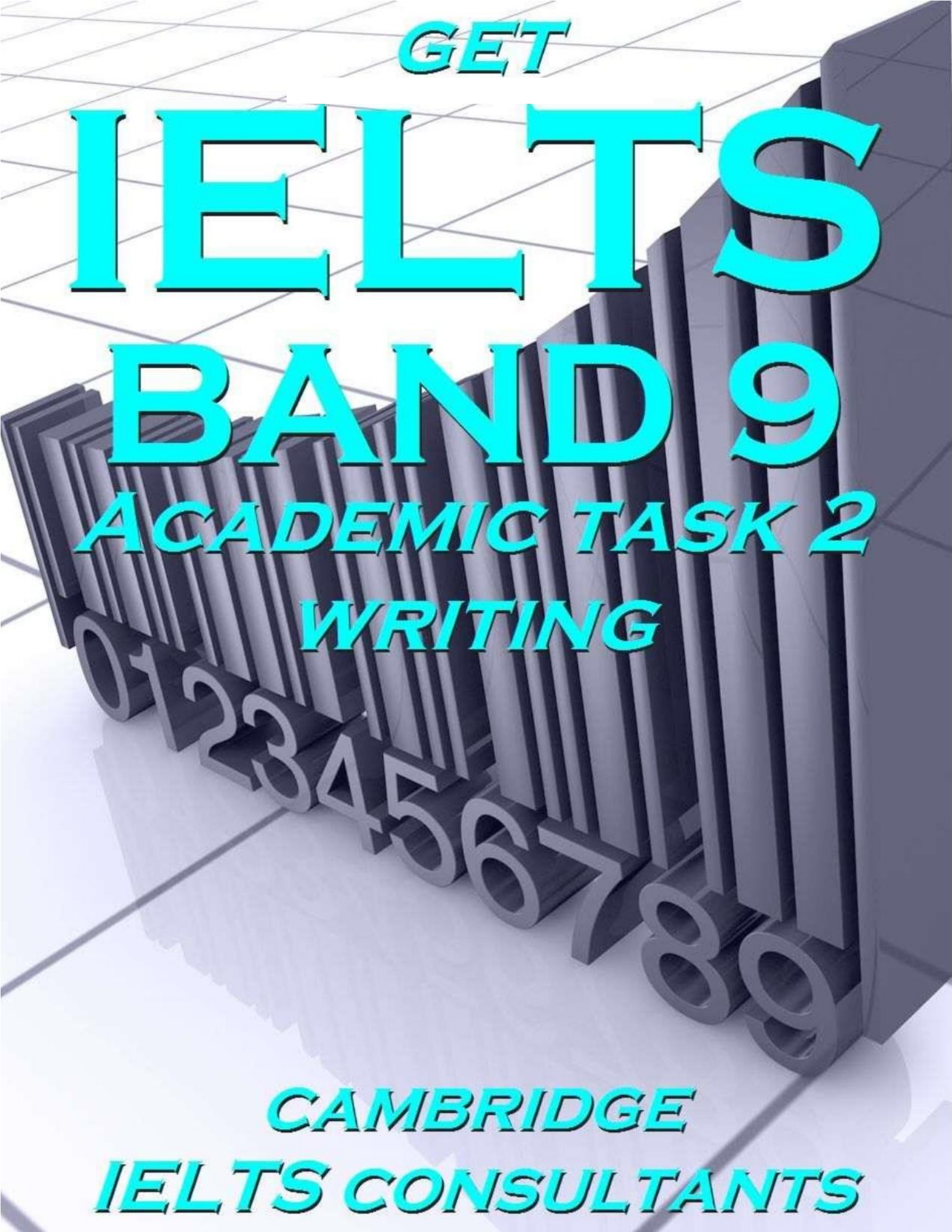

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Table of Contents

Introduction from the authors
Explanation of the different types of Academic Task 2 essay
OPINION type tasks: Model essays
IDEAS type tasks: Model essays
Summary of the model essays
Tasks for you to practice
Key to practice tasks
The 10 most common mistakes in IELTS academic writing
Help from the experts

GET IELTS BAND 9
In Academic Writing

Book 1

15 MODEL ESSAYS SHOWING YOU
HOW TO GET BAND 9
IN ACADEMIC WRITING TASK 2

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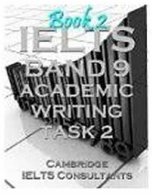


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IDEAS type tasks: Model essays

Summary of the model essays

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Key to practice tasks

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Introduction from the authors

For many people, the most difficult part of the IELTS Academic exam is the Task 2 essay in the writing test. This is because few people understand the different types of Task 2 essay, and few people take the time to read examples of high quality Task 2 essays before they take the exam.

We are here to help!

In this book we show you how to analyze the Task 2 question, and we explain the different types of essay you may be asked to write. Most importantly, this book provides you with fifteen examples of Task 2 essays, all written to Band 9 standard. Each essay also has examiner's comments, which explain why the writing is Band 9 level.

At the end of the book, there are a number of practice tasks for you to use. You should analyze the tasks and decide on which type they are. Then try to write your own essay in forty minutes, as you would in the exam. There is a key to the practice tasks, and also a summary of the ten most common mistakes in IELTS academic writing. Make sure you avoid these mistakes!

If you need a dictionary while reading this book, we recommend the free *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* from Cambridge University Press.

Don't just trust to luck in your IELTS exam – the key is expert advice!

Jessica Alperne & Peter Swires
Cambridge IELTS Consultants
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Explanation of the different types of Academic Task 2 essay

There are two possible types of IELTS Academic Task 2 writing tasks: OPINION tasks and IDEAS tasks. Let's explain the difference, because this is very important.

Firstly, there are OPINION tasks, which ask for your opinion on a topic, such as whether you think something is good or bad. These OPINION tasks take two forms.

