

IELTS

Essay Analysis

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- Tổng hợp 32 bài mẫu Band 9
- Giải đáp thắc mắc thường gặp





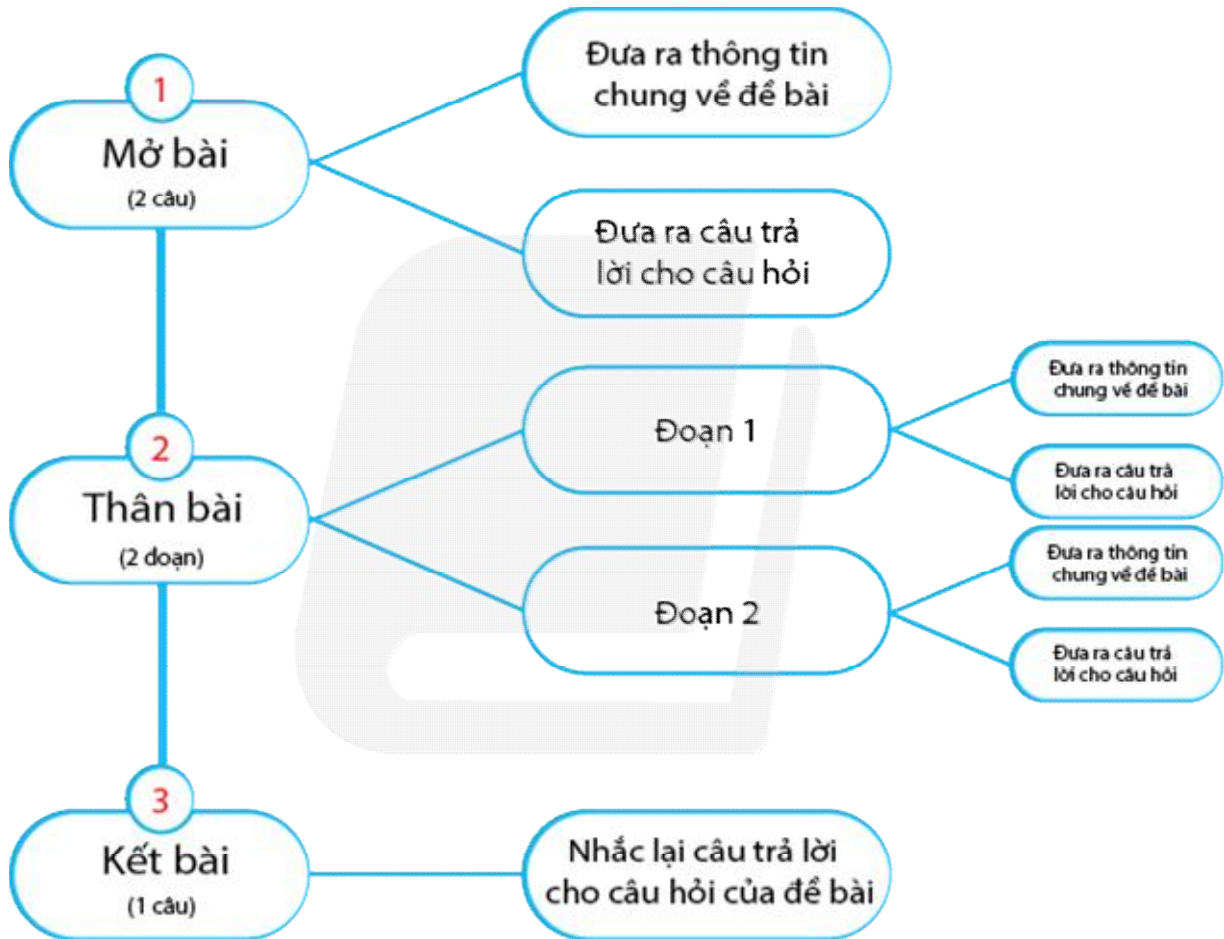
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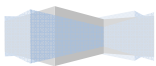
PHẦN 1: GIỚI THIỆU CẤU TRÚC MỘT BÀI ESSAY



Hầu như tất cả các bài viết của thầy Simon đều sử dụng cấu trúc này.



Khi viết essay task 2, chúng ta nên theo một khung nhất định. Điều này sẽ đảm bảo rằng chúng ta sẽ có thêm thời gian để hướng tới những yêu cầu quan trọng hơn mà không mất thời gian vào việc phải cấu trúc bài viết như thế nào.



VÍ DỤ:

Topic: Wild animals have no place in the 21st century, so protecting them is a waste of resources.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Thông tin chung

Câu hỏi của đề

Sample

Some people argue that it is pointless to spend money on the protection of wild animals because humans have no need for them. **I completely disagree with this point of**

view.

Thông tin chung

Câu trả lời

1

In my opinion, it is absurd to argue that wild animals have no place in the 21st century. I do not believe that planet Earth exists only for the benefit of humans, and there is nothing special about this particular century that means that we suddenly have the right to allow or encourage the extinction of any species. Furthermore, there is no compelling reason why we should let animals die out. We do not need to exploit or destroy every last square metre of land in order to feed or accommodate the world's population. There is plenty of room for us to exist side by side with wild animals, and this should be our aim.

Câu mở đoạn

Các câu phát triển ý
Trả lời câu hỏi
“Tại sao động vật hoang dã lại có chỗ đứng ở thế kỉ 21”

Câu mở đoạn

2

I also disagree with the idea that protecting animals is a waste of resources. It is usually the protection of natural habitats that ensures the survival of wild animals, and most scientists agree that these habitats are also crucial for human survival. For example, rainforests produce oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide and stabilise the Earth's climate. If we destroyed these areas, the costs of managing the resulting changes to our planet would far outweigh the costs of conservation. By protecting wild animals and their habitats, we maintain the natural balance of all life on Earth.

Các câu phát triển ý
Trả lời câu hỏi “Tại sao bảo vệ động vật hoang dã không được coi là một sự lãng phí tiền”

In conclusion, we have no right to decide whether or not wild animals should exist, and I believe that we should do everything we can to protect them.

Nhắc lại câu trả lời

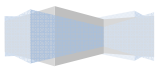
3

2

(268 words, band 9)

➔ Có thể nhận ra bài viết của Simon có độ dài vừa phải (250-280 từ). Chính vì vậy với mỗi bài essay, người

viết chỉ nên viết trong khoảng này. Việc viết một bài essay quá dài (>300 từ) sẽ dễ dẫn đến tình trạng bị thiếu thời gian làm bài hay sẽ mắc thêm nhiều lỗi sai dẫn đến việc trừ điểm.



PHẦN 2: CÁCH VIẾT TỪNG PHẦN CỦA MỘT BÀI IELTS ESSAY HOÀN CHỈNH

Mở bài



Mở bài thường sẽ bao gồm 2 câu, câu đầu tiên dùng để đưa ra *thông tin chung* về chủ đề và câu thứ 2 dùng để trả lời câu hỏi hoặc báo hiệu cho người chấm về nội dung của bài viết.

Với câu đưa ra thông tin chung, thầy Simon thường có 2 cách tiếp cận chính:



Cách thứ nhất - TRỰC TIẾP PARAPHRASE LẠI CÂU CHỦ ĐỀ Ở ĐỀ BÀI:

Ví dụ với topic sau:

In some countries, many more people are choosing to live alone nowadays than in the past. Do you think this is a positive or negative development?

Với câu chủ đề là: **"In some countries, many more people are choosing to live alone nowadays than in the past"**, thầy Simon viết lại như sau:

→ *In recent years, it has become far more normal for people to live alone, particularly in large cities in the developed world.*



Một số cách paraphrase hay dùng: Dùng cấu trúc chủ động-bị động, đổi dạng từ, sử dụng chủ ngữ giả (kết hợp với việc sử dụng từ đồng nghĩa)

Ví dụ với câu sau:

Governments should financially support businesses which are facing the possibility of going bankrupt.

Sử dụng chủ động-bị động:

→ Businesses which are facing the possibility of going bankrupt should be financially supported.

Đổi dạng từ:

Support (v) -> Support (n)

Bankrupt (adj) -> bankruptcy (n)

→ Governments should provide financial support for businesses which are facing the possibility of bankruptcy.

Sử dụng chủ ngữ giả (it, there)

→ It is necessary for governments to financially support businesses which are facing the possibility of going bankrupt.

❖ **Kết hợp các cách + sử dụng từ đồng nghĩa**

→ It is of great necessity for governments to provide financial aids for businesses which are coping with the possibility of bankruptcy.

Như vậy chỉ từ một câu gốc có thể paraphrase bằng rất nhiều cách khác nhau. Điều quan trọng là người viết cần biết kết hợp các cách để tạo thành một câu văn hoàn chỉnh.



Cách thứ 2 là GIÁN TIẾP ĐƯA Ý KIẾN CỦA NGƯỜI KHÁC VỀ CHỦ ĐỀ bằng việc sử dụng cụm ***"People have different views about..."*** hoặc ***"People have differing views about..."***

Ví dụ:

Some people think that strict punishments for driving offences are the key to reducing traffic accidents. Others, however, believe that other measures would be more effective in improving road safety. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Vì chủ đề ở đây là về 2 cách trái chiều của mọi người về việc giảm thiểu tai nạn giao thông nên thầy Simon đã viết câu thứ nhất của mở bài như sau:

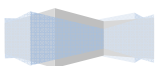
➔ *People have differing views with regard to the question of how to make our roads safer.*

Đây không phải là một câu viết lại trực tiếp từ câu chủ đề nhưng đây là một cách tiếp cận gián tiếp nêu lên ý kiến của mọi người về câu hỏi an toàn giao thông.

Câu thứ 2 trong phần mở bài thường được viết khá đơn giản, rõ ràng và đi thẳng vào vấn đề. Đây là câu quan trọng nhất của bài viết, vì vậy nên được viết một cách dễ hiểu nhất! Thường thì sẽ có một từ nối báo hiệu câu đưa ra ý kiến như là ***"in my opinion"*** hay ***"in my view"***.

