

Ideas for IELTS topics

Who is this book for?

Many students have no ideas or opinions about IELTS writing topics. Even if your grammar is perfect, you will not get a high IELTS score if you do not know what to write. This book is for students who want to go into the writing exam feeling confident that they have excellent ideas, opinions and vocabulary for as many topics as possible

How do you get an IELTS score of 7 or higher?

The key to a high score is not grammar, it is not your use of words like “moreover” or “in addition”, and it is not your use of phrases like “this is controversial issue nowadays”.

To get a high score you need to use good “topic language” (words and phrases that are related to the question topic). You need good ideas in order to answer the question well.

How should you prepare for IELTS writing task 2?

There is an enormous amount of advice on my website ielts-simon.com. Here is a summary of what I suggest:

- **Spend more time preparing than testing**

When you test yourself, you find out what your level is, but you do not learn anything new. You will not improve if you only write test essays. Before writing an essay, study the topic and prepare your ideas, opinions and vocabulary.

- **Steal my ideas**

If you only use the vocabulary that you already know, you will not learn anything new, and you will not improve. Practise linking my topic ideas together to write “perfect essays”. See the website for examples of how to do this.

- **Use this book together with the website**

The website ielts-simon.com contains lessons and videos that show you how to use the ideas from this book. You can speak to me there if you have any questions.

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1. Advertising

Positives of Advertising

Advertising is a key part of modern business
Companies need to tell customers about their products
Advertisements inform us about the choices we have
Advertising is a creative industry that employs many people
Without advertising we would have less choice
Without advertising there would be higher unemployment
Advertising is a form of modern art
People enjoy adverts

Negatives of Advertising

Advertising manipulates people
It aims to persuade people that buying a product will make them happier
Advertisers focus on selling a brand image
They use glamorous, successful people
We now live in a consumer culture
We are persuaded to follow the latest trend
We are encouraged to associate certain brands with a higher status
Advertisers often aim their marketing at children
Children can easily be influenced by advertisements.
Children put pressure on parents to buy them things

Opinions about Advertising

Advertising should be regulated
Advertising aimed at children should be controlled or even banned
Unhealthy foods should not be marketed in a way that attracts children
Products that can be risk to healthy should display warnings
In some countries it is illegal to advertise cigarettes on television
Warnings must be displayed on cigarette packets
However, advertising is necessary in free market economies
It creates demand for products
Governments should only censor false information or products that are harmful

2. Animal rights

Arguments for Animal testing

Animals are used in important scientific research

It is necessary to do medical tests on new drugs

Animal testing helps to advance medical and scientific knowledge

Many important medical discoveries involved experimentation on animals

Researchers aim to minimize the suffering that animals experience

Testing for the cosmetics industry is now banned in many countries

Arguments against Animal Testing

The benefits of research using animals do not justify the suffering caused

There are alternative methods of research

The lives of animals should be respected

Humans have no moral right to do experiments on animals

Arguments for Vegetarianism

Vegetarians do not eat foods that are produced by killing animals

Many people choose a vegetarian diet for moral or health reasons

A healthy diet is possible without eating meat

It is unnecessary to kill animals for food

A vegetarian diet may reduce the risk of disease like cancer

Many people question the treatment of animals in factory farms

Arguments against Vegetarianism

Vegetarians do not eat a balanced diet

In many cultures, meat is the main ingredient in traditional meals

Meat-eaters argue that animals are below humans in the food chain

It is completely natural for us to kill them for food

Our aim should be improve farming methods

Farms should produce organic food

Positives of Zoos

Zoos paly an important role in wildlife conservation

They can help to protect endangered species

Zoos allow scientists to study animals and their behavior

Zoos are educational, interesting and fun

Children, in particular, enjoy learning about animals

Zoos provide job opportunities.

Negatives of Zoos

Zoo animals are kept in artificial environments

They are kept in cages or have limited space

Zoo animals rely on humans

They lose the freedom to hunt for food

They best way to save endangered species is by protecting natural habitats.

Some people believe that zoos are unethical

Zoos exhibits animals with the aim of making money

We have no right to use animals for entertainment and profit.

3. Cities

Reasons for Urbanization

People move to cities in search of job opportunities

Cities offer greater employment possibilities and a higher standard of living

People migrate to cities from the countryside

Traditional activities like farming need fewer workers nowadays

Negatives of City Life

Life in cities has its drawbacks

The cost of living is higher than in rural areas

Some people do not manage to find work

Housing is usually much more expensive

Homelessness and poverty are common in cities

There is a gap between rich and poor

Life in cities can be extremely stressful

There are problems like traffic congestion and crime

Cities lack a sense of community

People do not even know their neighbor

Cities are sometimes described as “concrete jungles”.

Pedestrian Areas

Pedestrian zones in city centre can improve the local environment

Banning cars encourages people to walk or cycle

Many European cities have built bicycle lanes

Dependence on cars is linked to health problems like obesity

People who walk or cycle regularly are generally healthier

Pedestrian areas are safer and more attractive for both residents and tourists

4. Crime

Police and Crime Prevention

The job of the police is to catch criminals

They must also prevent crime and make communities safer

There should be an increase in the number of police officers on the streets

Police officers should be seen as part of the community

They should be involved with education and prevention

The police should be in close contact with schools

They should focus on young people who have dropped out of school.

