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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.

INTRODUCTION

Ben: Ten examples of topic sentences for your [IELTS essays](#). In this tutorial, we are going to look at ten different ways of opening your IELTS essay, not just the introduction but the paragraphs as well; the body paragraphs. We're going to look at how you can [expand your vocabulary](#). We'll look at eliminating redundancy and concise academic English-- well, to write concise academic English. This skill is definitely essential; how to concisely start your essay and how to stay on topic.

Before we start, I'll just remind you in case you've forgotten or in case it's your first time listening to IELTS podcast. My name's Ben Worthington and we've been doing these IELTS tutorials for almost five years now and we keep growing and growing. At the website, at



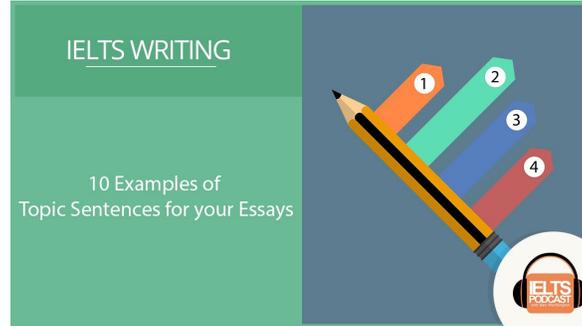
ieltspodcast.com, you can get [feedback on your essays](#)-- on your writing if you want to improve faster.

There's the [online course](#) with the guarantee of jump to band 7 or it's free. The guarantee is for those students who are at 6.5 and who can prove it before stating the course. However, we've had tremendous success with students going from band 6 up to band 7, from 5.5 up to 6.5. Some students even get band 8 or band 9 because there is a human factor in the course i.e. because we have teachers looking at your essays and giving you feedback.

If you're at a band 7 already and they're giving you feedback, then obviously the feedback is going to be in response to your current level. So, they're going to push you-- we are going to push you towards a band 8 or a band 9.

LET'S FOCUS ON TOPIC SENTENCES

Right. Now then, now that we've got that out of the way, let's get back into the topic for today's tutorial; topic sentences. These form the backbone of your [IELTS Task 2 essay](#). The topic



sentence captures the essence of the paragraph. It shows the reader where you plan to go, what is the main topic that you will write about in the next paragraph? It also sets the tone. Now, this is important. If you're going to be neutral, then obviously you're going to have a neutral topic sentence. If you're going to be quite argumentative and making a strong claim with strong points, then this will also be reflected in your topic sentence.

Now, what's **really important** about the **topic sentence** is that good ones are **clear, concise, and quite simple**. They also get to the point. So, you don't have to read the whole sentence until you can get the feel of the sentence. Now, this is true for normal academic writing, but IELTS sometimes isn't completely normal.

STRAIGHT, CONCISE AND TO THE POINT

The reason is because when you're writing in IELTS, there is an element of showing off, so to speak and not showing off to the point where we are just putting in all these fancy phrases just



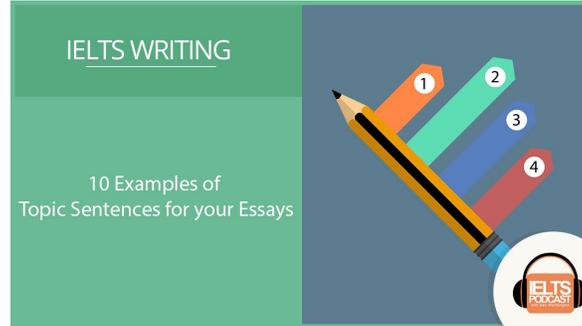
trying to impress the examiner. No. By showing off I mean we do have to improve the quality and improve our level of writing and make it slightly more sophisticated.

So, although I just said clear, concise, and straight to the point, we must bear in mind that we also want to possibly **introduce some conjunctions** where-- we also want to introduce some higher-level sort of like components or structures, okay? For example, we might want to put in a conjunction there where we say one thing and then we say, however, this is also true.

So, this is why it's kind of unique for [IELTS writing](#). With standard academic English writing, then we'd usually just want to get to the point and make it succinct, but we want to pick up points in the IELTS writing. We want to pick up points for [grammatical range and accuracy](#), so we've got to show a wide range within that criteria.

SHOW A CLEAR DIRECTION

Now, next point. The examiner should be able to read the topic sentence and immediately know what the rest of the paragraph will be about. These are good points to consider when you



are reviewing your own writing. Is it clear the direction your paragraph will take after you've read the topic sentence? I'll give you an example, probably an example of poor writing.

