

ESTERMA ACADEMY

IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING TASK 2

LESSON 1

OPINION ESSAYS

Question analysis - Planning - Thesis statements - Body paragraphs - Conclusions - Academic language

Learning Goal

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to analyse an opinion prompt, state a clear position, organise a logical essay, develop relevant ideas, and edit your response using the four IELTS Writing assessment criteria.

A bridge to your dreams

1. Understanding IELTS Writing Task 2

In IELTS Academic Writing Task 2, you respond to a point of view, argument, or problem in essay form. You should write at least **250 words**. A practical time target is about **40 minutes**, because Task 2 contributes twice as much as Task 1 to the Writing score.

The Four Assessment Criteria

Criterion	What it rewards
Task Response	Answering all parts of the prompt, maintaining a clear position, and developing relevant ideas with support.
Coherence & Cohesion	Logical organisation, clear progression, effective paragraphing, and natural connections between ideas.
Lexical Resource	Range, precision, appropriacy, spelling, word formation, and natural collocation.
Grammatical Range & Accuracy	A useful range of sentence structures used accurately, with controlled grammar and punctuation.

Important

Do not memorise a fixed essay and force it onto the question. IELTS rewards a response that directly addresses the specific prompt and develops relevant ideas.

What Is an Opinion Essay?

An opinion task asks you to take a position on a statement. Common instructions include **To what extent do you agree or disagree?** or **Do you agree or disagree?** Your job is not simply to discuss the topic. Your position must be clear and sustained throughout the response.

Example prompt

Prompt

Some people believe that universities should focus only on subjects that are useful for future employment. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

This prompt requires a position on the word **only**. A strong response should therefore explain not just whether employability matters, but whether universities should exclude broader academic subjects.

2. Analyse the Question Before You Write

Strong essays begin with accurate question analysis. Before planning examples or vocabulary, identify exactly what the statement claims and what the instruction asks you to do.

A Four-Step Analysis

- 1. Identify the topic** - What broad issue is being discussed?
- 2. Find the controlling words** - Words such as *only*, *all*, *always*, *more important*, *should*, or *best* can change the argument.
- 3. Read the instruction** - Are you being asked for your opinion, both views, causes, solutions, or an evaluation of advantages and disadvantages?
- 4. Decide your position** - Choose a position you can explain clearly with two strong reasons.

Exam Strategy

Underline the key claim and the instruction. Then rewrite the question in your own words before planning. This reduces the risk of writing a fluent essay that does not fully answer the task.

Possible Positions

For an agree/disagree prompt, you may fully agree, fully disagree, or take a qualified position. The important point is that the reader can identify your position easily and that your body paragraphs support it consistently.

Position A: I completely disagree because universities have educational purposes beyond immediate employment.

Position B: I largely agree that employability should be prioritised, but universities should still preserve some broader academic study.

Position C: I completely agree because limited university resources should be directed toward labour-market needs.

Avoid

Do not choose a 'balanced' position merely because it sounds academic. A nuanced position is useful only when you can state it clearly and defend it consistently.

Mini Practice

Prompt: *Governments should make public transport free in order to reduce traffic congestion. To what extent do you agree or disagree?*

Write one sentence stating your exact position and two short reasons that could become body paragraphs.

3. Planning a Clear Four-Paragraph Essay

There is no single compulsory paragraph formula for IELTS, but a clear four-paragraph structure is efficient for many opinion essays. The structure should serve your argument rather than become a memorised template.

Paragraph	Purpose
Introduction	Paraphrase the issue and state a clear thesis/position.
Body Paragraph 1	Develop your first main reason with explanation and a relevant example.
Body Paragraph 2	Develop your second main reason with explanation and a relevant example.
Conclusion	Restate your position and summarise the central logic without adding a new main idea.

Planning Example

Prompt

Some people think that secondary schools should require every student to learn basic financial skills. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Position: Strongly agree.

Body 1: Financial decisions affect almost every adult; school can provide essential knowledge before students begin earning or borrowing.

Body 2: Not all families can teach budgeting, credit, and saving; school instruction can reduce inequality in access to practical knowledge.