These teenagers may become involved with gangs

Punishments/Prisons

Fines are used as punishment for minor crimes

If the crime is more serious, prison is the most common punishment

Some criminals pose a threat to society

They are put in prison to ensure the safety of other citizens

Negatives of Prisons

Criminals are put together

They make friends with other offenders

Many prisoners re-offend when they are released

A criminal record makes finding a job more difficult

Rehabilitation

Another aim of prisons is rehabilitation

Prisoners receive education or vocational training

Prisoners should learn personal skills and specific job skills

Punishment could make prisoners' behavior worse

Rehabilitation aims to make them better citizens

Rehabilitated prisoners are less likely to re-offend

Capital punishment

Supporters say that capital punishment deters crime

Fear of the death penalty stops people from committing offences

The death penalty shows that crime is not tolerated

It is a form of revenge

The cost of imprisonment is avoided

The offender cannot pose a threat to others

Against Capital Punishment

Innocent people could be wrongly convicted and executed

Crime rates are not necessarily reduced

Many criminals do not think they will be caught

Capital punishment is not a good deterrent

Executing prisoners creates a violent culture and encourages revenge

We have no right to take another human life

Community service

Community service is a way to reform offenders

It could be a solution to prison overcrowding

It avoids the cost of imprisonment

It makes offenders useful in their local communities

They are required to clean streets or talk to school groups

Offenders repay their community

They avoid the negative influence that prison can have

Against community service

Community service is not a sufficient punishment

Criminals should be locked up, away from their victims

Crime in the Media

Crime is one of the main subjects of most news programs.

The mass media focus on violent and sensational crimes

This lead to fear of crime among the public

Sensational stories attract more viewers or readers

The media report crime stories in order to increase their audience

5. Education

Benefits of education

Education gives people knowledge and skills

People with qualification are more likely to find work

They can earn a higher salary

They can contribute positively to society

Schools aim to teach young people moral values such as tolerance and sharing

Schools prepare children to be members of a society

Benefits of Studying Abroad

Foreign institutions may offer better courses

Many students want to attend a prestigious university

The best universities employ teachers who are experts in their fields

Qualifications gained abroad can open the door to better job opportunities

Living abroad can broaden students' horizons

Overseas students are exposed to different cultures and customs.

They become more independent

They are responsible for cooking, cleaning and paying bills

They will learn a foreign language

Drawback of studying abroad

Living and studying abroad can be difficult

Students have problems with paperwork such as visa applications

The language barrier can be a problem

Students have to find accommodation and pay bills

Studying in a foreign language is challenging

Living alone in an unfamiliar culture can cause homesickness

Technology in Education: Advantages

Technology is a powerful tool to engage students

Technology can make lessons much more interesting

Students can do research using online resources

Students can study at their own place

Adults can take distance learning courses

Students can study whenever and wherever they want

Students also learn skills which are useful for their future jobs

For example, they learn to write reports using a word processor

Technology in Education: Disadvantages

People rely too much on computers

Young learners do not become proficient in some basic skills

They use word processors and spelling may suffer

People should be able to write a letter by hand

Technology is no substitute for a real teacher

Learners need a structured course

An experienced teacher knows what materials to choose

Computers are expensive to maintain and can be unreliable

Technology in Education: Opinion

Institutions should supplement traditional teaching with the use of technology

Technology is part of everyday life

It can enhance a teacher's lessons

Students can use online resources to help with homework

Students must still learn to write by hand

They should still use traditional sources of information such as books

Education in Developing countries: Problems

Children often have to work from an early age

There are no schools in many areas

Families do not have access to books or computers

Literacy rates are often low

People in developing countries need knowledge and skills

Education is the key to improving the economy of these countries

Education in developing countries: solutions

Developed countries could help developing nations by providing money

They could invest in schools and technology

They could supply the funds to build schools and pay for teachers

Children need to have access to free schooling

Computer equipment could be donated

The Internet can expose students to a world of knowledge and information

Governments should make education compulsory for all children

They should encourage parents to send their children to school

Governments of developed and developing countries must work together

Higher education: Advantages (also see "benefits of education")

There are many benefits to going to university

A degree can open the door to better employment prospects

Economies are becoming increasingly knowledge-based

Most jobs require specific knowledge and skills

Skilled workers are needed for sectors such as information technology and engineering

Repetitive manual jobs are now done by machine

Many factories have moved to developing countries

Higher education: Disadvantages

A healthy economy needs a wide range of workers

Some manual workers will always be needed

A university degree is not necessary for many service professions

Practical training is more important in some industries

In the UK, for example, there is currently a shortage of plumbers

Their services are therefore becoming more and more expensive

Advantage of Home-schooling

Some parents decide to educate their children at home

Some families live in isolated areas with poor transport

Other parents are not satisfied with local schools

Parents can respond to what their children need and how they learn best

One-to-one lessons allow much faster progress

The child can work at his or her own pace

Discipline problems are avoided by home-schooling

Disadvantages of home-schooling

Most parents do not have the time to educate their children at home

One parent would need to give up work

School subjects are normally taught by up to ten different teachers

Most parents do not have the necessary knowledge or resources

Private tutors are expensive

Children will miss out on the social experience that school offers

At school, children learn how to get on with each other

Home-schooled children may lack social skills

Schools offer a better overall educational experience

Bad behavior in schools: causes

Bad behavior is due to a lack of structure and discipline

There are too many children in some classes

Large classes are difficult to manage

May disruptive students come from an unstable family background

Other parents are too lenient and spoil their children

Some children are used to getting whatever they want

Schools can do very little if they are not supported by parents

Bad behavior in schools: solutions

Schools need a clear code of conduct

Schools need a clear set of rules about behavior

They need to create a positive working atmosphere

Teachers must have the power to punish disruptive students

Schools should remove difficult children from lessons

Schools need to work closely with parents

Discipline could be lacking at home

Parents must support the school rules

They should take responsibility for their children's behavior

Corporal Punishment: Opinion

Corporal Punishment is not a good idea

Physical punishment is a way of controlling children using fear

This does not promote trust between adults and children

Children who are punished physically may become shy or resentful

Corporal punishment creates an atmosphere of fear and anger

Single Sex Education: Advantages

Some people believe that male and female students should go to separate schools

This is often for religious or cultural reasons

Discipline problems might be avoided by separating boys and girls

Boys and girls may learn in different ways and have different needs

Student at single-sex schools often get better exam grades.

