

First: Plan your essay:

1. Identify the question type:

2. Underline the key words

3. Plan the essay: two methods:

1. Introduction -> paragraph2: Disadvantages -> paragraph3: Advantages -> Conclusion
2. Body:

Paragraph 1: Topic sentences (Idea):

Supporting sentence/explain:

Example sentence

The 4 different question types

OPINION

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Is this a positive or negative development?

DISCUSSION

What are the benefits and drawbacks?

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages.

OPINION/ DISCUSSION

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

SITUATION

What are the problems? What solutions can you suggest?

Which factors contribute to this? Is it realistic to expect these factors?

OPINION

Introduction: Rephrase the question. Tell the reader your opinion and plan.

BODY

Para 2: Support your opinion with argument and examples

Para 3: Support your opinion further with another argument and examples

Conclusion: Summarize key points and restate your opinion.

DISCUSSION

Introduction: Rephrase the question. Tell the reader your plan.

BODY

Para 2: Discuss advantages or one side of the argument

Para 3: Discuss disadvantages or the other side of the argument

Conclusion: Summarize key points. You do not need to give the reader your opinion.

OPINION/ DISCUSSION

Introduction: Rephrase the question. Tell the reader your opinion and plan.

BODY

Para 2: Discuss the side you disagree with

Para 3: Discuss the side you agree with, making it clear that you agree

Conclusion: Summarize key points and restate your opinion.

SITUATION

Introduction: Rephrase the question. Tell the reader your plan.

BODY

Para 2: One problem and solution / factor and cause etc.

Para 3: Another problem and solution / factor and cause etc.

Conclusion: Summarize key points and state who should solve problems / consider solutions.

Introductions :

An example Task 2 question

“Some people think that climate change is happening because of the way humans live their lives. Others think that these changes are natural, and that human activity does not have an influence.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.”

3-step formula for introductions

1

There is no doubt that the Earth's climate is changing.
b) Give a general statement about the topic (what is undeniably true?)

2

While some people believe that these changes are due to human activity, others argue that they are the result of natural processes.
c) Paraphrase the statement in the question

3

In this essay, I will discuss both sides of the argument and explain my support for the latter view.
a) Tell the reader your plan (*and give the reader your opinion*)

Useful expressions for introductions

General statement sentence

There is no doubt that / It is clear that ...
Nowadays, ... / These days, ... (+ present simple or continuous)
In recent years, ... / Over the last few years, ... (+ present perfect)
It is important to consider ... (+ question word e.g. *how* / *whether* / *why*)

Paraphrase the question sentence

While some people believe ..., ... others argue that
There are many people who think ...
While there are many benefits to ..., there are also some drawbacks to consider.

Opinion and plan sentence

I completely agree/disagree with this statement ...
I tend to agree/disagree with the former/latter argument ...

..., and in this essay I will support my view with examples

In this essay, I will discuss both sides of the argument/topic ...

In this essay, I will explore/discuss some of the problems associated with ... and propose/suggest some solutions.

Body:

Building body paragraphs

T = topic sentence (idea)

One problem in big cities is the lack of green spaces.

S = support/explain

For example, in the city where I live, we only have one small park, which is itself surrounded by concrete buildings.

E = example

This is an issue because city citizens need green areas in order to relax, and the plants and trees also help to filter the air.

A = alternative

To solve this problem, city authorities must invest more in building parks and gardens.

So = solution

As a result, the people who live in cities will suffer from less stress and breathe cleaner and safer air.

R = result

Effective Formulas: #2

Now you know have seen one effective way of combining these body paragraph ingredients, here is another. Variety is essential!

T **T:** One of the most significant benefits of air travel is speed. **S:** Most aircraft nowadays are able to travel faster than any other mode of transport, and they do not have to deal with the same obstacles as on land. **E:** To illustrate this speed, a journey from London to New York by air takes just 10 hours. **A:** In contrast, travelling across the Atlantic by sea takes several days. **S:** Evidently, travelling by plane is far more convenient than travelling by any other means.

