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.

Volume II

Pages 102 - 193

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.

Tenses

This chapter will provide an overview of the main tenses. Your aim will be to:

1. Use this list as your own check list.

   When you practise writing essays at home, review your essay and see how many of the tenses below you used in your essay.

2. Practise creating sentences using these tenses.

   I am not asking you to memorise sentences. That is a bad idea for IELTS writing as the examiner will discount memorised sentences or phrases. However, you can practise using these tenses so that you can produce them more easily in your real IELTS test.

To learn common problems and useful points about using different tenses correctly, see the next chapter, page 109.

Tenses for IELTS Writing Task 2: Common Worries and Questions

Will I get a higher score if I use complex tenses?

Using one particular tense will not give you a higher score. You will get a higher score if you use a range of tenses at the right time, in the right context and in the right way. If the sentence calls for the Present Perfect, for example, then use it. However, to use it inappropriately will lower your score, not increase it.

How many tenses do I need to use for a high score?

There is no fixed number. The band scores are not marked in that way. The examiner will be looking for **a range of tenses** but there is no set number for a particular band score. Not all tenses are commonly used in IELTS Writing Task 2 and not all tenses need to be used for a high score.

Always remember that the examiner is looking not only for range when marking grammar, but also **accuracy**. This means you must avoid errors at all costs to get a good score in grammar.

Tenses for IELTS Writing Task 2

Below are the common tenses in the English language. You will see that some tenses are more likely to be used than others. They are organised below as follows:

Grammar for IELTS Writing Task 2

Tenses	Usage in IELTS Writing Task 2
1. Ways of talking about **present** events and situations	
• Present Simple	Likely to be used
• Present Continuous	Likely to be used
• Present Perfect Simple	Likely to be used
• Present Perfect Continuous	Less likely to be used
2. Ways of talking about **past** events and situations	
• Past Simple	Likely to be used
• Past Continuous	Less likely to be used
• Past Perfect	Less likely to be used
• Past Perfect Continuous	Less likely to be used
• *Used to*	Likely to be used
3. Ways of talking about **future** events and situations	
• *Going to*	Less likely to be used
• *Will*	Likely to be used
• Future Perfect	Less likely to be used

1. Ways of Talking About <u>Present</u> Events and Situations

Present Simple

Many essays will use the Present Simple because a lot of the issues in IELTS Writing Task 2 are **current** world issues.

We use the Present Simple to talk about the present in general, about things which are generally or always true:

➢ While some people <u>believe</u> that music and art are important subjects at school, others <u>argue</u> that the main focus should be on science and technology.

➢ Banks <u>have to</u> be strict in granting personal loans in order to limit overspending and debt.

We also use the Present Simple to talk about regular or habitual actions:

➢ Many children <u>spend</u> at least two hours a day watching television.

> Research into space exploration often <u>results</u> in advances in technology, such as 3D printers.

As you can see from the four examples above, it is not important whether the action is happening now, at the time of speaking. We are talking about things *in general*. Writing about things in general is extremely common in IELTS essays.

To learn about using the Present Simple to express the future, see page 110.

Present Continuous

This tense is used when the situation is happening *around now*. It is a current situation or action, but not necessarily one happening at the time of speaking. It is often used to talk about trends and about changes happening *around now*. IELTS candidates are frequently given questions about trends in society, which means you will probably need to use this tense in your essay.

> More people <u>are travelling</u> abroad today than ever before.

> Old people <u>are living</u> longer today, which is one reason why people need to save money for their lengthy retirement.

> More people <u>are choosing</u> to drive to work and this <u>is causing</u> traffic congestion in city centres.

Attention: some verbs are not normally used in the continuous form. See page 109.

Present Perfect Simple

This tense is used a lot in IELTS Writing Task 2 because many situations and events have an origin in the past but have a connection with *now*.

> Research into space exploration <u>has resulted</u> in advances in modern technology.

> Social media <u>have become</u> one of the main forms of online communication between people over the last few years.

> Since people <u>have started</u> using the internet, information <u>has become</u> more readily available.

For more information about using the Present Perfect as opposed to the Past Simple, see pages 111 and 112.

Present Perfect Continuous

Although the Present Perfect Continuous is used less frequently than the Present Perfect Simple in academic essay writing, you may occasionally need to use it, for example to emphasise that an action or situation which started in the past is still happening or continuing.

> ➤ For several decades, scientists <u>have been turning</u> their attention to artificial intelligence.

> ➤ In many European countries, the growth rate of the young population <u>has been decreasing</u> for several years.

2. Ways of Talking About <u>Past</u> Events and Situations

Past Simple

This tense is used only to describe the past as it was. It is for events or situations that happened and finished in the past. Even if the essay question is about a present situation, it is common to offer comparisons with the past in order to expand and explain your ideas.

> ➤ In the past, people often <u>kept</u> the same job for their entire working lives.

> ➤ Several generations ago, few people <u>planned</u> to retire from work.

> ➤ Before the spread of social media, people <u>tended</u> to call on neighbours, friends and relatives much more often.

Past Continuous

You are not likely to have to use this tense often, if at all, in an academic essay.
The Past Continuous is used to talk about something which continued to happen before and after a particular action or situation in the past.

> ➤ In the 17th century, many people left Europe for America because the state <u>was persecuting</u> them.

Past Perfect

This tense is not common to use in IELTS Writing Task 2. However, you may have to use it occasionally.
You use the Past Perfect to talk about a completed action that happened before another action in the past.

➢ Before the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, hardly anybody in the West <u>had heard</u> of PyeongChang.

➢ International sports competitions bring to light places in the world that many people <u>had not heard</u> of before, such as PyeongChang with the 2018 Winter Olympics.

Past Perfect Continuous

Like the Past Perfect, this tense is not common to use in IELTS Writing Task 2 either. However, you may have need to use it occasionally.
You use the Past Perfect Continuous to talk about an action that happened before another action in the past and was still continuing.

➢ The Japanese artist Hokusai <u>had been working</u> for decades before he became internationally famous, which shows that both talent and hard work are needed for success.

used to + Infinitive

This is a frequent and very useful past form which is used to describe habitual or regularly recurring situations or behaviour in the past that are no longer happening. It is a great way to compare and contrast with common practices today.

➢ People <u>used to eat</u> a lot of meat but nowadays many people prefer a vegetarian diet.

➢ Only a few decades ago, people <u>used to have</u> a more active lifestyle than they do now.

➢ In the past, there <u>did not use to be</u> as much littering in the streets as there is now.

Note that *used to* + Infinitive is past only. It has no present form. To talk about habitual or regularly recurring situations or behaviour in the present, use the Present Simple.
Note too that the negative form is *did not use to*.

3. Ways of Talking About <u>Future</u> Events and Situations

going to + Infinitive

We use (*be*) *going to* + Infinitive to talk about a pre-decided plan or intention.

➢ In some countries, the government <u>is going to impose</u> restrictions on the cultivation of crops in areas where water resources are scarce.

> Over the next few years, the World Bank <u>is going to invest</u> millions of dollars in education projects for girls.

We also use (*be*) *going to* + Infinitive to talk about a prediction based on evidence.

> As all sources of fossil fuels are limited, our planet <u>is going to face</u> energy scarcity.

> Rising sea levels mean that major cities such as Shanghai and Hanoi <u>are going to suffer</u> from flooding more and more often.

will

We can use *will* + Infinitive simply to refer to future events that we regard as facts.

> In 2025, the United Nations <u>will be</u> 80 years old.

We also use *will* + Infinitive for predictions that are based on opinions, beliefs or hopes (i.e. not on hard evidence).

> Many people think that social media <u>will continue</u> to grow as a recruiting tool.

> With advances in artificial intelligence, there are grounds for believing that autonomous machines <u>will become</u> prevalent.

If you want to make the opinion or belief sound more or less certain, you can use adverbs such as *probably, certainly, definitely*.

> In the future, robots <u>will probably play</u> a greater role in our daily lives.

> Young people <u>will definitely not accept</u> a world where only adults have the power to make decisions that will affect everyone's future.

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

Important:

Note that after *if* or *unless* (First Conditional) and in time clauses after *when, until, as soon as, before, after, next time, once*, etc. we use a present verb form although we are talking about the future.

> <u>If temperatures continue</u> to rise, whole areas of the world will become uninhabitable.

> More species will disappear <u>unless we put an end</u> to illegal hunting and poaching.

> ➢ The crime rate will fall <u>as soon as we eradicate</u> poverty and unemployment.

> ➢ There should be more shelters where the homeless could stay <u>until they find</u> somewhere else to live.

For more information about First Conditional sentences, go to page 113.

For more information about Time Clauses, go to page 45.

Future Perfect

We use the Future Perfect to talk about something that has not happened yet but will happen before another event or action in the future. The time expression is usually introduced by the word *by*.

> ➢ By the middle of this century, the number of polar bears <u>will have decreased</u> dramatically.

> ➢ By the time those in power agree to put poverty at the top of their agenda, thousands more people <u>will have suffered</u> unnecessarily.

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Tenses: Useful Points & Common Problems

In this chapter, we go through the tenses in the same order as the previous chapter (present, past and future) and highlight a number of areas which require particular attention.

Verbs Not Normally Used in the Continuous Form

Some verbs (such as *believe*, *need*, etc.) do not describe actions or happenings. They describe states. These 'stative' verbs are not normally used in the continuous form of the present, past or future tenses.

> Everybody <u>knows</u> that electricity is a reality, but few people <u>understand</u> how it works.

It is wrong to write '*is knowing*' or '*are understanding*'.

> I <u>agree</u> completely with this opinion.

It is wrong to write '*am agree*'.

Here are some common 'state' verbs:

dislike	agree	know	appear	belong to
fear	believe	realise	hear	concern
hate	doubt	recognise	look like	consist of
like	expect (= believe)	forget	notice	contain
love	feel (= have an opinion)	remember	seem	depend on
prefer	think (= have an opinion)	suppose	resemble	need
want	guess	suspect	smell	own
wish	imagine	understand	sound	possess
			taste	

Some of those verbs have a different meaning when they are used in the continuous form.

Compare:

> Young people <u>think</u> that life is more exciting in the city than in the countryside.

Meaning: 'That it is their opinion. It is what they believe.' It is wrong to write "*Young people are thinking that*".

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➢ More than ever before, young people from rural areas <u>are thinking about</u> moving to the city.

This means that the process of making the decision is happening now. In other words, they are *considering / contemplating* moving to the city at this moment.

➢ I <u>feel</u> that governments are not doing enough to combat global warming.
Meaning: 'This is my opinion. It is what I believe.' It is wrong to write '*I am feeling that*'.

➢ More and more, we <u>are feeling</u> the effects of global warming.
This means that we are experiencing a particular physical feeling at the moment.

Talking About Hypothetical Present (or Future) States and Actions

➢ If children <u>had</u> a healthier diet, obesity would not be such a common problem.

Despite the past form *had*, this sentence describes a problem that exists <u>now</u>, <u>in the present</u>. This sentence implies the following: '*Children today <u>do not have</u> a healthy diet. As a result, obesity <u>is</u> a common problem*.' This form is called the Second Conditional. We use it to talk about hypothetical, imaginary states and actions.

See Conditional Statements, page 113 for further information.

Present Simple with Future Meaning After *if* and Conjunctions of Time

After *if / when / before / after / until / as soon as / while*, we use a present tense to refer to a future time.

➢ **If** temperatures <u>continue</u> to rise at the same rate in the next ten years, there will be an ecological catastrophe.
In the main clause, we use the Future Simple tense (*will be*) because the time is future. In the *if*-clause, however, we use the Present Simple (*continue*) although the time is future (*in the next ten years*). It is wrong to write '*will continue to rise*'.

➢ Many young teenagers have no idea what they are going to do **when** they <u>leave</u> school.
In the main clause, we use the Present Simple tense (*have*) because the time is present.
In the *when*-clause we also use the Present Simple tense (*leave*) although the time is future. It is wrong to write '*when they will leave*'.

➢ There will not be peace in the world **until** powerful countries <u>agree</u> to stop the arms trade.
It is wrong to write '*will agree*' in this sentence.

Past Simple vs Present Perfect (Simple)

The Present Perfect is used a lot in Writing Task 2 because many situations and events have an origin in the past but have a connection with *now*.

> Social media <u>have become</u> one of the main forms of online communication over the last few years.

Note: Social media became the main form of online communication in the past and is still the main form today.

> It is hard to believe that more than 30 years <u>have passed</u> since the birth of the internet.

Note: The internet came into being 30 years ago (past) and is still being used today.

The Past Simple is used to describe states and actions which started and ended in the past.

By contrast, we use the Present Perfect to describe states and actions which started in the past but have a connection with the present time. As its name indicates, the Present Perfect is a present tense and always has some relevance to **now**.

> Since Jenner <u>introduced</u> vaccination over 200 years ago, millions of lives <u>have been saved</u>.

In the first part of the sentence, the expression *over 200 years ago* tells us that the event happened in the past, so the Past Simple tense is used (*introduced*).
In the second part, the Present Perfect is used (*have been saved*). Vaccination started saving lives at some point in the past, but it is still saving lives **now** and will probably continue to do so in the future. It is wrong to write "… *millions of lives were saved*". This would mean the lives were saved in the past but are not being saved any more in the present.

> The modern Olympic Games <u>started</u> in 1896. Since then, they <u>have taken place</u> regularly every four years, except during the two world wars.

The Past Simple (*started*) is used to talk about something that happened entirely in the past (in 1896). It is an event with a fixed time in the past. The Present Perfect (*have taken*) is used to talk about an event that started in the past but continues **up to now**. We still have Olympic Games nowadays.

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Time Expressions Using Either Past Simple or Present Perfect

Use the Past Simple (NOT the Present Perfect) with time expressions which refer to a specific point in time in the past or a finished period of time in the past.

For example: *200 years ago / in 1896 / last year / when we were younger / from the 17th until the 20th century*, a few years ago, etc.

Use the Present Perfect with time expressions which refer to an unfinished period of time, i.e. to a period of time which includes the present.

For example: *this year / over the last few years / during the last few years / so far / recently / up to now*, etc.

Let us look at two sentences and the time expressions used:

➢ <u>So far</u> no scientist <u>has discovered</u> an effective cure for the common cold.

Other common time expressions for the Present Perfect include: *ever / never / just / already / yet / for / since*. These expressions require the Present Perfect when the period of time includes **now**, the present.

➢ Man <u>has dreamt</u> of going to Mars <u>for a long time</u>.

The Present Perfect (*has dreamt*) is used here with *for* because the period of time which started in the past and continues **up to now**. Man is still dreaming of going to Mars today. Contrast this with the following sentence: '*Nelson Mandela <u>was</u> in prison <u>for 27 years</u>*.' Here the Simple Past (*was*) must be used because the time period (*for 27 years*) ended in the past. Mandela was released from prison in 1990.

Now look at these two sentences:

➢ The country was attacked three times.
➢ The country has been attacked three times.

The different use of tenses helps us understand what is happening in relation to time. In the first sentence, the past simple is used which means the country was attacked three times in the past and the action ended in the past. However, in the second sentence, the present perfect is used which means the country was attacked in the past but this action is also connected to the present. In other words, the attacks somehow connect to or influence the current situation. For example, it might infer that more attacks might happen soon or that these attacks have weakened the current position. Your choice of tenses changes the meaning of the information provided. Understanding the meaning through tenses is something you must pay close attention to in other sections of IELTS as well such as IELTS Reading.

See Workbook Exercises page 15.

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Conditional Statements

Main Conditional Statements	Usage in IELTS Writing Task 2
First Conditional	Likely to be used
Second Conditional	Likely to be used
Third Conditional	Less likely to be used
unless Statements	A useful variation
provided that Statements	A useful variation

There are three main types of conditional: first, second and third. You can see the usage above for each one. The 'zero conditional' has not been listed as it is not likely to be used in Writing Task 2. Try to use at least one type of conditional statement in your essay.

You choose which conditional to use depending on your ideas.
- If you believe the situation is likely to happen, then you will use the First Conditional.
- If you think it is unlikely to happen in reality, you will use the Second Conditional.

Note that conditional statements do not need to start with *if*. You can change the position of the clauses.
If you plan to use two conditional sentences in your essay, invert one to show the examiner flexibility.
Always remember to use a comma in the right place, as shown below. You only use a comma between the two clauses when the *if*-clause starts the sentence.

First Conditional = real situation (likely to happen / a likely result)

This is generally made using "*If* + Present Simple, … *will* + Infinitive".

