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**IELTS Writing:
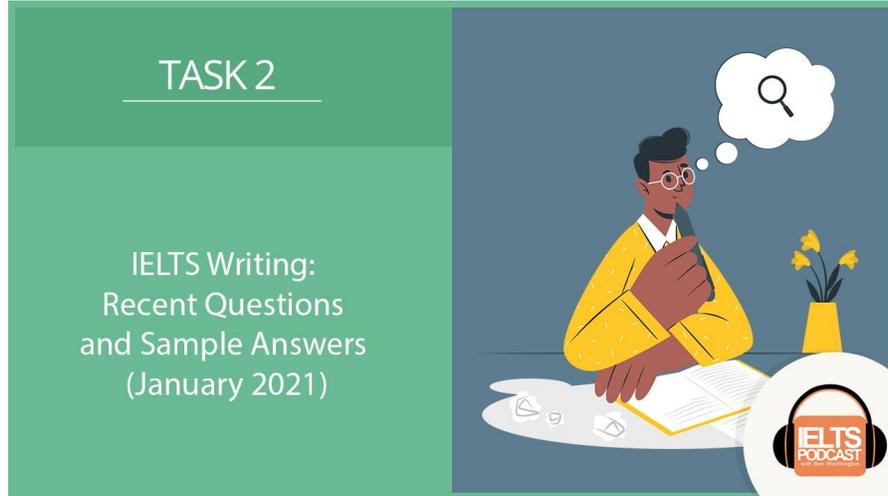Recent Questions
and Sample Answers
(January 2021)**

[Music]

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.

[Music]

Ben: Recent IELTS Task 2 Writing questions. Hi there. My name is Ben Worthington. In this tutorial, we are going to cover some questions seen by students on the exams. They were sent to us by our own students and found online and we're going to basically break down possible answers and more importantly, how to attack these types of questions. We've got all different types: problem-solution, agree-disagree, all of those and I'm going to show you how to do it.
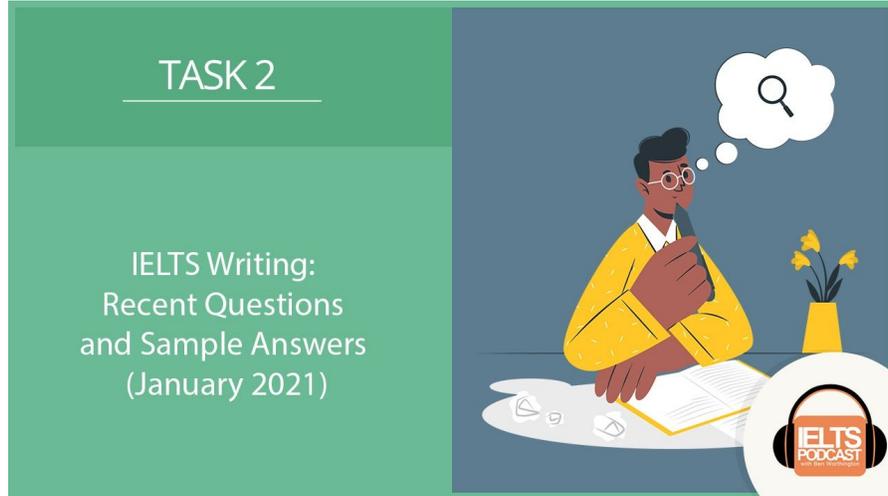
Before we get started, let me explain who I am. My name is Ben Worthington. I'm from England up north. You may have recognized some of the vowel sounds and maybe small remnants of my

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accent that I used to have, but anyway, I lost my accent because I went to Spain about 15 years ago. I started teaching English. It wasn't fair to teach kids a Yorkshire accent. I'm just joking, but nobody understood me. So, I slowly had to lose it.
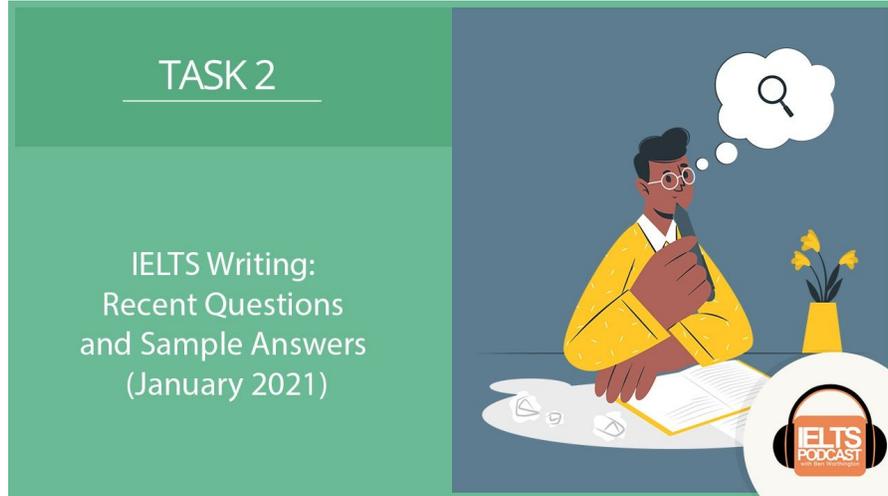
And I was teaching English. Eventually, I specialized in IELTS preparation and to get even better, I started by asking other professionals and experts in the sector how to improve their students' scores. And this led me to conversations with linguists, with pronunciation experts, academic experts and then I thought I'm going to record these interviews.

