



IELTS Essay Structures

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Introduction

An IELTS essay is a 'discursive essay' where you may have to discuss an issue, give an opinion, explain advantages or disadvantages, write about problems and give solutions.

There are 5 variations to an IELTS discursive essay. I have outlined some structures for these in the following pages. It is important to remember that you should not become obsessed with these structures as there are many other ways to structure an essay not listed here.

These structures are just guidelines, much like if you arrived in a new city you would need a map, it's just a guide.

Actually, In the IELTS marking criteria it does not state what exact structure should be used. Take a look at what the marking criteria says below.

The marking criteria for Band 7 states:

- *logically organises information and ideas*
- *there is clear progression throughout*
- *presents a clear central topic within each paragraph*

The marking criteria for Band 8 states:

- *uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately*
- *sequences information and ideas logically*
- *presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas*

To get a high band score you need to do the above, so some kind of solid structure is needed in the essay. Make sure your essay has clear paragraphing also, skip a line between paragraphs. It is also important to write a conclusion or you could lose a band score.

Key things to consider about structures.

- There is no magic structure that will guarantee you a high band score, they are just guides and help you organise your ideas.
- Write your opinion if the question asks for it in the thesis statement. The body paragraphs will expand on your thesis statement. Your opinion must also be in the body paragraphs and conclusion.
- Generally, body paragraphs follow this pattern:
 1. Topic sentence (main idea)
 2. Supporting sentences (explain your main idea)
 3. Specific example (this supports your main idea)

In an opinion essay or discussion essay that asks your opinion, you must state your view or position clearly in the body paragraphs.

- You need to analyse the question well and **spend at least 10 minutes on planning**. Make sure you understand the task question otherwise you could write a completely different essay. It is important to only use official Cambridge IELTS questions and test material.
- Introductions should not be too long, keep them under 55 words. Conclusions should paraphrase your thesis statement and your main points. Don't just copy your introduction, paraphrase again.
- In some cases you can have a 3rd body paragraph such as in a Discussion essay that asks to discuss both sides and give an opinion. The 3rd body paragraph can be for your specific opinion. I recommend only 2 main paragraphs though.
- Word count is minimum of 250 words, aim for between 260 to 290 words, over 300 words is getting too long which means more chance of making mistakes. You do not get a higher band score with a really long essay.

Problem Solution (causes solutions)

Introduction:

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis statement with your opinion (if asked for)

Main body 1:

- State problem 1 (topic sentence)
- Explain the problem (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example
- State the solution to problem 1
- Result of the solution

Main body 2:

- State problem 2 (topic sentence)
- Explain the problem (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example
- State the solution to problem 2
- Result of the solution

Conclusion:

- Summarise main points
- Restate your opinion (only if asked for)

Problem Solution (causes solutions)

An easier structure...

Introduction:

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis statement (includes your opinion if asked for)

Main body 1:

- State the problem (topic sentence)
- Explain the problem (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Main body 2:

- State the solution (topic sentence)
- Explain the solution (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Conclusion:

- Summarise main points
- Restate your opinion (only if asked for)

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Discuss Both Views and Give Your Own Opinion

Introduction:

- Paraphrase the question / state both views
- Thesis statement with your opinion

Main body 1:

- State what some people think (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Opinion: why you agree or don't agree
- Give an example to support your opinion

Main body 2:

- State what other people think (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Opinion: why you agree or don't agree
- Give an example to support your opinion

Conclusion:

- Summarise the 2 viewpoints
- Restate your opinion

Discuss Both Views and Give Your Own Opinion

3 Main body paragraphs version

(some candidates find this easier to write)

Introduction:

- Paraphrase the question / state both views
- Thesis statement with your opinion

Main body 1:

- State what some people think (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Main body 2:

- State what other people think (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Main body 3:

- Give your specific opinion clearly and an example to support your view

Conclusion:

- Summarise the 2 viewpoints
- Restate your opinion

Opinion Essay (Agree Disagree)

Choose one side, either agree or disagree. Ideally you should mention the other side to the opinion to give the essay balance. Your own opinion must be clear throughout the essay.

Introduction

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis statement with 2 reasons for your opinion

Main Body Paragraph 1

- 1st reason why you agree or disagree (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Main Body Paragraph 2

- 2nd reason why you agree or disagree (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Conclusion

- Summarise your main points briefly
- Restate your opinion briefly

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Two Part Question

Introduction

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis Statement: (answer both questions in no more than 2 sentences, only give an opinion if it is asked for)

Main Body Paragraph 1

- Answer the first question (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give an example to support it

Main Body Paragraph 2

- Answer the second question (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give an example to support it

Conclusion

- Summarise your main ideas briefly

Advantages and Disadvantages

(1 advantage and 1 disadvantage)

Introduction

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis statement
(state briefly one advantage and one disadvantage)

Main Body Paragraph 1

- State one advantage (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Main Body Paragraph 2

- State one disadvantage (topic sentence)
- Explain in detail (supporting sentences)
- Give a specific example

Conclusion

- Briefly rephrase the task question
- Re-paraphrase your thesis statement

Make sure your thesis statement is concise, do the same with the conclusion, keep it brief and concise.

If you develop and support your points well you can still get Band 7 or more with just one advantage and one disadvantage.