Do **not** use *will* in the *if*-clause!

➢ If people <u>work</u> hard, <u>they will have</u> success in life.

➢ If rich countries <u>provide</u> more financial aid to poor countries, <u>it will close</u> the gap between the rich and the poor.

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➢ If the government <u>does not act</u> soon, global warming <u>will become</u> irreversible.

➢ If rich countries <u>do not aid</u> poor countries, the poverty cycle <u>will never be</u> broken.
⇩

The poverty cycle <u>will never be</u> broken <u>if</u> rich countries <u>do not aid</u> poor countries.

➢ Young people <u>will gain</u> important life experience <u>if</u> they <u>travel</u> abroad before going to university.
⇩

<u>If</u> young people <u>travel</u> abroad before going to university, they <u>will gain</u> important life experience.

Second Conditional = unreal situation / hypothetical (unlikely to happen)

This is made using "*If* + Past Simple, … *would* + Infinitive".

Do **not** use *would* in the *if*-clause!

Note that we use the Past Simple in the *if*-clause although we are talking about the present (or the future).

➢ If the government <u>built</u> wider roads, <u>it would improve</u> traffic flow.

➢ If people all around the world <u>spoke</u> only one language, <u>it would promote</u> harmony and understanding between different cultures.

➢ There <u>would be</u> more violence and discontent in the world <u>if</u> there <u>was</u> no censorship of media content.
⇩

If there <u>was</u> no censorship of media content, there <u>would be</u> more violence and discontent in the world.

➢ If the government <u>did not provide</u> state schools and social security, many families <u>would not be</u> able to afford either.
⇩

Many families <u>would not be</u> able to afford state schools or social security <u>if</u> the government <u>did not provide</u> them.

Using *might* or *could* in the main clause

Note too that instead of *would* in the main clause, you can use *might* or *could* if you think it is less probable that the event or situation described will happen.

> If we <u>used</u> fewer plastic bottles, it <u>might have</u> a huge impact on the environment.

> World poverty <u>could be</u> eradicated <u>if</u> everyone <u>had</u> free access to education.

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

Third Conditional = 'imaginary past'; used to express criticism or regret because we would have liked the past to be different from what actually happened

This is made using "*If* + Past Perfect, ... *would* + *have* + Past Participle" if both actions are in the past:

> If man <u>had not always had</u> the urge to surpass himself, the pyramids <u>would never have been built</u>, and no one <u>would ever have walked</u> on the moon.

> If the public transport system <u>had been better planned</u>, our cities <u>would not have become</u> so difficult to live in and work in.

> The British Empire <u>would probably not have existed</u> if Britain <u>had not developed</u> into a naval superpower.

If the action or situation in the main clause is in the present, then the Third Conditional is made using "*If* + Past Perfect, ... *would* + *Infinitive*":

> If the government <u>had started</u> paying attention to climate change 50 years ago, our environmental problems <u>would not be</u> as complex as they are today.

> English <u>would probably not be</u> spoken as a lingua franca in so many parts of the world <u>if</u> the United States and Britain <u>had not been</u> economic and military superpowers.

> If there <u>had not been</u> so many advances in medicine and in pharmacology over the past century, people <u>would live</u> much shorter lives and suffer greater pain.

unless Statements *unless = If ... not*

Unless statements can be very useful in highlighting the potential problems if a situation is ignored. Such statements can be particularly useful in IELTS solution essays.

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> If we do not reduce our consumption of plastic, ocean pollution will worsen.
> ⇩
> Unless we reduce our consumption of plastic, ocean pollution will worsen.

In the same way as in *if*-sentences, you can change the position of the clauses:

> Unless people make more effort to recycle and reduce their energy consumption, global warming will continue to be a threat.
> ⇩
> Global warming will continue to be a threat unless people make more effort to recycle and reduce their energy consumption.

> Many delinquents will reoffend unless they take part in a rehabilitation programme.
> ⇩
> Unless they take part in a rehabilitation programme, many delinquents will reoffend.

Note that the same punctuation rule as in *if*-sentences applies here: you only use a comma between the two clauses when the *unless*-clause starts the sentence.

provided that Statements *provided = if and only if*

You can also begin a conditional clause with *provided that*. The expression *provided that* can also be interchangeable with the following:

> *provided / providing / providing that / as long as / so long as*

All the expressions above have the same meaning as '*if and only if*'.

> Children should be allowed to watch movies on television provided that parents censor violent content.

> Children should be allowed to play computer games, provided parents control the amount of time they spend playing them.

> Children should be allowed access to social media providing parents monitor the sites they access.

> Children should be allowed to read story books providing that they also spend time reading educational books.

In the same way as in *if*-sentences, you can change the position of the clauses:

➤ Children should be allowed to watch the news on television <u>provided that</u> parents are prepared to answer their questions.

⇩

<u>As long as</u> parents are prepared to answer their questions, children should be allowed to watch the news on television.

➤ <u>Provided</u> overfishing ceases immediately, fish stocks might be able to recover.

⇩

Fish stocks might be able to recover <u>so long as</u> overfishing ceases immediately.

See Workbook Exercises page 21.

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Modals

The modals, sometimes called 'modal auxiliary verbs', are:

can / could / may / might / shall / should / will / would / must / ought to

We use modals to express concepts such as ability (or inability), possibility, probability, certainty, obligation (or lack of obligation) and necessity (or lack of necessity), and also to make recommendations and suggestions.

Modals enable you to show your attitude towards, or your perception of, the situations you describe or the events you write about. Being able to express these in IELTS Writing Task 2 is very important.

Important notes:

a. <u>Meaning</u>: Some modals can be used in different ways to express different things. For example, the modal *must* can have more than one meaning (more than one use). Pay close attention to the different use of each modal.

b. <u>Grammar</u>: Modals differ from ordinary verbs in a number of ways. Pay close attention to how the modals are used grammatically. For example, modals:

  ▪ do not take *-s* on the third person singular

  ▪ are always followed by an infinitive (without *to*, except for *ought*)

  ▪ do not need *do* in questions and negatives

  ▪ have no past forms and no *-ing* forms.

Use of Modals

In IELTS Writing Task 2, it is highly likely that you will need to use modals. You are most likely to need modals to:

  1. make recommendations

  2. express degrees of probability

  3. express obligation

So, let's look at these three areas to begin with.

1. Making Recommendations and Suggestions; Giving Advice

could

This modal can be used to make a suggestion:

➢ News media <u>could</u> try to free themselves from political bias.

➢ Fast food restaurants <u>could</u> make an effort to offer healthy alternatives.

might

This modal can be used to make a more tentative suggestion:

➢ It <u>might</u> be a good idea to make all students do an internship in order to graduate.

➢ It <u>might</u> be wise to quit social media before we become addicted to them.

should / ought to

Both these modals are used to express a recommendation or to give firm advice:

➢ If employees want to improve their time management, they <u>should</u> draw up a list of priorities.

➢ Employees who want to improve their time management <u>ought to</u> draw up a list of priorities.

➢ Employees <u>should</u> not be expected to take work home with them.

➢ Employers <u>ought not to</u> ask their staff to take work home with them.

You can use *ought to* to paraphrase *should*. Both *should* and *ought to* are stronger in feeling than *could* or *might*.

must

This modal can be used to express a very strong recommendation, an obligation, a duty:

➢ The government <u>must</u> take all necessary steps to ban single-use plastic bags.

➢ Gender equality <u>must</u> be achieved in all areas of human activity.

Note that *have to* can also be used to express a duty, an obligation, or a strong recommendation:

➢ The government <u>has to</u> phase out coal power and prioritise clean power as soon as possible.

➢ Governments <u>have to</u> impose stricter rules against deforestation before it is too late.

You will use *must* depending on how strong your own personal views are. *Must* is the strongest of all modals in this section.

2. Expressing Possibility and Degrees of Probability; Making Predictions and Speculating

can / cannot

Using *can* or *cannot* to show that something is **possible** or **not possible** rather than talking about something as certain is important in IELTS Writing Task 2.
It is very common for people to sound overconfident or forceful because they make absolute statements, as in Sentence 1, instead of using cautious language as in Sentence 2:

1. Eating junk food <u>leads</u> to obesity.

⇩

2. Eating junk food <u>can lead</u> to obesity.

Eating junk food does not necessarily cause obesity because if it did, nearly all people would be obese. However, junk food *can* cause obesity. This means it is **possible** that junk food causes obesity, but it is **not absolutely certain** that it does in all cases.

Being able to use "cautious language" is an important skill in academic writing. In IELTS, if your language appropriately conveys a more subtle meaning, you will get a higher band score.

may / might / could

When you want to express **uncertainty**, to say that there is only **a possibility** of something being true or happening, you can use any of these three modals interchangeably:

➢ People <u>might</u> stop littering if there were more litter bins for public use.

➢ Globalisation <u>could</u> be the main reason for the loss of local traditions.

➢ Internet addiction <u>may</u> cause unsocial behaviour.

➢ Even if there were living beings in outer space, we <u>may not</u> be able to communicate with them.

➢ Young teachers in rural areas <u>might not</u> be able to get the professional support they need.

In all five sentences above, the meaning of the underlined modal is 'perhaps':

➢ <u>Perhaps</u> people would stop littering if there were more litter bins for public use.

➢ <u>Perhaps</u> globalisation is the main reason for the loss of local traditions.

➢ <u>Perhaps</u> internet addiction causes unsocial behaviour.

Note that in negative sentences, only *may not* and *might not* can be used here because *could not* expresses a different meaning, namely ability.

should / ought to

When you want to say that you think something will **probably** happen (or not) or is **probably** true (or not), you can use either of these modals interchangeably:

➢ Having a degree <u>should</u> enable you to earn a higher salary.

➢ Two years of real-world work experience <u>ought to</u> make it easier for you to land your first job.

➢ Reducing our use of plastic in daily life <u>should not</u> be too difficult.

➢ International aid <u>ought not to</u> stop poor countries trying to tackle their own problems.

This means *should* and *ought to* can be used either to express a recommendation as in Section 1 of this chapter or to express the probability of something happening or being true as in this section.

You can express the same meaning using *be (un)likely to* or *It is (un)likely that ...*:

➢ Having a degree <u>is likely to</u> enable you to earn a higher salary.

➢ <u>It is likely that</u> two years of real-world work experience will make it easier for you to land your first job.

➢ Reducing our use of plastic in daily life <u>is unlikely to</u> be too difficult.

➢ <u>It is unlikely that</u> international aid will stop poor countries trying to tackle their own problems.

If you want to sound a little more certain, use *highly* (*un*)*likely*:

> ➢ It is highly likely that an increasing number of people will work from home.

> ➢ Unfortunately, fines alone are highly unlikely to stop people from littering.

will

Use this modal when you want to say that you think something will **certainly** happen (or not):

> ➢ In developed countries, the death rate will continue to decline.

> ➢ Manufacturing cheaper cars will not solve our environmental problems.

If you want to sound even more certain, use *will definitely* (*not*); to sound a little less certain, use *will probably* (*not*):

> ➢ Private car ownership will probably not decrease in the foreseeable future.

> ➢ Building more railways will definitely improve the quality of our environment.

You can also express certainty using phrases such as *be bound to* or *be certain to*:

> ➢ The death rate is bound to continue to decline in developed countries.

> ➢ Building more railways is certain to improve the quality of our environment.

Note that *be sure to* means the same as *be certain to*. However, *be sure to* is more frequent in spoken English while *be certain to* is generally considered more appropriate in formal written English such as IELTS Writing Task 2.

must

You use *must* to say that you think something is **fairly certain** or **quite certain** because of a deduction you make based on particular facts or events:

> ➢ The widening gap between rich and poor must eventually lead to civil unrest.

> ➢ Exploding population and urbanisation must be the main cause of any temperature increase.

Note that in negative sentences, only *cannot* is used in this sense because *must not* expresses a different meaning, namely prohibition:

> ➢ Genes cannot be the reason why some people are successful early in life.

3. Obligation; Necessity; Absence of Necessity

must / have to / need to

These three forms express obligation or necessity and are frequently used in academic writing:

➢ Governments <u>must</u> arrange for more trees to be planted.

➢ People <u>need to be</u> aware of the amount of energy they use in their homes.

➢ All countries <u>have to</u> have a minimum wage to ensure a good standard of living.

As *must* has no past form, use *had to / needed to* to express obligation/necessity in the past:

➢ In the 19th century, many children <u>had to</u> work to help their parents financially.

do not have to / do not need to

You can use either of these forms to say that something is **not obligatory or necessary**. Remember that *must not* expresses prohibition and therefore cannot be used in this sense. The past forms are *did not have to / did not need to*.

➢ With television, you <u>do not need to</u> leave the comfort of your home to enjoy entertainment or educational programmes.

➢ We <u>did not have to</u> wait very long to realise how much cars pollute our air.

Reminder:
Do not use contracted forms in your essay! (~~don't have to~~ / ~~didn't need to~~, etc.)

Other Uses of Modals

We will now turn to other areas: 4. ability, 5. permission and 6. modals & perfect infinitive.

4. Ability

can / able to / manage to

If you want to say that someone or something has the ability to do or cause something, use *can*.

➢ A better standard of living means that the elderly <u>can</u> remain active much longer.

➢ Goodwill alone <u>cannot</u> solve all the problems the world is facing.

When talking about ability, the form *be able to* can be used instead of *can*:

➢ Owing to the global financial crisis, fewer countries <u>are able to</u> provide aid to the developing world.

The form *be able to* is particularly useful when talking about the **future**:

➢ We have grounds to believe that robots <u>will be able to</u> interview job applicants.

It is also useful in positive sentences about a **specific ability or achievement in the past**, where it is not possible to use *could*:

➢ In 1945, the United Nations <u>was able to</u> bring many countries together with a view to safeguarding world peace.

If you want to convey the idea that this specific achievement involved a certain amount of difficulty, you can use *managed to* as an alternative:

➢ In 1945, the United Nations <u>managed to</u> bring many countries together with a view to safeguarding world peace.

However, in negative sentences about a specific ability or achievement, *could not*, *was/were not able to* and *did not manage* to are interchangeable.

Finally, to talk about a **general ability** in the past, we tend to use *could / could not* more frequently than *was (not) / were (not) able to*:

➢ Our ancestors <u>could</u> already make relatively complex tools.

5. Permission

can / be allowed to

You can use these forms interchangeably to say that someone has permission to do something, or in the negative to say that they do not have permission:

➢ In some universities, students <u>are allowed to</u> work up to 20 hours a week.

➢ Employees may feel dissatisfied if they <u>cannot</u> choose what to wear at work.

When talking about the past, you can use *could (not)*, or *was/were (not) allowed to*:

➢ In many countries, women <u>were not allowed to</u> vote until the 20th century.

➢ In the United States, women <u>could not</u> vote until 1920.

When talking about the future, or after another modal, only *be allowed to* is possible:

➤ It is to be feared that one day government agencies <u>will be allowed to</u> access all email and phone records.

➤ Employers <u>should not be allowed to</u> force their staff to take work home with them.

Finally, in Section 6 we look at meaning and use of some modals followed by the Perfect Infinitive (i.e. *have* + Past Participle).

6. Modals + Perfect Infinitive

could + Perfect Infinitive

This is useful in IELTS Writing Task 2 when you talk about things that people or the government could have done in the past but did not. It highlights an oversight or a failure to do something.

Use this form to talk about actions or events that were possible but did not happen:

➤ Better planning <u>could have prevented</u> the global financial crisis that shook the world a decade ago.

This form is also frequently used to express criticism of something that did not happen:

➤ Climate experts <u>could have told</u> us much earlier that the future of our planet was in danger.

should / ought to + Perfect Infinitive

We often use these forms to talk about things that someone did not do, when we think there was an obligation for them to do it:

➤ Many people think that the government <u>should have built</u> shelters for the homeless instead of a multi-million-pound Olympic Village.

Conversely, we use *should not / ought not to* + Perfect Infinitive to talk about things that someone did, when we think it was not the right thing to do:

➤ The government <u>ought not to have spent</u> so much money on an Olympic Village when thousands of people are homeless.

must + **Perfect Infinitive**

You are less likely to use this form than the previous two in your IELTS Writing Task 2.

You use this form when you are **almost certain** that something happened:

> ➢ Armstrong <u>must have felt</u> like a god when he set foot on the moon.

Note that in the negative, i.e. when you are almost certain that something did not happen, you use *cannot* + Perfect Infinitive:

> ➢ Teenagers who become delinquents <u>cannot have had</u> a happy childhood.

