

# Table of Contents

I. Pre-writing.....	3
1. Definition and Characteristics .....	3
2. Essay Structure .....	3
3. Analyze a sample essay .....	4
4. Useful language (two-sided essays) .....	7
4.1. Introduction .....	7
4.2. Body paragraphs.....	7
4.3. Conclusion .....	8
5. Writing Practice .....	8
5.1. Analyze the task.....	9
5.2. Brainstorm ideas .....	9
II. While-writing .....	10
III. Post-writing .....	13
1. Peer editing .....	13
2. Further practice .....	14
ANSWER KEY .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>



## UNIT 4: OPINION ESSAYS (Agree/ Disagree)

### I. Pre-writing

#### 1. Definition and Characteristics

- An opinion essay is a formal piece of writing which requires your opinion on a topic. Your opinion should be stated clearly. Throughout the essay, you will give various arguments/reasons/viewpoints on the topic, and these will be supported by evidence and/or examples. You could also include an opposing viewpoint in a paragraph.

- The question for an IELTS opinion essay includes 2 parts:

- Part 1: a statement/ topic.
- Part 2: the question whether you agree or disagree with the statement.
  - What is your opinion?
  - Do you agree or disagree?
  - To what extent do you agree or disagree? (= How much do you agree or disagree?)

- Example: Many people say that eating at home is better for the individuals and the family than eating out in restaurants. (Part 1)

To what extent do you agree or disagree? (Part 2)

→ There are 3 ways to answer the question:

- I totally/ strongly/completely agree with the statement + reasons
- I totally/ strongly/ completely disagree with the statement + reasons
- I partly/ somewhat agree/ disagree with the statement + reasons

#### 2. Essay Structure (General Outline)

Depending on your opinion, whether you strongly agree/disagree (one-sided) or only partly agree/disagree (two-sided) with the statement, the essay structure will vary accordingly.

In this unit, we will focus on how to structure the essay using the **two-sided approach**, in which you **PARTLY** agree or disagree with the statement.

INTRODUCTION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic: Introduce the topic by paraphrasing the statement</li> <li>• Thesis statement: State your opinion about the given topic</li> </ul>	
BODY PARAGRAPH 1 The side that you don't support	BODY PARAGRAPH 2 The side that you support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Topic sentence: Briefly state which side you are discussing (disagree)</li> <li>- Reason 1 – Support this idea (example, explanation, result, etc.)</li> <li>- Reason 2 – Support this idea (example, explanation, result, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Topic sentence: Briefly state which side you are discussing (agree)</li> <li>- Reason 1 – Support this idea (example, explanation, result, etc.)</li> <li>- Reason 2 – Support this idea (example, explanation, result, etc.)</li> </ul>
CONCLUSION	
<p>Summarize the main points in the essay</p> <p>AND/ OR</p> <p>Restate the thesis statement/ Give your final opinion</p>	

### 3. Analyze a sample essay

#### Sample writing task 2 question:

**Some people say that city life has become more stressful and has no advantage. To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge.  
Write at least 250 words.

#### Task 1. Read the sample essay below and answer the following questions.

Many people argue that urban life causes more stress while offering little advantages for its citizens. In my opinion, I partially agree with this opinion for the following reasons.

To begin with, there are many reasons why living in big cities has its challenges and makes people suffer from a great deal of pressure, two of which are the high cost of living and the problems related to commuting. First, the bills, treatment, accommodation, and food that people in big cities have to pay are often more expensive than in other areas. As a result, people are often overworked and stressed from the financial pressure that they have to face in order to

afford a good life. Furthermore, commuting in many cities is an exhausting task filled with many urban problems such as traffic congestion, inadequate infrastructure, noise, air pollution, and so on. This can lead to a waste of people's valuable time and have a considerable impact on their mental health.

However, there are numerous advantages that should not be overlooked. First of all, a city provides better education and career prospects. Young people would thus have more options to choose from and have higher chances of getting the desired job with a good salary. This allows them to have better opportunities to not only enhance their knowledge but also to change their life. Another factor to consider is the ease of access to high-quality healthcare services in a city than in a remote area where individuals have to travel a lot to cure their illness. For example, in my district, there are more than 5 different hospitals with all the services that a patient might need.