Example ideas: comparing loan costs, understanding interest, creating a monthly budget. These are realistic examples; invented research statistics are unnecessary.

5-Minute Planning Rule

A short plan can save time later. Decide your thesis, two main ideas, and one supporting example for each body paragraph before writing full sentences.

Development Test

For every body idea, ask: **Why is this true? How does it affect people? Can I give a relevant example?** If you cannot answer these questions, the idea may be too weak or too broad.

4. Writing the Introduction

An effective introduction is usually concise. It establishes the topic and makes your position immediately clear. You do not need a dramatic hook, quotation, dictionary definition, or memorised background sentence.

Step 1: Paraphrase the Issue

Change the wording and, where natural, the grammatical structure. Do not replace every word with a synonym; awkward paraphrasing can reduce clarity and lexical accuracy.

Prompt idea: Secondary schools should require all students to learn basic financial skills.

Natural paraphrase: There is growing support for making practical financial education a compulsory part of secondary schooling.

Step 2: State Your Thesis

Your thesis should answer the question directly. It can also preview the logic of your essay.

Clear thesis: I strongly agree with this proposal because financial literacy is essential for adult life and formal instruction can ensure that all students receive this knowledge.

Weak Thesis

This essay will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of financial education. - This does not answer an agree/disagree question and does not state a position.

Model Introduction

Example

There is growing support for making practical financial education a compulsory part of secondary schooling. I strongly agree with this proposal because young people need these skills before entering adult life, and schools can provide access to financial knowledge that may not be available at home.

Why it works: the first sentence frames the issue; the second gives an unmistakable position and previews two body-paragraph ideas.

5. Building Strong Body Paragraphs

A body paragraph should do more than present a topic sentence. It should develop one central idea logically. One useful sequence is **Point -> Explain -> Develop -> Example -> Link**. This is a planning tool, not a rigid sentence formula.

Body Paragraph 1 - Model

Point: The strongest reason to teach financial literacy at school is that students will soon face decisions with long-term consequences.

Explain and develop: After leaving school, many young adults must manage income, rent, borrowing, and savings, yet these choices can be difficult without an understanding of interest rates or budgeting. Learning such concepts before financial independence would allow students to evaluate costs more carefully and avoid preventable mistakes.

Example: For instance, a student who understands compound interest is better equipped to compare borrowing options and recognise why a low monthly payment may still result in a high total cost.

Body Paragraph 2 - Model

Point: Compulsory lessons could also make access to practical financial knowledge more equal.

Explain and develop: Some teenagers learn about saving, taxes, or responsible borrowing from family members, while others receive little guidance. If schools include these topics in the curriculum, students' financial preparation is less dependent on their home circumstances.

Example: A classroom activity in which students create a realistic monthly budget can give every learner experience of balancing essential expenses with savings and discretionary spending.

Task Response Check

Relevant examples do not need to be impressive. Their purpose is to make the reasoning clearer and more specific. Avoid unsupported invented statistics or references to imaginary studies.

Paragraphing Principle

Keep one clear central topic in each body paragraph. If a paragraph starts discussing several unrelated reasons, development usually becomes shallow and coherence suffers.

6. Conclusions and Academic Language

A conclusion should close the argument, not restart it. Restate your position in fresh language and summarise the main logic. Do not introduce a new major reason that has not been developed in the body.

Model Conclusion

Example

In conclusion, I strongly support compulsory financial education in secondary schools. It can prepare young people for important real-world decisions while ensuring that practical financial knowledge is not limited to students who happen to receive guidance at home.

Useful Language for Opinion Essays

Purpose	Useful options
State a position	I strongly agree that... / I largely disagree with... / In my view,...
Add a reason	A further reason is that... / Another important consideration is...
Explain	This is because... / This means that... / As a result,...
Give an example	For example,... / For instance,... / A clear example of this is...
Qualify	Although... / While it is true that... / This does not mean that...
Conclude	Overall,... / In conclusion,... / For these reasons,...

Use Linking Language Naturally

Coherence is not created by filling every sentence with linking words. Relationships between ideas should be logical, and cohesive devices should be used accurately rather than mechanically.

