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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.

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## INTRODUCTION

**Ben:** Recent IELTS Task 2 questions seen by students on the exam who have been doing the exam recently. They send in their questions and then we can get a head start. We can look at these questions, brainstorm ideas, organize ideas, and then organize our paragraphs and then write beautiful essays. That's the plan for today's tutorial.

We're going to look at three questions seen by students who've done the exam. We're going to break down those questions and look at strategies to answer them and give you ideas.



Specifically, all of these today are discuss the advantages and disadvantages. I'll give you the three questions first and maybe you want to pause between each one and just start brainstorming some ideas. This will help you just get your brain in gear, turn this into more of an active lesson rather than a passive one and you can check your ideas against my ideas.

I mean at the end of the day, there's not a right or wrong answer, but there is a right or wrong sort of like development of your answer, of your idea; the relevancy. So, what I'm saying is there are quite a few different ideas or possible solutions to these essays, but it's more about the delivery. It's more about the communication how these are developed. As I've said million times before, it's not an intelligence test. It's a communication test. It's a language test.

Right. First question: Many companies and organizations require their employees to wear uniforms. What kind of jobs require uniforms? Question one. What are the disadvantages of wearing a uniform to work? Disclaimer here and this is why I always say to every student really read the question a million times. Read it and double and triple check because even in my notes,



in my second paragraph, I'm talking about the advantages of wearing a uniform and that's not what the question asked.

So, even though I've been doing this for a long time, just switching off for a second and I would have scored very low on task response. So, just keep that in mind. I also made quite a funny mistake in the first body paragraph. So, anyway here are my answers.

Body paragraph no. 1: I have to answer directly the question. What kinds of jobs require uniforms? Body paragraph no. 1. What I'm going to do there is I can't just give them a list of jobs that require uniforms. I'm going to say first responders wear uniforms. For example, firemen wear uniforms to protect them from the flames. Medical staff wear uniforms for hygienic reasons.

Others wear uniforms to show status. Barristers in the UK or barristers-- these are the legal experts based in the courtrooms. They have a legal dress which includes a grey wig. I'm not talking about the baristas that you get in Starbucks or in Costa Coffee because they definitely



don't have to wear wigs for work. However, in my notes I did spell it as baristas the coffee experts. So, just keep that in mind all right.

So, anyway what I'm saying here is that some professions use or wear a uniform to show their status. The barristers do it for traditional reasons to show that they're the ones adjudicating in the courts. University deans will usually wear uniforms such as gowns to show their status and also companies also insist their employees wear uniforms. For example, McDonald's was one of the first. So, they do it for branding reasons.

So, I just gave like three different reasons and told the reader why they would wear those and then gave examples for each one. So, firemen wear it for functional reasons; to protect. Barristers wear it for status symbols to illustrate to the others that they're the ones with the position and it's traditional and then university deans as well. So, that's body paragraph one.

I'm not going to talk about the advantages or disadvantages there. I'm just saying these people wear them for these reasons. For example, xy said.



Now, in my misreading of the question, I've got a lot of ideas for the advantages of wearing a uniform for body paragraph two. I've got so many advantages and it's a disaster because the question says what are the disadvantages of wearing a uniform. So, I well and truly messed that one up. It's a good job I spotted this mistake. So, I've got to change it around.

In this situation, I was going to share how to rescue a paragraph, but I think just for teaching reasons, it's going to be easier if I just share disadvantages of wearing a uniform. So, we could talk about firemen; the disadvantage of wearing heavy protective equipment is that they have to move slower. They cannot sprint. They cannot run as fast as if they didn't have any equipment.

And it's not the strongest argument. Perhaps a stronger argument I could use from my childhood which was in our school we had to wear uniform, but our rival school across the hills they all had to wear a different one. Theirs was black. Ours was with a green jumper. Theirs was with a black jumper.



Now, because of this, we could easily differentiate between them and us. So, it made-- I wouldn't say violence, but it made it easier to maybe pick on a student from that school if we were having some kind of activity together or if we just saw them in the village or if we saw them in the street. So, it did kind of increase the rivalry between our two schools.

Now, I'm not going to give a specific personal example like I just did there. What I would do I would make it more general. I would say one of the disadvantages of wearing a uniform could be that it highlights the differences between rival groups. For example, in some villages in northern England, there is a high rivalry between schools and this is only exaggerated because the schools have to wear different colored uniforms therefore making it easy to distinguish between rival gangs or groups.

A small exaggeration there about the gangs, but it makes my point and it's much better than me saying telling them a story about when we saw a kid from the other school on our playing field and we knew it was from another school because he had a different uniform. I'm not going to do



that because it's not academic. It's not IELTS. The examiner doesn't want that. They want a generalized story-- it's not even a story-- generalized example.

