* ***Families who send their children to private schools should not be required to pay taxes that support the state education system.***  
  ***To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?***
* 1,Some people believe that parents of children who attend private schools should not need to contribute to state schools through taxes. 2,Personally, I completely disagree with this view.
* 1,For a variety of reasons, it would be wrong to reduce taxes for families who pay for private education. 2,Firstly, it would be difficult to calculate the correct amount of tax reduction for these families, and staff would be required to manage this complex process.
* 3,Secondly, we all pay a certain amount of tax for public services that we may not use.
* 4,For example, most people are fortunate enough not to have to call the police or fire brigade at any time in their lives, but they would not expect a tax reduction for this.
* 5, Finally, if wealthy families were given a tax discount for sending their children to private schools, we might have a situation where poorer people pay higher taxes than the rich.
* 1,In my opinion, we should all be happy to pay our share of the money that supports public schools.
* 2, It is beneficial for all members of society to have a high quality education system with equal opportunities for all young people.
* 3,This will result in a well-educated workforce, and in turn a more productive and prosperous nation. 4,Parents of children in private schools may also see the advantages of this in their own lives.
* 5 For example, a company owner will need well qualified and competent staff, and a well-funded education system can provide such employees.
* 1,In conclusion, I do not believe that any financial concessions should be made for people who choose private education.
* (269 words, band 9)
* ***Happiness is considered very important in life.***  
  ***Why is it difficult to define?***  
  ***What factors are important in achieving happiness?***
* 1,It is no doubt true that the majority of people would like to be happy in their lives.
* 2, While the personal nature of happiness makes it difficult to describe, there do seem to be some common needs that we all share with regard to experiencing or achieving happiness.
* 1,Happiness is difficult to define because it means something different to each individual person.
* 2,Nobody can fully understand or experience another person’s feelings, and we all have our own particular passions from which we take pleasure.
* 3,Some people, for example, derive a sense of satisfaction from earning money or achieving success, whereas for others, health and family are much more important.
* 4,At the same time, a range of other feelings, from excitement to peacefulness, may be associated with the idea of happiness, and the same person may therefore feel happy in a variety of different ways.
* 1,Although it seems almost impossible to give a precise definition of happiness, most people would agree that there are some basic preconditions to achieving it.
* 2,Firstly, it is hard for a person to be happy if he or she does not have a safe place to live and enough food to eat.
* 3,Our basic survival needs must surely be met before we can lead a pleasant life.
* 4,Secondly, the greatest joy in life is usually found in shared experiences with family and friends, and it is rare to find a person who is content to live in complete isolation.
* 5,Other key factors could be individual freedom and a sense of purpose in life.
* 1,In conclusion, happiness is difficult to define because it is particular to each individual, but I believe that our basic needs for shelter, food and company need to be fulfilled before we can experience it.
* (292 words, band 9)
* ***When choosing a job, the salary is the most important consideration. To what extent do you agree or disagree?***
* Many people choose their jobs based on the size of the salary offered. Personally, I disagree with the idea that money is the key consideration when deciding on a career, because I believe that other factors are equally important.
* 1,On the one hand, I agree that money is necessary in order for people to meet their basic needs.
* 2,For example, we all need money to pay for housing, food, bills, health care, and education.
* 3,Most people consider it a priority to at least earn a salary that allows them to cover these needs and have a reasonable quality of life.
* 4,If people chose their jobs based on enjoyment or other non-financial factors, they might find it difficult to support themselves.
* 5,Artists and musicians, for instance, are known for choosing a career path that they love, but that does not always provide them with enough money to live comfortably and raise a family.
* 1,Nevertheless, I believe that other considerations are just as important as what we earn in our jobs.
* 2, Firstly, personal relationships and the atmosphere in a workplace are extremely important when choosing a job.
* 3,Having a good manager or friendly colleagues, for example, can make a huge difference to workers’ levels of happiness and general quality of life.
* 4,Secondly, many people’s feelings of job satisfaction come from their professional achievements, the skills they learn, and the position they reach, rather than the money they earn.
* 5 Finally, some people choose a career because they want to help others and contribute something positive to society.
* In conclusion, while salaries certainly affect people’s choice of profession, I do not believe that money outweighs all other motivators.
