IELTS Writing Test Task 2 Format, Skills and Teaching Methodology

SMALL, Lyndon*

Abstract

A description and explanation of the IELTS writing test task 2 precedes advice for answering topics and the skills required for test candidates to clearly express their opinions, ideas and examples from their experience. The advice is particularly relevant to first year or second year university students studying English in test preparation courses such as ESP, to enable them to progress from IELTS band 4 to band 5 and higher. Furthermore, TEFL practitioners should gain advice from this article to improve their IELTS test teaching methods. Related to this, there are numerous examples of common weaknesses in the writing style of native Japanese students so that with guided practice, both learners and teachers can work to avoid these. In addition, various types of writing topics, examples of paraphrase and the overall format of a written answer provide content for focused study and test practice.

1. Introduction

IELTS tests English language proficiency in the four macro skills, within frames set up to reflect common topics of communication in real-life situations. The information and advice in this article aim to help students at overall IELTS band 4 level progress to band 5 during a one-term university course of IELTS-focused lessons. Section 2 outlines the IELTS test and notes how it differs from other proficiency tests. The focal point of this article is a dissection of the writing test task 2, one of the most daunting sections of the IELTS exam. Section 3 explains the format for writing test task 2 and provides general advice to minimise features that can result in an IELTS writing score penalty. Following this is a description of IELTS writing 2 task question types and advice for test candidates about how to approach their answer. Next is specific advice for expressing opinions clearly, examples of appropriate topic paraphrase and suggestions for formatting an introduction. There are also comments about methodology related to various group discussion and writing activities with the intention that TEFL educators might incorporate these upon reflection and review of their own professional practice.

2. What is IELTS?

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS), has evolved since it

* Professor, General Education & Research Centre, Fukuoka University

was developed thirty years ago and has become one of the world's most prominent and reputable standardised English language tests. IELTS scores are recognised globally by over 10000 education and corporate organisations, with over 3.5 million examinations administered in 2018 (British Council, 2019a), (British Council, 2019b). A wide range of education institutions accept IELTS scores for study at secondary, tertiary undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as government departments, such as those that process study visas and immigration applications, and a host of corporate employers. Together, the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge Assessment English manage the IELTS Test.

To compare three of the prominent English tests, the TOEIC test is designed for business communication, the TOEFL test deals with classroom communication and the IELTS test comprises a choice of two streams, general, or academic English, which assess listening, reading, writing *and* speaking ability (Robbins, 2015). One of the strengths of the IELTS test is a face-to-face structured speaking interview of approximately 15 minutes that assesses, among other features, the prosody, lexical range and flexibility of each candidate. These interviews are recorded and then later reassessed by another IELTS examiner to monitor test score validity. Each macro-skill component of the IELTS test is assigned a proficiency rating on a scale called a band from 1 for a non-user to 9 for an expert user, equivalent to native speaker level of proficiency. An overall proficiency band score is also assigned.

3. IELTS writing test

The writing section of the IELTS test comprises two tasks to be completed within one hour. Task 1 requires candidates to describe or explain in at least 150 words a graph, chart, diagram or table of some kind. For task 2, the candidates explain their opinions in at least 250 words about one given topic. Both writing tasks are assigned a band score of 1~9, assessed according to 1. the task achievement; 2. the coherence and cohesion of the writing; 3. the lexical resource it demonstrates; and 4. the text's grammatical range and accuracy; see (public) marking rubric (British Council, n.d.; Exam English, 2019).

3.1 General writing advice

The following points offer general advice for IELTS writing tasks 1 and 2 to help test candidates minimise score penalties for poor writing skills. This advice is applicable to any writing test, not only for the IELTS test. The first point is that a candidate's handwriting must be legible. If an examiner has difficulty reading individual letters or the

