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Writing

The basics

The Writing test lasts 60 minutes and is in two parts.

Task 1

Task 1 (min. 150 words) depends on which IELTS module you are taking.

- Academic: you will interpret and describe information in a chart, diagram, table or graph.
- General Training: you will write a letter in response to an everyday situation or problem, e.g. looking after someone's house while they are away on holiday.

Task 2

Task 2 is the same for both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. You will be asked to write a short essay (min. 250 words) in response to a point of view, a problem or an argument.

Preparation

In order to prepare effectively, you should first look at the marking criteria. This is what the examiner is looking for.

- ✓ Have you **fulfilled the requirements of the task?** Is your answer relevant, appropriate and accurate?
- ✓ Can you **develop an argument** and **support your ideas** with evidence?
- ✓ Do you **express your ideas clearly**, e.g. with good organisation and signpost words?
- ✓ Is your **vocabulary** appropriate, varied and accurate?
- ✓ Is your **grammar** varied and accurate?

Use these criteria to identify your weak areas. How do you do this? Find some essays you have written in the past. Read through each one five times — each time you read, focus on one of the marking criteria on the left. When you have finished you should have a clear idea of your strengths and weaknesses. Focus on improving your performance in your weak areas.

Four tips for your Writing test

- ✓ Do write in paragraphs. Focus on one idea in each paragraph and introduce it with a topic sentence. The rest of the paragraph should explain, expand on, support or illustrate the idea.
- ✓ Similarly, in Task 2, do make sure that you structure your essay with an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The introduction should not be too long, and the conclusion should be a summary of the key points and your final viewpoint.
- ✓ Don't simply copy words from the question paper. Use your own words to paraphrase the question, and make sure you demonstrate the breadth of your vocabulary.
- ✓ Don't use bullet points or note form: you need to write in complete sentences.

Why time matters

- 1 Remember that Task 2 is worth twice as much as Task 1, so you should spend 20 minutes on Task 1 and 40 minutes on Task 2. Be disciplined.
- 2 Divide your time between planning, writing and reviewing. With the clock ticking, it's tempting to start writing immediately, but without planning, you can't produce a well-structured answer. When you've finished you need time to count your words and to check spelling, grammar and punctuation. Proof reading your work is an easy and effective way of boosting your band score.