* ***Some people think that in the modern world we are more dependent on each other, while others think that people have become more independent.  Discuss both views and give your own opinion.***
* 1,People have different views about whether we are more or less dependent on others nowadays.
* 2 In my view, modern life forces us to be more independent than people were in the past.
* 1，There are two main reasons why it could be argued that we are more dependent on each other now.
* 2，Firstly, life is more complex and difficult, especially because the cost of living has increased so dramatically.
* 3，For example, young adults tend to rely on their parents for help when buying a house. Property prices are higher than ever, and without help it would be impossible for many people to pay a deposit and a mortgage.
* 4，Secondly, people seem to be more ambitious nowadays, and they want a better quality of life for their families.
* 5， This means that both parents usually need to work full-time, and they depend on support from grandparents and babysitters for child care.
* 1，However, I would agree with those who believe that people are more independent these days.
* 2,In most countries, families are becoming smaller and more dispersed, which means that people cannot count on relatives as much as they used to.
* 3, We also have more freedom to travel and live far away from our home towns. For example, many students choose to study abroad instead of going to their local university, and this experience makes them more independent as they learn to live alone.
* 4, Another factor in this growing independence is technology, which allows us to work alone and from any part of the world.
* 1,In conclusion, while there are some reasons to believe that people now depend on each other more, my own view is that we are more independent than ever.
* ***Foreign visitors should pay more than local visitors for cultural and historical attractions. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?***
* It is sometimes argued that tourists from overseas should be charged more than local residents to visit important sites and monuments. I completely disagree with this idea.
* 1，The argument in favour of higher prices for foreign tourists would be that cultural or historical attractions often depend on state subsidies to keep them going, which means that the resident population already pays money to these sites through the tax system.
* 2，However, I believe this to be a very shortsighted view.
* 3， Foreign tourists contribute to the economy of the host country with the money they spend on a wide range of goods and services, including food, souvenirs, accommodation and travel.
* 4， The governments and inhabitants of every country should be happy to subsidise important tourist sites and encourage people from the rest of the world to visit them.
* 1，If travellers realised that they would have to pay more to visit historical and cultural attractions in a particular nation, they would perhaps decide not to go to that country on holiday.
* 2， To take the UK as an example, the tourism industry and many related jobs rely on visitors coming to the country to see places like Windsor Castle or Saint Paul’s Cathedral.
* 3，These two sites charge the same price regardless of nationality, and this helps to promote the nation’s cultural heritage.
* 4， If overseas tourists stopped coming due to higher prices, there would be a risk of insufficient funding for the maintenance of these important buildings.
* In conclusion, I believe that every effort should be made to attract tourists from overseas, and it would be counterproductive to make them pay more than local residents.
* [**IELTS Writing Task 2: from plan to paragraph**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/11/ielts-writing-task-2-from-plan-to-paragraph.html)
* Let's plan and then write one main paragraph for the question below.
* ***Economic progress is often used to measure a country's success. However, some people believe that other factors are more important. What other factors should also be considered when measuring a country's success? Do you think one factor is more important than others?***
* **Here's a plan I wrote with my students:**
* Paragraph about other factors:  
  1) Education for development of the country, providing future workforce.
* 2) Good health system, living standards, life expectancy.
* 3) Personal freedom / rights / equality e.g. equal opportunities for both genders.
* **Here's our full paragraph using the plan above:**
* Standards of education, health and individual human rights should certainly be considered when measuring a country’s status.
* A good education system is vital for the development of any nation, with schools, colleges and universities bearing the responsibility for the quality of future generations of workers.
* Healthcare provision is also an indicator of the standard of living within a country, and this can be measured by looking at average life expectancy rates or availability of medical services.
* Finally, human rights and levels of equality could be taken into account. For example, a country in which women do not have the same opportunities as men might be considered less successful than a country with better gender equality.
* [**IELTS Writing Task 2: introduction and conclusion**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/10/ielts-writing-task-2-introduction-and-conclusion.html)
* ***Economic progress is often used to measure a country's success. However, some people believe that other factors are more important. What other factors should also be considered when measuring a country's success? Do you think one factor is more important than others?***
* **Introduction:** Introduce the topic and give a general answer to both questions.
