

Grammar

for

IELTS Writing Task 2

& for Life 

Improve your English Language

High Level Grammar in Simple Steps

Increase your IELTS Score

IELTS Liz

Academic & GT IELTS. High Score Target.

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This book contains information about grammar as well as model sentences which can be paraphrased for use in IELTS writing task 2. The ideas expressed in the model sentences are not intended to influence any person's personal opinions and do not represent the opinions of the author.

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Note

Chapters marked with 🔍 are for people who have less than one month before their test. These chapters are the most critical to review if you are short of time.

Chapters marked with *** are for people who have finished IELTS and wish to focus exclusively on English language development. It might still be useful to review all chapters, but I have marked those which will be most helpful to you.

Intensifiers

Intensifiers are usually adverbs and adverbial phrases that are used to emphasise a point or to strengthen the meaning of other words. These words can help you express the strength of your ideas and thoughts more precisely, which is important for a high score in IELTS Writing Task 2. However, intensifiers should match your feelings. They should not be used solely because you think they might give you a better score. As with all aspects of grammar and vocabulary, using words incorrectly or inappropriately will lower your score.

Examples

- In most major cities, traffic congestion has become a serious problem.

In this sentence, both grammar and vocabulary are used correctly. However, it may be that the writer was looking for a word with a stronger meaning than *serious*. An easy way to make the meaning of the adjective *serious* stronger is to use an intensifier:

In most major cities, traffic congestion has become a very
an extremely serious problem.
a particularly

As you can see, the underlined intensifiers enable you to express your opinion more precisely.

Let's look at another example:

- It is probable that a growing number of people will work from home.

Here too, both grammar and vocabulary are used correctly, but maybe the writer would like to say *how probable* it is. Again, intensifiers enable you to do that:

It is highly
extremely probable that a growing number of people will work from home.
very

As the following example illustrates, adjectives in their comparative form can be intensified as well:

- Governments should impose stricter rules against deforestation.

Governments should impose much
far stricter rules against deforestation.
considerably

About This Chapter

This chapter lists a wide variety of intensifying words and phrases and shows you how to use them correctly.

As this chapter is essentially about adjectives and adverbs, the following abbreviations have been used:

'Adj.' stands for 'Adjective(s)'

'Adv.' for 'Adverb(s)'

In this chapter, the term "gradable" is sometimes used in relation to adjectives. A gradable adjective is one that can be used with comparative and superlative forms, or with intensifiers such as *very*. For example:

rich	richer	the richest	very rich	gradable
interesting	more interesting	the most interesting	very interesting	gradable
worrying	more worrying	the most worrying	very worrying	gradable
excellent	more excellent	the most excellent	very excellent	ungradable
unique	more unique	the most unique	very unique	ungradable
favourite	more favourite	the most favourite	very favourite	ungradable

You could also show a gradable adjective in this way: *fairly rich, quite rich, very rich, extremely rich*. It shows a scale of intensity or, in other words, it shows they vary in "grade".

Adverbs too can be gradable. For example:

often	more often	the most often	very often	gradable
always	more always	the most always	very always	ungradable

too / very

The word *too* means 'to an excessive degree' and therefore always has a negative meaning, while the word *very* simply means 'to a high degree' but is in itself neither positive nor negative. Both *too* and *very* can be used with adjectives and adverbs.

- Many people emigrate because wages are too low in their country of origin.

A paraphrase of the above sentence will make the negative meaning of the intensifier *too* clear:

- Many people emigrate because wages are not high enough in their country of origin.

The negative meaning of *too* is also evident in the following sentence:

- Teachers need to pitch tests at the right level. If a test is too easy, students will feel under-challenged or even insulted; if it is too difficult, students will be discouraged and demotivated.

In your essay, do NOT use *too* instead of *very*.

~~Many people emigrate because wages are not high enough in their country of origin. As you can see, the intensifier "too" has a negative meaning.~~

Further examples:

- Credit cards can be very useful in emergency situations.
- Schoolchildren who are forced to study too intensively may fall into depression.
- The economy has been improving very slowly since the last recession.

***too* + Adj./Adv. + *for* somebody/something**

- Examinations are too stressful for young children.
- Graduates are sometimes too qualified for the job they apply for.
- Time often seems to move too slowly for young children.
- A number of surgical procedures are too risky for the elderly.

Note that the meaning of *too* + Adj./Adv. can sometimes be expressed as *not* + Adj./Adv. + *enough*. Pay attention to the word order: *enough* comes **after** the adjective.

- Time often seems not fast enough for young children.
(~~not enough fast~~ is WRONG)
- A number of surgical procedures are not safe enough for the elderly.
(~~not enough safe~~ is WRONG)

***too* + Adj./Adv. + *for* somebody/something *to do* something**

- The climate is changing too fast for some species to survive.

This means that some species cannot survive **because** the climate is changing too fast.

- Social issues are being dealt with too slowly for ordinary people to feel a difference.

This means that ordinary people cannot feel a difference **because** social issues are being dealt with too slowly.

Note that the meaning of *too* + Adj./Adv. + *for* somebody *to do* something can sometimes be expressed as *not* + Adj./Adv. + *enough* + *for* somebody *to do* something.

- Social issues are not being dealt with fast enough for ordinary people to feel a difference.

***so* + Adj. / *such* + Noun Phrase**

To learn more about noun phrases, go to page 20.

The words *so* and *such* require markedly different structures.

The word *so* can be used to make adjectives or adverbs stronger.

- It would be difficult to ban plastic bags overnight because they are so popular.
- People already knew 20 years ago that the climate was changing, but they did not expect it to change so rapidly.

By contrast, the word *such* can only be used with a noun phrase.

- It would be difficult to ban plastic bags overnight because they enjoy such widespread popularity.

In this sentence, we have *such* + [no article because *popularity* is uncountable] + Adjective + Noun.

- Apparently, people were not aware that burning fossil fuels would have such dire consequences for the environment.

In this sentence, we have *such* + [no article because *consequences* is a plural] + Adjective + Plural Noun.

- Scientists never expected the climate to change at such an alarming rate.

In this sentence, we have *such* + Indefinite Article because *rate* is singular + Adjective + Singular Noun.

***so* + Adj. + *that* ... / *such* + Noun Phrase + *that* ...**

The intensifiers *so* and *such* can also be used to introduce a result clause.

- The climate is changing so fast that scientists and governments seem unable to provide long-term solutions.
↓
The climate is changing at such an alarming rate that scientists and governments seem unable to provide long-term solutions
- The popularity of plastic bags is so widespread that it would be difficult to ban them overnight.
↓
Plastic bags enjoy such widespread popularity that it would be difficult to ban them overnight.

fairly / quite / rather

fairly

As an intensifier, the word *fairly* means 'to some degree' and is therefore much less strong than *very*.

- Access to the internet plays a fairly important part in a child's success at school.
- In some parts of the world, there are thousands of uneducated people who are able to speak two or three different languages fairly well.

Note: Do not confuse the intensifier *fairly* with *fairly* as an adverb meaning 'in a fair way'.

- Employees should be treated fairly, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or creed.
↓
Employees should be treated in a fair way, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or creed.

quite

This word can be confusing because, as an intensifier, it can have two opposite meanings depending on the adjective that follows.

1. When it is followed by a gradable adjective or adverb, *quite* is similar in meaning to *fairly*. It is stronger than *a little* but less strong than *very*.

- Not so long ago, people used to go to the public library quite often.
- Some people say that the role of luck in business success is quite important.

Pay attention to the word order when *quite* is followed by a noun phrase.

- Some people say that luck plays quite an important role in business success.
(~~a quite important role~~ is WRONG)
- It takes quite a long time to give up old habits and develop new ones.
(~~a quite long time~~ is WRONG)

2. The word *quite* means 'very', 'completely' when it is followed by an ungradable or "extreme" adjective (or adverb) such as:

clear, obvious / true, right, wrong / sure, certain / different / impossible / amazing, extraordinary, incredible, etc.

- It is quite wrong to treat employees differently on the basis of their gender.
(= completely wrong)
- Learning a foreign language at school is quite different from picking it up in the country where it is spoken.
(= completely different)

3. When the word *quite* is used with a verb, it can mean either *fairly* or *completely*, depending on whether the verb is considered gradable or not.

- Elderly people quite enjoy spending time on social media.
(= they enjoy that moderately)
- I quite agree with the idea that school leavers should spend a year abroad.
(= I completely agree)

rather

This word is also used to intensify the meaning of adjectives and adverbs. It means 'to some degree' and therefore has the same strength as *fairly* and *quite* (when *quite* is used with gradable adjectives). There are three main uses of the word *rather*.

1. The main difference between *rather* and *fairly/quite* is that we **tend** to use *rather* mainly with negative adjectives or when we perceive something as negative. Note that this is a **tendency** more than a **rule**.

- Losing one's passport or mobile phone can be rather distressing.

Something distressing makes you feel very upset, so the word *distressing* has a negative meaning. Therefore, *rather* would tend to be used more often than *quite* in this context.

- When we practise a skill, it is useful to remember that the road to mastery is rather long.

The adjective *long* is neutral, neither positive nor negative, but the writer here wants to express the idea that it takes a very long time to reach mastery and that it is not easy.

2. We also use *rather* with positive adjectives and adverbs when we want to express the idea of something unexpected, surprising or unusual.

- Despite a recent period of financial instability, the economy is rather healthy overall.

The adjective *healthy* is positive, but the fact that the economy is healthy now is slightly surprising or unexpected because of the recent period of financial instability.

- A film or a play may become rather popular even though it had poor reviews in the press.

One might expect a film or a play that receives poor reviews to be bad, but in this case it became popular, which is surprising.

3. The word *rather* can also be used in these combinations: *rather* + Adj. + Noun / *rather* + Noun.

- When we start practising a skill, we should remember that it takes rather a long time to attain mastery.

Note that the form “a rather long time” is not a mistake but is less common than “rather a long time”.

- The search for more eco-friendly ways of spending one’s holidays has produced some rather imaginative ideas.
(~~rather some imaginative ideas~~ is WRONG)
- To many people, the 2008 financial crisis came as rather a shock.
(~~a rather shock~~ is WRONG)

very / extremely, and other adverbs in -ly

Using *very* or *extremely* is one of the most common ways of making an adjective or an adverb stronger.

- We all know some extremely talented people who are very lazy and do not achieve anything in life.
- Professional translators need to be able to work very fast and extremely accurately.

Of course, adjectives and adverbs do not always need to be made stronger, but if you wish to use intensifiers in your essay, it is a good idea to familiarise yourself with some other intensifying adverbs so that you do not overuse *very* and *extremely*.

exceptionally / extraordinarily / incredibly / remarkably / unusually

- We all know some exceptionally talented people who are incredibly lazy and do not achieve anything in life.
- Professional translators need to be able to work remarkably fast and accurately.

Note:

Those adverbs cannot be used to strengthen just any adjective or adverb. A good collocations dictionary will give you information about which adverbs are frequently used as intensifiers with which adjective or adverb. During the examination itself, if you are not sure about a certain collocation, you may want to use only *very* and *extremely*.

Note also that in informal spoken English, people often use intensifiers such as *awfully*, *pretty*, *really*, *terribly*. While it is perfectly acceptable in informal spoken English to say that someone is 'awfully talented' or 'pretty lazy', you must not use those intensifiers in your essay.

Intensifiers with Comparatives

Before comparatives, we use *much / far / a lot / considerably* for large differences and *a little / slightly / a bit* for small differences.

- I believe that hard work is much more necessary than creativity in order to become successful.
- Parents and teachers exert a considerably stronger influence on children than celebrities.

For more information about comparatives and superlatives, go to page 190.

“Extreme” Adjectives

A whole range of adjectives already function as intensifiers because of their meaning. See, for example, the following adjectives in **bold**:

very good	→	excellent / superb / perfect / wonderful / brilliant
very bad	→	awful / dreadful / appalling / terrible / horrible
very big	→	huge / enormous / massive / gigantic / immense / vast
very small	→	tiny / minute / microscopic / infinitesimal

Such adjectives are sometimes called “extreme” or “absolute” adjectives because part of their meaning includes a very high degree of a certain quality. For example, *vast* means ‘very, very big’ and *tiny* means ‘very, very small’. Therefore, extreme adjectives cannot be intensified with *very*.