So, that's why I changed it to it's common for villages in the north of England to have rival groups and that's only exaggerated by the different uniforms from the different rival schools. So, just bear that in mind. Two lessons to take away there. One, read the question. Three, just kind of formalize your examples.

So, body paragraph one: directly answering the question what kinds of jobs require uniforms. Body paragraph two: disadvantages of wearing a uniform to work. So, I messed up again a second time. I talked about uniform at school and messed up again. That's not great. Anyway, wow! That's not too big a difference. What I could do is just talk about the disadvantages.

Wearing a uniform to work could include stigmatization. Stigmatization is when you judge somebody or you assume a certain set of qualities just because of what you know about them and you might know very little. So, for example, a McDonald's employee with a McDonald's



uniform could receive a high degree of stigmatization or could be subject to stigmatization for performing a low skilled job. So, I could just say stigmatization there and develop that example. So, I can't believe I messed up twice on that body paragraph. Wow!

Anyway, the point that I want to make is that we've got two direct questions. Assign a paragraph to each one then in the conclusion, we'll do a very brief summary. So, the kinds of jobs that require uniforms range from first responders and emergency services up to fast food workers and even school-- and even legal experts such as barristers.

The disadvantages range from restricting movement which might be the case for firemen and stigmatization if the job is considered low skilled and low paid. That would be a very rough conclusion; just a summary of both paragraphs. Job done.

Now, I used to struggle with this a lot; struggling with this organizing my ideas and not contradicting myself in the paragraph and most of all, the most surreptitious, the most sort of like silent killer of these Task 2 essays is probably task response because it's just so innocuous. It's so



like obvious, but it's so easy to get tripped up. And I used to get tripped up a lot with task response and as you can see it still happens.

I read the question really quickly. I think I know what it means. I start developing it, go back and check and it's off topic. The important thing though is that it was caught. So, just be careful. Now, I used to suffer from this a lot more. It used to happen a lot more frequently as well as struggling with all the other parts of the IELTS.

When I started teaching this I was a bit lost. This is why I decided to find examiners, find ex-IELTS examiners, linguistic experts, speaking experts, pronunciation experts, all of them and learn from those, record those interviews, and put them into the podcast and that's how this podcast was born, how these tutorials were born. And after testing all that information, some of it worked. Some of it didn't. I eventually just found the winning formula; the one that was getting the students the band 7 and perfected it so much so I could offer that Jump to Band 7 or It's Free online course and you can find that at [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com).



So, yes and as you know, I'm from England. I used to live in Spain. I used to teach English there. I was preparing students for IELTS and then I just focused my energy into the online school. We could get better results. We could reach more students and we could share all those tips and secrets and advice that we've been using with my students face-to-face I could share them with students online reach more.

Now, let's move on to question two. In some countries, young people are encouraged to work or travel for a year between finishing high school and starting university studies. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages for young people to do this. Now in the UK and in the US, if you take a year out before studying for university, it's generally called the gap year. That's the kind of vocabulary we want to include.

So, I've simplified this question. It's basically discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a gap year. So, pros of a gap year; body paragraph one. Cons of a gap year; body paragraph two. Pros:



you see the world, you could get clarity of career choice by trying different professions, get a break from academia.

So, different ones there and for example, I'm not going to talk about my cousin Nicholas who had been studying at university and he just thought he would try something with carpentry using his hands, but what I'm going to do is just transform that into a more formal example. I'm going to say students often find that when they take a break from book studying and essay writing and try a career such as carpentry, they often learn to develop new skills especially in the physical sense. Something like that. I could even make it into a scientific study. A study from Cambridge recently showed that when students took a break from academia and tried physical jobs, they obtained a five-fold boost in emotional intelligence, whatever.

Body paragraph no. 2: the cons of a gap year. A student could lose money. This is especially bad if you are aiming for a competitive field such as the legal world. It could be costly especially if you're-- it could be costly with regards to time because if you're a psychologist, it takes over



eight years of training more or less. Going abroad for a year extends this to nine years. It could also be dangerous and costly. For example, there have been a lot of robberies of intoxicated tourists while at full moon parties in Thailand.

So, plenty of reasons there. Each reason was developed a little bit and the final one was probably developed the most and it was the easiest to explain. So, it's very straightforward here. The pros of a gap year; body paragraph one. Cons of a gap year; body paragraph two. And then I'm going to just put something like after reviewing all the advice-- let's see.

After reviewing both the advantages and the disadvantages-- I'll probably change that to pros and cons-- I strongly believe that although it could be costly in terms of time and money for a student to take a gap year, the advantages gained such as seeing the world and other cultures, taking a break from academia, and also possibly even trying different professions, definitely outweigh the cons. Just a very brief conclusion there. That wouldn't be the full one. It's just the direction and the style that I would aim for.