* The relative success of different countries is usually defined in economic terms. There are several other factors, apart from the economy, that could be used to assess a country, and in my opinion education is the most important of all.
* **Conclusion:** Repeat / summarise your answer.
* In conclusion, nations can be assessed and compared in a variety of ways, but I would argue that the standard of a country's education system is the best indicator of its success.
* **ELTS Writing Task 2: 'money' topic**
* Here's a recent exam question on a topic related to [yesterday's lesson](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/10/ielts-listening-money-topic.html" \t "_self):
* ***Economic progress is often used to measure a country's success. However, some people believe that other factors are more important. What other factors should also be considered when measuring a country's success? Do you think one factor is more important than others?***
* This is what I call a "2 part question". Here's my 4-paragraph essay structure:
* Introduce the topic and give a general answer to both questions.
* Describe two or three other factors.
* Say which factor you think is more important.
* Conclude by repeating / summarising your views.
* [**IELTS Writing Task 2: argument or discussion?**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/10/ielts-writing-task-2-argument-or-discussion.html)
* Many people ask me about the difference between an 'argument' (opinion) essay and a 'discussion' essay. Here's an easy way to think about the difference:
* When you argue, you are trying to persuade the other person to agree with your point of view. You might even get angry!
* When you discuss, you consider different points of view, and nobody gets angry.
* The question should make it very clear what it wants you to do. If it asks you to "discuss", you should write about both sides or two views.
* If the question asks whether you "agree or disagree", it's asking for ***your*** view. For this type of question, give your opinion in the introduction and support it in the rest of the essay. Develop an argument that persuades the reader to agree with you. Note: you can have a strong view or a balanced view - it's your choice.
* [**IELTS Writing Task 2: children's upbringing**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/09/ielts-writing-task-2-childrens-upbringing.html)
* ***Children who are brought up in families that do not have large amounts of money are better prepared to deal with the problems of adult life than children brought up by wealthy parents. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?***
* Here are two quick tasks related to the question above.
* **1) Vocabulary: fill the gaps in the following paragraph:**
* On the one hand, I agree that some children from less wealthy \_backgrounds\_\_\_\_ might be in a better position to \_\_face\_\_\_ adult life. Children whose parents have less money learn to fight, struggle and solve problems on a daily \_\_basis\_\_\_.
* They are forced to rely on \_themselves\_\_\_\_ because they have less financial help from parents and cannot get what they want as soon as they want it.
* For example, poorer children may have to wait until a birthday to receive a toy or game that they have asked for, and this encourages them to learn patience.
* These children will also learn the importance of managing money and the value of hard \_\_work\_\_\_, which will be vital \_\_\_skills\_\_ in later life.
* **2) Opinions: think of some ideas to support the opposite point of view.**
* ***Some people think that governments should give financial support to creative artists such as painters and musicians. Others believe that creative artists should be funded by alternative sources. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.***
* People have different views about the funding of creative artists. While some people disagree with the idea of government support for artists, I believe that money for art projects should come from both governments and other sources.
* 1，Some art projects definitely require help from the state.
* 2In the UK, there are many works of art in public spaces, such as streets or squares in city centres. 3In Liverpool, for example, there are several new statues and sculptures in the docks area of the city, which has been redeveloped recently.
* 4These artworks represent culture, heritage and history. They serve to educate people about the city, and act as landmarks or talking points for visitors and tourists.
* 5Governments and local councils should pay creative artists to produce this kind of art, because without their funding our cities would be much less interesting and attractive.
* *1On the other hand, I can understand the view taken by many people that artists should not expect the state to fund their work.*
* *2 Most musicians and the majority of painters make a living by performing or selling their artistic creations to fans or collectors; they would not expect to receive any help from their governments.*
* *3 Industry sponsorships can be another useful source of revenue for creative artists.*
* *4 For example, media companies like the mobile giant Apple are often willing to pay huge fees to inspirational designers who work on their advertising campaigns, product packaging, and even the appearance of their electronic devices.*
* *5 Finally, some artists may be lucky enough to receive donations from wealthy individuals.*
* In conclusion, there are good reasons why artists should rely on alternative sources of financial support, but in my opinion government help is sometimes necessary.