Some of these are OPINION > DISCUSSION tasks, which typically say *'Some people think that X is a good thing, while other people disagree. Discuss both sides and give your own view.'* Remember that the exact words used could be different (for example, it might say *'consider both aspects'* or similar) but the concept will be the same. In these OPINION > DISCUSSION tasks, you should write about each side of the discussion, and finally give your opinion at the end of your essay.

The other type of OPINION task is the OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT task. These tasks typically say *'X is a good thing. To what extent do you agree with this statement?'* Again, the exact words will often vary (for example, it might say *'Many people support the suggestion of X. How far do you support this proposal?'*) but the concept will be the same. In these OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT tasks, you should state your personal viewpoint at the *beginning* of the essay, and then explain why you have this opinion.

The second type of task are IDEAS tasks, which ask you to think of some ideas on a topic (such as the reasons for a problem or some ways to solve it) or to evaluate a situation. In these IDEAS tasks, you will get high marks for thinking of a number of ideas on the topic, but you will lose marks if you give a strong personal opinion.

The common IDEAS tasks are IDEAS > PROBLEM/SOLUTION, IDEAS > CAUSE/EFFECT and IDEAS > EVALUATE. This book has examples and explanations of all these types.

In the exam, you should analyze the task carefully *before* you start writing, to make sure you understand which type you need to write. Ask yourself: is this an OPINION or an IDEAS task? Is it asking me to give my personal view, or is it asking me to think of some ideas on a topic? Which type of OPINION or IDEAS task is it? Then you should spend a few minutes planning your essay with some simple notes.

Don't try to write anything very different in structure from the models in this book. These model essays are exactly what the examiners want to see from you. Read our mod

essays, and then use our practice tasks to practice writing your own essays in a similar way.

OPINION type tasks: Model essays

Example Task 1

You should spend about 40 minutes on this question.

Some people believe that sport is an essential part of school life for children, while others feel it should be purely optional. Discuss these opposing views and give your own opinion.

You should give reasons for your answer, and include ideas and examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is an OPINION > DISCUSSION type task. It asks you to consider both sides of an argument, and then give your opinion. You should discuss both sides objectively, describing two or three points on each side, and then give your personal view in the conclusion. Remember, your personal view should be expressed without emotion or humour.

Model Essay 1

Sport continues to be a controversial topic in the school curriculum, just as sport itself has become a controversial industry in some respects. There are valid opinions on both sides, which I will consider now.

On the one hand, some people feel that sport uses up time which could be better spent on academic subjects such as exam preparation. In addition, it might be said that it is unwise to force children to do activities which they have no interest in. After all, some youngsters are just not sporty, and should be allowed to study instead. Finally, there are question marks over the wholesomeness of sport itself, with drugging and corruption scandals increasingly common, as we see in cycling at present. Some people believe that this lack of morals sets a poor example to young people.

On the other hand, though, one major benefit of sport is that it helps children's physical development at an important stage. If all their time was spent studying, they would become unfit and their minds would eventually suffer. Furthermore, supporters of school sport emphasize the importance of team building in sports such as football or hockey, which is often felt to be an excellent preparation for adulthood. Finally, many people feel that a competitive spirit, so important today, is fostered by sports at an early age. It is notable, for example, that many successful business people excelled in sport at school.

Overall, I feel that sport should be compulsory for school children, because the positive effect on their mental and physical development outweighs the negatives. This i

as long as children are given a wide range to choose from, to ensure their interest is high, and that the sports industry itself maintains the highest standards of conduct.

(293 words)

Examiner's comments

This essay would receive Band 9. It exceeds the minimum word requirement and is clearly organized into introduction, main body discussion, and conclusion with opinion. The candidate has introduced the topic, and then given several relevant points on each side of the discussion. There are suitable examples at times, without too much detail. The conclusion has a clear and relevant opinion. The English used is clear and uncomplicated, with good use of common academic words (e.g. *controversial, emphasize, excel.*) The ideas and paragraphs are connected by good use of common linking phrases (e.g. *on the one hand, furthermore, overall.)*

Example Task 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this question.

Some people feel that it is always wrong to keep animals in captivity, for instance in zoos. Other people say that there are benefits for the animals and for humans. Discuss both sides of this debate, and give your personal view.

You should give reasons for your answer, and include ideas and examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is another OPINION > DISCUSSION type task. Although the topic and the words used in the instructions are different to the previous task, you should follow the same basic structure. You should discuss both sides objectively, describing two or three points on each side, and then give your view in the conclusion.

Model Essay 2

Zoos continue to be controversial, even now that they have evolved into 'animal parks' or similar facilities. Most people love animals, and there are strong views on both sides, which I will discuss now.

People opposed to zoos highlight the unnatural way in which animals live in such places. For example, captive animals do not need to hunt or raise offspring, and this means that they are not living as nature intended. Furthermore, the anti-zoo lobby point out that animals probably suffer mentally when kept in captivity, even if their surroundings are spacious and similar to the natural habitat. Symptoms of mental issues range from repetitive behaviour to eating disorders, and these are often seen in captive animals. Lastly,

it is often said that zoos add little to animal conservation, which is better served by preserving their habitat.

Conversely, those who support zoos say that in most cases they offer a secure and peaceful setting for animals, for example in high quality wildlife parks or reserves. They add that in many cases, the animals would suffer from loss of habitat or poaching in the wild, and in captivity they are at least safe and able to breed successfully. Finally, zoo enthusiasts feel that zoos and animal parks are part of an integrated system of protecting animals, involving habitat protection, breeding programmes and disease control. This all helps to safeguard endangered species and thus preserve the global ecosystem for the future benefit of all life forms.

Overall, I feel that zoos provide a valuable service to society and the animal world, as they help to protect many species. This outweighs their possible disadvantages, as long as they are properly staffed and maintained.

