



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: Hello there IELTS Podcast listeners. In this tutorial, we are specifically looking at sentence structure. This is extremely valuable for your IELTS essays especially Writing Task 2 although I will be giving you a few useful copy-paste sentences for Academic Task 1 also. And what's interesting about sentence structure is that with regards to your IELTS preparation, this is one of the skills that is not only a language skill but also an exam skill. So, sentence structure is basically like the overlap of both skills and you'll see why in the duration of this podcast. You'll see why you need high levels of both language skills and exam skills in order to succeed with effective sentence structure.

Now, before we start, I'll just tell you who I am and where I'm from. My name is Ben Worthington. I'm from the north of England although nowadays, a lot of people don't think so



because I've lost my accent. And that's what happens when you move away from your home town and especially if you're not interacting with people with the same accent or especially if you are teaching English and you decided-- not decided, but it's just easier to move towards the Standard English pronunciation rather than maintain my northern accent.

Anyway, so I left England over 20 years ago and moved to Spain and since then I've been moving around and teaching English. That's why I no longer sound like a Yorkshire tyke I guess. All right. So yeah. I started teaching English then I quickly specialized into IELTS and since then, I put my knowledge online and we have been growing every year since apart from COVID which was a bit of a shame, but yeah. That's how I basically got into this.

And I used to struggle with preparing students for IELTS and that's why I decided to launch this podcast where we interview experts. I tested what worked, what didn't work and if it worked, I put it into our online course of Jump to Band 7 or It's Free and if it didn't work, I just threw it out.



And that's how I built up the course and how I built up my capability and capacity and competence in training students for passing the IELTS exam. I'm not training them in IELTS. I'm not training them in English. I'm training them in passing IELTS because that's the goal and that's what attracted me to IELTS.

Right. Let's jump into today's tutorial which is all about sentence structures. We're going to look at what sentences to include in your IELTS Task 2 essay. We're going to look at different types of long sentences, why clarity is critical. It's a horrendously important point that and you'll definitely agree with me once we come to that point in a few minutes.

And also, I'm not just going to tell you about these. I'm also going to tell you how you can learn these to perfection to avoid losing points and I'll also just to make it more practical, I'm going to give you examples of sentence structures to learn as well.

Now, a sentence has one job above all others and that is to convey information. Let me just say that again. A sentence has one job above all others; to convey information. Its job is not to be



clever. Its primary task is to present information and in your case, score points. What do I mean by that? Well, if you are writing for your geography university paper or your business communication or any other case of non-exam situation, then your primary task is communication.

However, with IELTS, that is not our primary task. Our primary task is to communicate and impress the examiner because really what we are communicating is kind of secondary to the actual vehicle-- to the actual language we are using. This is a language test. That does not mean that we can write whatever we want and it's grammatically perfect and we'll score band 9. No. We have to get a balance between answering the question and also communicating in a clear effective way. So, that's why we say the primary task is to present information and score points because we are writing for IELTS.

Now, that does not mean that it cannot or should not sound nice or be clever. These are bonuses, okay? So, the first and foremost is to communicate the information and as a bonus, to pick up



those points. We can make it clever. We can make it sound nice, but remember these are after thoughts. These are bonuses because unless it presents the information clearly, it cannot be understood which I will come to in a second.

So, it's insanely important because if it isn't understood, the examiner will not be able to determine whether you have understood the question. I've said this before. This is why I've always said as well grammar is king because you can read the question and then write your answer, but if you have written this in poor grammar, it's going to be difficult to be understood.

So, the examiner will not know if you've actually understood the question or not and if you are actually answering the question. So, you're probably going to lose points for task response because I can't understand you. Coherence and cohesion because again, you cannot be understood because of poor grammar and then obviously, you'll lose points for grammatical range and accuracy.



Now, with sentences-- with sentence structures, especially come exam day, you want to play it safe and go for the structures that you have mastered. By mastered, I mean your trusted go-to sentences and we all have these when we are learning a new language-- when we're in a second language.

Especially in spoken English we might have phrases. I've taught these phrases in the past like if I remember correctly or to cut a long story short; these little phrases. If we are training correctly, we should also have a collection of these phrases for our writing and these are the phrases that you want to go to and use and deploy in your essay.

So, we've got our collection of sentences and now what you do with them-- your collection of structures-- which I will share with you in a second is that we can start being flexible with these by just interchanging the nouns or interchanging the adjectives depending on the context. And this is where the Sentence Guide really comes into its own because we've got a huge collection of these sentences.



When you are writing them using this framework and sending it in for feedback from us-- from myself or from the other teachers, you are beginning to master them. You are beginning to put them into your go-to collection. So, the more adept you come with these sentences, the more you write them, the more you confidence you get with them and the more feedback you'll get with them because you're sending them in. We're giving you feedback. You'll get more skilled with them. You'll get more confident.