* Compare the following questions. Both ask you about the same topic, but the requirements of each question are different. Think about how you would organise your answer for each one.
* **Discussion question**  
  Some people think that governments should give financial support to creative artists such as painters and musicians. Others believe that creative artists should be funded by alternative sources. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.
* **Opinion question**  
  Some people believe that governments should stop spending money on the arts. Instead, they should use this money to improve vital services such as schools and hospitals. To what extent do you agree or disagree?
* The [essay](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/06/ielts-writing-task-2-animal-testing-essay.html" \t "_self) I wrote on Wednesday was full of good words and phrases. Can you remember the missing words in the phrases below?
* 1. medicines are \_\_\_\_\_\_ tested on animals  
  2. cleared for \_\_\_\_\_\_ use  
  3. a limited \_\_\_\_\_\_ of animal experimentation  
  4. clear \_\_\_\_\_\_ arguments  
  5. a common \_\_\_\_\_\_ of this practice  
  6. the \_\_\_\_\_\_ of a drug can be measured  
  7. subject animals to \_\_\_\_\_\_  
  8. all creatures should be \_\_\_\_\_\_  
  9. the benefits do not \_\_\_\_\_\_ the suffering  
  10. alternative \_\_\_\_\_\_ of research  
  11. suffering on the \_\_\_\_\_\_ of mice and rats  
  12. may be a necessary \_\_\_\_\_\_
* ***Nowadays animal experiments are widely used to develop new medicines and to test the safety of other products. Some people argue that these experiments should be banned because it is morally wrong to cause animals to suffer, while others are in favour of them because of their benefits to humanity.***  
  ***Discuss both views and give your own opinion.***
* 1It is true that medicines and other products are routinely tested on animals before they are cleared for human use. 2While I tend towards the viewpoint that animal testing is morally wrong, I would have to support a limited amount of animal experimentation for the development of medicines.
* 1On the one hand, there are clear ethical arguments against animal experimentation.
* 2To use a common example of this practice, laboratory mice may be given an illness so that the effectiveness of a new drug can be measured.
* 3 Opponents of such research argue that humans have no right to subject animals to this kind of trauma, and that the lives of all creatures should be respected.
* 4,They believe that the benefits to humans do not justify the suffering caused, and that scientists should use alternative methods of research.
* 1,On the other hand, reliable alternatives to animal experimentation may not always be available. 2,Supporters of the use of animals in medical research believe that a certain amount of suffering on the part of mice or rats can be justified if human lives are saved.
* 3,They argue that opponents of such research might feel differently if a member of their own families needed a medical treatment that had been developed through the use of animal experimentation.
* 4 Personally, I agree with the banning of animal testing for non-medical products, but I feel that it may be a necessary evil where new drugs and medical procedures are concerned.
* In conclusion, it seems to me that it would be wrong to ban testing on animals for vital medical research until equally effective alternatives have been developed.
* (270 words, band 9)
* Task 2 questions often ask you to ***Discuss both views and give your own opinion***. Here's how I structure a 4-paragraph essay for this kind of question:
* 1. Introduction (2 sentences):
* First introduce the topic. I often begin with the phrase "People have different views about...".
* In the second sentence, mention both views ***and*** your own opinion. I often use the word "although" in this sentence e.g. Although there are good arguments in favour of..., I personally believe that...
* 2. The first view  
  3. The second view (I make it clear that I agree with this view)  
  4. Conclusion: summarise both views and your own opinion
* Please share any 'discuss both views' questions that you find difficult in the comments area below. I'll choose one question to look at next week.
* **IELTS Writing Task 2: 'language learning' topic**
* My students and I worked on this question from Cambridge IELTS 9:
* ***Some experts believe that it is better for children to begin learning a foreign language at primary school rather than secondary school. Do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?***
* Here's our plan for a 4-paragraph essay:
* Introduction: Topic = best age to learn a foreign language. Our opinion = better to learn at primary school age.
* Disadvantages of learning languages at primary age: other subjects are more important at that age (maths, mother tongue language, science), learning a new language is confusing and wastes time, could delay development of child's first language.