Với 2 Topics trên, thầy Simon đã viết câu thứ 2 này như sau:

- ❖ Topic 1: *In my opinion, this trend could have both positive and negative consequences in equal measure.*
- ❖ Topic 2: *In my view, both punishments and a range of other measures can be used together to promote better driving habits.*



Thân bài



Thân bài thường được bố cục thành 2 đoạn văn trung bình gồm 4-6 câu mỗi đoạn. Trong đó có 1 câu chủ đề là câu đầu mỗi đoạn được viết ngắn gọn rõ ràng và dễ hiểu. Tiếp theo đó là 4-5 câu phát triển câu chủ đề bằng cách đưa ra các giải thích và ví dụ.

Ví dụ:

In some countries, many more people are choosing to live alone nowadays than in the past. Do you think this is a positive or negative development?

In recent years, it has become far more normal for people to live alone, particularly in large cities in the developed world. In my opinion, this trend could have both positive and negative consequences in equal measure.

Trong phần thân bài, người viết sẽ đề cập đến những lợi ích và bất lợi của việc sống một mình:

Đoạn 1: Lợi ích của việc sống một mình

(1) The rise in one-person households can be seen as positive for both personal and broader economic reasons. (2) On an individual level, people who choose to live alone may become more independent and self-reliant than those who live with family members. (3) A young adult who lives alone, **for example**, will need to learn to cook, clean, pay bills and manage his or her budget, all of which are valuable life skills; an increase in the number of such individuals can certainly be seen as a positive development. (4) From an economic perspective, the trend towards living alone will result in greater demand for housing. (5) This is likely to benefit the construction industry, estate agents and a whole host of other companies that rely on homeowners to buy their products or services.

Câu chủ đề

Lợi ích thứ nhất

Ví dụ cụ thể

Lợi ích thứ nhất

Giải thích

Đoạn 2: Bất lợi của việc sống một mình

(6) However, the personal and economic arguments given above can be considered from the opposite angle. (7) Firstly, rather than the positive feeling of increased independence, people who live alone may experience feelings of loneliness, isolation and worry. (8) They miss out on the

Câu chủ đề

Bất lợi thứ nhất

Giải thích

emotional support and daily conversation that family or flatmates can provide, and they must bear the weight of all household bills and responsibilities; in this sense, perhaps the trend towards living alone is a negative one. (9) Secondly, from the financial point of view, a rise in demand for housing is likely to push up property prices and rents. (10) While this may benefit some businesses, the general population, including those who live alone, will be faced with rising living costs.

- **Bất lợi thứ hai**
- **Giải thích**

Có thể nhận thấy bố cục trong 1 đoạn rất rõ ràng, thể hiện ở việc dùng liên từ một cách nhẹ nhàng (Firstly, Secondly...). Nhiều người mắc sai lầm trong việc sử dụng liên từ, rằng việc sử dụng liên từ “uncommon” hoặc “advanced” sẽ được tăng điểm. Việc sử dụng những loại liên từ này sẽ gây ra sự mất tự nhiên và có nhiều trường hợp sẽ nhầm cách sử dụng. Điều này đã được ghi trong “Writing Task 2 Band Description” của trường Đại học Cambridge:

Band	Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully addresses all parts of the task presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention skillfully manages paragraphing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sufficiently addresses all parts of the task presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sequences information and ideas logically manages all aspects of cohesion well uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings skillfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures the majority of sentences are error-free makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies

“Uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention” nghĩa là sử dụng liên từ một cách nhẹ nhàng và không gây chú ý cho người chấm.

Xuyên suốt cả bài văn, rất nhiều câu phức, câu ghép cũng như các cấu trúc phức tạp được sử dụng một cách linh hoạt. Số lượng câu đơn là rất hạn chế và thường chỉ được dùng để viết những câu thể hiện quan điểm hoặc những ý chính.

Kết bài



Kết bài thường chỉ bao gồm một câu làm nhiệm vụ nhắc lại câu trả lời cho câu hỏi của đề bài. Không nên đưa các thông tin mà đề bài không yêu cầu như đưa ra giải pháp. Hãy cùng xem một bản đánh giá bài viết của thầy Simon như sau:

IELTS Writing Task 2: essay analysis

Did you analyse last week's essay carefully? Here's an example of how an examiner would analyse it:

Task response

- The essay fully addresses the task; it is "on topic" at all times, and it definitely answers the question.
- The position (opinion / overall answer) is clear throughout the essay. It is presented in the introduction, and then supported in the rest of the essay (with no surprises in the conclusion!).
- Lots of detail is given. Ideas are "fully extended" (explained in depth) and well supported.

Coherence and cohesion

- Ideas are presented in a logical and organised way.
- There is definitely a good "flow" to the essay, so that the argument builds and develops. Paragraphing is well managed, and each paragraph is well constructed.
- Cohesive devices (linking) are used in an effective but subtle way - they help with the development of ideas, but do not overshadow those ideas.

Lexical resource (vocabulary)

- A wide range of vocabulary is used.
- Vocabulary is used appropriately, skillfully and naturally in the development of ideas.
- There are several examples of "less common" items of vocabulary, all of which are used appropriately.

Grammatical range and accuracy

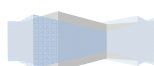
- A wide range of structures is used.
- There are no mistakes!

"No surprises in the conclusion" nghĩa là không đưa các thông tin mà không được support trong thân bài vào phần kết bài.

Ví dụ với cùng topic về việc sống một mình, kết bài được viết như sau:

➔ *In conclusion, the increase in one-person households will have both beneficial and detrimental effects on individuals and on the economy.*

❖ Note: Trước khi nhắc lại câu trả lời thường sẽ có một liên từ được đặt ở đầu câu (in conclusion) để đảm bảo tính liên kết mạch lạc giữa các đoạn văn với nhau.



PHẦN 3: DẠNG ESSAY TRONG BÀI THI VIẾT IELTS

Có 4 dạng bài luận có thể sẽ gặp trong bài thi viết IELTS:

- **Opinion**
- **Discussion**
- **Cause & solution**
- **Two-part question**

Với dạng bài **Opinion**, có 2 cách viết chủ yếu đó là kiểu viết **MỘT CHIỀU** (completely agree or completely disagree) hoặc cách viết **CÂN BẰNG** (partly agree or partly disagree).

1. Cách viết một chiều



Hoàn toàn đồng ý hoặc hoàn toàn không đồng ý với đề bài bằng cách đưa ra 2 lý do, mỗi lý do sẽ được phát triển bằng một đoạn trong thân bài.

Ví dụ với topic sau:

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?

Some people believe that parents of children who attend private schools should not need to contribute to state schools through taxes. **Personally, I completely disagree with this view.** => *Quan điểm của người viết được thể hiện rất ngắn gọn và rõ ràng.*

For a variety of reasons, it would be wrong to reduce taxes for families who pay for private education. 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. Secondly, we all pay a certain amount of tax for public services that we may not use. 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. 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. => *Cả đoạn chỉ phát triển 1 luận điểm: "it would be wrong to reduce taxes for families who pay for private education"*

In my opinion, we should all be happy to pay our share of the money that supports public schools. It is beneficial for all members of society to have a high quality education system with equal opportunities for all young people. This will result in a well-educated workforce, and in turn a more productive and

prosperous nation. Parents of children in private schools may also see the advantages of this in their own lives. For example, a company owner will need well qualified and competent staff, and a well-funded education system can provide such employees. => **Cả đoạn chỉ phát triển 1 luận điểm: "we should all be happy to pay our share of the money that supports public schools"**

In conclusion, I do not believe that any financial concessions should be made for people who choose private education. => **Kết bài khẳng định lại ý kiến một chiều một cách trực tiếp**

- ❖ **Lưu ý:** Có 2 phần được dùng để đưa ý kiến, câu trả lời cho câu hỏi ở đề bài: **Câu thứ 2 phần mở bài** và **câu kết bài**. Cách thể hiện ý kiến rất rõ ràng và trực tiếp.



Không trình bày ý kiến trái chiều vào bài viết

Ngoài ra, còn một cách viết khác để thể hiện quan điểm một chiều đó là cách viết "phản biện"

Ví dụ với topic sau:

Topic: Some people who have been in prison become good citizens later, and it is often argued that these are the best people to talk to teenagers about the dangers of committing a crime. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

It is true that ex-prisoners can become normal, productive members of society. I completely agree with the idea that allowing such people to speak to teenagers about their experiences is the best way to discourage them from breaking the law. => **Thể hiện quan điểm một chiều rất rõ ràng qua việc sử dụng cụm "completely agree"**

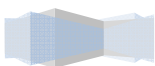
In my opinion, teenagers are more likely to accept advice from someone who can speak from experience. Reformed offenders can tell young people about how they became involved in crime, the dangers of a criminal lifestyle, and what life in prison is really like. They can also dispel any ideas that teenagers may have about criminals leading glamorous lives. While adolescents are often indifferent to the guidance given by older people, I imagine that most of them would be extremely keen to hear the stories of an ex-offender. The vivid and perhaps shocking nature of these stories is likely to have a powerful impact. => **Chứng minh quan điểm đó bằng đoạn văn đầu tiên**

The alternatives to using reformed criminals to educate teenagers about crime would be much less effective. One option would be for police officers to visit schools

and talk to young people. This could be useful in terms of informing teens about what happens to lawbreakers when they are caught, but young people are often reluctant to take advice from figures of authority. A second option would be for school teachers to speak to their students about crime, but I doubt that students would see teachers as credible sources of information about this topic. Finally, educational films might be informative, but there would be no opportunity for young people to interact and ask questions. => **Lần lượt đưa ra 3 quan điểm trái chiều và trực tiếp phủ nhận chúng (Lưu ý: đây là ý kiến trái chiều đến từ người khác)**

In conclusion, I fully support the view that people who have turned their lives around after serving a prison sentence could help to deter teenagers from committing crimes. => **Kết bài khẳng định lại ý kiến một chiều một cách trực tiếp**

|| **Như vậy với cách viết này, phần mở bài kết bài đều không có gì thay đổi. Sự thay đổi chỉ nằm ở đoạn thứ 2 thân bài (Đoạn phản biện)**



Đoạn phản biện sẽ được cấu trúc như sau:

The alternatives to using reformed criminals to

educate teenagers about crime would be much

less effective. One option would be for police

officers to visit schools and talk to young people.

