



**Student:** Almost half of the essay was with the structure.

**Ben:** Wow!

**Student:** Not the exact structure you have provided, but with my own ideas, of course.

**Ben:** Absolutely. Yeah, yeah.

**Student:** The result was 7.

**Ben:** Wow! Wonderful. Well done, there, Olga. Well done.

[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.



## INTRODUCTION

[Music]

**Ben:** 7 ways to improve your sentences in your IELTS essays. Hi there. My name is Ben Worthington and in this tutorial, we are going to look at your sentences and I'm going to give you some very practical, very straightforward valuable advice that you can implement today. I hope you are practicing your essays and writing out essays because you can adopt this tutorial. You can adopt these techniques into the next sentence that you utter or that you write down.

Okay. My name is Ben Worthington. I'm from England and a long time ago probably about 15, 16 years ago, I left my homeland. I left England and I went to complete my studies in Spain and after I completed my studies, I decided to teach English. I got thrown in at the deep end and had



to teach a bunch of kids and that was fun. And then I was just teaching some adults then teaching some students-- some university students, teaching some business students.

And then I stumbled across IELTS students who had to write out these lovely essays of agree/disagree or opinion and I was equally frustrated and it's confusing. And this is why I decided to start IELTS Podcast because I wanted to reach out to some experts, not just ex-IELTS examiners, not just linguistic experts but professional teachers who've had years in the game.

And I interviewed them and I still do interview experts just to improve my teaching and to improve my knowledge and then if what they say works or if it sounds like it'll work, I'll test it out on my students. If it doesn't work, I-- if it does work, I put it in my online course. If it doesn't work, I throw it out there. And this is why we're continually improving the online course and we're getting some fantastic results from that.



And by the way, we have currently the [\\$5 essay correction](#) that has been brought back. That was incredibly popular and we're still promoting it on the website. We opened it up again because we're just getting so much positive feedback from there and that's really-- it really helps the students who are undecided; if they don't know if what we're doing would work for them.

So, what you can do is just go there, pick up your \$5 essay correction, get some feedback. It's a ridiculously low price and just get help to get you started with your IELTS progress and with your IELTS preparation.

So, let's have a quick look at sentence construction and how to improve them for your IELTS essay. So, as you know, a sentence has one job. That is to convey information. That's all you have to do with a sentence. It doesn't have to be clever. Its primary objective is to convey information. However, if it can sound nice, beautiful. If it can be clever, beautiful. Those are bonuses.



And we do have to be aware of this because in the IELTS exam we cannot just write sentences that convey information. That's the bare minimum. We do have to introduce new-- not introduce new elements but we have to introduce components that are going to help us score higher. So, although communication is the primary objective of a sentence just like languages, we also have to be aware that we are going to get scored on lexical resource, cohesion and coherence, task achievement, and grammatical range and accuracy.

And in this tutorial, I'm just going to give you some advice on how to improve your sentences. So firstly, subjects separated from verbs. So, I'll give you two sentences and I want you to tell me which one do you think sounds better. So, we have England together with most other western countries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century undergoing industrialization transitioned from a largely agrarian society to a more factory orientated economy. That's the first sentence.

Second sentence. England transitioned from a largely agrarian society to a more factory orientated economy much like other western European countries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century undergoing



industrialization. Now, with the second sentence, we have England transitioned. We have the verb and the subject together. The subject and the verb together next to each other.

However, with the first sentence, I have to-- well, you have to because you're the reader or the listener you have to wait 13 words until you get the verb. So, I'll just say the first sentence again. England together with most other western European countries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century undergoing industrialization transitioned from largely...

You see? You have to wait 13 words until you can close that thought, until you can find out what actually happened to England. These are higher-level writing techniques that I'm sharing. So, what we do to solve this problem is we just make sure that the subject and the verb are together and are as close as possible.

Now, I love teaching this technique because it's beyond correcting. It's beyond corrections. It's beyond basic grammar structure. This is higher level. This is improving, not correcting. And if



you can get to this level and start implementing these techniques then you are on your way to a band 7. So, by doing this, by keeping our subjects and our verbs closer together then we reduce reader strain and it just makes it easier to read.

Second thing. Sentences can be heard. So, a well-written sentence will also sound good as well. So, try reading it out aloud and if it just flows then you're on the right track. If you have to stop and keep re-reading then probably you could rephrase it. And this goes back to what I just said. Part of building a sentence that flows is usually putting the most important information at the beginning and at the end. And then in the middle, that's where you put the least important information as well as keeping an eye on where the subjects and the verbs are.

Now, as I said, this is higher-level knowledge. So, before we get to the end, what I would recommend you do is just listen to everything and then choose one that you're going to implement and master that and then come back and try working on the others.



The third point I want to mention is variety. Now, I have taught in the past that long sentences are-- basically, what I've seen is I've seen some students from some countries have a writing style which encourages long sentences and this is-- you cannot carry this style over into English. It doesn't work as well.