* Advantages of learning languages at primary age: young children learn faster, they are less self-conscious or shy, they pick up the pronunciation better, they enjoy copying and learning through games, nowadays languages are just as important as maths etc.
* Conclusion: repeat / summarise our answer.
* The plan took us 10 minutes to write. With a plan like this, it should be easy to write a good essay in 30 minutes.
* ***Which words or phrases in the following paragraph might be considered 'band 7 or higher'?***
* 1，It is true that there are some disadvantages to learning a foreign language at primary school age.
* 2，The main problem is that young children need to study other subjects which can be considered as more important than a second language.
* 1，The core subjects in most primary schools are the mother tongue language, mathematics and science, and it can be argued that lessons in a new language take valuable study time away from these key disciplines, as well as causing confusion in the young learners. 2In particular, some people might worry that lessons in the new language could delay the development of a child’s first language.
* Here are the words/phrases that I think would impress the examiner.
* TOPIC VOCABULARY:
* - at primary school age  
  - core subjects  
  - mother tongue language  
  - take valuable study time away from  
  - key disciplines  
  - causing confusion in the young learners  
  - delay the development of a child’s first language
* 'ORGANISING' VOCABULARY:
* - which can be considered as  
  - it can be argued that  
  - In particular, some people might worry that
* Do the following questions ask for your opinion or not?
* To what extent do you agree or disagree?
* Discuss the advantages and disadvantages.
* Discuss both views and give your opinion.
* Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?
* Is this a positive or negative development?
* What are the benefits and drawbacks?
* ***Answers:***  
  - Numbers 2 and 6 are discussion questions. Discuss both sides of the issue, but don't give an opinion about which side you agree with.  
  - Numbers 1 and 5 are opinion questions. Give your opinion and support it. If you have a strong opinion, you don't need to mention the other side of the argument.  
  - Numbers 3 and 4 can be called discussion + opinion questions. Discuss both sides and make your opinion clear too.
* ***Successful sports professionals can earn a great deal more money than people in other important professions. Some people think this is fully justified while others think it is unfair. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.***
* *We spent 10 minutes planning, then we wrote half of the essay together:*
* It is true that the top sports people earn incredibly high salaries. Although reasons can be given to justify this, I personally believe that sports stars should be paid much less.
* There are several reasons why some people support high incomes in sport.
* Firstly, people who reach the highest levels in any sport must be uniquely talented.
* For example, it is rare to find someone with the football skills of Messi or Ronaldo, and it can be argued that these players deserve salaries that reflect their abilities.
* Secondly, even the most talented sports professionals must undergo many years of training to develop the skills and fitness required, and this takes great commitment, dedication and passion.
* Finally, sports salaries are only high because audiences and fans are willing to pay to watch their favourite stars.
* ***Marriages are bigger and more expensive nowadays than in the past. Why is this the case? Is it a positive or negative development?***
* First, we can introduce the topic by paraphrasing the question statement:
* *It is true that weddings have become more costly and extravagant in recent years.*
* Second, I need a short, simple answer to both parts of the question:
* *There are several reasons for this, and in my view it is a negative trend.*
* If I put the two sentences together, I have a really succinct\* introduction:
* ***It is true that weddings have become more costly and extravagant in recent years. There are several reasons for this, and in my view it is a negative trend.***
* \*(succinct: clear, precise expression in few words)
* **IELTS Writing Task 2: the 10-minute plan**
* If you are struggling to improve your score for writing task 2, the solution might be to spend more time planning before you start writing.
* I asked the students on my most recent [one-day course](http://ielts-simon.com/manchester/" \t "_self) to spend 10 minutes planning a question about whether the only purpose of prisons is to punish people. Here are the ideas that my students had:
* **Paragraph 2: prisons do punish offenders**  
  Punishment makes offenders think, reflect, feel sorry, understand the consequences (that we have choices about the actions we take), suffering, revenge / justice for victims, debt to society, taking away freedom and privileges, miss family, deter people from committing crimes in future - fear of prison
* **Paragraph 3: other purposes of prisons**  
  Reflection time, rehabilitation - help the prisoner to prepare for normal life: new skills, education, courses, qualifications, treatment - reform, reeducate, find employment, re-enter society - address the root causes of crime
* With a plan like this, you should find it easier to write a great essay.