And then after getting that knowledge, if it worked-- I mean after getting that knowledge, I tested it with my students. If it worked and improved scores, then in it went into the online course we have and if it didn't work, then I threw it out. That's basically it.

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So, if you are looking to pass the IELTS exam and you don't know where to start, then perhaps go to ieltspodcast.com and there you will see we've got a special offer at the moment and we are doing essay corrections for a ridiculously low price and this is because it's good to see if we are the right fit for each other because you might not like the way we work and we might not like your essays. I'm just joking, but it's just a good fit to see if we can work together. So, have a look at that. Go to ieltspodcast.com and you will see the essay correction offer we have at the moment.
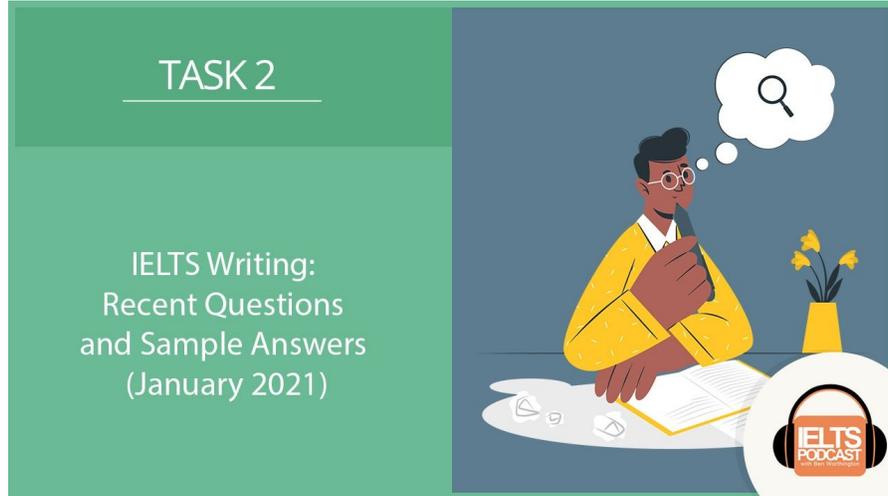
Let's jump into it. I've got three questions and all different types of questions. So, let's go. First one. Grab a pen by the way and this way you can follow the process and ideally try it with your own essays and even possibly write an essay from my notes. So, let's go. Question 1. Prison is the common way in most countries to solve the problem of crime. However, a more effective solution is to provide people with a better education. Do you agree or disagree?

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Let's see. So, I'm going to get two ideas for each paragraph. Paragraph 1: prison is a good idea. Body paragraph 2: better education is a solution. There we go. I've got my plans. Now, let's see. Prison is common because it's effective. These are my notes and this is what I'm going to write about. So, let's just go back to the question.

Prison is the common way in most countries to try and solve the problem of crime. That's body paragraph 1. However, a more effective solution is to provide people with a better education. I'll use that for body paragraph 2. Thank you. So, let's go. Prison is common because it's effective bullet point 1. Bullet point 2: it takes criminals off the street. That's why we have prisons because they're effective. The issue is that it's only a short-term problem because what happens upon release?

Now, in my notes, I usually write down short hand ideas that I can develop. However, sometimes a phrase will drop into my mind and I'll write down the entire phrase. Why is that? Because I'm

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like that is good vocabulary or that is the perfect phrase to include and in this case, I put what happens upon release because that was a nice phrase. It's almost a collocation-- upon release-- and it fits perfectly. It's some high level grammar I can definitely use.

So, I've got my three ideas. It's probably a little bit thin. So, how do I extend it? Well, I can extend it now with some examples or some studies. I'm not going to go into how to write examples or how to reference studies just now, but that's what I would do. I would extend it that way and then develop the same point, not over and over again, but basically I'd say the same argument but in the form of an example or a study.

Body paragraph 2. Let's just go back. So, in the question, it says however a more effective solution is to provide people with better education. Do you agree or disagree? I'm going to say yes. Do I personally think that education would solve-- better education would solve the problem of crime in countries? I don't know. Is it easier to write? Yes, it is.