Effective Formulas: #3

And one more... Try experimenting with other combinations, but always put the topic sentence first!

T **T:** However, air travel does have a drawback in air pollution. **S:** The power required for a plane to take off and fly to its destination causes a huge amount of fuel to be burnt. **E:** It is believed that 13 million flights are taken each year, and this creates a huge strain on the environment. **T²:** Furthermore, aeroplanes require airports, and airports often cause a lot of stress for locals. **E²:** For example, the sound pollution airports leak can prevent local families from sleeping properly.

Some tips for body paragraphs

- Begin all body paragraphs with a topic sentence
- Topic sentences should be relevant to both the task itself and the para idea
- Keep paragraphs 4 - 5 sentences long
- In D&O essays, begin body with the side you disagree with
- For P&S essays, use the same formula twice (problem *then* solution)
- Keep paragraphs based on one central topic (*advantages* or *disadvantages*)

conclusion:

Useful words and phrases for conclusions

Introducing a conclusion	Expressing opinion	Linking devices
In conclusion, ...	In my opinion, ...	Although ...
To sum up, ...	Personally, ...	While / Whereas ...
Having looked at both sides, ...	In my view, ...	Despite ...

Examples conclusion:

Read this conclusion to a Task 2 Writing question and match each sentence (1-2) to its purpose (a-b).

1 In conclusion, although renting can be useful for people who need a home on a short-term basis, this convenience comes at a high cost. **2** In my opinion, the benefits of renting are outweighed by the drawbacks, and I would prefer to buy a property rather than to rent one.

a) Summarize the key points **1**

b) Give your own opinion **2**

More example conclusions

To sum up, while there are disadvantages to handwriting, such as compromised readability and a greater time commitment, these must be weighed against the cultural and practical benefits that handwriting offers. Personally, I feel that these benefits outweigh the drawbacks.

In conclusion, despite the convenience and lower cost home schooling offers, we must take into consideration the dangers of fewer social opportunities and real-world experience. In my view, these drawbacks outweigh the advantages, and I would not want to homeschool my children.

Problem and Solution essay conclusions

Problem and Solution essays (most Situation essays) are slightly different in that you are not being asked for a specific opinion. You should **state who you think the responsibility for solving this problem lies with**.

In conclusion, although modern cities face a variety of problems, such as crime and air pollution, these problems are not insurmountable. In my view, it is the government's responsibility to tackle these issues, and they should begin by considering some of the solutions proposed above.

1. Summarize the key points
2. State who the responsibility lies with

NOTES:

- **Do not** simply state that the topic has 'benefits and drawbacks', or that 'each viewpoint has pros and cons'. This does nothing to summarise the main ideas, but only rephrases your introduction.
- **Try to paraphrase the content of your essay**. If you write 'greater affordability' as an advantage in your body, try something like 'less expensive' in your conclusion.
- Do not add any unnecessary information in your conclusion.

What are cohesive devices?

Cohesive devices are the words and phrases which link your sentences, and the clauses within your sentences, together. **Cohesive devices create flow.**

Read this extract from a model Task 2 essay and mark the cohesive devices.

One of the main drawbacks of driving a car is the amount of pollution it causes. This is because the fumes from car exhausts contain chemicals which pollute the atmosphere. As a result, people who live in places with many cars, like cities, may suffer from respiratory-related illnesses. Furthermore, air pollution has a negative impact on a global scale. To illustrate, the polar ice caps are melting as a consequence of global warming, to which air pollution contributes.

Useful cohesive devices

Begin an opinion	Describe result	Give reason	Give example
Firstly, ...	As a result, ...	This is because ...	For example, ...
One advantage/idea/problem is ...	As a consequence, ...	The reason for this is ...	To illustrate, ...
The most significant advantage/problem is ...	Therefore, ...	This happens because ...	For instance, ...
First and foremost, ...	The result of this is ...	This is an advantage/disadvantage/problem because ...	To illustrate this point, ...