And this is one of the factors why doing the online course just makes it a very straight forward process when learning to write these academic essays because we give you a whole collection of these sentences.

Now, let me give you some examples. A very useful sentence could be one of the most interesting features of global warming... One of the most interesting features of nuclear power is so-and-so. And now if you've got a question maybe about let's say crime, we could say one of the



most interesting features of criminal prosecution systems is the assumption of innocence at the very beginning, okay? And we can put that sentence in any essay.

But remember a band 6 student or lower will use phrases that are kind of generic and empty which is better than free styling if you've got poor language skills. However, the examiner can usually spot these sentences. That's why we have to tailor them to our topic by interchanging the vocabulary and especially using topic-specific vocabulary.

Now, another sentence could be recent studies from the Cambridge Institute of Crime clearly demonstrate the connection between poverty and local crime rates. You see? Recent studies from the IMF Institute clearly demonstrate the connection between hunger and crime. A very useful sentence.

Now, we've also got sentences which you can use for Academic Task 1 and these are some of my favorites. And I got these because I was correcting a lot of essays and I was like okay, this is a very useful sentence and the student had kind of like discovered that they could use this sentence



in different Academic Task 1s. And I remember she kept on using it for a bar chart, for a pie chart, for a graphic, for a map and I was like this student's really smart because they're using the same structure in all of the essays that she sent me. All her Academic Task 1s had this same structure. So, I took it from her and I put it into the course.

And the sentence is one of the-- in this case-- one of the largest sectors of the pie chart is corn at 30%. That's like a basic interpretation. Again, another sentence. One of the most common forms of pollution is from the transportation sector especially cruise liners and freight. You see? One of the most distinguishable features of the map is the large open space in the northern quarter.

And it's quite straightforward. It's quick and easy to master. You could probably put it into the next essay you write both for Task 1 and for Task 2 and it just adds a little bit of style, a little bit of color to your writing and it's not too difficult to mess up. So, write that one down.

Now, the next point that I want to talk about is clarity and I think the best way to teach this is with examples. So take this sentence. There can be little doubt that technology has disrupted



family structures. What's wrong with this sentence? Well, it's a bit unclear because family structures sounds okay, but in what sense has it disrupted family structures?

Does it mean that family members are fighting with one another or that they are living far apart from one another? It's a bit unclear and it doesn't necessarily establish that technology has decreased or increased family communication assuming the question is about family communication.

Now, let's rephrase it. There can be little doubt that technology has steadily eroded the underlying social dynamics that facilitate family communication. Now, in this sentence it's very specific although it's written in quite a stylized fashion; there can be little doubt. These little stylistic elements. However, it does clearly convey the information it should do that technology has resulted in a decrease in family communication.

Now, let's move on to clauses. So, some clauses are independent and others are dependent, okay? Independent clauses stand on their own. I'm not going to get into a big tutorial right now about



dependent and independent clauses, but the most important thing to remember is that independent clauses stand on their own and dependent clauses is a group of words with a subject and a verb, but it does not express a complete thought and it cannot stand alone.

So, some examples of dependent clauses are: since the country in question clearly lacks funds... okay? What's happening next? What's happening next? That is not a sentence. Next one. Before the country developed... What happened? We cannot just leave the reader hanging. Whenever universities are established abroad, xyz. Something else must happen.

Now, if you're really serious about this, you could write out those sentences and finish them off. So the first one. Since the country in question clearly lack funds, there needs to be some new investment, for example. Before the country developed, it was dependent on agricultural commodities. Next one. Whenever universities are established abroad, a general increase in social welfare is usually attained within a few generations. Okay?



Now next one: long sentences. Now, I know from correcting numerous essays that in some countries long flowery sentences are the norm for formal writing. Not so in English. And if you want a really good example of crystal clear English, go to the UK government website. I was recently renewing my passport and I was surprised because it was crystal clear. The instructions were there.

And in the past I've gone to other websites especially the Spanish ones. Oh my word! And it's not because my Spanish was poor. My Spanish was excellent back then, but I still could not make heads or tails of the bureaucratic websites. And I showed my Spanish friends native speakers and they said the same. They confirmed it that this is-- I wouldn't say garbage, but it's overly formal. It's too flowery.

So, let's get back to IELTS. Long sentences. These are okay, but you must be aware of the dangers. First, they can reduce comprehension because long sentences you've got to hold a large amount of information in your head until the sentence finishes and that increases reader strain.



Second point is that the longer the sentence the higher the chance of a grammatical mistake. So, this is why when you're writing your essay you want a variety of long sentences, short sentences, and medium length sentences.

However, when you go for your long sentences, just play it safe. Go for a long sentence structure that you are entirely confident with. One example of a long sentence structure that is quite simple to deploy-- to use in your essay is just to use a little list, okay? So, you could start with something-- and this is one of the-- it's not a module. It's just part of a module about sentence structure in the Sentence Guide we've got in the online course we have.