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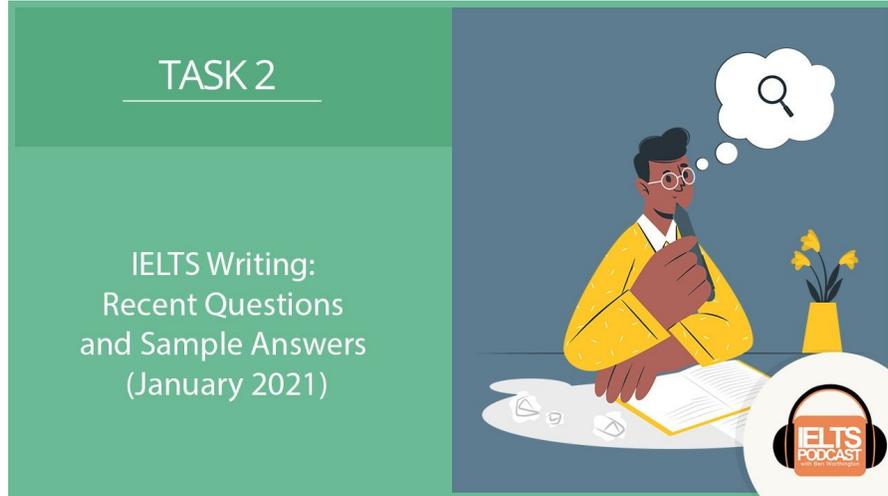
For me, I just found it was the first position that came into my mind and I was like okay, let's just go with this. Education is better and also it makes me sound like a better person to be honest. If I write no, criminals should be thrown in jail and their hands should be cut off and education will not change a person if they are morally corrupt. It doesn't make me sound like a good person, does it? And so I'm just going to say education will solve the problem because…
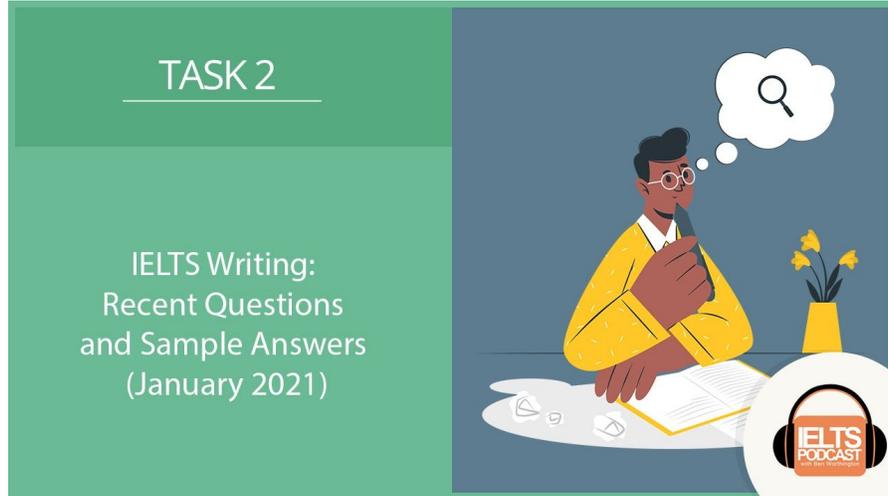
And I could think of lots of ideas. It gives the person better prospects. If they have a job, they are less likely to commit a crime. They're more likely to have a job if they're better educated. So, you can see I'm developing this argument and then like the first paragraph, I'm going to give an example and I can just say Norway. A recent study in Norway showed that when potential criminals were offered free higher education, crime rates in these cities dropped drastically. Something like that.

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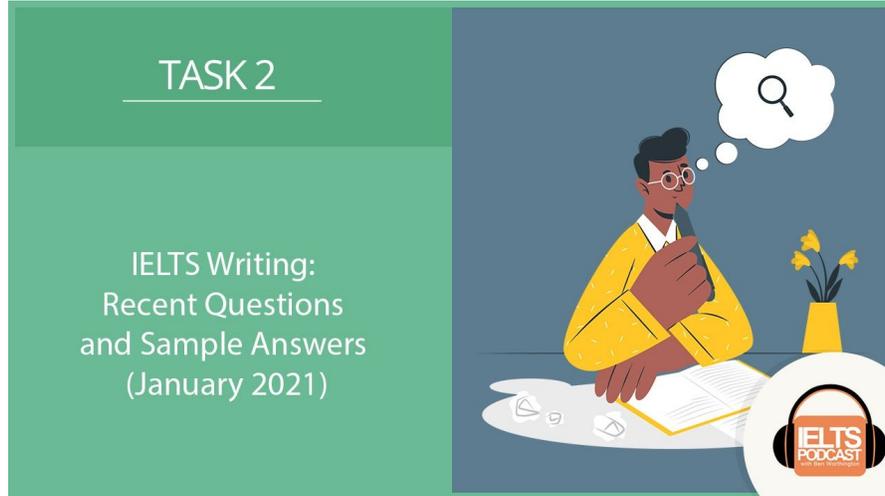
Norway comes to mind because nowadays everybody looks at Norway. It's like the perfect country, so it's good to put Norway into the argument here especially in this. If I'm talking about gun crime, I'm not going to talk about Norway. I'm going to talk about the U.S.A. most likely or some other country, but in this respect, Norway is world famous for having some ridiculously generous social programs, so it was believable.

Conclusion. Final paragraph. Conclusion. Prison is a short-term solution. Education is definitely better. I might write it. That does seem like a little bit blunt. I'd probably write something like outweigh the benefits and so on so forth, but just for my notes, I put prison as a short-term solution. Education is definitely better.

Then I put down I think using both because after all prison is a necessary deterrent and in my notes I put a circle around deterrent because this is a phrase again that as I said before, what

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happens upon release when a convict is released from jail? Likewise, there is a deterrent was a really suitable phrase. This is topic-specific vocabulary, so I didn't want to lose that.

Next question. In some countries, there are fewer young people who listen to or play classical music these days. Why is this? Should young people be encouraged to play or perform classical music? Now, I could jump in and talk-- for body paragraph 1, I could talk about should young people be encouraged to play music? Body paragraph 2: the benefits of playing classical music.