(281 words)

Examiner's comments

This would be a band 9 essay. The style is academic but not excessively formal, and the writer gives a personal opinion without emotion or humour. Both sides of the topic are discussed, using clear examples to illustrate the points. There is a logical flow from the points supporting zoos into the conclusion, which also supports the zoos. The language used is academic (e.g. *conversely, thus*) without being technical or archaic. Linking phrases are used to guide the reader helpfully (e.g. *furthermore, overall*.) The conclusion includes a proviso (*as long as they are . . .*) which is a strong feature in academic writing.

Example Task 3

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Some people believe that a gap year between school and university is a good idea, while others disagree strongly. Consider both sides of this debate and present your own opinion.

You should give reasons for your answer, and include ideas and examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is another OPINION > DISCUSSION type task. You should follow the same basic structure as for examples 1 and 2.

Model Essay 3

While gap years are increasingly popular, they continue to be rather controversial because the benefits are hard to quantify exactly. There are arguments on both sides of this very topical debate, and I will discuss them now.

On the one hand, opponents of gap years point to the cost involved in areas such as air fares, accommodation and living expenses. All this money has to come from the student's family, or even from borrowing to be paid later. Secondly, it is often said that gap years take a young person's focus away from studying, and allows them to get involved in distractions such as travelling. This can make it hard to adjust to university life, damaging the student's performance. Finally, there is a concern over the safety of young people if they are travelling to remote places. Being kidnapped or mugged is a poor start to an academic career, after all.

On the other hand, supporters of gap years say that the skills learned outweigh the disadvantages. They highlight the independence and assertiveness that a student will acquire, in areas such as time management and interpersonal skills. They also say that these skills lead to greater career success later in life, thus cancelling out the costs involved. Furthermore, there are many examples of young people using gap years to achieve something significant, whether in voluntary work or in a sector of business that interests them.

In conclusion, my own feeling is that a year off can indeed be a useful activity, with the experience leading to improved skills that are invaluable in the future. Of course, this is provided that the year is planned carefully and used for something genuinely worthwhile.

(281 words)

Examiner's comments

This is a good example of a Band 9 essay. The writer discusses each side of the debate, giving two or three points to support each side. The points are relevant and clear, without being too specific or personal. The linking words used (*e.g. On the other hand, furthermore, in conclusion*) show the reader how the essay develops and what to expect at each stage. The language is academic but understandable to a general reader. The opinion in the conclusion is expressed without emotion or attempts at humour.

Example Task 4

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Some people think that it is best to save money, for example in a bank or savings scheme. Other people feel that money should be spent whenever it is available. Discuss these views and reach an opinion on this debate.

Give reasons for your answer, and support your essay with ideas and examples from your own experience.

You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is our final example of an OPINION>DISCUSSION type task.

Model Essay 4

The question of whether to save or spend money is very topical today, as so many people are struggling with financial worries. There are valid arguments on both sides, which I will discuss now.

On the one hand, it is often said that spending money is one way to relax and enjoy life, for instance by shopping or taking holidays, and there is certainly some truth in this. In addition, we usually have no choice but to spend quite a large proportion of our available salary on day to day expenses such as food, housing and transport, and so there is surprisingly little remaining to save anyway. Finally, spending money on products and services boosts the economy and creates employment, and in this sense is a worthwhile action.

On the other hand, other people point out the dangers of reckless spending, for example on frivolous or unnecessary items, which is often encouraged by advertising. Young people in particular are vulnerable to being influenced like this. Furthermore, advocates of saving often point out that, without a reserve of funds for emergencies, unemployment or illness, people are putting themselves at risk of hardship or even bankruptcy. This is especially true in the current economic situation. Lastly on this side of the debate, people emphasise the need to accumulate wealth during one's lifetime, so that one's children can inherit money or property which will increase their security and standard of living.

Overall, I tend to agree that it is wiser to save money wherever possible, for reasons which benefit both individuals today and future generations.

(263 words.)

Examiner's comments

This is a Band 9 essay. As the examiner, it is immediately clear to me in the first paragraph that the writer is introducing an OPINION > DISCUSSION essay, which the task requires. The two sides of the topic are then discussed in logical paragraphs, with a series of simple examples to support each side. The linking phrases help to introduce each example (E.g. *On the one hand, in addition, finally,)* and they also show me the stages of the essay (E.g *Overall* to introduce the conclusion.) The English used is reasonably academic (E.g. *Large proportion, emphasize the need)* and the sentences are generally clear. The reader gets the impression that the writer is rational and well-informed, and able to discuss a topic objectively.

Example Task 5

You should spend about 40 minutes on this question.
It is better to save money than to spend it.

How far do you agree with this statement? Is saving more important than spending in today's world?

Give reasons for your answer, and provide ideas and examples from your own experience. You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is an OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT type task. It asks you to say how much you agree with an idea. You should state your opinion at the start, and then explain why you have this opinion, giving several logical reasons. You should briefly mention the opposing view as well. The conclusion should be a summary of your viewpoint.

Note that this type of essay is different from the OPINION > DISCUSSION type.

Model Essay 5

With the world in such economic turmoil, many of us face difficult choices in managing our money. Personally, I feel that saving is preferable to high spending, and I will explain why.

Firstly, saving money is a sensible precaution in a world where the future is uncertain. It is possible, for example, that a person might meet unemployment, ill health or other crises at some point in life. It is essential to have some funds in reserve for these situations, and saving is for most people the only way to achieve this. Furthermore, I believe that saving is itself a good discipline for people to develop, as it builds skills of planning and reaching targets. We can see this in the way that disciplined people build up quite large sums through small monthly contributions to savings plans. In many cases this meets important objectives in their lives, including large purchases such as cars or property. Finally, we have to remember the reasons for the current economic problems besetting the world. The crisis was caused by excessive spending and insufficient saving – not just by individuals, but by corporations and even governments themselves. I feel that an emphasis on sensible saving should be a universal strategy now.