- ✓ The difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness is very big.
- ✗ The difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness is ~~very huge~~.
- ✓ The difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness is huge.

If you want to use an intensifier with an extreme adjective, you need to use *absolutely*, for example.

- The difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness is absolutely huge.

A second feature is that extreme adjectives are ungradable, which means that they do not usually have a comparative or superlative form (~~huger, more excellent~~, etc.).

It is important in IELTS Writing Task 2 that the meaning in the ideas you present is accurate. Do not use extreme adjectives unless you actually mean to use such strong language. Having precise meaning is a requirement of the higher band scores.

Intensifying Adverb + Adjective Collocations

Collocations are ‘partners for words’: for example, some adjectives are commonly modified by certain specific adverbs, and never by others.

As explained in the preceding section, ‘absolutely huge’ is fine, but ‘~~very huge~~’ is wrong.

There are no hard and fast rules for collocations, there are only tendencies. However, you may find it useful to look at some common combinations and the reason behind them.

absolutely	Usually strengthens adjectives that express an 'extreme' meaning and which cannot be intensified by the word <i>very</i> , such as: <i>appalled / appalling / convinced / devastated / devastating / exhausted / exhausting / impossible</i>
utterly	Like <i>absolutely</i> , <i>utterly</i> is used to strengthen adjectives that express an 'extreme', usually negative, meaning.
bitterly	Apart from <i>bitterly cold</i> when talking about the weather, frequent collocations include: <i>disappointed / disappointing / opposed / resentful</i>
deeply	Often used to strengthen adjectives associated with beliefs, feelings and opinions, such as: <i>ashamed / committed / concerned / depressed / hurt / moved / offended / offensive / shocked / upset</i>
highly	Usually strengthens adjectives that denote positive qualities or express probability, such as: <i>intelligent / profitable / recommended / successful</i> <i>likely / unlikely / probable / improbable</i> Note also the extremely frequent collocation <i>highly controversial</i> .
seriously	Often used to strengthen adjectives that denote negative qualities, such as: <i>damaged / delayed / hurt / ill / injured / overweight / worried</i>

Intensifying Adjective + Noun Collocations

It is not possible to produce lists of which adjective collocates with which noun. However, you may find it useful to look at three adjectives and some nouns you can collocate with them that are very frequently used as intensifiers.

complete / total	agreement / change / control / freedom / misunderstanding / recovery / surprise / waste
Utter	confusion / contempt / despair / devastation / disbelief / failure / helplessness / nonsense / waste

Prepositions

A preposition is a small word such as *at, before, behind, over, to, with*, etc. that is used before a noun (or a noun phrase or pronoun). The preposition expresses a relationship between that noun and the verb, noun or adjective that comes before it.

In this chapter you will review:

Use of Prepositions
Dependant Prepositions
Prepositions at the End of Clauses or Sentences
Prepositions Followed by a Verb

Use of Prepositions

Introduction

Prepositions can be used to express many different kinds of relationships. For example:

- spatial, such as location, movement, direction (*above, at, below, in, on, to, from, towards*, etc.)
 - Many people emigrate to be educated **in** more developed countries.
 - Some foreign students do not wish to return **to** their own country after graduation.
- temporal, such as time, duration (*at, before, by, during, in, on, for, since*, etc.)
 - **In** a few years, climate change will have spun out of control.
 - Governments need to take action on global warming **before** it is too late.
- reason (*because, because of, due to, owing to*, etc.)
 - A lot of animal species disappear **because of** human activities such as deforestation.
 - **Owing to** traffic congestion in cities, thousands of litres of petrol are wasted every day.
- purpose (*for, to, towards*, etc.)
 - A huge number of people are finding it impossible to save money **towards** their retirement.
 - Cycling **for** fitness or **for** pleasure can be a great family activity.

Note that many of the common prepositions listed above can also be used in an abstract sense in addition to their concrete sense:

- It is always families **on** low incomes that suffer most during an economic downturn.
- We should not just watch **in** silence while the world's last primeval forests are being cut down.
- It is easier for students to succeed if they feel that their parents are **behind** them.
- Many people are **under** a lot of pressure at work.

Let's now look in more detail at some prepositions expressing spatial and temporal relationships.

Spatial Relationships (Position & Place)

- Examples of common expressions with *at* expressing location 'at a point':

at the top (of sth)	at school	at the front
at the bottom (of sth)	at university	at the back
at the end (of sth)	at work	at the airport
at the beginning	at home	at the station

- Examples of common expressions with *in* expressing location 'inside' something:

in bed	in the middle	in the photo / picture
in the kitchen / bath / garden	in the corner	in hospital / prison
in a book / magazine	in Paris / India / Africa	in the sky

- Examples of common expressions of location with *on*:

on the Danube / Ganges	on the screen	on the computer
on the left / right	on TV	on the phone
on the page	on the radio	on the ground
on the map	on the road	on the plane / train / bus (! <u>in</u> a car)

Temporal Relationships (Time)

- Examples of common time expressions with *at*:

at one o'clock	at the weekend	at night
at noon / midnight	at weekends	at Christmas / Diwali, etc.
at the moment	at present	at the same time

- Examples of common time expressions with *in*:

in the morning	in January / February, etc.
in the afternoon	in 1789 / 1968 / 2050, etc.
in the evening	in the 20th / 21st, etc. century
in the summer / autumn, etc.	in the daytime
in the past	in the future

Note:

These three expressions have a different meaning:

- In my experience, it is not possible to learn a foreign language in two or three years.

Meaning: 'in this amount of time'

- Experts say we can expect another recession in the next two or three years.

Meaning: 'any time in the future between now and the next two or three years'

- Upon leaving university, many graduates do not know where they will be in two or three years' time.

Meaning: 'two or three years later'.

- Examples of common time expressions with *on*:

on 8th March / January 1st, etc.	on the first / second / last day
on Tuesday / Sunday, etc.	on Thursday afternoon, etc.
on Monday morning, etc.	on Friday evening, etc.

- Examples of common time expressions with no preposition:

No preposition before *last / next / this* + time expression:

It happened on last Monday.	→	It happened last Monday.
It will take place on next Wednesday.	→	It will take place next Wednesday.
They want to go in this evening.	→	They want to go this evening.

No preposition before *all / any / each / every / some* + time expression:

There are forest fires in every summer.	→	There are forest fires every summer.
Violence could erupt on any day.	→	Violence could erupt any day.

No preposition before *tomorrow / yesterday / the day after tomorrow / the day before yesterday*.

- Easily confused time words: **until** vs **by**:

The difference between *until* and *by* can be seen clearly in the following sentence:

- In my country, children are allowed to play outside **until** eight o'clock, but they must be in bed **by** ten o'clock.

This means that children can continue to play up to eight but must be in bed not later than ten.

We use *until* to talk about something that continues up to a certain time in the future and then stops.

- Some experts have predicted that, because of rising sea temperatures, glaciers will only last **until** 2050.

We use *by* to talk about something that will happen at or before a future moment. *By* means 'not later than'.

- **By** 2050, greenhouse gas emissions will have been cut to almost zero in most European countries.

The related expression *by the time* roughly means 'when'. We use it to connect an action that has already happened, or will have happened, *before* another action:

- **By the time** the fire brigade arrived, the fire was already out.

This means that it probably took the fire brigade a long time to arrive, so the fire was already extinguished when they arrived.

- **By the time** we find a solution to the problem of plastic pollution, many more animal species will have disappeared.

This means that it will probably take quite a long time to solve the problem of plastic pollution, so when we eventually find a solution, it will be too late for many species.

Note: Do not use *will* to refer to the future in a clause introduced with *by the time* ('by the time we ~~will~~ find a solution').

Note that *until* is not only a preposition. It can also function as a conjunction to link an event or an action to a point in time:

- The Romans expanded their control **until** they had conquered a huge territory.
- Environmentalists fear that logging will continue **until** most of the Earth's rainforests have disappeared.

Note: Do not use *will* to refer to the future in a clause introduced with *until*:

Incorrect: The world will not be completely safe **until** nuclear weapons ~~will be~~ banned.

Correct: The world will not be completely safe **until** nuclear weapons **are** banned.

Note also the difference between *until now* (+ past) and *so far* (+ present):

- **Until now**, people had to pay in cash or by credit card.

This implies that the situation has stopped or changed. For example, people can now pay by mobile phone.

- **So far**, the United States have not signed the Kyoto Protocol to fight climate change.

This implies that the situation has not changed. We cannot use *until now* in this case.

- Easily confused time words: **during** vs **while** vs **for**:

Compare these two sentences:

- Many people run up huge debts **during** their university studies. (**NOT while**)
- Many people run up huge debts **while** they are studying at university. (**NOT during**)

We use the preposition *during* before a noun or a noun phrase to say *when* something happens:

- Many people lost their homes **during** the 2008 financial crisis.
- We must make sure to remain well hydrated **during** the summer months.
- **During** the next decade, mass tourism will certainly continue to grow.

By contrast, *while* is a linking word and is used to introduce a clause:

- Young people will not sit in silence **while** the rainforests are being destroyed.

To say *how long* something goes on, we use *for*:

- **For** decades, Native Americans have suffered from injustice and discrimination.

- Easily confused time words: **for** vs **since**:

As we have just seen, *for* as a time word is a preposition and is used to talk about the length of a period of time, an amount of time. This period of time can be in the past, the present or the future:

- In 1969, Armstrong and Aldrin walked on the Moon **for** over two hours. (*past*)
- There is no reason why nonviolent offenders should be held in prison **for** life. (*present*)
- It will soon be possible for space tourists to stay in space **for** several weeks. (*future*)

By contrast, *since* as a time word is used to talk about the start of a period. It can be a preposition, a conjunction or an adverb:

- There have been countless armed conflicts **since** the Second World War. (*preposition*)
- The United Nations has solved many regional conflicts **since** it was founded in 1945. (*conjunction*)
- The Great Pyramid of Giza is a remarkable feat of human engineering, and many people agree that nothing comparable has been built **since**. (*adverb*)

The confusion between *for* and *since* arises mainly when using the Present Perfect.

1. India and Pakistan have been independent **since** 1947.
2. India and Pakistan have been independent **for** more than 70 years.

In both sentences, we use the Present Perfect to describe a situation which started in the past and continues up to the present.

In Sentence 1, we use *since* because we are talking about when independence started; we are interested in the start of a period.

In Sentence 2, we use *for* because we are talking about how long those countries have been independent. 'Since more than 70 years' is WRONG.

Here are some examples of phrases commonly found after *for* and *since*:

<i>for</i>	<i>Since</i>
A period of time that something lasted	A specific date, day, month or time when something started
a long time	five o'clock
five minutes	1990
two hours	February
a month	last winter
many years	the 15th century
centuries	the beginning of the month
the past three weeks	yesterday afternoon

Other Useful Expressions with Prepositions

at a loss	in danger	on a diet
at an advantage	in good condition	on business
at risk	in love	on holiday
at the age of 18	in my opinion	on purpose
at war	in the end	on the whole

Correct Use of Prepositions

As you know, using prepositions correctly is not particularly easy and can be challenging. This for a number of reasons:

- The same preposition can be used to express different relationships: *at university / at the weekend / at war; in the countryside / in ten years / in trouble*; etc.
- A word may need a different preposition depending on the word(s) that it is connected to: *apologise to somebody / apologise for (doing) something; agree with somebody / agree to a proposal*; etc.
- Some words do not need a preposition: *talk about something* but **discuss something**; *go into a building* but **enter a building**; *look like someone* but **resemble someone**; etc.
- There are some rules, but usage is very idiomatic, and there are many fixed phrases.

Inaccurate use of prepositions may cause difficulty for the reader and occasionally cause misunderstandings.

Using prepositions accurately will help you boost your score on either or both Lexical Resource (vocabulary) and Grammatical Range and Accuracy (grammar).

Therefore, you need to pay close attention to prepositions when you proofread your essay.

Note:

The aim of this chapter is simply to provide a general overview of the main uses of prepositions in relation to academic essay writing. It does not contain all uses of prepositions.

If you feel you would like more insight into prepositions or if you realise that this is an area you are not yet sufficiently confident in, please refer to a detailed English Language grammar book.