This could be useful in terms of informing teens

about what happens to lawbreakers when they

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would be no opportunity for young people to

interact and ask questions.

Báo hiệu đoạn phản biện

Ý trái chiều thứ nhất

Phản biện ý trái chiều thứ nhất

Ý trái chiều thứ hai

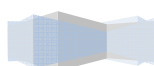
Phản biện ý trái chiều thứ hai

Ý trái chiều thứ ba

Phản biện ý trái chiều thứ ba

❖ **Lưu ý: Đoạn phản biết không bắt buộc phải đưa ra 3 quan điểm trái chiều.**

Có thể chỉ cần đưa ra 2 quan điểm và phản biện chúng



2. Cách viết cân bằng



Ý kiến của người viết sẽ được thể hiện cân bằng, không nghiêng hẳn về bên nào.

Ví dụ với topic sau:

The older generations tend to have very traditional ideas about how people should live, think and behave. However, some people believe that these ideas are not helpful in preparing younger generations for modern life. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?

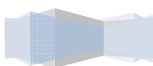
It is true that many older people believe in traditional values that often seem incompatible with the needs of younger people. While I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated, I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten.

On the one hand, many of the ideas that elderly people have about life are becoming less relevant for younger people. In the past, for example, people were advised to learn a profession and find a secure job for life, but today's workers expect much more variety and diversity from their careers. At the same time, the rules around relationships are being eroded as young adults make their own choices about who and when to marry. But perhaps the greatest disparity between the generations can be seen in their attitudes towards gender roles. The traditional roles of men and women, as breadwinners and housewives, are no longer accepted as necessary or appropriate by most younger people.

On the other hand, some traditional views and values are certainly applicable to the modern world. For example, older generations attach great importance to working hard, doing one's best, and taking pride in one's work, and these behaviours can surely benefit young people as they enter today's competitive job market. Other characteristics that are perhaps seen as traditional are politeness and good manners. In our globalised world, young adults can expect to come into contact with people from a huge variety of backgrounds, and it is more important than ever to treat others with respect. Finally, I believe that young people would lead happier lives if they had a more 'old-fashioned' sense of community and neighbourliness.

In conclusion, although the views of older people may sometimes seem unhelpful in today's world, we should not dismiss all traditional ideas as irrelevant.

Mặc dù là bài viết với quan điểm cân bằng, nhưng người viết vẫn thể hiện rất rõ mình nghiêng về bên nào hơn, cùng lúc đó không phủ nhận về còn lại.





Ở câu thứ 2 đoạn mở bài và câu kết bài, cấu trúc nhượng bộ (Concession structures) được sử dụng để thể hiện rằng mình nghiêng về bên nào: ***While I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated, I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten.***

Như vậy có thể thấy đoạn thứ nhất thân bài sẽ được dùng để phân tích về đầu của câu trên: ***"I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated"*** còn đoạn thứ 2 thân bài sẽ là đoạn về phía người viết nghiêng về: ***"I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten"***

Một số cấu trúc nhượng bộ khác có thể được dùng trong loại văn này là:

Although	+ Clause 1 (vế 1)	+ Clause 2 (vế 2)
Even though		
While		
In spite of	+ Noun phrase (vế 1)	+ Clause (vế 2)
Despite		



Lưu ý rằng vế 2 luôn là vế mình nghiêng về nhiều hơn.

Mở đầu mỗi đoạn thân bài đều có cụm liên từ "On the one hand" với vế thứ nhất và "On the other hand" với vế thứ 2.

Đối với một số đề bài, phải rất cẩn trọng khi dùng cách viết cân bằng để giải quyết.

Ví dụ như topic sau:

Although more and more people read news on the Internet, newspapers will remain the most important source of news. Do you agree or disagree?

Tại sao lại như vậy? Đây là lời giải thích của thầy Simon:

IELTS Writing Task 2: can we always 'partly agree'?

Read the question below. Do you think it's possible to partly agree? Is it possible to write a balanced answer?

Although more and more people read news on the Internet, newspapers will remain the most important source of news. Do you agree or disagree?

Be careful with this type of question. Here's why:

Because of the word "most", ***I don't think we can 'partly agree'***. Either we believe that newspapers will remain the most popular source of information (agree), or we believe that they won't (disagree). This probably explains why the question doesn't say "to what extent do you agree or disagree?".

However, ***there is a way to write a balanced answer***: we need to disagree. We can say that we disagree that newspapers will remain the most important source of news, because we believe that the Internet will become equally important. This answer allows us to write one main paragraph about each source of news.



Như vậy để có thể trình bài về cả newspaper và Internet trong phần thân bài, người viết cần trả lời câu hỏi như sau: **"Tôi không đồng ý với quan điểm trên vì tôi nghĩ cả sách báo cả Internet sẽ trở nên hay nguồn thông tin quan trọng NHƯ NHAU."**

Sau đó đoạn thân bài thứ nhất sẽ nói về newspaper và đoạn thứ 2 sẽ nói về Internet.

Bài mẫu cho đề bài này như sau:

The Internet is beginning to rival newspapers as the best place to find information about what is happening in the world. I believe that this trend will continue, and the Internet will soon be just as important as the traditional press.

On the one hand, I believe that newspapers will continue to be a vital source of information, even in the Internet age. Firstly, newspapers are the most traditional

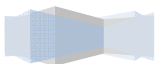
means of communicating the news, and not everyone wants to or is able to use the Internet instead. For example, old people or those in rural areas might not have the ability or opportunity to get online, while many of us simply prefer newspapers even if we do have Internet access. Secondly, newspapers can be trusted as reliable sources of news because they employ professional journalists and editors. Finally, many people like the experience of holding and reading a paper rather than looking at a computer screen.

However, the Internet is likely to become just as popular as newspapers for a variety of reasons. The main reason is that it allows us much faster access to news in real time and wherever we are, on different gadgets and mobile devices. Another key benefit of online news compared to newspapers is the ability to share articles, discuss them with other people, give our views, and even contribute with our own updates on social media. For example, there has been an explosion in the use of platforms like Twitter and YouTube where anyone can share their news and views. A final point is that this source of news is less damaging to the environment.

In conclusion, I disagree with the view that newspapers will continue to be the main source of news, because I believe that the Internet will soon be equally important.

=> Quan điểm của người viết vẫn là "disagree"

|| **Những cụm từ nên tránh khi viết những câu thể hiện opinion hoặc idea: It is believed, it is argued, it is considered...**



Dạng bài Discussion

Đây là dạng bài cũng khá phổ biến trong kì thi IELTS. Dạng bài thường yêu cầu người viết phải trình bày về 2 luồng quan điểm trái chiều sau đó đưa ra ý kiến cá nhân.

Ví dụ:

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.

It is true that medicines and other products are routinely tested on animals before they are cleared for human use. While 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.

On the one hand, there are clear ethical arguments against animal experimentation. To 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. **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. **They believe** that the benefits to humans do not justify the suffering caused, and that scientists should use alternative methods of research.

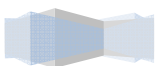
On the other hand, reliable alternatives to animal experimentation may not always be available. **Supporters** of the use of animals in medical research believe that a certain amount of suffering on the part of mice or rats can be justified if human lives are saved. **They argue** that opponents of such 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. 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.

Mở bài:

*Câu 1: Viết lại topic
Câu 2: Dùng cấu trúc
nhượng bộ để đề
cập đến cả 2 vế của
tranh luận cũng như
để thể hiện mình
nghiêng về phía nào*

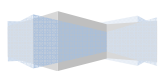
*Bàn luận về vế thứ
nhất. Thường mở
đoạn bằng cụm từ
"On the one hand"*

*Bàn luận về vế thứ hai
(về mình nghiêng về).
Thường mở đoạn
bằng cụm từ "On the
other hand"*



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.

*Kết bài bằng 1 câu thể
hiện mình nghiêng về
vế nào của tranh luận*





Dạng bài này nhìn qua có vẻ giống với dạng viết cân bằng như trong dạng Opinion. Điểm khác nhau về bản chất chính là dạng discussion yêu cầu người viết trình bày quan điểm của xã hội, còn ở dạng còn lại thì yêu cầu người viết trình bày quan điểm cá nhân.

- ❖ Lưu ý dạng câu hỏi "Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?". Câu trả lời của thầy Simon cho câu hỏi này như sau:

IELTS Writing Advice: a useful question

A student asked me the following useful question:

I am confused about the question "Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?". Is this an opinion question or discussion + opinion question?

Here's my answer:

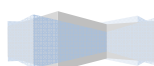
Strictly speaking, "Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?" is asking for your opinion (do you think there are more advantages or disadvantages?). Technically, you could give a one-sided "opinion" answer e.g. you could argue that there are many advantages and almost no disadvantages.

However, I think the examiner would expect and prefer to see a balanced discussion of both sides as well as your opinion. Therefore, I think it's best (and easiest) to write a discussion + opinion essay.



Như vậy, với đề bài có câu hỏi "**Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?**" thì người viết có thể viết như một dạng discussion bình thường.

- ❖ Lưu ý: Những cụm từ hay dùng trong văn discussion: **people think, it is believed, people argue that...** Đây cũng là sự khác nhau trong văn phong dạng opinion và dạng discussion.



PHẦN 4: DẠNG BÀI CAUSE/PROBLEM & SOLUTION

Ví dụ:

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**.

Mở bài:

Câu 1: Paraphrase chủ đề

Câu 2: Trả lời gián tiếp câu hỏi

(1) 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.

Câu mở đầu chung chung: "Có một số vấn đề liên quan đến hiện tượng này..."

Vấn đề thứ nhất + giải thích

Vấn đề thứ hai + giải thích

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

Câu mở đầu chung chung: "Có một số giải pháp ..."

Giải pháp thứ nhất

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.

Giải pháp thứ hai

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.

Giải pháp thứ ba

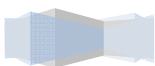
In conclusion, various measures can be taken to tackle the problems that are certain to arise as the populations of countries grow older.

