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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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Ben: The principles of academic writing. Hello there. My name is Ben Worthington and I'm with ieltspodcast.com. And in this tutorial, we are going to look at some easy essay academic writing. We're basically going to look at the principles of academic writing, apply them to your IELTS essay. We're going to look at transforming standard normal writing which you've been doing all your life into the famous prestigious eloquent succinct concise academic writing.

We're going to look at five elements to purposeful writing. This is going to help you with your cohesion and coherence score. We're going to look at clarity. This is very interesting. Clarity for IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 and it's quite different from clarity for academic writing and I'll



share why. We're going to look at the natural word order for the English language and the power of iteration. We've got quite a lot to get through today.

Before we start, let me just tell you who I am and where I'm from. You may have noticed that some of my vowel sounds are different from what you may have learned at school and that's because I'm from the north. I'm from the north of England although I haven't lived there for around 18 years maybe.

I left England to teach English in Spain. I started off teaching business students, students, adults, anybody who wants a class I'll give them a class, but that's a horrible way to live. It's a horrible way to teach as well because you got to prepare so many different classes and you never get super proficient in one of them.

So, for example, you've got two teachers; one who teaches kids all their lives and then the generalist who just teaches anybody anything. Who do you think is going to be more competent for teaching young kids, for example? The teacher who has specialized in teaching young kids all



her life or the generalist who just rolled off a plane and said oh, I'm a native English speaker. I can help you with business English. I can teach kids as well. Who do you think is going to be more competent? Obviously, the teacher who specialized.

And this is exactly why I specialize. I decided to specialize in IELTS because you can measure the results. You can measure the effectiveness of your tuition, the quality of your tuition. And that's exactly what we do and that's why we only offer courses that work and we're probably the only ones online who can offer you a guarantee of jump to band 7 or it's free.

So, go to ieltspodcast.com if that sounds like something that you would benefit from. Have a look and yeah, we would be over the moon to work with you and help you improve your score.

So, let's have a look at the principles of academic writing. First question we want to ask ourselves is is our IELTS essay purposeful? What does that mean? Is it clear? Do the paragraphs correspond to the message, okay? Your message should correspond very closely to the task



response. We've got to stay on topic. And it's not just a case of staying on topic. It's a case of developing the argument and making sure that the sentences in the body paragraph are supported.

Are we going off in three different topics with five different ideas? Maybe we've got five different ideas all within the same topic. That's average, but we're aiming for above average. We're aiming for band 7 or higher. In this case, what we need to do is make sure that there is a clear thread and we have developed our argument; our message is clear.

Is every single sentence necessary? Now, what I'm talking about now is probably not so helpful in the exam because we know we've got 40 minutes. I'm talking more about our preparation time when we've got the luxury of time to just review our essay and reflect. Is every sentence necessary? Can I say the same with less words? Am I repeating myself? Do I have dull basic vocabulary in the sentence? Can I upgrade it, okay? So, this all circles back to the question of is your IELTS essay purposeful?



The next question we want to look at is clarity. Is your writing clear? Scott Adams from a great book called *The Day You Become a Better Writer* talks about-- he says simple writing is persuasive. A good argument in five sentences will sway more people than a brilliant argument in a hundred sentences. Don't fight it.

And this is insanely true for the IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 and General Task 2 as well. Here, your friend is clarity and I've been saying this for so long. I'll say it again. Clarity. So clarity and simplicity. Sorry. A convoluted-- a super intelligent argument for your essay is going to trip you up because it's more difficult to explain. It will probably need more complex grammar, possibly more complex vocabulary, longer sentences.

And the nuance-- the basis of the IELTS exam is it's a language exam. So, you are not going to get points for the quality of your idea. You're going to get points for the quality of your language. So, keep your writing clear. How do we keep it clear? We go for simple arguments that are easy and can be eloquently explained rather than using longer sentences and complex arguments.



Also, not only is this going to help us with our grammatical range and accuracy score, but also if it's clear-- if our grammar is clear then we're going to pick up points for cohesion and coherence whereas if we go for a difficult argument and we're using long sentences and we basically butcher our grammar-- if we basically mess up our grammar and it becomes unclear, then we can't even pick up points for cohesion and coherence because the examiner can't read it and we can't pick up points for task response because it's not understood. I can't understand if this student has answered the question because the grammar is a mess. So, this is why it is insanely important to go for a simple argument.