No. That would be a task response train crash. We do not want a task response train crash. All of you listening are capable of avoiding this task response train crash. How do we do it? Well, we analyze the question and we break it down and we assign ideas to parts of the question. This is what we train in the online course; how to dissect the question, break it down, and plan your answer.
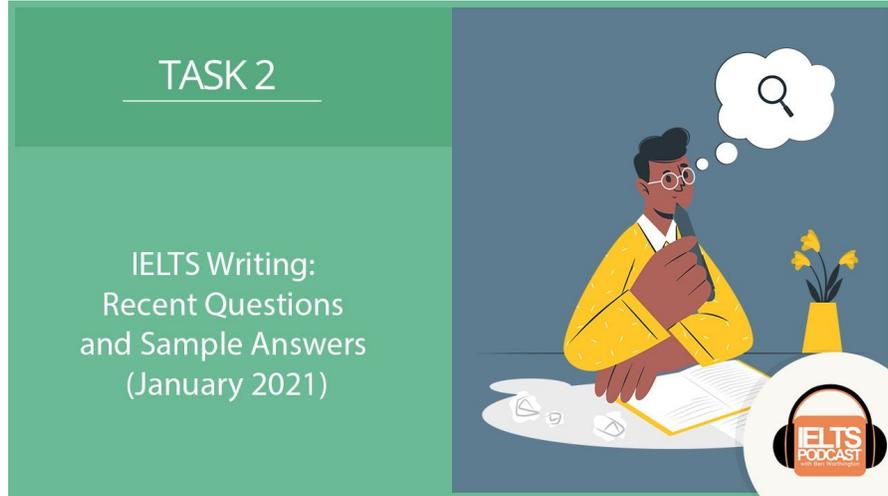
In this case, body paragraph 1 is why are less young people playing classical music or listening to classical music because it directly says why is this. So, I've got to answer it if I want to get points for task response. My next body paragraph is should young people be encouraged to play or perform classical music and I don't think-- okay. In the end, I put yes.

Do I personally believe this? No, probably not. When I was writing this, I did think it was a good idea they should be encouraged. Actually, I think the reason why it should be is because I had the phrase musical intelligence and I thought that would sound great in the essay. On the second run through this I'm thinking no, children shouldn't be forced to do antiquated tasks. However, it doesn't really matter my personal opinion. I'm going to go for the easiest to describe and in the end, I came up with a reasonable argument.

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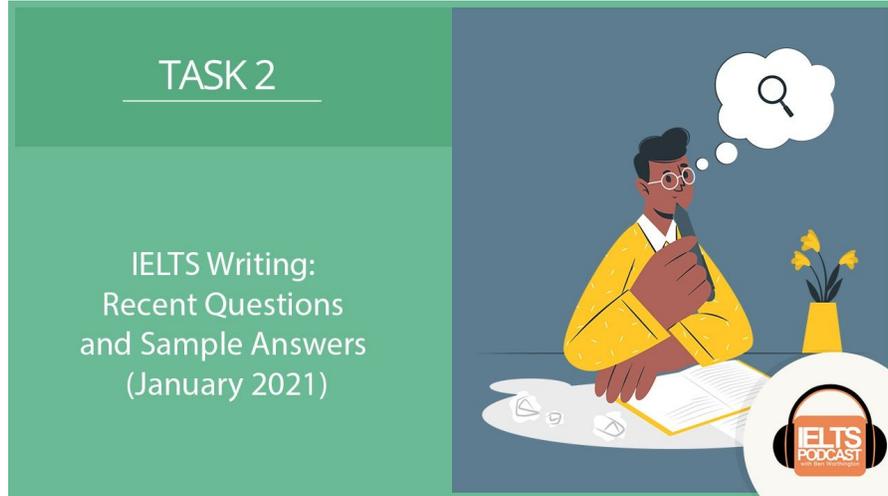
Again, as I've said a million times before, IELTS is a language test. Language is communication. Intelligent ideas are difficult to communicate. So, go for simple ideas that are easier to communicate and score points in the language exam. Score points in the communication exam.

Let's jump into the meat and potatoes of this answer. Let's go. So, why are students playing less and listening to less classical music? Well, there are a lot of distractions available at the moment. One, we've got the internet. We've got video games. We've got more sports than ever. We've got extracurricular activities. We have all of these different distractions available and basically, classical music is competing against these.

Now, when I'm planning my essay, all these ideas are coming out, but when I'm writing it, I'm going to reorganize it slightly differently so I finish with internet. So, I will say we are an age of opulence regarding distractions. It basically means ridiculous wealth of distractions. So, I could

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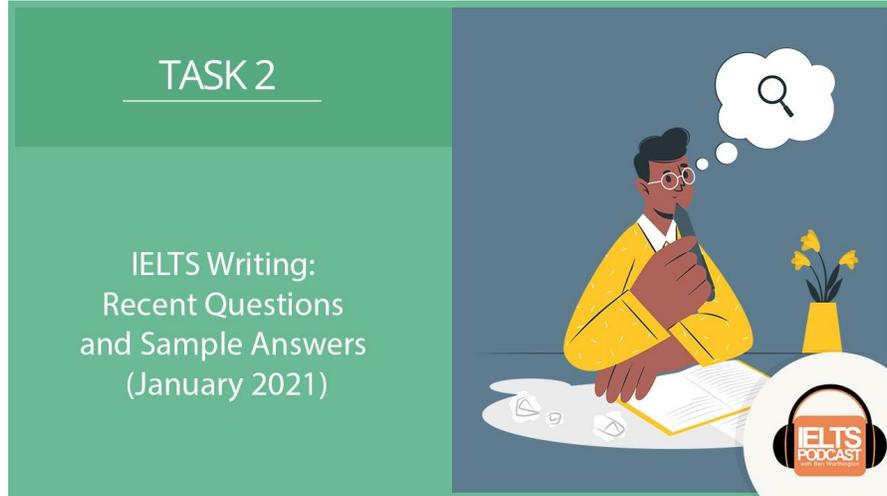
say young people have the Kindles, have video games, have the internet and I'm going to finish with the internet because this is the argument that I'm going to now develop further.