I do appreciate that some people think differently, saying that it is better to live for the moment and spend accordingly. While some daily spending is essential, of course, I feel this is a potentially unwise viewpoint, especially considering recent global events.

To conclude, I believe that saving is the wiser course, not just for financial but also for personal and political reasons. Sensible saving is an invaluable skill and a buffer against uncertainty.

(279 words)

Examiner's comments

This would be a Band 9 essay. It exceeds the minimum word count and is organized in clear paragraphs. The writer introduces the topic briefly, and then states his/her viewpoint in the introduction. There are then three clear and logical reasons to justify the viewpoint, with some simple examples that can be understood by anyone with a general

awareness of the world. The opposing view is mentioned briefly, and then rejected, so the essay is not completely one-sided. The conclusion re-states the writer's opinion and summarizes without repeating details. The English is formal/academic, but not complicated. The choice of words is academic (e.g. *turmoil, insufficient, invaluable*) but still clear. There are clear linking phrases to guide the reader through the stages of the essay (e.g. *firstly, finally, to conclude.*)

Example Task 6

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

'Tourism is always a force for good which enables people of different countries to understand each other.'

To what extent do you agree with this idea?

You should give reasons for your answer, and include ideas and examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is another OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT type task. '*To what extent do you agree . . .?*' is the key phrase that tells you this. You should start by saying how much you agree with the statement, and then explain why you think this. You should briefly consider the opposing view, even though you then reject it.

Model Essay 6

The role of tourism in the world today is widely debated, with some people claiming that it is indeed a force for international understanding. However, I personally do not entirely accept this, and I will explain why in this essay.

Firstly, we must consider the potential negatives of contact between cultures. For example, when western tourists visit untouched parts of the world, their stay causes pollution for local societies. We see this in the litter left at Machu Picchu in Peru, and in the damage to ecology caused by safari tourism in Africa. Furthermore, there are numerous examples of tension between tourists and local cultures, ranging from drunken British tourists in Europe to American 'spring breakers' in Canadian or Latin American resorts. In these cases, tourism actually leads to resentment and distrust between nationalities, not better understanding.

A further reason to be wary of this idea is the economic aspect. It is sometimes said that tourism improves international relations because it encourages the flow of money from wealthy to less developed countries. In reality, however, the wealth generated usually stays in the hands of private companies or local officials, and rarely drips down into the population. Many of us have visited less developed nations as tourists, and have witnessed at first hand the poverty that exists outside the confines of the resort hotels. We leave with the impression that our stay has contributed nothing to the lives of those we have observed.

This is not to say that tourism is entirely bad, of course. There are benefits in terms of improving local infrastructure such as roads and airports. But to say that it is 'always a force for good' is to ignore the various problems it causes.

(289 words)

Examiner's comments

I would certainly give this essay a band 9 score. The writer answers the task completely, and makes his/her opinion clear in the introduction. The main body contains a series of clear reasons to justify this opinion, using examples which are relevant and accessible to the general reader. The writer mentions the opposing view briefly *('There are benefits in terms of improving local infrastructure such as roads and airports'*) so that the essay has some balance.

Example Task 7

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.
'We should introduce laws to make businesses and state services employ equal numbers of male and female workers in every department or area of the company.'
How far do you support this idea? Give reasons for your answer, and support your essay with ideas and examples from your own experience.
You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is another OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT type task. The instruction '*How far do you support this idea'* tells you this.

Model Essay 7

The issue of equality for men and women at work is still widely debated, despite the extensive legislation that now exists in many countries. Personally, I do not feel that imposing a numerical target for gender is a sensible idea, and I will explain why.

Firstly, we have to consider whether equal numbers of men and women really wish to do every job which is available. For example, few women wish to be airline pilots, and only a minority of school teachers are male. If we impose a law on airlines or schools, where will they find the people to fill these posts willingly? Furthermore, there is the huge issue of the existing workforce. Would it be right to dismiss a worker because he or she is of a certain gender, in order to create a statistically perfect balance? The effects would be disastrous for many hard-working people. Finally, I believe we should find ways to encourage equality of opportunity through support and guidance, rather than top-down legislation. For instance, improved child care facilities and subsidies would probably

encourage more women into parts of the workforce which may currently be difficult to enter.

I do understand the opposing view, which is that legislation is the quickest and most effective way to achieve gender equality. Nevertheless, I feel that the disruptive effects of 'overnight' legislation would destabilise society and hinder many people's prospects.

Overall, I believe that equality is an excellent goal for society to strive for. Above all, though, I think that this needs to be a gradual process, based on careful support rather than sudden legislation.

(267 words)

Examiner's comments

This essay would achieve Band 9. It is presented in a clear form, with obvious paragraphs to separate the introduction, main body, concession and conclusion. The writer shows that this is an OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT essay by introducing the topic and then giving his opinion in the first paragraph. The writer explains the opinion by giving three clear reasons, each one supported by an example which is readily understandable to a general reader.

Example Task 8

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

"Prison is the only truly effective form of punishment, because it separates criminals from society." To what extent do you support this view?

You should give reasons for your answer, and include ideas and examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is another OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT essay. The task may be phrased as *'How far do you support x/ To what extent do you support x/ In what ways do you agree with x'* or any similar wording. Be alert to the different possible ways that this can be expressed, and remember the difference between this type and the OPINION > DISCUSSION type task.

Model Essay 8

There is no doubt that we need to find effective forms of punishment for criminals, and also find ways to protect citizens from the threat of crime. I personally feel that prison is only one of a range of options we should use, and is not always the most effective.