Single-sex Education: Disadvantages

Separating boys and girls is unnecessary

It is unhealthy in terms of children's social development

Many coeducational schools are extremely successful

A mixed-sex environment is more representative of real life

Coeducational schools provide children with better social skills for adult life

Advantages of Streaming (grouping children according to ability)

Some schools separate students according to their academic ability

Teachers can work at the right speed for their students

Teachers can plan more suitable lessons

High-level groups may progress faster

Lower level groups can benefit from a slower pace

Some teachers and parents support streaming for these reasons

Disadvantages of Streaming

Grouping by ability may have a negative impact on students

Children do not want to be seen as less intelligent than others

Streaming could damage students' self esteem

They may lose motivation

Students from wealthier families tend to be better prepared

Children from poorer families may receive less support from parents

Mixed ability classes encourage everyone to achieve their potential.

6. Environment

Global warming

Gases such as carbon dioxide trap heat from the sun

This causes global temperatures to rise

This process is known as the greenhouse effect

Human activity is a major factor in the rise of the greenhouse gases

Factories and vehicles produce emissions and exhaust fumes

Many developing countries are becoming industrialized

The number of cars on our streets is growing

Cheap air travel is allowing more people to fly

Effects of Global Warming

Global warming will have a significant impact on our planet

Rising temperature will cause melting of the polar ice caps

Sea levels will rise

We can expect more extreme weather conditions

Flooding and droughts may become more common

Impacts of humans on the environment

The increasing world population is putting pressure on natural resources

Fossil fuels like oil and gas are running out

We are destroying wildlife habitats

We have cut down enormous areas of rainforest

This has led to the extinction of many species of animals and plants

Solutions to environment problems

Governments could introduce laws to limit emissions from factories

They should invest in renewable energy from solar, wind or water power

They could impose “green taxes” on drivers and airlines companies

Government campaigns should promote recycling

Natural areas and wild animals should be protected

Individuals should also try to be greener

We should take fewer flights abroad for holidays

We should take public transport rather than driving

We should choose products with less packaging

We should recycle as much as possible

Waste/rubbish

The amount of waste we produce has increased

This problem is a result of our consumer culture

Products are not made to last

If something breaks, we throw it away and buy a new one

Advertisers encourage us to buy the newest fashions

Packaging is an important part of selling

Most foods are sold in non-biodegradable plastics packaging

The amount of household waste is growing

This waste ends up in landfill sites

Litter

People do not think about the consequences of dropping rubbish

They assume that somebody is paid to clean the streets

Plastic packaging does not break down easily

Most of the litter seen on streets is fast food packaging

Recycling and other solutions

Companies should make goods that last longer

They should not use so much packaging

Governments should be stricter, about waste produced by companies

They should put legal limits on packaging

Consumers should avoid buying over-packaged products

We should recycle and reuse useful materials.

There are collection banks for glass, paper and plastic bottles

Households can use several rubbish bins to separate waste

Recycling saves energy and raw materials.

Nuclear Power: Positives

There are several benefits to build more nuclear power stations

Fossil fuel like oil and gas are running out

Nuclear power is a sustainable energy source

It can be used to produce electricity without wasting natural resources

It could be replace the use of natural resources like coal, oil or gas

Nuclear power stations are cleaner than fossil fuel power stations

They could help to reduce carbon emissions that cause global warming

The risks of accidents are being reduced

Nuclear Power: negatives

Opponents of nuclear power worry about the safety of power stations

The building of new nuclear power stations is unpopular

Nobody wants to live near one

Nuclear waste disposal is a significant problem

There is currently no way to decontaminate radioactive material

People worry that terrorists could steal radioactive materials

It is safer to produce energy from solar, wind or water power.

7. Family

Family size

Families in many countries are not as large as they used to be

We tend to live in small nuclear families rather than large extended families

Parents tend to have fewer children

Young children are no longer expected to work

Nowadays both parents often work

It costs so much to bring children up

It is more difficult to raise a large family

Working parents (also see “gender” topic)

Children and their parents seem to be less close nowadays

Parents spend less time with their children

Women traditionally stayed at home to cook, clean and look after children

Nowadays both parents often work full time

Children may be left alone, or with nannies or babysitters

Busy parents have less contact with their children

Many families no longer eat meals together

Children spend more time with friends or surfing the Internet

Negative effects on Children

The lack of closeness in families can have a negative effect on children
Many parents have no idea how their children spend their time
Friends, television and the Internet become the main influence on children's behavior
Teenagers are influenced by peer pressure
Some of them join gangs
Juvenile delinquency is on the increase
Parents should be more involved with their children's upbringing
Young people need positive role models

Divorce

In the past, divorce was unacceptable
It was considered to be embarrassing for a family
People stayed together for religious or family reasons
Divorce is more socially acceptable nowadays
It has become much more common
Divorce can be extremely stressful
Lone parents may face financial difficulties
Many single parents have to rely on benefits paid by the state
Divorce can have a negative effect on children
Children from single-parent families are more likely to get lower grades or drop out of school.
The rise in divorce rates may be connected to some social problems

Care for Old people

Caring for elderly people was traditionally the responsibility of families
Adults had to look after their elderly parents
A woman's job was to stay at home taking care of her family
Nowadays, fewer elderly people are looked after by their relatives
Residential homes provide care for large number of elderly people
Some families are unable to look after elderly relatives
Families tend to be smaller these days, and women often have full-time jobs
Cares homes provide a professional service for senior citizens
Nurses are better trained than family members

Care for Old people: Opinion

The best form of care for the elderly depends on the family situation
It depends on whether family members have the time resources
We all have a responsibility towards the older people in our society
Governments should invest money in facilities and training for care workers.