And I'm going to say furthermore, there's no powerful force behind classical music whereas with social media, we have-- basically, our social media is fueled by titans such as Facebook and TikTok so the competition for attention is even harder. So, in this paragraph, I've given a few different reasons then I developed one reason further and then I gave an example with Facebook and TikTok.

And the structure of the essay there; I didn't start off with internet as a distraction and then come back to it later after mentioning video games. No. I would have reorganized it, finished with the internet as my final point, and develop that further. So, that is why fewer young people are listening or playing classical music because basically it's competing against TikTok and Facebook and whatnot.

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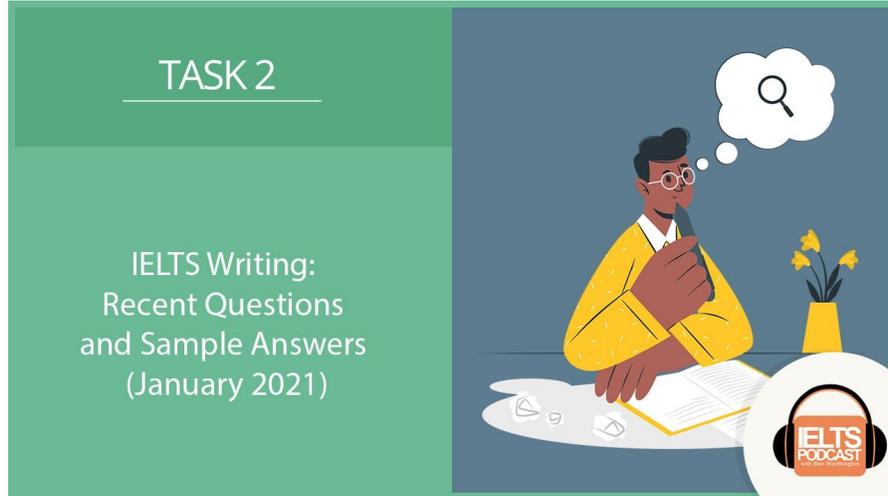Recent Questions
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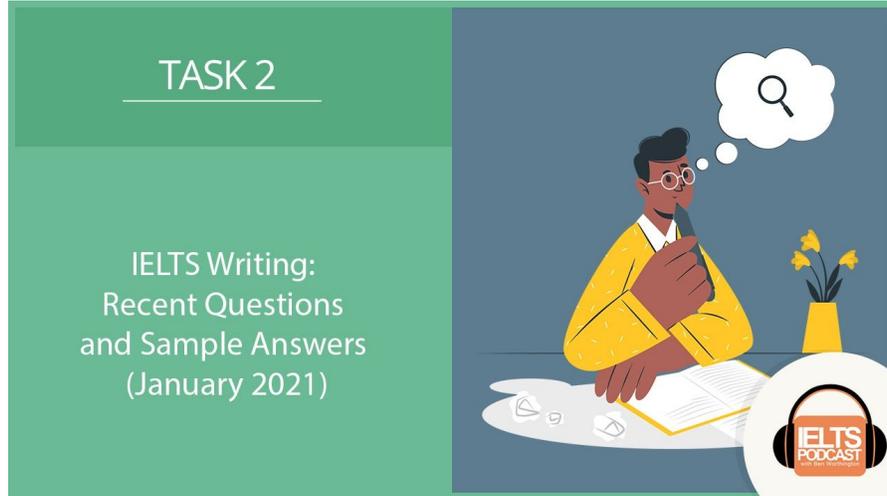
Body paragraph 2. Should young people be encouraged to play or perform classical music? Yes. Again, I'm questioning why did I say yes. It seems a bit cruel. However, I'm going to say yes because I'm going to say-- basically, I wanted to argue about musical intelligence and I know with that phrase I can develop it further. I can invent a study and we tell you how to invent realistic believable studies.

I did have another argument as well. One argument was cultural heritage for some countries. Mozart the famous classical musician is Austrian and he is the source of national pride in Austria and having no classical musicians in Austria could be an embarrassment. So, this is why we should develop it. Again, on second thoughts, that sounds like a weak argument. I might put it in at the beginning, but I wouldn't really develop it further. It's just an additional argument. Maybe I'd even delete it when it comes to planning the essay.

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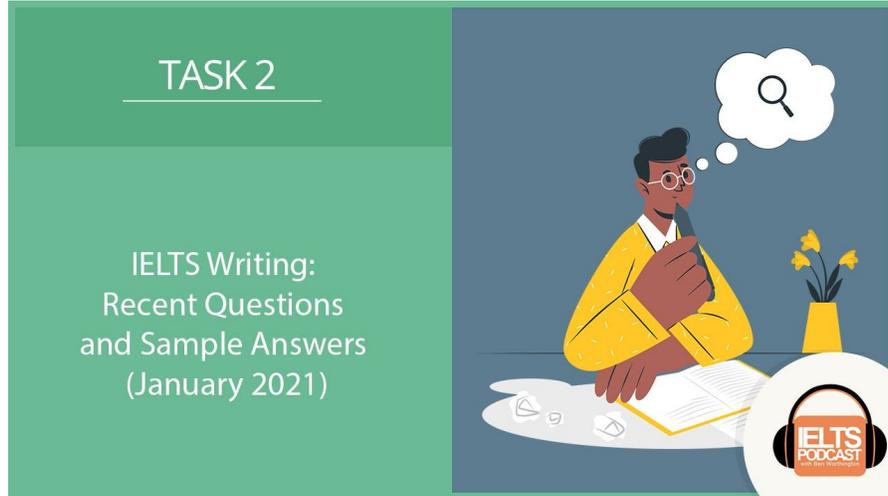
I did have one good argument though which was that playing a classical instrument is safer than going on social media because you cannot be bullied. You cannot suffer from cyber bullying. Now interestingly, while I was planning this, I had this idea or this witty comment that you cannot be-- what is it? You cannot be cyber bullied when you're playing the clarinet, but I thought that could be interpreted incorrectly as well, yes. You could be cyberbullied for playing a clarinet. Why not? And the idea was that if I'm playing a clarinet and I'm not on social media then I'm not going to get bullied, but as you can see, it's too complicated. I would have to be very careful on how I phrase it so I can avoid that confusion.