* **IELTS Writing Task 2: band 9 paragraph**
* My students and I prepared an essay about the following question:
* ***Some people prefer to spend their lives doing the same things and avoiding change. Others, however, think that change is always a good thing. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.***
* Here's one of the main body paragraphs:
* There are good reasons why some people feel the need to make significant changes to their lives from time to time.
* Firstly, any new situation that a person encounters can be an opportunity to learn and grow as a person. A new job, for instance, might present challenges that push the person to adapt, acquire new knowledge, or add to their skill set.
* Secondly, a change can represent a break with the past and an old routine which has become boring and predictable.
* Finally, as well as making life more fun and interesting, new experiences can be good for our physical and mental health.
* ***Task:***  
  Analyse this paragraph carefully. What can you learn from it in terms of structure, ideas, vocabulary and grammar?
* The paragraph I wrote for [last week's lesson](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/03/ielts-writing-task-2-band-9-paragraph.html" \t "_self) (repeated below) is structured in the following way:
* 1. Topic sentence  
  2. Firstly  
  3. Example  
  4. Secondly  
  5. Finally
* I think this is a good way to organise a paragraph. However, it's best not to use the same structure twice in one essay. Compare the two paragraphs below. How did I structure the second one to avoid repeating "Firstly, Secondly, Finally"?
* First main paragraph  
  There are good reasons why some people feel the need to make significant changes to their lives from time to time. ***Firstly***, any new situation that a person encounters can be an opportunity to learn and grow as a person. A new job, for instance, might present challenges that push the person to adapt, acquire new knowledge, or add to his or her skill set. ***Secondly***, a change can represent a break with the past and an old routine which has become boring and predictable.***Finally***, as well as making life more fun and interesting, new experiences can be good for our physical and mental health.
* Second main paragraph  
  On the other hand, it is understandable why people might avoid change.
* Whenever people are forced to change their lifestyles, jobs or even to move house, they are likely to experience stress and worry as they try to adapt to the new situation.
* By contrast, we feel comfortable and confident when we stay with what we know.
* The decision to persist with a course of action or stick to one chosen path often leads to greater success in life.
* For example, by staying in the same job for many years, a person can become an expert in his or her field, which will lead to better opportunities for promotions and career progression.
* **IELTS Writing Task 2: introduction technique**
* As I've said before, task 2 introductions should be short and direct. You only need to write two sentences in order to do two things:
* Introduce the topic.
* Respond to the question, making your position clear.
* **Take this question from last week's lesson:**
* More houses are needed in many countries to cope with increasing populations. Would it be better to build houses in existing towns and cities, or to develop new towns in rural areas?
* **Here's my 2-sentence introduction:**
* It is true that the populations of many countries are growing, and that new housing is therefore needed. In my opinion, it would be better to increase the provision of housing by creating new towns, rather than by further developing existing towns and cities.
* **IELTS Writing: 5 sentence paragraphs**
* When writing main body paragraphs for IELTS writing task 2, try to aim for five sentences. For example:
* Topic sentence (e.g. There are several reasons why I believe...)
* First reason
* Example
* Second reason
* Third reason
* Another example:
* Topic sentence (e.g. Many people believe that...)
* Explain why
* Explain in more detail
* Example
* Explain why they disagree with the opposite view
* Before you start writing it's a good idea to make some notes.
* Try to organise your notes according to this 5-sentence paragraph structure.
* ***in the developed world, average life expectancy is increasing. What problems will this cause for individuals and society? Suggest some measures that could be taken to reduce the impact of ageing populations.***
* It is true that people in industrialised nations can expect to live longer than ever before. Although there will undoubtedly be some negative consequences of this trend, societies can take steps to mitigate these potential problems.
* As people live longer and the populations of developed countries grow older, several related problems can be anticipated.
* The main issue is that there will obviously be more people of retirement age who will be eligible to receive a pension.
* The proportion of younger, working adults will be smaller, and governments will therefore receive less money in taxes in relation to the size of the population.
* In other words, an ageing population will mean a greater tax burden for working adults.
* Further pressures will include a rise in the demand for healthcare, and the fact young adults will increasingly have to look after their elderly relatives.