In conclusion, I believe that even though living in big cities causes stress and anxiety, it has its benefits. It depends on people's preferences and lifestyles to decide whether the city is worth living in.

1. What is the main topic of this essay?

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2. What is the author's opinion about the statement? Underline the thesis statement of the essay.

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3. What are the two drawbacks of living in urban areas?

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4. What are the two benefits of living in urban areas?

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5. Find all the linking words used in the sample essay. (e.g. *to begin with*, ...)

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**Task 2. Below is an outline for the sample essay. Reread the essay and complete the outline.**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
Topic: _____	
Thesis statement: _____	
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH 1</b>  <b>Drawbacks of living in big cities</b>	<b>BODY PARAGRAPH 2</b>  <b>Benefits of living in big cities</b>
Drawback 1: _____ Supporting ideas: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____  Drawback 2: _____ Supporting ideas: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Benefit 1: _____ Supporting ideas: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____  Benefit 2: _____ Supporting ideas: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
Restate thesis statement/ Summarize main points + Your opinion: _____	


## 4. Useful language (two-sided essays)

### 4.1. Introduction

The introduction includes:

- **A background sentence: introduce the topic or paraphrase the question:**

- + It is a common belief that S + V.
- + Many people argue that S + V.
- + There is a growing concern that S + V.

- **A thesis statement: state your opinion (e.g. completely agree or partly agree)**

- + While S + V, I think / believe that S + V.
- + I think / I believe that S + V.
- + In my opinion / Personally / From my experience, S + V.
- + I somewhat/ partially agree with this opinion for several reasons.

\***Note:** DO NOT give or discuss any specific reasons in your introduction.

### 4.2. Body paragraphs

- **Topic sentences:**

- + The main reason why I do not completely believe that S + V is because S + V.
- + There are several/ many reasons why S + V.
- +
- + It is true/ reasonable that S + V to a certain extent.

- **Supporting sentences:**

Facts:	+ Research shows that S + V + Scientists have proved that S + V Example: Research shows that too much salt, which is often used as a common seasoning, can increase the risk of chronic conditions.
Explanations:	+ This is mainly because S + V + Due to / Because of + noun phrase, S + V.

	Example: This is because excessive intake of salt can increase the sodium levels in the blood, leading to high blood pressure.
Examples:	+ For example, S + V. + For instance, S + V. + One example of this is + Noun/ Noun phrase/ Noun clause/ Gerund
Consequences:	+ As a result / Therefore, S + V. + S + therefore/ thus + V. + This could cause / This could lead to + noun phrase. + This can have positive/negative effects/impacts on + noun phrase. + This can be harmful/detrimental to + noun phrase. + This allows + (someone) + to + verb. Example: High blood pressure makes the heart work harder. As a result, it can lead to diseases of the heart such as heart attack.

#### - Other transitions between sentences and paragraphs:

However/ Nevertheless/ In addition/ Furthermore, S + V.

Despite/ In spite of + Noun/ Noun phrase/ Gerund, S + V.

### 4.3. Conclusion

#### - Restate your opinion/position and the main points:

- + In conclusion, I somewhat believe that S + V.
- + In conclusion, while I support the view that S + V, I disagree that S + V.
- + In short/ In conclusion/ To sum up, I believe that even though/ although S + V, S + V.

#### - Give your final opinion (a recommendation, a prediction, or a call to action):

- + If S + V, S1 + V1.
- + [Governments/ The society/ Companies/ Individual] should S + V.

## 5. Writing Practice

### Writing task 2 question:

**Many people say that eating at home is better for the individuals and the family than eating out in restaurants.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

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



Write at least 250 words.

### 5.1. Analyze the task

- Every task contains a topic and a question. It is important that you fully address both the topic and the question.

**Many people say that eating at home is better for the individuals and the family than eating out in restaurants.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**



- To understand the task, you could simplify the questions into: “**Do you agree that + topic?**”.

Example: *Do you agree that eating at home is better for the individuals **and** the family than eating out?*

\* When there is a word “**and**” in the topic, you must write about both parts. In the sample topic above, you must address **BOTH individuals AND family**.