More useful cohesive devices

Clarify a point	Link ideas	Switch argument	Make another point
In other words, ...	While	On the other hand, ...	Furthermore, ...
That is to say, ...	Although	However, ...	In addition ...
To clarify, ...	Despite	Turning to the other side of the argument, ...	What's more, ...
In short, ...	whereas	Nevertheless, ...	Moreover, ...

Cohesive devices in use

Using the cohesive devices we have looked at, try to change this paragraph to make it sound more coherent, cohesive and fluent.

Firstly, one disadvantage of prisons is their arguably luxurious conditions. **For example,** inmates are given televisions to watch, video games to play, and expensive sports facilities to use. **This is a problem because it** does nothing to deter the criminals from committing crimes once they are released. **Moreover,** this pleasant environment requires a great amount of money to be maintained. **As a consequence,** the taxpayer, whose taxes pay for the upkeep of these prisons, is left out of pocket in order to keep prisoners entertained in their cells.

to be 'out of pocket' = to have lost money

Referencing

*One reason sports stars deserve high salaries is that **they** set good examples for children. **This** is because they show children that, if **they** believe in themselves, **they** can achieve anything. If top athletes didn't **encourage this idea**, then **these** children would lose out on a role model. **This** is why successful sports professionals should earn more money than other professionals.*

Developing Ideas:

The three questions in practice

Idea: *The function of a university should be to prepare students for work.*

Why? *This is because many professions need employees who are equipped with comprehensive theoretical and practical knowledge, which universities can provide.*

What kind of professions? *For example, medical students must be given rigorous lessons on anatomy before they become doctors, so that they can make decisions which save people's lives.*

What if this weren't the function of universities? *If universities were more concerned with education for its own sake, rather than giving students the necessary training to become competent professionals, there would be a serious shortage of doctors, lawyers and other essential professionals in society.*

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words

Example2:

Idea: *Sending all criminals to prison would be a terrible idea.*

Why?

This is because the purpose of prison is to deter and incarcerate criminals, but some types of crime can be deterred with less expensive and more productive measures.

What kind of criminals shouldn't go to prison?

For example, those who commit petty crimes like pickpocketing, shoplifting and speeding would contribute much more to society by undergoing community service or paying a fine.

What would happen if all criminals went to prison?

If, in contrast, every crime was sentenced with prison time, prisons would be full to bursting, law-abiding citizens would be faced with a huge tax burden, and the criminals themselves would learn nothing about their crimes.

Develop these ideas

Use the same technique of **why?**, **what kind?**, and **what if?** to develop the ideas below.

Conflict between parents and their children is necessary because it helps the latter to develop.

Dropping foreign languages from school curriculums would be unnecessary and shortsighted.

One of the main advantages of moving abroad is that it enables people to broaden their horizons.

How to avoid overgeneralising

To avoid overgeneralising, we must **soften** our statements with appropriate language. Think of these as **generalising softeners**.

Modal verbs (*may, might, could, can*)

Frequency language (*often, tend to, usually, occasionally*)

Non-specific quantifiers (*many, some, a number of, a lot of*)

These can all be used to soften the **broadness** of our statements.

Try to use the language above to 'soften' the following sentence.

***Many** politicians are influenced by the media, which is **often** a problem because this **can** have a negative effect on social equality in the country.*

Make 'vocabulary tables' for topics

To improve your topic-related vocabulary, make tables for the topics, and remember to include the form/s of the words/expressions you find.

Museums	Schools	Public Health
curator (n) curate (v)	teacher / student (n)	obese (adj) obesity (n)
artefact (n)	teacher-student ratio (n.p)	health-related issues (n.p)
well-preserved (adj)	class / classroom (n)	sports facilities (n.p)
exhibition (n) exhibit (v and n)*	head teacher (n)	healthcare system (n.p)
gallery (n)	star pupil (n.p)	spread of viruses (coll)
collect (v) collection (n)	attend (v) attendance (n)	threats to health (coll)
archive (v and n)	cram for an exam (exp)	healthy choice (n.p)

* an 'exhibit' (noun) is like a smaller version of an 'exhibition'. An exhibit would take up one room in a museum, while an exhibition may take up an entire wing.

