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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: Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we are looking at recent questions seen by students doing the exam and they are on the online course usually and they sent in the questions they saw. In this tutorial, we're specifically looking at problem-solution questions. I personally think these are among the easiest of the Task 2 questions. I believe they are the easiest because it's quite straightforward. You dedicate one paragraph to the problem and the second paragraph to the solution.



I think where a lot of students trip up over this is that they maybe even try looking at both sides when really it's not that-- it's over complicating it or maybe they just don't follow the actual question. This is why in the online course we have a module all about categorizing questions and the appropriate strategy for each question type and I don't go into it in too much detail because roughly if you're following the cohesive coherent response or the CTRT method the cohesive test response method, then it's really quite straightforward. You can face any question and you'll know exactly what to do and that's a module we've got in the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free course.

So, let's have a look at these recent questions sent in by the students. So, when cars and cyclists use the same roads, there are often problems. Why is this the case? What are the solutions? Straightforward. One paragraph: why is this the case? Body paragraph two: what are the solutions?



Now, if you've been listening to these tutorials a while, you'll usually hear me skip over the introduction. Why? Because personally, I believe the introduction is quite straightforward. Second, the bulk of the points are contained in body paragraph one, body paragraph two. Thirdly, if you're following our process or my process of writing the essay, you'll know that we immediately start to split up the question, generate ideas, plan our paragraphs and once we've got it crystal clear what we're going to write, then we know what to include in the introduction. So, this is why I'm always skipping over the introductions.

And how do I know this method? Well, I've written well over a hundred essays. I've corrected well over-- I don't know if it's over a thousand. I did check and I think we're about at 8,000 essay corrections in total which is ridiculous and I know I did a good chunk of those. Anyway, this is how I know it; through cold hard experience. The amount of horrible essays I've written or I used to write at the beginning.



Nowadays, that rarely happens, but as you know I used to be a teacher in Spain and I wanted to get good at this. I wanted to master it, so this is how I started. This is why I started IELTS Podcast interviewing all the experts. I took their advice, tried it, threw out what didn't work, and included what did work and improved upon it. So, anyway that's where we are today. I kept on doing that and writing essays, testing out what works, and finally got a beautiful system. It's so strong that I can offer the guarantee of jump to band 7 or it's free.

Right. Let's move on. So, when cars and cyclists use the same roads, there are often problems. Why is this the case? What are the solutions? Body paragraph one: why is this the case? What is the case? The case here or the problem is cars and cyclists use the same roads. Why do they use the same roads? So, here are my ideas. Here is my plan for the essay.

Roads were originally designed for horse and carriages, not cars never mind trucks and buses or even bikes. I could probably add that. This means that in most cases, they are incredibly narrow already. So, to fit in space for a cyclist, it is incredibly difficult, cumbersome, and



dangerous. The smart cookies amongst you may have picked up on that little technique I did there. Well, there's probably two techniques. The most obvious I thought was one, two, and three as in the list just to emphasize one point, two point, and the third point and it's just a stylistic element. Lists usually come in threes or fives, never twos or fours or sixes. That just doesn't feel right.

The other stylistic element was that you could hear or you could hear my position without having to explicitly say why this is the case. So, it was obvious that I was saying that the roads were for horses and carriages originally. Now with trucks and buses, they're even more narrow and never mind cyclists. So, it's implicitly saying-- it's implicitly answering that's the case.

Now, let's get back on topic. So, the problem exists because cyclists often lack their own lanes. Cities evolve and it is borderline impossible to retroactively add cycle lanes to cities especially old established cities such as London. Furthermore-- actually before I jump into that, I wanted to put a reference here. I wanted to give it context because the examiner doesn't know if I'm



from England, if I'm from Brazil, or if I'm from Saigon because each of those cities have their own unique historical perspective.

Being European, being from England myself, I'm talking about the cities I know about so I have to put this-- especially old established cities such as London-- because what I just said might not be true for Sao Paulo. It might not be true for Bangkok or Saigon or wherever. It's not Saigon, is it? It's Ho Chi Minh. Sorry about that. So, I'm just putting it in reference because otherwise, I'm talking about all the cities in the world and it's probably going to be factually inaccurate which we don't want.