Kết bài bằng một câu ngắn gọn

❖ **Câu thứ 2 phần mở bài luôn được viết để trả lời gián tiếp câu hỏi. Không nên viết 1 dàn bài ngay tại mở bài.**

❖ **Một số từ và cấu trúc hay dùng trong dạng bài này:**

1. Some negative consequences
2. To take steps to mitigate these potential problems
3. Several related problems can be anticipated
4. The main issue is
5. Solve the problems described above
6. A simple solution
7. A second measure
8. Tackle the problems



PHẦN 5: DẠNG BÀI TWO-PART QUESTION

Dạng bài này yêu cầu người viết phải trả lời 2 câu hỏi trực tiếp từ đề bài. Cấu trúc của đoạn thân bài khác đơn giản, mỗi đoạn sẽ trả lời một câu:

Ví dụ:

Happiness is considered very important in life.

Why is it difficult to define ?

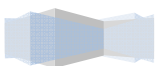
What factors are important in achieving happiness?

It is no doubt true that the majority of people would like to be happy in their lives. 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.

Happiness is difficult to define because it means something different to each individual person. Nobody can fully understand or experience another person's feelings, and we all have our own particular passions from which we take pleasure. 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. 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. => **trả lời câu hỏi thứ nhất**

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. 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. Our basic survival needs must surely be met before we can lead a pleasant life. 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. Other key factors could be individual freedom and a sense of purpose in life. => **trả lời câu hỏi thứ hai**

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.



PHẦN 6: TỔNG HỢP CÁC BÀI MẪU CỦA CỰU GIÁM KHẢO SIMON

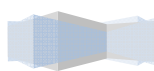
(UPDATE 10/5/2016)

- 32 bài mẫu gồm:
- 15 bài mẫu dạng Opinion
- 9 bài mẫu dạng Discussion
- 2 bài mẫu dạng Cause/problem & solution
- 6 bài mẫu dạng Two-part question

❖ Cách tự học với việc đọc bài mẫu:

Gồm 3 bước sau:

1. Viết ra dàn bài, idea mà thầy Simon sử dụng với từng đề bài
2. Note lại những từ và cụm từ hay, tra từ điển Oxford để biết chính xác cách dùng
3. Tự viết lại bài của mình và sử dụng những cấu trúc chung, từ và cụm từ vừa được note lại.



OPINION

(15 sample essays)

Topic 1: As well as making money, businesses also have social responsibilities. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Businesses have always sought to make a profit, but it is becoming increasingly common to hear people talk about the **social obligations** that companies have. I completely agree with the idea that businesses should do more for society than simply make money.

On the one hand, I accept that businesses must make money in order to survive in **a competitive world**. It seems logical that the priority of any company should be to cover its running costs, such as employees' wages and **payments for buildings and utilities**. On top of these costs, companies also need to invest in improvements and innovations if they wish to remain successful. If a company is unable to pay its bills or **meet the changing needs of customers**, any concerns about **social responsibilities** become irrelevant. In other words, a company can only make a positive contribution to society if it is **in good financial health**.

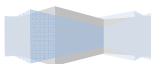
On the other hand, companies should not be run with **the sole aim of maximising profit**; they have a wider role to play in society. One social obligation that owners and managers have is to treat their employees well, rather than exploiting them. For example, they could pay a "living wage" to ensure that workers have a good quality of life. I also like the idea that businesses could use a proportion of their profits to support local charities, environmental projects or **education initiatives**. Finally, instead of trying to **minimise their tax payments** by using accounting loopholes, I believe that company bosses should be happy to contribute to society through the tax system.

In conclusion, I believe that companies should place as much importance on their social responsibilities as they do on their financial objectives.

(285 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. **Social obligations**: những ràng buộc xã hội
2. **A competitive world**: một thế giới đầy sự cạnh tranh
3. **Meet the changing needs of customers = satisfy customers' changing needs**: đáp ứng nhu cầu luôn thay đổi từ khách hàng
4. **Social responsibilities**: các trách nhiệm đối với xã hội
5. **In good financial health**: tình hình tài chính ổn định
6. **The sole aim of maximizing profit**: chỉ với mục đích tối đa hóa lợi nhuận



Topic 2: Although more and more people read news on the Internet, newspapers will remain the most important source of news. Do you agree or disagree?

The Internet is beginning to rival newspapers as the best place to find information about what is happening in the world. I believe that this trend will continue, and the Internet will soon be just as important as the traditional press.

On the one hand, I believe that newspapers will continue to be a vital source of information, even in the Internet age. Firstly, newspapers are the most traditional means of communicating the news, and not everyone wants to or is able to use the Internet instead. For example, old people or those in rural areas might not have the ability or opportunity to get online, while many of us simply prefer newspapers even if we do have Internet access. Secondly, newspapers can be trusted as reliable sources of news because they employ professional journalists and editors. Finally, many people like the experience of holding and reading a paper rather than looking at a computer screen.

However, the Internet is likely to become just as popular as newspapers for a variety of reasons. The main reason is that it allows us much faster access to news in real time and wherever we are, on different gadgets and mobile devices. Another key benefit of online news compared to newspapers is the ability to share articles, discuss them with other people, give our views, and even contribute with our own updates on social media. For example, there has been an explosion in the use of platforms like Twitter and YouTube where anyone can share their news and views. A final point is that this source of news is less damaging to the environment.

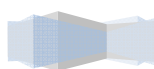
In conclusion, I disagree with the view that newspapers will continue to be the main source of news, because I believe that the Internet will soon be equally important.

(300 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. The traditional press: báo chí truyền thống
2. A vital source of information: một nguồn thông tin quan trọng
3. The Internet age: thời đại Internet
4. Social media: truyền thông

An explosion in the use of platforms: sự bùng nổ trong việc sử dụng những ứng dụng



Topic 3: In some countries, many more people are choosing to live alone nowadays than in the past. Do you think this is a positive or negative development?

In recent years, it has become far more normal for people to live alone, particularly in large cities in the developed world. In my opinion, this trend could have both positive and negative consequences in equal measure.

The rise in one-person households can be seen as positive for both personal and broader economic reasons. On an individual level, people who choose to live alone may become more independent and self-reliant than those who live with family members. A young adult who lives alone, for example, will need to learn to cook, clean, pay bills and manage his or her budget, all of which are valuable life skills; an increase in the number of such individuals can certainly be seen as a positive development. From an economic perspective, the trend towards living alone will result in greater demand for housing. This is likely to benefit the construction industry, estate agents and a whole host of other companies that rely on homeowners to buy their products or services.

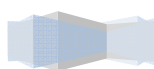
However, the personal and economic arguments given above can be considered from the opposite angle. Firstly, rather than the positive feeling of increased independence, people who live alone may experience feelings of loneliness, isolation and worry. They miss out on the emotional support and daily conversation that family or flatmates can provide, and they must bear the weight of all household bills and responsibilities; in this sense, perhaps the trend towards living alone is a negative one. Secondly, from the financial point of view, a rise in demand for housing is likely to push up property prices and rents. While this may benefit some businesses, the general population, including those who live alone, will be faced with rising living costs.

In conclusion, the increase in one-person households will have both beneficial and detrimental effects on individuals and on the economy.

(306 words-band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. One-person households: những hộ gia đình có một người
2. From an economic perspective: theo góc độ kinh tế
3. Greater demand for housing: nhu cầu lớn hơn về nhà ở
4. The construction industry: ngành xây dựng
5. Feelings of loneliness, isolation and worry: cảm giác cô đơn, xa lánh và lo lắng
6. Emotional support: ủng hộ về mặt tình cảm



Topic 4: Some people who have been in prison become good citizens later, and it is often argued that these are the best people to talk to teenagers about the dangers of committing a crime. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

It is true that ex-prisoners can become normal, productive members of society. I completely agree with the idea that allowing such people to speak to teenagers about their experiences is the best way to discourage them from breaking the law.

In my opinion, teenagers are more likely to accept advice from someone who can speak from experience. Reformed offenders can tell young people about how they became involved in crime, the dangers of a criminal lifestyle, and what life in prison is really like. They can also dispel any ideas that teenagers may have about criminals leading glamorous lives. While adolescents are often indifferent to the guidance given by older people, I imagine that most of them would be extremely keen to hear the stories of an ex-offender. The vivid and perhaps shocking nature of these stories is likely to have a powerful impact.

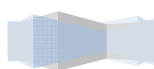
The alternatives to using reformed criminals to educate teenagers about crime would be much less effective. One option would be for police officers to visit schools and talk to young people. This could be useful in terms of informing teens about what happens to lawbreakers when they are caught, but young people are often reluctant to take advice from figures of authority. A second option would be for school teachers to speak to their students about crime, but I doubt that students would see teachers as credible sources of information about this topic. Finally, educational films might be informative, but there would be no opportunity for young people to interact and ask questions.

In conclusion, I fully support the view that people who have turned their lives around after serving a prison sentence could help to deter teenagers from committing crimes.

(287 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Speak from experience: nói từ trải nghiệm
2. Reformed offenders=rehabilitated prisoners: tội nhân đã được cải tạo
3. Have a powerful impact=have a huge influence: có một ảnh hưởng mạnh mẽ
4. Lawbreakers=offenders=criminals: tội nhân
5. Figures of authorities=authority figures: nhân vật có quyền lực



Topic 5: The older generations tend to have very traditional ideas about how people should live, think and behave. However, some people believe that these ideas are not helpful in preparing younger generations for modern life. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?

It is true that many older people believe in traditional values that often seem incompatible with the needs of younger people. While I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated, I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten.

On the one hand, many of the ideas that elderly people have about life are becoming less relevant for younger people. In the past, for example, people were advised to learn a profession and **find a secure job** for life, but today's workers expect much more variety and diversity from their careers. At the same time, the rules around relationships are being eroded as young adults make their own choices about who and when to marry. But perhaps the greatest disparity between the generations can be seen in their attitudes towards **gender roles**. The traditional roles of men and women, as **breadwinners and housewives**, are no longer accepted as necessary or appropriate by most younger people.

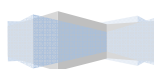
On the other hand, some traditional views and values are certainly applicable to the modern world. For example, older generations attach great importance to working hard, doing one's best, and **taking pride in one's work**, and these behaviours can surely benefit young people as they enter today's competitive job market. Other characteristics that are perhaps seen as traditional are **politeness and good manners**. In our **globalised world**, young adults can expect to come into contact with people from **a huge variety of backgrounds**, and it is more important than ever to treat others with respect. Finally, I believe that young people would lead happier lives if they had a more 'old-fashioned' sense of community and neighbourliness.

