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INTRODUCTION

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Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we're going to look at some recent questions seen by students and sent in to us-- students who are doing their exams, who are working through the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free online course and they're taking the exam and sending in the questions. And all of these questions that we review today are to what extent do you agree and for each question, I'll show you how I attack it, how I break it down and I'll look at ideas and



evaluate those ideas and basically just show you how to attack them. So, it's going to be quite a fun episode.

Let's jump straight into it. Question 1: environmental issues have always been an international problem because governments are not imposing harsh punishments against offenders. To what extent do you agree or disagree? Support your answer with specific reasons and examples. So, let's have a look. Environmental issues have always been an international problem because governments are not imposing harsh punishments against offenders. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Let's see. So, p1 as you may have heard from our success students, the ones we interview, we usually, not usually. We always train them in the course to get ideas for two body paragraphs and to plan it. Actually, there's a few more steps involved beforehand, but we're just going straight to ideas now. For example, the other steps are simplifying the question, possibly researching, possibly looking for vocabulary, but right now we're looking at ideas.



So, I'm going to get my position crystal clear and this will help me when I develop that idea, when I develop the paragraph. So, I'm going to go with environmental issues are a problem and the government is to blame because... So, if we just go back to the question, environmental issues have always been an international problem because governments are not imposing harsh punishments against offenders.

I totally agree with this idea in body paragraph 1. I've got my position crystal clear. Now, I'm going to develop this idea. These are a problem because 1) they keep happening. These oil spills, for example, keep on happening. British Petroleum (BP) in the Gulf of Mexico about five or six years ago, Shell in Nigeria-- Shell Petroleum Company in Nigeria. So, we can say that the problem is persistent. The problem is not getting solved. So, I agree the governments are not doing enough and this is proven by my examples because they keep happening. These issues keep on returning.



Another issue-- so I can usually build on this now and I can say furthermore, if we look at the Pacific garbage patch, it is currently the size of France and it is actually growing and this is a clear sign that the government is not taking enough action.

So, I've got quite a lot of examples that back up my idea, that develop my argument and these examples offer solid evidence of my position that I established very early and you can see it's all consistent. It's all on one side in this body paragraph.

Moving on to body paragraph 2. I disagree. I disagree. Let's have a look at the question again. Environmental issues have always been an international problem because governments are not imposing harsh punishments against offenders. I disagree with this statement. Okay. Why do I disagree with this statement? Well, I disagree because governments have to balance economic growth with job creation and environmental standards and punishments. So, what I'm saying here is that the governments have got a balancing act so to speak. The governments have to



balance growing their economy, providing jobs, and also maintaining environmental standards. So, this is why I disagree with the statement.

All right. So, going back to Nigeria. Nigeria might have difficulties imposing fines on petrol companies such as Shell because the multinationals can easily take the investment elsewhere. So, if the Nigerian government starts getting strict with the petrol company Shell and say look, if you don't do this-- if you don't stop the oil spills, we're going to fine you \$20 billion. If they say that, the petrol company will just say okay, I'm off. I'm going to Venezuela. I'm going to Mexico. I'm going to another country that's not as strict and then Nigeria loses all this economic investment, loses all these jobs.

So, just to summarize-- I can't go into as much detail, so I've got to compact that argument basically into a sentence. So, what I would say is this may infer a loss of jobs for the local economy and a potential loss of tax revenues. You see? So, that's my argument there and the



good argument there is that it's hypothetical and if I'm using hypothetical arguments, I'm obviously using one of the three conditionals.

If the government imposed strict standards, then the multinational company may just quit the country altogether eventually leading to a loss of tax revenues, employment, or other income for the developing country, for example. So, that's an argument for body paragraph 2. Note, please note that this is a disagree. I'm disagreeing in this body paragraph even though I agreed in my first paragraph. It doesn't matter. I can sort it all out in my conclusion which I will tell you in a second.

