



IELTS Task Response

The **IELTS Task Response** is 25% of your score for your essay. When your essay is marked, you are given a score for each of these criteria:

- *Task Response – 25%*
- *Coherence and Cohesion – 25%*
- *Lexical Resource – 25%*
- *Grammatical Range and Accuracy – 25%*

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There are two key factors that are important for ensuring you get a high score for **IELTS Task Response**:

- Fully answering the question
- Developing and extending your ideas

In this lesson and following on from writing task 2 lesson one and lesson two, we will focus on the first factor, **answering the question**.

Fully Answering the Question

This is very important because misunderstanding the question and not answering it properly can be fatal for your IELTS Task Response Score.

These are the penalties:

- *Your answer has no relation to the topic or question at all – **Band 3***
- *The question has been misunderstood but some ideas are related to the question – **Band 4***
- *The question has been understood but is only partially answered – **Band 5***
- *Fully answered but some parts are more fully covered than others – **Band 6***

However, for band 7:

- *All parts of the essay question are adequately covered and ideas are extended and*



Developing and extending your ideas is obviously crucial as well to get a good IELTS Task Response score but there is no point extending your ideas if they are the wrong ones because you have misunderstood the question!

So the key starting point for a high IELTS Task Response score is to **fully answer the question**.

To understand the problems with this, we will look at a recent IELTS essay question (*from a test in May 2019*).

This is a question that several candidates reported they had problems with answering and when I queried how they answered it, many had written about the wrong thing.

This is the question from the test:

Earlier technological developments brought more advantages and changed the lives of ordinary people more than recent developments ever will.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Before carrying on with this lesson, it would be a good idea to analyse the question and makes some notes on how you would answer and organise an essay like this.

You can then compare your answer with the suggestions below and see if you analysed it correctly.

Confusing Parts of the Question

The opinion in this essay question is indicating a comparison between two things:

- *Technological developments of the past*
- *Technological developments of recent times*

You simply need to say which ones you think have led to the biggest changes and benefits to people's lives.

There are several things that resulted in confusion for candidates.

Earlier technological developments brought more advantages and changed the lives of ordinary people more than recent developments ever will.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Ordinary People

One confusion was with the word **ordinary people**, which led some candidates to go off-topic and start discussing the lives of poor people or other things not really related to the topic.

This simply refers to the everyday person in society, like you and me. Someone who studies or goes to work everyday and therefore would make use of technology, such as phones, washing machines, cars, computers etc., in the usual way.

So rather than focusing on companies for example, or extremely rich people, your essay would need to be about the general population in societies.

You can of course still mention rich people as long as it is in relation to the question and ordinary people. For instance you may argue that some technological developments were expensive and only benefitted the rich so did not tend to improve most ordinary people's lives.

Ever Will

Another word causing confusion was **ever will**.

Seeing '*will*' led some candidates to think they needed to discuss how current developments will change in the future.

This would be wrong as the question is about **past** technological developments and **recent** developments. '*Ever will*' is just a phrase to emphasise the opinion that past developments are not as influential as more modern ones and never will be, even in the future.

The future could be discussed in reference to the extent to which people's lives may change, but it is not about which developments may arise in the future.

Earlier and Recent

Another problem candidates faced with this essay question was what is actually meant

by **earlier** and **recent**?

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Advantages and Disadvantages?

One common mistake is to rush into a question without reading it, which could be a big mistake.

Something you must *not* do, which some candidates said they did, is to have a general essay discussing the **advantages and disadvantages of technology** on people's lives without making any reference to earlier and later ones.

A careful look at the question should tell you that it is not asking this. However, some lower level candidates who may have been struggling with the language just assumed it was simple pros and cons of technology essay.

This mistake is likely to lead to a band 3 or 4 for task response:

- *Your answer has no relation to the topic or question at all – **Band 3***
- *The question has been misunderstood but some ideas are related to the question – **Band 4***

Answering and Organising the Essay

Based on the factors discussed above, answering the question as follows would mean a *reduction* in the IELTS task response score:

- *Writing about earlier technological developments and **future** technological developments*
- *Writing **only** about earlier developments or recent developments (not both)*
- *Not focusing on ordinary people*
- *Writing generally about the advantages and disadvantages of technology*

There are various options of how to organise your essay to show the examiner you have understood the question and answered it.

Here are some possibilities, all of which would help you get a good score for IELTS Task Response as they all fully answer the question.

Earlier vs Recent Developments

Based on the fact you want to discuss both earlier and recent technological developments the easiest way to organise the essay to ensure you answer the question is as follows:

- **Intro:** Opinion
- **Body Para 1:** Early Developments
- **Body Para 2:** Recent Developments
- **Conc:** Restate Opinion

Particular Areas of Development

You could also compare them though by specific developments that have been changed and updated over time. For instance, you could write about the typewriter as an early technological development and the computer as a more updated one which has more benefits.

- **Intro:** Opinion
- **Body Para 1:** Early vs Recent 1 (e.g. Typewriter vs Computer)
- **Body Para 2:** Early vs Recent 2
- **Body Para 3:** Early vs Recent 3
- **Conc:** Restate Opinion

[There is a model answer for this plan – the link is at the bottom of the page]

Pros and Cons in Each Period of time

You may think that the whole opinion is wrong because it is not a matter of distinguishing between periods of time but depends on the actual technology.

In other words, some technology from the past was good but some bad, and the same for today.

For instance you may think mobile phones are a bad invention of today as they occupy people's time so much but robotics are a good thing as they have led to advances in medicine and operations.

So you may organise it like this:

- **Intro:** Opinion
- **Body Para 1:** Early and Recent Developments that are beneficial
- **Body Para 2:** Early and Recent Developments that are detrimental
- **Conc:** Restate Opinion

This is ok as long as you clearly organise your essay and explain your ideas.

IELTS Task Response: Extending and Supporting Your Ideas



This lesson has focused on answering the question fully. You should now hopefully realise the importance of making sure you **carefully analyse the question before you write**.

It's easy to make mistakes and this could seriously affect your IELTS Task Response score.

But as noted above, extending and supporting any ideas you have is of course another key factor in IELTS Task Response.

So once you have decided how you will answer the question and you have some ideas, you need to provide support and maybe use examples to illustrate what you want to say and extend your points.

We looked at this in the planning and brainstorming lesson.

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