Anyway and just to build on my argument now, I'm going to add furthermore. So, I'm going to further develop the argument. Furthermore, in the new world such as Australia, Canada, and the U.S., cities were designed primarily for cars which further aggravates the issue. So, going back to the question when cars and cyclists use the same road there are often problems. Yes, because in one case, the roads are kind of like they're all curvy. They're all small. They're



wiggly. I'm talking about the European old cities. This is usually the case and they're usually quite narrow already and then in the new world, Australia, Canada, and U.S., it's all on a grid system. They're quite big, so it's even-- it's not even more, but it's kind of designed for like high speed travel. So, it's even more of a problem. Perhaps I should even add that, but I just said it further aggravates the issue.

Now, just to clarify, wide scale adoption of cycling is relatively recent and most established cities simply have difficulties to adapt and modify their infrastructure. By infrastructure I mean the narrow roads in the old cities and the large grid system in the new cities. So, that is the case. That is why there are often problems in my opinion.

Now, to further develop this, I could add an example. For example, nine out of ten cyclists in London state that they feel uncomfortable and that the roads are not suited for cyclists and just a side note here, I'm using lots of topic-specific vocabulary: cycle lanes, cyclists, lanes-- what is it-- narrow roads, cumbersome, and infrastructure as well and also, I'm using some



higher-level vocabulary such, as I just said, cumbersome, borderline impossible-- that's just a very fancy-- not a fancy way, but quite a sophisticated way of saying almost impossible, retroactively; these are definitely like C1 C2 level terms and wide scale adoption as well. So, look at all this beautiful vocabulary in there and reading that paragraph, it's clear why this is the case.

Going back to the question; why are there problems when cyclists and cars use the same roads? Well, there are problems because they weren't designed for it. This is true in London. The roads are too narrow. This is true in the new world because it's a grid system. They're too big, it's high speed, and trying to go back in time-- retroactively trying to go back in time and change this is difficult. That's why there are problems. This is the case.

Body paragraph two: what are the solutions? It's quite straightforward. We are going to state the solutions here. Convert narrow roads to bike lanes. Easy-peasy. London converted over 20 kilometers and in the subsequent three years, cycle accidents dropped by a staggering 23%. Is



that true? I don't know. Does it sound true? Yes, it does sound true and that's okay. You can tell porkies or little white lies. You can tell lies, but they just have to be realistic and believable. I cannot say London converted its entire road network to exclusive cycle-lane-only roads and the traffic accidents dropped by a staggering 500% whatever. It's not realistic. London is never going to do that and it never has done that, but you can't really challenge me because 20 kilometers of converted road sounds believable and it's doable.

So, carrying on. Furthermore or other solutions include designing new areas of the cities with bikes in mind. For example, new cities in China are mandated to include over 50 kilometers of inner city cycle routes. Again, I have no idea if that's true or not. I have absolutely no idea. Does it sound true? Does it sound believable? Yes. So, I'm going to stick it in there.

The examiner just-- I'm just going to go off on a tangent here, but the examiner is getting paid per essay. Bear that in mind. Do you really think they are going to jump onto Google and check that fact? No. Is it the purpose of the essay corrector-- the examiner-- is it the purpose to truth



fact everything, to check the facts of everything? No. No. The examiner's purpose is to check your English and to check if you're on topic and as you'll have heard the English, so far I hope, the English so far has been perfect. Being a native English speaker, it's been perfect. So, there wouldn't be any problem there. It's been on topic. They're not going to fact check it. I know this for a fact. I know how the examiners work. We work with them here in the company.

Anyway, let's get back. Further solutions or other solutions include-- so you can see I'm giving like three or four different ideas and one of them I'm going to develop with an example. Well, actually a few of them I've developed and backed up with irrefutable evidence or fake evidence. Anyway, other solutions include harsh penalties for road accidents where cyclists are involved. This would encourage drivers to give more respect and distance while near cyclists. For example, in Argentina, recent legislation reduced cyclist fatalities by over 30% in the first month of police enforcing the new rules.



