

# Advantages and disadvantages essays 1: Living abroad

## Try it first!

### Task 2 Writing

#### How to write an advantages and disadvantages essay

Very often in the IELTS exam, you will have to write an essay called an 'advantages and disadvantages' essay. This is where you have to write about the good and bad points of a common situation.

Here is a typical question:

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of leaving your country to live or study abroad?*

Try writing an essay on this subject before you study this unit.

You will need to:

- write an introduction to the topic;
- think of two advantages to the situation and provide clear examples;
- think of two disadvantages and write about these with good support;
- write a short conclusion giving your overall opinion;
- write a minimum of 250 words.

Take your time, but remember that in the exam you will need to complete Writing Task 2 in around 40 minutes.

## Home or away?

1 Look at these popular sayings about home and discuss the questions below.

Home is where the heart is.

Home sweet home

There's no place like home.

- 1 Do you agree with these sayings?
- 2 Do you have similar expressions in your language?
- 3 Can you think of any others?

2 Complete these everyday questions about living arrangements using the correct form of the verb *live*. Then write a short answer for each one.

- 1 Where are you ..... at the moment?
- 2 How long have you been ..... there?
- 3 Would you rather ..... on your own or with friends or family?
- 4 Are you a good person to ..... with? Why? / Why not?
- 5 Have you ever ..... abroad? If so, how did you find ..... there?
- 6 If you could ..... anywhere in the world, where would it be?

3 Work with a partner and share your answers. Make some notes about their responses. What do you have in common?

### Tip

Remember that 25% of your score will be for grammar. Examiners will be looking for two things:

- 1 a good range of grammar (e.g. lots of tenses, conditionals, modals, etc.)
- 2 accurate grammar. Make sure your tenses are correct, and you don't make silly mistakes. Be sure to practise your grammar and get your tenses right.

## Introductory text

- 1 You are going to read an article entitled *Getting away from it all*. What do you think it is about?
- 2 Now read the article on the opposite page.

### Responding to the text

- 3 Complete this table with the positives and negatives of moving away that were mentioned in the article.

good points about moving away	downsides of moving away

- 4 Add some ideas of your own to the table in Exercise 3.

### Building your bank of words and phrases

As you work through the book, you will be developing a strong vocabulary in the process. It is really important to show both range and accuracy of vocabulary in the exam.

- 5 Find the words or expressions in the article that have a similar meaning to these definitions.

- 1 clear arrangements (paragraph 1) *concrete plans*
- 2 had jobs organized (paragraph 1)
- 3 to not hurry (paragraph 1)
- 4 hurried (paragraph 1)
- 5 needed to see new places and have new experiences (paragraph 2)
- 6 give myself extra time to (do something) (paragraph 2)
- 7 damage future work opportunities (paragraph 2)
- 8 exactly the kind of thing I like (paragraph 3)
- 9 organized programme or course (paragraph 3)
- 10 I couldn't believe the moment was real (paragraph 4)
- 11 beginning a new life in a different place (paragraph 5)
- 12 become completely involved in (an experience) (paragraph 5)
- 13 see more of the world (paragraph 6)
- 14 easy or without problems (paragraph 7)
- 15 improve my mood (paragraph 7)
- 16 remain in touch with (paragraph 7)
- 17 full of life (paragraph 8)

- 6 Discuss these questions.

- 1 Which of the words or expressions in Exercise 5 are the most useful for you?
- 2 How do you say the same thing in your own language?
- 3 What will you do to practise using them?