spelling of whole words, a score penalty might result. Although everyone's style of handwriting differs, there are orthographic conventions for forming upper case and lower case letters of the Romanised alphabet. A primary effort of candidates, whatever they write, should be legibility. After all, a fundamental component of proficiency is to demonstrate the ability to clearly and correctly form all letters of the alphabet. Some problematic letter formations of Japanese students include lower case *a* resembling a rather curly number 2, *c* resembling *e*, *d* resembling *cl*, *e* resembling *o*, and *f* resembling *s*. Japanese students often write lower case *g*, *j*, *p*, *q*, and *y* above the base line instead of half above and below, which can create confusion between upper and lower case letters. A 'floating' lower case *g* strikes an examiner as odd and can detract from the overall quality of text. Other features of Japanese writers are capital *K* written as a lower case *k* and capital *T* that appears as a capital *J*. There is often little distinction between lower case *m* and *w*, *t* and *f*. Frequently, lower case *r* looks more like lower case *v*. This becomes obvious when writing words such as *river*, where letters that appear incorrectly similar can distract the reader and affect comprehension. Therefore, students should be expected to write clearly and according to the conventions of forming Roman letters.

Spelling errors will result in a score penalty, especially any words that can be copied from the test paper, for example from graph headings or axes labels in writing task 1, or from topics in task 2. Not only for pronunciation, but also for spelling, Japanese students often have trouble with words spelt with *l* and *r*. There is also occasional confusion between writing lower case *b* and *d*, *b* and *v*. Students also need to practice changing the capitalisation of headings and titles to lower case within sentences. Failure to do so will affect a candidate's band score.

3.2 Writing task 2

The writing task 2 format is shown in Table 1. Note these circumstances where score penalties apply as outlined by IELTS Liz (2019). Writing task 2 requires candidates to write at least 250 words. There is a penalty if the writing is too short (see IELTS Official, 2016). It is suggested that candidates write 260~280 words to avoid a penalty. In addition, failure to answer the question fully, despite otherwise suitable grammar, spelling and sentence structures results in a maximum score of band 5. If it appears that a candidate has memorised an answer, they receive a score of 0; refer Table 1.

Not only is there a wide range of possible writing topics, the types of questions and the way to formulate a response can vary, as indicated in Table 2 which shows eight

Table 1.

Format and Directions for IELTS Test Writing Task 2

Format	Directions
Timing advice	You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.
Topic	Write about the following topic. [topic]
Instructions	Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your knowledge or experience. Write at least 250 words.

typical question types. Therefore, candidates need to understand how to answer the specific kind of questions asked. Each topic essentially asks for a candidate's opinions with examples. Importantly, the questions might require candidates to express more than one opinion, discuss pros and cons, compare opposing views, or suggest solutions to a stated problem. In addition, throughout the essay, candidates should provide a minimum of one example to support each point they express. Three examples are ideal to demonstrate the lexical resource of the candidate. As IELTS Liz (2019) explains, the IELTS test does not score an answer for its level of reader interest. A skill as fundamental as listing vocabulary can really help to support a candidate's opinion and help to vary the style and structure of sentences.

The eight question types shown in Table 2 are indicative of those in task 2, but as there is only one writing topic in each IELTS task 2 test, candidates should be familiar with how to approach answering each sort of topic. A homework activity could be for students to translate the information in Table 2. In a following lesson, students could work in small groups with their translations and match examples of Task 2 question types. A suggested number of questions is twenty so that students can also see the range of topics that appear on the IELTS exam; see Appendix. Such an activity requires students to actively discuss with each other the skills and approach each question requires. For examples of Task 2 question types, see British Council (2019c); IELTS Buddy (2019); IELTS Exam-Net (2019); IELTS Ninja (2019); refer Table 2.

3.3 Starting an answer

At first, candidates should spend a few minutes to carefully examine the different parts of the topic, to identify key words for paraphrase and discussion and to form a rough

Table 2.