See Workbook Exercises page 24.

IELTS **Liz**

Passive Voice

Let's start by tackling the most important question relating to the use of the passive voice in IELTS Writing Task 2:

Will I get a higher score if I use the passive voice?

The examiner does not give you extra points because you used the passive voice. There are no rules in the marking criteria to award a better score for grammar for using the passive voice in your essay. The marking for IELTS Writing Task 2 does not work that way. You can still get a high score without using the passive voice. The examiner is looking for a range of grammar usage which includes all aspects given in this e-book.

The passive voice can be useful to use in your IELTS essay. This chapter aims to show you when and how to use it well.

This chapter will cover:

1. forming the passive voice
2. why to choose the passive voice
3. the agentless passive voice
4. when not to use the passive voice
5. the passive voice & tenses
6. the passive voice & modals
7. *it* + the passive voice

1. Forming the Passive Voice

The passive voice is made using the appropriate form of *be* + Past Participle.

The table below shows some of the most common active and passive voice forms (third person singular and plural) used in IELTS Writing Task 2.

Active Voice	Passive Voice
teaches / teach	*is taught / are taught*
Schools teach social skills.	Social skills are taught at schools.
pollutes / pollute	*is polluted / are polluted*
Industry pollutes our environment.	Our environment is polluted by industry.

values / value Customers value good service and quality products.	*is valued / are valued* Good service and quality products are valued by customers
is building / are building The government is building wider roads.	*is being built / are being built* Wider roads are being built by the government.

To see more examples of how the passive is formed using different tenses and modals, please see Sections 5 and 6 of this chapter.

Note that the form *to be born* is a passive form: *I was born / he was born*, etc.

Passive Voice Negative

Below you can see the difference between the negative forms of active and passive voice.

Active Voice	**Passive Voice**
does not teach / do not teach Some schools do not teach social skills.	*is not taught / are not taught* Social skills are not taught at some schools.
does not pollute / do not pollute Solar energy does not pollute the environment.	*is not polluted / are not polluted* The environment is not polluted by solar energy.
does not value / do not value Customers do not value poor service.	*is not valued / are not valued* Poor service is not valued by customers.
is not developing / are not developing The government is not developing the infrastructure enough.	*is not being developed / are not being developed* The infrastructure is not being developed enough by the government.

2. Why Choose the Passive Voice?

Below are four main reasons why you might choose to use the passive voice in your IELTS essay rather than an active voice:

i)   To change the focus of the sentence
ii) When the person doing the action is of no interest
iii) When we do not know who did the action
iv) When describing processes

i) To change the focus of the sentence

Active Voice

We use the *active voice* to say what the subject does, i.e. when we want to talk about the person or thing that *performs* the action.

> ➢ Sentence A: Oceans generate most of the oxygen on our planet. (active voice)

In Sentence A, the focus of the sentence is on oceans. You are most likely to find this sentence in an essay about the importance of protecting our oceans.

Passive Voice

By contrast, we use the *passive voice* when we want to emphasise what happens to the subject, i.e. when we want to talk about the person or thing that *is affected by* the action.

> ➢ Sentence B: Most of the oxygen on our planet is generated by the oceans. (passive voice)

In Sentence B, the focus of the sentence is on oxygen and our planet. It is more likely you will find this sentence in an essay which focuses on our planet or the air we breathe.

Examples

Let's look at a couple more examples of using the passive voice to change the focus of the sentence.

Voice	Sentence Sample	Focus
Active	Social media have transformed the way families communicate.	Social media

Passive	The way families communicate <u>has been transformed</u> by social media.	Families & communication

Voice	Sentence Sample	Focus
Active	International sports competitions fire up national pride.	Sports competitions
Passive	National pride is fired up by international sports competitions.	National pride

Note: The passive voice can of course be used with phrasal verbs as well (e.g. *to fire up*).

Voice	Sentence Sample	Focus
Active	Alexander Fleming <u>discovered</u> penicillin in 1928.	Alexander Fleming
Passive	Penicillin <u>was discovered</u> by Alexander Fleming in 1928.	Penicillin

ii) When the person doing the action is of no interest

We might choose to use the passive voice if the person doing the action is not of importance to the aims of the essay.

➢ Active Voice: <u>Mark Zuckerberg created</u> Facebook in 2014 and over 2 billion people now use it as a form of communication.
⇩

Passive Voice: <u>Facebook was created</u> ~~by Mark Zuckerberg~~ in 2014 and over 2 billion people now use it as a form of communication.

⇩

Passive Voice: <u>Facebook was created</u> in 2014 and over 2 billion people now use it as a form of communication.

In the active voice above, the subject and focus of the sentence is Mark Zuckerberg. However, if you want to write about Facebook and the focus of the essay is on how popular social media are today, the name of the person who created Facebook may not be

important. In this case, you might choose to use the passive voice and completely remove [by Mark Zuckerberg] from the sentence.

So, if the person is of no interest or does not contribute towards the aims of the essay, we do not need to use their name or refer to them at all. The passive voice gives us this choice. This is useful in an IELTS Writing Task 2 essay because it is a short essay and you need to select what information to include and what information is not worth adding. In IELTS essays, more information is not always a good thing. All your sentences should have a clear, focused, relevant purpose. Furthermore, if you have forgotten the name of the person doing the action, you can choose to use the passive voice as a way of getting around this problem.

iii) When we do not know who did the action

If you do not know the name of the person doing the action, you might again choose to use the passive voice.

> ➤ <u>Stonehenge was built</u> in about 2500BC. (passive voice)

The focus of the sentence above is on Stonehenge. We do not know who built it. While it was clearly built by people, we do not know specifically who they were. For this reason, the logical choice would be to use a passive voice.

iv) When describing processes

It is common to use the passive voice when describing a process. While it is not common to use the passive voice for this reason in Writing Task 2, it is usual in Writing Task 1 (Academic Paper) if you are asked to write about a diagram.

> ➤ The life cycle of the silkworm begins when eggs <u>are laid</u> on a leaf. When the larvae hatch, the leaf <u>is used</u> as a food source.

3. The Agentless Passive Voice

As seen above, there are a number of times we might use the passive voice and not state the agent (the person doing the action). For example, "*Facebook was created in 2014 and is the one of the biggest social media sites in the world.*" In this sentence, the agent ("*Mark Zuckerberg*") has been omitted from the sentence.

However, there is another time we might use an agentless passive voice in IELTS Writing Task 2. It is common to write about other people's opinions in the background statement of your introduction and in any essay that requires a discussion. When we write about other people's opinions, it is common to use the passive voice and when we do that we do not need to state the agent "by some people" or "by many people".

> Active Voice: Some people <u>use</u> paper bags instead of plastic bags for environmental reasons.
> ⇩
> Passive Voice: Paper bags <u>are often used</u> instead of plastic bags for environmental reasons.

As you see, in the passive voice the agent "some people" is omitted from the sentence. It is automatically understood from the context that it is "*some people*" who often use paper bags. Below is another example of this:

> Active Voice: Few people <u>value</u> experience more than education.
> ⇩
> Passive Voice: Experience <u>is rarely valued</u> more than education.

Note: In the passive sentences, you can of course choose which adverb of frequency to use (*always, usually, commonly, frequently, seldom, rarely,* etc.) depending on the meaning you wish to convey.

4. When Not to Use the Passive Voice

In IELTS Writing Task 2, some essays will require your opinion. For example, the instruction "Do you agree or disagree?" requires you to state your personal opinion on the statement given in the essay question. It is not possible to give your opinion using a passive voice. Your opinion must be given using an active voice.

✓ *I believe   I think*

✗ *it is believed   it is thought*

I believe and *I think* both show your own beliefs or thoughts. You use an active voice to state your own viewpoint. However, *it is believed* and *it is thought* are used to show other people's views (*it is believed by many that …*)

5. The Passive Voice & Tenses

The passive voice can be used in different tenses.

It is made using *be* (in the appropriate tense) + Past Participle.

The tables below show the different tenses of the passive voice for the third person singular and plural.

Present Simple:	It is written. They are written.
Present Continuous:	It is being built. They are being built.
Present Perfect:	It has been found. They have been found.

Past Simple:	It was discovered. They were discovered.
Past Continuous:	It was being planned. They were being planned.
Past Perfect:	It has been started. They have been started.

Future Simple:	It will be taught. They will be taught.	
Future Continuous:	It will be being tackled. They will be being tackled.	(unlikely to be used in IELTS Writing Task 2)
Future Perfect:	It will have been seen. They will have been seen.	

Below are a few examples of some of the above tenses used in complete sentences.

Present Simple passive:

> ➢ While independent travellers can decide where they visit on holiday, package tours <u>are designed</u> with a set itinerary.

Present Continuous passive:

> ➢ Solar power <u>is not being widely used</u> at present.

Past Simple passive:

> ➢ Many of the old roads in city centres <u>were built</u> a long time ago and are no longer able to cope with the heavy volume of traffic.

Present Perfect passive:

➢ Although laws <u>have been written</u> to prohibit the hunting of endangered animals, they do not seem to be very effective.

Future Simple passive:

➢ It is unlikely that pollution <u>will be reduced</u> unless there is more pressure from the international community.

6. The Passive Voice & Modals

The passive voice can also be used with modals (*can, could, might, should, have to*, etc.). To talk about the present or the future, it is made using Modal + *be* (Infinitive) + Past Participle.

➢ Equality between the sexes <u>should be taught</u> in more schools.

➢ Our cities <u>should be planned</u> with more foresight.

➢ Pollution <u>can be tackled</u> if individuals take responsibility for their decisions and actions.

➢ Global warming <u>might be halted</u> if governments around the world take prompt action.

➢ Areas that rely too much on the tourist trade <u>will be</u> severely <u>affected</u> by a world economic downturn.

➢ Rural schools <u>have to be</u> better <u>funded</u> in order to attract graduate teachers.

To talk about the past, it is made using Modal + *have be*en + Past Participle.

➢ Equality between the sexes <u>should have been taught</u> in more schools.

➢ Our cities <u>should have been planned</u> with more foresight.

➢ Pollution <u>could have been tackled</u> if individuals had taken responsibility for their decisions and actions.

➢ The pyramids of Central and South America <u>could not have been built</u> by 'primitive' tribes.

➢ The 2008 global financial crisis <u>might have been prevented</u> if ethics played a more prominent role in the finance industry.

7. *It* + the Passive Voice

You can also use *It* + the passive of a verb such as *think, believe, expect, say, agree*, etc. + *that*-clause when you want to suggest that a certain opinion or belief is held by an unspecified group of people. This structure is relatively frequently used in academic essay writing. However, take care not to overuse it. There is no need to mention "*by some people*" in these sentences as it is already understood from the context.

> ➢ It is generally believed ~~by some people~~ that recruiters prefer an applicant with relevant job experience rather than one with an academic degree.

> ➢ It is universally agreed that government is necessary for society to function properly.

> ➢ It is expected that global warming will get worse in the next decade.

> ➢ It is thought that social media can be more addictive than alcohol and cigarettes.

> ➢ It is often said that happiness is something different for each and every person.

Note that you can also express general opinions with the passive of some of those verbs without using *it*:

> ➢ Recruiters are generally believed to prefer an applicant with relevant job experience rather than one with an academic degree.

> ➢ Global warming is expected to get worse in the next decade.

> ➢ Social media are thought to be more addictive than alcohol and cigarettes.

> ➢ Happiness is often said to be something different for each and every person.

See Workbook Exercises page 29.

IELTS Liz

Verb Patterns

Here is an overview table of the main verb patterns:

1.	Verb + -*ing* (gerund)	Most children <u>enjoy</u> learn**ing** to play a sport or a musical instrument.
2.	Verb + *to*-infinitive	Many people cannot <u>afford</u> **to go** to university.
3.	Verb + -*ing* or + *to*-infinitive	The government has <u>started</u> fund**ing** research on the link between air pollution and health. The government has <u>started</u> **to fund** research on the link between air pollution and health.
4.	Verb + Object + *to*-infinitive	Parents need to <u>encourage</u> their children **to take up** a sport or an outdoor physical activity.
5.	Verb + Object + Ø-infinitive	I think it is irresponsible to <u>let</u> children **play** in the street after dark.
6.	Verb + *that*-clause	Some economists <u>have suggested</u> **that** the government should renationalise certain industries.

While some verbs can only be used with one pattern, a large number of other verbs can be used with several different patterns. There are no hard and fast rules to tell you which verbs can be used with which pattern.

When you practise essay writing and you are in doubt which pattern is required for a specific verb, do look it up in the dictionary. A good English learner's dictionary always provides information about verb patterns as well as example sentences to illustrate them.

We will now look in some detail at each of the patterns in the table above.

IELTS Liz

1. Verb + -ing (gerund)

A number of verbs are followed by an -ing form. They cannot be followed by to-infinitive or Ø-infinitive. Here is a selection of some of the commonest ones:

admit *	consider *	Enjoy	imagine *	(not) mind *	practise	resent
avoid	delay	fancy	keep (on)	miss	put off	risk
carry on	deny *	give up	mention *	postpone	recall *	suggest *

> Over-exploiting natural resources <u>risks</u> damag**ing** the environment.
> (~~risks to damage~~ / ~~risks damage~~ are WRONG)

> It is rarely a good idea to <u>postpone</u> deal**ing** with a problem.
> (~~postpone to deal~~ / ~~postpone deal~~ is WRONG)

Note the negative form:

> It may well be that an increasing number of cancer patients will <u>consider</u> <u>not</u> tak**ing** chemotherapy and will turn to natural remedies instead.

> Home-schooled children might <u>miss</u> <u>not</u> hav**ing** the opportunity to do team sports.

The verbs marked with an asterisk (*) in the table above (as well as in all tables henceforth) can also be followed by a that-clause.

> Parents rarely <u>admit</u> treat**ing** their sons and daughters differently.
> ⇩
>
> Parents rarely <u>admit</u> **that** they treat their sons and daughters differently.

> If you have always had a garden, it is hard to <u>imagine</u> liv**ing** in a flat.
> ⇩
>
> If you have always had a garden, it is hard to <u>imagine</u> **that** you could live in a flat.

Most of the verbs in the table above can also be followed by a noun or a noun phrase.

> More should be done to encourage people to <u>give up</u> smok**ing**.
> ⇩
>
> More should be done to encourage people to <u>give up</u> <u>cigarettes</u>.

> Most children would <u>practise</u> play**ing** a musical instrument if they had the opportunity.
> ⇩
>
> Most children would <u>practise</u> <u>a musical instrument</u> if they had the opportunity.

The verbs *come* and *go* + *-ing* are often used to talk about sports and outdoor activities.

> ➤ One way to reduce one's carbon footprint is to <u>go</u> shopp**ing** only once a week.
> ➤ The water is so polluted in many places that if you <u>go</u> swimm**ing**, you risk picking up an infection.

Remember that some verbs have *to* as a preposition, and that prepositions are followed by an *-ing* form. Verbs in this category include *be used to / get used to / object to / look forward to*.

> ➤ Children may not enjoy school every day, but most of them actually <u>look forward to</u> go**ing** to school.
> (~~to go~~ is WRONG)

> ➤ People <u>have got used to</u> do**ing** several things at the same time, and as a result do not do anything whole-heartedly.
> (~~have got used to do~~ is WRONG)

Some of the verbs in this category can be used in the pattern Verb + Object + *-ing*.

> ➤ In many cultures, it is considered rude to <u>keep</u> people wait**ing**.

> ➤ Most parents would not <u>contemplate</u> their children grow**ing** up without them.

The verbs in this category form the passive with *being* + Past Participle.

> ➤ Some children do not seem to <u>mind</u> <u>be**ing** disciplined</u> in front of others.

> ➤ Authoritarian people usually <u>resent</u> <u>be**ing** criticised</u>.

2. Verb + *to*-infinitive

A number of verbs are followed by *to*-infinitive. Here is a selection of some of the commonest ones:

afford	attempt	expect *	offer	refuse
agree *	choose	fail	plan	tend
aim	decide *	hope *	pretend *	threaten
arrange	deserve	manage	promise *	want

➢ Several countries have already <u>decided</u> **to ban** single-use plastic bags.
   (~~decided banning~~ is WRONG)

➢ Some students <u>tend</u> **to worry** too much about future earnings when they decide which subjects to specialise in.
   (~~tend worrying~~ is WRONG)

Note the negative form:

➢ Celebrities sometimes <u>pretend</u> <u>not</u> **to enjoy** being in the limelight.

➢ Thanks to an international treaty, many countries <u>have chosen</u> <u>not</u> **to try** to acquire nuclear weapons.