Dependent Prepositions

Some verbs, adjectives and nouns are followed by a specific preposition (called a “dependent preposition”).

Study the common dependent prepositions listed above and keep adding your own examples to the list whenever you study or read for pleasure. Combinations of Verb / Adjective / Noun + Preposition are extremely frequent, and it is highly likely that you will use some in your Writing Task 2 essay.

Below are *just a few common examples* of such combinations.

Verb + Preposition

Verb + *for*

- In many cultures, it is the duty of children to care for their ageing parents.
- Several countries have apologised for mistreating their indigenous peoples.

Verb + *from*

- It is sometimes argued that school uniforms prevent children from expressing their personality.
- There is little that parents can do to protect their children from accidentally accessing inappropriate online content.

Verb + *in*

- I believe it is a good idea for schools to encourage parents to participate in the life of the school.
- Schools should encourage students to take part in environmental activities.

Verb + *of*

- Many parents do not approve of letting children watch television indiscriminately.
- All too often, art classes simply consist of basic drawing and colouring activities.

Verb + *on*

- Happiness depends on a host of different factors.
- It is not realistic to rely on teachers alone to help students who have personal difficulties.

Verb + *to*

- The Earth does not belong to us, so it is our duty to protect our environment.
- Some people object to the theory of evolution being taught at school.

Verb + *with*

- Businesses which do not comply with environmental laws and regulations should be fined.

- Parents should teach their children to sympathise with homeless and destitute people.

For more examples of phrasal verbs, please refer to a phrasal verb dictionary. This idiomatic vocabulary is high band score. However, mistakes are easy to make. One mistake using an incorrect preposition might result in changing the meaning of the sentence completely which could lower your score.

Adjective + Preposition

- In my opinion, censoring the internet is not the same as curtailing freedom of speech.
- Most children are very good at some subjects and rather bad at some others.
- Overpopulation and poor public transport are responsible for traffic congestion in many cities.
- Teaching in an inner-city school is of course very different from teaching in a remote rural area.
- For several decades already, surgeons have proved that organ transplants are capable of saving lives.
- Understandably, most young people do not want to remain dependent on their parents for too long.
- People are part of nature and therefore need to be kind to the environment.
- Many people are opposed to the death penalty because of the risk of miscarriages of justice.
- In a way, learning a foreign language is similar to learning a sport: practice is the key to success.
- Some cities have become so popular with tourists that visitors outnumber the locals.

Noun + Preposition

- There is a huge difference between learning a foreign language at school and learning it in the country where it is spoken.
- The main reason for the depletion of the ozone layer is the use of chemicals such as CFCs.
- Ex-convicts often have difficulty in finding a job. (or: Ex-convicts often have difficulty finding a job.)

- There has been an increase in the number of people who choose to adopt a healthy lifestyle and diet.
(NB: In the same way, we speak of a decrease in profit, a rise in gun crime, a fall in the number of violent crimes, etc.).
- Man's interest in space research seems motivated by the urge to conquer rather than by humanitarian concerns.
- So far, there is no definitive proof of the existence of extraterrestrial life.

Prepositions at the End of Clauses/Sentences

In a number of cases, the preposition goes at the end of the clause or sentence:

- Sometimes, parents do not even know what their teenage children are interested in. (*indirect question*)
- Old people who live in care centres often complain that they are not properly looked after. (*passive*)
- Global warming and poverty are the two issues which young people today are most worried about. (*relative clause*)
- To be happy at work, you first need to like the people you work with. (*relative clause*)

If you want to show flexibility and adopt a more formal style, relative clauses such as the ones above can be paraphrased as follows:

- Global warming and poverty are the two issues about which young people today are most worried.
- To be happy at work, you first need to like the people with whom you work.

Prepositions Followed by a Verb

When a preposition is followed by a verb, the verb is normally in the *-ing* form (gerund):

- One should always prepare oneself carefully before going to a job interview.
- Many people do not like the idea of living far away from their workplace.

- It is mostly young people who succeeded in raising public awareness of global warming.
- Whenever possible, we should walk to work and to the shops instead of driving.
- Many graduates struggle to land a job despite having good academic qualifications.
- Very often, female employees are still paid less in spite of performing as well as, or even better than, their male counterparts.
- Graduates look forward to finding a job related to their field of study.
- Many people object to working at weekends.
- Someone who has always lived in a house is likely to find it difficult to get used to living in a flat.

Note:

... ~~look forward to find~~ .../... ~~object to work at weekends~~ .../... ~~get used to live in a flat~~ are all WRONG forms.

It may seem 'strange' to have an *-ing* form after *to*, especially when we have learnt to produce correct sentences such as 'Everyone wants to have a decent job.' / 'Some countries have decided to ban online sales of e-cigarettes.' etc. This is because there is a word *to* which is a preposition, and another word *to* which is part of the infinitive. The word *to* after *look forward* / *object* / *get used* is a preposition, and is therefore followed by the *-ing* form (the 'gerund', which is like a verbal noun).

Of course, all the prepositions above could also be followed by a noun or a noun phrase:

- Graduates look forward to an interesting job related to their field of study.
- Many people object to weekend work.
- Someone who has always lived in a house is likely to find it difficult to get used to smaller accommodation.

The verb is also in the *-ing* form when there is an object before it:

- Parents often insist on their children finishing their homework before watching television.
- The stability of a country partly depends on the government managing economic and social issues effectively.

Some Advice on Learning Prepositions

- Always record new vocabulary **in context**. You do not really “know” the word *look forward* if you do not know that we say *look forward to*, and that *look forward to* is followed by a noun, noun phrase, pronoun or gerund. An example sentence will help you remember this (e.g. *I look forward to the day when single-use plastic bags will be banned.*)
- Create your own exercises. For example, take a reading passage that you are already familiar with. Read it again, this time paying particular attention to prepositions. Highlight all the combinations of Noun/Verb/Adjective + Preposition that you find interesting.
- When you practise writing an essay on your own, proofread it carefully when you have finished and refer to a good dictionary to check any use of prepositions that you are not sure about.

See Workbook Exercises page 51.

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Using Cautious Language & Avoiding Over-Generalisation

Introduction

As you know, when you write an essay such as IELTS Writing Task 2, you do not have a choice when it comes to *style*: your style has to be reasonably formal.

However, when it comes to making statements, presenting arguments and expressing opinions, you can choose which *tone* to adopt: strong, neutral or cautious.

There are times when a strong tone is entirely appropriate, while at other times you might want to sound neutral, or more cautious, more tentative.

If you use a strong tone all the time, you may come across as over-confident, forceful, opinionated, or even intolerant. Therefore, it is useful to have the flexibility to sound cautious when it is appropriate.

The IELTS examiner will be looking at the tone you use in your sentences. The more precisely and subtly your tone seems to match what you really think, the better your score will be.

As an example, consider these three different ways of expressing the same opinion:

- I am firmly convinced that burning fossil fuels is the main cause of global warming.
→ *strong tone*
- I personally believe that burning fossil fuels is the main cause of global warming.
→ *neutral tone*
- It would seem that burning fossil fuels might be the main cause of global warming.
→ *cautious, tentative tone*

All three ways are correct, but being aware of tone will enable you to express yourself with more subtlety. This is also the case when making a recommendation:

- It is of the utmost importance that cars should be banned from city centres.
→ *strong tone*
- It would be in most people's interest to ban cars from city centres.
→ *neutral tone*
- The government might like to consider banning cars from city centres.
→ *cautious, tentative tone*

Using cautious language is sometimes referred to as *hedging* and is basically a way of 'softening' the language you use. It shows that you understand that it is not possible to be completely sure about certain things. It also shows that you are not claiming that what you write is an absolute truth or an undeniable fact.

Consider the following sentence:

- Watching violent films harms young children.

This is a very bold claim, presented as if it were an objective scientific truth. But how much do we really know? In what ways does watching violent films harm children? Does it affect all young children or just some of them? How much watching is necessary to harm children? What is meant by 'violent films'? etc.

In this case, 'softening' our language would be useful. Study the following examples to see how this can be done:

- Watching violent films can harm young children.
- Watching violent films might harm young children.
- Watching violent films often might harm young children.
- It is possible that watching violent films harms young children.
- Watching violent films probably harms young children.
- It is widely agreed that watching violent films harms young children.
- In my view, it is highly likely that watching a lot of violent films harms most young children.

As you can see, we have a good number of linguistic devices to show how strongly we are committed to the truth of what we say. Let's now look at four kinds of such devices.

How to Express Oneself Cautiously

Using adverbs of frequency

Compare:

- Teenagers prefer chatting online to doing homework.
- vs
- Teenagers often prefer chatting online to doing homework.

Simply adding *often* makes the assertion less strong, more nuanced.

Other adverbs of frequency can achieve the same effect, for example: *sometimes*, *generally*, *usually*.

Using modals and modal words

Compare:

- Media violence has a greater impact on our emotions than on our behaviour.
- vs
- Media violence may have a greater impact on our emotions than on our behaviour.

- Shared reading with children is an opportunity for parents to bond with them.
- vs
- Shared reading with children can be an opportunity for parents to bond with them.

Using modals such as *can / could / may / might / would* is a very effective way of reducing the strength of our assertions.

For more information about how to express degrees of certainty/probability, go to page 118.

A whole range of adjectives, adverbs and nouns can also be used to express varying degrees of certainty/probability, in the same way as modals do. Here are some of the most common ones.

- Adjectives: *certain / definite / possible / probable*, etc.
- Adverbs: *certainly / definitely / possibly / probably / arguably / generally*, etc.
- Nouns: *possibility / probability / assumption / likelihood*, etc.

Compare:

- Media violence affects young children's behaviour.
- vs
- It is probable that media violence affects young children's behaviour.
- ↓
- Media violence probably affects young children's behaviour.
- ↓
- There is a possibility that media violence could affect young children's behaviour.

Using particular verbs

Compare:

- Media violence has a greater impact on our emotions than on our behaviour.

vs

- Media violence seems to have a greater impact on our emotions than on our behaviour.

- Reading aloud to children fosters the acquisition of literacy skills.

vs

- Reading aloud to children tends to foster the acquisition of literacy skills.

Using verbs such as *appear (to be) / seem / think / believe / look like / tend / indicate / suggest* is another effective way of softening our claims.

Using *there* or impersonal *it* in *that*-clauses

Compare:

- Adults have difficulty keeping abreast of technological change.

vs

- There is a common belief that adults have difficulty keeping abreast of technological change.

or

- It is commonly believed that adults have difficulty keeping abreast of technological change.

It is important to note that when using such statements, the idea does not represent your own personal opinion, hence the word “impersonal” in the subheading. These methods of starting your sentence do not show the reader if you agree with the idea or not. They only show other people’s opinions. If the aim of your body paragraph is to present your view and only your view, you should not use such statements as presented above and listed below. However, if your aim is to discuss what other people think, this is a good way to vary your sentences.

Here are some other similar sentence openers:

It is a widely held view that ...

It is generally believed that ...

It is widely agreed that ...

It seems likely that ...

It may be assumed that ...

It could be argued that ...

There seems to be a general consensus that ...

There is some evidence to suggest that ...

There is little evidence to suggest that ...

There is a general assumption that ...

There is a widespread belief that ...

Using a combination of the above-mentioned devices

Adverbs of frequency, modals, modals words, certain specific verbs and *there* or impersonal *it* in *that*-clauses can be used in various combinations to adjust the strength of the assertions we make. Compare:

- There would be fewer armed conflicts if all countries shared a common language.

vs

- I believe that there might be fewer armed conflicts if all countries shared a common language.

- Learning a language helps people understand a culture.

vs

- It is possible that learning a language may help people understand a culture.

↓

There is some evidence to suggest that learning a language can help people understand a culture.

↓

- It is widely agreed that learning a language often helps people understand a culture.

Important reminder:

Using cautious language is not a way of making your writing style more interesting or more varied. Rather, it is a way of adjusting with subtlety the strength of the claims you make.

There are times when a strong tone is entirely appropriate, especially if you have convincing examples to support the claims you make. On the other hand, overusing cautious language can give the impression that you do not want to take responsibility for the claims you make or even that you have no clear opinion about the issue under discussion.