IELTS Writing Task 2 Question Types and Answer Skills

Type of Topic	Perspective and Skills required for Appropriate Answer
1. Direct question topic	What is your opinion of the question presented? The reasons why I believe this are 1, 2, 3...
2. Agree/disagree	I agree with the opinion of the topic. The reasons why I agree are 1, 2, 3... [OR] I disagree with the opinion of the topic. The reasons why I disagree are 1, 2, 3...
3. Extent of (dis)agreement	I somewhat (OR) I completely (dis)agree with the opinion of the topic. The reasons why I (dis)agree are 1, 2, 3...
4. Advantages/disadvantages	State some good/positive things about the topic and state some bad/negative things about the topic. What is your overall opinion about the topic?
5. Choosing one view/ perspective	State which (one) view you believe and explain the reasons why.
6. Topics assuming one view/ perspective	You do not need to agree with the view presented, but you should state the reasons why you agree or disagree with it.
7. Discussing two views/ perspectives	You should give some information about both views in the topic. What is your overall opinion about the topic?
8. Problems and solutions. Topics with multiple questions	You should answer *each* of the questions asked about the topic *and* you should also explain the ideas you have to solve the problems mentioned.

plan for their answer. This is clearly explained and reiterated in Oxford Online English (2018a). For instance, assuming a candidate must agree or disagree with (the essence of) a topic such as 'watching television is bad for children', they need to discuss the key points 'watching television', 'bad' and 'children'. In what ways is watching television 'bad'? For balance, what are the good things about children watching television? Are there any other activities that are 'bad' for children? What age range is relevant for this

topic? In Japan, children become adults at the age of twenty. However, it is more likely that this topic relates to (very) young children and the effects that watching television can have on them. When discussing their opinions, the candidate should clarify the age range of the 'children' to which they refer.

As a majority of first year and second year university students are at band 4 level, a suggestion is to show an example of band 5 or 6 writing. This can also be compared with examples from band 4, so that with structured practice and review, students can see how to improve their proficiency. For a lesson or homework activity, students could check an internet resource and listen to the advice of test experts, pausing for review and checking for comprehension. One such video explains the reasons for a band 5 score for a topic on the advantages and disadvantages of international tourism (IELTS Official, 2016). Using this video as a study resource could be useful for students to see the overall marking criteria as well as examples and explanation of written errors so that they can understand what kinds of lexical and syntactic features gain a band 5 score. A different video reviews the correction of a topic about waste food (E2 IELTS, 2019). Although the writing sample in this video is somewhat complex and advanced for students at IELTS band 4, it is useful for them to see the (public) IELTS band descriptors, (see also British Council, n.d.) how the writing is scored and why in this case, the sample was assessed at level 6.5.

One of the common mistakes that students make is to begin their answer as though they were casually talking to another speaker. They often begin by stating: 'Yes, I think (so)'; 'Yes, I agree'; 'I think so too'; or 'I agree (with) this opinion'. This is an ineffective way to begin writing as there is no prior contextual reference. Another frequent mistake is for students to state 'I agree (with) this problem', which is an incorrect collocation. What they mean to write is something such as 'I somewhat (or) strongly agree that ... is a problem.' It is the accuracy, clarity and cohesion of what they write, not their intended meaning that is scored. Therefore, it is crucial for students to practice how to express their opinion clearly from the start of their reply and then throughout the writing task.

Let's consider some of the common thought processes and answer styles for an imagined topic about fairness. Students most often think only in terms of agree/disagree, when a more appropriate answer style for this topic is to discuss two views:

> There are often great differences between the amount of money that professionals and sports players earn. It is not fair that sports players earn so much when professionals must study hard to get their jobs and work very long

hours. Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your knowledge or experience.

For this topic, when students read '...examples from your knowledge or experience', they often want to write about their favourite sport and player/s. They usually go off on a tangent that does not suitably address the topic, with comments such as 'I like baseball', 'Soccer players are rich', or 'Sports players don't earn too much money'. To provide a satisfactory answer for this topic, students need to directly explain whether they think it is *fair* that sports players earn the money they do. The topic is not only about sports players though and so students should also state examples of 'professionals'. They should compare the income of athletes such as swimmers and runners with that of tennis and football players, for instance. They should also provide examples to compare various professions as evidence of their lexical range. A suitable answer for this topic would discuss the fairness of the income earned when comparing sports players and professionals and also consider the ways in which both groups work 'very long hours'.

