



Ideas for IELTS

Generating **ideas for IELTS writing task 2** is often daunting for candidates preparing for the test.

There is a fear that a question will come up that you cannot answer because you know nothing about it. There is also a worry that the questions are geared towards Western orientated topics.

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Below you'll get some insight into exactly what the examiner is looking for when they mark your essay so you know what you really need to have in mind when you think of ideas for IELTS writing.

Also you'll get some tips on what you can do to help you come up with ideas for IELTS writing topics.

What ideas for IELTS does the examiner want to see?

Many candidates tend to think that the examiner is looking for the best possible ideas that answer the question, and that they will award higher band scores for this.

Actually this is not true. There is nothing in the grading system that the examiner uses that assesses how clever your ideas are or to knock off points if s/he thinks they are too boring or uninteresting.

What is important is the **relevancy** of the ideas.

This means that they **must answer the question** that you have been asked. They must also of course be properly **explained through further support**.

Once you come up with some ideas you should use what you think are the best ones, but the important point about this is that you should not waste so much time at the beginning trying trying to come up with what you think is going to be the best idea to impress the examiner to the point that you have too little time to write a good essay.

With only 40 minutes to plan and write the essay there is not the time to do this. There is no point if you then don't finish the essay or have poor grammar because you are rushing to finish it.

As long as your ideas answer the question and you can explain and justify them, that is fine.

What if the question is not relevant to my country?

Another concern of candidates is that as the exam is written in the UK and Australia, it will be questions related to Western countries and not the country or culture that they come from.

This should not be the case as the writers of the test are aware that most people taking the test are from other countries and cultures.

The questions are designed to be general in nature and based on topics and issues that are relevant to most countries around the world.

If you take a look at the latest IELTS writing topics, you'll see that most are quite general topics that should be relevant to most countries.

Very occasionally a topic may come up that is possibly not as relevant to your country as it may be for some others, but if this is the case you have to think about the fact that examiners are not looking for perfect ideas.

It's how you explain and support them that is key so you have to use the knowledge that you do have.



What strategies can I use to come up with ideas for IELTS?

Next we'll look at some strategies you can use to come up with ideas for IELTS essays.

Reading around relevant topics

You can broaden your knowledge of potential ideas for IELTS by reading around the kinds of topics that come up in IELTS.

You should be doing this anyway as you want to improve your reading skills and also your ability to have knowledge for the speaking test too.

Questions connected in some way to the following topics are fairly common in the exam:

- *Education*
- *Health, Diet and Fitness*
- *Globalisation*
- *Work and Unemployment*
- *Crime, the Law, and Criminal Justice*
- *Children and Families*
- *Technological Development and Change*
- *The Environment*
- *Public Transport*
- *Advertising*

But these are quite broad topics so the questions will be directed to a particular aspect related to these topics. But keeping up-to-date with what is going on in the world by reading international newspapers or magazines will help.

A good way though to find out more about the specific issues related to these broad topics that come up is by looking at old essay questions and sample answers.

To do this, check out our IELTS Sample Essays.



As an example, on this IELTS sample essay page, if you look you'll see a number of essays related to 'Children and Families':

- Family Size
- Having Children Later in Life
- Family Closeness
- Living Alone

Read the essay but also go into an internet search engine such as google and find some articles on the topic. Search for things such as "*reasons for living alone*", "*advantages and disadvantages of living alone*".

Remember this is all reading practice, so even if the topic does not come up you are still developing your reading ability and your critical thinking skills, both of which will help you with IELTS.

Note also that there are also topics that will never come up, and these are ones connected to religion, politics and war. So you don't need to research about these.

Brainstorming Ideas

Brainstorming and planning is something that is covered in this IELTS writing task 2 lesson:

- Brainstorming and Planning

Brainstorming is when you write down any ideas that come into your head about a particular question or topic. At first you are not dismissing any, you just write them down however good or bad they seem.

You then select which ones are the best. For an IELTS essay you will usually only need around four ideas to answer a question, as with it being such a short essay, two are usually enough to provide support in one body paragraph.

The important thing to remember again is that you are not getting marked on the ideas themselves (as long as they answer the question) but the way in which you present them in terms of coherency, cohesion and grammar.

Ask 'why' questions



Another way to come up with ideas for IELTS writing is to turn the essay question into shorter questions and ask other questions to develop the ideas further.

This is an excellent way to not only develop ideas but also to develop support for you ideas as it helps to focus your thoughts. This can mostly be done by developing '**why?**' questions.

Let look at an example essay question to illustrate this. This is a recent IELTS essay question from

People living in the 21st century generally have better quality of lives than people born in earlier centuries.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

So turn this into some simple questions to focus you on an answer:

Why is life better?

- People are healthier.

Why are they healthier?

- Because of more access to medicine.

Why else?

- Greater access to cleaner water and safer food.

By thinking like this you can start to come up with ideas and develop them into paragraphs.

You don't really have time though to start writing out all these question. This is just a way to develop or train the way your mind works when you look at an essay question.



So when you next look at a question, try asking yourself 'why?' and may help you start to develop ideas and extent them.

So these are all potential ways for you to develop ideas for IELTS. Remember as always it's a very personal thing, so do what is most suitable for you.

But the key thing to remember and take away from this is that you are not getting marked on how amazing your ideas are.

Someone who comes up with a boring idea but who explains it well and uses good grammar and organisation is going to get a better score than someone who thinks of a great idea but can't explain it properly or presents it badly.

And don't forget, if you've found this lesson useful and you want to further develop your writing skills for the essay, you may be interested in our eBook:

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