Over-Generalisation

Another aspect of using language in IELTS Writing Task 2 is to avoid over-generalisation when you present your ideas. This actually falls under the marking criterion of Task Response rather than Grammatical Resource and Accuracy but as it is a common issue with Writing Task 2, it needs to be explained.

Below is an example of an over-generalised statement.

- International business destroys local businesses and thus increases unemployment rates.

Presenting an idea in this way assumes that the statement applies globally – to all people, at all times, in all countries without exception. When you write in this way, you are over-generalising, which means you are presuming that this situation is without exception. Over-generalising is mentioned in the band score descriptors published by IELTS and will limit your score for Task Response. This is mainly a problem for people aiming for the higher band scores. Many people think it is only important to have relevant ideas and explain them. As a result, they forget to develop their ideas and sometimes write in a manner that is too general. Presenting more specific information that is well thought-out is essential for a high score.

To avoid over-generalisation, you need to:

- think more carefully about your ideas and how to present them in the planning stage before you start writing
- use cautious language or mention the extent to which this idea actually applies to real life on a global or national scale.

You need to think more deeply about your ideas before you present them in your essay.

You need to ask yourself:

- Does international business destroy all local businesses or only particular local businesses?
- Does international business destroy all local businesses in all cities and in all countries?
- Does international business destroy all local businesses affecting the unemployment rates beyond a shadow of a doubt? Or do you feel this statement might be too strong?

You are being marked on your ability to use the English language to present precise meaning. You are being marked on your ability to present well thought-out ideas which are not over-generalised. Below are options of how the statement given above could have been presented using more specific and more cautious language:

- International business can often result in the closure of some local businesses, especially in developing countries.
- International business can sometimes have a detrimental impact on some local businesses, particularly small businesses.
- The success of some local businesses is under threat due to the competition from international business in their area, and this can result in the closure of some of these local businesses.
- International business can sometimes have an adverse effect on the success of small local businesses. In some countries, such local businesses are unable to compete and are forced to close, having a direct impact on employment rates.
- Unemployment rates have been known to rise in some countries due to the negative impact of international business on many small local businesses.
- Some small local businesses have been known to be negatively affected by international business. In some cases, small businesses have been forced to close down, thus causing an increase in unemployment rates.

As you can see above, there are many ways to be more cautious with your language and more specific with your ideas. When you do this, you will see that it is easier to keep up the word count. Many people struggle to hit a reasonable number of words in their essay.

However, by being more careful and explaining more fully the realistic limitations of your ideas, your essay will expand.

If you are worried about repeating “some local businesses in some countries” again and again in your essay, remember that once you have stated this in the first sentence of a body paragraph (the topic sentence), it will be presumed that the rest of the information in the paragraph follows this. Consequently, you will not have to repeat yourself.

However, missing this information out completely might result in your ideas being over-generalised and not specific enough or not thought-out enough for a high band score.

See Workbook Exercises page 53.

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Paraphrasing

Introduction

Paraphrasing is the skill of re-expressing in your own words information or ideas expressed by someone else.

It is a crucial skill to have in essay writing. In IELTS Writing Task 2, for example, you have the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to paraphrase right from the outset as the background statement in your introduction is essentially a rewording of the essay question.

However, the usefulness of paraphrasing extends well beyond the background statement. Indeed, as each essay is about one specific topic, you need to be able to explore this topic in some depth while avoiding unnecessary repetitions of certain words or sentence structures. Paraphrasing enables you to avoid cumbersome word-for-word repetitions. Besides, it also contributes to the overall cohesion of your essay.

Paraphrasing an Essay Question

Read the essay question below. Then study two ways in which it has been paraphrased.

Essay question:

- While studying abroad provides an opportunity to broaden one's experience, it also presents the danger of negative influences from the host culture.

Paraphrase 1:

- Studying abroad is a potential source of both knowledge about life and risk of adverse foreign cultural influences.

Paraphrase 2:

- Young people studying overseas can gain a lot of experience. However, they may also be negatively affected by certain aspects of the foreign culture.

Analysis

Although their wording is markedly different, both paraphrases reflect fairly accurately the meaning conveyed by the essay question and are therefore satisfactory.

Besides, both writers have used a number of similar paraphrasing techniques. Let's have a look at these.

A) Changing the sentence structure:

The essay question is a complex sentence; (1) uses a simple sentence instead, while (2) uses two sentences linked by 'however' (which echoes the contrast expressed by 'while').

B) Changing word forms:

(1) 'culture' → 'cultural'; (2) 'negative' → 'negatively'.

C) Using synonyms:

(1) 'danger' → 'risk', 'negative' → 'adverse'; (2) 'abroad' → 'overseas'.

These are examples of straightforward synonyms which we could find in a good dictionary. However, what skilled writers do very often is to paraphrase with synonymous phrases that they create themselves. In (1), for example, 'experience' becomes 'knowledge about life'.

D) Changing the word order:

In both (1) and (2), although the ideas are in the same order as in the essay question, there are inevitably several changes in the word order.

Further comments:

Note that in the essay question, the words 'opportunity' and 'danger' convey the idea of something that may or may not happen. To convey the same idea, (1) uses the word 'potential', while (2) uses the modals 'can' and 'may'.

All the above methods of paraphrasing are useful in enabling you to showcase your English language skills. While option C is based on your knowledge of vocabulary, options A, B and D show your skills in English grammar. When paraphrasing, it is common for people to rely solely on option C (vocabulary). However, you can gain as much advantage from using options A, B and D instead. Furthermore, it is good to show flexibility in the way you paraphrase.

Useful Tips for Writing a Good Paraphrase of the Essay Question

- Make sure your paraphrase reflects **accurately** the meaning expressed in the essay question.
- Do not add any ideas that are not in the essay question.
- Not all words need to be changed. You can use some of the words given in the essay question, but try not to use more than three consecutive words from the question. This means that you should limit the number of words that are in the same order as given in the question.

- Remember that not everything has to be or can be paraphrased. Over-paraphrasing is a common source of mistakes in IELTS essays.
- Do not rely exclusively on synonyms. Whenever possible, use several paraphrasing techniques in combination. This will also help boost your band score for grammar rather than focusing only on vocabulary.
- Avoid paraphrases that are much longer than the original.
- Remember that the main aim of the background statement is not to display sophisticated vocabulary and syntax, but rather to show that you understand the essay question.

Always aim for meaning and accuracy rather than aiming to impress.

Using Synonyms and Other Paraphrasing Techniques in the Body of the Essay

Example 1:

- The government should increase social benefits to alleviate poverty.

We can guess that 'poverty' is probably a key word here, and as we know that it would not be easy to paraphrase, we may decide to keep it.

However, we could use 'raise' instead of 'increase'. We could also use 'reduce' instead of 'alleviate'; 'eradicate' would not be acceptable as it would change the meaning (if you eradicate a social problem, you get rid of it completely, whereas if you alleviate it, you just make it less severe).

So we now have:

- The government should raise social benefits to reduce poverty.

Further, since we know that it is the government that pays benefits, we could have:

- Social benefits should be raised to reduce poverty.

'Social benefits' does not necessarily have to be paraphrased, but if it has already been used several times, 'welfare benefits' or 'welfare payments' could be a useful alternative:

- Welfare payments should be raised to reduce poverty.

Finally, the word order could be changed:

- In order to reduce poverty, welfare payments should be raised.

In conclusion, we have here four effective paraphrases of the original sentence. Which one is best, however, will depend on how well it fits in with the sentence that comes before and/or the one that comes after.

Example 2:

- Countries which rely exclusively on the tourist trade will be badly affected by a world economic downturn.

In this case, we can assume that the main topic is 'the tourist trade'. This could be replaced with 'tourism'.

A few more synonyms quickly come to mind, such as:

- 'countries' → 'nations'
- 'rely (on)' → 'depend (on)'
- 'exclusively' → 'entirely', 'solely'
- 'badly' → 'severely', 'seriously', 'adversely'
- 'world' (used as an adjective) → 'global'
- 'economic downturn' → 'recession'

So, using only synonyms we now have:

- Nations which depend solely on tourism will be severely affected by a global recession.

Further, the passive could be changed into an active:

- A global recession will severely affect nations which depend solely on tourism.

(Conversely, it is often possible to change an active form into a passive.)

A few more options are available. For example, the modal 'will', expressing certainty, could be replaced with 'is bound to', and the adjective 'dependent' could be used instead of the verb 'depend':

- A global recession is bound to severely affect nations which are solely dependent on tourism.

Finally, the relative pronoun and the auxiliary could be left out:

- Nations solely dependent on tourism are bound to be severely affected by a global recession.

In conclusion, as was the case with Example 1, here too we have four effective paraphrases of the original sentence. And, similarly, which one is best will depend on how well it fits in with the preceding sentence and/or the following one.

See Workbook Exercises page 55.

Giving Examples

In IELTS Writing Task 2, you might want to provide examples in order to illustrate a point or support a claim. Examples are not essential in an IELTS essay. You use them when you feel they can help explain and illustrate your idea.

Selecting Examples

It is important that you learn to use examples correctly, not only examples that are just grammatically correct. Below are some extra guidelines to help you understand the use of examples in your IELTS essay.

1. Examples should add rich content to your essay. However, many people make the mistake of adding examples that are unnecessary and too obvious. Make sure you think carefully about what examples you use and how to use them.

Incorrect:

- These days more and more parents are giving children fast food, such as hamburgers, chips, hotdogs, and pizza, instead of balanced meals.

The examiner knows what fast food is. It is completely unnecessary to explain fast food by giving examples. Examples should be used to highlight or explain something that is not clear without the example. Examples make ideas clearer but they should not be used to define obvious English words.

Correct:

- These days more and more parents are giving children fast food instead of balanced meals, which means children are not getting enough nutrition in their diet.

By cutting out the examples in the sentence, we now have space to add more useful information which will help our score for Task Response and also for grammar (we have added a clause).

2. Never use an example as a way to introduce an idea. In IELTS, you must show a logical order of information. This means you should state the main point clearly first and then add an example in one of the following sentences as a way to illustrate that point.
3. You do not need to put examples in all your body paragraphs. Although this is a recommendation made by many teachers to help you to create paragraph content more easily, it is not a rule of IELTS. Use examples when you feel an example is useful to illustrate a point.

4. Do not just write out long lists of examples. Think about them, select which ones to use, and decide how to present them. This should be part of your planning stage before you start writing your essay.

Incorrect:

- Nowadays, everybody is taking advantage of the internet, starting from students, teachers, doctors, engineers up to even farmers, workers and the list goes on.

The sentence above uses a list of jobs to illustrate a point. Although the writer does not use *for example*, the jobs are there as an illustration. However, this writer has not carefully selected how to use those examples or which ones to use. The writer has instead given as many examples as possible.

Remember that you will not get a higher band score because you have listed more examples.

Correct:

- Nowadays, everybody is taking advantage of the internet, from professionals such as doctors and engineers down to people on a lower income such as students.

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Linking Words & Giving Examples

The most commonly used expressions for giving examples are *for example* and *for instance*. However, there are many ways to signpost to the reader that you are presenting an example or illustration. For this reason, you should never repeat linking words for giving examples. It is important that you show different ways to present examples in your essay.

for example / for instance

For example and *for instance* have the same meaning and can be used interchangeably.

They are often used at the beginning of a clause or sentence.

- Many things can be done on a daily basis to reduce the amount of waste we produce. For example, containers can be reused and plastic recycled.

However, *for example* and *for instance* can also be used in the middle or at the end of a sentence.

Therefore, avoid overusing these expressions at the beginning of sentences. You can vary their position in order to show flexibility.

- Human migration has a host of different causes. Social unrest and political instability, for instance, often drive people to leave their country of birth.
- Environment-conscious travellers now try to fly as little as possible. They prefer to use overnight trains or sleeper buses, for example.

Note how commas are used in the above sentences.

such as

Another useful expression is *such as*. You can use it to introduce one or several examples of something you mention.

- Healthcare professionals such as doctors and nurses often have to work long hours in an extremely stressful environment.
- We can get all the proteins we need from foods such as cheese and eggs.

If *such as* introduces a list of more than two items, it is usually preceded by a comma.

- Even people who are not so well off now like to travel to places that were once the most exotic destinations, such as the Maldives, Bhutan or Antarctica.