The verbs marked with an asterisk (*) in the table above can also be followed by a *that*-clause.

➢ Environmentalists <u>expect</u> **to see** most sea life extinct in one or two decades.
   ⇩

   Environmentalists <u>expect</u> **that** most sea life will be extinct in one or two decades.

➢ Scores of government leaders have <u>agreed</u> **to reduce** their dependence on fossil fuels.
   ⇩

   Scores of government leaders <u>have agreed</u> **that** they would reduce their dependence on fossil fuels.

Some verbs in this category can be followed by a '*wh*'-word + *to*-infinitive.

➢ Students sometimes cannot <u>decide</u> <u>where</u> **to go** for their gap year abroad.

➢ It is often said that scientists <u>do not know</u> <u>how</u> **to talk** to ordinary people.

The verbs in this category form the passive with *to be* + Past Participle.

➢ Teenagers usually <u>want</u> <u>to be given</u> their own space and freedom.

➢ Every human being <u>deserves</u> <u>to be treated</u> with dignity and respect.

3. Verb + *-ing* or + *to-* infinitive

A small number of verbs can be followed by *-ing* or *to*-infinitive with almost no difference in meaning. Some other verbs can also be followed by *-ing* or *to*-infinitive but with a difference in meaning.

Here is a selection of some of the commonest verbs which can be followed by *-ing* or *to*-infinitive with little change in meaning:

Begin	bother	continue	intend *	start

> Too many people still <u>do not bother</u> **to dispose** of their rubbish properly.
> ⇩
>
> Too many people still <u>do not bother</u> <u>dispos**ing**</u> of their rubbish properly.

> Students who <u>intend</u> **to go** to university sometimes have difficulty choosing their main subject.
> ⇩
>
> Students who <u>intend</u> **going** to university sometimes have difficulty choosing their main subject.

If the verb is in a continuous tense, use *to*-infinitive as it is unusual to have two consecutive *-ing* forms.

> More people than ever before <u>are beginning</u> **to understand** that a complete change of lifestyle is necessary to safeguard the environment in the long term. (~~are beginning understanding~~ is WRONG)

The verbs *like / love / hate / prefer* can also be followed by *-ing* or *to*-infinitive, often with little change in meaning. However, we tend to use the *-ing* form when we want to express our feelings, and the *to*-infinitive when we want to say that something is (or is not) a good idea.

> Japanese businessmen <u>like</u> go**ing** to karaoke bars after work.

This simply means that they *enjoy* going to karaoke bars, that it makes them happy. (Note that in this sense it is not a mistake to write '*Japanese businessmen <u>like</u> <u>to go</u> to karaoke bars after work.*')

> Japanese people <u>like</u> **to bow** in order to communicate respect.

This means that they consider it a good idea to bow (… even if they do not always necessarily enjoy it).

➤ Many people <u>like</u> **to start** the day with some stretching exercises.

This means that they think it is a good idea to start the day this way, although they might not particularly enjoy it.

Remember that the expressions *would like / would love / would hate / would prefer* can only be followed by a *to*-infinitive.

➤ In many countries, young people from rural areas <u>would like</u> **to move** to the city. (~~would like moving~~ is WRONG)

Here are some of the verbs which can be followed by a *to*-infinitive or the *–ing* form, but with a change in meaning:

forget *	mean *	regret *	stop
go on	need	remember *	try

You use *remember / forget / regret* with an *-ing* clause if you are writing about an event **after** it has happened. If you are writing about an event **before** it happens, you use a *to*-infinitive.

remember

➤ Quite a few people <u>remember</u> <u>cry**ing**</u> on their first day at school.

<u>They remember *now*</u> that <u>they cried *then*</u>, presumably in this case a long time ago.

➤ All children need to develop positive self-esteem, so parents and teachers should <u>remember</u> **to praise** them for whatever they can achieve.

Parents and teachers should <u>remember *now*</u> to <u>praise children *later*</u>, at some point in the future.

forget

➤ Most people never <u>forget</u> <u>gett**ing** on</u> a plane for the first time.

This sentence is about not forgetting something that happened in the past.

➤ People who work from home should not <u>forget</u> **to take** regular breaks.

This sentence is about not forgetting something that should happen in the future.

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regret

> ➢ Governments probably <u>regret</u> ignor**ing** the advice climate experts began to offer two decades ago.

The regretting is now; the ignoring happened in the past.

> ➢ I <u>regret</u> **to say** that those who govern us have lost the confidence of a large segment of the population.

The verb *regret* is used with *to*-infinitive in just a few set expressions such as *I (we) regret to inform you that … / I (we) regret to say that … / I (we) regret to announce that … / I (we) regret to tell you that … .*

mean

We use the verb *mean + -ing* when we want to say that one thing involves another or that one thing results in another. It is often possible to use *mean + that* instead.

> ➢ A healthy diet <u>means</u> eat**ing** a wide variety of nutritious foods.
> ⇩
>
> A healthy diet <u>means</u> **that** we should eat a wide variety of nutritious foods.

We use the verb *mean + to*-infinitive when we want to express an intention.

> ➢ If we are not aware of cultural differences, we may appear distant or rude even though we <u>mean</u> **to be** friendly and polite.

try

We use the verb *try + -ing* when we want to say that something is done as an experiment, in order to see what happens.

> ➢ Instead of going everywhere by car and complaining that we are out of shape, we should <u>try</u> <u>walk**ing**</u> to work or to the shops.

We use the verb *try + to*-infinitive when we want to say that someone makes an effort to do something, even though it is difficult and may not be successful.

> ➢ Westerners who <u>try</u> **to learn** Chinese often find the tone system extremely difficult to learn.

4. Verb + Object + *to*-infinitive

Some of the verbs in the Verb + *to*-infinitive category can also be used with the pattern Verb + Object + *to*-infinitive. Here are some of the commonest ones:

ask	expect *	Want	would like	would prefer

> ➤ It is sometimes argued that it is not fair to <u>ask</u> children **to do** the housework.

> ➤ Parents generally <u>expect</u> their children **to learn** to fend for themselves.

> ➤ We all <u>want</u> our dreams **to come true**.

> ➤ The public <u>would like</u> the media **to make** a clear difference between facts and opinions.

> ➤ It is often wrongly assumed that students <u>would prefer</u> their teachers **to be** very permissive.

Other verbs **always** require an object between them and the *to*-infinitive. Here are some of the commonest ones:

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advise *	enable	force	order *	teach *
allow	encourage	help	persuade *	tell *
cause	forbid	invite	remind *	warn *

> ➤ Art museum curators should not <u>allow very large groups</u> **to visit** an exhibition all at the same time.

> ➤ Widespread deforestation for agriculture and urban development <u>is causing</u> <u>greenhouse gases</u> **to accumulate** in the atmosphere, and these then <u>cause the</u> <u>planet</u> **to warm**.

> ➤ Good teachers <u>enable students</u> **to become** independent learners.

> ➤ More initiatives should be introduced to <u>encourage holidaymakers</u> **to travel** by train rather than by plane.

> ➤ Some dishonest companies try to <u>persuade job seekers</u> **to pay** for a training course before they apply for a position.

> Parents sometimes have a hard time trying <u>to persuade</u> <u>their children</u> <u>not</u> **to take up** smoking

> Climatologists <u>have long warned</u> <u>governments</u> <u>not</u> **to ignore** the effects of global warming.

Remember that all the verbs marked with an asterisk (*) can also be followed by a *that*-clause:

> Some dishonest companies try to <u>persuade</u> <u>job seekers</u> **that** they should pay for a training course before they apply for a position.

> Climatologists <u>have long warned</u> <u>governments</u> **that** they should not ignore the effects of global warming.

The verb *help* is the only one in the list that can be used with or without *to*:

> The aim of most humanitarian organisations is to <u>help people</u> **to help** themselves.
> ⇩

> The aim of most humanitarian organisations is to <u>help people</u> <u>help</u> themselves.

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5. Verb + Object + Ø-infinitive

Only two high-frequency verbs can be followed by an object and a bare infinitive, namely *make* and *let*.

| make |

> It is extremely unfair to <u>make</u> <u>taxpayers</u> <u>pay</u> for members of parliament's personal expenses.
> (~~make taxpayers to pay~~ is WRONG)

> A number of European countries <u>made</u> <u>immigrants</u> <u>feel</u> very welcome.
> (~~made immigrants to feel~~ is WRONG)

However, note that a *to*-infinitive is necessary when the passive form is used:

> It is extremely unfair that taxpayers <u>should be made</u> **to pay** for members of parliament's personal expenses.

> Immigrants <u>have been made</u> **to feel** very welcome in a number of European countries.

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let

> Some cities have become so unsafe that parents no longer dare to <u>let their children play</u> outdoors on their own.

> Elderly people resent being patronised, so their carers should <u>let them make</u> their own decisions whenever possible.

6. Verb + *that*-clause

All the verbs marked with an asterisk (*) in the preceding sections of this chapter can be used with a *that*-clause. As example sentences for those verbs have already been provided, there is no need to repeat them here. So many verbs can be used with this pattern that it would be impossible to provide a full list. Therefore, we shall focus here only on (1) "reporting verbs"; (2) a few verbs used with Object + *that*-clause; and (3) a few high-frequency verbs that have proved to be a common source of difficulty or error.

Reporting verbs

Reporting verbs are so called because we use them to repeat or report on what other people have said or written. Some of those verbs can be found among the asterisked verbs in the preceding sections, to which the following can be added:

Claim	doubt	Insist	repeat
complain	explain	realise	say
confirm	feel	reckon	suppose

> Several tour operators <u>have confirmed</u> **that** climate change is affecting bookings.

> Psychologists <u>explain</u> **that** we tend to believe what others think of us, and that we then shape our lives on the basis of those opinions.

Verb + Object + *that*-clause

A number of high-frequency verbs are commonly used with the pattern Verb + Object + *that*-clause. These verbs too are frequently used for reporting. Here are some of the commonest ones:

assure	inform	Promise	tell
convince	persuade	remind	warn

> Employers try very hard to <u>persuade</u> <u>job seekers</u> **that** their company is the place to be.

> Teachers need to <u>tell</u> <u>students</u> **that** asking questions is usually a sign of intelligence rather than ignorance.
> (~~Teachers need to tell that asking questions ...~~ is WRONG)

Common errors: *advise / recommend / suggest*

These three high-frequency verbs are a source of common errors partly because they can be used with several different patterns and cannot be used with some others. We look at each one in turn.

advise

First, we look at this verb when it means "to tell people what you think they should do".

The most common pattern is Verb + Object + *to*-infinitive:

> Nutritionists <u>advise</u> <u>parents</u> **to control** what and how much their children eat.

> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs <u>advises</u> <u>travellers</u> <u>not</u> **to visit** conflict areas.

The pattern Verb + *that*-clause (i.e. without an object) is also possible:

> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs <u>advises</u> **that** travellers should not visit conflict areas.

Note that the pattern Verb + Object + *that*-clause can NOT be used in this sense:

> ~~Parents should advise their children that they should avoid fast foods~~ is WRONG

> Parents should <u>advise</u> <u>their children</u> **to avoid** fast foods.

If you want to say that you think someone should **not** do something, you can use the expression *advise somebody against doing something*:

> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs <u>advises</u> <u>travellers</u> <u>against visit</u>**ing** conflict areas.

> Parents should <u>advise</u> <u>their children</u> <u>against consum</u>**ing** fast foods and energy drinks

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The verb *advise* can also be used with the pattern Verb + Object + '*wh*'-word:

➢ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can <u>advise</u> <u>tourists</u> **what** they should do if they lose their passport while travelling.

The second meaning of *advise* is "to inform", "to tell someone about something". In this sense, *advise* can be used with two patterns:

● Verb + Object + *that*-clause

● Verb + Object + *of* (*something*)

➢ Meteorologists <u>have already advised</u> <u>the public</u> **that** temperatures were likely to reach record highs in the summer.

➢ Meteorologists <u>have already advised</u> <u>the public</u> **of** the likelihood of record high temperatures in the summer.

recommend

First, we look at this verb when it means "to say that somebody or something is good".

Verb + Noun (or Noun phrase):

➢ Websites that <u>recommend hotels and restaurants</u> have become hugely popular.

Verb + Object + *to* (*somebody*) / *for* (*something*):

➢ I firmly believe that literature plays an important part in our emotional and cognitive development, and I therefore thoroughly <u>recommend stories and folk tales</u> <u>to children and adults alike.</u>
(both … ~~recommend children and adults~~ … / … ~~recommend to children and adults~~… are WRONG)

➢ Many travel agencies hugely <u>recommend</u> <u>travel insurance</u> <u>for any trip.</u>

The second meaning of *recommend* is related to the first. However, it is more similar to "advise somebody to do something". In this sense, the person who recommends usually has special authority or special knowledge of the subject.

Verb + *that*-clause:

➢ Most doctors <u>recommend</u> **that** <u>people eat</u> meat two or three times a week.
Note that the verb (*eat*) in the *that*-clause is in the infinitive form. This is called 'the subjunctive mood' and is used in formal writing. In the subjunctive, the infinitive form is used for all six persons, so we would have *'The doctor recommended that <u>my friend</u> <u>eat</u> meat two or three times a week.'*

Instead of *that* + Subject + Subjunctive, we often use that + Subject + *should* + Infinitive:

➢ Most doctors <u>recommend</u> **that** <u>people should eat</u> meat two or three times a week.

➢ In some countries, doctors <u>recommend</u> **that** <u>the father be present</u> at his child's birth.
⇩

In some countries, doctors <u>recommend</u> **that** <u>the father should be present</u> at his child's birth.

(… ~~recommend the father to be present~~ … is WRONG)

Verb + *-ing*:

➢ In order to avoid contamination by pesticides, experts <u>recommend</u> <u>soak**ing** all fruit and vegetables</u> in cold tap water for a few minutes.
⇩

➢ In order to avoid contamination by pesticides, experts <u>recommend</u> **that** <u>all fruit and vegetables should be soaked</u> in cold tap water for a few minutes.

Important point to remember:

<u>Never</u> use the following forms; they are WRONG:

~~recommend to do something~~

~~recommend someone to do something~~

~~recommend someone something~~

suggest

The verb *suggest* has several different, though related meanings, and can be used with a number of patterns.

First, we look at the verb *suggest* when it means "to indicate". It is frequently used in this sense in academic writing.

If you say that X *suggests* Y, you mean that Y is likely to be true, or that X shows Y in an indirect way.

Verb + Noun (or Noun phrase):

➢ Recent studies conducted in Western Europe seem to <u>suggest</u> <u>a gradual decline in labour supply</u>.

Verb + *that*-clause:

> ➤ The results of a recent survey <u>suggest</u> **that** <u>a large proportion of nurses are at risk of burnout</u>.

The second meaning of *suggest* is "to propose", "to put forward an idea for someone to consider".

Verb + *that*-clause:

> ➤ Environmentalists <u>have suggested</u> **that** <u>the government should spend a much higher percentage of the transport budget on walking and cycling paths</u>.
> (… ~~have suggested the government to spend~~ … is WRONG)

> ➤ Health experts <u>suggest</u> **that** <u>we walk 10,000 steps a day in order to keep fit</u>.
> (… ~~suggest us to walk~~ … is WRONG)

Verb + *-ing*:

> ➤ Environmentalists <u>have suggested</u> <u>spend**ing**</u> a much higher percentage of the transport budget on walking and cycling paths.

> ➤ Health experts <u>suggest</u> <u>walk**ing**</u> 10,000 steps a day in order to keep fit.

Verb + '*wh*'-word:

> ➤ Some websites <u>suggest</u> **how** we could overcome our addiction to social media.

> ➤ A good teacher not only points out a student's mistakes, but also <u>suggests</u> **wh**at to do about them.

Important point to remember:

<u>Never</u> use the following forms; they are WRONG:

~~suggest to do something~~

~~suggest someone to do something~~

~~suggest someone something~~

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See Workbook Exercises page 33.

</div>

Articles: *a / an / the*

The IELTS examiner will be checking your use of articles and paying attention to the density of your errors. Articles are things you can pay close attention to when you proofread your essay.

Note: The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the main uses of articles in relation to IELTS Writing Task 2. It does not contain all uses of articles. If you feel you would like more insight into articles or you realise that this is an area you are not yet sufficiently confident in, please refer to a detailed English grammar book.