There's a typical phrase that a lot of students use. **That's it.** It's in today's competitive world, okay? Now, I dislike this phrase, okay? Or in today's modern world-- because we're using up a lot of words and they're not really contributing to the essay, yes? This is what being **concise** means. Being **concise and succinct** means that we are only using words and phrases that are related to the topic, that contribute to the topic.

Now, as I've said before, **IELTS is a bit of a different beast** because, not only do we want to be writing in this academic fashion and clear and concise and to the point but we also want to include-- we also want to pick up points for a wide [grammatical range and accuracy](#). That's it. So, once again, we've got this balance to achieve.

TRY TO USE SOME HIGH-POINT WORDS



Now, this might contradict with what we have in the online course because in the online course-- [the writing course](#)-- we've got a framework with phrases. However, these **phrases they are usually high-point words**. So, like C2 words, C2 structures and they will help you to gain points. They're not as **generic and low-scoring** as in today's modern world and in today's competitive world because that's just verbiage basically.

Our template is much more sophisticated. Also, we strongly encourage you to keep writing essays using this template until the template disappears. By that, I mean that you've embedded the structure and you've learned new phrases and you can swap it and you can change it. It's like when you learn a sport or when you learn how to play-- when you learn how to ride the bicycle. You don't stick to that same sort of like technique.

You start changing it-- as you get better, you start changing it. You modify it. Soon, you can ride with one wheel on the ground or with one hand on the handlebars. Soon, you can start going around corners and you adjust yourself. Well, the better you get with it, the more confident you get with it, the more you can make it do what you want to do. This is what we encourage in the course.



SOME IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER

So, here are some other points before we continue with the examples. First of all, and this is insanely important; remember to **read the question**. As we've said and all of the tutors at [IELTS podcast](#) strongly agree with is that the amount of essays we see that are off-topic-- that might start on topic, but eventually go on to another topic. So, it's really important that you can order-- that your arguments follow the question and that you can organize them in a **coherent manner**.

Just to emphasize what I said, it's really important that we read this question because-- **we read the question thoroughly and we fully understand** what's needed in our essay because if we start off wrong here at this exact point, 20 minutes 30 minutes later, we realize we've written two paragraphs about the wrong thing. So, it's really important just to make sure and to plan your argument, to plan your essay before you start.

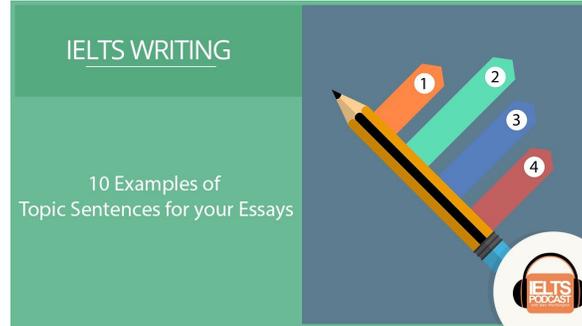


This is insanely important and this is why Daphne has done a tutorial about [idea generation](#), how to organize these ideas. I've done many tutorials about it and we've got a whole section about this in the [online course](#). In the course, we've got sort of like a more systematic way to do it, which definitely helps the students.

THE TOPIC SENTENCE IS YOUR MAIN IDEA

Now, as you know, **each paragraph should contain one idea or point**, okay? Now, this is where your topic sentence comes in. This topic sentence is your main idea that you want to demonstrate or that you want to communicate in your paragraph.

From this idea, we add additional points that **support** this idea and then we will also include an example. Usually, we can include an example or maybe one point, two examples or two points



one example. It just depends, okay? The topic sentence is just one way to make your writing shine, to make it get off to the best start.

Now, without further ado, let's have a look at some **example topic sentences**. These are quite straightforward, but there are a few details that I want to bring out-- that I want to mention to you while we're going through these ten questions and **possible topic sentences**. The first one is we'll start with the question. You might want to consider pausing the recording and writing down your ideas and possibly even writing down your own topic sentence.

EXAMPLES OF SOME TOPIC QUESTIONS

So, let's start with the first question. *Some people argue that it is the responsibility of the police to educate children about good behavior in society whereas others believe that parents should be responsible for teaching their children how to behave in an acceptable way. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.*

Topic sentence 1: *It is the responsibility of the police to educate children about good behavior.* That's fine. Personally, I dislike this one because half of the words are just taken directly from



the question and as my previous podcast about [paraphrasing](#) goes, we should really be using synonyms.

