

# Brainstorming and Planning

## Brainstorming and Planning an Essay

*“I can’t think of any ideas for my IELTS essay!”*

That is a common statement from students preparing for the test and this is where **brainstorming and planning** come in.

Once you have analysed the question in the IELTS test you need to **brainstorm** some ideas to include in your answer.

Lets look at the same question we looked at in the first two lessons:

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***The crime rate among teenagers has increased dramatically in many countries.***

***Discuss some possible reasons for this increase and suggest solutions.***

Brainstorming is an important part of the planning process.

In order to get a good score it will not be enough just to put a list of ideas – you need to **extend and explain** those ideas.

If you look at the IELTS prompt, it says this:

***“Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge”.***

So you need to support your ideas using reasons and examples.

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## Developing Focus Questions

For this question, you need to write about **reasons** for the increase in teenage crime and **solutions**.

In order to make sure you fully answer the question it is a good idea to develop some **focus questions** i.e. questions that will help you focus on what you need to write.

These are possible focus questions for this essay question:

- ***Focus question 1: Why has teenage crime increased?***
- ***Focus question 2: What can be done about it?***

You then need to brainstorm answers to these questions:

*Why has teenage crime increased?*

- *Breakdown in the nuclear family*
- *Lack of things to do*

*What can be done about it?*

- *Government – Provide better support for families & stricter punishments*
- *Individuals – take responsibility*

[*Nuclear family* is a term used to define a family group consisting of a pair of adults and their children, as opposed to *single-parent* families].

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## Extending and Supporting your Ideas

However, you now need to think about how you are going to extend and support those ideas you have brainstormed. In other words, you need to ask yourself further questions about each of your ideas. For example:

*Why has there been a breakdown in the nuclear family?*

*What is the effect of this?*

*What is a good example of it?*

Answering questions like these will make sure you have fully supported and explained all your points.

For example:

*Why has there been a breakdown in the nuclear family?*

– high divorce rates

*What is the effect of this?*

– no male role model; boys go astray & may commit crime

## Planning

When you have extended your main ideas, this then provides the basis for your plan.

Here is an example of the brainstormed ideas with further support, which has now become the plan for the essay:

## Essay Plan

### **Why has teenage crime increased?**

#### *1) Breakdown in the nuclear family*

- high divorce rates = no father as 'role model'
- boys go astray, drugs & crime

#### *2) Lack of things to do*

- e.g. TV has shown nothing to do
- children see crime as entertainment

### **What can be done about it?**

#### *1) Govt – Provide better support for families*

- e.g. more youth centres
- guidance and activities, sport

#### *2) Parents – take responsibility*

- provide loving environment, relative as role model

The essay can now be written. Here is an example essay written from the plan, with the main supporting ideas highlighted in bold:

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## Sample Essay

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

**The crime rate among teenagers has increased dramatically in many countries.**

**Discuss some possible reasons for this increase and suggest solutions.**

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

Write at least 250 words.

## Model Answer

Over the last decade there has been a massive rise in the level of crime committed by teenagers in a number of countries. It is important to establish why this has happened and to look at ways to solve the problem.

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One reason is the **breakdown in the nuclear family**. The high divorce rates have meant many children have been brought up in one-parent families with no father to act as a role model which is detrimental to their development. This is particularly important for boys, who without this guidance are easily led astray by bad influences such as drugs and crime. Another factor is the **lack of things to do** for the young. For example, in the UK, many television programs about this issue have shown that teenagers hang around in the evenings with little to do. When this happens, the boredom means they will find their own entertainment, which is often crime.

There are, however, ways to tackle these problems. Firstly, the **government should provide more support for families**. They could, for instance, invest more into building and staffing youth centers which would provide guidance through the youth workers and also enable teenagers to focus their attention on sport and other activities. **Parents should also be encouraged to take more responsibility for their children**. Ultimately, the onus is on them to ensure their children are brought up in a loving environment which would make them less likely to turn to crime. They could, for example, find a male relative to act as a role model.

Therefore, it is clear that there are various reasons for this rise in crime, but solutions are available. If we begin to tackle the issue now, we may be able to prevent the situation from declining further.

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A common mistake is to have lots of ideas that are not explained properly.

However, you can see that as a result of brainstorming some key ideas and making sure you have explained each of them, you have a fully supported and well organized essay.

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