8. Gender

Gender and education

Men and women should have access to the same educational opportunities
Males and females should be accepted onto courses according to their abilities
It is wrong to discriminate against students because of their gender
Gender should be irrelevant in education
Student's achievements should depend on hard work and individual merit
In the UK, there are similar numbers of male and female students in higher education

Gender and work

Men and women should have access to the same professional opportunities
Both man and women should be able to pursue a career
They should earn equal salaries
They should be employed according to their abilities, qualifications and experience
Traditionally women have been restricted to certain roles
They were often employed as secretaries or receptionists
Nowadays, a range of occupations is available to both sexes
Career success depends on individual merit

Women's and Men's roles in the Family

Some people argue that a mother should not work
She should stay at home and bring up her children
The father should be the breadwinner of the family
Others believe that both parents should share these responsibilities
Working women can take maternity leave during and after pregnancy
Many mothers continue to work after this period
Many fathers and mothers share their parenting and domestic responsibilities
They contribute equally to childcare, cooking and cleaning
Some women many have better career prospects than their husbands.

Paternity leave and “househusbands” are becoming more common
Traditional gender roles are gradually changing
Families can divide roles and responsibilities in the most convenient way.

9. Genetic Engineering

Positives of genetic engineering

Genetic engineering is the practice of manipulating the genes of an organism
It is used to produce crops that are more resistant to insects and diseases
Some genetically modified crops grow more quickly
Some drugs and vaccines are produced by genetic engineering
It may become possible to change human’s genetic characteristics.
Scientists may use genetic engineering to cure diseases.
Inherited illnesses would no longer exist
Genes could be changed before a baby is born
It could also be possible to clone human organs
We could all have replacement body parts
Humans could live longer, healthier lives

Negatives of genetic engineering

There are ethical concerns about human genetic engineering
Parents might want to choose their children’s characteristics
This would be unnatural
It would be unacceptable in most religions
Soldiers could be cloned from the genes of the strongest people
Clones might be used like robots to do certain jobs
Clones might even be developed just for organ replacements
Society and human evolution would change completely
Currently, human genetic engineering is prohibited

Genetically-Modified (GM) foods: Advantages

Farmers can produce crops that grow bigger and faster
Some GM crops are more resistant to disease or insects
This could be important for food production in developing countries
Faster growing cereals, fruit and vegetables will mean more profit
GM foods can be modified to look perfect

They may be more attractive to customers

Genetically-Modified (GM) Foods: Disadvantages

There may be risks involved in the genetic engineering of foods.

GM crops might change whole ecosystems

Food chains could be broken if crops are resistant to predators

Organic foods are produced without chemicals or genetic modification

Organic farming may be slower and more expensive

However, the environment is not damaged by fertilizers or pesticides.

10. Global issues

Problems in developing countries

Developing countries face a range of problems

Standards of healthcare and education are low

Life expectancy is usually lower than in developed countries

There is a lack of infrastructure, employment and good quality housing

Many people are forced to live in poverty

Food, drinking water and basic medicines are in short supply

How to help developing countries

The best form of help for developing countries is development aid

Richer nations can help by investing in long-term projects

Governments and charities can help by building new houses and schools

Globalization may also help developing countries

Multi-national companies can create jobs in developing countries

On the other hand, many people emigrate to find work in richer countries

They often send money back home to their families

This money helps to improve the standard of living in developing countries

Immigration

Some people move to another country in search of a better life

Many immigrants come from less developed countries

Richer, industrialized countries may offer opportunities for employment

Free healthcare and schooling are available in some developed countries

Other people migrate to a foreign country to improve their academic qualifications

Positives of immigration and Multi-cultural societies

From an economic perspective, immigration can be extremely positive
Many immigrants have skills that are needed in the country they move to
Immigrants who find work contribute to the economy of their new country
Many immigrants send money home to help family members
Immigration also creates cultural diversity
People of many different nationalities learn to live together
This can help people to become more open-minded and tolerant

Negatives of Immigration

Some people believe that immigrants take jobs that should go to local people
Some immigrant workers work longer hours for less money
Companies might pay lower salaries to immigrant workers
Unemployment rates could rise if there are too many immigrants

Opinions about Immigration

Immigration can help the economy of a country
It can create multi-cultural societies
However, immigration needs to be controlled
In many countries, immigrants need visas or work permit
Governments should stop companies from exploiting immigrant workers
Foreign and local workers should have the right to equal pay and conditions

Positives of Globalization

Business of becoming increasingly international
Multi-national companies do business across the world
Companies like MacDonald's can be seen on high streets in most cities
Goods are produced in one country and sold in many others
A global economy means free trade between countries
This can strengthen political relationships
Globalization can also create opportunities for employment
It encourages investment in less developed countries

It could reduce poverty in the developing world

Negatives of Globalization

Globalization is not always beneficial to everyone
Companies can move to countries where labour is cheap
This creates redundancies, or job losses
Employees cannot be confident that they have stable jobs
Companies sometimes exploit their employees in developing countries
Global trade creates more waste and pollution

The future of Globalization

There should be global regulations for salaries and working conditions
Governments should impose laws to protect the environment

11. Government and Society

What governments can do

Governments provide public services like healthcare and education
They support people who are living in poverty or unable to work
Governments raise money by taxing working people
They can spend money on resources and campaigns
They can introduce new laws
They can impose taxes
They can raise people's awareness of issues (e.g climate change/healthy eating)
They can influence people's habits and opinions
They can create jobs
They can regulate the activities of companies such as banks
They can provide resources for schools
They are also responsible for the security and well-being of their citizens
They control armed forces and police forces