3.4 Paraphrase

There is conflicting advice as to whether candidates can simply write 'I think' and then copy information directly from the topic. Although this might form a technically correct sentence, it is an overly conservative approach. Moreover, IELTS Official (2016) explains that copied text is ignored by an examiner and is not counted in the total number of words therefore risking a band score penalty for writing less than 250 words. The advice here is that candidates should not copy directly from the topic but paraphrase key points. Oxford Online English (2018) explains some issues about paraphrasing a topic in an introduction. The first is that the IELTS writing task 2 scoring criteria does not include topic paraphrase in the introduction. Another point is that paraphrase does not just mean vocabulary substitution with synonyms and that this is a perilous strategy to attempt. It is explained that there are few true synonyms in English and that 'vocabulary usage depends on more than just meaning. Register and collocation are equally important' (Oxford Online English, 2018).

Paraphrase though, is a necessary and useful speaking and writing skill to teach and actively practice. If candidates simply copy from the test paper, the examiner initially has little information about their ability to understand the topic. Therefore, from the first sentence, students should practice how to accurately paraphrase in various forms, using simple language to clearly demonstrate their topic comprehension. Table 3 features six examples of topics and various ways candidates can paraphrase and express their meaning

(Small, 2017). Some key words in each topic and example sentence are underlined to focus reader attention; refer Table 3.

Table 3.

Examples of IELTS Writing Task 2 topic Paraphrase

	Example IELTS Writing Task 2 Topic	Example Topic Paraphrase
1	<u>The tax</u> on fast food should be higher because it is unhealthy.	It is not necessary <u>to tax</u> fast food in my opinion.
2	<u>Smoking</u> should be banned from <u>all</u> public places.	I believe (that) we shouldn't <u>smoke</u> in <u>most</u> public places.
3	<u>Domestic travel</u> has less <u>dangers</u> than travelling <u>overseas</u>.	I somewhat agree that compared to travelling <u>in Japan</u>, it can be <u>dangerous to visit</u> some countries <u>abroad</u>.
4	<u>Watching</u> television is <u>bad</u> for children.	In my opinion, some television shows are <u>not suitable</u> for children <u>to watch</u>.
5	<u>There is no way to stop</u> global warming.	I completely disagree that <u>we cannot stop</u> global warming.
6	<u>Companies</u> should not <u>expect</u> their <u>staff to work</u> on <u>public holidays</u>.	I don't think that <u>firms</u> should <u>require</u> their <u>workers</u> to be <u>on duty</u> on <u>national holidays</u>.

In examples 1 and 2, the part of speech changes from a noun to a verb. An additional example of paraphrase and of lexical flexibility could be the synonymity between the forms 'it is not necessary' and 'it is unnecessary'. The use of 'in Japan' demonstrates that the writer knows the meaning of 'domestic' in example 3, where the noun 'dangerous' changes to an adjective and 'abroad' replaces 'overseas' to express the same meaning. Possible alternative vocabulary could be 'foreign (or) other countries', or 'countries in (region)'. Similarly, vocabulary is substituted in example 4, where 'not suitable' replaces 'bad' and there are five lexical substitutions in example 6; refer Table 3.

Examples of the types of paraphrase in Table 3 are also provided by IELTS Liz (2018). As an individual or group activity, students can practice paraphrase by completing close exercises, where the missing information is the underlined vocabulary on the right side of Table 3. The teacher can also write a hint after the sentence such as [verb] to guide the students. Another exercise is to print the paraphrased sentences in a very large font

size and then cut them into individual words. In groups, students can rearrange the words to form sentences and then copy these on a worksheet similar to the style of Table 3. Based on these, they can then practice forming and writing their own opinions about other topics. For instruction and teacher feedback, one approach easy for students to understand when explaining paraphrase and lexical substitution, is to describe content as 'low score' or 'high score'. For students at IELTS band 4, assessment can focus on paraphrasing sentences about different topics to show clear opinions. Even learners whose English writing skill or motivation is poor will likely be able to attempt writing individual sentences. This is a more realistic expectation and far less daunting than requiring a 250-word, more structured, developed and coherent answer on just one topic.