Firstly, I do not accept that all criminals need to be separated from society. Juvenile and minor offenders can be punished through fines, community service or other non-custodial means. This is cheaper than prison, and prevents the damage to the criminal's

family which in itself could generate further social problems. Furthermore, by keeping these small-scale criminals in society, we can try to rehabilitate them, for example through training or education programmes. This will help to reduce re-offending in future.

Besides this, if offenders are believed to be a threat to their fellow citizens, there are ways of containing them such as electronic tagging, curfews or regular reporting to the police. Such methods have been shown to be effective in reducing criminal behaviour and are themselves quite a strong punishment, as they restrict an offender's freedom greatly. Finally, we should remember that prisons are to some extent 'schools of crime' and in many cases prisoners end their jail terms as more capable and determined criminals than when they entered.

Of course, it is true that in certain cases we need to both punish criminals and isolate them from other people. I recognise that violent or dangerous people need to be imprisoned – yet I believe this applies to a small minority of instances.

To conclude, I feel that prison is a last resort in cases where there is no alternative. This does not make it the only effective punishment, but rather the most severe among a variety of possibilities.

(290 words)

Examiner's comments

This meets the standard for a band 9 essay. The writer introduces the topic and then makes his/her opinion clear. The main body then contains a small range of reasons explaining this opinion, signposted with linking words (*e.g. Firstly, furthermore besides this, finally*) which guide the reader through the stages. The English used in the essay is academic but clear and modern. The writer shows that he has considered the opposing view briefly *('I recognise that violent or dangerous people need to be imprisoned . . .')* so that the essay has some balance. The reader feels that the writer is a logical thinker, able to organise ideas in support of his opinion.

IDEAS type tasks: Model essays

Example Task 9

You should spend about 40 minutes on this question.

Many people today are worried about 'cybercrime' such as hacking and identity theft. What problems does 'cybercrime' cause, and what solutions can you suggest for ordinary people and businesses to take?

Give reasons for your answer, and provide ideas and examples from your own experience. You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is an IDEAS > PROBLEM/SOLUTION type essay. It does **not** ask for your opinion about a topic, such as whether you think cybercrime is good or bad, or if you think it is important or not. It asks you to think of some *problems* in a situation, and suggest some *solutions* to these problems. In tasks such as this, you should introduce the topic, describe two or three problems, then offer two or three solutions, and then summarize in the final paragraph.

Remember, this is **not** an OPINION type task. You will lose marks if you give a strong personal opinion in this essay.

Model Essay 9

Cybercrime is a cause of widespread concern today, as so many people use technology to store and transmit sensitive data. There are a number of problems that people suffer as a result of these crimes, but also some straightforward measures we can take to protect ourselves.

Perhaps the worst problem stemming from this is the financial impact. If someone has his or her bank account emptied, or has false credit lines created under their name, they are potentially liable for large sums of money. Even if they can avoid the consequences, their bank or finance company has to cover the losses, which can damage their performance. A further problem is the way in which these stolen funds are used to subsidize other crimes, such as drug distribution or even terrorism. Once the money enters the criminal networks, we have no way of knowing how it will be used. Finally, there is the problem of anxiety and stress caused to the innocent victims of these crimes. The initial shock is often followed by months or years or legal wrangling, paperwork and a sense of insecurity.

Turning to possible solutions, probably the most effective measure is to improve personal security, ranging from passwords to the shredding of documents. This denies the criminals the raw materials to work with. Secondly, we should raise awareness of the risks among the elderly or the very young – two groups who are often specifically targeted – via publicity and public education. Ultimately, however, it is the financial companies who can make the greatest contribution, by increasing their security and detection systems – ideally in partnership with the police.

Overall, the problems caused are both financial and social, and the solutions should involve coordinated action by individuals, corporations and the state.

(288 words)

Examiner's comments

This would receive a Band 9 score. The essay is clearly organized into sections, within which there are linking words (e.g. *a further problem, Turning to, ultimately, overall*) which signpost the ideas. The writer describes three problems and then three solutions,

using relevant examples that do not rely on technical knowledge. The examples are presented in a variety of ways (e.g. *such as, ranging from/to.*)The English is fairly formal (e.g. *potentially liable, consequences, initial shock*) but always modern and clear. The essay describes a controversial subject without any bias or emotion, and no personal opinion is given.

Example Task 10

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Many people today are worried about young children using video games. What problems might these games cause, for children and society as a whole? How could these problems be reduced?

You should give reasons for your answer, and include ideas and examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is an IDEAS > PROBLEM/SOLUTION essay. It uses the word 'problems' clearly, and then asks for solutions in a paraphrased way ('*How could these problems be reduced?')*

Remember that the exact words '*problem'* and '*solution*' may not be used in the task; you must be alert to synonyms such as '*challenge*' and '*answer.'*

Model Essay 10

The almost universal availability of video games among children has presented us with a number of challenges and decisions, none of which are straightforward. I believe there are three main problems associated with these products, and also three remedies we can adopt.

Perhaps the major problem we need to deal with is the level of violence found in these games. Many of them feature aggressive or warlike characters, ranging from soldiers to criminals and killers. This inevitably leads children to believe that such behaviour is normal, or even desirable. A second issue is the obsessive way that some children use the games – for example, preferring their computers to real friendships, making these children isolated and socially naïve. Finally, there are physical effects from excessive gaming, including eye strain, insomnia and damage to posture. These can be difficult to reverse once they have taken hold.

Turning to possible solutions, one key step would be to legislate more strictly to control the content of these games. They could, for instance, be reviewed by censors in the same way that films are. This would prevent unsuitable material influencing young minds. To tackle the problem of obsessive use, we could make more counselling and advice available through schools. On the subject of physical side effects, advice on safe use could be included as part of the packaging or even the game itself, so that youngsters are constantly aware of the risks.