And it's so much simpler if I just go for musical intelligence. Musical intelligence. There are numerous skills to be gained from playing a musical instrument such as empathetic awareness, your listening skills improve, and so does your psychometric coordination, for example. Recent

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studies show… And you can see there it's a simple idea. It's easy to communicate and then I can back it up by a study.

And I'm not getting mixed up with this silly argument of a clarinet and being cyber bullied and whatnot. The only reason why I really wanted to go with that was to mention the term cyber bullying because I knew it's a good term to put in, but again, it's not really relevant. So, I'm not going to force it. So, just bear that in mind.

My conclusion. In summary, I don't really have to put-- don't have to give my opinion here, do I? No. I'll say in summary, classical music is falling in popularity. It's basically saying the same as the question, but with different words because of the amount of alternatives. I'm not going to say distractions again. I want to improve my score by showing my lexical resource skills, my depth of vocabulary, so I'll say alternatives.

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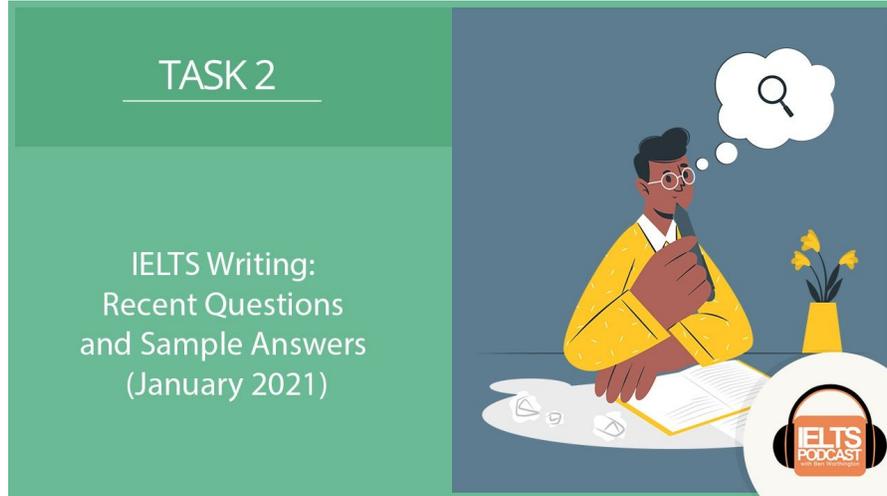
People are playing less instruments because of the dearth-- because of the wide range of opportunities available. Most likely people-- no. And students should be encouraged because of the benefits such as musical intelligence and cultural heritage. A very summarized summary there-- summarized conclusion. I could develop it a little bit further, but that's the general idea. Remember we've only got 40 minutes for this.

Next one. Final question. Some people feel that the effects of advertising are positive for individuals and businesses while others think they are negative. Discuss both sides and give your own opinion. So, again what do we do? We simplify the question. P1: advertising is positive for consumers and here just rereading the question, it says for individuals and businesses. So, I might have to add a sentence about it being positive for businesses i.e. it allows them to grow faster, but the main point of my paragraph when I was planning was that it's beneficial for consumers and then in body paragraph 2 it's negative for consumers.