3.5 Introduction length

IELTS Liz (2014) suggests an introduction of between 35~50 words and the example she gives comprises three sentences, with a total of 35 words. Similarly, Oxford Online English (2018a) suggests that it is quite acceptable to write a brief introduction, as long as it includes one's overall considered opinion and informs the reader where the answer is heading. In fact, the introduction should give a hint as to the content of the conclusion. The example provided is two sentences, with a total of 32 words.

E2 IELTS (2019) states that 'the writing *always* begins with a neutral sentence'. A problem with this approach is that students sometimes write a cliched, overgeneralised sentence which does not contribute to the opinion of their answer. An example would be something such as: 'There are many problems in the world'. Starting with a neutral sentence is probably better for a candidate aiming for a band score of 6 or higher who has developed the skill of linking a clear opinion in the second sentence to complement or contrast with an idea set up in the first sentence. The example introduction (E2 IELTS, 2019) features a total of 47 words with a neutral sentence, a sentence to paraphrase the topic question and a final sentence to inform the reader of the two ideas for discussion in the body.

For more advanced learners, Oxford Online English (2018b) shows an introduction with 68 words composed of two rhetorical questions and followed by one sentence. It is not recommended to teach band 4 students to begin with a question, as they may think it is appropriate to write something such as 'Do you know...?' which is unlikely to contribute any worthwhile content to the opinion of the essay.

Overall, perhaps the most effective way to teach and assess writing task 2 for band 4 students is to focus on topic analysis and writing an introduction that first clearly states

an opinion to answer the question/s asked and then clearly states the general content the candidate intends to discuss in the essay. On the real IELTS test time is precious and candidates need to realise the importance of test time management, first making an essay plan. Furthermore, it is also vital that candidates decide how their essay will conclude before they begin writing their introduction.

3.6 'Lower score' and 'higher score' band score descriptor examples

This section provides some comments and advice relating to the four categories of (public) band score descriptors: task achievement; coherence and cohesion; lexical resource; and grammatical range and accuracy (British Council, n.d.). It follows the content of section 3.4 with advice for students to help them achieve a higher band score. The first comments relate to two marking criteria: grammatical range and accuracy; and lexical resource. A predominant error of Japanese students is to say or write '...is/was same' instead of 'is/was *the* same'. Such an error can limit a student to band 4 or perhaps band 5, especially if combined with poor 'lower score' lexical choices, e.g. 'price was same' as opposed to 'the price remained steady', which could feature in band 6 or higher. Students should be advised to study multi-word expressions as single lexical units and to reinforce this, it should help them to write these in brackets, e.g. [the same]. In addition, more complex sentences will gain a higher score, such as those using relative clauses. At band 4, these are rarely used and at band 5 they are attempted, but perhaps with errors. Proficiency becomes more evident at band 6 with the practice of longer, more complex sentences, including those featuring relative pronouns.

Next are some comments concerning lexical resource. Students need to be aware that the lexical items they choose directly reflect their proficiency. The following two examples illustrate the difference between semantically comparable 'higher score' and 'lower score' vocabulary: 'a majority of'/'most'; and 'fluctuate'/'up and down'. In addition, to reiterate the benefits of paraphrase from section 3.4, the teacher can provide focused practice of variation in word form. For instance, using the adjective 'problematic' demonstrates a 'higher score' lexical range than repeating the noun 'problem'. Yet another feature of lexical resource that will help students to gain a higher band score is to include a range of adjectives. However, students should avoid 'low score' lexical items such as 'big/small', 'good/bad', 'happy/sad' and instead use 'higher score' adjectives. These are often (strong) collocations such as 'breathtaking + scenery/view/mountains', 'mouth-watering + delicacies/cuisine/dishes/desserts', or 'lush + forest/green/field'. Loose collocations can also be formed with 'high score' adjectives, including 'suitable +

time/clothes/weather', 'memorable + day/book/experience', or 'contemporary + art /music/building'. Of course, not all collocations are an adjective + noun construction, but it would be difficult to achieve a band score of more than 4 without using adjectives, which are a very important component of lexical resource.