Advantages and Disadvantages

(2 advantages and 2 disadvantages)

Introduction

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis statement
(outline the advantages and just mention the disadvantages)

Main Body Paragraph 1

- State first advantage
- Explain in detail
- State second advantage
- Explain and give a specific example

Main Body Paragraph 2

- State first disadvantage
- Explain in detail
- State second disadvantage
- Explain and give a specific example

Conclusion

- Briefly rephrase the task question
- State the disadvantages and just mention the advantage

Make sure your thesis statement is concise. You don't need to mention all the advantages and disadvantages in detail in the introduction, briefly mention there is a disadvantage. Do the same with the conclusion, keep it brief and concise.

Advantages and Disadvantages 'Outweigh'

(if you agree with the advantages)

Sometimes you will see an advantage disadvantage essay which asks **'Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?'** This means you have to write what side you think is stronger, you actually have to give your opinion here.

Introduction

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis statement: State your opinion on the advantage

Main Body Paragraph 1

- State the disadvantages
- Explain the disadvantages
- Give a specific example to support this

Main Body Paragraph 2

- State your opinion on why you think there are advantages
- Explain why you hold that view
- Give a specific example to support this

Conclusion

- Refer to the disadvantage
- Restate your opinion about the advantage

Advantages and Disadvantages 'Outweigh'

(if you agree with the disadvantages)

Introduction

- Paraphrase the question
- Thesis statement: State your opinion on the disadvantage

Main Body Paragraph 1

- State the advantages
- Explain the advantages
- Give a specific example to support this

Main Body Paragraph 2

- State your opinion on why you think there are disadvantages
- Explain why you hold that view
- Give a specific example to support this

Conclusion

- Refer to the advantage
- Restate your opinion about the disadvantage

Discussion Essay Model Answer

'Going to University is thought by many to be the best way to secure a good job, on the other hand, some people think that getting work experience and getting a skill is more important. Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.'

Many believe that continuing higher education is an effective way to gain employment, while others think that gaining experience and practical skills are better in the long run. I agree with this because in certain cases it is not necessary to go to university to get a good job.

On the one hand, some hold the view that professional jobs require university-level knowledge and understanding. This is because recruiters consider university graduates as a valuable human resource. For instance, If someone goes for an interview for a job as a Lawyer in a law firm then that person would certainly need to have completed a Law degree and have spent time in that field. Additionally, the quality and ranking of the university they attended would be a deciding factor in whether they would get the job they desire as many employers consider this fact.

On the other hand, others would argue that not all companies require a university degree to secure employment. I agree because certain jobs require practical skills and hands-on experience. For example, designing websites or being a software programmer would require a person to be able to think for themselves, be innovative and have technical experience. Therefore, not all jobs require people to continue their higher education at university. I think that If someone has the experience necessary and aims for a job that does not require higher education, they should take the opportunity rather than spending four years at university.

To conclude, although views differ on the best way to gain employment, I believe that in certain fields practical skills and experience would give someone a much better chance of getting their desired job.

280 words

Analysis of the Model Answer

Going to University is thought by many to be the best way to secure a good job, on the other hand, some people think that getting work experience and getting a skill is more important. Discuss both sides and give your own opinion.

Many believe that continuing **higher education** is an effective way to **gain employment**, **while** others think that gaining experience and **practical skills** are better in the long run. *<-(paraphrased the task)* **I agree with this** because in certain cases it is not necessary to go to **university** to get a good job. *<-(thesis statement)*

On the one hand, some hold the view that professional jobs require **university level knowledge** and understanding, *<-(showing what some people think)* This is because **recruiters** consider **university graduates** as a valuable **human resource**. *<-(explaining what they think)* **For instance**, If someone goes for an interview for a job as a Lawyer in a law firm then that person would certainly need to have completed a Law **degree** and have spent time in that field. *<-(specific example)* **Additionally**, the quality and ranking of the university they attended would be a **deciding factor in whether they would get the job** they desire. Many **employers** consider this fact. *<-(further developed the example with an extra point)*

On the other hand, others would argue that not all **companies** require a **university degree** to **secure employment**. *<-(showing what other people think)* **I agree because** certain jobs require practical skills and **hands-on experience**. *<-(my opinion, I agree)* **For example**, designing websites or being a software programmer would require a person to be able to think for themselves, be **innovative** and have technical experience. **Therefore**, not all jobs require people to continue their education at university. *<-(specific example)* **I think that** If someone has the **experience** necessary and aims for a job that does not require **higher education**, they should take the opportunity rather than spending four years at university. *<-(extra point to reinforce my opinion)*

To conclude, although **there are differing views** on the best way to gain employment, *<-(just refer to the differing views here)* **I believe that** in **certain fields**, **practical skills** and experience would give someone a much better chance of **getting their desired job**. *<-(stated my opinion again, paraphrased)*

Bold words: = cohesive devices. / **Green**= vocabulary

Click the link below to see a lesson with 7 model answers for the various types of IELTS essays.

-> 7 Model Answers for IELTS Writing Task 2 <-

Are you still stuck at Band 6 or 6.5?

If you need further help with writing task 1 and task 2, have a look at the **writing correction service**. It includes full feedback, error corrections, grammar and vocabulary corrections, a band score for each part of the marking criteria with a model answer including advice for improvement.

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Regards

Ray, IELTS Focus

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