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Test format in detail

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IELTS General Training Writing description

Paper format	There are two Writing tasks to complete.
Timing	60 minutes
No. of questions	2

	In Task 2, test takers write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem.
Answering	Answers must be written in full in the answer booklet. Notes or bullet points in whole or in part will not be seen by the examiner.

IELTS General Training Writing in detail

A detailed look at the paper with links to related resources.

Task 1

Task type and format	<p>In Writing Task 1, test takers are presented with a situation and required to write a person of an informal, semi-formal or formal letter of at least 150 words in the answer booklet provided. They are asked to write about common, everyday ones such as: writing to a college about problems with accommodation, writing to a new employer about time management having, writing to a local newspaper about a plan to develop a local airport, writing to a relative about problems with the heating system in their house.</p> <p>Test takers are told what kind of information (in the form of three bullet points) they must include in their response. They may be required to request or give information and/or explain a situation. They need to do some of the following: ask for and/or provide general factual information, express likes or dislikes, express opinions or complaints, make requests or make suggestions/recommendations.</p>
	The style of writing that test takers use depends who they are asked to write to (i.e. the audience they are supposed to know them). They need to write in a style that is appropriate for their purpose and help them to achieve their purpose for writing, e.g. writing to a friend (informal) or writing to a formal or formal). Test takers do not need to include any addresses at the head of their letter.
	Test takers should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task. They are asked to write a minimum of 150 words. They will be penalized if their answer is too short. While test takers will not be penalized for writing more than 200 words, they should remember that a longer Task 1 answer may mean that they have less time available for Task 2, which contributes twice as much to the Writing band score.
	Test takers should also note that they will be penalized for irrelevance, if the response is not relevant to the question. They will be penalized for not writing full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form, etc.). They will also be severely penalized for plagiarism (i.e. copying from another source).

No. of questions	1
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Task 2

Task type and format	In Writing Task 2, test takers write a semi-formal/neutral discursive essay of at least 250 words on a book provided. The task instructions give information about a point of view, argument or problem. They tell test takers what they need to do. They may be asked to discuss this, which may involve providing general factual information, outlining and/or presenting ideas, justifying an opinion, evaluating evidence and ideas. Topics are of general interest, such as: whether children's leisure activities should be encouraged or discouraged; whether people's living standards are not so close as they used to be and how they could be brought closer; how environmental problems can best be solved; who should pay for the care of old people; whether smoking should be banned in public places; and so on.
	Test takers should make sure that they complete the task carefully and provide a full and clear answer. They should organize their ideas clearly and make sure to support their argument with relevant evidence (including from their own experience where relevant) or evidence. For this task, test takers will receive twice as many marks as for Task 1. Therefore, test takers who spend too much time on this task will greatly reduce their chance of achieving a good score. Test takers are asked to write at least 250 words and will be penalized if their answer is too short or if they spend no more than 40 minutes on this task. Test takers should also note that they will be penalized for irrelevance if the response is off topic or if it does not contain full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form, etc.). They will also be severely penalized for plagiarism (i.e. copying from another source).
	This task assesses the ability to follow English discursive writing conventions (i.e. what or what not to include in a response, what style to use, how to start and finish discursive writing, how to paragraph), to organize information coherently and cohesively and to use language accurately and appropriately.
No. of questions	1

Writing responses are assessed by certificated IELTS examiners. All IELTS examiners hold relevant teaching qualifications and are recruited as examiners by the test centers and approved by the British Council or IDP: IELTS Australia.

Each task is assessed independently. The assessment of Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1. Scores are given in whole and half bands. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe written responses in terms of IELTS bands. They are available on the [How IELTS is scored](#) page. The descriptors apply to both the Academic and General Training versions and are based on the following criteria.

Task 1 responses are assessed on:

- Task achievement
- Coherence and cohesion
- Lexical resource
- Grammatical range and accuracy.

Task 2 responses are assessed on:

- Task response
- Coherence and cohesion
- Lexical resource
- Grammatical range and accuracy.

Performance descriptors

Task 1

Task achievement

This assesses how appropriately, accurately and relevantly the response fulfils the requirements set out in the task. General Training Writing Task 1 is a writing task with a largely predictable output. It requires the test taker to respond to a situation, giving information about themselves and their family, and to express an opinion. The test taker should cover a minimum of 150 words.

Coherence and cohesion

This assesses the overall clarity and fluency of the message: how the response organizes and links information using language. Coherence refers to the linking of ideas through logical sequencing. Cohesion refers to the variety of cohesive devices (for example, logical connectors, pronouns and conjunctions) to assist in making the referential relationships between and within sentences clear.

Lexical resource

This refers to the range of vocabulary the test takers have used and the accuracy and appropriacy of use in the task.

task 2**Task response**

In both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training versions, Task 2 requires test takers to formulate an answer in relation to a question or statement. Ideas should be supported by evidence, and examples may be drawn from own experience. Responses must be at least 250 words in length. Scripts under the required minimum will be penalised.

The other three assessment criteria (Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy) are the same for Task 1 and Task 2.

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