Topic 3 Children and families

About Topic 3

The **Children and families** topic includes child psychology and development, ways of bringing up children, family discipline, child care, preschool learning, parental roles, family structures and roles (for example nuclear or extended families), adolescence, teenagers and elderly family members.

Important: Please remember that the topics are used in different ways in the Writing and Speaking parts of the IELTS test.

In the Academic Writing test Task 2, you should present ideas or opinions about society in general, but not about your personal life. In the Speaking test, the examiner will always ask you **both** about society in general (in Speaking part 3) **and also** about your personal life, country and background (in Speaking parts 1 and 2.)

With controversial topics such as 'families' and 'health,' some candidates become confused about this difference, but it's absolutely essential to remember if you want to achieve a very high Band!

Topic 3 example Task

Some people believe that children should spend all of their free time with their families. Others believe that this is unnecessary or even negative. Discuss the possible arguments on both sides, and say which side you personally support.

Explanation of the Task

This is another Opinion>Discussion type Task. You should introduce the topic, present two or three ideas on each side of the discussion, and then give your opinion in the conclusion. Remember that these Opinion>Discussion Tasks might be expressed in different ways; look for the instruction key word 'discuss' and its synonyms such as 'debate,' 'consider' and 'review.'

Band 9 model essay

Nobody can deny that parental influence is important for children, at least in cases where children live with their parents, **foster parents** or **guardians**. However, it is by no means clear that children should spend time exclusively in the family, as we will see.

On the one hand, it may appear advisable for parents to act as **role models** and to establish **ground rules** for behaviour by spending as much time as possible with their children. This allows the youngsters to **absorb conventions** and **codes of conduct** which they can then follow themselves, hopefully leading to an absence of problems such as **bullying, truancy** and **delinquency** later on. Furthermore, being with the family should reduce the risk of children falling victim to crimes such as

abduction, or coming under the influence of negative **peer pressure.**

On the other hand, we have to ask whether this is a practical proposition. In a society where many families are **dual-income**, or where one parent's role as **breadwinner** means he/she is away from the family for long periods, it is inevitable that children cannot spend all of their time with the family. **Child-minding** and **after-school childcare** are often used in these cases, and if managed properly, these can be perfectly **viable** alternatives. Equally, it seems that children can in some cases learn a considerable amount from their **peers** in addition to adults, and allowing them to play without direct supervision may be a benefit.

To conclude, it appears that, while family time is essential for **bonding** and **absorbing patterns of behaviour**, there are definite advantages when children are outside the family too. This is provided that they are in a safe, well-behaved environment with peers who are themselves reasonably **well brought-up**.

(287 words)

Explanation of the topic vocabulary and examples in Speaking

foster parents = people who have children living in their existing family for a fixed period, with the original parents' agreement

Being a foster parent is a difficult and tiring role, I can imagine.

guardians = people who are legally appointed to protect a child's interests in the absence of parents

In some countries, the government appoints a guardian if the parents die or experience severe difficulties.

role models = people that children look to and respect as good examples

In some countries, the royal family are good role models for youngsters, although in other cases this is not the case.

ground rules = basic rules governing the way people can behave in a situation

During the school holidays, my parents had strict ground rules for what we could do outside.

conventions = traditions or social norms that most people follow

It's a convention for grandparents to live with their children in many countries.

codes of conduct = voluntary rules which people accept in a situation

The Boy Scouts have a firm code of conduct, which seems to be a positive influence.

bullying = when children attack and intimidate other children

Bullying could be reduced through better awareness and positive peer pressure in schools.

truancy = when a pupil leaves school without permission (verb = to play truant from school)

I must confess that at secondary school I sometimes played truant and went to the park with my friends.

delinquency = minor crime (often by young people)

Delinquency is a huge problem in urban areas, especially when policing is minimal.

abduction = the crime of taking or kidnapping people for a criminal reason

Child abduction is a great concern for many parents, especially in South America.

peer pressure = the pressure from people in the same group to act in a certain way

Many children start smoking due to peer pressure or bad role models.

dual-income = a family where both the father and mother work

In many countries, the dual-income family is the norm nowadays.

breadwinner = the person who earns all or most of the money in a family

In some families, the father is still the only breadwinner.

child-minding = caring informally (not in schools) for children when parents are busy or working

In some countries, the state subsidises the costs of child-minding.

after-school childcare = caring for children in a school setting, as above

Many families rely on after-school childcare because both parents work and commute.

viable = practical and possible to achieve

It is not really viable to expect all children to get maximum grades in exams.

peers = people in the same group or level as yourself

Many of my peers from school are now working for charities.

bonding = the development of close emotional connections between people

Festivals and parties are an ideal time for families to bond.

patterns of behaviour = ways of acting and doing things (either positive or negative)

Unfortunately, some children absorb dangerous patterns of behaviour when watching movies or playing computer games.

well brought-up (to bring up children = to raise and educate them in your own moral, behavioural or religious conventions)

I was brought up in a very religious family, and I seem to have absorbed their values.

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