This chapter will focus on the following:

1.	Indefinite Article	*a / an*
2.	Definite Article	*The*
3.	No Article	—
4.	Concepts of Specific & General	
5.	Invariable Idiomatic Expressions	Fixed use of articles
6.	Articles Review	

1. Indefinite Article: *a / an*

Uncountable nouns do not use *a* or *an*. This is a simple rule to learn from the start.

We use the indefinite article when referring to a singular noun which is not specified. We also use the indefinite article when referring to something for the first time.

Single object or single person

- ➢ Owning <u>a car</u> can make some people's life easier.
- ➢ Having <u>a child</u> is a responsibility.
- ➢ Having <u>a poor diet</u> is <u>a common problem</u> for many people.
- ➢ Many people enjoy <u>a cup of tea</u> in their leisure time.

Note: In spoken English, it is common to say "a tea". However, this is an informal contraction of "a cup of tea". The word *tea* is uncountable. Such contractions should not be used in formal writing.

Objects or people that are not specific

➢ It is normal to go to a doctor when you are feeling unwell.

➢ People should learn about a country before travelling there.

➢ Learning a language becomes more difficult as a person gets older.

➢ A person who lives on the edge is a person who likes adventure.

➢ Being able to take a holiday abroad is considered by some to be a luxury.

Professions

➢ He is a teacher. She is a doctor.

Article: *an*

The article *an* is used as an indefinite article before nouns (or adjectives modifying a noun) that begin with a vowel sound: /æ/, /e/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /o/, /ʊ/.

➢ It is said that an apple a day will keep the doctor away.

➢ Most people in England carry an umbrella due to the weather being unpredictable.

➢ Starting a new job is an opportunity to learn new things and meet new people.

➢ Some people believe that libraries will one day become an outdated source of information.

Note that when the noun or the adjective begins with the letter *u* pronounced as /juː/, we use *a*, not *an*:

• a university, a unique opportunity, a union of creativity and expertise

Similarly, we use *a*, not *an*, when the noun or adjective begins with a silent *h*:

• an hour (*but* a hotel), an honest answer (*but* a holy city)

2. Definite Article: *the*

There are a number of cases when we use the definite article.

Specific Person or Object

When the person or object is specific or defined (this can also be in the plural), we use *the*. If we write:

➢ An applicant with lots of experience will probably get a job.

This refers to any applicant, not a specific one. It also refers to any job, not a particular job.

> The applicant with the most experience will probably get the job.

This refers to a specific applicant (the one with the experience) and a specific job.

> When applying for a job, the person with the broadest range of skills will most likely succeed.

This refers to any job (not specific) and a specific person (the one with the skills).

> The sports preferred by most people are usually team sports.

Sport is a countable noun and is used in the plural with the article *the* to refer to specific sports.

> The students who suffer most from education cuts are always those from modest social backgrounds.

Student is a countable noun and is used in the plural with the article *the* to refer to a defined group of students.

When the person or object has already been mentioned

> In my opinion, it would be useful for parents, students and teachers to hold a joint meeting every term. The aim of the meeting would be to improve communication and bridge the gap between home and school.

In the sentence above, the word *meeting* is first used as a singular, non-specific noun. It is the first time we are hearing about the meeting. However, in the second sentence, we already know which meeting we are talking about. For this reason, we change the article to refer to *the meeting* because we know which one it is.

> Children should be encouraged to take up a hobby. The hobby they choose should be something that they have a particular skill or interest in.

In the first sentence, *hobby* refers to any hobby. It is non-specific. However, in the second sentence, we refer to *the hobby* because we are specifying it is the one that is chosen by the children and the one already mentioned in the first sentence.

Names of mountain ranges, rivers, seas, oceans, islands, buildings, hotels and museums

- The Mekong River, the Nile, the Ganges
- The Indian Ocean, the Red Sea
- The Andes, the Himalayas
- The Canary Islands, the Galapagos Islands
- The Tower of London, the Taj Mahal, the Great Pyramid, the Colosseum
- The Burj al-Arab, the Ritz

- The British Museum, the Louvre, the Prado

Note: Some hotels named after a person do not use *the*. For example, '*Raffles*' in Singapore. This hotel was named after Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles. Also note that names of lakes and waterfalls do not usually use *the*.

Groups of people

- The English, the Germans, the Chinese
- The wealthy, the rich, the poor
- The homeless, the disabled, the sick, the hungry
- The unemployed, the uneducated, the displaced
- The elderly, the young

Musical Instruments and works of art

- The piano, the violin, the flute
- The Scream, the Mona Lisa

Social institutions, groups, systems and services

- The government, the department of education
- The church
- The police, the army
- The media, the papers

Species groups

This does not refer to one specific animal, fish or insect, but to the whole species group. Note the noun is singular.

- The giant panda is considered a national treasure in China and is a symbol of the WWF.
- The blue whale is an endangered species which needs more protection.
- The basking shark is the second-largest fish in the world.
- People should plant more flowers to support the honey bee.

Note: It is also possible to write these sentences differently by referring to the animals in the plural general sense which requires no article at all and would also require a third person plural verb. Although the grammar changes, the meaning is the same. For example, "Giant pandas are considered a national treasure in China." This example is listed in the following section about no articles.

Something unique

This is when there is only one of it in the world.

➤ People enjoy looking at <u>the moon</u> in the night sky.
➤ <u>The Earth</u> rotates around <u>the Sun</u>.
➤ <u>The world</u> is a complex place.

Competitions

- The Olympics, The World Cup

Note that some competitions do not use *the* such as Wimbledon. Note that many prizes use *the* such as the Nobel Prize and the Palme d'Or.

Organisations and newspapers

- The World Wildlife Fund
- (the WWF), the Red Cross, the World Health Organization (the WHO)
- The BBC
- The Times, The Telegraph, The Wall Street Journal

Note: Some organisations are written without an article, such as Amnesty International, Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders. Some newspapers do not use *the*, such as Metro. Most magazines do not use *the*, but there are exceptions (the Economist).

Countries, groups of countries, and directions

Some countries use *the* if they are made up of a group of smaller states and use words such as *state*, *united*, *kingdom* or *republic* in their name. Countries which are plurals or are made up of a group of islands also use *the*.

- The UK, the United States, the EU, the People's Republic of China
- The Philippines, the Bahamas, the Seychelles
- The north (of China), the south-east (of India)

Note: While *the UK* requires the article *the*, *Britain* does not. Most country names require no article unless they are irregular as stated above. Some directions are written without an article, such as *northern China*, *southern France*, *West Africa*, *South America*.

Ordinal numbers and decades

- The first
- The second
- The eighties (the '80s / the 1980s)

Times of the day or weekend

➢ In the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening
➢ At the weekend

Note: The exceptions are *at night, at dawn, at dusk, at midday, at midnight* without any article.

Definite noun phrases

Here are some example sentences using two extremely frequent patterns.

the + Noun + *of*

➢ The idea of one global language sounds ideal but, in reality, it is problematic.
➢ The content of many newspapers is often focused on bad news.
➢ We should always respect the culture of another country.

the + Noun + *to* + Verb

➢ The motivation to succeed is as important as the skills a person possesses.
➢ The will to win is what motivates many sportspeople.
➢ Most students are driven by the desire to surpass themselves.

Superlatives & Comparatives

➢ Improving public transport is the best way to tackle air pollution in city centres.
➢ Studying a foreign language in a classroom is not the same as learning it in the country of origin.

For more information on Comparatives and Superlatives, go to page 190.

3. No Article

We often use no article at all if we refer to things in a general way rather than being specific. Below you will find rules for referring to things in general as well as other occasions when no article is required.

Referring to things in general

When we talk about something in general, we refer not to one specific person or object, but to the general group. This is very common in IELTS Writing Task 2 as most essays are relating to people or situations in general. However, you need to pay attention to whether the noun is countable or uncountable.

Referring to things in general using <u>countable nouns</u>

When referring to things in general using countable nouns, we need to use <u>a plural noun and no article</u>. Note that because we are using a plural noun, the verb must match.

> <u>Cars</u> **are** a more popular form of transport than <u>buses</u>.
> <u>Holidays</u> **are** something that all workers should be entitled to.
> There will probably be <u>shortages</u> in world resources in the future.
> Without <u>computers</u>, the modern world would cease to function.
> <u>Giant pandas</u> are considered a national treasure in China.

Referring to things in general using <u>uncountable nouns</u>

When referring to things in general using uncountable nouns, no article is required. Note that uncountable nouns are considered singular and therefore the verb must match. It is essential in IELTS Writing Task 2 that you learn all the common uncountable nouns.

> <u>Traffic</u> **is** a serious problem during rush hour in most major cities.
> <u>Culture</u> **is** one of the most interesting things to notice if you travel to London.
> <u>Space technology</u> can be applied to many areas of everyday life.
> Children should not be allowed to eat so much <u>junk food</u>.
> Some people are obsessed with <u>money</u>.

By contrast, the same nouns can be used in a different way which changes the use of the article. All the sentences below use the same nouns as the sentences above but use the definite article (*the*) to refer to something specific rather than general.

> A lot of <u>the traffic</u> in urban areas is unnecessary and could be avoided if people walked to work or used public transport.

Note that the sentence above is referring to specific traffic in urban areas rather than all traffic in urban areas.

> Not many people understand <u>the technology</u> used for delivering e-learning.

Note that the sentence above refers to specific technology for delivering e-learning, not technology in general.

> Parents and children need to tackle <u>the junk food</u> that causes obesity.
> Some of <u>the money</u> we earn should be put aside for the future.
> Employers need to help new staff understand <u>the culture</u> of the organisation they work for.

Note that the word *culture*, like many other nouns, can be both countable and uncountable. This means use of the article will vary depending on how you use the word.

For example, "There are many different cultures existing peacefully side by side in London." You should learn which words can be both countable and uncountable.

Proper nouns

Proper nouns do not use articles. This includes: names of people, countries, cities, single lakes and single mountains.

➢ J.K. Rowling is the author of Harry Potter.
➢ China has the biggest population in the world.
➢ London is considered an international city.
➢ Hoan Kiem Lake is in the centre of Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam.
➢ Mount Fuji is often depicted in Japanese works of art.
➢ Facebook is a global social media giant.

Languages, professions, school subjects, names of universities, colleges and sports

➢ English is an international language.
➢ Nursing, as a career, is more popular with women than men.
➢ Some people think boys are drawn towards science, while girls often prefer literature.
➢ Universities such as Cambridge, Yale, Harvard, Oxford, Boston College
➢ Schools should branch away from traditional sports, such as tennis or football, and offer alternative forms of exercise, for instance tai chi or yoga.

Note: There are exceptions, for example, "The University of London"

Special days, holidays, days of the week and meals

➢ Christmas, Halloween, Independence Day, Spring Festival
➢ Monday, Friday
➢ Breakfast

Note that some holidays such as 'the Fourth of July' and 'the Cannes Film Festival' use *the*.

Places and locations

No article is used with names of places when we are referring to their general function rather than to the building itself.

➢ All children between the ages of 5 and 16 should go to school.
➢ Many people prefer to work from home.
➢ Not all people can afford to go to university.
➢ If people are seriously unwell or injured, they should go to hospital.
➢ Criminals belong in prison.

Note: The use of the article will depend on how the noun is used. If the word *hospital* is used to refer to the building, we will use the article *the*.

➢ If people are seriously unwell or injured, they should go to <u>hospital</u>. <u>The hospital</u> is located in the town centre.

In the first sentence, the word *hospital* is referring to the function provided and for this we use no article. In the second sentence, the word hospital is used to refer to one specific *hospital* and the location is given. For this, we must use a definite article: *the*.

Modes of transport

➢ Many people prefer to travel by <u>car</u> rather than by <u>bus</u>.
➢ Travelling by <u>train</u> is not always possible in some parts of the country.
➢ Transporting goods by <u>sea</u> is sometimes quicker than by <u>land</u>.

Companies and Acronyms

Most company names will not use an article.

➢ Facebook, Apple, Starbucks, Microsoft, Google
➢ British Airways
➢ NATO, UNESCO (these are pronounced as a word rather than letter by letter)

Note: There are rare exceptions to the rule for companies, such as The Body Shop. Acronyms where each letter is pronounced individually requires *the*, such as the UN and the FBI.

Abstract concepts

➢ Some people turn to <u>religion</u> in times of need.
➢ There have been many changes in <u>society</u> over the past few decades.
➢ <u>Happiness</u> is considered the most important thing in life.
➢ <u>War</u> broke out between two countries.
➢ <u>Crime</u> continues to be a problem.

Remember: Many abstract nouns, such as *society* or *war*, can in fact be used with *a/an*, *the* or no article depending on the meaning you want to convey. For example:

➢ It is sometimes said that <u>society</u> influences art.
   = abstract concept, not specific (no article)

➢ It is possible to imagine <u>a society</u> where human development is more important than competition.
   = single noun, not specific

➢ We are all responsible for <u>the society</u> that we live in.
= single noun (specific society)

➢ <u>The war</u> claimed over 70 million lives.
= single noun, relating to a specific war

➢ The two countries are now <u>at war</u>.
= invariable idiomatic expression

➢ War can put an immense stain on a country's economy.
= abstract concept, not specific (no article)

➢ If there is <u>a war</u> between two world powers, the whole global economy will be affected.
= single noun, not specific

4. Concepts of Specific and General

Below are two sentences, which one is correct?

1. <u>People</u> fleeing war-torn countries should be guaranteed sanctuary.
2. <u>The people</u> fleeing war-torn countries should be guaranteed sanctuary.

To find the answer and learn more about referring specifically or generally to things, please go to the extra pages at the end of this volume.

5. Invariable Idiomatic Expressions and Phrases

On the whole, 'colourful' idioms (such as 'a piece of cake', 'spill the beans', 'pull someone's leg', etc.) are not suitable for IELTS Writing Task 2 because they are too informal. However, there are many invariable idiomatic expressions and phrases which *can* be used in Writing Task 2. They are called "invariable" because they cannot be altered: you cannot usually add or omit any word. Below is a small selection of such idiomatic expressions and phrases. You need to learn which ones use which articles, and which ones use no article.

Fixed use of *the*	Fixed use of *a* or *an*
• the key to success / the key to solving • the same as • behind the times	• to play a role • at a loss • to keep an eye on • to turn a blind eye (to something)

- to work around the clock
- to think outside the box
- up in the air
- on the whole
- in the long run
- on the other hand
- to sit on the fence
- to get to the point

- a means to an end
- a question of time

Fixed use of no article

- to be at war
- to be at peace
- to cut corners
- word of mouth
- all day
- in other words
- to take part (in something)
- to make sense

- to shed light on
- to make matter worse
- to see eye to eye (with somebody or on something)
- to keep in touch
- to keep up appearances
- to take something at face value

6. Articles Review

See the breakdown of the following six sentences for a review of articles.

Sentence 1: If sea levels rise, low lying countries such as the Maldives will be at risk.

sea levels	referring to sea levels in general – use plural noun	no article needed
Countries	referring to countries in general, not one particular country – use plural noun	no article needed
Maldives	a country comprised of a group of islands	article *the* needed
Risk	invariable idiomatic expression	no article needed

Sentence 2: If pollution increases, it will worsen the effects of global warming, causing serious consequences.

Pollution	uncountable noun, non-specific	no article needed
Effects	referring to specific effects – plural noun	article *the* needed
global warming	uncountable noun	no article
Consequences	referring to consequences in general, not a specific consequence – plural noun	no article

Sentence 3: The causes of criminal behaviour can be traced back to childhood.

Causes	countable plural noun which is specific	article *the* needed
Behaviour	uncountable noun, abstract concept	no article needed
Childhood	uncountable noun, abstract concept	no article

Sentence 4: The protection of endangered species around the world should be a top priority.

Protection	countable singular noun which is specific	article *the* needed
Species	referring to species in general, not specific – plural noun	no article needed
World	unique noun	article *the* needed
Priority	countable singular noun which is not specific	article *a* needed

Note: Although we often talk about the concept of "other worlds", when we refer to "the world" we are referring to our unique world, of which we have only one. This also applies to the concept of moons. For example, Jupiter has eight moons, which means the word *moon* becomes countable in reference to Jupiter. However, when we refer to "the moon", we are referring to our unique moon, of which we have only one. Again these are good examples of how flexible words can be depending on what we use them to refer to.

Sentence 5: The key to overcoming poverty is for the rich to give more money to the poor and the needy.

key to	invariable idiomatic expression	article *the* needed
Poverty	uncountable noun, abstract concept	no article needed
Rich	groups of people	article *the* needed
Money	uncountable noun, non-specific	no article needed
poor / needy	groups of people	article *the* needed

Sentence 6: Both individuals and the government must share the responsibility to reduce the use of plastic.

