of course again, I would talk about the benefits of community service and how it is really important for students to be involved in it and that there should be a push. Students should be encouraged to do community service because both of the benefit for the community and for the student him or herself.

Then my next paragraph, I would talk about why this shouldn't be obligatory. We shouldn't make students do this and the reason why is because every student's life is different. Perhaps some students need to work after school in order to support their family or to save money for university.

Perhaps some students are involved in extracurricular activities that take up endless amounts of their spare time and so making it compulsory to do community service would really be



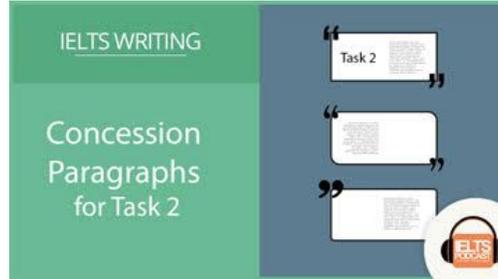
draining on that student. So, those are some of the things that I would talk about to show the other side of this issue; why it shouldn't be compulsory.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE

Let's look at one more. This is from a ton of different sites. I found it all over the internet, so you can too. Here's the question: ***In some countries, an increasing number of people are suffering from health problems as a result of eating too much fast food. It is therefore necessary for governments to impose a higher tax on this kind of food.***

Again, this is the kind of thing where I've seen tons of students look at the question and just kind of run with it. So, they write something like yes, the government needs to do this. The government needs to put taxes on junk food because people are dying and obesity etc. etc. etc.

Again, I want though to point your attention to this absolute word here and the word I find very absolute is necessary. Read it with me again. It says it is therefore necessary for governments to

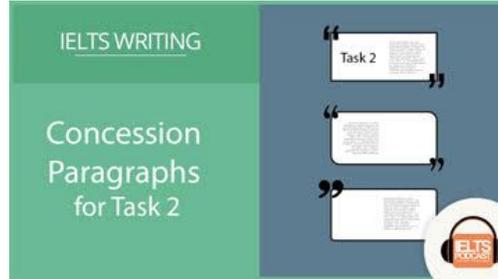


impose a higher tax. This is the word that needs to be underlined. So, if you wanted to have a position where you partially agree here, you could say something like this.

You could say while higher taxes is one way to combat the consumption of fast food, I do not believe this measure is necessary as there are better ways to deal with this issue. So, my first paragraph would talk about how yes, you could impose higher taxes on fast food and this would discourage a lot of people from buying it and this would be a positive step etc. etc. etc.

And then my next paragraph though would say that I don't think this is necessary. That's the key word here. I don't think this is necessary because there are other ways the government could encourage people to eat better. So, here again, there is this partial agreement where first I concede, all right? First, we have our concession paragraph and then we talk about the side that we actually support.

One thing I want to talk about before I leave you today is linking words between these two paragraphs. You've had your concession paragraph first. Your next body paragraph is the paragraph that you support. So, how do you link these ideas? Now, one way that's really very typical is to use on the one hand, on the other hand. Could you do that? Yes, you could. Is it kind of basic? Yes, it is.

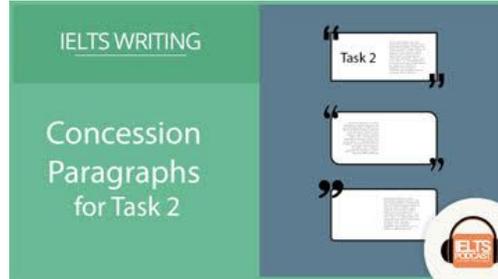


So, if you're aiming for something a little higher, you don't need to have something in your first paragraph that is in your concession paragraph, but what you could do is have a linking word which shows contrast in the beginning of your second body paragraph.

That could be something like in contrast, I believe a, b, c, d, e. or nevertheless is a nice word or another one that I really like is that being said or that said or even having said that a, b, c, d, e. Another thing you could also do is you could say despite the above, I believe a, b, c, d, e, all right? So, what you're doing is you're showing the examiner that you are shifting gears. You're shifting positions. You're changing your perspective and you are now moving on to the other side.

What is the takeaway here today? Do you have to have a concession paragraph in a to what extent do you agree or disagree essay? No. You don't have to. Do I recommend it? Yes. I do. I do recommend it if you are aiming for one of those higher band scores i.e. a 7, an 8, a 9. It shows more mature thinking. It shows a wider perspective.

Again, I'll say this as I said before, I know that-- we all know that IELTS is not a test where you're being tested on your ideas, but you are being tested on your ability to express and develop complex ideas. Especially at those higher band scores, the examiner does want to see that you are able to express complex ideas in English. So, this is one way to show that you are capable of doing that.



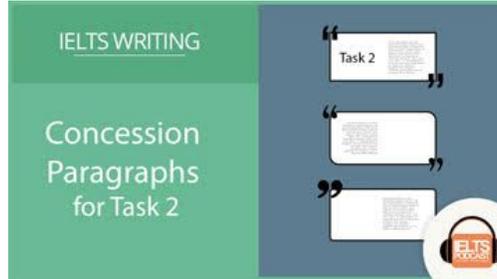
Before I leave you, the last thing I want to do just to kind of prove my point is to refer to the band descriptors for task 2. I'm looking at task achievement. Obviously, this is the public version which is available everywhere on the internet and if you have not read this then I absolutely 150% encourage you to do so.

When you read the band descriptors and if you especially have a [trained IELTS tutor](#) to kind of help you through them and explain them to you, it's really very helpful for your writing and for you to [improve your writing](#) when you understand what you're being graded on.

So, looking at band 9, it says fully addresses all parts of the task, presents a fully developed position. A fully developed position, so that means looking into all aspects of the question as it has been written. Even the band 8 says sufficiently addresses all parts of the task and presents a well-developed response. So, part of this involves looking at all areas of the issue.

I hope that this information on concession paragraphs has been helpful. I hope it gives you some ideas on how you can develop your to what extent do you [agree or disagree essays](#). If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to contact us and let us know what your concerns are.

I also encourage you to take a look at the [online course](#) here at ieltspodcast.com; tons of information that you will find absolutely invaluable to help you progress in your IELTS journey. Definitely look into that; I think it's a great resource. You will find so much help there to help



you structure your essays, help you develop your essays, a lot of very successful results from the course. So, take a look at it, okay? Till next time, I wish you good luck with your [IELTS preparation](#). **Female Voice:** Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com