## Getting away from it all

- 1 When I graduated from university a few years ago, I didn't really have any concrete plans for the future. A lot of my friends already had jobs lined up and went straight to work, but things weren't so clear-cut for me. After studying hard for three years, I just wanted to take my time before I rushed into making any decisions about my career.
- 2 London is great, but after growing up there, then spending my student years in the capital, I decided that I needed a change of scenery. I started to look into the possibility of taking a gap year and did a bit of research. In my mind, it would be a good way to buy me some time to think things through. And of course, on top of that, I was very excited about the opportunity to have an adventure! I also knew that having a year out wouldn't really harm my job prospects because employers generally look favourably on it.
- 3 One night I was out with some friends and I got talking to a guy called Ian. He told me that he had been living and working out in New York for the past six months on an international exchange programme. He was working for a market-research company in the centre of Manhattan and living with a group of other British people who were also carrying out work placements in the city. It sounded right up my street and just the kind of opportunity I was looking for. I took some contact details from Ian, and within a week I had applied for a position on the scheme. A month or so later, I was called for an interview and the rest, as they say, is history!
- 4 Arriving in New York after all that hard work at university was an unforgettable experience. I'll never forget standing on Fifth Avenue for the first time and looking up at the Empire State Building while yellow taxis raced up and down. I felt like I was in a scene from a movie. I had to pinch myself.
- 5 Even though it was the first time I had spent an extended period of time away from home, the first few months passed by very quickly. Looking back, it was probably down to the fact that there were lots of other British people around. I had a kind of instant social life. I think because we were all a long way from home and starting afresh, we quickly bonded and became good friends. New York has so much to offer, and soon I had started to discover new interests. My friends back in England laughed when I told them about my cocktail-making classes at night school! I love hip-hop music and street art, so it was easy for me to immerse myself in the New York culture.
- 6 Although my work placement wasn't exactly what I had expected, I gained valuable experience and knew that whatever happened, it would look good on my CV. Anyway, my year abroad was more about the chance to broaden my horizons and consider my future options than about the work.
- 7 I can't say everything about my New York adventure was plain sailing. There were times when I really missed my family and friends. If I had a bad day or was just feeling down, I didn't have the same support network of friends that I could go to back at home to cheer me up. Having said that, I was able to keep in contact with everyone fairly regularly via phone or email, so I was never too homesick.
- 8 On the whole, I would describe my year in New York as a life-changing experience and an opportunity that I'm happy to say I made the most of. I got the chance to live in one of the most vibrant and cosmopolitan cities in the world, I became a much more outgoing person and, above all, I made lots of great friends along the way. I certainly don't regret my decision to go.





## Writing about life changes and experiences

### Are you ready to move abroad? Take the test!

Complete the statements below with the correct word from the box, then score yourself on each one from 1 to 5.

adapt cope easily ~~mix~~ open pick sample scratch sense touch

	Yes					No				
1 I find it easy to <u>mix</u> with new people.	1	2	3	4	5					
2 I can ..... to new situations easily.	1	2	3	4	5					
3 I'm not worried about losing ..... with old friends.	1	2	3	4	5					
4 I make friends .....	1	2	3	4	5					
5 I am able to ..... up new languages without much trouble.	1	2	3	4	5					
6 People say I'm .....-minded and friendly.	1	2	3	4	5					
7 When I travel somewhere new, I like to ..... the local food.	1	2	3	4	5					
8 I feel I can ..... with most challenges that life throws at me.	1	2	3	4	5					
9 Starting a new life from ..... doesn't worry me at all.	1	2	3	4	5					
10 I have a keen ..... of adventure.	1	2	3	4	5					

Check your score in the answer key on page 115. Compare with a partner.  
What were the biggest differences in your answers?

#### Tip

The fastest way to build a powerful vocabulary is to study how words fit together into chunks of language instead of focusing on individual words.

For example, you know the word *decision*. But by exploring texts, you learn the verb + noun collocation **make a decision**.

Then you learn other useful chunks, such as:

- **make a decision about** something (a job, a university course)
- **rush into** making a decision about
- **take your time before you** rush into making a decision about

The more chunks of language you can learn, the more flexible your writing will be in the exam. You will develop this habit as you move through this book.

Start by looking back at the text *Getting away from it all* on page 9. Pick out and record some chunks you think are useful.

### Vocabulary chunks

Focus on the words you added to the questions in the test.

- 1 Look to the left and right of these words in each statement.
- 2 Can you identify any complete pieces of language?
- 3 Is the chunk of language fixed, or can you change parts of it?

Example: 1 mix

*mix with new people*

*mix with different people*

Try this process for the other words you added.  
Record the chunks that you find.





## Spotlight 2

### Verb patterns

#### Tip

Verbs in English fit together in different ways. It is very important to learn how they work to improve the accuracy of your writing for the exam.