Individuals	referring to individuals in general, not to a specific individual – plural noun	no article needed
Government	social institution	article *the* needed
Responsibility	countable singular noun which is specific	article *the* needed
use of	definite noun phrase, *the* + Noun + *of*	article *the* needed
Plastic	uncountable noun, non-specific	no article needed

See Workbook Exercises page 38.

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Pronouns & Referencing

Pronouns

Personal (Subject/Object), Possessive, Reflexive, Demonstrative

Below I have ticked and highlighted in bold the pronouns commonly used in IELTS Writing Task 2 essays. This does not mean it is wrong to use the others, but rather that they are not commonly needed.

		✓				✓		✓
1.	Personal pronouns (subject)	**I**	you (*sg./pl.*)	he	She	**it**	we	**they**
2.	Personal pronouns (object)	me	you (*sg./pl.*)	him	Her	**it**	us	**them**
3.	Possessive determiners	**my**	your (*sg./pl.*)	his	Her	**its**	our	**their**
4.	Possessive pronouns	mine	yours (*sg./pl.*)	his	Hers	**its**	ours	**theirs**
5.	Reflexive pronouns	myself	yourself (*pl.*) yourselves (*pl.*)	himself	herself	**itself**	ourselves	**themselves**

I / my

It is a myth circulating among people preparing for their IELTS Writing Task 2 that they are not allowed to use *I* or *my*. This is completely untrue. For any essay that requires your opinion, you must use *I* or *my* to present your view:

- ✓ I think
- ✓ I believe
- ✓ I agree

✓ I disagree
✓ In my opinion
✓ From my point of view

Phrases such as *This essay will …* or *This essay agrees …*, however, do not show your own personal opinion. Failure to give your opinion when asked for it, will result in a lower score.

you / your / we / our

There is no fixed rule about using *you* or *your* in IELTS Writing Task 2.

1. If you change your job frequently, you will be able to learn new, more diverse skills.
2. Although climate change should be tackled at an international, governmental level, we all have a responsibility to change our lifestyles and make better choices.
3. If we want our children to grow up with a good chance in life, we must ensure they get a good education.
4. We only have one planet and we must protect it.

As you can see from these four sentences, both *you* and *we* can be used to refer to people in general. However, in my essays I prefer using *people* and the third person plural to refer to people in general. I find it gives a more formal and more appropriate tone to the writing. Below you can see how I have rewritten the sentences.

1. If people change their jobs frequently, they will be able to learn new, more diverse skills.
2. Although climate change should be tackled at an international, governmental level, individuals have a responsibility to change their lifestyles and make better choices.
3. If people want their children to grow up with a good chance in life, it is important to ensure they get a good education.
4. We only have one planet and it is something that must be protected.
   (This is probably one of the few times, I would use *we* or *our* – in relation to our own planet.)

Using *one / one's / oneself*

To refer to people in general, *one* is sometimes used in formal written English. *One* is third person singular; there is also a possessive determiner *one's* and a reflexive pronoun *oneself*.

➢ Before applying for a job, one needs to make sure one has the necessary skills or degrees.

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➢ As <u>one</u> gets older, <u>one's</u> possessions often become a burden.
➢ A basic rule is that <u>one</u> should always prepare <u>oneself</u> very carefully before going to a job interview.

When referring to people in general in your essay, avoid switching from *you* to *people* or from *one* to *we*, for example. You need to aim for consistency. Using *one* (*one's / oneself*) is a great way to show flexibility in your essay.

Avoiding *he / she; his / her*

People often use *'he/she'* or *'his/her'* in their essay when they write about people in the singular. For example:

1. If <u>a doctor or a nurse work**s**</u> many antisocial hours, <u>he/she</u> should be entitled to extra pay as compensation for the effect on <u>his/her</u> health.

2. If <u>a doctor or a nurse work**s**</u> many antisocial hours, <u>he or she</u> should be entitled to extra pay as compensation for the effect on <u>his or her</u> health.

Sentence 1, above, would be considered incorrect grammar in an IELTS essay. Sentence 2 is possible, but not recommended. It would be better to use the plural instead:

3. If <u>doctors or nurses work</u> many antisocial hours, <u>they</u> should be entitled to extra pay as compensation for the effect on <u>their</u> health.

This is something that you can pay attention to when you proofread your essay because it is an easy mistake to change. But always remember to change the verb form as well as to remove the third person singular "*-s*" as highlighted in red above.

Using *it*

It is very common to use *it* in any IELTS essay.

➢ All children benefit from engaging in art because <u>it</u> provides a medium through which they can express their feelings.
➢ <u>It</u> is certainly not easy for local businesses to compete with large international companies.
➢ Too many regulations make <u>it</u> impossible for small businesses to cope with the bureaucracy.
➢ <u>It</u> looks as though governments are ill prepared to tackle the issue of global warming.

For more examples of *it* + Passive, go to page 127.

Referencing

Referencing: Coherence and Cohesion

Referencing has a direct impact on how easy your IELTS essay is to understand and how connected it is. Referencing is an aspect of English language that is assessed in IELTS and is mentioned in the band score descriptors published by IELTS under the marking criterion of Coherence and Cohesion, which is 25% of your marks.

Using *it*

Referencing should not be used in a Topic Sentence (the first sentence of any paragraph). When you write a topic sentence, the content of the paragraph will be new to the reader and should be explained fully in this first sentence. Referencing can then be used in the sentences that follow.

Look at the topic sentence below (the first sentence of a body paragraph).

➢ Firstly, **it** is a very serious problem, which is why parents should control how many hours their children have unsupervised access to a computer.

As you can see, referencing with *it* at the start of the paragraph does not allow the reader to know what the subject is. What is "it"? In this case, the word *it* refers to "children becoming addicted to online gaming", but this is only understood if the reader goes back and reads the essay question or the introduction again for this particular essay. Any time the IELTS examiner is forced to stop reading your essay because it is confusing, it will have a negative impact on your score.

Each paragraph is a new beginning and the reader will approach it with fresh eyes and without presumptions. So, you need to write your topic sentences in full:

➢ Firstly, <u>children becoming addicted to online gaming</u> is a very serious problem, which is why parents should control how many hours their children have unsupervised access to a computer.

Now the reader knows exactly what this paragraph is relating to. Supporting sentences, which follow the topic sentence, can then use referencing.

➢ Firstly, children becoming addicted to online gaming is a serious problem, which is why parents should control how many hours their children have unsupervised access to a computer. If **that solution** does not work and **the problem** persists, parents ought to consider a complete ban on any leisure time spent online during the weekdays and have stricter control at weekends.

When you reference, it must be clear what you are referencing. The first sentence shows the information and the second sentence refers back directly to it. It is easy for the reader to know what *that solution* and what *the problem* refer to. I have colour coded the meaning for you.

Let's add one more sentence to this paragraph:

➢ Firstly, children becoming addicted to online gaming is a serious problem, which is why parents should control how many hours their children have unsupervised access to a computer. If that solution does not work and the problem persists, parents ought to consider a complete ban on any leisure time spent online during the weekdays and have stricter control at weekends. **It** is an effective way to ensure children are given essential boundaries that protect them from the harmful effects of online gaming and ensure that weekdays are used to focus on schoolwork.

Having now added one last sentence, we can see that the word *it* refers to the last solution mentioned in the previous sentence. It is clear and easy to understand. If you wish to refer back to both solutions, you would need to write "Both measures offer a way to provide essential boundaries and hopefully limit the harmful effects of online gaming."

You should also note that the above paragraph is 93 words in length. Although each sentence is about online gaming, the words *online gaming* are only used twice.

Referencing: Avoiding Repetition and Poor Word Choice

Referencing can also be useful if you struggle with synonyms. Choosing the wrong synonym will lower your score for vocabulary, which is 25% of your marks. See the paragraph below:

> An inactive lifestyle can lead to serious weight problems in **children** as exercise is one of the best ways to burn off excess weight. As a result, **kids** can develop even greater health problems, such as diabetes or cardiovascular diseases. Another point to consider is that **young ones** often prefer heavily processed foods and junk foods which are high in fats and sugars, adding more fuel to the fire.

The paragraph above shows that the writer wanted to paraphrase the word *children* to avoid repetition. As a result, they have used inappropriate language. The word *kids* is informal and the term *young ones* is not appropriate. For this reason, if you struggle with finding a suitable synonym, it is best to use referencing instead.

> An inactive lifestyle can lead to serious weight problems in **children** as exercise is one of the best ways to burn off excess weight. As a result, **they** can develop even greater health problems, such as diabetes or cardiovascular diseases. Another point

to consider is that **children** often prefer heavily processed foods and junk food which are high in fats and sugars, adding more fuel to the fire.

As you see, referencing is used in the second sentence, but in the third sentence we go back to using *children*. It is fine to repeat this word. By referencing in the second sentence, we have avoided mechanical repetition of the word *children*.

Referencing Too Much

However, referencing should not be used too often in one paragraph for the same subject or object. If this happens, the reader may again be required to go back to the topic sentence to remember what is being referenced. See below:

> An inactive lifestyle can lead to serious weight problems in **children** as exercise is one of the best ways to burn off excess weight. As a result, **they** can develop even greater health problems, such as diabetes or cardiovascular diseases. Another point to consider is that **they** often prefer heavily processed foods and junk food which are high in fats and sugars, adding more fuel to the fire. To avoid these problems, **they** should be encouraged to eat more fruit and vegetables as well as participate in more sport.

It is better to reference back only one or two sentences at most to avoid strain on the reader. Also consider changing the subject if you feel you have too much repetition in your paragraph.

> An inactive lifestyle can lead to serious weight problems in **children** as exercise is one of the best ways to burn off excess weight. As a result, **they** can develop even greater health problems, such as diabetes or cardiovascular diseases. Another point to consider is that **children** often prefer heavily processed foods and junk food which are high in fats and sugars, adding more fuel to the fire. To avoid these problems, **parents** should provide more fruit and vegetables in their children's daily lives and encourage them to participate in sport together.

Using *this / that, these / those*

The word *this* (plural: *these*) is frequently used in academic writing to refer back to a single word or to a whole string of words expressing an idea:

➤ There are two effective solutions to the problem of repeat offenders. One way to tackle **this** is to ensure that all criminals entering prison are given the chance to retrain with useful skills which will hopefully ensure them a job after they have

served their sentence. **By doing this**, it will help them reintegrate back into society and give them some means of supporting themselves financially. Another method of dealing with criminals who reoffend is to have more supervision and checks in place when they are back in society. **This solution** would hopefully prevent them from taking any chances and deter them from reoffending because they are being so closely watched.

In conclusion, having training in prison and also close observation when first-time offenders are released are effective in dealing with the issue. If governments implemented **these solutions**, crime figures would soon drop.

This		*the problem of repeat offenders*
By doing this		(*ensuring*) *that all criminals entering prison are given the chance to retrain* etc.
This solution	refers back to	(*having*) *more supervision and checks in place when they are back in society*
these solutions		*having training in prison* + (*having*) *close observation when first time offenders are released*

This / these are used to refer to something perceived by the writer as close in time or place. By contrast, *that / those* are used to refer to something perceived as distant, or to create distance.

➢ The colonisation of the Americas by the Spaniards lasted over 300 years. Those were centuries of darkness, suffering and death for the indigenous populations.
➢ Education authorities should reduce their utilitarian bias and instead promote solidarity, cooperativeness and tolerance. These are fundamental values that need to be instilled in children as early as possible.

See Workbook Exercises page 42.

Quantifiers

Quantifiers are small words or phrases such as ***some, much, many, a lot of, few, a few, both, each***, etc. that are used to refer to a number of things or to a quantity of something.

It is common to use quantifiers in IELTS Writing Task 2. As you will see, there is a variety of different quantifiers that can be used. For this reason, you should avoid using the same ones again and again to show the examiner your range.

In order to be able to use quantifiers correctly, you need to be familiar with the difference between countable and uncountable nouns.

For a detailed description, see the chapter on Countable & Uncountable Nouns, page 183.

These two abbreviations will be used throughout this chapter:

[U] = **Uncountable** nouns
[C] = **Countable** nouns.

Two features of [U] nouns are that they cannot be used with *a/an* and that they have no plural form.

Besides, as the table below shows, some quantifiers are used only with [C] nouns or only with [U] nouns, while some can be used with both [C] nouns and [U] nouns.

1.	Quantifiers used with both [C] nouns & [U] nouns	some, any, more, most, all, no, enough, a lot, plenty of
2.	Quantifiers used with [C] nouns only	many, not many, few, a few, several, a number of, both, either, neither, all vs none each, every
3.	Quantifiers used with [U] nouns only	much, more much, little, a little
4.	Using compound quantifiers instead of *much / many*	• a lot of, plenty of • a large number of, a great number of, a good number of • a great deal of, a good deal of, a large quantity of, a large amount of

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1. Quantifiers + [C] nouns and [U] nouns

These quantifiers can be used with both [C] nouns and [U] nouns:

> *some / any / more / most / all / no / enough / a lot of / plenty of*

> ➢ [C] In some situations, body language can be more effective than verbal communication.

> ➢ [U] When applying for a job, some practical experience is often an asset.

> ➢ [C] A few decades ago, animals did not have any rights.

> ➢ [U] Meat eaters like to argue that animals do not suffer any pain when slaughtered.

> ➢ [C] As a result of global warming, more animal species are becoming extinct.

> ➢ [U] We should spend more money on healthcare for people rather than on animal welfare.

> ➢ [C] Most people find it difficult to set themselves realistic goals.

> ➢ [U] It is well known that most scientific research is funded by government grants.

> ➢ [C] In my opinion, all wild animals have the right to live in their natural habitat.

> ➢ [U] In some countries, all animal testing for cosmetics has already been banned.

> ➢ [C] No children should be denied their right to quality education.

> ➢ [U] In some countries, the school workload is so heavy that children have no free time for sport or hobbies.

> ➢ [C] Very often, schools in rural areas do not have enough resources.

> ➢ [C] Not enough hospitals are getting the funding they need.

> ➢ [U] Hospitals in rural areas sometimes do not have enough medical equipment.
> ⇩

> ➢ [U] Not enough medical equipment is getting through to the front line.

> ➢ [C] A lot of prospective parents are not fully aware of the demands of child-rearing.

➢ [U] As young children usually demand a lot of attention, it is better for parents to have a part-time job or to be able to work from home.

➢ [C] Young people from rural areas wrongly believe that there are always plenty of jobs available in cities.

➢ [U] In the past, people always seemed to have plenty of time to help their neighbours or just to talk to them.

Note that the word *enough* implies a sufficient quantity. The opposite of this is *lack*. Go to page 257 for information about using the word *lack*.

Also note that *some*, *any*, *more*, *most* and *all* are followed by *of* if you want to refer to a specific group or to members of a specific group:

➢ [C] Some of the people you meet while travelling can become friends for life.

➢ [U] People should try to put aside some of their income as savings.

➢ [C] People sometimes make various good resolutions at the start of a new year, and then fail to keep any of them.

➢ [U] Any of the advice given online from an unknown source should be doubted.

➢ [C] With better diet and health care, people are now keeping more of their natural teeth than in previous centuries.

➢ [U] In my opinion, teenagers should try to spend more of their free time with their parents and spend less time chatting online.

➢ [C] The media often claim that they are in the business of reporting the news, but I firmly believe that most of them actually try to influence people.

➢ [U] It is often said that most of the information we receive when somebody is speaking comes through their body language.

➢ [C] In smaller classes, it is easier for teachers to engage with all of their students.

➢ [U] It is unreasonable to expect school to be interesting all of the time.

some / any

As you know, the general rule is that we use *some* in positive sentences, and *any* in sentences with a negative meaning and in questions:

➤ [C] <u>Some</u> video games seem to incite teenagers to commit criminal offences.

➤ [U] Isolation and lack of community may be responsible for <u>some</u> criminal behaviour.

➤ [C] Some governments lack compassion and <u>refuse</u> to let <u>any</u> refugees enter the country.

➤ [U] In my opinion, it is dangerous to allow children to use smartphones and computers <u>without</u> <u>any</u> parental supervision.

Note that the example sentences presented here are all either affirmative or negative in meaning. No examples of interrogative sentences are given because you do not need to write questions in your essay. Your essay should present statements and supporting points rather than raise questions.