Public services

Governments pay the salaries of public sector workers like police officers and teachers
The necessary money is raised by taxing people's income

Free education and healthcare may be provided by the state
Some governments control public transport systems and even TV channels
In other countries, these services are provided by private companies
Some people believe that competition between private companies is good
It helps to improve quality while bringing prices down
Other people think that essential services should be free
Governments should pay for them

Censorship: Opinion

Governments can censor what public sees or reads in the media
To a certain extent censorship is necessary
We should use censorship to protect children from violent images
Some computer games involve killing people or committing crimes
The Internet also needs to be controlled
Many websites show pornography and violence
There should be age limits for websites and computers games
Parents need to take responsibility for checking what their children watch
It is impossible for governments to control everything we see

Video cameras in public places

The use of CCTV is becoming widespread
Video cameras have been installed in many public places
They are supposed to protect us and deter criminals
Many people think that this surveillance violates our privacy
The authorities could build databases with our pictures and identities
We should not be treated like criminals

Smart cards: Positives

Governments will probably introduce a digital identification card system
Smart cards will have benefits and drawbacks
They could help to reduce crime
They could hold personal information, such as DNA
Digital bank cards could contain fingerprint information
It would be very difficult for criminals to use a stolen card
It would be easier for police to identify people and catch criminals

Smart cards: Negatives

- Many people are worried about losing their privacy
- Governments could store all our personal and medical information
- This information could be used by insurance companies
- Employers could check our health records

People with Disabilities

- People with disabilities should be treated the same as everybody else
- They should have the same rights as other people
- They should have access to the same jobs as other citizens
- Discriminations against disabled people is illegal in many countries
- Ramps and lifts for wheelchairs should be installed in public buildings
- Support teacher can be employed to help children with learning difficulties

12. Guns and Weapons

Why guns should be legal:

- In some countries, people are allowed to own firearms
- Individuals have the right to protect themselves
- People can use guns in self defence
- This deters criminals

Why gun ownership should be illegal:

- There is a risk of accidents with guns
- The number of violent crimes increases when guns are available
- Criminals may be armed
- The police then need to use guns
- Suicide rates have been shown to rise when guns are available
- Guns create violent societies with high murder rates

Why polices should use guns

- Many criminals use weapons
- The threat of a gun can deter criminals
- Police officers can force a criminal to surrender

It is easier to arrest someone and avoid physical violence
The police may shoot violent criminals in self defence
They can protect the public
They can shoot an escaping criminal who poses a serious danger to the public

Why police should not carry guns

There is a risk of accidents and mistakes
The police might shoot an unarmed criminal or an innocent person
Accidents can happen in public places
There are several alternatives to guns (e.g tear gas, sprays and electric shock weapons)
Only special police units should use guns

Arm Trade: Positives

The export of arms, or weapons, is an extremely controversial issue
Governments of rich, industrialized countries sell arms to each other
This industry creates jobs and wealth
The trade of weapons may improve relationships between governments

Arms Trade: Negatives

Weapons may be used in conflicts and wars
The supply of arms could be responsible for deaths
Governments are promoting war in order to make a profit
Rich countries can influence the politics of other nations

Nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons are capable of destroying whole cities
A nuclear war between two countries would destroy both countries
Nuclear weapons are used as a deterrent
They prevent wars from starting

Nuclear weapons: Opinion

Nuclear weapons should be prohibited
Governments should limit the production of nuclear weapons
There is a danger of nuclear weapons being obtained by terrorists

Nuclear weapons cannot be used against terrorist organizations

Armed Forces: Positives

Armed forces provide security and protection
They deter military attack by another country
They can also be sued to maintain peace within countries
They can be sued to give the police extra support
Soldiers are also used to help in emergency situations, such as after a natural disaster

Armed forces: negatives

Armies require a lot of funding from governments
Too much money is spent on weapons and military technology
This money could be spent on schools, hospitals and other public services

13. Health

Diet

The human body requires a balanced diet
An unhealthy diet can cause various health problems
Obesity, diabetes and heart disease are on the increase
Many people nowadays rely on fast food or pre-prepared meals
These foods often contain too much fat, salt and sugar
They are cheap to buy and very easy to prepare
Many young people have grown up on a diet of convenience foods
Populations in developed countries are increasingly overweight

Exercise

Regular exercise is essential in maintaining a healthy body
Exercise burns calories and helps to build healthy bones and muscles
Doctors advise exercising at least three times a week for 20 minutes
Most people nowadays lead a sedentary lifestyle
We tend to walk less and do desk jobs
Most adults relax by watching television
Children play video games rather than doing outdoor sports
In the past, people were more active in their jobs and at home

Government's Role

Governments have a significant role to play in reducing obesity
More and more people, including young children are seriously overweight
They are at risk of heart disease and diabetes
This situation will increase the burden on hospitals and taxpayers
Hospitals rely on the government for money and resources
Governments should promote a healthy diet and regular exercise
There should be more time for sports on school timetables
Unhealthy junk food should be banned from school menus
People need information about what foods contain
Food packaging must show the food's nutritional content
The British Government recommends eating five portions of fruit and vegetables per day

State Health system: advantages

Good healthcare should be available to everyone for free
State healthcare is paid by the government using money from taxes
Everyone has access to the same quality of care and treatment
Private healthcare is unfair because only wealthy people can afford it
The National Health Service in the UK provides free healthcare for every resident

Private Healthcare: advantages

State hospitals are often very large and difficult to run
Private hospitals have shorter waiting lists for operations and appointments
Patients can benefit from faster treatment
Many people prefer to pay for more a personal service
Patients have their own room and more comfortable facilities