In conclusion, although the views of older people may sometimes seem unhelpful in today's world, we should not dismiss all traditional ideas as irrelevant.

(299 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Find a secure job: tìm một công việc đảm bảo
2. Gender roles: vai trò của các giới
3. Breadwinners and housewives: trụ cột và người phụ nữ trong gia đình
4. Take pride in one's work = pride oneself on his work: tự hào về công việc của mình
5. Politeness and good manners: sự lịch sự và cách cư xử đúng mực



Topic 6: Wild animals have no place in the 21st century, so protecting them is a waste of resources. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Some people argue that it is pointless to spend money on the protection of wild animals because humans have no need for them. I completely disagree with this point of view.

In my opinion, it is absurd to argue that wild animals have no place in the 21st century. I do not believe that planet Earth exists only for the benefit of humans, and there is nothing special about this particular century that means that we suddenly have the right to allow or encourage the extinction of any species. Furthermore, there is no compelling reason why we should let animals die out. We do not need to exploit or destroy every last square metre of land in order to feed or accommodate the world's population. There is plenty of room for us to exist side by side with wild animals, and this should be our aim.

I also disagree with the idea that protecting animals is a waste of resources. It is usually the protection of natural habitats that ensures the survival of wild animals, and most scientists agree that these habitats are also crucial for human survival. For example, rainforests produce oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide and stabilise the Earth's climate. If we destroyed these areas, the costs of managing the resulting changes to our planet would far outweigh the costs of conservation. By protecting wild animals and their habitats, we maintain the natural balance of all life on Earth.

In conclusion, we have no right to decide whether or not wild animals should exist, and I believe that we should do everything we can to protect them.

(269 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. The extinction of any species: sự tuyệt chủng của bất kì loài động vật nào
2. Die out = become extinct: tuyệt chủng
3. Exist side by side = co-exist: cùng tồn tại
4. Natural habitats: môi trường sống tự nhiên
5. The natural balance of all life on Earth: cân bằng tự nhiên của mọi sự sống trên trái đất

Topic 7: 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?

Some people believe that parents of children who attend private schools should not need to contribute to state schools through taxes. Personally, I completely disagree with this view.

For a variety of reasons, it would be wrong to reduce taxes for families who pay for private education. 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. Secondly, we all pay a certain amount of tax for public services that we may not use. 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. 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.

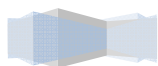
In my opinion, we should all be happy to pay our share of the money that supports public schools. It is beneficial for all members of society to have a high quality education system with equal opportunities for all young people. This will result in a **well-educated workforce**, and in turn a more **productive and prosperous nation**. Parents of children in private schools may also see the advantages of this in their own lives. For example, a company owner will need **well qualified and competent staff**, and **a well-funded education system** can provide such employees.

In conclusion, I do not believe that any **financial concessions** should be made for people who choose private education.

(269 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Tax reduction=tax relief=tax discount: giảm thuế
2. Wealthy families = rich families = the rich: nhà giàu
3. Well-educated workforce=well-trained workforce=well qualified and competent staff: nguồn lao động được đào tạo kỹ lưỡng
4. A well-funded education system: hệ thống giáo dục được đầu tư kỹ lưỡng
5. Financial concessions = financial reduction: để chỉ giảm tiền thuế



Topic 8: Nowadays celebrities are more famous for their glamour and wealth than for their achievements, and this sets a bad example to young people. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

It is true that some celebrities are known for their glamorous lifestyles rather than for the work they do. While I agree that these celebrities set a bad example for children, I believe that other famous people act as positive role models.

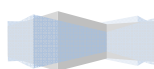
On the one hand, many people do achieve fame without really working for it. They may have inherited money from parents, married a famous or wealthy person, or they may have appeared in gossip magazines or on a reality TV programme. A good example would be Paris Hilton, who is rich and famous for the wrong reasons. She spends her time attending parties and nightclubs, and her behaviour promotes the idea that appearance, glamour and media profile are more important than hard work and good character. The message to young people is that success can be achieved easily, and that school work is not necessary.

On the other hand, there are at least as many celebrities whose accomplishments make them excellent role models for young people. Actors, musicians and sports stars become famous idols because they have worked hard and applied themselves to develop real skills and abilities. They demonstrate great effort, determination and ambition, which is required for someone who wants to be truly successful in their chosen field. An example is the actor and martial artist Jackie Chan, who has become world famous through years of practice and hard work. This kind of self-made celebrity can inspire children to develop their talents through application and perseverance.

(Add your own conclusion)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Positive role models: tấm gương tốt để noi theo
2. Gossip magazines: tạp chí lá cải
3. Great effort, determination and ambition: cố gắng, sự quyết tâm và hoài bão lớn
4. Self-made celebrity: người nổi tiếng do chính sức mình
5. Application and perseverance: ứng dụng và sự kiên nhẫn



Topic 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.

On the one hand, I agree that money is necessary in order for people to meet their **basic needs**. For example, we all need money to pay for housing, food, bills, health care, and education. 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. If people chose their jobs based on enjoyment or other **non-financial factors**, they might find it difficult to support themselves. 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.

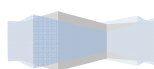
Nevertheless, I believe that other considerations are just as important as what we earn in our jobs. Firstly, personal relationships and the atmosphere in a workplace are extremely important when choosing a job. Having a good manager or friendly colleagues, for example, can make a huge difference to workers' levels of happiness and general quality of life. 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. 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.

(275 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. The key consideration=the most important consideration: sự cân nhắc quan trọng nhất
2. Basic needs: nhu cầu tối thiểu
3. Non-financial factors: những yếu tố không liên quan đến tài chính
4. Professional achievements: thành quả về công việc
5. People's choice of profession=people's choice of occupation: lựa chọn nghề nghiệp



Topic 10: 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.

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. However, I believe this to be a very shortsighted view. 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. 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.

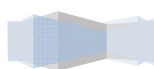
If travellers realised that they would have to pay more to visit historical and cultural attractions in a particular nation, they would perhaps decide not to go to that country on holiday. To take the UK as an example, the tourism industry and many related jobs rely on visitors coming to the country to see places like Windsor Castle or Saint Paul's Cathedral. These two sites charge the same price regardless of nationality, and this helps to promote **the nation's cultural heritage**. 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.

(269 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. State subsidies=national/government funding: trợ cấp của nhà nước
2. A wide range of goods and services: có nhiều sự lựa chọn về hàng hóa và dịch vụ
3. The nation's cultural heritage: di sản văn hóa quốc gia
4. Insufficient funding for the maintenance of these important buildings: trợ cấp không đủ cho sự bảo tồn những tòa nhà quan trọng đó.



Topic 11: Some people think that all teenagers should be required to do unpaid work in their free time to help the local community. They believe this would benefit both the individual teenager and society as a whole. Do you agree or disagree?

Many young people **work on a volunteer basis**, and this can only be beneficial for both the individual and society as a whole. However, I do not agree that we should therefore force all teenagers to do unpaid work.

Most young people are already under enough pressure with their studies, without being given the added responsibility of working in their spare time. School is just as demanding as a full-time job, and teachers expect their students to do homework and exam revision on top of attending lessons every day. When young people do have some free time, we should encourage them to enjoy it with their friends or to spend it doing sports and other **leisure activities**. They have many years of work ahead of them when they finish their studies.

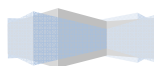
At the same time, I do not believe that society has anything to gain from obliging young people to do unpaid work. In fact, I would argue that it goes against the values of a free and fair society to force a group of people to do something against their will. Doing this can only lead to **resentment** amongst young people, who would feel that they were being used, and parents, who would not want to be told how to raise their children. Currently, nobody is forced to volunteer, and this is surely the best system.

In conclusion, teenagers may choose to work for free and help others, but in my opinion, we should not make this compulsory.

(250 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Work on a volunteer basis=work as a volunteer: làm việc tình nguyện
2. Leisure activities = recreations: hoạt động giải trí
3. Resentment: sự hằn học



**Topic 12: Some people believe that hobbies need to be difficult to be enjoyable.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Some hobbies are relatively easy, while others present more of a challenge. Personally, I believe that both types of hobby can be fun, and I therefore disagree with the statement that hobbies need to be difficult in order to be enjoyable.

On the one hand, many people enjoy easy hobbies. One example of an activity that is easy for most people is swimming. This hobby requires very little equipment, it is simple to learn, and it is inexpensive. I remember learning to swim at my local swimming pool when I was a child, and it never felt like a **demanding or challenging experience**. Another hobby that I find easy and fun is photography. In my opinion, anyone can take interesting pictures without knowing too much about **the technicalities of operating a camera**. Despite being straightforward, taking photos is a satisfying activity.

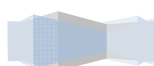
On the other hand, difficult hobbies can sometimes be more exciting. If an activity is more challenging, we might feel **a greater sense of satisfaction** when we manage to do it successfully. For example, film editing is a hobby that requires **a high level of knowledge and expertise**. In my case, it took me around two years before I became competent at this activity, but now I enjoy it much more than I did when I started. I believe that many hobbies give us more pleasure when we reach a higher level of performance because the results are better and **the feeling of achievement** is greater.

In conclusion, simple hobbies can be fun and relaxing, but difficult hobbies can be equally pleasurable for different reasons.

(266 words, Band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Demanding or challenging experience: một trải nghiệm thử thách và đòi hỏi
2. The technicalities of operating a camera: kĩ thuật để sử dụng camera
3. A greater sense of satisfaction: cảm giác hài lòng
4. A high level of knowledge and expertise: một trình độ cao về kiến thức và chuyên môn
5. The feeling of achievement: cảm giác đạt được cái gì đó



Topic 13: Many people decide on a career path early in their lives and keep to it. This, they argue, leads to a more satisfying working life. To what extent do you agree with this view? What other things can people do in order to have a satisfying working life?

It is true that some people know from an early age what career they want to pursue, and they are happy to spend the rest of their lives in the same profession. While I accept that this may suit many people, I believe that others enjoy changing careers or seeking job satisfaction in different ways.