But a safe long sentence could be something such as pollution in the West is largely deteriorating due to new government policies, new technology, a shift in consumer consciousness, and of course the ever looming threat of climate change. So, we've got a medium length sentence there. However we extended it in a safe way with a little list. I can't go into it in full detail here, but a little list of and then you just pack it with topic specific vocabulary helps you construct a slightly



longer sentence. And as I said before, variety is what's going to bring a stylistic or a degree of richness to your essay.

Now, the other danger with long sentences is that you write a run-on sentence and this is a sentence that takes a lot of independent clauses and puts them together without punctuation or a conjunction and this is quite dangerous. When you're reading your essay, when you're reviewing your essay, you might find the long sentence feels rumbly and it's not very cohesive. They're also very boring to read long run on sentences. They also as I mentioned before create reader strain because you've got to hold all this information.

Another form of inflicting reader strain is separating subjects and verbs from each other. Now, the natural order of English is subject-verb-object. Now, if you split those up-- you can do it sometimes, but it's not good practice. So, I'll give you one example of a sentence. So, let's see.



For example, Dubai in just a few years has become a global hub for travel and business. That's okay. It's not too bad. A better way would be for example, Dubai has become a global hub for travel and business in just a few years.

Now, what we did in the second sentence is that we put Dubai has become a global hub for travel and business-- we put it all together and we didn't separate it with a phrase of time. And as a general rule, you want to put your references of time at the beginning or at the end. So in this case, we could have said in just a few years, for example, Dubai has become a global hub for travel and business or as we said before, for example, Dubai has become a global hub for travel and business in just a few years.

It doesn't sound like much, but just little things like this stacking the deck in your favor and the more little things you do like this, it just increases the flow of your writing. It makes it easier to write and not just for your IELTS essay, in everyday writing and everyday communication. So,



these are skills. This is what I love about IELTS is that in the process of preparing for the exam, you're picking up lots of valuable language skills that you can take into other areas of your life.

Now, just a few more points before we finish. Sentences can be heard. They are not exclusive to the eyes. The ears also participate and what this means is that good writing sounds good when it's spoken. If you go to the Times online or the [financialtimes.com](https://www.ft.com/) or even possibly-- definitely the BBC. Personally, not so much the Guardian. It seems a bit rumbley for me.

However, if you go to the other sites especially the BBC, it's clear, it's short, it's straight to the point. And also the government website-- the UK government website if you've got a few minutes while you're waiting for your train or whatever, but go there and you'll see crystal clear English and it sounds good when it's spoken.

I mean fair enough the topic might not be so interesting especially if the UK government one, but have a look at the sentence and if you've got time and confidence then just say it aloud and you'll



see, you'll hear that they do sound richer. And of course, the more you do this, the better you'll get at it.

Now, one final point is variety. I mentioned this before, but some students get into the habit of thinking that long sentences equate to academic English and it's not the case. Variety of your sentence use. Well, first of all, clarity as I said. Grammar is king and once we've got the grammar under control, then we can start adding the higher level fancy level aspects such as style, maybe idiomatic expressions, such as special conjunctions in the sentences, but first we need to be communicating clearly. Otherwise, we are really shooting ourselves in the foot when it comes to the other area.

So, we get grammatical range and accuracy under control first. This is your language skills and then we start building on top of that with a variety of different sentence lengths, a variety of different sentence structures. This is your grammatical range and accuracy.



And all the time, we are keeping an eye on our grammar, keeping an eye on the grammar because sometimes we can get carried away preparing for IELTS and thinking that the examiner wants to see however, nevertheless, and all these other overused conjunctions and that's not the case. We want to go for clarity and then introduce stylistic elements later, but in a controlled fashion once we've got control of the basics. So, it's a good foundation that we're aiming for.

Now, this is where the value of feedback comes into play because when you're getting feedback, not only are you going to get some guidance with your language structure and your use of the English language, but also you're going to get some feedback about the structures you're using and the exam skills that you'll need to incorporate and the exam skills that you've shown but need to rectify or just tweak in order to get to band 7.

Now, that's it for me today. I wish you all the best with your IELTS preparation. And if you really are serious about taking it to the next level and perhaps even coming on this podcast and being a successful student like we've had recently, then come and join us.



The first steps would be to sign up for our mailing list. There you get even more tutorials and more guidance and more help and if you're really serious, you can invest a little bit of money, get some essay corrections or if you just want to get this over and done with and pass the IELTS and move on to the next challenge in your life, then have a look at the online course we offer with the guarantee of Jump to Band 7 or It's Free.

My name is Ben Worthington. Thank you very much for listening and I wish you a very productive, effective, and studious day. Good luck.

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