Alternative medicine: Positives

People are increasingly using alternative medicines to treat illnesses.
For example, acupuncture can be used to treat backache
Herbal medicines can be used to treat allergies or viruses
Many patients report positive experiences with these treatments
Some traditional cures have been used for hundreds of years

Alternative medicine: Negatives

- Many alternative medicines have not been tested scientifically
- They may have no beneficial effect at all
- They may cause unknown side effects
- People should trust the opinions of qualified doctors
- An illness could get worse without treatment from a doctor

Stress

- Modern lifestyles are increasingly stressful
- People work long hours with strict deadlines
- Our busy lifestyles mean we have less time to relax
- Unemployment is a major cause of stress
- Children may be affected by their parents' relationship problems
- Tests and exams can also cause stress

How to reduce stress

- Stress can be reduced by taking regular exercise and eating a healthy diet
- It is also important to get sufficient sleep and make leisure time a priority
- People should work less overtime and take regular holidays
- Schools have started to employ psychologists
- They can offer emotional support to students
- They can help students to cope with exam stress

14. Housing and Architecture

State/council housing

- In some countries the government provides state or council housing
- This helps people who cannot afford to buy their own house
- It can be argued that state housing creates dependence on the government
- People should be rely on the government to look after them
- People have no incentive to earn money and buy their own home
- Council properties are often made with cheap, poor-quality materials.

Old Buildings

- Historic buildings are part of a country's heritage

They should be protected
Old buildings are often considered to be works of art
They give character to cities and attract tourists
They show us how people lived in the past
We identify countries by architectural symbols like the pyramids in Egypt
Governments should spend money on looking after historic buildings
They need regular repairs and maintenance
New buildings should be designed to complement them

Modern/green buildings

Modern buildings should be designed to be environmentally friendly
They should use less energy and produce less waste
Modern insulation can make houses more energy-efficient
Solar and wind power can be used to generate electricity
Rainwater and waste water can be recycled and used to flush toilets.
Modern glass buildings take advantage of natural light

15. Language

English as an international language

English is widely used around the world
It is becoming a global second language
It is the dominant language of technology, science and international business
International business meetings are regularly held in English
The most important textbooks and journals are published in English
The ability to speak English is a necessary skill in the modern world

Negative of English as an International Language

If one language is dominant, other languages may disappear
The dominant language brings its own culture
American culture has become popular around the world
Other cultures may be damaged
As an alternative to English, a new global language could be invented
It would have no nationality or culture attached to it
This could help to promote international peace and understanding
Esperanto is an example of a language that was invented with this aim

16. Money

Money and Society

Society has become increasingly materialistic
People aspire to earn more money
They want a bigger house or a better car
We connect wealth and material possessions with happiness and success
Brands like “Armani” or “Mercedes” are status symbols
Advertising creates new desires and needs
It persuades us to buy the latest styles

Positives of Consumerism

Consumerism creates employment
It helps to reduce poverty
It encourages innovation and creativity in business
We live in a global economy
We have a better quality of life

Negatives of Consumerism

Consumerist societies create more waste
They use more natural resources
They cause damage to the environment
Consumerism creates a “throw-away” culture
Advertisers tell us who we are and what we want
Wealth does not lead to happiness
Materialism causes greed and crime
We should return to traditional values like sharing

17. Personality

Happiness

Happiness means different things to different people
It can be described as a feeling of pleasure or enjoyment
People enjoy spending time with family and friends

Hobbies, sports and games can be a source of fun and enjoyment
Some people see money as a source of happiness
Other people define happiness as something deeper
In order to be truly happy it is necessary to live a good life
We need to feel that we are doing something useful with our lives
Some people get a sense of achievement from their work
Others find happiness in bringing up their children
Religion or a sense of purpose can also be a source of happiness

Success

People define success in different ways
Some people get a sense of achievement from raising a family
For others, success is defined by wealth or status
We often think of rich and famous people as being successful in life
Millionaires like Bill Gates are considered to be successful
They have risen to the top in their chosen professions
For some, being successful means achieving personal or professional goals
They see success as the result of hard work
Success in any field requires long-term planning and effort

Nature or Nurture

Some people believe that our personalities are determined mainly by genetics
We inherit our abilities and talents from our parents
Others think that our education and upbringing are more important
We develop according to the influences around us
Our personalities and achievements depend more on nurture than nature
Many people argue that we control our own destinies
We can shape our own personalities
By working hard we can achieve and goal that we put our minds to
Many successful people are “self-made”
We are not limited by our genetic characteristic or upbringing

18. Sport and Leisure

Arguments against Professional/competitive sport

Sport has become a business

Professional sport encourages people to compete for money
Many sports stars are only concerned about money and fame
Some athletes take drugs in order to win at any cost
Competitors are often selfish and rude
They are not good role models for children
All sports should be amateur
Sports should be leisure activities rather than jobs
People should do sporting activities for enjoyment and health reasons
Taking part is more important than winning

Arguments for Professional sport

Professional sports are the same as any other business
Many people are employed in the sports industry
People should be able to use their talents to earn a salary
Sports stars entertain millions of people
Money is necessary to improve facilities and train athletes
The level of professional sport is much higher than that of amateur sport

Arguments for Competitive sport

Competition is a natural instinct in humans
In daily life we compete to get jobs or the highest grades
Sports are a safe form of competition
Competition is healthy because it pushes us to give our best
Competitors and fans can release energy and aggression
Supporters of teams feel a sense of belonging to a community

Opinion: professional sport salaries are too high

Sports professionals earn too much money
They do not provide a vital service
Football players, for example, earn enormous salaries by simply kicking a ball
We could all live happily without professional football
Life would be difficult without doctors, engineers and other vital professionals.
Society does not seem to value these professions as highly as professional sport
Sports salaries should be compatible with the wages most people earn