Other useful expressions

Changing the sentence structure is an effective way of avoiding overuse of *for example*:

- The health of our economic system is deteriorating gradually. The 2008 financial crisis is an obvious example of this.
- Homelessness is a glaring example of the unfairness of our society.
- I personally believe that our society could be much fairer. To illustrate this point, just consider how easily homelessness could be reduced.
- In my opinion, prison is not a good deterrent. To give a clear example, it is well known that a large number of first-time offenders turn to crime again upon release.
- It is well known that a large number of first-time offenders turn to crime again upon release. This example shows that prison is not an effective deterrent.

- Body language varies a lot from one culture to another. Take, for example, Albania and Bulgaria, where shaking your head from side to side means 'yes', while in most other cultures it means 'no'.
↓
Body language varies a lot from one culture to another. Take Albania and Bulgaria, for example, where shaking your head from side to side means 'yes', while in most other cultures it means 'no'.
- Austria has recently passed a law banning non-biodegradable plastic bags. This is an illustration of how the amount of plastic waste could be drastically reduced on a worldwide scale.
↓
Austria has recently passed a law banning non-biodegradable plastic bags. This illustrates how the amount of plastic waste could be drastically reduced on a worldwide scale.
- In my opinion, environmental education should begin at primary school. To be specific, I believe that children need to become aware of the threat posed by global warming and to be actively engaged in community programmes that promote healthy living and clean energy use.

in other words

This expression is not really used to introduce examples, but it can be useful in essay writing when you want to paraphrase or clarify an idea you have just expressed, or when you want to provide some more details.

- In my opinion, the best teachers are those who have earned the right qualifications and also have the necessary personal qualities to motivate children to learn. In other words, there is no clear-cut answer to the question whether good teachers are born or made.

Words and Phrases to Avoid When Giving Examples

e.g.

This is an abbreviation of the Latin words *exempli gratia*, which mean 'for example'. Do not use *e.g.* in formal writing. Use the full phrase *for example* (or *such as*) instead:

Incorrect:

- Deforestation is a severe problem in many countries (e.g. Brazil and Indonesia) and has devastating consequences for the whole planet.

Correct:

- Deforestation is a severe problem in many countries (for example in Brazil and Indonesia) and has devastating consequences for the whole planet.



Deforestation is a severe problem in many countries, such as Brazil and Indonesia, and has devastating consequences for the whole planet.

like

This is a very informal way of introducing examples. It is alright to use it in informal spoken English, but never in essay writing.

Incorrect:

- We should eat a balanced diet and avoid fatty foods like ice cream and butter.

Correct:

- We should eat a balanced diet and avoid fatty foods such as ice cream and butter.

namely

This word has a different meaning from *for example* and therefore cannot be used instead. It is possible to use *namely* in your essay, but not as a way to present an example.

Compare these sentences:

1. The three most populous countries in the world, namely China, India and the United States, ought to lead the fight against global warming.
2. A number of European cities, for example Venice and Amsterdam, are now suffering from tourism overcrowding.

In Sentence 1, we are dealing with a complete list. Therefore, we use *namely* to introduce it. Here, China, India and the United States are not given as three examples but as a complete list.

In Sentence 2, by contrast, we are dealing with an illustrative list. This means that we only mention a limited number of examples from a list which is much longer. Therefore, we use *for example* or *for instance* to introduce it. Only two examples of European cities suffering from overcrowding are given; the complete list would be much longer.

etc.

It is best not to use *etc.* in your essay. Instead, just choose exactly which examples you want to use. Limit them to one, two or at most three.

Incorrect:

- Some jobs require people such as doctors, nurses, firemen, etc. to work long hours, which affects their body clock.

Correct:

- Some jobs require people such as doctors, nurses and firemen to work long hours, which affects their body clock.

Informal expressions to avoid

Below are a few examples of informal expressions which would be acceptable in an oral presentation but should be avoided in essay writing.

- To give you a better idea ...
- Let's take a look at this more closely.
- The best way I can explain this is ..
- My favourite example of this is ...
- One example that springs to mind is ...
- Something I would really like to emphasise is ...

Providing Statistics

Task Response in IELTS Writing Task 2 is partly about expanding, explaining and illustrating your ideas. Presenting statistics is one way to exemplify your ideas. However, it is not necessarily the best way. While it is not wrong to use data (statistics), it is often better to use language instead. Facts and numbers will not be marked by the examiner, but language and ideas will be. So, by presenting your examples using high-level language rather than statistics, you are more likely to increase your score. This is illustrated in the example sentences below.

Incorrect for IELTS:

- Over the 20th century, the Earth's average surface temperature rose 0.9 degrees Celsius owing to increased carbon dioxide and other human-made emissions into the atmosphere. Besides, the global sea level rose by about 20 centimetres. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, the rate is nearly double that of the last century and is accelerating slightly every year.

Correct for IELTS:

- Owing to increased carbon dioxide and other human-made emissions into the atmosphere, the Earth's average surface temperature has increased markedly over the past century. Besides, the global sea level has risen dramatically and now keeps rising faster than ever before.

The first version contains more hard data than the second version. In an IELTS essay, however, you are not expected to supply precise data such as figures, dates or statistics. You are simply expected to provide topic-relevant and convincing examples to support the claims you make, written clearly and accurately. You do not get extra points in IELTS for providing data.

Furthermore, if you do decide to supply some statistics, you do not need to state where you got the statistics from. In most academic essays, providing the source of the data is essential. However, this is not the case with an IELTS essay. For this reason, it is irrelevant to your score to use phrases such as “According to recent studies” or “A recent survey published in the US showed that”.

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Paragraphing

Paragraphing actually falls under the marking criterion of Coherence and Cohesion. However, it seems fitting to offer some advice on this aspect of your essay.

How many paragraphs?

An IELTS essay will have four or five paragraphs including an introduction and a conclusion, which are compulsory. The body of the essay must be divided into paragraphs. You are being marked on your ability to organise your ideas into paragraphs, so make sure you plan this before you start writing. You should have either two or three body paragraphs. This will allow you to sufficiently extend your essay within the time limit.

Will I get a high score if I have five paragraphs?

Your IELTS essay score is based on more than how many paragraphs you have. The structure of your essay is just one part of the marking assessment. Paragraphing and linking combined are assessed in the criterion of Coherence and Cohesion, which is 25% of your score. Failure to produce relevant paragraphs will lower your score in this criterion. Having only one body paragraph means you have failed to divide ideas and will lower your score. Having too many body paragraphs usually means you have not extended your ideas enough, which could also have a negative impact on your score.

Introduction

Your introduction serves two purposes. The first aim is to introduce the issues your essay will be dealing with. This is done by paraphrasing the essay question, which means writing it again in your own words as a background statement. The second aim is to present your main ideas or your position in a thesis statement. You do not need a statement such as "This essay will ...". Such statements are commonly used in academic writing but are not required for IELTS and do not boost your score. A lengthy introduction will not help your score. However, extended ideas in the body paragraphs will.

Body paragraphs

There are no rules about what to put in your body paragraphs. It is common that the first sentence will contain the main point of the paragraph or the central theme. This is often called a Topic Sentence. Always make sure you write your topic sentences in full to include both the main point and how it connects to the issues in the question. The sentences following the topic sentence are called supporting points, but it might be just as useful to call them extra information or additional explanation.

Many people preparing for IELTS believe that a body paragraph must use the following structure:

1. Main point
2. Example
3. Concluding statement

This is not the case. There are no such rules in IELTS as to what your paragraph must contain. While examples are useful to illustrate your essay, they are not actually a requirement. You only illustrate where you feel relevant. Moreover, your body paragraph does not require a concluding statement. In fact, for such a short essay, having a concluding statement for every single paragraph with a conclusion at the end as well will be too much repetition. Lastly, although the paragraph structure above is useful, it can also be very limiting and lacking in options. Flexibility is essential if you are aiming for a high score. Try to avoid making your essay too formulaic.

It is best to decide the type of information you want to put in your body paragraphs once you know what your ideas are, and how you want to explain them and link them to the issues in the question. You could include:

- further explanation
- comparisons
- opposites
- hypothetical situations
- causes
- solutions
- recommendations
- suggestions
- examples or other types of illustrations
- exceptions to the rule, or concessions
- negative situations (If X does not happen, it might result in Y)
- concluding point.

The above ideas are only some of the possible options and should be used flexibly to show the full range of your ability and to vary information. What I mean is, try not to make every paragraph the same in format. For more examples of what to put in your body paragraph, spend time looking through this e-book and making notes on all the sentence structures and examples given – you will soon see the flexible range available to you for your body paragraphs.

As your body paragraphs carry much of the weight of your marks in Writing Task 2, they should also make up the largest proportion of your essay. As a guideline, if your essay is about 280 words, your introduction and conclusion together would be about 80–90 words. That would leave you with about 200–190 words for your body paragraphs. This is a rough estimate only.

Conclusion

It is vital that you finish your conclusion. Failure to produce a conclusion to your essay will automatically reduce your score for Task Response, which is 25% of your marks. Always check the time and, when only five minutes are left, turn to your conclusion regardless of where you are in your essay.

Conclusions should start with an appropriate linking device, such as *In conclusion* or *To sum up*. These devices signpost to the reader that you are concluding your essay. You are being marked on how well you link and signpost your essay.

A conclusion should contain no new ideas relevant to the task. It should contain a summary of the main points in your essay. If you wish to add a final comment, you can. This will commonly be a prediction or suggestion.

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Punctuation

The accuracy with which you use punctuation marks will affect your score on Grammatical Range and Accuracy.

The two punctuation marks that you need to get absolutely right in your essay are the comma (,) and the full stop (.). Occasionally, you might also need to use a colon (:) or an apostrophe ('), but do not use exclamation marks (!) or question marks (?).

When proofreading your essay, do make sure that you have used full stops and commas where necessary.

Full stop

A full stop is used to mark the end of a sentence. The new sentence that follows a full stop always begins with a capital letter. Remember to leave a small space between the full stop and the word which begins the next sentence.

In the following example, notice the full stop after *imagination* and also the capital 'H' on *However*:

- In my opinion, art classes are necessary to develop children's imagination.
However, art classes should not be taught at the expense of other school subjects.

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Comma

The use of the comma has been explained in various chapters throughout this e-book. Below you will find the main uses of the comma summarised and divided into sections to help you identify the areas that the examiner will undoubtedly pay attention to.

1.	Subordinate clauses
2.	Relative clauses
3.	..., which is why ...
4.	... not only ... but also ...
5.	Linking words
6.	Clauses with <i>and, but, so, yet, nor</i> and <i>or</i>
7.	Length of clauses
8.	Items in a list

1. Subordinate clauses

- When a subordinate clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, it is followed by a comma:
 - If the government decided to improve the public transportation system, fewer people would drive to work.

There is often no comma when the main clause is at the beginning:

Fewer people would drive to work if the government decided to improve the public transportation system.

Further examples:

- Although gender equality has made a lot of progress, some school subjects remain male dominated.
 - ↓
 - Some school subjects remain male dominated although gender equality has made a lot of progress.
- As the influx of visitors in the world's major cities has reached crisis point, global tourism urgently needs to rethink itself.
 - ↓
 - Global tourism urgently needs to rethink itself as the influx of visitors in the world's major cities has reached crisis point.

For more information about when to use a comma in subordinate clauses, go to 'Sentence Structure', pages 45–69.]

2. Relative clauses

- A non-defining relative clause always requires a comma **before** and **after** it:
 - Schoolchildren, who take physical exercise regularly, often have a healthier lifestyle than their parents.

By contrast, no comma is required before or after a defining relative clause:

- Schoolchildren who take physical exercise regularly tend to perform better in exams than those who do not.

For more information about defining and non-defining relative clauses, go to pages 70–82.

2. ..., which is why ...

- Remember to use a comma before *which is why*, and also before *which* used to refer back to a whole clause:
 - All too often, prisons fail to offer suitable rehabilitation programmes, which is why many inmates have difficulty integrating back into society.
 - Many people actually panic when they are unable to be online, which is a clear sign of their addiction to social media.

3. ... not only ... but also ...

- Do not use commas in sentences with *... not only ... but also ...*:
 - The lack of online security is a matter of considerable concern not only for businesses but also for private internet users.