Paraphrasing Tip #5: Think Outside the Box

Synonyms, sentence reconstruction and changes in word formation are all excellent ways of paraphrasing, but sometimes it is useful to just **completely change** the way an idea is communicated, while not changing the meaning.

These days, more and more people are going to other countries for significant periods of time, either to find a job or to study.

In recent years, the number of people choosing to move abroad, either for work or education, has increased substantially.

Here, we have synonyms (*work, education, abroad*), a change in word order, a tense switch (*present continuous* → *present perfect*) and a complete change in the communication of an idea (*more and more* → *the number of ... has increased*).

Subordinating Conjunctions

To create a complex sentence (a sentence with at least one dependent clause), you need to use subordinating conjunctions. There are many more of these conjunctions than you can see here.

When: when teachers gave more discipline.

In order to: In order to keep children from eating unhealthy food

Although: Although people who live abroad face some difficulties

Unless: unless the government imposes a congestion charge.

Even if: Even if the government invested in tourism


Before: before moving abroad.

Subordinating Conjunctions


To create a complex sentence (a sentence with at least one dependent clause), you need to use subordinating conjunctions. There are many more of these conjunctions than you can see here.

When: Grades improved when teachers gave more discipline.

In order to: In order to keep children from eating unhealthy food, advertising should be more strongly regulated.



Although: Although people who live abroad face some difficulties, they can also benefit from a broader perspective and improved job prospects



Unless: Traffic problems in big cities will continue unless the government imposes a congestion charge.

Even if: Even if the government invested in tourism, the essential problems would remain.



Before: People should think long and hard about the consequences before moving abroad.

Combining Conjunctions

To increase the complexity of your sentences even more, you can combine **subordinating** and **coordinating** conjunctions.

In order to reduce crime rates, the government should provide greater funding for the police **and** punishments should be made stricter.

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Unless emergency services are given more financial support, the number of fatalities will continue to rise, **even if** other measures are adopted.

Fatty and sugary foods need to be taxed **or** regulated **so that** children are not tempted by these unhealthy options.

So as to protect children, **who** may be influenced by the powers of peer pressure, the government must educate children about the danger of drugs **and** clamp down on drug abuse by minors.

Using commas

Commas in English are notoriously difficult to use. However, there are some rules which make comma usage simpler. For essay writing, the following four are the most relevant.

1. Use a comma after a dependent clause that starts a sentence.

To avoid overpopulation in cities, the countryside must be developed.

2. Use a comma before any co-ordinating conjunction that links two independent clauses.

The government must give doctors a higher salary, and they must also provide quality facilities.

3. Use commas to separate items in a list.

*Teachers have to prepare classes, mark homework, and attend many meetings.**

4. Use a comma after introductory cohesive devices.

For example, ... To begin with, ... Finally, ... As a consequence, ... (NOT There is no doubt / This is because...)

* The final comma here is called an 'oxford comma'. It is an optional addition, but it can help to avoid confusion at times.

What are relative clauses?

We use **relative clauses** to clarify who or what we are talking about (**defining**), or to give more information about something without writing another sentence (**non-defining**).

Defining relative clauses do not need a comma before the **relative pronoun**.

*The students **who** work hard are more likely to do well in their exams.*

Non-defining relative clauses do need a comma before the **relative pronoun**.

*The government will cut the price of train tickets, **which** will make transport more affordable for the public.*



How to use relative clauses in IELTS

Relative clauses are especially useful in supporting sentences in body paragraphs. They can be used to give more information about an example or to further justify a supporting point.

Arguing for the subsidisation of sports facilities

*... For example, swimming pools, **which are available at most sports centres**, give people the opportunity to work on their **cardiovascular** health.*

Arguing against single-sex schools

*... This is because mixed schools offer realistic environments, **which means that their students will find it easier to integrate into adult life.***

When to use conditional sentences

One of the best times to use conditional sentences is towards the end of a body paragraph, in the **alternative situation** sentence.