To sum up, this is a problem that has both social and physical effects, and the solution will require combined action by manufacturers, schools and authorities.

(261 words)

Examiner's comments

This essay would be marked at Band 9. The writer introduces the topic well, and makes it clear in the first paragraph that this will be an IDEAS > PROBLEM/SOLUTION essay. The ideas described are relevant and clear, without too much detail or technical description. The English used features some strong academic vocabulary (E.g. *desirable, obsessive, unsuitable)* and is clear to the general reader. The writer uses conditionals effectively (*could, would*) to propose ideas, showing that he has considered the outcomes of his suggestions.

Example Task 11

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

In many countries today, there are concerns about the unhealthy lifestyles that people lead. What health issues are linked to modern lifestyles? What answers to these problems can you suggest?

Give reasons for your answer, and support your essay with ideas and examples from your own experience.

You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is another IDEAS > PROBLEM/SOLUTION type task. '*Issues*' and '*answers*' are common synonyms for '*problems*' and '*solutions.*' You should think of two or three problems, and then a similar number of solutions. Remember, you do not need to have any specialist knowledge to discuss this topic. '*Your own experience*' means things you have read or seen in the media, whether in your own country or around the world.

Model Essay 11

Most people agree that modern lifestyles can be unhealthy, both physically and mentally. I believe there are three main problems, but also some practical steps we can take.

Perhaps the largest problem is the issue of obesity, which is growing drastically in most Western countries. With people working at desks and using transport rather than walking, weight gain seems inevitable, and being overweight causes various medical issues including heart trouble and strokes. Another major problem linked to lifestyle is poor diet, with people who are short of time eating junk food rather than proper nutrients. Resultant health problems range from obesity to high cholesterol and even organ failure. Finally, v

must consider the issue of mental health. Modern lifestyles are highly pressurised, with people expected to work at a fast pace for extended periods, and little scope for family life or relaxation, leading to enormous stress and anxiety.

Turning to possible solutions, the biggest step would be to improve the level of education regarding health issues connected to lifestyle, especially obesity. The government, media and schools should work together to raise awareness of the dangers and to promote sports and other positive practices. A further step would be to use legislation to curb the consumption of unhealthy foods, for example by imposing higher sales taxes or by restricting availability in retail outlets. Furthermore, to deal with the psychological impacts, we should encourage employers to adopt more flexible working practices, allowing workers to lead a fuller private life with less stress.

Overall, the key problems of obesity and stress can be addressed through a combination of awareness, targeted legislation and better employment practices.

9271 words)

Examiner's comments

This essay deserves a Band 9 score. The writer gives a brief introduction to the topic, and then gives three relevant examples of the problems, using generally available evidence. Each idea is introduced with a helpful linking phrase (*E.g. 'Turning to, furthermore.')* The writer suggests three sensible solutions, and considers their impact on the situation. The summary is brief but comprehensive, and paraphrases the main ideas well. The vocabulary used throughout the essay is modern and formal/academic in tone (*E.g. 'scope, inevitable, legislation.')*

Example Task 12

You should spend about 40 minutes on this question.

Having police officers patrolling the streets is often considered an essential way to reduce crime. How effective do you think police street patrols are? What other ways of reducing crime can you propose?

Give reasons for your answer, and provide ideas and examples from your own experience. You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is an IDEAS > EVALUATE type essay. It does not ask you to give an opinion about the principle of police patrols, but to consider how effective they are, and to suggest other ways to reduce crime. You should introduce the topic, then describe how effective you think patrols are, then propose two or three alternatives, then summarize.

Model Essay 12

We are all keen to reduce crime wherever possible, and the role of visible policing is a hotly debated part of this. Personally, I feel that street patrols are highly effective, although there are several supplementary methods too.

Regarding the effectiveness of patrols, evidence suggests that an increase in police on the streets leads directly to a drop in crime, especially crimes of violence and robbery. This was the experience of New York when it adopted the 'zero tolerance' policy in the 1990s, a high-profile policing tactic which has been extended successfully to many other cities worldwide. When compared to other tactics that have been tried, ranging from citizen patrols to CCTV, there is little doubt that assertive police patrolling is the most effective resource we have.

Turning to other methods, we should supplement police patrols with coordinated action elsewhere in the state. For instance, the courts should be prepared to issue deterrent sentences and prisons should be run strictly. This would help to deter people from committing crimes in the first place. Secondly, we should increase the resources available to the police away from the streets as well, for instance in detective and forensic departments, hopefully ensuring that detection rates are high when crimes do occur. Moreover, individuals and businesses should step up their own security arrangements to complement the police presence. For example, improved locks and lighting are simple measures which can reduce theft and burglary.

All in all, I feel that visible police patrols have been proved to be the most effective way to reduce common crimes. Their effectiveness can be maximized by supporting action from elsewhere in the police and justice system, and by private citizens doing their part as well.

(285 words)

Examiner's comments

This would be a Band 9 essay. The writer introduces the topic in an impersonal way, then gives his evaluation with reference to credible evidence and examples which support his assessment. The writer then describes several other measures and summarizes briefly. The English is academic and fairly formal, but the sentences are clear and the vocabulary is not over specialized. There are clear paragraphs for each section, and good use of linking words to move between points.

Example Task 13

You should spend about 40 minutes on this question.

Many countries today are experiencing high levels of migration from rural areas to cities. What are the causes of this trend, and what effects does it have on the existing city dwellers?

Give reasons for your answer, and provide ideas and examples from your own experience. You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task:

This is an IDEAS > CAUSE/EFFECT type essay. It asks you to think of some causes of the situation, and also some effects. It does not ask for your opinion about whether something is good or bad. You should introduce the topic, then describe two or three causes, then two or three effects. There should be a short summary at the end.

Model Essay 13

Migration from the countryside to cities is certainly a topical issue, as so many nations are seeing this pattern today. There are three main causes, and two key impacts, which I will outline now.