Next one, slightly better: *the police and parents have a mutual responsibility to teach children about good behavior.* In the first one, we know that we're just going to talk about the police. So, paragraph one is probably going to be about the police educating children. Paragraph two could be why parents shouldn't educate those children about good behavior whereas topic sentence number two the police and parents have a mutual responsibility to teach children about good behavior sets off the rest of the essay in a way so that we can say that both the police and parents should both teach children about good behavior.

So, this is why the topic sentence is important. With the first one, we've narrowed it down a lot and the rest of the essay should really **correspond** to what we've written.

Question 2: *Some people believe that more women should be encouraged to pursue careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) while others believe that women are naturally suited for careers in the humanities and Social Sciences such as teaching and psychology. Discuss your views and opinion.*



Example topic sentence: *There are not enough women pursuing careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, okay? We're taking one side here. Next one: Women are better suited for careers in the humanities and Social Sciences, okay?* So, here we're taking a second one.

Now, what I dislike about that first example these are probably for the beginnings of paragraphs because they do jump into the subject. For example-- yes, they do jump into it with like both feet. So, here for the first one, what I dislike about it is that it's not until this last part of the sentence do we realize what the essay is going to talk about. It says there are not enough women-- or the paragraph. There are not enough women pursuing careers in the fields of.

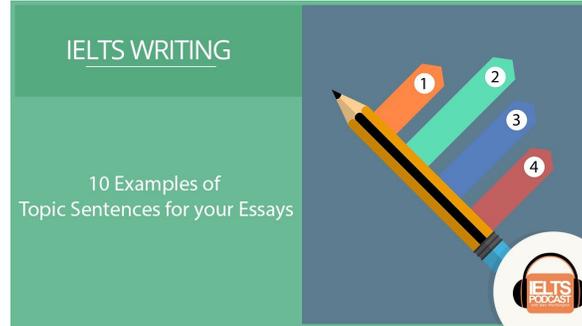
You see, we've got to get through about nine words until we realize what the sentence is going to be talking about; in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. A better way to organize this sentence would be to not only eliminate the negative construction, which is there are not enough which we can easily substitute for lack. There is a lack of or insufficient. Instead of using the negative construction, we can use a negative verb. There are insufficient or even better, eliminate there are and just start with insufficient women-- No, that means something else.



There is an insufficient number of women pursuing careers or even better, start off with the subject. So, STEM subjects are undoubtedly pursued less by women, okay? It's much more concise there, much more succinct. These are examples of the skills we teach in the course; how to front-load the sentence, so to speak, with the most important information first.

Next one: Scientists argue that the use of modern gadgets such as cell phones and tablets by young people has potential to boost creativity. Do you agree or disagree? Once again, we start off a bit slow. There has been evidence, okay? So, let me just complete the sentence. There has been evidence that the use of modern gadgets by young people does, in fact, increase their creativity.

Fine. On the one hand, we start with there has been and that's three words we do not really contribute to the argument or the topic. However, and this is why this should be a fine balance between writing in a concise tight manner and writing for IELTS. For example, if we continue the elimination which I was mentioning before of being as succinct as possible, then we would have eliminated a point score in tense, which is the present perfect. So, this is why we need to find a balance between conciseness and writing for points effectively.



So, the next sentence: The use of modern gadgets decreases the creativity of young people. What I like about this is the negative verb instead of a negative construction and it is a little bit more concise. However, as we've said before, we don't have the present perfect there. So, the best way to find out more about this is to start writing your own essays and start getting feedback on them. Then you can find out for yourself whether you need to make it more succinct or whether you need to start including more grammatical structures.

Next question: Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become a more important source of news and information for young people than newspapers. Do you agree?

1) Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become a major source of news and information for young people. Now, what's wrong about this? Well, it's just taking words directly from the question. We need to use synonyms-- Moving on to the next one.

Next one: Newspapers are still a more important source of news and information for young people than social media networks. Okay, both of those they've-- as I said, they're taking words directly from the question, so it's not perfect. However, both of them start strongly with the subject.