* There are several actions that governments could take to solve the problems described above.
* Firstly, a simple solution would be to increase the retirement age for working adults, perhaps from 65 to 70.
* Nowadays, people of this age tend to be healthy enough to continue a productive working life.
* A second measure would be for governments to encourage immigration in order to increase the number of working adults who pay taxes.
* Finally, money from national budgets will need to be taken from other areas and spent on vital healthcare, accommodation and transport facilities for the rising numbers of older citizens.
* In conclusion, various measures can be taken to tackle the problems that are certain to arise as the populations of countries grow older.
* ***Some people regard video games as harmless fun, or even as a useful educational tool. Others, however, believe that videos games are having an adverse effect on the people who play them. In your opinion, do the drawbacks of video games outweigh the benefits?***
* Many people, and children in particular, enjoy playing computer games. While I accept that these games can sometimes have a positive effect on the user, I believe that they are more likely to have a harmful impact.
* On the one hand, video games can be both entertaining and educational.
* Users, or gamers, are transported into virtual worlds which are often more exciting and engaging than real-life pastimes.
* From an educational perspective, these games encourage imagination and creativity, as well as concentration, logical thinking and problem solving, all of which are useful skills outside the gaming context.
* Furthermore, it has been shown that computer simulation games can improve users’ motor skills and help to prepare them for real-world tasks, such as flying a plane.
* However, I would argue that these benefits are outweighed by the drawbacks.
* Gaming can be highly addictive because users are constantly given scores, new targets and frequent rewards to keep them playing.
* Many children now spend hours each day trying to progress through the levels of a game or to get a higher score than their friends.
* This type of addiction can have effects ranging from lack of sleep to problems at school, when homework is sacrificed for a few more hours on the computer or console.
* The rise in obesity in recent years has also been linked in part to the sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise that often accompany gaming addiction.
* In conclusion, it seems to me that the potential dangers of video games are more significant than the possible benefits.
* (258 words, band 9)
* [**IELTS Writing Task 2: 'capital punishment' topic**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/01/ielts-writing-task-2-capital-punishment-topic.html)
* Here are some ideas from my [ebook](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/ielts-ebook.html" \t "_self) about the topic of capital punishment. Remember that you won't be able to write a good essay unless you have good ideas. Also, you should always try to prepare both sides of the argument.
* **Arguments for 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.
* **Arguments 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.
* [**IELTS Writing Task 2: public/private healthcare**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2010/06/ielts-writing-task-2-publicprivate-healthcare.html)
* A recent IELTS Writing Task 2 question was about the advantages and disadvantages of private healthcare. Here are some ideas from my [ebook](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/ielts-ebook.html#tp):
* **State Health Systems: Advantages**
* Good healthcare should be available to everyone for free. 经济社会
* State healthcare is paid by the government using money from taxes. 政府
* Everyone has access to the same quality of care and treatment. 社会
* Private healthcare is unfair because only wealthy people can afford it. 经济
* The National Health Service in the UK provides free healthcare for every resident. (use this as an example)
* **Private Healthcare: Advantages**
* State hospitals are often very large and difficult to run.
* Private hospitals have shorter waiting lists for operations and appointments. 社会
* Patients can benefit from faster treatment. 社会
* Many people prefer to pay for a more personal service. 经济
* Patients have their own room and more comfortable facilities.
* ***Note:***You can use the advantages of state healthcare when discussing the disadvantages of private healthcare.
* ***There are many different types of music in the world today. Why do we need music? Is the traditional music of a country more important than the international music that is heard everywhere nowadays?***
* It is true that a rich variety of musical styles can be found around the world. Music is a vital part of all human cultures for a range of reasons, and I would argue that traditional music is more important than modern, international music.
* Music is something that accompanies all of us throughout our lives. As children, we are taught songs by our parents and teachers as a means of learning language, or simply as a form of enjoyment. Children delight in singing with others, and it would appear that the act of singing in a group creates a connection between participants, regardless of their age. Later in life, people’s musical preferences develop, and we come to see our favourite songs as part of our life stories. Music both expresses and arouses emotions in a way that words alone cannot. In short, it is difficult to imagine life without it.