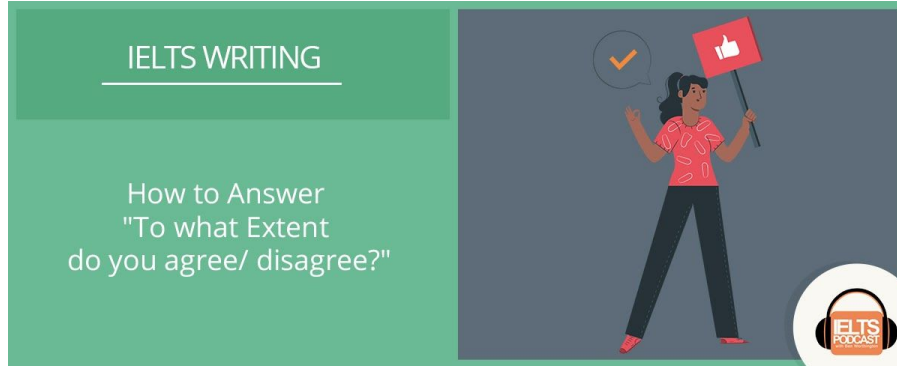
Second argument within body paragraph 2 and this is still in the same paragraph. I'm not going to start another paragraph. I'll just start with something like furthermore, consumers can vote with the wallet. If they were concerned about the environment, they would stop buying single-use plastics and stop frequenting the polluting petrol company stations. Now, this may be



slightly off topic, but I can use another sentence and just rescue it and bring it back so it's totally coherent.

So, my rescue sentence here would be something like therefore, it is not the government's-- let's just have a look at the question. Therefore, it is not the government's-- actually, I'll have to use my therefore sentence to also include the first argument. So, I'll say therefore, the governments are not only weak when it comes to imposing environmental punishments or-- no.

Therefore, the government is not only weak when it comes to imposing harsh punishments against the company, but also it is the consumers who have to decide not to frequent the companies that commit these offenses. So, I might have to just break that up a bit, but what I'm doing is I'm just kind of like saying look, it's not the government's fault. They've got to balance economic growth and also, it's the consumer's fault. The consumers should stop buying single-use plastics and they should stop going to the companies that commit all these environmental crimes.



So, there's a few words there that I highlighted in my notes: single-use plastics-- collocations-- frequenting; it's a beautiful word just to say to stop going to. It's much more accurate. It's much more higher level and also, you may have caught the other one which was infer which is also very sophisticated.

So, anyway just to summarize. Body paragraph 1: environmental issues are a problem. The government is to blame because xyz. Body paragraph 2: governments are not to blame because they've got to balance it with economic growth. Also, consumers are the main culprit here. Now, as you know, two body paragraphs both contradicting each other. What a disaster, some students may think. However, it's not a disaster because in the conclusion, we're going to pull it all together.

So, we might have something like I agree that governments in the West should be imposing stricter standards and harsh punishments to protect the environment. Direct answer to the question. I will get full points for task response. However, relying on lesser developed countries



is unfair because they need the polluting company revenues much more than the richer countries do.

To summarize-- so there I'm kind of like just looking at both paragraphs and just giving my opinion and now I'm pulling it all together. I'm saying to summarize, harsh penalties are needed because the current regime is too soft and lacks teeth. Beautiful collocations here and idiomatic phrases used perfectly and accurately. The burden to impose these fines should be squarely with the western richer countries who are less vulnerable to multinational company threats of disinvestment.

Look at that. Wow! So, I will admit I am not doing this on the fly. I am not winging this. I sat down and I wrote a few notes beforehand and I strongly recommend you do the same and in fact, this is one of the tasks we do on our course. We ask the students to go through a stage where they are generating ideas and this builds your idea generation muscle because we know a lot of



students struggle with generating ideas and this is why one of our modules in the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free course, one of the modules looks at solving this specific issue.

Let's have a look at 2; another to what extent do you agree or disagree question. Many people think technological devices such as smartphones, tablets, and mobile phones bring more disadvantages than advantages. To what extent do you agree or disagree? What's the first step, Ben? I hear you all asking.

Well, the first step is-- let's just clarify the question and clarify our position, so our position for body paragraph 1. Once again, I'm going to go with the 4-paragraph model. Introduction; I'm not even going to think about that at this stage. Body paragraph-- sorry-- besides I've got a template and I can follow that. I've got an easy to follow formula which is in the course. I don't need to mention it now and you are probably more concerned about how to get ideas, how to organize those ideas into coherent paragraphs. So, that's what we're going to focus on.



Let's go. So, many people think technological devices such as smartphones, tablets, and mobile phones bring more disadvantages than advantages. To what extent do you agree or disagree? I totally agree with this phrase for body paragraph 1 and I'm just going to brainstorm ideas here. I totally agree and by the way, this is a useful tip. Just simplify your position and sort of like get it lucid. Get it crystal clear in your mind in a very simplified statement.