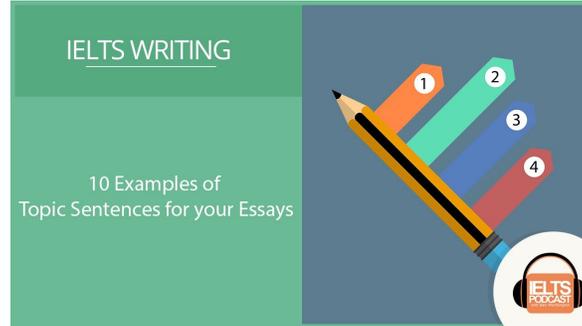


There's no there are or there has been. Both of them start with the subject which is like the main point of the sentence. It's a good way to start because instantly, I know what we're talking about. I don't have to wait until halfway through or until the end of the sentence to understand what the writer wants to communicate.

So, moving on to the next one. School children should be instructed in their home language for the first six years of school. Now, instead of school children, we can use young learners, yes? Instead of should be, we can say need to be-- semi modal verb there-- need to be taught and we use taught instead of instructed in their home language. Maybe we could say native language, but it's not an exact-- it could be slightly different. In the first six years of their schooling or in the first six years of their education.

Alternatively, we can say it is not important for school children to be taught in their home language in the first few years of school. A more sophisticated way would be pupils need not be taught in their home language in the first six years of their education. Now, this is a good example, again of what I was saying earlier.

Although it's not the most succinct way, it does sound very sophisticated. The pupils need not be taught. It's just another way we can impress the examiner with our grammatical range and



accuracy. Also, we've substituted-- where is it-- school children with pupils. If we use the word pupils, it's just another word for students at a younger-- students of a younger age; pupils.

Next one: *Nowadays, women are having children at a much later age than previous generations. Do you think this is a positive or negative thing? Discuss both sides.* One possible topic sentence to start your body paragraph: Nowadays, females have children much later in life than they did in the past. So, rather than say at a much later age, we say much later in life. Also, I changed it to females instead of just saying women.

Also, instead of using nowadays, I could have used-- I know I said I hated it but, in today's modern society. It depends. If you're around a band 5.5 or a band 6, then maybe you can use in today's modern society, yes? You can say currently as well. So, it just depends really what stage you are.

Another way we could say is currently-- another way we could say it is currently, women start families much later in life than previously. This is okay. You could argue that it's a little bit vague previously as in prior to what? Prior to last week? Prior to last year? So, if we're going to be-- if we're going to use rather generic phrases like that or vague phrases, make sure we're using



them later on in the essay when it's quite clear, yes? When it's quite clear what we've been talking about and what time frame we're talking about. So, just be careful there.

Next one: In many countries, women are opting not to have children. Some believe that having children stifles a woman's career growth. To what extent do you agree or disagree? Okay. 1) Having children can take a toll-- take a toll means like disadvantageous-- can take a toll on a woman's career.

Alternatively, we can say female careers have been hindered by starting families. Unfortunately, this is a very common concern for both females and employers. So, we're just elaborating it a little bit and signaling where we will be going with this paragraph.

Next one: *Nowadays, children are exposed to more sex and violence in the media than before. What are the reasons for this? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?* So here, we're going to structure it slightly differently. We're going to state there are several reasons why young people-- instead of saying children-- why young people see more-- rather than saying exposed to. So, we've got a lot of synonyms here. See more sexual and violent media than before.



So, if we can change it to the adjective and Kate has mentioned this before. If you know the formulas, if you know the structure of the language, the suffixes and the prefixes, if you can get to grips with those, you can expand your vocabulary. Another rule is modifying words-- modifying them into adjectives. So, yes, just different ways there of paraphrasing and expanding your vocabulary and showing the examiner what you're capable of doing.

Almost finished. **Next question:** Parents need to do more to protect children from cyberbullying. To what extent do you agree or disagree? Example: Parents can do a lot to protect their children from cyberbullying. It's quite straightforward, not that bigger points, so we've just rephrased it. We only changed need to into can do, so not the best example.

A better example would be parenting nowadays-- we're modifying the word. Instead of parents, were changing it into the gerund parenting. ...nowadays has become increasingly more complex largely thanks to the Internet and cyberbullying. Now, if we wanted to upgrade this like I did, I changed it from largely thanks to and I changed it to largely due to, which sounds much more formal. So, parenting nowadays has become increasingly more complex largely due to the internet and cyberbullying.



Another possible sentence: Regarding protecting their children online, parents need to find a balance between the child's online freedom and becoming online helicopter parents. So here, I've used a slightly technical phrase; helicopter parents, which means-- it basically means parents that are constantly hovering above their children and monitoring and planning every single step their children make, okay? So, they don't get that much freedom.