Vocabulary Principle

Aim for precise, natural vocabulary rather than unnecessarily rare words. Topic-specific collocations such as *financial literacy*, *responsible borrowing*, *long-term consequences*, *practical knowledge*, and *household budget* are more useful than forced 'advanced' synonyms.

7. Full Model Essay

Task

Some people think that secondary schools should require every student to learn basic financial skills. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

There is growing support for making practical financial education a compulsory part of secondary schooling. I strongly agree with this proposal because young people need these skills before entering adult life, and schools can provide access to financial knowledge that may not be available at home.

The strongest reason to teach financial literacy at school is that students will soon face decisions with long-term consequences. After leaving school, many young adults must manage income, rent, borrowing, and savings, yet these choices can be difficult without an understanding of interest rates or budgeting. Learning such concepts before financial independence would allow students to evaluate costs more carefully and avoid preventable mistakes. For instance, a student who understands compound interest is better equipped to compare borrowing options and recognise why a low monthly payment may still result in a high total cost.

Compulsory lessons could also make access to practical financial knowledge more equal. Some teenagers learn about saving, taxes, or responsible borrowing from family members, while others receive little guidance. If schools include these topics in the curriculum, students' financial preparation is less dependent on their home circumstances. A classroom activity in which students create a realistic monthly budget, for example, can give every learner experience of balancing essential expenses with savings and discretionary spending. This would make financial education both practical and widely accessible.

In conclusion, I strongly support compulsory financial education in secondary schools. It can prepare young people for important real-world decisions while ensuring that practical financial knowledge is not limited to students who happen to receive guidance at home.

Why This Essay Is Effective

Task Response: It answers the exact question and maintains the same position throughout. Each main reason is explained and supported.

Coherence & Cohesion: Each paragraph has a clear function, and ideas progress logically without excessive linking phrases.

Lexical Resource: Vocabulary is topic-specific and precise rather than artificially complicated.

Grammatical Range & Accuracy: The response mixes shorter structures with controlled complex sentences, including relative and conditional structures.

Note

This is an original teaching model written for Esterma Academy. It is designed to demonstrate organisation and development, not to be memorised as a fixed exam response.

8. Guided Practice

Practice Task

Some people believe that employees should be allowed to work from home whenever their jobs can be done remotely. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Step 1 - Analyse

What is the key claim? Which word makes the claim especially broad? What exactly must you evaluate?

Step 2 - Choose Your Position

Complete: I _____ agree/disagree because...

Step 3 - Plan Two Main Ideas

Body 1 main idea: _____

Explanation: _____

Example: _____

Body 2 main idea: _____

Explanation: _____

Example: _____

Step 4 - Draft the Thesis

Self-Check Before Writing

- I have answered the exact instruction.
- My position is clear.
- My two body ideas directly support that position.
- I can explain each idea rather than merely list it.
- My examples are relevant and realistic.

9. Final Editing Checklist

Use the final few minutes to check the essay strategically. Do not rewrite large sections unless there is a serious problem.

Task Response

- Have I answered every part of the prompt?
- Is my position easy to identify from the introduction and conclusion?
- Does each body paragraph contain a relevant, developed main idea?

Coherence & Cohesion

- Does each paragraph have one clear purpose?
- Do my ideas progress logically?
- Have I avoided repetitive or mechanical linking words?

Lexical Resource

- Have I used precise topic vocabulary?
- Have I avoided unnecessary repetition?
- Are spelling, word forms, and collocations accurate?

Grammatical Range & Accuracy

- Have I used both simple and complex sentence forms?
- Have I checked subject-verb agreement, articles, verb tense, and punctuation?
- Are my complex sentences controlled and easy to understand?

Esterma Academy Writing Rule

Clarity comes before complexity. A precise argument developed in accurate English is more effective than an essay filled with memorised phrases and unnecessarily difficult vocabulary.

Lesson Summary

- Analyse the exact claim and instruction before planning.
- State a clear position and maintain it throughout the essay.
- Develop two strong main ideas with explanation and relevant support.
- Use paragraphing and cohesive devices to make the argument easy to follow.
- Choose precise vocabulary and demonstrate controlled grammatical range.
- Edit with the four IELTS assessment criteria in mind.

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