I totally agree. Totally by the way is more spoken English than written English, but for the purpose of direction and clarity in this body paragraph, I'm just going to write it out like this. I totally agree modern devices bring more disadvantages than advantages-- oh sorry-- bring more disadvantages than advantages. Now I've got that statement, I can start developing the question with the beautiful word of why. Why do I think this?

Well, 1) they are a complete time sink. Time sink; another useful collocation, topic specific vocabulary. Time sink means time that has been sunk into an activity and you're never going to retrieve it back. You've lost that time. Mobile phones are a-- one of the disadvantages of mobile



phones are that they are a complete time sink. You lose time. Why do I lose time? Again, why, why, why. Well, they are designed to be addictive by manipulating serotonin levels. For example, games that ask for micro payments and are basically disguising gambling which we all know is a very addictive activity.

2) They bring more disadvantages than advantages because they are very risky and they are dangerous for younger generations. Why? They are dangerous for younger generations because they are not aware of the risks of gambling. So, I've got about two reasons now and I've developed each one.

Another reason: they-- and I'm going to keep on saying in my mind these devices bring more disadvantages than advantages because... Cyber bullying and then I'll say a recent study by Harvard showed that three out of four teenagers suffered from cyberbullying. So, I've got about three or four different reasons there. It's going to be a very complete paragraph.



In the course, we help you organize these ideas in a very easy to follow coherent structure. It's the C2 template basically. It's the Sentence Guide template; the one that the students in the online courses talk about.

So, anyway body paragraph 1 is now completely crystal clear. I completely agree that they bring more disadvantages than advantages. So, what am I going to do for body paragraph 2? Well, I'm going to totally disagree because it's asking me to what extent and if I want to really develop the argument, I'm going to look at both sides. I'm going to say I completely agree. I'm going to completely disagree and then in the conclusion, I'll just pull it all together exactly like we did with the earlier question.

So, let's have a look. I disagree that they bring more disadvantages than advantages. So, I'm going to say idea no. 1: it is the phones, not the user, all right and my argument here is that almost everyone has a phone, but hardly anyone has a gambling problem or a game addiction.



Also, I'm going to look at the advantages of having a phone. I'm going to talk about dematerialization, all right? Dematerialization that's the opposite of materialization.

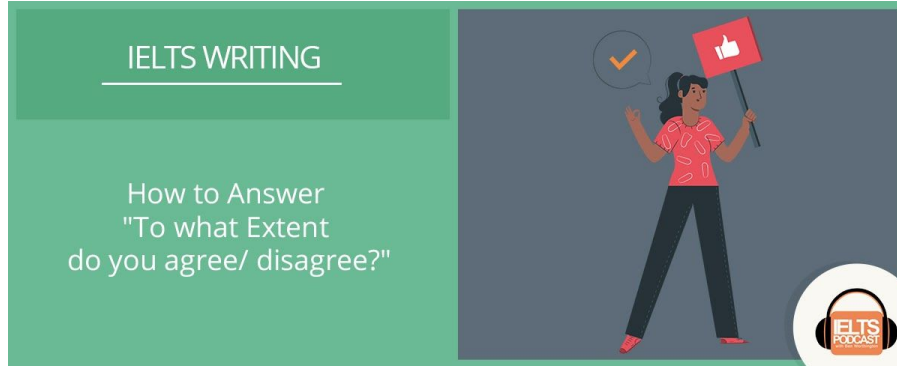
So, dematerialization means that we basically need less material goods to do the same. For example, I no longer need to carry a digital camera. I don't need to carry a map. I don't need to carry a GPS device. I don't need to carry a watch. I don't need to carry a board game because my phone is doing all of this. So, this is an advantage of having the phone.

And 2) it's a security device, a safety device. If I'm lost in the woods or if I'm getting mugged in a street in Glasgow-- I'm always picking on Glasgow or Liverpool, but if I'm getting mugged in a street in Glasgow-- I don't know why that should be funny. I'm sorry-- but if I'm getting mugged then I can maybe press a certain button on my phone five times and it immediately calls the emergency services and that's a good solid real-world example.



And then I can say another reason-- I can say, for example, with the recent corona pandemic, mobile phones have served excellently for the efforts of tracking and tracing victims or potential victims of corona through various apps. So, not only in this paragraph have I stated crystal clear what my position is, I developed it asking why and then I gave some real-world examples.