Moving on. Final question: The global demand for oil and gas is increasing. Some believe that we should therefore encourage the exploitation of remote areas. Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages? How do we organize the paragraphs? Well, advantages of exploiting remote areas; body paragraph one. Body paragraph two; disadvantages of exploiting remote areas. It's really quite straightforward.

We've got it down to a step-by-step process in the online course. You follow the modules. It's step one, step two, step three. We've also got a module for how to get ideas every single time and we improved that module in the recent update to the course. Now, you can get ideas and get vocabulary at the same time; to kill two birds with one stone as we say in the UK.

Let's jump into it. Advantages of exploiting remote areas. 1) We could increase the oil supply therefore decrease the price of oil and other product products and in theory, increase the quality of life for consumers as prices fall. Maybe I wouldn't include that one. It's just a long very developed argument, but it's all very, very, very hypothetical.



Next argument. It may reduce dependency on other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Russia. Therefore, diversifying the supply of energy sources increases geopolitical energy security. I'd definitely go with that just so I could use that beautiful phrase of geopolitical energy security. Topic-specific vocabulary. Examiners love this. Put it in there.

Final argument. Very straightforward; it increases jobs. Where there used to be a lovely beautiful lake in Argentina, now there is a massive oil well employing 300 people and creating jobs for the economy. So, you might have detected a little bit of sarcasm in my voice there. Don't put sarcasm in your essays, please.

As I've said a million times before, this is an IELTS essay, an academic essay you're writing. It's a language test. Language is communication, so it's a test of communication, not of your personal beliefs, the intelligence of your ideas. It's none of that. It's just your ability to communicate a coherent argument and it does increase jobs. Putting oil wells in the Arctic as crazy as it may sound or in beautiful lakes or wherever, in the desert, it increases jobs. You need



people to run those wells and as I said personally, maybe I don't agree with that, but I do want to get points for this essay. So, I can put my beliefs aside and just write the essay they want to hear.

Disadvantages of exploiting remote areas. 1) It's only going to add to global warming issues as more oil is produced and burnt. The current global supply chain is already in a precarious situation. I definitely wanted to mention precarious. That means it's dangerous. It's slightly dangerous and it could fall to bits in any day.

And my argument is that because it's in such a delicate precarious situation, adding more wells in remote locations is going to add more risks. This isn't necessary. For example, the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico shows that it's already a dangerous development extracting oil. No need to expand it.

And third, a lot of these areas are in dangerous locations such as the Arctic. Drilling for gas and oil near melting ice caps would most likely be a catastrophe for the environment. So, three very strong arguments there. Now, that I've got the ideas and I've got a good chunk of vocabulary, it's



quite easy to drop those into the C2 template and in the course, what we do is first we give a very basic template for the students to get used to dropping their ideas into and then we give them the high-powered C2 template where they can start really expanding their vocabulary, expanding their phrases, and improving their grammatical range and accuracy score.

So, in this case, I've got lots of ideas, lots of vocabulary. Now, I just need to organize them. How do I organize them? Easy-peasy lemon squeezy. We just drop them into the C2 template. So, going back to the question. Body paragraph one; advantages of exploiting remote areas. Reason one, two, and three developed with examples. Disadvantages of exploiting remote areas. Reason one, two, and three with examples. Quite straightforward.

Conclusion. I want to answer the question directly. Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages? So, I'll say unfortunately, the pros of increasing drilling and extraction for resources in remote areas definitely do not outweigh the cons. Direct answer to the question



using synonyms. Now, I'm definitely going to get points for task response and then in the next sentence in the conclusion, I'll just elaborate it.

Although there is an increase in jobs, the risks involved are far too dangerous and ultimately, exploiting new areas should not be the direction we go especially with global warming. It is predicted that these remote areas will be protected by governments and industry can pursue more greener efforts to supply the increased needs of global energy. And it kind of just goes back to the original sentence at the beginning about the global demand for oil and gas is increasing.

So, the biggest takeaways from this lesson would be just to learn how to split up the question and double-check, triple-check for task response. Don't make that mistake I did right at the beginning of going off on a different angle just by misreading the question. And then once you've got your ideas, you can drop those into your essay.

Now, if you are still struggling with this, I recommend you get on our mailing list and once you're on that mailing list you get some special discounts for the online course, but you also get



an opportunity to purchase the essay corrections. We give you the essay question, you write it, you email it to us, we review it, we evaluate it, we send it back to you, and then you know where you're going wrong and you'll also know if we're a good fit for working with each other. You want to do that just before you jump in because it'll just make it easier for us and easier for you to know if we're a good fit before we actually start.

That's it from me today. Have a great day. Keep on moving forward. Don't let lockdown or corona keep you down. Try to make the most of the situation. I know it's easier said than done, but just keep moving forward and try and look for those opportunities to improve your score. Have a great day and thank you for listening.

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## IELTS TASK 2

Sample Answers  
For Discuss the Advantages  
and Disadvantages Questions