4. Linking words

- To make an essay 'hang together', we need to use linking words (sometimes called 'connectors', 'linkers' or 'discourse markers'). When they are used at the beginning of a sentence, those linkers are always followed by a comma:
 - A relatively small number of brands have imposed themselves on the world stage. As a result, many local businesses have had to close down.
 - Sports lessons can develop a child's interest in exercise and outdoor activities. Besides, they can also be effective in combating overweight and obesity.
 - Over the past 50 years, there has been a growing awareness of ecological issues. On the other hand, the amount of plastic that is thrown away has led to an environmental disaster.

The main linkers that can be used at the beginning of a sentence can be grouped as follows:

Result	Cause	Addition
As a result, ...	Because of [N(P)], ...	Besides, ...
Consequently, ...	Therefore, ...	Furthermore, ...
Therefore, ...		Moreover, ...

Contrast	Alternatives/Choices	Text Organisers
However, ...	Alternatively, ...	First, ... / Firstly, ...
Nevertheless, ...	Otherwise, ...	Second, ... / Secondly, ...
On the other hand, ...	Instead of [N(P)], ...	Finally, ... / Lastly, ...
In spite of [N(P)], ...	Rather than [N(P)], ...	To sum up, ...
Despite [N(P)], ...		In conclusion, ...

		In my opinion, ...
		In my view, ...
		For example, ...

Some of the linkers in this table can also be used in the middle of the sentence. Note that when this is the case, a comma is needed **before** and **after** the linker:

- A good university degree is essential when applying for an academic job. In business, however, soft skills and experience are usually more useful.
- Some people argue that the only purpose of business is to make a profit. Such a stance is, in my view, short-sighted as well as unethical.
- In general, whether or not experience is more important than academic qualifications depends on the job being applied for. In law or medicine, for example, a university degree is absolutely essential.

5. Clauses with *and*, *but*, *so*, *yet*, *nor* and *or*

- A comma is used to separate two main clauses linked with *and*, *but*, *so*, *yet*, *nor* and *or*. This is particularly the case when the clauses are long and quite distinct in meaning:
 - Parents often spend a considerable amount of time watching television, and their children waste time chatting with friends online instead of doing their homework.
 - High-rise apartment blocks offer moderately priced housing in urban areas, but the lack of outdoor spaces makes many people search for other types of accommodation.
 - Few prisons offer adequate rehabilitation programmes, so prisoners have problems when they return to the community.

- The horrors of war are well documented in history books, yet those who govern us do not try hard to maintain peace.
- Governments do not seem willing to adopt measures that would ensure a fairer distribution of wealth, nor do they try to address the root causes of poverty.
- Parents should encourage their children to talk at mealtimes, or create other opportunities for all family members to talk to each other.

However, the comma may be omitted if the clauses are very short and closely linked:

- Children watch too much television and do not take enough exercise.
- Many people like nature but would not like to live in a village.
- Many children wish to attend school yet are unable to do so.

6. Length of clauses

- As stated above, the length of the clause will determine if you need to use a comma or not. However, there are no fixed rules in English grammar to distinguish how many words constitute a long clause or a short clause. This means the writer must decide if the length requires punctuation or not. As a general guide:
 - a) the comma sometimes signals the place where we might take a pause to breathe if we were speaking the sentence out loud
 - b) if the clause is very long, it might be easier for the reader to have the comma present in order to distinguish one clause from the other.

Modern English usage does tend towards using fewer commas than in the past.

However, use the above two suggestions as a guide, as well as the examples provided, to decide whether you will use a comma or not. The examiner will be flexible about this aspect of punctuation.

7. Items in a list

- Use a comma to separate items in a list:
 - Even in developed countries, many people cannot afford the bare necessities of life, such as food, shelter, proper clothing and medical care.

Between the last two items in a list, a comma is not usually used except if the items are long:

- Schools are places where not only subjects should be taught but also human values such as solidarity, team spirit, compassion for the suffering of all creatures, and readiness to help anyone in need.

Colon

On rare occasions, it may happen that you need to use a colon. A colon is used to introduce items in a list:

- There are three things we can easily do without if we want to protect our environment: CFCs, fossil fuels and single-use plastic bags.

You can also use a colon to introduce an explanation:

- Our planet is on the verge of an ecological disaster: sea levels are rising, the ozone layer is depleted, and an increasing number of plant and animal species are facing extinction.

Apostrophe

We use an apostrophe for two main reasons: in contracted forms (e.g. *can't* / *we're* / *won't* / *hasn't*, etc.) and after a noun to indicate possession. As you must not under any circumstances use contracted forms in academic essay writing, only the possessive marker is of interest here.

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- (1) ➤ Unless we stop depleting the Earth's natural resources, we will cause irreversible damage to the environment.
- (2) ➤ For our children's sake, the issue of global warming needs to be dealt with urgently.
 - People's opinions about current issues such as climate change and overpopulation vary greatly from one country to another.
- (3) ➤ Trade wars between superpowers are in nobody's interest.
 - The right to express one's opinions should be protected by law in all countries.
- (4) ➤ In my view, younger children should only be allowed to use social media under their parents' supervision.

As the sentences above illustrate, 's is used (1) after singular nouns that do not end in -s; (2) after plural nouns that do not end in -s; (3) after indefinite pronouns that do not end in -s.

Use 's (4) after plural nouns ending in -s.

Remember that an apostrophe is not used with possessive pronouns (*its / yours / his / hers / ours / theirs*).

See Workbook Exercises page 58.

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Phrases to Avoid or Use with Caution

Avoid learning whole sentences or phrases to use in your IELTS essay. Learning vocabulary is fine, but not memorising expressions or sentences. Each sentence should be uniquely created by yourself, not memorised from books. This is a language test and the examiner will mark you based on YOUR OWN language – not on memorised phrases.

It is fine to learn linking words (*while, however, on the other hand*). In fact, you need to learn them and use them correctly. Linking words are not considered as phrases. If you do not use linking words, you will get a lower score because they are part of the marking criterion of Coherence and Cohesion, which counts for 25% of your writing marks.

Most of the structures below should be used with caution and you certainly should not be focusing your time on learning them. They are VERY overused and therefore are not recommended as a way to boost your score. IELTS is a language test which tests your own language – not other people's language. Yes, IELTS Writing Task 2 is a formal essay but it is not a university essay. It is an essay for a language test. The examiner will mark your language – not learned expressions or memorised sentences.

Will I get a lower score if I use these sentences/phrases?

Not necessarily. But it is a waste of your time to focus on filling your essay with phrases and sentences that will not boost your score.

Phrases

- ✗ It cannot be denied that ... / It is indisputable that ...
 - Most IELTS essays are based on opinion, which means that these phrases are not often needed. They are overused by students inappropriately. These can only be used when dealing with fact.
- ✗ In the modern era / With the development of modern technology ...
 - Most IELTS essays are about current issues and it is not necessary to stress this, unless comparing with the past. Using "in the modern era" is an expression repeatedly overused by students all over the world.
 - "With the development of modern technology ...", might be used if your essay is about modern technology. But if the topic is about education, then it shows the examiner you are using this to boost your score using memorised expressions.

- ✘ This essay will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of ... / This essay will discuss both sides and then conclude ... / In this essay I plan to discuss both sides and then present my opinion ...
 - It is not wrong to use these phrases, but they are very overused, and it is better to introduce your ideas directly using your own sentence structure. They also include many words that are memorised and used in the same order by thousands of IELTS students. It does not demonstrate your own English language skills. This phrase will not help your score for language.
 - Furthermore, the examiner has the instructions. The examiner knows what you plan to do because it is written in the instructions. So, do not waste time paraphrasing instructions. Just start your essay directly by introducing the essay topic and presenting your direct answer.
- ✘ Research has shown that ... / Recent studies show that ...
 - Although it is good to give examples in IELTS Writing Task 2, it is not a requirement. The instructions ask you to present examples when relevant – this means you choose if you want to use them or not.
 - Moreover, you do not need to write about research and statistics. The examiner will not be marking your knowledge. Presenting data in Writing Task 2 will not have any impact on your score.
- ✘ From the arguments presented above, it can be concluded that ...
 - You need to inform the reader that you are beginning your conclusion and the usual linking words are “In conclusion”. If you add “From the arguments ...” – it is not going to boost your score because it is a learned phrase. It is not wrong to use it, but it is not going to impress the examiner.

Can I use quotes?

A quote will not help your vocabulary or grammar score because the words are not yours. The quote is not an example of your own language, it is an example of someone else's language. IELTS is a language test aimed to assess your own level of English, not your memory of other people's English.

Can I use idioms?

Most idioms are informal and not suitable for IELTS essays. However, it is possible to use idiomatic language such as “the key to ...” or “in the long run...”.

See page 158 and page 159 on Articles for a list of idiomatic expressions suitable for Writing Task 2 essays.

Deleting Mistakes

It is fine to correct your writing and delete mistakes in your IELTS essay if you are taking the paper-based test. However, you need to make your corrections easy to read. If your essay is messy or your corrections are difficult to understand, it will have a negative impact on your score.

There are no fixed rules about how to delete in IELTS Writing Task 2. Below are three suggestions of how to correct your mistakes. The key is to make your corrections clear and easily visible to the examiner.

How to Correct Mistakes

1. Many people prefer to ~~go~~ commute to work using private transport.

You can put a line through your mistake. Make sure the line is very clear and easy for the examiner to see. It must be clear that the word “go” is not to be counted in that sentence.

2. Many people prefer to ~~go~~^{commute} to work using private transport.

You can insert the correct word above the deleted word.

3. Many people prefer to ~~go~~ commute to work using private transport.

It is possible to fully delete the word that is incorrect. This way, the examiner will only read the correct words.

Using a Pencil

It is possible to use a pen or a pencil for the IELTS writing test.

If you use a pencil, you can remove your mistakes using an eraser. Make sure the new word you write is easy to read and very clear. Some pencils are not strong, so make sure you choose a pencil that is very easy to read.

If you use a pen, make sure you are tidy when you correct your errors. As long as the examiner can easily read what you write, it is fine.

Deleting Whole Sentences

The main reason people have to delete a whole sentence in their essay is because they have not spent time on planning. Your ideas, your supporting points, your linking and your organisation all count for 50% of your writing marks. It is not sensible to skip this stage. At least five minutes should be spent on planning all aspects of your essay. This means that every sentence in your essay will have been planned before you start your introduction.

If you want to delete a whole sentence, make sure your new sentence is easy to read and easy to find.

Writing on the Wrong Answer Sheet

Some students make a mistake and write their Writing Task 2 on their Writing Task 1 answer sheet. If this happens to you, make sure you change the title at the top of the page, so the examiner knows what has happened. Make sure you label which sheet is Task 1 and which is Task 2.

Using an Extra Answer Sheet

If you use an extra sheet for your Writing Task 2, make sure you highlight this for the examiner. You can write: Page 1 of 2 / Page 2 of 2. This is just a recommendation, not a rule.

Common Errors to Avoid

It is important to reduce the number of errors you make in your IELTS essay as these will have a direct impact on your IELTS score.

See the table below:

Band Score	Error Frequency
Band 5	Frequent errors which can compromise meaning
Band 6	Some errors but meaning is clear
Band 7	Frequent error-free sentences
Band 8	Most sentences are error free
Band 9	Rare minor errors, mostly occurring as 'slips'

Common Grammar Errors Checklist

In this chapter, you will find a list of common grammar errors that people make in their IELTS essay. Each common error is listed with examples and relevant page numbers so you can refer to particular chapters for more information.

The common grammar errors are listed in the table below. You can tick the ones that apply to you. The first row of the table shows the most common errors made by people and the second row the next most common, and so on. After you work on your grammar using this e-book, you should start reducing that list to only five common mistakes so that you can keep those five mistakes in mind when you are proofreading your IELTS essay.

1. <i>the</i> vs "Zero Article"	2. Prepositions	3. Subject–Verb Agreement	4. Word Form
5. Uncountable Nouns	6. Referencing: <i>it</i>	7. Relative Clauses	8. Contractions
9. Sentence Length	10. Linking Words	11. Using Interrogatives	12. Word Order
13. Flowery Language	14. Adjectives & Adverbs	15. Capital Letters	

1. *the* vs “Zero Article”

Some words do not use *the*, while some others do. You need to learn which ones do and which ones do not.