Now, as you know, we've got one paragraph in favor of the question or basically one favor agreeing with the question. There's more disadvantages than advantages from phones and tablets and whatever and then in the second paragraph, I disagree. Phones are amazing basically. Conclusion and again, a conclusion is important here. I'm going to pull it all together. Admittedly-- and as I said before, I wrote this out before and it takes a lot of time, practice, and effort to-- I've been writing out Task 2 essays for like the last five years. I wrote about well over a hundred when I was designing the course. I've corrected over-- I don't know if I'd say a thousand, but I've corrected a lot and so I know this.



But anyway, a conclusion; pull it all together. Admittedly, a few might be at risk, but this should not spoil it for the vast majority who are mature enough to realize they are engaging in unhealthy habits. In my notes, I've put also tremendous benefits are bestowed on smartphone users, but I'd probably change that to furthermore, tremendous benefits are bestowed on smartphone users.

Now, I'd probably have to rewrite that again. I mean it's not the finished product, but that is the position I'm going to take and it's basically an inexplicit way of saying the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and probably in the conclusion, I would put something like that, but even in the sentence, it's quite clear.

And this is a higher level writing technique where I can say a position and I don't have to explicitly say it. For example, here I'm inexplicitly saying the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, but because I've said it in such a way-- in such a style I don't have to explicitly say it. It is basically communicated with the fragment of the sentence that says this should not



spoil it for the vast majority who are mature enough. That's a higher-level writing technique when you don't have to explicitly state what you're saying. It can be deduced.

Anyway, that is the conclusion for that essay and let's move on to the next one. Last one-- I can hear you smile. Let's go. The government should lower the budget on the arts in order to allocate more money to education. To what extent do you agree or disagree? Again, the government should lower the budget on the arts in order to allocate more money to education. To what extent do you agree? Let's see. Body paragraph 1: I completely agree. Body paragraph 2: I completely disagree. So, let's go.

Now, I'm going to mention my mistake here, all right? My first idea was I completely agree that the government should lower the budget on arts to allocate more money to education and I said yes, the government should lower the budget especially now because of corona. Governments need the money to protect their populations and invest in PPE, invest in vaccines, and invest in



track and trace apps, but then I started generating more ideas because I realized I'm kind of off topic here because the question said lower the money invested in arts and invest in education.

I'm saying yes, they should lower the money now dedicated to the arts, but I'm saying and invest it in corona. So, I'm going off topic here and it's funny. All the other questions were completely on topic all of the time, but this one I went off topic and I think it was because it was the third question. I was mentally exhausted and this just highlights the importance of attacking these questions when you're mentally strong. So, I was mentally weak here. I started to wander off topic and fortunately, because I know to constantly go back to the question and check, I realized I was off topic. So, I was like okay, delete that idea. Let's go back.

So, I'm going to say-- let's see. I'm going to go with something similar though. I rescued it. I said yes, the governments should lower the budgets in the arts and allocate more money to education especially because of corona. The governments need to re-engineer their educational offering to accommodate a new study-from-home dynamic. So, it's kind of-- it is relevant and



you might think hmm, that's still off topic, but I said they need to re-engineer their educational offering to accommodate for a new study-from-home dynamic, a new remote learning world. So, I am on topic. I am linking it to education and I am talking about something modern relevant in today's society which is obviously corona.

Now, because it is a bit of a stretch, I'm going to just basically give an example. It's totally invented, but it sounds realistic. For example, Holland recently had to divert funds from building a new modern art gallery (budget in the arts from the question)-- Holland recently had to divert funds from building a new modern art gallery to investing in educational equipment to enable tutors to teach from home. This included webcams, streaming software, and USB microphones. Failure to divert the funds or failure to switch would have put the public in jeopardy.

So, I've answered the question directly and I said I completely agree they should lower the budget allocated to the arts because the educational system has to change. Right now, the education system has to change to face the new reality of corona. So, even though I did go a little



bit off topic, with a little bit of creativity I can kind of like reorientate my argument more to the question being asked.

Body paragraph 2: what am I going to do? I will disagree. I'm going to disagree because I want to look and say to what extent. So, I say yes, on one hand I do agree. On the other hand, I disagree, so I'm kind of on the fence with this. Anyway, let's go. I disagree. The arts are important to society because they inspire the local population.