The next point is learn how your brain organizes ideas, okay? Actually, before we get that I've just jumped ahead. We want to look at a mixture of long words and short words. This will help us to avoid repetition and obviously, it's going to help us boost our lexical resource score.



And this is especially important. The next step I'm going to say is especially important for Academic Writing Task 1. We need a handful possibly even more-- we need a handful of adverbs that we can deploy in the right situation.

And just a word of warning with our adverbs. Some of them are already very strong and you don't want to be the student who says that there was a very flat plateau between 2010 and 2004, for example or probably more likely to say between 2004 and 2010 because with plateau already means flat. So, if you're saying there's a very flat plateau, it's redundant. So, just bear that in mind when you are using and deploying your adverbs.

One last word of warning with this. For your grammatical range and accuracy score, we probably want to use passive constructions as well. However, in academic writing nowadays, they're usually not encouraged and the reason is because they can be quite vague because we don't know who is doing what. We don't know who the principal subject is and this is the whole idea of the passive. That's why it's not encouraged in modern academic writing.



However, the IELTS as I said before although it does have a lot of academic writing and that is the standard we're aiming for, we have to remember this is an exam, a language exam and one of the criteria is grammatical range and accuracy. So, although in standard academic writing it's not usually encouraged, we definitely want to use it in our academic writing for the exam because it's going to help us pick up points. We've got to show a variety of structures.

Here our objective is not to communicate a scientific paper as in normal traditional academic writing. Here our objective is to score points and pass this exam. So, this is why I would still encourage the use of the passive construction. And we have a whole module about this in our Jump to Band 7 or Its Free course.

Now, the next tip is to learn how brains organize ideas and I would be more-- let me be more specific. Anglo-Saxon or native English speaker brains because I'm learning another language and I've also known Spanish and it's not exactly the same, obviously. However, in English, there



is a natural order and if we can replicate this natural order as much as possible, it's just going to make our English-- our language more natural too obviously.

I'll give you an example. Imagine we have IELTS Academic Task 1. We can say increases throughout the entire period 1990 to 2017 are visible for the sales of corn. Now, this increases reader strain because it's not until the very last word do you know what I'm talking about. And the reason we've got strain is because it's not really the natural order. It's not really the natural order of the language.

I'll say it again. Increases throughout the entire period 1990 to 2017 are visible for the sales of corn. The better way to organize that sentence is corn sales increased throughout the entire period (1990 to 2017). Subject-verb-object, you see? There's less reader strain. It's clear. I do not have to hold information in my brain until I get to the end of the sentence which is what the first sentence forces you to do.



However, because we are writing for a language exam, we do want to increase the variety of different sentence structures that we're using in order to pick up points for grammatical range and accuracy. So, we do want a variety of structures.

However, in most cases, go for subject-verb-object especially if it's a tricky sentence that you're not entirely certain you've got right. Reorganizing it to subject-verb-object will definitely make it clearer as I've just said because we're following the natural order of the English language.

Now, just a few more points before we end. The next one we're going to talk about responsibility, okay? I've read some text online and it says like don't worry about whether the reader will get it or not. You are who you are. She is who she is. And either you'll get along or you won't.

That's probably applicable maybe for creative writing. However, it's definitely not applicable for IELTS. In the IELTS, it's your responsibility that the examiner gets your argument. It's your responsibility, obviously. So, you must be clear with your task response. You must be clear with your grammar.



And one way to absolutely ensure that the examiner is going to get your argument is to just follow a process, is to follow a structure, is to follow a template, to follow a plan. If you don't have a plan, if you don't have that structure, it could be much more difficult and your essay can just follow whichever whim, whichever interest you take. And you might think you've got a logical structure there, but unless you've practiced a structure beforehand and you're following it closely, then it's unlikely you do have this kind of clarity.

Now, one aspect of a good plan is unity. It is said unity is the anchor of good writing. Unity is the anchor of good writing. What's an anchor? An anchor is that big iron kind of like double hooked shape heavy piece of metal that the ships throw over the-- it's attached with the chain and the ships throw it over into the water and it sinks to the bottom and it keeps the ship in its location rather than drifting around.