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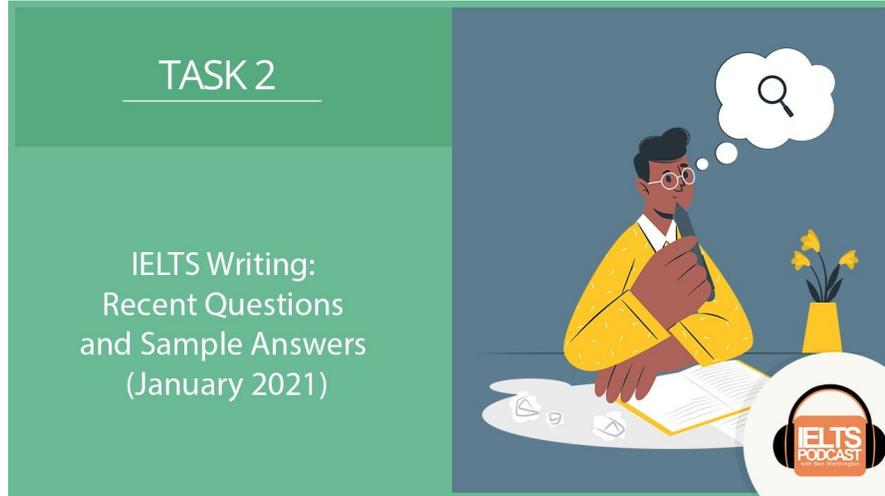
I simplified it and then I've got arguments for and against. So, it's positive because it helps businesses grow. Also for consumers, it informs them of the choices. Inform was one of the words I wanted to use here, so I put a circle around that. And it can instill belief. So, if you see a person in an advert that lost five kilos-- before they were quite heavy and now they're looking fit and six pack and whatever, it can make you believe that hey, if they can do it, I can do it too. So, in that respect, it's positive.
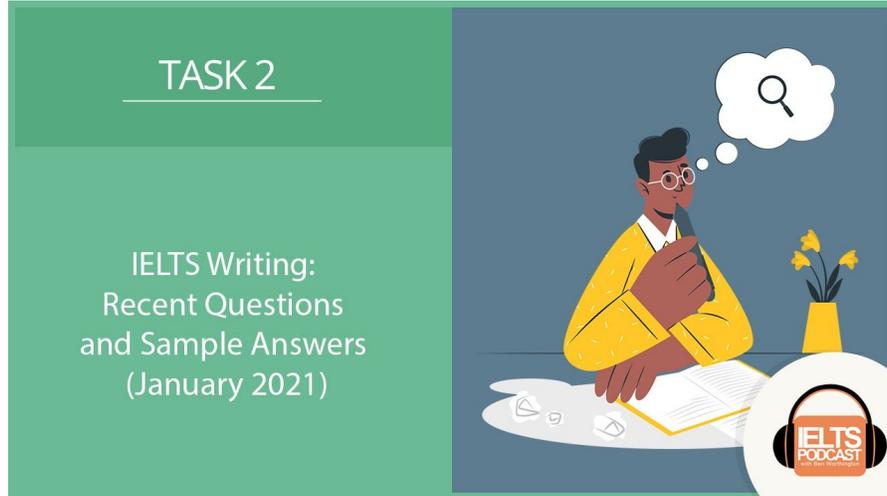
It could be a form of education. And now I've given you one or two reasons. The final reason, a form of education, I'm going to develop it further and I'm going to say it's a form of education. For example, YouTube is full of educational content creators who rely on advertisers for their income.
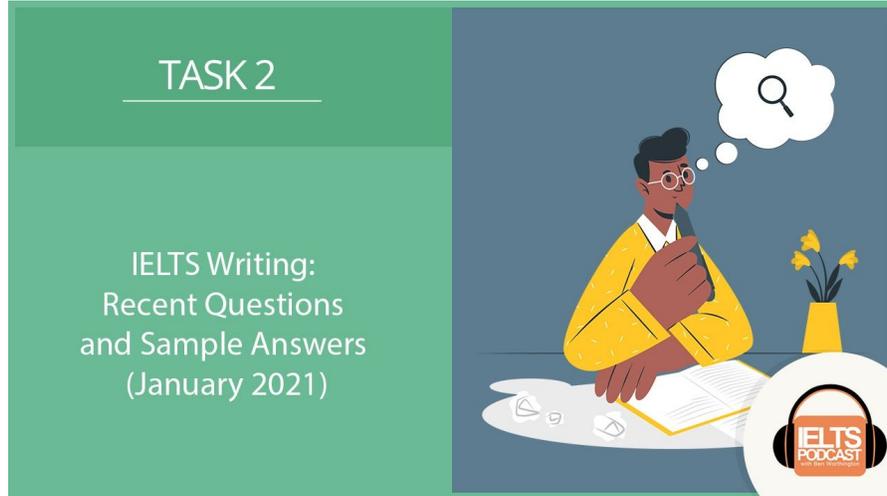
So, organization of your ideas is critical. We need to go for clarity and also they all need to be coherent. So, this is why I mentioned a form of education at the end. It's my final and then that's the one I'm going to develop further.
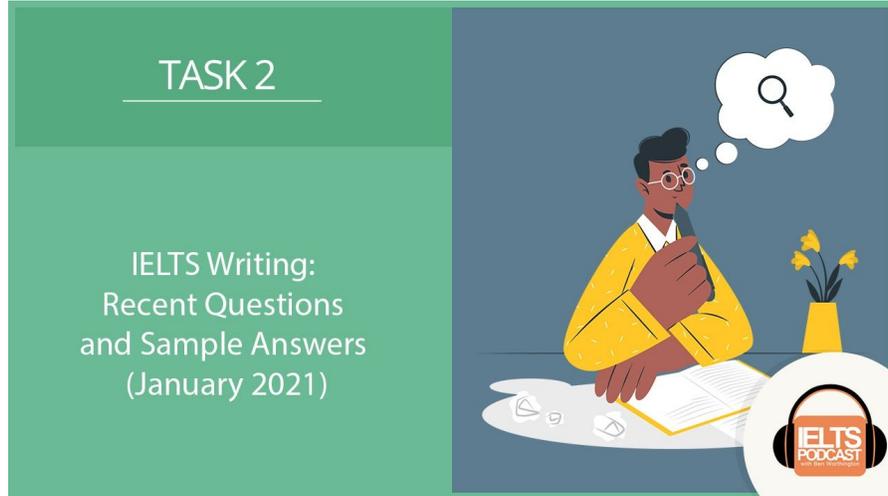
By the way, the organization of ideas and coherent paragraphs is quite straightforward. We've got a framework full of sentences where you just drop your ideas in and the essay writes itself. It's really, really straightforward and we're getting fantastic results for it and that is a form of advertising and you can too and I've instilled beliefs. There we go.