On the one hand, having a defined career path can certainly lead to a satisfying working life. Many people decide as young children what they want to do as adults, and it gives them a great sense of satisfaction to work towards their goals and gradually achieve them. For example, many children dream of becoming doctors, but to realise this ambition they need to gain the relevant qualifications and undertake years of training. In my experience, very few people who have qualified as doctors choose to change career because they find their work so rewarding, and because they have invested so much time and effort to reach their goal.

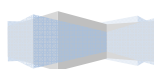
On the other hand, people find happiness in their working lives in different ways. Firstly, not everyone dreams of doing a particular job, and it can be equally rewarding to try a variety of professions; starting out on a completely new career path can be a reinvigorating experience. Secondly, some people see their jobs as simply a means of earning money, and they are happy if their salary is high enough to allow them to enjoy life outside work. Finally, job satisfaction is often the result of working conditions, rather than the career itself. For example, a positive working atmosphere, enthusiastic colleagues, and an inspirational boss can make working life much more satisfying, regardless of the profession.

In conclusion, it can certainly be satisfying to pursue a particular career for the whole of one's life, but this is by no means the only route to fulfilment.

(310 words – Band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. A defined career path: con đường nghề nghiệp định sẵn
2. A reinvigorating experience: một trải nghiệm tràn đầy năng lượng
3. Route to fulfillment: con đường đến với sự trọn vẹn



Topic 14: 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)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Impoverished or disadvantaged: nghèo đói và khó khăn
2. Prioritise local charity: ưu tiên từ thiện trong nước
3. Curable diseases: những bệnh có thể chữa được
4. An international charity: tổ chức từ thiện quốc tế
5. National boundaries=national borders: biên giới quốc gia

Topic 15: Universities should accept equal numbers of male and female students in every subject. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

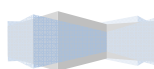
In my opinion, men and women should have the same educational opportunities. However, I do not agree with the idea of accepting equal proportions of each gender in every university subject.

Having the same number of men and women on all degree courses is simply unrealistic. Student numbers on any course depend on the applications that the institution receives. If a university decided to fill courses with equal numbers of males and females, it would need enough applicants of each gender. In reality, many courses are more popular with one gender than the other, and it would not be practical to aim for equal proportions. For example, nursing courses tend to attract more female applicants, and it would be difficult to fill these courses if fifty percent of the places needed to go to males.

Apart from the practical concerns expressed above, I also believe that it would be unfair to base admission to university courses on gender. Universities should continue to select the best candidates for each course according to their qualifications. In this way, both men and women have the same opportunities, and applicants know that they will be successful if they work hard to achieve good grades at school. If a female student is the best candidate for a place on a course, it is surely wrong to reject her in favour of a male student with lower grades or fewer qualifications.

In conclusion, the selection of university students should be based on merit, and it would be both impractical and unfair to change to a selection procedure based on gender.

(265 words, band 9)



DISCUSSTION

(9 sample essays)

Topic 16: Some people think that all university students should study whatever they like. Others believe that they should only be allowed to study subjects that will be useful in the future, such as those related to science and technology.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

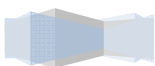
People have different views about how much choice students should have with regard to what they can study at university. While some argue that it would be better for students to be forced into certain key subject areas, I believe that everyone should be able to study the course of their choice.

There are various reasons why people believe that universities should only offer subjects that will be useful in the future. They may assert that university courses like medicine, engineering and information technology are more likely to be beneficial than certain art degrees. From a personal perspective, it can be argued that these courses **provide more job opportunities, career progression**, better salaries, and therefore an improved quality of life for students who take them. On the societal level, by forcing people to choose particular university subjects, governments can ensure that any knowledge and skill gaps in the economy are covered. Finally, a focus on technology in higher education could lead to new inventions, economic growth, and **greater future prosperity**.

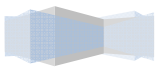
In spite of these arguments, I believe that university students should be free to choose their **preferred areas of study**. In my opinion, society will benefit more if our students are passionate about what they are learning. Besides, nobody can really predict which areas of knowledge will be most useful to society in the future, and it may be that employers begin to value **creative thinking skills** above **practical or technical skills**. If this were the case, perhaps we would need more students of art, history and philosophy than of science or technology.

In conclusion, although it might seem sensible for universities to focus only on the most useful subjects, I personally prefer the current system in which people have the right to study whatever they like.

(297 words, band 9)



2. Career progression = career promotion: sự phát triển nghề nghiệp
3. Future prosperity: sự thịnh vượng trong tương lai
4. Preferred areas of study: ngành học ưa thích



Topic 17: Some people think that strict punishments for driving offences are the key to reducing traffic accidents. Others, however, believe that other measures would be more effective in improving road safety. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

People have differing views with regard to the question of how to make our roads safer. In my view, both punishments and a range of other measures can be used together to promote better driving habits.

On the one hand, strict punishments can certainly help to encourage people to drive more safely. Penalties for dangerous drivers can **act as a deterrent**, meaning that people avoid repeating the same offence. There are various types of **driving penalty**, such as small fines, **licence suspension**, driver awareness courses, and even prison sentences. The aim of these punishments is to show dangerous drivers that their actions have negative consequences. As a result, we would hope that drivers become more disciplined and alert, and that they follow the rules more carefully.

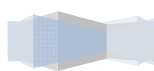
On the other hand, I believe that safe driving can be promoted in several different ways that do not punish drivers. Firstly, it is vitally important to educate people properly before they start to drive, and this could be done in schools or even as part of an extended or more difficult driving test. Secondly, more attention could be paid to safe road design. For example, signs can be used to warn people, speed bumps and road bends can be added to calm traffic, and speed cameras can help to deter people from driving too quickly. Finally, governments or local councils could reduce road accidents by investing in better public transport, which would mean that fewer people would need to travel by car.

In conclusion, while punishments can help to prevent bad driving, I believe that other road safety measures should also be introduced.

(269 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Act as deterrent: coi là một rào cản
2. Driving penalty: hình phạt về lái xe
3. Licence suspension: thu bằng lái



Topic 18: 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.

People have different views about whether we are more or less dependent on others nowadays. In my view, modern life forces us to be more independent than people were in the past.

There are two main reasons why it could be argued that we are more dependent on each other now. Firstly, life is more complex and difficult, especially because the cost of living has increased so dramatically. 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. Secondly, people seem to be more ambitious nowadays, and they want a better quality of life for their families. This means that both parents usually need to work full-time, and they depend on support from grandparents and babysitters for child care.

However, I would agree with those who believe that people are more independent these days. In most countries, families are becoming smaller and more dispersed, which means that people cannot count on relatives as much as they used to. 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. Another factor in this growing independence is technology, which allows us to work alone and from any part of the world.

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.

(279 words – Band 9)

Topic 19: 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.

Some art projects definitely require help from the state. In the UK, there are many works of art in public spaces, such as streets or squares in city centres. In Liverpool, for example, there are several new statues and sculptures in the docks area of the city, which has been redeveloped recently. These 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. Governments 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.

On the other hand, I can understand the arguments against government funding for art. The main reason for this view is that governments have more important concerns. For example, state budgets need to be spent on education, healthcare, infrastructure and security, among other areas. These public services are vital for a country to function properly, whereas the work of creative artists, even in public places, is a luxury. Another reason for this opinion is that artists do a job like any other professional, and they should therefore earn their own money by selling their work.

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.

(263 words – Band 9)

Topic 20: 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.

It is true that medicines and other products are routinely tested on animals before they are cleared for human use. While 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.

On the one hand, there are clear ethical arguments against animal experimentation. To 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. 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. They believe that the benefits to humans do not justify the suffering caused, and that scientists should use alternative methods of research.

On the other hand, reliable alternatives to animal experimentation may not always be available. 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. 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. 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)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Ethical arguments: những cuộc tranh luận về mặt đạo đức
2. The effectiveness of a new drug can be measured: tính hiệu quả của loại thuốc mới có thể đo lường được
3. Trauma: ám ảnh

Topic 21: Some people regard video games as harmless fun, or even as a useful educational tool. Others, however, believe that video 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 game can improve users' motor skills and help to prepare them for real-world tasks, such as flying a plane.

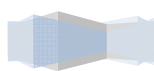
However, I would argue that these benefits are outweighed by the drawbacks. Gaming can be highly addictive because users are constantly given scores, new targets and frequent rewards to keep them playing. Many children now spend hours each day trying to progress through the levels of a game or to get 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)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Virtual world: thế giới ảo
2. The sedentary lifestyles: lối sống ít vận động
3. Potential dangers: những mối nguy hiểm tiềm tàng



Topic 22: Some people think that museums should be enjoyable places to entertain people, while others believe that the purpose of museums is to educate. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

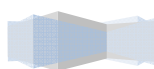
People have different views about the role and function of museums. In my opinion, museums can and should be both entertaining and educational.

On the one hand, it can be argued that the main role of a museum is to entertain. Museums are **tourist attractions**, and their aim is to exhibit **a collection of interesting objects** that many people will want to see. The average visitor may become bored if he or she has to read or listen to too much educational content, so museums often put more of an emphasis on enjoyment rather than learning. This type of museum is designed to be visually spectacular, and may have interactive activities or even games as part of its exhibitions.

On the other hand, some people argue that museums should focus on education. The aim of any exhibition should be to teach visitors something that they did not previously know. Usually this means that the history behind the museum's exhibits needs to be explained, and this can be done in various ways. Some museums employ professional guides to talk to their visitors, while other museums offer headsets so that visitors can listen to **detailed commentary** about the exhibition. In this way, museums can play an important role in teaching people about history, culture, science and many other aspects of life.

In conclusion, it seems to me that a good museum should be able to offer an interesting, enjoyable and educational experience so that people can have fun and learn something at the same time.

(253 words, band 9)



Topic 23: Some people believe that studying at university or college is the best route to a successful career, while others believe that it is better to get a job straight after school.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

When they finish school, teenagers **face the dilemma** of whether to get a job or continue their education. While there are some benefits to getting a job straight after school, I would argue that it is better to go to college or university.