In terms of coherence and cohesion, Japanese students often overuse 'so' in speaking and writing, not only as an intensifier, e.g. so big, but also to begin sentences. This can be part of an individual's discourse style, but students need to be made aware to take care using it and to substitute it with 'therefore' in many cases. Inappropriate use, such as overuse or incorrect meaning, will detract from spoken and written coherency and cohesion.

Some final comments relate to task achievement, which can be directly influenced by aspects of Japanese culture and discourse style, such as conformity, consensus and avoidance of conflict. Such elements often feature in student responses to task 2 topics. For example, Japanese students are far more likely to write 'I think' and 'I agree' rather than 'I don't think' and 'I don't agree'. When a topic asks for solutions to a problem, students often reply without specific advice, but instead with vague suggestions such as 'we should solve these problems'. An important and valuable skill of answering some topics is to argue *against* particular ideas and teachers should explain that this skill is not only (culturally) acceptable in English, but in some cases, is also required to fulfil the criteria for task achievement.

4. Reflecting on IELTS

Based on formal IELTS examiner training, testing experience and that of teaching IELTS test ESP courses for nearly 20 years, I have two main comments about the English proficiency band levels of first year and second year university students from a range of faculties. Firstly, it seems that there is a relatively small percentage of overall band 3 (or lower) and band 6 (and higher) level students. Secondly, most students demonstrate English proficiency at overall band 4 level and those who engage in active study and practice throughout a one-term course of IELTS-focused lessons often progress to band 5. It is important to state that official band scores for an IELTS Test candidate indicate that they have demonstrated their ability to fulfil *all* components of that particular band. Additionally, there is an implication that they might also demonstrate features of a higher band, but not yet all of them. It is not entirely accurate to say that students stagnate at a band level, but rather, with continued practice and confidence, their English proficiency can become consolidated within a band level. Instead of aiming for fluency, it is a more

realistic goal for students to feel satisfied that they can understand what the various IELTS test tasks require them to do and to be motivated enough to think about various language forms and functions. Unlike other tests with no contextual theme that rely on unrelated multiple-choice responses, the IELTS test assesses the proficiency of learners within topic frames, requiring them to develop and practice listening, reading, writing and speaking skills useful for communication within the context of a wide range of everyday situations.

Rather than mention IELTS band scores, course assessment should be explained to students in the context of their university's system of credit. For instance, an averaged score of four points out of a total of ten for any form of IELTS test assessment would probably convert to an overall score high enough to pass a university-level English course. This perspective of scoring should be a motivating factor for students to try achieving more than a minimum, 'safe' score.

5. Conclusion

When planning for a balance in teaching and assessing all IELTS tasks, there are only three or four lessons to cover each of the macro-skills in a 15-week course. Because there are two different writing tasks on the IELTS test, it is recommended to spend at least two lessons on each of them. This does not allow a great amount of time to offer students comprehensive advice to satisfactorily complete each task fully. Writing task 2 initially seems to be a formidable challenge. However, if practice focuses on paraphrasing sentences about different topics to show clear opinions and students can at least write an introduction of two or three sentences, the overall assessment can be less discouraging for them. In class, studying in pairs and groups to discuss ideas can help to create a lower-stress supportive learning environment. The study of lexical range and accuracy can be done with focused, sentence-writing exercises. This approach will be more manageable and motivating than expecting students to write whole paragraphs and essays, which could be conducted if more lesson time was devoted to doing so.

References
British Council, (2019a). Take IELTS, Study and work abroad. Retrieved from
　　　https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/study-work-abroad
British Council, (2019b). Take IELTS, IELTS grows to 3.5 million a year. Retrieved
　　　from https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/about/press/ielts-grows-three-half-million-
　　　year
British Council. (2019c). Academic Writing – task 2. Retrieved from

https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-ielts-practice-
tests/writing/academic/task-2

British Council, (n.d.). IELTS Task 2 writing band descriptors (public version).
Retrieved from https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/ielts_task_2
_writing_band_descriptors.pdf

E2 IELTS. (2019, February 14). *IELTS Writing Task 2 - Super Strategy! with Alex*
[Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbNVbIA8Os0