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2. Quantifiers + [C] nouns

These quantifiers are used with [C] nouns. They are never used with [U] nouns and are always followed by a plural noun (except *either / neither / each / every*, which are followed by a singular noun – see below for more detail).

many / not many / few / a few / several / both / either / neither

➤ <u>Many</u> <u>historic buildings</u> are damaged by the tourists who visit them.

All these quantifiers too can be followed by *of* + a noun, a pronoun or a noun phrase to refer to members of a specific group:

➤ Children generally enjoy school, but <u>not many of them</u> would enjoy going to school at weekends.

few vs a few

Many people confuse the meaning of *few* and *a few*. It is a common mistake to make in English grammar. They do not have the same meaning.

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Note that *few* has a slightly negative meaning:

➤ Unfortunately, <u>few people</u> genuinely care about the environment.

This means 'not as many people as one would expect' or 'not as many people as I would like'. You could paraphrase it as:

➤ Unfortunately, only <u>a small number of people</u> genuinely care about the environment.

or:

➤ Unfortunately, <u>not many people</u> genuinely care about the environment.

By contrast, *a few* is more positive in meaning:

➤ Fortunately, <u>a few people</u> genuinely care about the environment.

You could paraphrase this sentence as:

➤ Fortunately, <u>some people</u> genuinely care about the environment.

or:

➤ Fortunately, <u>a number of people</u> genuinely care about the environment.

In your essay, if you wish to paraphrase *some* (+ plural noun), we recommend that you use *a number of* rather than *a few*.

➤ <u>Some people</u> believe that it is good for children to be given more freedom.
⇩

<u>A number of people</u> think that children benefit from having more freedom.

It is better to paraphrase *some* (+ plural noun) with *a number of* because *a number of* is a <u>neutral</u> expression, whereas *a few* means 'not many'.

Note too that *few* can have a comparative and a superlative form:

➤ In large cities, not many people know their neighbours, and <u>fewer</u> still would be willing to help them.

➤ Areas where housing prices are relatively low have <u>the fewest</u> homeless people.

Important: Remember that *fewer* is the comparative form of *few* and is used with plural nouns, while *less* is the comparative form of *little* and is used with uncountable nouns.

➢ Although there are <u>fewer</u> <u>fatalities</u> due to plane crashes than to road accidents, many people still consider flying unsafe.

➢ The popularity of the internet means that people spend <u>less</u> <u>money</u> than before on music CDs. Besides, <u>fewer</u> <u>people</u> now listen to the radio.

In informal spoken English, you may hear people say *less fatalities*, *less people*, etc., but you must not use such forms in your essay.

several

Several means 'more than a few, though not a lot'. This is a good alternative to use in your essay so that you do not repeat the words *some* or *a few*.

➢ <u>Several</u> <u>countries</u> have already introduced a ban on single-use plastic bags.

➢ World peace has already been threatened on <u>several</u> <u>occasions</u> this century.

➢ Ecotourism differs from traditional tourism in <u>several</u> <u>ways</u>.

➢ It will take <u>several</u> <u>years</u> before the full impact of social media addiction can be assessed.

both / either / neither

These three words can function as conjunctions and as quantifiers.

Conjunctions:

➢ Obviously, <u>both</u> Maths and Science are essential subjects.

➢ People can <u>either</u> control their emotions or be controlled by them.

➢ Fast food is <u>neither</u> cheap <u>nor</u> healthy.

Below, however, we focus on the use of these words as **quantifiers**.

You use *both*, *either* and *neither* to talk about two people or two things that you have just mentioned or that can be identified from the context.

Both means 'one and the other (as a group)'; *either* means 'one or the other (individually)'; and *neither* means 'not one or the other'.

➢ Young offenders could be sent to a rehabilitation centre or told to do community service. <u>Both</u> solutions <u>are</u> fairly easy to implement.

➤ Young offenders could be sent to a rehabilitation centre or told to do community service. However, <u>either</u> solution <u>is</u> likely to draw criticism from different sections of society.

➤ Young offenders could be sent to a rehabilitation centre or told to do community service. However, <u>neither</u> solution <u>is</u> likely to satisfy all sections of society.

Important: In the sentences above, note:

- the plural noun and verb after *both*
- the singular noun and verb after *either* and *neither*.

both of / either of / neither of

Both, *either* and *neither* can also be followed by *of*.

➤ <u>Both of</u> the candidates interviewed were highly qualified.

In this case, they cannot be followed directly by a noun:

➤ ~~Both of candidates~~ interviewed were highly qualified.

This is a very common grammar mistake which you need to avoid.

Both of, *either of* and *neither of* need to be followed by:

i   *the* + Noun or Noun Phrase

ii   *these* or *those* + Noun or Noun Phrase

iii   a Possessive Determiner + Noun or Noun Phrase

They can also be followed by:

iv   a Personal Object Pronoun

v   a Possessive Pronoun

Here are some example sentences to illustrate these five possible structures.

i)   followed by *the* + Noun or Noun Phrase:

➤ <u>Both of the solutions proposed by the government</u> have drawn a lot of criticism.

ii)   followed by *these* or *those* + Noun or Noun Phrase:

➢ Such a critical issue needs to be dealt with soon, so <u>either of</u> <u>those solutions</u> has

to be adopted.

iii) followed by a Possessive Determiner + Noun or Noun Phrase:

➢ The government proposed two ways of dealing with the issue, but <u>neither of</u> <u>their</u>

<u>solutions</u> was very popular.

iv) followed by a Personal Object Pronoun:

➢ The government put forward two different proposals to reduce social security

benefits, but <u>both of</u> <u>them</u> were rejected.

v)   followed by a Possessive Pronoun:

➢ Losing a parent can be traumatic for a child, so we should show even greater

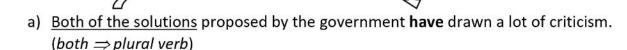compassion to children who have lost <u>both of</u> <u>theirs</u>.

For more information on Pronouns & Determiners, go to page 163. For more information
on Noun Phrases, go to page 20.

Important:

In the sentences below, note

- the plural verb after *both*
- the singular verb after *either* and *neither*

The verbs have been **highlighted**.

a) <u>Both of the solutions</u> proposed by the government **have** drawn a lot of criticism.
    (*both ⇒ plural verb*)

b) Such a critical issue needs to be dealt with soon, so <u>either of those solutions</u> **has** to be adopted.

(*either* ⟹ *singular verb*)

c) The government proposed two options, but <u>neither of their solutions</u> **was** very popular.

(*neither* ⟹ *singular verb*)

As you can see above, the word *solutions* is plural in all sentences. However, while in Sentence (a) the verb is plural, in Sentences (b) and (c) the verb is singular.

all / none

As explained above, *both* and *neither* are used to talk about two people or things. If you want to talk about three or more people or things, use *all* and *none* (= *not any*):

➢ Many solutions were proposed, but <u>all of them</u> drew a lot of criticism.

➢ Three ways of dealing with the issue were proposed, but <u>none of them</u> was very popular.

Notes:

1. While *none* can only be used with [C] nouns, *all* can also be used with [U] nouns (*all the time / all their money*, etc.).

2. It is not a 'mistake' to use a plural verb after *neither* and *none*. However, this is mainly done in spoken English. In your essay, it is recommended that you **use a singular verb after *neither* and *none*** as shown in the example sentences above.

each / every

These quantifiers are often interchangeable, but their meaning is slightly different. You use *every* to generalise, when you think about things or people as a group. You use *each* to separate, when you think about the things or people individually.

➢ <u>Every</u> professional sportsperson <u>practises</u> every day.

➢ <u>Each</u> child in a class <u>has</u> a slightly different way of learning.

Only the word *every* can be used with words such as *almost, nearly, practically, not*, etc.

> ➢ Almost <u>every</u> country <u>has</u> serious pollution problems.

> ➢ <u>Not every</u> student <u>likes</u> to be praised in front of their peers.

Note that after *each* and *every*, the noun and the verb are always singular.

3. Quantifiers + [U] nouns

These quantifiers are used with [U] nouns. They are never used with [C] nouns and are always followed by a singular noun and verb form.

not much / much / little / a little

not much / much

> ➢ In most countries, it seems that <u>not much effort</u> is being put into creating a health service that would be free for all citizens.
> ➢ Some jobs do <u>not</u> require <u>much experience</u> as on-the-job training is provided.
> ⇩
>
> <u>Not much experience</u> is required for jobs that provide on-the-job training.

Note that *much* in affirmative sentences is considered very formal and is becoming rare. It is alright to use it in your essay, but you can use *a lot of* instead.

> ➢ A fairly large number of elderly people say they derived <u>much benefit</u> from serving in the army.
> ⇩
>
> A fairly large number of elderly people say they derived <u>a lot of benefit</u> from serving in the army.

The expressions *so much* and *too much*, however, can be used in affirmative sentences.

> ➢ In some countries, schoolchildren have <u>so much homework</u> that they suffer from burnout and depression.
> ➢ In my opinion, most governments spend <u>too much money</u> on defence and not enough on health and education.

All these quantifiers can be followed by *of* + a noun or a noun phrase to refer to members of a specific group:

> ➢ It is generally accepted that <u>much of human behaviour</u> is influenced by culture.

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➢ There is some evidence to support the claim of some critics that <u>much of the money</u> donated after natural disasters is either misused or stolen.

Note that this section is about the word *much* as a quantifier. There is another use of the word *much* as an adverb used before comparative adjectives (*much better / much more important*, etc.).

For this particular use of the word *much*, go to the chapter on Comparatives, page 190.

little vs *a little*

Many people make a mistake using *little* and *a little*. These expressions do not have the same meaning.

Note that *little* has a slightly negative meaning:
➢ Unfortunately, <u>little</u> <u>effort</u> is made to educate people about how democracy really works.

This means 'not as much effort as one would expect' or 'not as much effort as I would like'. You could paraphrase it as:

➢ Unfortunately, <u>not much</u> <u>effort</u> is made to educate people about how democracy really works.

By contrast, *a little* is more positive in meaning:
➢ Fortunately, most countries have made <u>a little</u> <u>progress</u> towards eradicating poverty. However, there is still a long way to go.

You could paraphrase this sentence as:

➢ Fortunately, most countries have made <u>some</u> <u>progress</u> towards eradicating poverty. However, there is still a long way to go.

Note too that *little* can have a comparative and a superlative form:
➢ There has been very little effort to promote green technologies, and even <u>less</u> to reduce air pollution levels.
➢ The poorest people are also those who have <u>the least</u> power.

4. Using compound quantifiers instead of *much / many*

As you know, *much* is used with [U] nouns and *many* with [C] plural nouns. *Much* and *many* are used mainly in negative sentences and in questions.

Much and *many* are unusual in positive sentences, except in expressions such as *too much / too many, so much / so many, very much / very many*, etc.

In positive sentences, you can use other quantifiers as an alternative to *much/many*. These are sometimes called 'compound quantifiers' or 'phrasal quantifiers'. All compound quantifiers can also be used in negative sentences and in questions.

Compound quantifiers + [U] nouns and plural [C] nouns

These quantifiers can be used with both [U] nouns and plural [C] nouns:

a lot of / *plenty of*

The verb will be either singular or plural depending on the noun before it. Singular nouns (including uncountable nouns) require a singular verb. Plural nouns require a plural verb.

> ➢ [C] Food additives and preservatives are not popular with a lot of consumers.
> ➢ [C] A lot of people spend too much time looking at a screen.
> ➢ [U] Parents spend a lot of time and energy bringing up their children.
> ➢ [U] A lot of value is placed on success.
> ➢ [C] Climate change is pushing plenty of species to extinction.
> ➢ [U] Plenty of evidence shows that fossil fuels are partly to blame for global warming.
>
>   ⇩
>
> ➢ [U] There is plenty of evidence that fossil fuels are partly to blame for global warming.

Both *a lot of* and *plenty of* may be used in IELTS Writing Task 2. However, do not overuse these quantifiers. It is recommended that you sometimes use other quantifiers in order to show flexibility.

Note that *loads of* and *lots of* are not listed because they are considered too informal.

Also note that *plenty of* cannot be used in a negative form unlike *a lot of*. For example:

> ➢ Not a lot of people exercise enough these days.

Compound quantifiers + plural [C] nouns

These quantifiers can only be used with plural [C] nouns:

a large number of / a great number of / a good number of / a wide range of

Note the plural noun and verb after *a* (*large/great/good*) *number of* and after *a* (*wide*) *range*.

> ➤ Food additives and preservatives are not popular with <u>a large number of consumers</u>.
>
> ➤ <u>A large number of consumers are</u> opposed to food additives and preservatives.
>
> ➤ Climate change is pushing <u>a great number of species</u> to extinction.
>
> ➤ <u>A great number of species are</u> being pushed to extinction by climate change.
>
> ➤ <u>A wide range of products</u> can now be recycled.

For the difference between *a number of* and *the number of*, go to the chapter on Common Errors, Section 3, page 250.

Compound quantifiers + [U] nouns

These quantifiers can only be used with [U] nouns:

a great deal of / a good deal of / a large quantity of / a large amount of

Note the singular noun and verb after these quantifiers. See the following chapter to learn about uncountable nouns.

> ➤ Catastrophes receive <u>a great deal of coverage</u> in the media.
>
> ➤ Even people who are not so well off seem to spend <u>a good deal of money</u> on luxuries.
>
> ➤ <u>A large quantity of plastic waste</u> finds its way into the oceans every year.
>
> ➤ <u>A large amount of fake information</u> circulates in the social media.

See Workbook Exercises page 45.

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Countable & Uncountable Nouns

Nouns are usually grouped into two categories, 'countable nouns' and 'uncountable nouns'.

In this chapter, we use the following abbreviations: [C] stands for 'countable', while [U] stands for 'uncountable'.

These are the abbreviations traditionally used in dictionaries for students of English. A good learner's dictionary should always tell you whether a noun is [C] or [U], or whether a noun has one meaning in its [C] form and another meaning in its [U] form. Whenever you are in doubt about a noun when practising essay writing, do look it up in your dictionary.

Countable and Uncountable Nouns: Introduction

[C] Nouns

[C] nouns are used to refer to people, things or concepts that are seen as separate entities.

an <u>artist</u>, a lot of <u>artists</u>	a <u>shop</u>, several <u>shops</u>	a <u>person</u>, many <u>people</u>
this <u>teacher</u>, our <u>teachers</u>	a <u>proposal</u>, two <u>proposals</u>	a <u>city</u>, many <u>cities</u>

These nouns are called 'countable' because we can say *one shop, two shops, three shops*, etc.

[C] nouns have both a singular and a plural form. They can be used with *a/an*, with numbers (*one, five*, etc.), quantifiers (*many, a few*, etc.) and demonstratives (*this, those*, etc.).

➢ <u>Most public libraries</u> offer <u>a wide range of services</u> and often open <u>their doors</u> to various local community <u>groups</u> and <u>charities</u>.

➢ Even people who like <u>cats</u> and <u>dogs</u> sometimes forget that <u>a pet</u> should be <u>a friend</u> for life.

➢ <u>This decade</u> will be remembered for many worrying political and social <u>developments</u>.

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[U] Nouns

[U] nouns are used to refer to concepts, feelings, activities, materials and substances, etc. that are seen as a whole or as a mass.

Education	water	advice	fear
work	rice	information	sadness
leisure	bread	time	empathy
fun	milk	money	warmth

These nouns are called 'uncountable' because we cannot say ~~one work~~, ~~two advices~~, ~~three informations~~, etc.

[U] nouns have only one form. They are not used in the plural or with *a/an* or with numbers.

- ➤ A large number of websites offer support, advice and guidance about education for children with special needs.
- ➤ Fear, anger, joy and excitement are probably the most common human emotions.
- ➤ A lot of information about accommodation in the world's major tourist hotspots is available online.

Being uncountable is not a property of the words themselves but is language specific. This means that nouns which are [U] in English may be [C] in other languages. For example:

accommodation	furniture	luggage	research
advice	homework	permission	travel
behaviour	information	progress	weather

For information about which quantifiers to use with [U] nouns, go to page 170.

Using Countable Noun Phrases for [U] Nouns

If you want to talk about a specific number or amount of an [U] noun, you need to use an alternative phrase such as *a piece of / pieces of*; *a bit of / bits of*; *an item of / items of* etc. For example:

~~an advice~~	~~an interesting information~~	~~a good news~~
a piece of advice	an interesting item of information	a bit of good news

~~two advices~~	~~three informations~~	~~two good news~~
two pieces of advice	three items of information	two bits of good news
~~a bread~~	~~a soap~~	~~a water~~
a loaf of bread	a bar of soap	a bottle of water

Further examples:

✖ It can be very hard for young couples to find ~~a suitable accommodation~~.