#### 1 Think about / Discuss these questions.

- Have you or your friends/family lived overseas for a long period of time? What problems did you/they face? Have you/they adapted to the new culture? How?

#### 2 Read the text below about culture shock and match these headings (a–c) to the three stages (1–3).

- a Trouble in paradise      b The road to recovery      c The honeymoon period

#### 3 Which stage are you or people you know going through at the moment?

### A CULTURE SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

Many people **would love** to leave their nine-to-five jobs behind and have a life-changing adventure overseas. They **imagine** lying under palm trees as the sun goes down. However, life overseas is not always easy, and many are not prepared for the shock of living in an alien culture.

#### STAGE 1: .....

At first, for those who actually **decide** to move abroad, life is an exciting adventure. With their new-found freedom, they **enjoy** exploring their new surroundings, and life seems like an extended holiday. They **don't mind** sampling the local cuisine and discovering other aspects of the local culture. They can even **afford** to practise their foreign-language skills without fear of making mistakes.

#### STAGE 2: .....

In many cases, when people **consider** moving to another country, they often **fail** to realize how different life overseas will be. As time goes by, they experience feelings of frustration when language and cultural misunderstandings become a daily headache. In this stage, many people **refuse** to accept the differences of their host country and some actually **avoid** spending time with local people in favour of mixing with others from their home country.

#### STAGE 3: .....

Gradually, over time, the visitor realizes they must accept the differences and not fight against them. This change in mentality **encourages** them to improve their language skills and slowly they **manage** to do the things we would do without thinking at home such as opening a bank account. This new-found confidence **enables** them to see a side of life which very few tourists are lucky enough to witness.

Culture shock is a real issue. The secret is to **stop** trying to change your host country; you will not succeed. If not, you **risk** losing your dream and having to return to the old life you wanted to leave behind.

#### 4 Look at the text again and focus on the verbs in red. Complete this table according to the pattern that follows each verb.

verb + <i>-ing</i>	verb + <i>to infinitive</i>	verb + object + <i>to infinitive</i>
imagine lying	would love to leave	encourages them to improve

#### 5 Find and correct the mistakes with verb patterns in these extracts from the text.

- Many people would love leaving their nine-to-five jobs behind ...
- They don't mind to sample the local cuisine ...
- ... slowly they manage doing the things we would do without thinking at home ...

#### 6 Complete these sentences with the correct verb pattern and your own ideas.

- If I had the money, I would consider ...
- I am planning ...
- Studying English has enabled ...



## Model essay: Advantages and disadvantages

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

*These days, more and more people are going to other countries for significant periods of time, either to find a job or to study. There are clearly many benefits to doing this, but people who live abroad can also face some difficulties.*

*Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living and working in a foreign country.*

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Skim the model essay below to find the main points, then complete this table about moving away.

advantages	examples	disadvantages	examples

Nowadays, taking a year out to live or study abroad is becoming increasingly popular. For many people, especially young adults, the chance to spend an extended period of time overseas is an attractive one. However, there are both pros and cons to deciding to do this. In this essay, I will discuss some of the reasons why moving abroad is so popular and some of the challenges to be overcome.

Let's begin by looking at the advantages of moving away. One of the main positives of heading overseas is that it broadens your horizons. What I mean by this is that you have the chance to meet people from different cultural backgrounds and learn to cope with foreign customs and food. This can make you more rounded as a person.

Secondly, moving abroad can lead to a better quality of life. Take British people for example. Thousands of people from the UK move to Spain and Australia every year. These countries have warmer climates and encourage a better work-life balance. In addition, by

living overseas, you can gain qualifications and language skills, which may improve promotion prospects on your return.

Turning to the other side of the argument, culture shock is a major problem. Many people who take a year out find it hard to cope with the language barrier, the food and general cultural differences. This often leads to homesickness and in some cases a sense of isolation.

Another issue is that it can be difficult to start a new life from scratch. In other words, when you move abroad, you have to make new friends and find your place in the community. This process takes time and can be especially challenging if there is also a language barrier to deal with.

All things considered, starting life in a foreign country is never easy. You need to weigh up the pros of the better lifestyle, weather and so on, and the cons of culture shock and language barrier. Personally, I believe the benefits in terms of personal growth eventually outweigh any negatives.

(344 words)