Let's go. Advertising is negative because it can cause discomfort and body shame. Body shame is another phrase that I wanted to mention. Beauty products, for example, they could show a person full of wrinkles and the person afterwards after using the cream is now 20 years younger, has a tan, and the picture is in color. They can revolutionize your life.

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Next. Advertising is negative because it adds to the cost of the product. So, you might buy a product that is $400, but 200 of that could have easily gone on advertising and if you see the adverts following you around on the internet and you can't escape, then that company is spending a lot of money on adverts to get your attention and to get you to purchase their product and you end up paying for those adverts. For example, the product is 400. You've probably spent at least half of that on the adverts if you're seeing a lot of adverts.

Final arguments. Again, this follows the same structure. I reorganized it. I think when I was brainstorming ideas I had lots of different random ones. I chose the best and then I reorganized them into a coherent paragraph. And so following on from it adds to the cost of the product, I said retargeting-- this is basically what I was saying when the advert follows you around. You are getting targeted again-- retargeting can be seen as invasive.

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This is negative if it's following you around. It's just like leave me alone. I'm at home. I don't want these adverts right now and then this is why new privacy concerns and regulations keep appearing. For example, and now I will talk about GDPR.

So, again you can see final argument links very coherently with the cost of the product. I think when I was brainstorming, first I came up with the cost of the product, then I came up with body shame, and then I came up with retargeting invasive GDPR. So, I had to reorganize it so it all flowed.

Conclusion. My opinion is that advertising is fine if it is in moderation. So, I'm saying it's good, but when they follow you around and they invade your privacy, it can be detrimental. Another useful term to include in your essay.

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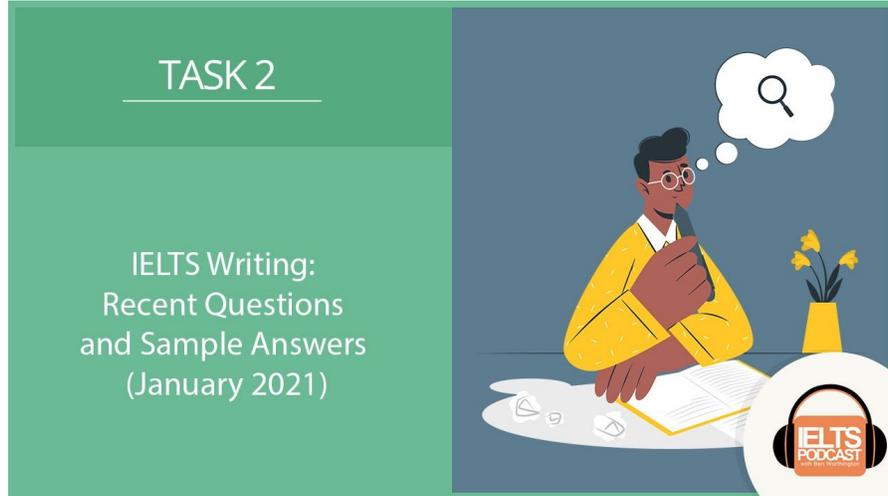
There we go. Straightforward. Kind of easy-- not kind of easy. I'm sorry. Maybe a little bit, but it does get easy. On the course, we tell our students to come up with ideas, to brainstorm ideas and we give them feedback on their possible ideas and then after that, we ask them to write a simple essay using our structure. We give them feedback and we see big improvements.

So, those were three recent current questions we saw. Also, we update our online course with these questions. So, every now and again, a student will be like hey Ben, on the exam I had the question that we had in the course. That was fantastic and I knew exactly what to write because I'd written it before. So, this is why we update our questions in our course so that it's all up to date and relevant.

That's it from me. Remember if you want to start improving your essays then come to ieltspodcast.com and you'll see a special offer. We're only doing 50 essays at $5. I think we're

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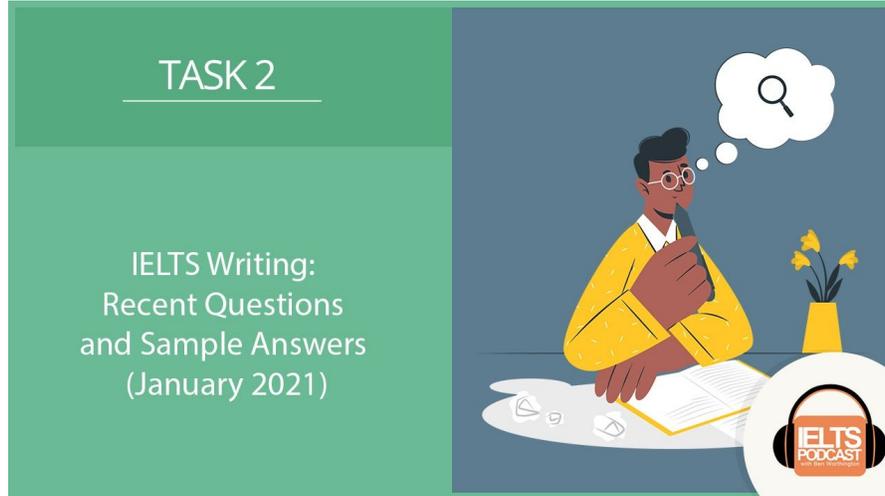
about halfway through. So, get a move on with that before the offer ends. That's it from me.

Have a great day and good luck with your IELTS preparation.

[Music]

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