✔ It can be very hard for young couples to find suitable accommodation.

✔ It can be very hard for young couples to find a suitable place to live.

✔ It can be very hard for young couples to find a suitable flat or house.

✖ A lot of young people dream of going on ~~a long travel~~ around the world.

✔ A lot of young people dream of going on a long journey around the world.

✔ A lot of young people dream of going on a long trip around the world.

Nouns Used to Refer to Substances

Many nouns used to refer to substances can be used either as [C] or [U] nouns.

The [C] form usually refers to a specific quantity or a particular kind of something, while the [U] form has a general meaning. For example:

➢ [C] We stopped at a roadside cafe and ordered <u>two teas</u> and <u>a sparkling water</u>.
In this sentence, *tea* and *water* are used as [C] nouns because they refer to specific quantities: *two cups of tea*, *a bottle of sparkling water*.

➢ [C] <u>Most teas</u> are low in caffeine.
In this sentence, *tea* is used as a [C] noun because the meaning is *most types/kinds of tea*.

➢ [U] In many cultures, drinking <u>tea</u> is a social activity.
In this sentence, *tea* is used as an [U] noun because the meaning is *tea in general*, i.e. not a specific quantity or a particular type of tea.

➢ [C] Chilean and Californian <u>wines</u> are ranked among the best in the world.
(= kinds of wine)

➢ [U] In my opinion, teenagers should not be allowed to buy <u>wine</u> or beer.
(= 'wine in general')

Specific and General Meanings

Besides the nouns used to refer to substances discussed above, there are many other nouns which can be used either as [C] or [U] nouns.

For example:

business	experience	labour	society
communication	food	language	support
culture	growth	power	time
development	industry	practice	value
economy	interest	property	work

Usually, the [C] form has a more specific meaning, while the [U] form has a general meaning.

However, the meaning of the [C] form can be quite different from that of the [U] form.

For example:

> ➤ [U] Many young people are seeking a career in <u>business</u>.

In this sentence, the noun *business* denotes the activity of buying, selling or producing goods and services. In this sense, it is [U].

> ➤ [C] A lot of local <u>businesses</u> are going broke because of large corporations.

In this sentence, the noun *businesses* denotes particular companies that buy or sell goods and services. In this sense, it is [C].

> ➤ [U] When applying for a job, <u>experience</u> is sometimes more valuable than qualifications.

In this sentence, the noun *experience* denotes knowledge or skill in a particular activity which is gained after doing that activity for a long time. In this sense, it is [U].

> ➤ [C] People are sometimes afraid of pets because they had <u>a</u> bad <u>experience</u> in the past.

In this sentence, the noun *experience* denotes something specific that happens to you and that affects you. In this sense, it is [C].

> ➤ [U] Human <u>language</u> can communicate an infinite number of thoughts and concepts with a finite number of words.

In this sentence, the noun *language* means communication in general, the use of words to communicate in writing or in speaking. In this sense, it is [U].

> ➤ [C] Knowledge of at least <u>one</u> foreign <u>language</u> is now expected from most people who apply for a white-collar job.

In this sentence, the noun *language* denotes a particular language. In this sense, it is [C].

> ➤ [U] Learning to play a musical instrument is hard <u>work</u>.

In this sentence, the noun *work* denotes something we do that requires an effort. In this sense, it is [U].

> ➤ [C] Historic buildings often house valuable <u>works</u> of art that need to be protected from careless tourists.

In this sentence, the noun *works* denotes particular pieces of art, specific artistic creations. In this sense, the noun *work* is [C].

Besides, some very common abstract [U] nouns can be used with the indefinite article *a(n)* like [C] nouns when you want to talk about a particular kind of something.

Such nouns are typically used in the following patterns:

a(n) + Adj. + Noun	*a(n)* + Noun + *of*	*a(n)* + Adj. + Noun + *of*

However, those nouns have no plural form.

For example:

education	help	Life	sleep
hatred	knowledge	love	understanding

> ➤ A lot of people can speak several languages even though they have had little or no formal <u>education</u>.
> ➤ All parents want <u>a good education</u> for their children.

> ➤ Social media are sometimes used to stir up racial <u>hatred</u>.
> ➤ In my experience, it is not true that elderly people have <u>a deep hatred of</u> anything new.

> ➤ In my opinion, schools should spread <u>knowledge</u> of civil rights issues through discussion and social media.
> ➤ Many jobs require <u>a working knowledge of</u> various computer programs.

> ➤ Children need a lot of <u>love</u> and affection.
> ➤ It is the teacher's duty to ensure that children develop <u>a love of</u> reading and learning.

[U] Nouns Ending in -s

Some nouns end in -s but are [U] nouns and are therefore followed by a singular verb. These are mostly nouns used to refer to diseases, subjects of study, activities and games. For example:

diabetes	economics	aerobics
rabies	electronics	athletics
	linguistics	gymnastics
	mathematics	billiards
	physics	cards

> ➤ Economics <u>has</u> become a very popular field of study.
> ➤ Diabetes <u>is</u> affecting an increasing number of young people who are heavily overweight.
> ➤ It is often claimed that aerobics <u>increases</u> blood flow and body stamina.

High-Frequency [U] Nouns in Academic English

Here are 20 [U] nouns which are among the most frequently used nouns in Academic English:

accommodation	information	management	research
advice	knowledge	money	shopping
behaviour	leisure	nature	traffic
equipment	luck	news	violence
homework	luggage	progress	weather

Remember that these nouns are never preceded by *a/an* and do not have a plural form (i.e. ~~an advice~~ / ~~informations~~ / ~~a news~~ / ~~homeworks~~ , etc. are all INCORRECT forms).

Note that although the noun *news* ends in -s, it is [U], not plural:

> ➤ Some people say that <u>the news is</u> always depressing.

Nouns That Only Have a Plural Form

Some nouns in English only have a plural form and so are never used with *a*(*n*). They always take a plural verb. Typically, these are nouns that are used to refer to clothing / things people wear, instruments, tools and other things that are thought of as consisting of more than one part.

For example:

glasses	binoculars	belongings	outskirts
sunglasses	headphones	expenses	premises
clothes	scissors	goods	surroundings
jeans		savings	congratulations
trousers			thanks
pyjamas			

> ➤ Many old people have to spend most of their <u>savings</u> on healthcare.

> ➤ In many countries, the poorest people live in slums on the <u>outskirts</u> of large cities.

> ➤ In some workplaces, <u>jeans</u> are not allowed.

With nouns used to refer to clothing, instruments and tools, it is usually possible to use *a pair of* (or *one pair of*) if you want to specify that you are referring to only one example.

> ➤ If you are a music lover, it is worth investing in <u>a good pair of headphones</u>.
> ⇩
> If you are a music lover, it is worth investing in <u>some good headphones.</u>

If you want to refer to two or more examples, use *two pairs of ... / three pairs of ...*, etc.

Note that the noun *police* is plural although it does not end in *-s*. It always takes a plural verb.

> ➤ It is good to know that <u>the police</u> <u>are</u> there to protect us and prevent crime.

IELTS Liz

Comparatives & Superlatives

Adjectives

We use the comparative form of an adjective to compare two things or people:

➢ Staying within one's comfort zone is **easier than** starting on a new path.
➢ Change is **more interesting than** stability.

We use the superlative form of an adjective to compare three or more things or people:

➢ Nelson Mandela is sometimes regarded as **the greatest** statesman of the 20th century.
➢ Cities like Barcelona and Bangkok are among **the most popular** tourist destinations in the world.

Form

The form depends on how long the adjective is (i.e. how many syllables it has) and on the spelling.

Type	Example	Comparative form	Superlative form
One syllable	old	old**er** (than)	the old**est**
	cheap	cheap**er** (than)	the cheap**est**
One syllable ending in -e	large	larg**er** (than)	the larg**est**
	nice	nic**er** (than)	the nic**est**
One syllable ending in short vowel + consonant	hot	ho**tter** (than)	the ho**ttest**
	big	bi**gger** (than)	the bi**ggest**
Two syllables ending in -y	happy	happ**ier** (than)	the happ**iest**
	noisy	nois**ier** (than)	the nois**iest**
Two or more syllables	famous	**more** famous (than)	**the most** famous
	successful	**more** successful (than)	**the most** successful

Other cases

- Some common two-syllable adjectives form the comparative with either *-er* or *more* and the superlative with either *-est* or *most*. For example:

clever / cleverer (*or* more clever) / the cleverest (*or* the most clever)

simple / simpler (*or* more simple) / the simplest (*or* the most simple)

narrow / narrower (*or* more narrow) / the narrowest (*or* the most narrow)

quiet / quieter (*or* more quiet) / the quietest (*or* most quiet).

- Some very common adjectives are irregular. For example:
good / better / the best
bad / worse / the worst
far / further / the furthest
- Note that you can express opposites with *less* and *the least*. So, for example:
happier (than) ≠ less happy (than) / the happiest ≠ the least happy
more expensive (than) ≠ less expensive (than) / the most expensive ≠ the least expensive.

Adverbs

We use the comparative form of an adverb to compare two actions, and the superlative form to compare three or more actions:

> ➢ The European economy is developing **more slowly than** the Chinese one.
> ➢ China is probably **the most rapidly** developing economy in the world.

- Note that a number of common adverbs have the same form as the adjective. Such adverbs follow the same rules as the adjectives. For example:
hard / harder (than) / the hardest
fast / faster (than) / the fastest
- Some very common adverbs are irregular. For example:
well / better / the best
badly / worse / the worst
far / further / the furthest

Large and Small Differences

> ➢ Reading aloud to children is of course <u>**much** better</u> than letting them watch TV on their own.
> ➢ Industry experience is sometimes regarded as <u>**far** more useful</u> than a university degree.
> ➢ People who are geographically mobile can find a job <u>**a lot** more easily</u> than others.
> ➢ Online learning is usually <u>**a little** cheaper</u> than traditional education.
> ➢ Online courses can be completed <u>**slightly** more quickly</u> than traditional ones.
> ➢ Life in a suburban area is usually <u>**a bit** less stressful</u> than in the city centre.

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

Similarity and Difference

We use *as … as* to say that people, things or actions are similar in some way, and *not as … as* to say that they differ in some way.

- ➢ Social networking sites are **as** addictive **as** video games.
- ➢ It is often argued that punishing bad behaviour is **not as** effective **as** rewarding exemplary behaviour.
- ➢ We need to change our consumption habits **as** radically **as** possible in order to reduce the impact they have on the environment.
- ➢ In my opinion, traditional lifestyles are **not** protected **as** effectively **as** they should be.

Comparatives with Nouns and Noun Phrases

With countable nouns, we use:
more ≠ fewer / the most ≠ the fewest / as many … as ≠ not as many … as
With uncountable nouns, we use:
more ≠ less / the most ≠ the least / as much … as ≠ not as much … as

- ➢ Smart cities should aim to have <u>fewer cars</u> rather than <u>more parking spaces</u>.
- ➢ There are <u>not as many public phone booths</u> <u>as</u> there used to be because almost everyone now has a mobile phone.
- ➢ <u>Fewer private vehicles</u> on the streets would mean <u>less traffic congestion</u>.
- ➢ It is sometimes argued that children do <u>not</u> get <u>as much exercise as</u> they should because they spend too much time online.

In informal spoken English, *less* used with a countable noun is considered acceptable. In writing, however, you are advised to use *fewer* before a plural noun, not *less*.

<u>Incorrect:</u> Despite all the talk about gender equality, there are still ~~less women~~ in top positions, and women often earn less money than their male counterparts.

<u>Correct:</u> Despite all the talk about gender equality, there are still <u>fewer women</u> than men in top positions, and women often earn less money than their male counterparts.

Other Useful Words and Structures for Comparing

the same as ≠ different from

> ➢ Ready meals do not have <u>the same</u> nutritional value <u>as</u> home cooked meals.
> ➢ Being slightly overweight is <u>different from</u> being obese.

Both expressions are used very frequently when comparing. Make sure you use them correctly.

> <u>Incorrect</u>: It is sometimes suggested that animals may share <u>the same</u> emotions ~~like~~ humans.

> <u>Correct</u>: It is sometimes suggested that animals may share <u>the same</u> emotions <u>as</u> humans.

similar to

> ➢ Young people's hopes and fears are often <u>similar to</u> those of their parents.

compared to (or *with*) */ in comparison with* (or *to*)

> ➢ <u>In comparison with</u> other urban areas, cities popular with tourists face the additional challenges of overcrowding and waste disposal.
> ➢ Self-organised holidays can save you a lot of money <u>compared to</u> package tours.

Talking about increases and decreases

> ➢ The world is losing its tropical rainforests <u>faster and faster</u>.
> ➢ In most cities, the air is getting <u>more and more polluted</u>.

Talking about interdependent situations

> ➢ <u>The more</u> trees we plant, <u>the better</u> the air we breathe.
> ➢ <u>The less</u> we use paper, <u>the fewer</u> trees will be cut down.
> ➢ <u>The more</u> you watch violent films, <u>the more</u> desensitised to violence you become.

See Workbook Exercises page 48.

Articles: Section 4

This is a continuation of the Articles Chapter which is found earlier in Volume II.

Concepts of Specific & General

We have seen in section 2 and section 3 about Articles that we mainly use *the* when we are referring to something specific and we use no article when we refer to something in general. For example:

➢ Some people think <u>the language</u> of a country can only be learned properly by living there.

In this case, *the language* refers to the specific language of the country referred to.

➢ <u>Holidays</u>, such as Halloween, are usually enjoyed by all young children.

In the sentence above, the word *holidays* is referring to all holidays, not specific holidays. When we refer to something in general with a countable noun, we use the plural form without an article.

So far, this rule seems simple and easy to follow. However, understanding what is specific and what is general is not always easy to grasp. Take a look at the following examples:

1. <u>People</u> with a criminal record often find it difficult to find a job after they are released.

In Sentence 1, the word *people* is not referring to all people, but to people with a criminal record. If this is the case, why does it not use the article *the* for a specific group of people? Why does it not require *the*?

The subject in Sentence 1 is a noun phrase. It is referring to all people who have a criminal record. This means it is referring in general to that whole group. For this reason, no article is used and the main noun, which is countable, is plural.

You can learn more about noun phrases on pages 20 - 31.

2. <u>The people</u> with a criminal record who came to the interview showed a wide range of skills and experience.

In Sentence 2, the subject is also a noun phrase. However, this noun phrase also contains a clause. Below you will see the defining relative clause underlined:

The people with a criminal record <u>who came to the interview</u>

The clause in Sentence 2 shows that we are not referring to all people with a criminal record. We are only referring to a specific group of people with a criminal record (the ones who attended the interview). For this reason, the article *the* is required as it is a specific group.

You can learn more about defining relative clauses on pages 70 - 82.

3. <u>Cars</u> in urban areas are largely responsible for most of the air pollution.

In Sentence 3, the subject is a noun phrase: *cars in urban areas*. This means it is referring in general to all cars in urban areas, not to specific cars in urban areas.

4. <u>The cars</u> with the best mileage usually have the highest price.

In Sentence 4, by contrast, we are not talking about cars in general but about a specific group of cars, namely those which have the best mileage. This sentence could be paraphrased as follows:

➢ The cars which have the best mileage are usually the ones which have the highest price.

5. People fleeing war-torn countries should be guaranteed sanctuary.

In Sentence 5, no article is used because it is referring in general to all people coming from a war-torn country.

6. The people fleeing war-torn countries should be guaranteed sanctuary.

The use of the article *the* in Sentence 6 is based on the meaning of the writer. By using the article *the*, the writer is putting people coming from war-torn countries into a specific category. This is mostly likely because the writer is differentiating that group of people from another wider group of people coming into the country who are not from war-torn countries. This means the use of the article *the* is purposely used to divide these specific people from the general group of people coming into the country.

While this may seem confusing, you must take context into consideration. After all, we use language to communicate meaning and therefore context counts towards meaning and influences grammar. It is most likely that this sentence would be found in an article about people coming into a country seeking sanctuary. The paragraph would then separate people from war-torn countries from the wider group. This would make them a specific group of people.

Example sentences in context:

➢ There is an increasing number of people requesting to enter this country. The reasons for their application are varied. Some want to give their children a

better education, some just want to find a decent job and others want to escape from their war-torn country. Obviously, <u>the</u> people fleeing war-torn countries should be guaranteed sanctuary. With nowhere else to turn, these people must be allowed entry.

End Volume II