The option to start work straight after school is attractive for several reasons. Many young people want to start earning money as soon as possible. In this way, they can become independent, and they will be able to afford their own house or start a family. In terms of their career, young people who decide to find work, rather than continue their studies, may progress more quickly. They will have the chance to gain real experience and learn practical skills related to their chosen profession. This may lead to promotions and a successful career.

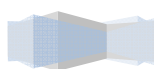
On the other hand, I believe that it is more beneficial for students to continue their studies. Firstly, **academic qualifications** are required in many professions. For example, it is impossible to become a doctor, teacher or lawyer without having the relevant degree. As a result, university graduates have access to more and better job opportunities, and they tend to earn higher salaries than those with fewer qualifications. Secondly, the job market is becoming increasingly competitive, and sometimes there are hundreds of applicants for one position in a company. Young people who do not have qualifications from a university or college will not be able to compete.

For the reasons mentioned above, it seems to me that students are more likely to be successful in their careers if they continue their studies beyond school level.

(271 words, Band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Face the dilemma: đối mặt với tình huống khó xử
2. Academic qualifications: bằng cấp



Topic 24: Several languages are in danger of extinction because they are spoken by very small numbers of people. Some people say that governments should spend public money on saving these languages, while others believe that would be a waste of money. Discuss both these views and give your opinion.

It is true that some minority languages may disappear in the near future. Although it can be argued that governments could save money by allowing this to happen, I believe that these languages should be protected and preserved.

There are several reasons why saving minority languages could be seen as a waste of money. Firstly, if a language is only spoken by a small number of people, expensive education programmes will be needed to make sure that more people learn it, and the state will have to pay for facilities, teachers and marketing. This money might be better spent on other **public services**. Secondly, it would be much cheaper and more efficient for countries to have just one language. Governments could cut all kinds of costs related to communicating with each **minority group**.

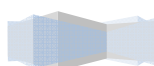
Despite the above arguments, I believe that governments should try to preserve languages that are less widely spoken. A language is much more than simply **a means of communication**; it has a vital connection with **the cultural identity** of the people who speak it. If a language disappears, a whole way of life will disappear with it, and we will lose the rich cultural diversity that makes societies more interesting. By spending money to protect minority languages, governments can also **preserve traditions, customs and behaviours** that are part of a country's history.

In conclusion, it may save money in the short term if we allow minority languages to disappear, but in the long term this would have an extremely negative impact on our cultural heritage.

(258 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Public services: dịch vụ công
2. Minority group: dân tộc thiểu số
3. A means of communication: phương tiện giao tiếp
4. The cultural identity: đặc tính văn hóa
5. Preserve traditions, customs and behaviours: bảo tồn truyền thống, phong tục và cách cư xử



CAUSE AND SOLUTION

Topic 25: More and more people are migrating to cities in search of a better life, but city life can be extremely difficult. Explain some of the difficulties of living in a city. How can governments make urban life better for everyone?

Cities are often seen as places of opportunity, but there are also some major drawbacks of living in a large metropolis. In my opinion, governments could do much more to improve city life for the average inhabitant.

The main problem for anyone who hopes to migrate to a large city is that the cost of living is likely to be much higher than it is in a small town or village. Inhabitants of cities have to pay higher prices for housing, transport, and even food. Another issue is that urban areas tend to suffer from social problems such as high crime and poverty rates in comparison with rural areas. Furthermore, the air quality in cities is often poor, due to pollution from traffic, and the streets and public transport systems are usually overcrowded. As a result, city life can be unhealthy and stressful.

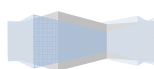
However, there are various steps that governments could take to tackle these problems. Firstly, they could invest money in the building of affordable or social housing to reduce the cost of living. Secondly, politicians have the power to ban vehicles from city centres and promote the use of cleaner public transport, which would help to reduce both air pollution and traffic congestion. In London, for example, the introduction of a congestion charge for drivers has helped to curb the traffic problem. A third option would be to develop provincial towns and rural areas, by moving industry and jobs to those regions, in order to reduce the pressure on major cities.

In conclusion, governments could certainly implement a range of measures to enhance the quality of life for all city residents.

(273 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. A large metropolis: một đô thị lớn
2. High crime and poverty rates: tỷ lệ tội phạm và đói nghèo cao
3. Tackle these problems=address these problems=solve these problems: giải quyết những vấn đề này
4. Reduce the cost of living: giảm chi phí sống



Topic 26: 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.

(265 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Mitigate these potential problems: giảm thiểu những vấn đề tiềm tàng
2. Retirement age: tuổi về hưu
3. An aging population: dân số già
4. Productive working life: cuộc sống công việc hiệu quả

TWO-PART QUESTION

(6 sample essays)

Topic 27: Happiness is considered very important in life.

Why is it difficult to define ?

What factors are important in achieving happiness?

It is no doubt true that the majority of people would like to be happy in their lives. 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.

Happiness is difficult to define because it means something different to each individual person. Nobody can fully understand or experience another person's feelings, and we all have our own particular passions from which we take pleasure. 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. 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.

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. 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. Our basic survival needs must surely be met before we can lead a pleasant life. 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. Other key factors could be individual freedom and a sense of purpose in life.

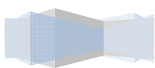
In conclusion, happiness is difficult to define because it is particular to each individual, but I believe that our basic needs for shelter, food and company need to be fulfilled before we can experience it.

(292 words, band 9)

❖ **Useful vocabulary:**

1. A precise definition of happiness: định nghĩa chính xác của hạnh phúc
2. Basic survival needs: nhu cầu sinh tồn cơ bản
3. Lead a pleasant life: có một cuộc sống dễ chịu

Live in complete isolation: sống trong sự cô lập hoàn toàn



Topic 28: 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)

Topic 29: Nowadays the way many people interact with each other has changed because of technology.

In what ways has technology affected the types of relationships that people make? Has this been a positive or negative development?

It is true that new technologies have had an influence on communication between people. Technology has affected relationships in various ways, and in my opinion there are both positive and negative effects.

Technology has had an impact on relationships in business, education and social life. Firstly, telephones and the Internet allow business people in different countries to interact without ever meeting each other. Secondly, services like Skype create new possibilities for relationships between students and teachers. For example, a student can now take video lessons with a teacher in a different city or country. Finally, many people use social networks, like Facebook, to make new friends and find people who share common interests, and they interact through their computers rather than face to face.

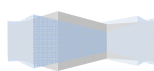
On the one hand, these developments can be extremely positive. Cooperation between people in different countries was much more difficult when communication was limited to written letters or telegrams. Nowadays, interactions by email, phone or video are almost as good as face-to-face meetings, and many of us benefit from these interactions, either in work or social contexts. On the other hand, the availability of new communication technologies can also have the result of isolating people and discouraging real interaction. For example, many young people choose to make friends online rather than mixing with their peers in the real world, and these 'virtual' relationships are a poor substitute for real friendships.

In conclusion, technology has certainly revolutionised communication between people, but not all of the outcomes of this revolution have been positive.

(257 words, band9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Face-to-face meetings: buổi gặp mặt trực tiếp
2. A poor substitute for real friendships: sự thay thế tồi tệ cho tình bạn thực sự



Topic 30: Explain some of the ways in which humans are damaging the environment. What can governments do to address these problems? What can individual people do?

Humans are responsible for a variety of **environmental problems**, but we can also take steps to reduce the damage that we are causing to the planet. This essay will discuss environmental problems and the measures that governments and individuals can take to address these problems.

Two of the biggest threats to the environment are **air pollution and waste**. **Gas emissions** from factories and **exhaust fumes** from vehicles lead to **global warming**, which may have a devastating effect on the planet in the future. As the human population increases, we are also producing ever greater quantities of waste, which contaminates the earth and pollutes rivers and oceans.

Governments could certainly make more effort to reduce air pollution. They could introduce laws to limit emissions from factories or to force companies to use **renewable energy** from **solar, wind or water power**. They could also impose 'green taxes' on drivers and airline companies. In this way, people would be encouraged to use public transport and to take fewer flights abroad, therefore reducing emissions.

Individuals should also take responsibility for the impact they have on the environment. They can take **public transport** rather than driving, choose products with less packaging, and recycle as much as possible. Most supermarkets now provide **reusable bags** for shoppers as well as 'banks' for recycling glass, plastic and paper in their car parks. By reusing and recycling, we can help to reduce waste.

In conclusion, both national governments and individuals must play their part in looking after the environment.

(250 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Environmental problems: vấn đề về môi trường
2. Air pollution and waste: ô nhiễm không khí và rác thải
3. Gas emissions: sự thải ra khí thải
4. Global warming: hiệu ứng nhà kính
5. Renewable energy: năng lượng có thể thay mới
6. Solar, wind or water power: năng lượng mặt trời, sức gió và sức nước
7. Public transport: phương tiện công cộng
8. Reusable bags: túi có thể tái sử dụng

Topic 31: Many people prefer to watch foreign films rather than locally produced films. Why could this be? Should governments give more financial support to local film industries?

It is true that foreign films are more popular in many countries than **domestically produced films**. There could be several reasons why this is the case, and I believe that governments should promote **local film-making** by subsidising the industry.

There are various reasons why many people find foreign films more enjoyable than the films produced in their own countries. Firstly, the established film industries in certain countries have huge budgets for action, special effects and to shoot scenes in spectacular locations. Hollywood **blockbusters** like 'Avatar' or the James Bond films are examples of such productions, and their **global appeal** is undeniable. Another reason why these big-budget films are so successful is that they often star the most famous actors and actresses, and they are made by the most accomplished producers and directors. The poor quality, low-budget filmmaking in many countries suffers in comparison.

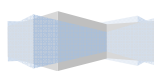
In my view, governments should support local film industries financially. In every country, there may be talented **amateur film-makers** who just need to be given the opportunity to prove themselves. To compete with big-budget productions from overseas, these people need money to pay for film crews, actors and a host of other costs related to producing high-quality films. If governments did help with these costs, they would see an increase in employment in the film industry, income from film sales, and perhaps even a rise in tourist numbers. New Zealand, for example, has seen an increase in tourism related to the 'Lord of the Rings' films, which were partly funded by government subsidies.

In conclusion, I believe that increased financial support could help to raise the quality of locally made films and allow them to compete with the foreign productions that currently dominate the market.