- ✗ Government should spend more money on protecting environment.
- ✓ The government should spend more money on protecting the environment.

- ✗ Crime in the society has risen in recent years mainly due to poverty.
- ✓ Crime in society has risen in recent years mainly due to poverty.

- ✗ Many people turn to the religion in times of need.
- ✓ Many people turn to religion in times of need.

When you write about people or things **in general**, do NOT use *the* with plural nouns, and of course do not forget the plural -s.

- ✗ The teenagers can benefit from doing work experience if it is only part-time and properly supervised.
- ✗ Teenager can benefit from doing work experience if it is only part-time and properly supervised.
- ✓ Teenagers can benefit from doing work experience if it is only part-time and properly supervised.

- ✗ The cars emit gases which are harmful to the environment.
- ✗ Car emit gases which are harmful to the environment.
- ✓ Cars emit gases which are harmful to the environment.

Similarly, do NOT use *the* with uncountable nouns used **in a general** way.

- ✗ It is often said that the music is essential to the life.
- ✓ It is often said that music is essential to life.

When we speak or write, we often begin by talking about things in general, and then we move on to the specific. This has important implications for the way we use or do not use articles:

- ✓ It is often said that information is power.

This sentence could be the opening sentence of an essay. Here, both *information* and *power* are uncountable nouns used in a general sense, and **the** is therefore not needed.

Now, pay attention to what changes in the second sentence:

- ✓ However, the information we get from the internet is not always trustworthy. The power it gives us is therefore highly questionable.

We are now talking about specific information (the information we get from the internet) and about specific power (the power that internet information gives us). Therefore, **the** must be used.

For more information about use or non-use of *the*, see Articles on pages 150–162.

2. Prepositions

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- ✗ Children must be encouraged to go in sports centres to participate more in physical activities.
- ✓ Children must be encouraged to go to sports centres to participate more in physical activities.

To go means 'to move from one place to another' and in this sense it therefore always requires the spatial preposition of movement **to**. **In** is wrong here because it expresses location, not movement.

However, be careful with these exceptions: *go home / go back home / go abroad / go there / go somewhere / go shopping (swimming, skiing, etc.)*. These expressions are always used without **to**.

Finally, remember the difference in meaning between *gone to* and *been to*.

You use *gone to* to say that someone has gone somewhere and not come back, or not come back yet, as in:

- ✓ Some of my classmates have gone to Valencia to study Spanish.

This means that your classmates are not here now, they are still in Valencia.

Contrast this with the following sentence:

- ✓ Now that mankind has been to the Moon, the next destination is Mars.

This means that man has visited the Moon and come back from there. *Has gone* would be wrong in this case.

- ✗ If people drive over the speed limit, it can result to fatal casualties.
- ✓ If people drive over the speed limit, it can result in fatal casualties.
- ✗ The government needs to invest its money on road and public transport infrastructure.
- ✓ The government needs to invest its money in road and public transport infrastructure.

Some verbs are often used with a specific preposition, for example *result + in* and *invest + in*.

For more examples, go to the section on Dependent Prepositions, page 211 - 216.

- ✗ Spending more time in watching TV as a source of entertainment is not beneficial on children.
- ✓ Spending more time watching TV as a source of entertainment is not beneficial for children.
- ⇓
- ✓ Spending more time watching TV as a source of entertainment is not beneficial to children.
- ✗ The government should spend more money for health and education.
- ✓ The government should spend more money on health and education.

Usage is very idiomatic: you spend time **doing** something, you spend time **with** your family or your friends, and you spend money **on** things. As regards *beneficial*, both *beneficial to* and *beneficial for* are correct.

For more examples of idiomatic language with prepositions, go to the chapter on Prepositions, page 212.

- ✗ Commercials in TV often target low-income families, which can lead to more personal debt.
- ✓ Commercials on TV often target low-income families, which can lead to more personal debt.

You watch a programme **on** TV or listen to music **on** the radio, but you read something **in** the newspaper or recognise someone **in** a photo.

For more examples of common expressions with spatial prepositions, go to the chapter on Prepositions, pages 204 - 216.

- ✗ Technology has become more advanced since many decades ago.

There are several problems with this sentence. Firstly, the preposition **since** is never used with the adverb *ago*. You use *ago* to say how far back in the past something happened, and therefore the Past Simple is required, as in 'This technology was developed many years ago.'

Secondly, we use the time word **since** to refer to the start of a period, not to talk about the length of a period, so '~~since many decades~~' is wrong. We could have instead 'since the 1960s', 'since the Middle Ages', 'since the invention of the telephone', etc.

As we are talking about a period of time that extends up to now, we use the Present Perfect.

- ✓ Technology has become more advanced since the first desktop computer was designed.

For more information about *since*, *ago* and other time words, go to the section on Temporal Relationships in the chapter on Prepositions, pages 204 - 216.

More information can also be found in the section on Past Simple vs Present Perfect in the chapter on Tenses, page 111 - 112.

3. Subject–Verb Agreement

The subject and the verb of a sentence must agree in number. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular. If the subject is plural, then the verb must be plural as well. This

sounds simple enough, but it can sometimes be difficult to identify the exact subject, for example when the subject is a phrase that contains both a singular and a plural noun:

✗ The number of private cars have increased dramatically.

In this sentence, the subject of *have* is not 'cars' but 'the number', which is a singular noun.

✓ The number of private cars has increased dramatically.

✗ A number of scientists argues that climate change cannot be stopped.

In this sentence, the subject of 'argue' is 'a number of', which means the same as 'some' or 'several' and therefore requires a plural verb.

✓ A number of scientists argue that climate change cannot be stopped.

✗ Training more teachers are a priority for many developing countries.

In this sentence, the subject is the noun phrase 'training more teachers', where the head word is 'training'. As 'training' is a singular noun, the verb *to be* must also be in the singular form *is*.

✓ Training more teachers is a priority for many developing countries.

✓ Staff performance is key to the success of a company. That is why new techniques for improving staff performance are so popular in the corporate world.

In the first sentence, the subject is the singular noun 'staff performance', so the verb is in the third person singular. In the second sentence, by contrast, the subject is the plural noun 'new techniques', so the verb is in the third person plural.

✗ The content our children watches on TV is often very harmful.

There are two verbs in this sentence, *to be* and *to watch*. The subject of *to be* is the complex noun phrase 'the content our children watch on TV', where the main noun of the clause is the singular noun 'content'. The verb *to be* is therefore in the singular form *is* because of the singular main noun 'content'. The subject of the verb *to watch*, however, is

the plural noun 'children', which explains why the verb must be plural. See the correct sentence below.

✓ The content our children watch on TV is often very harmful.

4. Word Form

It is important not only to have the correct meaning of the word (which falls under the marking criterion of vocabulary) but also to choose the correct form of the word (grammar). It often happens that people use the right word, but then fail to choose the correct form of that word.

advise (Verb) / advice (Noun)

- ✗ It is important that young people are given good advise for their future career.
- ✓ It is important that young people are given good advice for their future career.
(*uncountable noun*)
- ✓ It is important that young people are properly advised about their future career.
(*verb*)

affect (Verb) / effect (Noun)

- ✓ The climate has always affected the way people live. (*verb*)
- ✓ The climate has always had a significant effect on the way people live. (*noun*)

complain (Verb) / complaint (Noun)

- ✓ Public transport users often complain about overcrowding and delays. (*verb*)
- ✓ The most frequent complaints of public transport users are about overcrowding and delays. (*noun*)

lack (Verb) / lack (Noun)

Pay attention to whether you are using this word as a verb or as a noun. Also check prepositions being used with this word.

- ✗ Many developing countries lacking in good infrastructure, which limits their economic development.
- ✓ Many developing countries are lacking in good infrastructure, which limits their economic development.
- ✓ Many developing countries lack well-trained teachers and facilities in rural areas.
- ✗ Many developing countries have lack of well-trained teachers and facilities in rural areas.
- ✗ Many developing countries are lack of well-trained teacher and facilities in rural areas.
- ✓ Many developing countries have a lack of well-trained teachers and facilities in rural areas.
- ✗ In many developing countries, there is lack of good medical and educational resources.
- ✓ In many developing countries, there is a lack of good medical and educational resources.

practise (Verb) / practice (Noun)

- ✓ Musicians and sportspeople practise hard for many years in order to hone their skills. (*verb*)
- ✓ Years of regular practice enable musicians and sportspeople to hone their skills. (*noun*)

5. Uncountable Nouns

Keep your own list of frequent uncountable nouns, together with examples. Update your list regularly when you study.

- ✗ Up-to-date equipments are vitally important for any company.

- ✓ Up-to-date equipment is vitally important for any company. (*uncountable noun*)
- ✗ The internet gives us access to more informations than ever before.
- ✓ The internet gives us access to more information than ever before. (*uncountable noun*)
- ✗ Teenagers cannot be expected to follow their parents' advices all the time.
- ✓ Teenagers cannot be expected to follow their parents' advice all the time. (*uncountable noun*)
- ✗ There are no scientific evidences of life on other planets.
- ✓ There is no scientific evidence of life on other planets. (*uncountable noun*)

Note that many words can have both a countable and an uncountable use. Usually, the countable form has a specific meaning, while the uncountable form has a general meaning.

- ✓ Most people prefer to read the news online rather than buy a paper every day.

In this sentence, 'paper' is a countable noun and means 'newspaper'.

- ✓ Paper is one of the greatest inventions of humankind.

In this sentence, 'paper' is an uncountable noun and refers to the material.

- ✓ Large, global companies are forcing many small businesses to close down.

In this sentence, 'business' is a countable noun in its plural form and refers to shops, companies and factories.

- ✓ Political instability is bad for business.

In this sentence, 'business' is an uncountable noun which refers to the activity of buying and selling goods and services.

6. Referencing: *it*

Make sure you understand how to reference properly. This is not actually part of grammar, it is marked as part of Coherence and Cohesion. Using referencing is one way to avoid repeating vocabulary.

However, you must also make sure that you do not make mistakes when you reference:

- ✗ Building wider roads helps solve traffic congestion, allowing it to move more easily.

In this sentence, the word 'it' refers to 'traffic congestion'. This is a mistake. The idea of 'moving more easily' does not refer to 'traffic congestion', it refers to 'traffic'. So, the sentence should be:

- ✓ Building wider roads helps solve traffic congestion, allowing traffic to move more easily.

7. Relative Clauses

- ✗ People which litter should be fined. (*defining relative clause*)
- ✗ Teachers, which are among the lowest-paid professionals, are essential to the future of any community. (*non-defining relative clause*)

Never use *which* as a relative pronoun for people in any type of relative clause. Use *who*.

- ✓ People who litter should be fined.
- ✓ Teachers, who are among the lowest-paid professionals, are essential to the future of any community.

- ✗ I admire tourists who they care for the environment and no longer travel by plane.

When a relative pronoun is the subject of the verb in the relative clause, we do not need another pronoun.

- ✓ I admire tourists who care for the environment and no longer travel by plane.

- ✗ It is unfair to make the next generation solve the environmental problems that we are largely responsible for them.

Likewise, we do not need another object pronoun when a relative pronoun is the object of the verb in the relative clause.

- ✓ It is unfair to make the next generation solve the environmental problems that we are largely responsible for.

- ✗ Internet sites, which promote hatred should be banned.

Do not use commas in defining relative clauses.

✓ Internet sites which promote hatred should be banned.

✗ The internet which is arguably the greatest modern invention is used for both noble and evil purposes.

In this sentence, 'which is arguably the greatest modern invention' is not essential. It is a non-defining relative clause because it only provides extra information. If it is left out, the sentence still makes sense. With non-defining relative clauses, we always use commas.

✓ The internet, which is arguably the greatest modern invention, is used for both noble and evil purposes.

For detailed information about defining and non-defining relative clauses, go to page 70.

8. Contractions

Many people do not pay attention to this in their IELTS essays. Contractions should not be used in Writing Task 2 or Writing Task 1 (except for GT informal letters). It is considered a mistake in IELTS to use contractions in formal writing. Although this e-book does use the contraction 'Let's', this is not something you should do in your IELTS essay.

- ✗ The government doesn't spend enough money on protecting the environment.
- ✓ The government does not spend enough money on protecting the environment.