Opinion: professional sport salaries are fair

It is fair that the best professional earn a lot of money
Sport is a multi-million-pound industry
There is a large audience of sports fans
Sports on television attract many viewers
Sports stars have dedicated hours of practice to developing their fitness and skills
Only the most talented among them will reach the top
A sports career many only last 10 years
Sports fans are willing to pay to support their teams

Sports and Politics

Some people think that sport and politics should remain separate
Governments are involved in the hosting of sporting events such as the Olympics.
These events attract investment and create jobs.
The Olympic Games are an advertisement for the host nation
They attract huge numbers of visitors and sports fans
Wealthy countries tend to hold these events
Developing countries should be given the chance to become hosts

19. Television, Internet, Phones

Positives of television

Watching television is a good way to relax
It is many people's favorite way to wind down after a hard day at work
Television programs can be entertaining and enjoyable
Viewers have access to a huge variety of entertainment channels
Television brings the best comedians, musicians and actors into our homes
Programmers can also be informative and educational
News coverage makes the public aware of events around the world
Documentaries can make learning more interesting

Negatives of Television

Television is having a negative impact on society
Some people link violence on television with crime rates in the real world

Children copy the behavior they see on the screen
Children are less healthy because they spend less time palying
Advertisers direct their marketing at children
Most programs do not require much thought
Watching TV is a waste of time

Opinions about Television

Television has many benefits
However, it can be addictive
Children should play outside rather than sit in front of a screen all day
Behaviour shown on TV can influence people
Parents should choose carefully what their children watch
Children should not be exposed to violence, swearing or sexual images
Advertising during children's programs should be strictly controlled
TV companies should make more positive, educational programs

Positives of the Internet

There are many advantages to using the Internet
It gives us instant access to information on almost any subject
Shops and other services are now available online
People can buy goods and services from the comfort of their homes
The Internet is starting to replace other forms of entertainment
It has revolutionized communication
We can keep in touch by email or instant messenger services
Video messaging is becoming common for business meetings

Negatives of the internet

Many websites contain offensive content
Some sites show violent or sexual images
Parents find it difficult to control what their children see online
They do not always know who their children are chatting to
With so many websites it is difficult to search for good information
Criminals increasingly use the Internet to steal people's money

Internet compared to newspaper and books

Newspapers and books are now published online as well as in print
We can read the news in any language from any country in the world
It costs nothing to publish or access information on the Internet
The Internet allows anybody to publish their own writing
Newspaper articles and books are written by professionals
Professionals produce better quality writing than amateur
People still buy newspapers and books because they are portable
People do not like reading from a screen

Positives of Mobile Phones

The mobile phone is the most popular gadget in today's world
Mobile phones have revolutionized the way we communicate
We can stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues wherever we are
Users can send text messages, surf the Internet, take photos and listen to music
Mobiles have also become fashion accessories

Negatives of Mobile Phones

Mobiles phones can be a problem in some public places
Ringing phones cause disturbance in cinemas and school lessons
Some people are not aware that others can hear their conversations
Mobile phones may also interfere with electronic equipment
Their waves could cause damage to our brains
Mobile phones can also be a dangerous distraction
Using a phone while driving reduces the driver's concentration
Mobile phones are a popular target for thieves

Opinion about Mobile Phones

The benefits of mobile phones outweigh the drawbacks
We need to use these phones with care

20. Tourism

Positives of Tourism

Tourism is a popular leisure activity
People go on holiday to relax and have fun
Tourists can experience different cultures
They can sunbathe on beaches or go sight-seeing
Travelling abroad opens our minds
We can learn to speak other languages
The tourist trade is vital for some economies
It creates employment in services like accommodation, transport and entertainment
Some areas rely on tourism for their income
Tourists spend money
Tourism attracts investment from multi-national companies
It helps to improve the standard of living
Low-cost airlines are making it cheaper to travel abroad

Negative effects of tourism

Tourism can have a negative effect on the natural environment
The building of facilities and infrastructure can destroy the habitat of wild animals
Beautiful beaches are spoilt by the building of hotels
Tourism creates pollution and waste
It puts pressure on local resources
Local traditional and cultures may be endangered
A rise in the cost of living affects local people
The price of goods, services and housing may increase significantly

The future of tourism

Government should introduce laws to protect natural environments and local cultures
Tourism should have a low impact on wildlife
Renewable resources like solar or water power should be used
Waste should be recycled
Local businesses such as farms should be supported

21. Traditional vs Modern

Losing traditional skills

Because of industrialization and global trade, many traditions have disappeared
Global advertising encourages everyone to buy the same products
Most products are now made in factories
Machinery has replaced skilled human labour
Factory work is boring and leaves people feeling unfulfilled
Goods are produced very quickly and in large numbers
Products are cheaper, which means that more people can buy them

Examples

Clothes are mass produced in standard sizes
People wear similar clothes, rather than traditional costumes
Jeans and T-shirt are now worn throughout the world
Historic buildings took skilled craftsmen years to build
Modern concrete, steel and glass buildings are built in only weeks or months
There are fewer people who can create hand-made goods

Traditional customs

Traditional customs are still important during weddings and religious festivals
People wear traditional costumes and eat special foods
It is important to maintain our different cultural identities
We should celebrate festivals, teach traditional skills and protect historic places

22. Transport

Traffic problems

Traffic congestion is caused by commuters travelling to work
Most people live in the suburbs outside city centre
Commuters tend to travel at the same time of day
They tend to travel alone
Cars and road space are not used efficiently
This causes traffic jams during the rush hour