And unity is the anchor of good writing. So, if your essay has unity in it, if it's all on the same thread, then it's going to keep the writing in place and it's going to be easy to follow, okay? Unity



satisfies the reader's subconscious need for order. And you need to be aware of unity when you transform your ideas into an essay.

You need to be aware of how you're going to organize this material; what approach you're going to take, what ideas to include, what attitude, what tone, what style is going to best communicate your idea.

And it can be tricky especially when you start out. I know that most students fall between two camps: ones who don't have any ideas and those who have an explosion of ideas. So, it's not easy. In the course, we're aware of this and we've got a specific exercise to help you generate ideas.

Some students find that after going through some of the exercises that they now generate too many ideas which is a lovely problem to have because now you can choose. If you're generating too many ideas then you can choose the best one and by best I don't mean the most intelligent. I mean the easiest to communicate. So, with your IELTS Writing Task 2 having a structure to



follow, having a plan to follow that ensures unity, that ensures flow, that ensures that it all ties together is half of the battle.

And just one final note on this. When you are planning your essay, go from general to specific. I've mentioned this a million times before so I don't go into detail, but generally speaking, we go from general to specific.

And just one last thing with a plan. Once you have a plan, you know what you're going to be doing. You don't have to waste time thinking about organizing. You just drop it all into the plan that you've already used numerous times before while you've been practicing.

And what I love about it is when the students say it's like muscle memory. They've done so many essays with us, they got so much feedback they improved that it's like when you go and play your favorite sport. You know the routine. You know the procedure and this is exactly what we do. We give them so many essays to write and we give them the exact structure to follow, the



exact procedure that come exam day, they've got a plan and they just follow that plan and it all falls into place.

You get the confidence that you know you're writing well. So, you're going to write better. You've got the exam skills under control, so you can focus more time on the more difficult to learn language skills.

Now final point is iteration. Iteration means just going back over your first draft and reviewing it. Now, when we are at home or in the library or in the cafe preparing, we have the luxury of time. We have the luxury to review our essay. Before we send it in for feedback we can review it. In our course, we tell all our students to get into the habit of reviewing the work and iterating on what you've written.

Some people call it tinkering. Some people call it modifying. It's your first draft. You've got to upgrade it. We've called it many different things, but basically, what you're doing is you're iterating and it's an insanely valuable skill to have.



At home, you want to review your work, check for mistakes, check for the possibility of an upgrade, look for altering the sequence, tightening the flow, sharpening the point, reorganizing the sentence, check for clarity. We actually give you-- if you join the course, we give you a checklist of what to do, what to look for. It makes it again 10 times easier.

Most importantly though you want to check for mistakes that you've made previously. Looking for any mistake is okay, but look for the ones you've made previously because they're going to be easier to spot.

And time is of the essence. So, come exam day, you want to be able to set aside five minutes for the end of the exam where you just review and look for mistakes and if you've got time, look for opportunities to upgrade.

Now, to get the most from this tutorial, what I recommend you do is just choose a couple of principles. Trying to incorporate all of what you've heard might be a little bit overwhelming. So, just pick a few and incorporate those. Incorporate them into the next few essays. Master them



and own them so they become part of your essay writing process. Then come back to this podcast and look for a few more tips, a few more action points to incorporate into your next essay.

Thank you very much for listening. My name is Ben Worthington. And if you're struggling with the exam, please get in contact. We help students every single month; hundreds of students. We give them feedback. We help them pass the exam. We've got a guarantee jump to band 7 or it's free. Also as I said, other students use it to get band 8, band 9. We've got tutors who give you feedback, help you improve. It's a successful system. That's why we offer the guarantee.

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Also, if you're a business owner and you think we could collaborate some way, get in contact with ben@ieltspodcast.com. Maybe some licensing, maybe sponsorship. I'm open to suggestions be it in China or outside of China. I don't mind. Let's sit down have a conversation.

Thank you very much for listening and I wish you all the best and the most successful IELTS exam you've ever had the next time you go to sit it. Take care.

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