2) They have-- actually, I'd probably develop that. They inspire the local population. Ask myself why. Well, they inspire the local population because, for example, creative people or those who work in the creative arts such as design can visit art museums and learn about foreign or new contemporary art movements and possibly include this in their next design pieces.

2) The arts are important to society because they often have a positive ROI. Now, if you've done the course or you've listened to previous podcasts, this is the argument that Maria-- I think if I



remember correctly she was Dutch and she wanted to get to Australia, but she always used this argument in all her essays which is basically the economic argument which is-- yes, it's in the online course, but basically you learn a lot of phrases related to economic arguments and then you try and orientate your arguments around the economic aspect or the economic point of view so that you can use your phrases.

So, anyway the arts are important to society because they often have a positive ROI; a return on investment. For example, a recent study showed the return on investment was five times what was invested. So, I'd probably rephrase that. These are just ideas at this stage. I would rephrase it. Actually, if I was using the C2 template, I could just drop them in and use the phrases in that template.

Anyway, third argument: the arts are important to society because they can boost jobs. For example, a museum in London employs over 200 people in peak season or at peak season. These arguments are okay. They're not perfect assuming everything else was perfect in this essay. I



could maybe be criticized by the examiner because-- what would be the critique against these arguments?

Well, they don't really mention allocating more money to education. You see? A sharp examiner would spot that. So, maybe I could just twist it around and say-- maybe I could put in a rescue sentence and say-- let's see. It is therefore clear that governments should not lower the budget on the arts or should not lower funds dedicated to arts or the arts because it is clear that investing money in these areas is much more beneficial to society than education or I could say recent studies show that for every dollar invested in education it performs less than every dollar invested in the arts. This performance is related to social well-being, employment numbers, and jobs in the-- and enrichment or society.

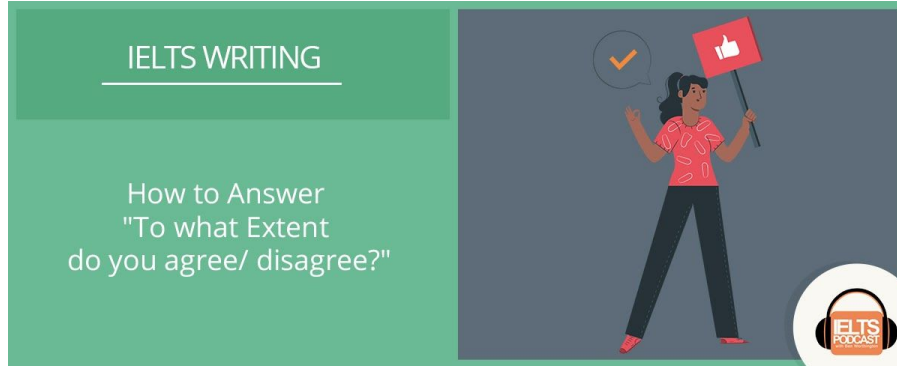
Anyway, what I'm trying to say is that I could rescue that sentence by just briefly mentioning that investing money in the arts is a better equation or is a better idea than investing money in education.



Anyway, conclusion. In emergencies, defund the arts. Otherwise, investment should actually be increased due to the positive impact it has on society or due to the superior impact it has over education or due to the superior impact it has on society over investing in education. And again, directly going back to the question.

Now, the sharp ones among you may have noted I was using a lot of words from the question. That's okay for explaining it. I mean the reason I did it was for explanation so you could follow the progression of my arguments. Also, so that you don't forget the actual question. Also, so that you audibly hear me going back again and again and again to the question.

However, if I were writing this up, I would be using synonyms all the time. I don't use them when I'm doing an audio tutorial about this because I want to just, as I keep saying, remind you I'm going back to the question and I'm staying on topic. However, if I was writing it up, I'd use a lot of synonyms.



So, that's it from me today. If you're still struggling with this and maybe you want to test your ideas and get some feedback because we all know that getting feedback is the fastest way to improve, then please don't hesitate to get in contact with us. We can help you. We love giving feedback on essays. When you sign up to the newsletter or when you get the app, you'll get special offers for reduced priced essay correction and evaluation which is what you need to get started.

So, thank you very much for listening and remember we're here to help. We love to help and you can do this. You just need to keep moving forward and just keep saying it's not going to be gifted to you. You're not going to wake up with a band 7. You need to put the work in, the hours and write those essays pen and paper. Keep moving. All right. Have a great day and good luck.

[Music]

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