In English, what you have to do and especially academic writing is provide a mixture. Provide a variety of short sentences, long sentences, and medium length sentences. Sorry. Short, medium, and long, okay? This helps break up the variety and just makes it a little bit more interesting. You do not want an essay that's full of short sentences because it sounds choppy whereas an essay full of long sentences increases reader strain because the reader has to hold a lot of information in their mind until that thought or that sentence has finished and this is called reader strain.

I think this happens a lot with Russian, Spanish, and possibly even Chinese writers because I think this is common in their language. I know for sure it definitely is in Spanish. I'm guessing it



is the same in Russian because I've read Russian literature and the sentences go on forever. Now then, so what do we do? We just break it up. And don't be afraid of a three-word sentence, a four-word sentence, an 18-word sentence. Just make sure that we've got variety in there.

Next. Also, make sure we are reviewing our essays for repetition because if we are starting each sentence with the same construction, not only are we going to lose points for lexical resource and cohesion and grammatical range and accuracy, but it's also going to be extremely boring for the examiner. And I'm not saying we need to make an exciting interesting amazingly enticing essay. However, we do want to increase our score for grammatical range and accuracy, lexical resource, and we also want to make it interesting.

So, I'll just give you an example of how an essay that's written with lots of repetition sounds. There are many countries that have banned smoking in public places and have greatly increased the quality of life of their citizens. There are many other ways to improve a society. A government could reduce taxes then there would be money for each person. There are also other



functions a government could perform to improve the quality of life for each citizen. So, if we keep starting each sentence with there are there are, it's incredibly boring to read. So, try and avoid that.

The next point I want to share is that some clauses are independent and others are dependent. So, independent clauses they stand on their own and you need to know which of your clauses are dependent and which are independent. The dependent clauses are a group of words with a subject and a verb, but it does not express a complete thought and it's not a sentence on its own.

So, for example, dependent clause could be since the country in question clearly lacks funds. We need to complete it. We can't just leave it empty like that. A possible ending: since the country in question clearly lacks funds, the government urgently needs to increase taxes.



Again, another dependent clause. Before the country developed. If I just leave that on its own, it's unfinished. We need to finish that off. Before the country developed, it was common for most of the population to be employed in agriculture. So, just keep that in mind.

Now, long sentences. Again, I'm coming back to long sentences and a guide for sentence length is usually one idea per sentence. Now, as I said before, the important information will be usually at the front and at the end and the less important information is usually in the middle.

Now, it's quite common maybe if a corporation, for example, or a government bureau has made a mistake what they'll usually do is bury the important information or the admission in the middle of the sentence just to sort of like brush it under the carpet, so to speak. So again, this is a useful skill to spot, by the way. Probably not a-- it could be a useful skill to employ, but obviously we don't want to ever be in that situation.



So, anyway back to IELTS. We want to put the information at the front-- at the beginning of the sentence or at the end. Usually limit it to one idea per sentence and just keep an eye on your long sentences because the longer the sentence is the more chance of a grammatical mistake there is. So, just bear that in mind.

What I've taught in the past to students is that okay, use your long sentences, but make sure you've got the construction down. Make sure you've got it completely under control and you know exactly what you're doing and you've mastered that construction. And this way, instead of freestyling a long sentence on exam day and risking it, you can benefit from using long sentences and do it in a risk-free manner.

And in the online course, we've got lots of sample sentences: long sentences, complex sentences, that are quite easy to master and you just drop in your own subjects and your own objects and your own verbs and this way, it's much easier and much safer to use them and get the benefits of



variety and get the benefits of advanced grammatical constructions. And it just makes the whole process a lot easier and we find our students improve a lot quicker using these.

Now, long sentences (2). Now, what we want to do is be aware of run-on sentences. A run-on sentence is one that takes a lot of independent clauses and puts them together without punctuation or a conjunction. So, it'll go-- the sentence will just keep going and it'll feel rumbly and it'll definitely lose cohesion. And also, it's going to increase reader strain something that we've mentioned before.

So, an example of a run-on sentence would be something like we went to the park and we ate dinner and we got ice cream and when it got dark we chased fireflies. So, in that sentence, there's an overuse of and. Sometimes you can do this on purpose, but definitely not for IELTS writing or academic writing. So, how do we fix that? It's usually with some punctuation; some full stops splitting it up and then adding some other conjunctions.



So, that's everything from me today in this tutorial. If you are still struggling with your IELTS exam then please get in contact. We can help you. We've got Daphne and Ellen who are correcting tons of essays every day and probably even more now that we've relaunched the \$5 essay correction. So, have a look at that. Go to [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com) and you'll see the promotion running at the top of the website.

And also remember you can get feedback on your speaking as well. You'll see the links to that after you get your essay correction back and just remember you're not alone if you're struggling with the IELTS exam. We've got lots of students going through the course at the moment. We've got lots of success stories coming out and we'd love you to join us and pass IELTS and move forward in your life. So, have a great day. Keep working and I wish you all the best.

[Music]

**Female Voice:** Thanks for listening to [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com)

IELTS TASK 2

7 Ways  
to Improve your Sentences