The main cause is probably the lack of employment available to rural people. Rural industries, ranging from agriculture to food production and animal breeding, have all been rationalized and made far more efficient in recent years, meaning that fewer people are needed to staff them. Furthermore, the growth of employment opportunities in the cities means that people, especially youngsters, are tempted to move there by higher wages and the prospect of reliable work. Finally, many countries still have a weaker infrastructure in rural areas, especially in terms of transport and economic activity. For example, if a country dweller is unable to find public transport to get to work locally, that person will inevitably consider moving to a city where the infrastructure is far better established.

Regarding the effects felt by the urban residents, perhaps the main impact is on accommodation. An increased urban population drives up the cost of buying or renting a home, leading to possible hardship for people who had assumed that prices would remain stable. We can see this clearly in major conurbations such as London, Sao Paolo or Delhi, where property prices are extremely high and continue to rise. The other main effect on the existing city population is the vastly increased competition for job opportunities, especially at a less skilled level. For instance, drivers, shop workers and hospitality staff find themselves competing for work with new arrivals who are often prepared to work for less. This can lead to a reduction in wages and consequent decline in standard of living, especially when combined with the increased cost of housing.

To sum up, the causes of this trend are primarily to do with employment, and the effects are felt in terms of wages and accommodation.

(312 words)

Examiner's comments

This is a Band 9 essay. The writer introduces the topic, and describes three causes using clear, academic language (e.g. *rationalized, employment opportunities, infrastructure.)* The examples given are clear and relevant, and do not rely on specialized knowledge. The writer uses a variety of structures and marks each point with linking words (e.g. *furthermore, finally, regarding, to sum up*.) The word count is the maximum that an examiner would be prepared to read.

Example Task 14

You should spend about 40 minutes on this question.

In many countries, financial crime involving identity theft is increasing. What are the causes of this trend, and what effect does identity theft have on the victims involved?

Give reasons for your answer, and provide ideas and examples from your own experience. You should write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

This is another IDEAS> CAUSE/EFFECT type essay. You should try to use examples and evidence that you know about from the media, press or Internet, but do not give personal stories about yourself or people you know.

Model Essay 14

There is no doubt that identity fraud is a great concern, especially in western countries where people are most at risk. I think there are two main causes, and a number of damaging effects.

The major cause is probably the almost universal use of digital technology to store financial data and undertake financial transactions. It is surprisingly easy for criminals to obtain personal information about a possible victim, and then to use this information to impersonate the target. Because bank accounts and loans can be applied for digitally, without the need for face-to-face contact, the criminals are able to apply for financial products remotely, often before the victim is even aware of the attack. The second key cause is, I believe, the increasing probability of 'traditional' crimes (such as armed robbery, mugging or burglary) being detected. When criminals see the widespread use of CCTV, DNA profiling and fingerprinting, they are less inclined to indulge in such old-fashioned crimes. Rather, they prefer the lower risk and more profitable use of data-based crimes.

The effects on the unfortunate victims can be quite devastating. Firstly, there is the loss of money from bank accounts or by being connected to a fraudulent loan. In some cases, this can take years for the victim to pay back or resolve with the banks and the authorities. Secondly, there is the damage to their credit rating, which means they may find it impossible to obtain legitimate credit in future. In extreme cases, people's employment prospects can even be damaged as well, as they find themselves profiled as a financial risk.

Overall, the presence of technology and the decline of 'traditional' crimes are the key causes behind this trend. The effects on the victims involve long-term financial hardship in many instances.

(293 words)

Examiner's comments

We would give this essay a Band 9 grade. The writer provides three causes of the situation and describes three effects, which is a suitable number of ideas in this type of

essay. The essay is clearly and logically organized into paragraphs, and linking phrases are effective (*E.g. 'Firstly, secondly, overall.'*) The writer uses vocabulary which shows a general understanding of the topic (*E.g. 'Financial transactions, fraudulent loan'*) and the examples given are not excessively regional or detailed. The reader feels that the writer can generate and present ideas clearly and logically.

Example Task 15

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Many people today find it difficult to balance the demands of their work and personal life. What are the causes of this situation, and what can individuals and employers do to reduce the problem?

You should give reasons for your answer, and include ideas and examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Explanation of the task

Occasionally, an IDEAS task may be a mix of PROBLEM/SOLUTION and CAUSE/EFFECT types. In this example, you are asked to think of some ideas about the causes of a situation, and then propose solutions. You should follow the same structure as for other IDEAS tasks, and give two or three causes, then two or three ideas about solutions (ways to '*reduce the problem*') and then summarise.

Note that the task requires you to talk about solutions from individuals and also from employers. You should check the task carefully to make sure you have understood any 'extra' requirements such as this. They are quite common in IDEAS type tasks.

Model Essay 15

Finding a compromise between one's job and one's private life is probably harder than ever these days, especially if one has a family. There are several reasons for this, but also a number of measures we can take.

Possibly the major factor is the increased workload that many people have to deal with. The predominance of the service sector means that most people work in office-related jobs, and they find that employers expect them to stay longer or be available outside traditional office hours. On top of this, the rise of communication tools – ranging from smart phones to laptops and teleconferencing equipment – has accelerated the trend, because people are always contactable. Furthermore, the economic recession has made the labour market increasingly competitive, and so workers are under pressure to cooperate in this process, fearing loss of promotion or even redundancy if they resist.

However, there are various steps that can be taken to lessen the problem. Firstly, individuals should clarify with their employer the times when they expect to be free of work and out of contact, thus ensuring private time. Another positive development would be for employers to allow more flexible working hours, so that staff can take time off for important family events during the working day. Lastly, employers could offer advice an

coaching to staff in areas such as time management, stress control and relaxation techniques. This would help to reduce the anxiety that stems from heavy workloads and long hours.