Beautiful and now, how am I going to finish this paragraph? I can just put a brief summary. Something like in summary, there are various measures how the problems of cyclists and cars sharing the same lanes can be alleviated or sharing the same tarmac. What am I doing there? Well, instead of saying roads, I just wanted to show the examiner I've got an expansive vocabulary and I'm going to score maximum points for lexical resource. So, instead of saying roads, I'm going to say share the same tarmac. How beautiful is that? And instead of saying use the same roads, share the same tarmac. Practically, it means the same, but I want to get points.

So, there we go and then for the conclusion, I'm just going to basically paraphrase the question. It is true when bikers and vehicles are sharing the same infrastructure within a city, numerous incidences occur. This is largely a design problem and the solutions range from-- let's check my notes-- the solutions range from cycle lanes new design and heavy fines.

There we go. So, it's just a brief summary of both body paragraphs and also the wise amongst you which is the vast majority I'm pretty certain will have noticed that in my conclusion first,



I'm going to mention what I talked about in body paragraph 1 then I'm going to mention what I talked about in body paragraph 2. It's just logical and it's easier to follow and even when I'm finishing my conclusion or my summary, I'm going to list the points that I mentioned in the same order that I mentioned them in my body paragraph.

It's just one of those stylistic elements that are worth adopting to make your writing sound more like a native speaker. Well actually, a qualified academic writer is probably a better term there because not even native speakers know how to write like this unless they've specifically studied it.

And just one last thing before we move on, it's one of those things that goes unseen when you're reading, when you implement it, it just falls into the background and it feels natural, but when you don't implement it, it makes your writing feel unnatural and it doesn't flow as much. So, just bear in mind and if you are implementing what I'm saying in these tutorials, then good for you because you are at the higher levels. These are higher-level writing concepts.



Next question: in some places, young people find it difficult to communicate with older people. Why is this? What are the solutions? Again, what are we going to write in body paragraph 1? Why do young people find it hard to communicate with the elderly? Body paragraph 2: what are the solutions for this?

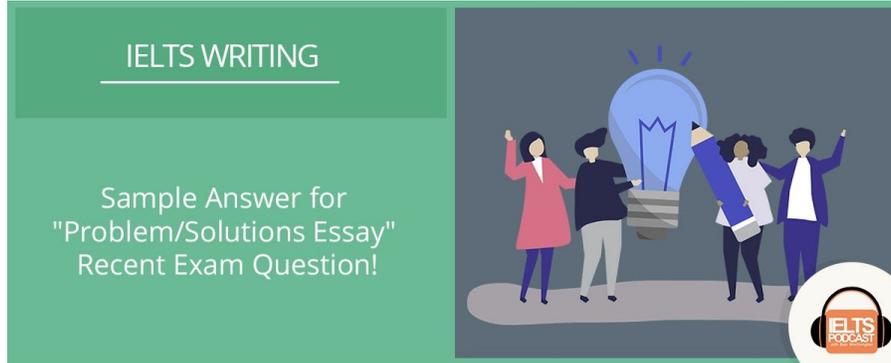
Let's jump straight into it; maybe even pause the tutorial and brainstorm a few ideas of why young people may find it difficult to communicate with old people. By the way, I personally think that the reason the examiner has written this question is because you are going to lose points if you talk about older people as old people because it's rude. You have to say elderly; elderly people, the elderly, senior citizens. You cannot say old people because it's just not academically-- it's just rude actually and we're writing in an academic fashion. Likewise with kids. You can't say kids either. You've got to say children, young adults, adolescents, and so on and so forth.



Right. In some places, young people find it difficult to communicate with older people. Why is this? What are the solutions? Body paragraph 1: young people find it difficult because they are unfamiliar with it. They no longer live with their elders. In fact, it is common for grandparents to be shipped off to old people's homes.

Now, you may have said hey Ben, you just said old people is wrong. You'd be right, but old people's home is a common term. So, if I use it with home, it's fine. Also, one problem with that sentence is I should have maybe hedged it. I should have said a lot of young people or most young people and they often no longer live with their elders.

Carrying on anyway. Recent studies show that nine out of ten students or nine out of ten adolescents no longer live with their grandparents. I'm going to just state a study there that backs up what I'm saying. I'm giving evidence. Furthermore, society is changing much faster nowadays largely due to technology. Over the last few years, the IT revolution has modified



how we interact with each other and if an older person does not adapt, they simply get left behind.

For example-- now, I can either state a study or I can use a hypothetical example. For example, if grandparents refused to use modern smartphones, they could find a distance or a communication distance appearing between their grandchildren who most likely all have smartphone devices and other digital technology.

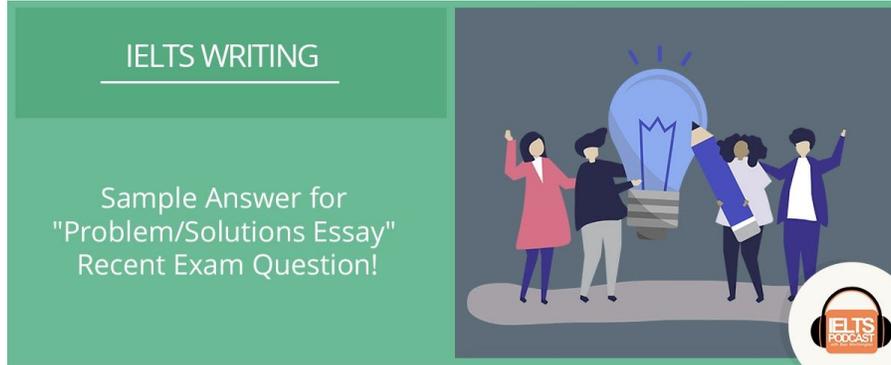
There we go. I'm developing my arguments and giving a believable realistic argument and I've just stated two points. I've developed both points, so it's a coherent argument and then I would finish with some kind of summary. It's really quite straightforward and if you are struggling with this, we have templates in the online course that make it even easier as well as techniques to get ideas and even boost your vocabulary. It is really quite straightforward.



Now, pause the tutorial and think of some solutions. Again, I'll tell you the question. In some places, young people find it difficult to communicate with older people. Why is this? What are the solutions? The solutions-- I'm just going to clarify, rephrase the question, make sure I'm getting full points for task response.

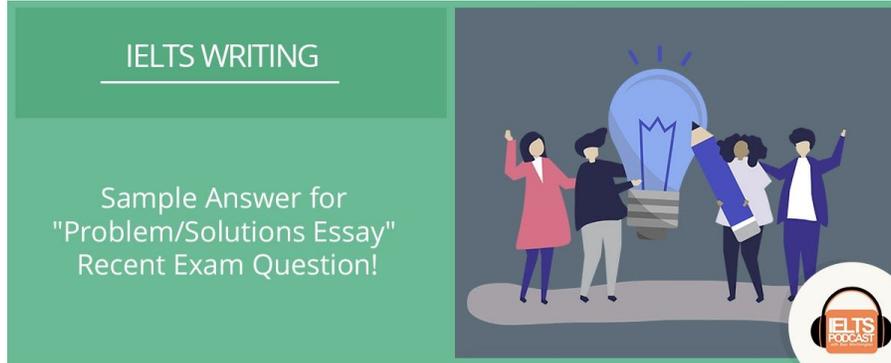
The solutions to help young people communicate with older people include or possible solutions could include training the elderly how to use mobile phones. Recent training in Scotland increased interaction between adolescents and the elderly by 20%. Another figure I just pulled out of thin air.

It's a completely invented made-up study, but I'm sure if I searched online long enough, I could find a report that and that backs that up. Also, it's completely believable. If you take an elderly person and train them how to use a phone, more than likely they're going to increase their interaction with their grandchildren or with young people. Probably more so with grandchildren. So, I might have to just rephrase that.



Anyway, moving on. Local governments-- moving on here, I'm going to just go with another point and then I'm going to develop it. Local governments could organize school trips to day care centers so old people can interact with youngsters. Hopefully, you'll have caught me saying old people, which is rude. So, obviously I'll change that. These are my notes. Elderly. So, senior citizens can interact with youngsters. Also, the children could learn from the elderly. Such a program was introduced in Liverpool in 2020 before corona came into the daycare center. No, don't go there, Ben. No, don't mention that. Such a program was introduced in Liverpool and 30% of the residents lost their jewelry within three hours. No, don't say that either. It's not very fair for Liverpool, is it?

Anyway, let's get back to it. Local governments could organize school trips to day care centers so old people can interact with youngsters. Such a program was introduced in Liverpool and 30% of all participants stated they both learnt from the other party. That's much better than saying people lost their jewelry.



So, what I'm saying is just go for realistic, believable and don't go for jokes either. Don't risk it. You just spend about \$200 on your test, so don't do it. I'm just doing it now to lighten the mood and to help you if you are struggling with this IELTS problem, with this IELTS wall in front of you. Just realize keep moving and don't get so obsessed. Take a look at the big picture. I remember one student saying that actually to me and I was like that's genius advice.

By the way, here's another piece of advice. I think it was the same student who said that she used to just talk about these questions. She'd like print them out and go and talk with her partner or with a friend and then just brainstorm ideas. Also in the online course, there's a whole module about how to do this; how to develop ideas and then once you get the ideas, all you have to do is drop them into the template. It's super easy. Super straightforward the C2 template and then obviously get some feedback because that's the fastest way to improve.

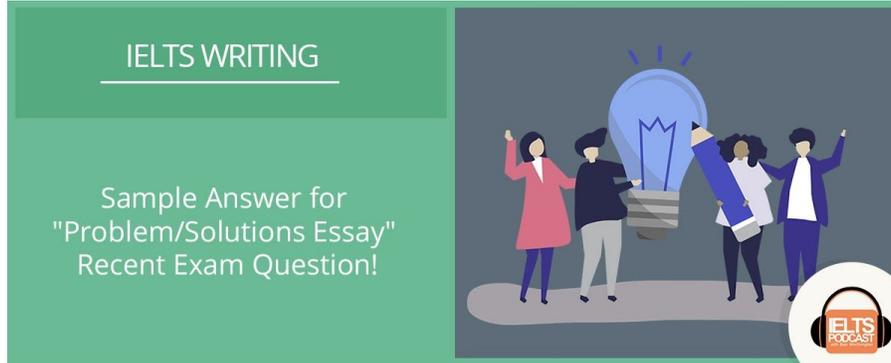
Final question: experts say older people were happier and healthier in the past because they did more exercise and spent more time with family and friends whereas now, many suffer



loneliness and health problems. What are the causes of this? What are some solutions? Again, there's a lot of words. There's quite a long sentence and that can act as a distractor, but we don't want to treat it like a distractor because there is some gold in there that we obviously need to follow to ensure we get full points for task response. So, what are the causes of this and what are some solutions?

Let's just establish what the cause is. Experts say older people were happier and healthier in the past because they did more exercise, spent more time with the family and friends-- could be a distracted that-- whereas now many suffer loneliness and health problems. What are the causes of this? This and the next part of the question obviously refers to now many suffer loneliness and health problems. That's probably what we want to focus on in body paragraph one.

And as you know from previous tutorials, it's a really good idea just to write the plan or just write like your opinion or your direction of the paragraph before you get started. In this case, it would be the causes of loneliness and health problems are the following. Later, we can



rephrase this, but it's good just to maybe write it down in capitals in your notes and then start brainstorming ideas. Doing it this way, you're more likely to stay on topic and you can double, triple-check with the question again as well which is always good practice.

Let's go. The causes of loneliness are a lack of action and not moving probably due to health problems. Another cause of loneliness could be technological isolation. A recent study by Sheffield Hallam University showed that only 45% of those over 70 could manage a smartphone never mind popular social media apps such as WhatsApp and WeChat.

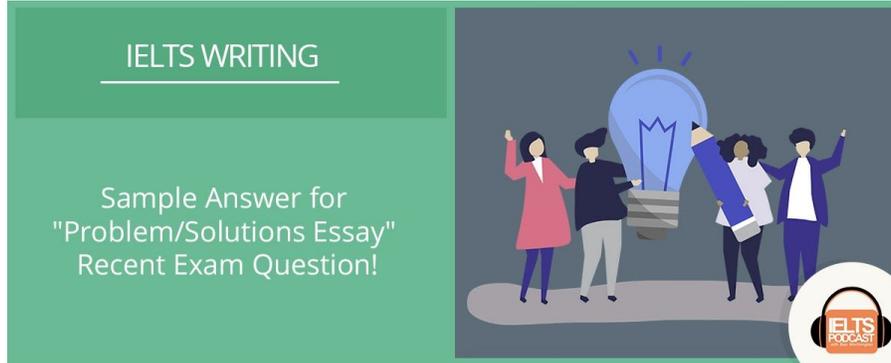
Right. Hopefully, you spotted there that this was probably a fake report or fake study, but did it sound official and realistic? Yes, it did because there are lots of details in there-- Sheffield Hallam University. By the way, when you are mentioning universities, mention the ones that are close to you. Don't always go for Oxford or Harvard or whatever. Just mention ones that are close to where you live. So, it could be Bangkok Central University. It could be Moscow State University, whatever the name is of your local university. The most famous one in your



country or your city, whatever. Sheffield is just down the road from Huddersfield, so that's why I used it.

Anyway, so I just gave a report here that backed up what I said and I could even develop this further quite easily saying the health problems could also be solved by a government program and so on and so forth. Also, the other good thing about my previous example-- my previous evidence was I stated some realistic real world example. It sounds so much better when I say social media apps such as WhatsApp and WeChat rather than social media apps.

So, just bear that in mind when you are giving evidence if you can give realistic examples. That's why we say a recent study by Sheffield Hallam University rather than a recent study by a university showed that social media apps were popular. Horrendous! A recent study by Ho Chi Minh Central University showed that 45% of social media apps such as WhatsApp, WeChat, and YouTube increased communication by 50%, whatever.



Solutions; body paragraph 2. What are the solutions to the elderly becoming lonely and suffering health problems? Well, governments should invest in keeping the elderly healthy. A recent program by the local government of Greater Manchester aimed to get 50% of their elderly residents active. The program succeeded and reduced health issues by over 90%. Furthermore, to decrease loneliness, local governments could train the elderly to use technology.

A study showed that once grandparents-- is probably the same argument as before. Yes. So, maybe I would actually probably delete that from my notes and think of another argument-- another solution. What could be the solution? A media campaign to encourage the elderly to get in contact with past friends and family members-- not past family members, but current family members.

There's a million different ideas. Just one last thing. Don't be worried about your ideas. With IELTS, it's not an intelligence test. It's a language test. Language is communication. So, you



can really-- it really is open. It just has to be realistic. I know a lot of teachers say there is no right answer, but really, there is a right answer. The right answer is a realistic answer and that's quite wide. You just need to use your common sense. It is quite straightforward and hopefully, you'll get a lot of ideas and examples from this.

If you're still struggling for ideas, how to get ideas and how to get examples, then we've done past tutorials about this and we've got a very popular-- it's one of the most popular tutorials actually in the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free course, but this tutorial gives you a step-by-step process and we even test you on your ability to generate ideas later in the course because it's such a vital component of passing IELTS. And then once you get those ideas, it really is straightforward. You just drop them into our C2 template in the Sentence Guide.

Really easy and then you've got Daphne, Ellen, or myself looking at your work and looking to give you feedback. That's everything from me today. Remember keep moving forward. You



can do this, so just push on. You are getting closer. Every little minute you invest in your preparation will get you closer, so keep on investing. Have a great day and thank you.

[Music]

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