Traffic solutions

In order to reduce traffic we should change our working habits
The internet can now be used to connect people
More people could work from home
Meetings can be held as video conferences
Workers could be given flexible timetables
Another solution would be to tax drivers
Workers should share their cars and travel together
In London, for example, there is a congestion charge
This helps to raise money for better public transport
Public transport needs to be reliable and efficient

Positives of Public transport

We need to reduce our dependence on cars
Parking a car can be extremely difficult in big cities
Well-designed transport systems are comfortable and convenient
Modern public transport can be fast and cheap
Public transport can help to reduce pollution in cities
Investment in buses and trains will ease traffic congestion
Buses can be given special lanes to avoid traffic

Negatives of public transport

Public transport is often slow and unreliable
Metro systems and trains are often dirty and crowded
People feel like “sardines in a can”
Cars are much more comfortable

Road safety

Driving while tired or drunk is extremely dangerous
Mobile phones can be a dangerous distraction for drivers
They draw the driver's attention away from the road
The use of phones while driving has been banned in many countries
Punishments are becoming stricter
Television campaigns are used to remind people to drive safely
Speed cameras have become more common
Speed bumps are another form of traffic calming

Many streets are designed with the aim of slowing traffic down

23. Water

Importance of clean water

Water is as necessary natural resource
Humans need access to clean, safe drinking water in order to live
Poor water quality is a major cause of disease and death in some countries
Water usually needs to be treated before we can drink it
Developing countries often lack the means to treat and supply water to citizens
Developed countries tend to have much better sanitation
Citizens have access to clean tap water
Drinking water is not contaminated by sewage or waste water
The supply of clean water would improve public health in many developing countries

Water supply

Urban life would be impossible without water supply systems
These systems are massive engineering projects
Many professionals are involved in their planning, construction and maintenance
The supply and distribution of water are major concerns
Water is becoming scarce in some countries
Areas that suffer droughts often need to import water
As populations grow, there is more pressure on water supplies
This could lead to a water crisis

Water and politics

The supply of water is also an important political issue
Huge amount of water are needed for agriculture and industry
The irrigation of crops accounts for a large proportions of water use
A water crisis could lead to political conflicts or even wars

Argument: water should be free

Some people believe that water should be free for everyone
Governments should supply water to all homes at no cost

Private companies should not be allowed to profit from this natural resource
Money from taxes can be used to pay for water supply systems

Argument: water should not be free

If water is free, people take it for granted
They do not think about how much water they waste
They leave taps running while washing or brushing their teeth
If we have to pay for water, we will use it more responsibly
Water supply systems are extremely expensive
Investment is needed to maintain and improve them
Private companies may provide a better service than governments
If they provide an efficient service, they will make more money
They will repair leaks to avoid losing money

Bottled Water: Opinions

Some people carry bottles of water wherever they go
For example, they take bottles of water to work or to the gym
They believe that bottled water is healthier than tap water
They also argue that it tastes better
However, other people believe that we should consume less bottled water
Plastic water bottles add to litter and waste problems
Companies should not be able to make a profit from water
It is unethical to make money by selling packaged water
There is no difference in quality between bottled and tap water

24. Work

The benefits of staying in the same job for life

Employees have a stable career with one employer
They have a good pension and health insurance
Their salaries gradually increase
They may be promoted within the organization
They demonstrate loyalty
Experienced staff can be trusted with more responsibility
They become part of a team
There is a clearly defined path for development

The benefits of not staying in the same job

People often change jobs in order to further their career
Another company may offer a promotion or a higher salary
People who change jobs can gain experience
They can learn different skills
Changing jobs is interesting and challenging
People can retrain in a different occupation
In a fast-changing world workers need to be flexible
People need to develop a range of experience and skills

Self-employment

Nowadays, it is easy to set up a company
The Internet provides a global marketplace
Self-employment offers greater freedom than working for a company
However, there are risks to starting a new business
Self-employed people may face financial difficulties
Many businesses fail to make a profit
There is less stability in self-employment
There are no benefits like pensions, sick pay and holiday pay
Self-employment involved hard work, long hours and total responsibility

Unemployment

Unemployment is a big problem for individuals, communities and society
Some people are unable to find a job
They may not have the sufficient level of education or qualifications
They may find themselves homeless
Unemployment causes frustration and stress
Jobless people may become involved in crime as a means to get money
The unemployed need careers advice
Governments need to provide vocational courses and retraining

Unemployment benefits: positives

Some governments pay unemployment benefits in order to help jobless people
Unemployed people need financial support until they find a new job

By claiming benefits they can continue to pay for their homes
The benefits system helps to reduce poverty, homelessness and crime

Unemployment benefits: negatives

Some people claim benefits rather than working
They become dependent on the government
They are not motivated to find a job
The benefits system is a burden on taxpayers
All citizens should work to earn a living and support themselves
Receiving benefits affects people's self esteem

Work/Life Balance

It is important to achieve a balance between work time and leisure or family time
Too much work can result in stress and poor health
“workaholics” may neglect their families and friends
People need to take regular holidays
Companies should be expect employees to work overtime
Nowadays, many people work part-time or have flexible working hours
Technology allow people to work from home
Many companies provide childcare facilities
A good work/ life balance can raise job satisfaction
Happy, healthy workers are more productive

Technology and work

Internet, fax and mobile phone technologies have revolutionized working life
Workers can communicate via email, online networks and video conferencing
Technology can connect workers in different countries
It gives people more freedom
It can also save time and money
Some people believe that offices could disappear in the future
Virtual online offices may replace them

Child labour

In some countries, children are exploited
They do repetitive jobs for very low pay

Children are often used in agriculture and factory work
The employment of children is prohibited in other countries
Many people think that children should be free to enjoy their childhood
Governments should make education a priority
They should build new schools
They should supply the resources to educate children
Children need to be given the knowledge and skills for adult life