(294 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Domestically produced films: phim được sản xuất trong nước
2. Local film-making: làm phim trong nước
3. Global appeal: sức hút toàn cầu
4. Amateur film-makers: các nhà làm phim nghiệp dư



Topic 32: These days more fathers stay at home and take care of their children while mothers go out to work. What could be the reasons for this? Do you think it is a positive or a negative development?

It is true that men are increasingly likely to take on the role of **househusband**, while more women than ever are the **breadwinners** in their families. There could be several reasons for this, and I consider it to be a very positive trend.

In recent years, parents have had to **adapt to various changes** in our societies. Equal rights movements have made great progress, and it has become normal for women to gain qualifications and **pursue a career**. It has also become socially acceptable for men to stay at home and look after their children. At the same time, **the rising cost of living** has meant that both marriage partners usually need to work and save money before starting a family. Therefore, when couples have children, they may decide who works and who stays at home depending on the personal preference of each partner, or based on which partner earns the most money.

In my view, the changes described above should be seen as progress. We should be happy to live in a society in which men and women have equal opportunities, and in which women are not put under pressure to sacrifice their careers. Equally, it seems only fair that men should be free to leave their jobs in order **to assume childcare responsibilities** if this is what they wish to do. Couples should be left to make their own decisions about which parental role each partner takes, according to their particular circumstances and needs.

In conclusion, the changing roles of men and women in the family are a result of wider changes in society, and I believe that these developments are desirable.

(274 words, band 9)

❖ Useful vocabulary:

1. Househusband: người chồng ở nhà làm việc nhà
2. Breadwinners: trụ cột gia đình
3. Adapt to various changes: thích nghi với nhiều thay đổi
4. The rising cost of living: chi phí cho cuộc sống càng tăng
5. Assume childcare responsibilities: nhận trách nhiệm chăm sóc con cái

Phần 7: Tổng hợp những thắc mắc của học viên gửi cho thầy Simon

1. Is it ok to use the words "I", "my" and "we" in writing task 2?

Yes, it's perfectly ok to use those words. You might be told to avoid them in university assignments, but the advice for IELTS is different. If the question asks for your opinion, you will probably need to write "I agree", "I believe" or "in my opinion".

2. Can we invent facts or figures in writing task 2?

I don't recommend inventing statistics or news stories. I always think that doing this makes writing seem 'false'. Just explain your own ideas and opinions, and give reasons and examples.

3. Can we use "you" to talk about people in general?

In the speaking test, it's fine to say something like "when you go on holiday, you have the chance to relax". But in a written essay, I would prefer to change this e.g. "when people go on holiday...".

4. Is it ok to use "firstly" and "secondly" without a "finally" idea?

Yes, that's fine.

5. Will I lose marks if I don't give both views in writing task 2?

It depends on the question. If the question asks you to discuss both views, you must do this. However, if the question asks whether you agree or disagree, you definitely don't need to mention both sides of the argument.

6. IELTS Advice: don't invent statistics

People often ask me about inventing statistics in their task 2 essays. For example, if the question is about crime, they might invent something like this:

"According to a recent report from Oxford University, around 60% of prisoners reoffend after being released."

Although this looks like a good 'academic-style' sentence, I still wouldn't recommend writing it. Here are two reasons why:

1. As you don't have access to research in your exam, statistics like this always seem 'fake' to the examiner.
2. Statistics aren't really appropriate for the style of writing that examiners expect. They are expecting an opinion-based essay, not a research-based assignment.

Rather than relying on invented statistics, focus on expressing your own views.

7. IELTS Advice: you don't need to be 'original'

Some students worry about being 'original'. They worry that too many other candidates might use the same ideas, vocabulary or linking words as them. For example, several people have asked me whether the examiner will notice if they use the vocabulary from my blog lessons or ebook. Others worry that simple linking words like "firstly, secondly, finally" are too common or even too 'old'.

So, is it true that we should worry about these things? Do candidates need to use 'new', original language in their tests?

The answer is no! IELTS is not testing your originality; it's testing your ability to use the English language in a normal, natural way. Don't worry about any of the things mentioned above!

8. Do you recommend using thesis statements e.g. "This essay will..." in introductions for writing task 2?

There's nothing wrong with doing this, but I find it unnecessary. If you read through my task 2 lessons, you'll see that I never write a thesis statement in my introductions. I prefer to spend the time getting started on my main body paragraphs, which are more important!

9. If the question asks "Is this a positive or negative development?", should we write about both positives and negatives?

It's your choice. You can take a strong view and argue that the development is 100% positive (or negative), or you can take a balanced view and give the positives and negatives. If you do discuss both sides, it might be best if you make an overall decision e.g. "In spite of the negative effects of..., I believe that it is a positive development overall."

10. Is it ok to write IELTS essays in capital letters?

Yes, it seems that the rules changed some time ago, and it's now fine to write your essays in capital letters.

11. Is writing task 2 the same for the general and academic tests?

Yes, the question types and topics are basically the same. That's why I only have one lesson category for task 2 here on my blog.

12. Do examiners care about small things like singular and plural forms?

Yes, examiners notice these things! In the writing test, one small mistake won't affect your score, but many small mistakes will. In the listening test, a singular / plural mistake could lose you a whole mark.

13. Is it better to write numbers as words or figures?

It's probably better to write the full word (e.g. 'nine') in writing task 2, but I would write the figure (e.g. '9') in all other parts of the test.

14. IELTS Advice: band 9 phrases for every essay?

Here's an interesting question that someone asked me on Facebook:

Can you add on your blog some typical phrases (band 9) that we can use in every essay?

This seems to be the 'secret' that so many people are looking for. The problem is that these phrases **do not exist**. I'll try to explain why.

To get a high score for vocabulary and task response, you need to use words and phrases that are specific to the particular question that you are given. For example, if the question is about the environment, you could write about 'greenhouse gases' or 'carbon dioxide emissions'. But these phrases cannot be used in every essay; they are only relevant to this one topic.

The only phrases that can be used in every essay would be 'linking' phrases, and these do not contribute to your vocabulary or task response scores. They only help you to organise your ideas.

15. In writing task 2, is it better to write four paragraphs or five?

There isn't really a 'best' way; it's possible to write a band 9 essay with four, five, or even six paragraphs. My preference is for four paragraphs because this encourages you to go into more detail in each of the two main body paragraphs. More detail and depth = a better essay!

16. IELTS Advice: linking

Many IELTS students become obsessed with 'linkers' - words or phrases that link ideas together in a paragraph e.g. firstly, secondly, furthermore, moreover. There is nothing wrong with using linkers, and they can certainly help you to write good paragraphs.

However, linkers become a problem when they are the only thing that students care about. Examiners care much more about the **content between** the linkers.

As an experiment, try writing a paragraph without linking words. Can you still make your paragraph coherent? Note: you probably don't use many linkers when you write in your own language!

17. IELTS Advice: are longer essays better?

A student asked me the following question:

Will it help my score if I write a longer essay for writing task 2 - because a longer essay will contain more vocabulary?

Here's my answer:

Quality is more important than quantity in the IELTS writing test. If you write a longer essay, you **might** demonstrate a wider range of vocabulary. On the other hand, you might just repeat the same ideas, and you might make more mistakes.

I don't teach my students to write longer essays (anything over 250 words is fine). I teach them to spend 10 minutes planning good ideas, rather than trying to write more words. In my view, planning is the secret to improving the quality.

18. Is it a ok to start task 2 essays with a question?

No, that would be more journalistic than academic style.

19. If I only put my opinion in the conclusion, will I lose marks?

Possibly, yes. If you want a high score, your opinion should be clear "throughout" the essay (if the question asks for it). State your opinion in the introduction, then explain it in the main body, and repeat or summarise it in the conclusion.

20. IELTS Writing Advice: don't use these phrases

When writing a conclusion for task 2, I always start with the words "In conclusion". There's no reason why you should learn any alternatives.

Here are some phrases that I would **not** use:

1. All things considered
2. To sum up
3. In summary
4. To summarize
5. In short
6. In a nutshell
7. To put it in a nutshell

Note:

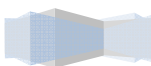
Phrases 1 to 5 are acceptable, but I still wouldn't use them myself. Don't use any phrase containing the word "nutshell". 6 and 7 are not appropriate for an academic essay.

21. Is it ok to use quotations by famous people in my task 2 essay?

I wouldn't recommend using quotations. Unless you have thousands of them in your head, it's unlikely that you'll remember a relevant one. The examiner is likely to judge a quotation as 'memorised language'.

22. How do examiners know whether I'm using 'memorised language'?

All of the language in your brain is memorised, so I should explain this properly. The examiner would be impressed by a memorised phrase like "greenhouse gas emissions contribute to global warming", if the question asked you to explain an environmental problem. However, examiners are not impressed by the kind of phrase that students think they can use for any question e.g. "This is a controversial issue that has led to heated debate among people on both sides".



23. IELTS Writing Advice: word count

Here's a question that seems to worry students, especially those in China:

"A famous IELTS book in China tells students that they should write 340 words or more (for task 2) if they want to get band 6.5 or higher. However, other tutors tell us that we should use the 10% principle, which means we will lose marks if we write anything more than 275 words. Which advice is correct?"

Here's my answer:

All of that advice is wrong, and I don't know why teachers invent these things! The only rule is that you need to write at least 250 words. So, whether you write 250 words or 500 words, it is possible to get a band 9. As long as you reach 250 words, the examiner only cares about the quality of what you write.

PS. I advise my students to spend 10 minutes planning before they write anything. This forces them to focus on quality rather than quantity.

24. Students' Questions: 'complex' sentences

People often ask me about using 'complex' sentences and 'difficult' words or grammatical structures. Here's an example question that someone asked me:

I can see you did not use any long and complex initial sentences to begin your paragraphs. I wonder if sentences like this are useful: "In recent years, has never failed to attract people's attention and spark controversy over the potential impacts of this trend on individuals."

My answer is that examiners are not impressed by this kind of sentence. Instead of judging it as 'complex', they are more likely to judge it as 'memorised'.

Here's my tip: instead of trying to impress the examiner with big words or memorised phrases, try to impress him/her by answering the question really well. Plan some good ideas before you start writing, then do your best to express them in a natural way and without making too many mistakes.

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