9. Sentence Length

- ✗ There is a lot of competition for jobs among graduates. Therefore, having some practical work experience is a good thing. It will give an applicant a distinct advantage over others.

If you have a succession of very short sentences, your writing will lack cohesion. Very often, all you need to do to combine your ideas is use a sentence connector and make a few minor changes.

- ✓ There is so much competition for jobs among graduates that having some practical work experience will give an applicant a distinct advantage over others.

Overlong sentences also often lack cohesion. Besides, they can make it difficult for the reader to understand what you are trying to say.

- ✗ The instability of the economy and of the job market means that many workers are worried about being made redundant, and this fear often makes them tolerate low wages and poor working conditions, which puts them under strain and also increases the stress resulting from routinely having to take work home and from spending an undue amount of time commuting each day.

Remember that a complex sentence is not the same as a long sentence. You can express yourself more clearly by avoiding overlong sentences and using the right connectors as well as the right punctuation.

- ✓ Owing to the instability of the economy and of the job market, many workers are worried about being made redundant. This fear often makes them tolerate low wages and poor working conditions, which puts them under great strain. Besides, routinely having to take work home and the long daily commute make the stress even worse.

IELTS Liz

10. Linking Words

but / although

- ✗ Although there is growing awareness of the dangers of plastic pollution, but many people continue to use single-use plastic bags.

Both *but* and *although* express the idea of contrast. Therefore, only one conjunction is enough to link the clauses.

- ✓ There is growing awareness of the dangers of plastic pollution, but many people continue to use single-use plastic bags.
- ✓ Although there is growing awareness of the dangers of plastic pollution, many people continue to use single-use plastic bags.

Note that when a sentence begins with *Although* (or *Even though / Despite / In spite of*) there is always a comma at the end of the subordinate clause.

If you reverse the clauses, do not use a comma:

- ✓ Many people continue to use single-use plastic bags although there is growing awareness of the dangers of plastic pollution.

Starting a sentence with *But / Because / And*

- ✗ Plastic bags are very convenient when shopping. But they are a source of environmental pollution.
- ✗ Because single-use plastic bags are a source of environmental pollution, they should be banned.
- ✗ Disposable plastic bags are a source of environmental pollution. And they endanger the ocean wildlife.

In essay writing, NEVER begin a sentence with *But, Because, or And*.

- ✓ Plastic bags are very convenient when shopping, but they are a source of environmental pollution.
- ✓ Single-use plastic bags should be banned because they are a source of environmental pollution.
- ✓ Disposable plastic bags are a source of environmental pollution and endanger the ocean wildlife.

Forgetting to use *and* when listing examples

Always remember to use *and* before the last item when writing a list.

- ✗ Sports professionals should earn less than other professionals who benefit society for example doctors, teachers, nurses.
- ✓ Sports professionals should earn less than other professionals who benefit society, for example doctors, teachers **and** nurses.

Note the comma before *for example*.

- ✗ Most children enjoy creative activities, such as drawing, dancing, singing.
- ✓ Most children enjoy creative activities, such as drawing, dancing and singing.

For detailed information about linking words, go to Sentence Structure, pages 45-69, and Giving Examples, pages 229-235.

11. Using Interrogatives

Avoid writing questions in your essay and instead support your ideas with statements. There are no specific rules about this, but it is a strong recommendation.

- ✗ But how can we solve air pollution? Firstly, we could reduce the number of cars on the road.
- ✓ One of the most effective ways of tackling air pollution is to reduce the number of cars on the road.

12. Word Order

'Indirect' or 'reported' questions

'Indirect' or 'reported' questions, unlike 'real' questions, do not require an auxiliary.

- ✗ Young people today wonder why did their parents' generation ignore the issue of climate change.
- ✓ Young people today wonder why their parents' generation ignored the issue of climate change.

Adverbs

Some can go in initial position, most can go in both mid- and end-position, but some only go in one or the other. There are many rules and exceptions.

Remember these three basic rules:

a) Adverbs of frequency (*never, always, etc.*) usually come after an auxiliary but before the main verb:

- ✗ Young offenders are offered rarely adequate rehabilitation programmes.
- ✓ Young offenders are rarely offered adequate rehabilitation programmes.

b) Avoid separating a verb and its subject with an adverb:

- ✗ Young children like very much being read to.
- ✓ Young children very much like being read to.
- ✓ Young children like being read to very much.

c) Adverbs of place usually come before adverbs of time, and adverbs of manner before place and time:

- ✓ The ice caps have been melting gradually over the past decade.

13. Flowery Language

IELTS Writing Task 2 is not descriptive. You will need to use formal language. Although this mainly falls under the marking criterion of vocabulary, it will also have an impact on your grammar.

- ✗ Since time immemorial, *Homo sapiens* has had an overwhelming urge to emulate the winged denizens of the skies.

Note: *homo sapiens* is a singular noun.

If you want to impress, aim for clarity. Do not aim for flowery (overly descriptive) language. The above sentence could be effectively reworded as follows:

- ✓ Mankind has always felt the urge to master flying.

Be more succinct with language; get to the point and avoid too much description. Being overly descriptive in your formal essay writing does not necessarily help your score. The aim is to keep your ideas easy to understand and control the use of descriptive language.

- ✗ Adults who choose to stay with their families rather than live alone play a vital part in strengthening the social values of society through creating a culture of family affinity, care and togetherness, which helps to keep the individuals happy, satisfied and more productive.
- ✓ Adults who choose to stay with their families rather than live alone play a vital part in strengthening the social values of society through creating strong family bonds, which help support the individual.

Keep a formal style of writing rather than a descriptive and emotional style. Do not start writing until you have decided how to present and explain your ideas precisely and directly.

- ✗ On the one hand, some people are blessed by God having some eternal qualities inside them for which they need only a tiny amount of grooming to reach the peak of success. For example, Beethoven was a charming composer and pianist, and one of the most prominent musicians of any era. He was genetically blessed, and his contributions still warm the heart of music lovers around the world today.

- ✓ On the one hand, some people are fortunate to have innate talents which enable them to reach the peak of success without training or experience. For instance, Beethoven, one of the world's most prominent composers and pianists, was genetically gifted and was able to compose complex music at a very young age. This is a good example of how talent is inherited rather than learned.

14. Adverbs & Adjectives

Do not use an adjective where an adverb is needed, or vice versa.

- ✗ Children should start learning a foreign language in primary school because they can learn easier at that age.
- ✓ Children should start learning a foreign language in primary school because they can learn more easily at that age.

- ✗ Parents need to be more care to protect their children from the influences of the media.
- ✗ Parents need to be more carefully to protect children from the influences of the media.
- ✓ Parents need to be more careful about protecting children from the influences of the media.

- ✗ Young children are quickly learners.
- ✓ Young children are quick learners. (*Adjective + Noun*)
- ✓ Young children learn quickly. (*Verb + Adverb*)

enough

- ✗ I believe that children are enough intelligent to understand art.
- ✗ Governments are not reacting enough fast to the threat of global warming.

The adverb *enough* comes after adjectives and adverbs, never before them:

- ✓ I believe that children are intelligent enough to understand art. (*Adjective + enough*)

- ✓ Governments are not reacting fast enough to the threat of global warming.
(Adverb + enough)

For *enough* used as a determiner before uncountable and plural nouns, see the chapter on Quantifiers, page 170.

Easily Confused Adjectives and Adverbs:

actual vs current

- ✗ The actual world population is about 8 billion.

Actual is very similar in meaning to *real*. If you want to talk about a situation **now**, do not use *actual*, use *current* or *at the moment*.

- ✓ The current world population is about 8 billion.
- ⇓
- ✓ At the moment, the world population is about 8 billion.

actually vs at the moment

Likewise, *actually* is similar in meaning to *really* or *in fact*.

- ✓ Some politicians still deny the existence of global warming, when scientists have proven that it is actually a major threat to the planet.

⇓

- ✓ Some politicians still deny the existence of global warming, when scientists have proven that it is in fact a major threat to the planet.

If you want to talk about a situation **now**, do not use *actually*, use *at the moment* or *at present*.

- ✓ At the moment, world leaders seem unable to provide any viable long-term solutions to the major issues facing humankind.

economic vs economical

- ✗ Many young people want to emigrate because the economical situation in their country is deteriorating.

Economical means 'using very little money, energy, petrol, etc.'. *Economic* refers to the economy of a country.

- ✓ Many young people want to emigrate because the economic situation in their country is deteriorating.
- ✓ We need to find more economical ways of heating the buildings in which we live and work.

Note that *economics* is a noun and refers to the university subject.

historic vs historical

- ✗ Man's first walk on the Moon in 1969 was a historical moment we will always remember.

To talk about something that is important or famous in history, use the word *historic*.

- ✓ Man's first walk on the Moon in 1969 was a historic moment we will always remember.

We also use *historic* to talk about very old buildings, monuments or sites.

- ✓ Mass tourism is responsible for a lot of the damage to historic buildings.

Historical means 'relating to the past', or 'having really existed or happened in history'. So a *historic event* is one which is very important in history, whereas a *historical event* is something that really happened.

- ✓ In my opinion, it is important to put a work of art in its historical context in order to understand it.

interested vs interesting

- ✗ It is a tragedy to see millions of people doing jobs in which they are not really interesting.

To write about how you feel about something or someone, use the word ending in *-ed* (called the Past Participle).

- ✓ It is a tragedy to see millions of people doing jobs in which they are not really interested.

To write about how the thing or the person makes you feel a certain way, use the word ending in *-ing* (called the Present Participle).

- ✓ Millions of people think that their job is not interesting.

There are many pairs that function in a similar way to *interested vs interesting*: *bored vs boring*, *confused vs confusing*, *excited vs exciting*, *tired vs tiring*, *shocked vs shocking*, etc.

- ✓ Many teenagers go through a crisis during which they feel bored at school.
- ✓ Many teenagers go through a crisis during which they say everything is boring.

15. Capital Letters

Always use a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence (and a full stop at the end).

- ✗ it may be true that nobody can be completely self-sufficient. however, values such as solidarity and compassion are not always easy to find in our society.
- ✓ It may be true that nobody can be completely self-sufficient. However, values such as solidarity and compassion are not always easy to find in our society.

All proper nouns are written with a capital letter: Marie Curie / Mahatma Gandhi / New York / Ho Chi Minh City, etc.

The days of the week and the months are also written with a capital letter: Tuesday / August, etc.

Words for nationalities and languages also require a capital: *They are Canadian and they speak both English and French.*

IELTS Liz

Important:

Never use capital letters for emphasis in an IELTS essay!

- ✗ The way some people treat their pets is OUTRAGEOUS.
- ✓ The way some people treat their pets is outrageous.
- ✓ The way some people treat their pets is absolutely outrageous.

Irregular Verb List

The table shows some irregular verbs that are commonly used in IELTS Writing Task 2.

Infinitive	Past Simple	Past Participle
be	was/were	been
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
broadcast	broadcast/broadcasted	broadcast/broadcasted
build	built	built
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
cut	Cut	cut
deal	dealt	dealt
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed

Infinitive	Past Simple	Past Participle
feel	Felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fly	Flew	flown
forbid	forbade	forbidden
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
get	Got	got
give	Gave	given
go	Went	gone
grow	Grew	grown
have	Had	had
hear	Heard	heard
hide	Hid	hidden
hold	Held	held
keep	Kept	kept
know	Knew	known
lay	Laid	laid
lead	Led	led
leave	Left	left
lend	Lent	lent
let	Let	let
lie	Lay	lain
lose	Lost	lost
make	Made	made
mean	meant	meant

Infinitive	Past Simple	Past Participle
meet	met	met
pay	paid	paid
put	put	put
read	read	read
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
set	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
show	showed	shown
shrink	shrank	shrunk
shut	shut	shut
sink	sank	sunk
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
speak	spoke	spoken
spend	spent	spent
spread	spread	spread
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught



Infinitive	Past Simple	Past Participle
tell	Told	told
think	thought	thought
throw	Threw	thrown
understand	understood	understood
wear	wore	worn
win	won	won
write	wrote	written

I hope that you found this Grammar E-book useful.

Do not hesitate to review chapters again and again. Go through this e-book as many times as you need.

Make sure you have also reviewed all chapters in the Workbook to test yourself and develop more accuracy.

I wish you all the best for your future plans.

Liz



End Volume III