Exam English. (2019). IELTS Writing Mark Schemes. Retrieved from
https://www.examenglish.com/IELTS/IELTS_Writing_MarkSchemes.html

IELTS Buddy. (2019). IELTS Writing Questions. Retrieved from
https://www.ieltsbuddy.com/ielts-writing-questions.html

IELTS Exam-Net. (2019). IELTS Sample essays (IELTS Writing Task 2).
Retrieved from https://www.ielts-exam.net/ielts_writing_samples_task_2/

IELTS Liz. (2014, September 4). *IELTS Writing Task 2: How to write an introduction*
[Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YngqHl_BLOU

IELTS Liz. (2019). IELTS Writing Penalty for Being Under Words. Retrieved from
https://ieltsliz.com/ielts-penalty-for-writing-under-word-count/

IELTS Ninja. (2019). 5 Recent IELTS Writing Task 2 Exam Questions [And Answers
To Target Band 9]. Retrieved from https://ieltsninja.com/content/ielts-writing-task-
2-questions/

IELTS Official. (2016, October 10). IELTS Writing Test (Task 2) Band 5 [Video File].
Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O50yp4u-yBE

Oxford Online English. (2018a, May18). *IELTS Essay - How to Write an Introduction
(Using Paraphrasing)* [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com
/watch?v=kvLWEYLvzYU

Oxford Online English (2018b, October 19). *IELTS Essay - Tips to Write a Good IELTS
Writing Task 2 Essay.* [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com
/watch?v=HR7YE7oDWCE

Robbins, J. (2015, July 22). Learning English, TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC? Comparing
the tests. VOAnews. Retrieved from https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/toefl-
ielts-toeic-comparing-the-tests/2873821.html

Small, L. (2017, February). Paraphrase Writing Practice. Oral presentation at the
CamTESOL 13th Annual CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching.
Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Appendix
Example IELTS Writing Task 2 Types and Topics

1. Direct question topic

a. Is freedom of speech necessary in a free society?

b. Do you think people can be happy without much money?

2. Agree/disagree

a. Employers should give longer holidays to employees to encourage them to do their job well. Do you agree?

b. Professional sports players earn too much money. Do you agree?

3. Extent of (dis)agreement

a. In today's job market it is far more important to have practical skills than theoretical knowledge. In the future, job applicants may not need any formal qualifications. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

b. Modern communications mean that it's no longer necessary to write letters. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

4. Advantages and disadvantages

a. Tourism is encouraged in many countries. Does tourism bring more advantages or disadvantages to a country?

b. In order to solve traffic problems, governments should tax private car owners heavily and use the money to improve public transportation. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a solution?

5. Choosing one view/perspective

a. Many childhood diseases can now be prevented through the use of vaccines. Should parents be made by law to immunise their children against common diseases or should individuals have the right to choose not to immunise their children?

b. Many newspapers and magazines feature stories about the private lives of famous people. We know what they eat, where they buy their clothes and who they love. We also often see pictures of them in private situations. Is it appropriate for a magazine or newspaper to give this kind of private information about people?

6. Topics assuming one view/perspective

a. Some students tend to play computer games rather than do sports. Why is this? What can be done to tackle the problem?

b. As the number of private cars has increased, so too has the level of pollution in many cities. What can be done to tackle this increasingly common problem?

7. Discussing two views/perspectives

a. Some people think that modern technology is making people more sociable, while others think it is making them less sociable. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

b. A growing number of people feel that animals should not be exploited by people and that they should have the same rights as humans, while others argue that humans must employ animals to satisfy their various needs, including uses for food and research. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

8. Problems and solutions. Topics with multiple questions.

a. Motorways help people travel quickly and cover long distances but they also cause problems. What are the problems of motorways and what solutions are there?

b. Developed countries have created many environmental problems in the world, particularly in their contribution to global warming. Why is global warming a problem? What can be done to reduce the dangers of global warming?

British Council (2019c); IELTS Buddy (2019); IELTS Exam-Net (2019); IELTS Ninja (2019).