*One of the main reasons education should receive more government funding is that it results in a stronger economy. This is because quality education produces a capable workforce, which is an essential component of a functional and successful society. For example, medical schools have given us competent doctors and nurses, helping us to recover from illness and return to work. (A.S) If the government *had not invested* in these educational institutes, people *would not have recovered* so quickly, leading to a fall in productivity and thus fewer tax contributions.*

The four conditionals

In English, we have the **zero** conditional, the **first** conditional, the **second** conditional, and the **third** conditional*.

The **zero** conditional expresses what *always* happens when a particular action or event takes place.

*If water **reaches** 100 degrees celsius, it **boils**. (present simple + present simple)*

The **first** conditional expresses what *is likely* to happen as a result of an event.

*If it **rains** tomorrow, we **won't go** camping. (present simple + will (not) + inf)*

The **second** conditional is used to talk about the results of impossible, imaginary or unlikely events in the present or future.

*If I **won** the lottery, I **would be** rich. (past simple + would (not) + inf.)*

The **third** conditional is used to talk about an imaginary result of a situation in the past which did not happen.

*If I **hadn't eaten**, I **would have starved**. (past perfect + would (not) + have + past participle)*

Two more examples

Arguing for pay rises for teachers

... If the government *does not raise* the salary for teachers, this *is likely to make* them feel undervalued and thus decrease their sense of job satisfaction. This, in turn, *may* have a negative effect on teachers' students.

Arguing against investment in the arts

... If the government *refused to invest* any money in the arts, there *would be* much more money left over for public service funding, leading to improvements in education, healthcare and welfare.

Some people believe that there should be fixed punishments for each crime. Others,

however, argue that the circumstances of an individual crime, and the motivation for committing it , should always be taken into account when deciding on the punishment.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Although there is no doubt that crime must be punished, it is important to consider which type of penal system is most appropriate. While some believe that a system of fixed sentences should be adopted, I support the view that punishments should be based on motives and circumstances.

Those who advocate implementing a judicial process of set punishments may argue that this would make criminal trials more efficient. For example, once a jury has decided a particular defendant is guilty of murder, the judge need only refer to the 'punishment for murder' to sentence that person to life imprisonment. The benefit of this is that a huge amount of time would be saved in court, thus leading to significant financial savings. As a result, more money could be spent on healthcare, education and welfare.

However, I would argue that the above system is too rigid, and a process of 'flexible' punishments is much fairer. The latter punishment system, which many countries use, leaves more room for compassion toward offenders who have been blackmailed or manipulated. For instance, under this system, if a thief is able to prove that he had been bullied into committing his crime, he should be sentenced to less prison time than a

thief who had been motivated by greed. If, instead, fixed punishments were implemented, this sense of fairness and morality would be lost.

In conclusion, while a legal system of fixed punishments might be more cost-effective and efficient, a procedure of assessing crimes based on circumstances and motives is more just, and justice, in my view, is paramount.

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Some people view teenage conflict with their parents as a necessary part of growing

up, whilst others see it as something negative which should be avoided. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

There is no doubt that adolescence can be a difficult period for both youngsters and their parents. Although some people believe that conflict at this time does more harm than good, I would argue that it is an essential stage of teenagers' development.

On the one hand, those who believe teenage conflict is harmful might argue that it can damage relationships between parents and their children. This is because such disputes can create tension in the family. For example, it is quite common for young people to begin smoking at their age to impress their peers, but the resulting confrontations with parents can lead to difficulties with communication afterwards. In contrast, if there is no conflict between parents and teenagers, there will be a much greater sense of happiness among family members.

On the other hand, my view is that this conflict is important because it can help teenagers to mature. The reason for this is that by having disagreements adolescents can form and develop their own opinions. For instance, a child may grow up in a family of meat-eaters but feel very strongly about not eating meat. If this child does not voice their opinion, they will be going against their principles. However, if they are willing to engage in conflict with their parents, their conscience will be much clearer despite the agony of the argument.

In conclusion, despite the danger of damaging relationships which teenage conflict can create, it is my firm belief that this time of friction is a vital step on the path to teenagers becoming mature and independently-minded adults.