

# **Dominic Cole's IELTS Blog**

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**Some people prefer to live in a house, while others think that there are more advantages living in an apartment.**

**Are there more advantages than disadvantages to living in a house rather than in an apartment?**

Many people nowadays face a difficult decision when they buy their own home. The question is whether they should buy a house or an apartment. There would seem to be clear benefits and drawbacks to both options.

Perhaps the major advantage of living in a house is the issue of privacy. Typically, there is more opportunity for peace and quiet, if you live in a house. This is particularly the case if it is a detached house. Other significant advantages are that houses are generally more spacious and on the whole have gardens. This is especially important if there is a family so that the children can have a safe environment to play in. If, however, you live in a tower block, then the children may have to play outside on the pavement.

There are, of course, negative aspects to living in houses. The greatest of these is that they tend to be more expensive to purchase and to maintain. Indeed, a large majority of people choose to live in apartments because they cannot afford the mortgage to buy a house. Another possible problem is that there are fewer houses in cities than the countryside. So if you like urban life, it may be preferable to live in an apartment. A second reason to avoid living in a house is that there is a greater sense of community to life in an apartment.

My conclusion would be that this is a well-balanced issue. There are probably an equal number of pros and cons to making either choice. Ultimately, whether you decide to live in a cottage in the countryside or a duplex in the city depends on your own personality, family and financial circumstances.

(285 words)

**Unemployment is one of the most serious problems facing developed nations today. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of reducing the working week to thirty five hours?**

It is unquestionable that rising unemployment is one of the most pressing issues in the industrial world. One solution that has been put forward is to cut the working week to a maximum of 35 hours. However, this solution is somewhat controversial as it has both positive and negative effects.

It is fairly easy to understand the reasons why this proposal has been made. The reasoning is that if workers are not allowed to work for more than 35 hours weekly, then employers will be forced to engage more staff. There would be at least two advantages to this. Not only would unemployment be reduced, but the working conditions of employees on very long shifts would also be significantly improved. For example, a factory employing 300 manual workers doing 10 hours a day might employ 450 workers.

There is also, however, a strong argument not to implement this proposal. This argument is based on economic competitiveness. If a company was forced to employ more workers to produce the same amount of goods, then its wage bill would rise and its products might become more expensive and less competitive compared to companies with longer working weeks. In this case, it is possible that the company either might become insolvent or it would have to make some employees redundant. As a result, the intended benefit to the personnel would not happen.

In summary, we can see that this is clearly a complex issue as there are significant advantages and disadvantages to the proposal. My own personal view is that it would be better not to introduce the shortened working week because it works only in theory and not in practice.

(278 words)

**Everyone should stay in school until the age of eighteen. To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

It is often said that if you want to succeed in life, you need a proper education. I would agree with this, but it is debatable whether a proper education means having to stay in school until you are 18.

Perhaps the strongest reason not leaving school early is that it prepares you for your working career. If you leave school early with only a basic education, you are unlikely to be able to find any skilled work. Indeed, the education you receive between the ages of 16 and 18 is crucial for anyone who does not want a lifetime of unskilled work in a factory.

Another compelling reason for remaining in school until 18 is that school provides moral and social education too. This is particularly important for people between 16 and 18 who have many temptations and benefit from the organised framework that school provides. Young people who stay in school until the age of 18 tend to be more responsible and help build a stronger society.

There are, however, equally strong arguments against making school compulsory until the age of 18. One such argument is that not everyone is academic and that some people benefit more from vocational training. For instance, someone who wants to become a car mechanic may find better training and more satisfaction in an apprentice scheme. Another related argument is that, in today's world, young people are maturing ever more quickly and are able to make their own life decisions by the age of 16.

To my mind, everyone should be encouraged to stay in school until 18. However, I believe it would be a mistake to make this compulsory.

(277 words)

**The threat of nuclear weapons maintains world peace. Nuclear power provides cheap and clean energy. The benefits of nuclear technology far outweigh the disadvantages. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer.**

One question that has caused a great deal of controversy over the years is nuclear technology. Although it offers a number of advantages in world peace and green power, it is also a dangerous technology. In this essay I intend to show how these benefits outweigh that disadvantage.

The opponents of nuclear power generally base their arguments on the danger it represents to the world. There are two main dangers: the risk of nuclear warfare and the nuclear disasters. If one thinks about Chernobyl, it is easy to understand why people are worried about nuclear power, as it can cause major suffering.

There are, however, two good reasons for believing that nuclear technology is generally advantageous. The first of these is that there has not been a major world conflict since the invention of nuclear weapons. While there have been wars, they have not been on the same scale as the Second World War. It is possible to say that the world is a safer place because of nuclear weapons.

The other most significant benefit relates to the environment. Perhaps the greatest danger facing our world today is a combination of global warming and the greenhouse effect. This danger is caused partly by burning fossil fuels which leads to our polluted atmosphere. Nuclear power, however, is a much greener alternative which does not have such negative effects. Furthermore, in the last 50 years there have not been too many nuclear disasters and many experts claim that it is in fact a safe technology.

In conclusion I would say that nuclear technology is better than the current alternatives. However, I also believe we should keep looking for ways to make it safer.

(281 words)

**The best way to solve the world's environmental problems is to increase the cost of fuel. To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Most people would accept that one of the highest priorities today is to find a solution to the various environmental problems facing mankind. It has been suggested that best way to achieve this is for governments to raise the price of fuel. I am, however, not sure that this is necessarily the case.

One reason why this approach may not work is that there is not just one environmental problem the world faces today. If governments did make fuel more expensive, it might well help reduce the amount of carbon dioxide we produce and so slow down the rate of global warming and air pollution. However, it would not help with other major problems such as intensive farming, overpopulation, the hole in the ozone layer or water pollution. For these problems we need to find other solutions.

A second reason why this policy may not be the most appropriate is that it places the emphasis on governmental policy and not individual responsibility. Ultimately, most environmental problems are the result of the way we as individuals live our lives. If we wish to find a long-term and lasting solution to them, we need to learn to live in a way that it is greener or kinder to the environment. What governments need to do to make this happen is to ensure there is a global programme to educate people of all ages about the environmental consequences to their actions.

In summary, I believe that increasing the level of taxation on fuel is at best a short-term solution to only one environmental problem. If we wish to provide a home for our children's children, education is likely to be the key to making this happen.

(283 words)

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**Should museums and art galleries be free of charge for the general public, or should a charge, even a voluntary charge, be levied for admittance? Discuss this issue, and give your opinion.**

One very complex issue in today's world is the funding of museums and art galleries. There is an argument that they should be free to the general public and funded by governments, but there is also a case for saying that they should charge an entrance fee like other attractions. In this essay, I am going to examine both sides of this issue.

Those who argue that museums should be free typically make one of two arguments. The first argument is that institutions like museums are a public service and therefore there should be free access to the man in the street. If for example there was a charge only the wealthy could afford to enjoy works of art. The second, and related, argument is that if they did levy a charge fewer people would go to museums. This would be serious as they are educational institutions and standards would fall.

In contrast, there is only one major argument on the other side of the debate. This is that both museums and art galleries need to charge an entrance fee if they are to survive in the modern world. Governments do not have sufficient funds to subsidise all such institutions and there are other priorities for public money. Therefore these galleries and museums need to charge their customers not only to survive but to update their exhibitions and make new purchases. By way of illustration, the Tate Modern in London could not have been founded without revenue from admissions.

My personal position is that there is no clear answer to this question as there are such strong arguments on both sides. Perhaps it is possible for some museums and galleries to charge fees and for others not to.

(288 words)