* In my opinion, traditional music should be valued over the international music that has become so popular. International pop music is often catchy and fun, but it is essentially a commercial product that is marketed and sold by business people. Traditional music, by contrast, expresses the culture, customs and history of a country. Traditional styles, such as ...(example)..., connect us to the past and form part of our cultural identity. It would be a real pity if pop music became so predominant that these national styles disappeared.
* In conclusion, music is a necessary part of human existence, and I believe that traditional music should be given more importance than international music.
* (261 words, band 9)
* Hi Simon,
* The whole question is below:
* To some people history studying has little value in the modern world. Why do you think it is important to do so? What will be the effect if children are not taught history?
* Thanks,  
  Tim
* **Posted by: Tim |**[**Wednesday, June 29, 2011 at 19:19**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2011/06/ielts-advice-less-common-vocabulary.html?cid=6a0120a5bb05d8970c014e897a1ce5970d#comment-6a0120a5bb05d8970c014e897a1ce5970d)
* Thank you. Dave.
* **Posted by: Tim |**[**Wednesday, June 29, 2011 at 19:51**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2011/06/ielts-advice-less-common-vocabulary.html?cid=6a0120a5bb05d8970c01538f86e907970b#comment-6a0120a5bb05d8970c01538f86e907970b)
* Why do you think it is important to do so?  
  Know the past - where you come from, and where your country is today. This could be about wars or colonization (positive or negative effects)
* What will be the effect if children are not taught history?  
  They don't know the past  
  Could write about globalisation - loss of traditions or culture.
* This question has variations on the above ideas (globalisation, traditions, culture).
* **Posted by: DaveVN |**[**Wednesday, June 29, 2011 at 19:55**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2011/06/ielts-advice-less-common-vocabulary.html?cid=6a0120a5bb05d8970c014e897a44f9970d#comment-6a0120a5bb05d8970c014e897a44f9970d)
* HI Simon  
  thank u for this list  
  however i do not understand the meaning of all them. Can you explain them? thank you so much!
* **Posted by: chi |**[**Thursday, June 30, 2011 at 12:45**](http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2011/06/ielts-advice-less-common-vocabulary.html?cid=6a0120a5bb05d8970c0154335e4227970c#comment-6a0120a5bb05d8970c0154335e4227970c)
* I agree again Dave.
* It's often easier to give a one-sided answer to agree/disagree questions. I've put a few essays here on the site that develop a one-sided argument. This is my normal structure:
* 1) Introduction: I completely agree (or disagree)  
  2) 1st reason  
  3) 2nd reason  
  4) Conclusion - summarise/repeat
* ...
* Hi Tim,
* It's not a problem/solution question, it's a "2 part question". Just write one main paragraph answering each of the 2 questions (Why..? What..?).
* See Dave's comment above for some ideas.
* Last week I wrote a plan for the question below. Now you can read my full essay.
* We cannot help everyone in the world that needs help, so we should only be concerned with our own communities and countries.  
  To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?
* Some people believe that we should not help people in other countries as long as there are problems in our own society. I disagree with this view because I believe that we should try to help as many people as possible.
* On the one hand, I accept that it is important to help our neighbours and fellow citizens. In most communities there are people who are impoverished or disadvantaged in some way. It is possible to find homeless people, for example, in even the wealthiest of cities, and for those who are concerned about this problem, there are usually opportunities to volunteer time or give money to support these people. In the UK, people can help in a variety of ways, from donating clothing to serving free food in a soup kitchen. As the problems are on our doorstep, and there are obvious ways to help, I can understand why some people feel that we should prioritise local charity.
* At the same time, I believe that we have an obligation to help those who live beyond our national borders. In some countries the problems that people face are much more serious than those in our own communities, and it is often even easier to help. For example, when children are dying from curable diseases in African countries, governments and individuals in richer countries can save lives simply by paying for vaccines that already exist. A small donation to an international charity might have a much greater impact than helping in our local area.
* In conclusion, it is true that we cannot help everyone, but in my opinion national boundaries should not stop us from helping those who are in need.
* (280 words, band 9)
* Posted by Simon in IELTS Writing Task 2 | Permalink | Comments (38)