This is what we're kind of talking about, but we're trying to get a balance. We're arguing a balance between the child's freedom and their parents vigilating their moves online or becoming online **helicopter parents**.

By the way, I only learned that phrase a couple of months ago while I was reading an online newspaper. I had no idea about helicopter parents, but this is the kind of **topic-specific vocabulary** that can definitely help you pick up points because it seems like you know the subject. Maybe you do know the subject. Just using a few phrases or some vocabulary that's unique to that topic can go a long way in improving not only the comprehension from the readers' point of view but also just showing them your vocabulary level.

Final example: Some people think that children should not have a cell phone until they have reached their teens whereas others believe that children should have cell phones at an early



age. Discuss both views and give your own opinion. Body paragraph topic sentence could be children should not be allowed to have a cell phone until they are 13. That's not too bad.

However, I would have modified that just to eliminate the negative construction should not be allowed. I'm pretty certain we could modify the whole sentence actually and then use a negative verb or just reorganize the sentence to avoid that construction. I'm not saying the constructions are bad, but there's usually a more concise way especially with the English language especially with negative verbs such as lack and all the prefixes that we can put on them.

Anyway, we could say children should be permitted-- actually, I have to think about this. Children should be prohibited from having a phone until they are over 13, for example. By using a negative verb, we can avoid using the negative construction which means we're saying the same with less words which means it's more concise.

These are all skills that will not only help you with your English writing-- with your IELTS writing. They will help you with your English writing in general; for university, for job applications, and for citizenship exams and as I personally experienced. Once I got into the fashion of doing this with all my writing and making it as succinct as possible, I honestly found an improvement in



the clarity of my thinking. There was less brain fog and it got a little bit sharper and a little bit clearer.

Anyway, another sentence: Parents should encourage cellphone use at an early age. With that one, obviously, we're taking a different point of view.

So, as you can see and as you've heard, there are many different ways you can write your topic sentence. You just got to be careful that you are not taking the words directly from the essay question. Remember to use your synonyms, your prefixes, your suffixes just to expand your vocabulary.

Also, if you're interested in the higher-level techniques that we were talking about with regards to writing in a concise manner, but still in a fashion that's going to get you points then have a look at the end of the online course. There we've got lots of chapters about how to write like a native English speaker.

That's the title of the chapters actually. I should actually modify that to how to write like a sophisticated native English speaker because not all English speakers are-- not all native English



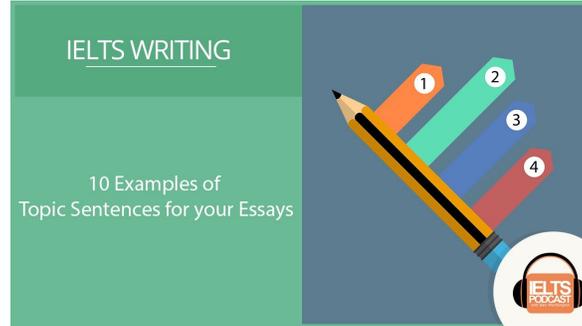
people can write in a succinct concise way. It is a skill that you have to learn. You have to basically up your own level of language usage.

IN CONCLUSION

Right. That's everything for this tutorial. It's gone on a bit longer than expected, so I'm going to have to finish soon. So, just before I go, remember you can sign up to the IELTS podcast email list and there you'll get links to special offers, you'll get updates, and you'll also get more tutorials and you'll be the first one to know about new tutorials and new updates coming out.

Second, if you've got a friend who's struggling with **IELTS**, then send them a link, send them our resources and hopefully, we can help them, too and the final thing, if you had a 6.5, remember we've got the online course Jump to Band 7 or It's Free, but this course is also useful for students who maybe want to go from band 8 to band 9 or want to go from 7 to 8.

It's also useful because we've got humans correcting your essay. We can collaborate. Basically, if you are sending an essay that's 5.5 and you want a band 6, then we're going to adapt our



teaching to your level just by looking at your writing. We're not going to be saying hey, try and introduce some parallelism into your writing. There's no point with a student who's aiming for a band 6. However, if the student wants to go from band 8 to band 9, then we would definitely teach them higher-level techniques such as parallelism.

Right. That's everything from me. **Remember keep moving, keep working, and you will get there.** Just keep your head up high. Keep your chin up. Keep working, put in the hours, put in the work and trust me; you'll get the results that you want. Have a fantastic day and all the best.

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