\* If the question is “**To what extent** do you agree or disagree”, you need to state whether you agree (or disagree) **AND how much** you agree (or disagree).

### 5.2. Brainstorm ideas

- To argue why you **PARTLY** agree/ disagree with the statement, you should think about 2 reasons for each side.

- You should NOT simply list the reasons. Instead, you should expand/ support the ideas with explanations and examples.

**Task 3. Now, brainstorm ideas for the writing task above. Complete the T-chart below.**

Topic: Eating at home is better for the individuals and the family than eating out.	
FOR (Agree)	AGAINST (Disagree)
- Supporting idea 1: _____	- Supporting idea 1: increase family-bonding time
- Details (Fact, Example, Explanation, etc): _____	- Details:
	+ Why/ How? => don't have to spend much time cooking and cleaning
	+ Example: no

<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Supporting idea 2:</b> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>- Details (Fact, Example, Explanation, etc):</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>+ Possible results: family members have more time to share their feelings/ problems =&gt; understand each other more</p> <p><b>- Supporting idea 2:</b> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Details (Fact, Example, Explanation, etc):</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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## II. While-writing

**Task 4. From the T-chart Task 3, complete the outline for the writing task.**

**Remember to use the language in 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.**

**Many people say that cooking and eating at home is better for the individual and the family than eating out in restaurants.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<p>Topic: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Thesis statement: _____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH 1</b>	<b>BODY PARAGRAPH 2</b>

<p>Topic sentence:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Supporting idea 1:</p> <hr/> <p>Supporting details (example, reason, consequence, fact, etc.):</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Supporting idea 2:</p> <hr/> <p>Supporting details (example, reason, consequence, fact, etc.):</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Topic sentence:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Supporting idea 1:</p> <hr/> <p>Supporting details (example, reason, consequence, fact, etc.):</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Supporting idea 2:</p> <hr/> <p>Supporting details (example, reason, consequence, fact, etc.):</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONCLUSION</b></p> <p>Restate thesis statement/ Summarize the main ideas + Your opinion:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

**Task 5. Write a complete essay based on your outline in Task 4.**

**Many people say that eating at home is better for the individuals and the family than eating out in restaurants.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

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

Write at least 250 words.

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### III. Post-writing

#### 1. Peer editing

**Work in pairs. Read your partner's essay. Then use the Checklist below to offer feedback that can help your partner improve his/ her writing.**

Content	Y/N	Comments/ Suggestions
<b>Task Response</b>		
Is the essay at least 250 words?		
Is the topic clearly identified in the introduction?		
Does the thesis statement clearly state the writer's opinion?		
Is each paragraph related to the topic?		
Does the conclusion summarize the main ideas/ restate the thesis statement, and give a final opinion?		
<b>Coherence &amp; Cohesion</b>		
Are there one introduction, at least two body paragraphs, and one conclusion in the essay?		
Is there a clear topic sentence in each paragraph?		
Are relevant examples and/or other supporting details (explanation, reasons, etc.) included?		
Are the sentences well linked together using appropriate cohesive devices?		
<b>Lexical Resource</b>		

Has the question been suitably paraphrased?		
Has consistent repetition of vocabulary been avoided?		
Has spelling and word-choice errors been checked?		
Is there sufficient used of academic vocabulary?		
Does the essay contain vocabulary specific to the topic?		
<b>Grammar Range and Accuracy</b>		
Has a range of simple, compound, and complex sentences been used?		
Have the verb tenses and subject-verb agreement been checked?		
Are most sentences error-free?		
Has correct punctuation been used?		
<b>Time management</b>		
Has the essay been written within 40 minutes?		

## 2. Further practice

**Choose one of the following topics and write a complete essay. Remember to give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge. Write at least 250 words.**

1. It is better for college students to live in schools than live at home with their parents. Do you agree or disagree?
2. Everyone should stay in school until 18 years old. To what extent do you agree or disagree?
3. Many people believe that everyone should follow a vegetarian diet because it would have a positive impact on our health and the environment. Do you agree or disagree?