In summary, we can say that technology and economics are creating this situation, but also that employees and companies together can reduce the impact.

(268 words)

Examiner's comments

This essay reaches the criteria for band 9. The task is answered fully, with causes and solutions being described, and the writer discusses solutions regarding both individuals and employers. There are three ideas in each section, so the essay feels complete but not too detailed. The introduction guides the reader in what to expect, and the conclusion has a brief but effective summary. The language used is a very high quality academic style (E.g. *Possibly the major factor, various steps, has accelerated the trend.)* The tone is impersonal and unemotional, while also being persuasive.

Summary of the model essays

This completes the 15 model essays in this book. Please go back and read them again when you have time, paying special attention to the Examiner's Comments which show how the examiners will react to the essay you write. Remember that the examiners can only give you a high mark if you show the following in your essay:

You have **analysed and understood the task** itself

You make it clear **what type of essay** you are going to write

You **organise** the essay into logical **paragraphs**

You **avoid** personal **emotions** and personal **stories**

Your **English is modern and academic**, but not too technical or specialised

You use **linking phrases** to connect the stages of the essay

When you practise writing essays, ask yourself if you are doing these things all the time. By doing this, you can be sure of increasing your chances of a high grade.

Tasks for you to practice

Here are some are further examples of IELTS Academic Task 2 questions. Try to analyze each one, decide which type of essay it is, and then practice writing an essay in 40 minutes. There is a key on the next page of this book which explains which type each essay is.

Practice Task 1

Some people believe that a person's intelligence is inherited from the parents, while others believe that their environment is the main factor. Discuss these views. Which factor do you think is mostly responsible for intelligence?

Practice Task 2

Playing a musical instrument is one of the most important achievements for any child. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Practice Task 3

Analysts tell us that many people today feel stressed and think they have insufficient control over their lives. What problems do such feelings cause for people? What remedies could you suggest?

Practice task 4

It is generally agreed that fewer people today write letters (through the mail or post) compared with the twentieth century. What factors have led to this situation? What will the impact be on the lives of future generations?

Practice Task 5

Governments in many countries are urgently seeking ways to reduce unemployment in rural areas. What are the most effective ways to do this? Which measure do you think would be the single most effective step that governments could take?

Key to practice tasks

Practice Task 1 Key: This is an OPINION > DISCUSSION type task.

Practice Task 2 Key: This is an OPINION > PERSONAL VIEWPOINT type task.

Practice Task 3 Key: This is an IDEAS > PROBLEM/SOLUTION type task.

Practice task 4 Key: This is an IDEAS > CAUSE/EFFECT type task.

Practice Task 5 Key: This is an IDEAS > EVALUATE type task.

The 10 most common mistakes in IELTS academic writing

Using contractions (for example *'I don't think'* or '*We can't say')* **instead of the full form** (*'I do not think'* or '*we cannot say.'*) Never use contractions in academic writing.

Writing too few words. If you write much less than the required word count, the examiner has to reduce your score, even if your essay is good quality. You should count the number of words in your essay after each paragraph and keep a continuous total; this way, you can be sure of reaching at least 250 words in 40 minutes.

Writing too many words. The examiner is paid to mark on an 'essay per hour basis,' and so will not read the end of an essay if it exceeds the minimum word count by more than about 50 words. This means he or she will not see the end of your argument, and your score will reduce considerably. Remember: 250 words minimum, and about 300 words maximum in Academic task 2 writing.

Having handwriting that is difficult to read. IELTS is still a handwritten exam, and the examiners will not spend time trying to understand your writing. You must make sure that your handwriting can be read quickly. You should focus on writing clearly when you do your practice essays. Ask friends or other students to give you an honest opinion about whether your writing is easy to read.

Using informal words (for example 'a *nice* idea' or 'a *silly* thing to do') **instead of academic words** (for example 'a *positive* idea' or 'a *regrettable* thing to do.') Remember that academic vocabulary is different from the language you would use in English when talking to friends.

Giving personal opinion in an IDEAS type task. Check if the task is asking for your opinion or not. The first question you should ask yourself is '*Is this an OPINION or an IDEAS task?*'

Telling stories about your personal history, friends or family. The task tells you to use '*examples from your own experience*,' but this does **not** mean describing stories from your life or people you know. It means describing examples of things in the world that you know about, have studied or have learned about in the media.

Giving evidence which is too detailed or specific to a subject. You may be an expert in a particular social or scientific field, but the examiner probably has a different specialty. You need to make your ideas and examples accessible to a general reader. For

example, if the Task topic is about money and you are an accountant, do not use specialized accounting terms.

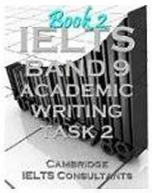
Being emotional or too dramatic when giving your opinion in an OPINION task. You may feel strongly about issues such as animals or crime, but academic writing must be unemotional. So avoid phrases such as '*a disgusting idea*' or '*I detest this concept.*' It is much better to say '*an unacceptable idea*' or '*I disapprove of this concept,*' which is more impersonal and academic; similar to the type of writing that people use in business reports or university essays.

Not following the basic structures presented in this book. The examiners want to see a clear, well-structured essay that is easy to read. They are accustomed to seeing the structures we have presented in this book, and they will feel more positive about your essay if they can recognize these structures in what you write. Remember: the *topic* under discussion will be different every time, but the basic concept behind the task and the essay will be the same. Give the examiners what they want, and they will reward you with a high score, even if there are some grammatical mistakes in your English.

Help from the experts

We hope you found this book useful.

Book 2 in this series has another fifteen Band 9 model essays, with example essay plans and examiner's notes, to help you get the best possible result in Task 2:



And don't miss our other IELTS advice books, which so many people have found useful in getting the Band score needed:

