



Personal Pronouns in Essays

Personal Pronouns in Essays for IELTS

Whether to use personal pronouns in essays for IELTS is a question that comes up often with students studying for the test.

Personal pronouns are words such as “I”, “you”, “we” and “they”.

Some people believe that these words should not be used in IELTS essays because IELTS essays are ‘academic’ and it is not usually advised to use such personal words in academic writing.

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This is true, but IELTS is **not the same** as writing an essay at university or writing a research article for a journal.

When you write an essay at university, you will have books and journals that you will refer to and you will need to use citations and references.

In an IELTS essays you don’t have any of these sources – you only have your own experience (and 40 minutes!).

And as the rubric states in every question, you are expected to make use of this experience and knowledge:

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

It would not be written in this way if you were forbidden to use personal pronouns in essays for IELTS.

So you may wish to give an example from your own country, or even your own personal experience if it is relevant.

Also, some of the tasks asking for your opinion are personal:

*“To what extent do **you** agree or disagree?”*

*“Discuss both opinions and give **your** opinion”*

So although an IELTS essay does need to be in an academic style, it is not quite the same as your average piece of academic writing and it can be more personal with the use of personal pronouns.

Where can I use personal pronouns in essays and how often?

So it is ok to use personal pronouns in essays for IELTS, but you should not overdo it. If you start using them all the way through, your essay **will** be in danger of losing its academic style.

But using them a few times when needed is not a problem. For example, you may want to use them in the **thesis statement** in the introduction to give your opinion:

*“**In my opinion**, students should not have to wear school uniforms”.*

*“**I do not believe** that students should wear school uniforms”.*

*“**I agree** that wearing school uniforms is necessary for the following reasons”.*

Another advantage of using personal pronouns in essays for IELTS is that it makes **your opinion very clear**.

The examiner will expect to be able to clearly see what **your opinion is** (in opinion essays). There is a possibility that if you use impersonal language the examiner will not realise it is **your opinion**.



This is not to say you *have to* use personal pronouns as you certainly don't, but if you are a lower level writer it makes it very clear what your opinion is so there are no misunderstandings.

Look at this example **conclusion** – it is very clear what the writers position is and there will be no misunderstanding:

*On balance, **I would argue that** although it is not realistic to remove all opportunities for privately funded research, governments should have the main responsibility for the monitoring and controlling of this. Strong checks and balances need to be in place to ensure future research is ethical and productive.*

What about in body paragraphs?

Again, as explained above, you may wish to use personal pronouns in essays for IELTS as you are told you can give examples from your own experience and you are asked for your opinion. A few times is ok, but **don't use them too much** as your essay may start to look **too informal**.

Take a look at this example essay where personal pronouns have been used effectively and they do not detract from the style of the essay or the answer:

Many old buildings protected by law are part of a nation's history. Some people think they should be knocked down and replaced by news ones.

How important is it to maintain old buildings?

Should history stand in the way of progress?

Most nations around the world have at least some, or possibly many, old buildings such as temples, churches and houses in their cities, villages and surrounding areas which have historical significance. **In my opinion**, it is very important to maintain these, but this does not mean progress should stop.

Preserving certain old buildings is important for several reasons. Firstly, these structures provide an insight into the history of **our** countries, showing how people many centuries ago lived their lives. Without **them,we** could only learn by books, and it would undoubtedly



be sad if this were the only way to see them. Many of these buildings are also very beautiful. Take for example the many religious buildings such as churches and temples that can be seen around the world. Not only this, but on a more practical level, many of these buildings provide important income to a country as many tourists visit them in great numbers.

However, this certainly does not mean that modernization should be discouraged. I **believe** that old buildings can be protected in tandem with progress. For example, in many circumstances **we** see old historic buildings being renovated whilst maintaining their original character, and being used for modern purposes. Also, in no way does history hinder progress, and in fact it is the opposite. By studying and learning about **our** history, a greater understanding is gained about the world **we** live in, and this helps to build a better future.

To conclude, **in my view** it is very important to protect and preserve old buildings as **we** can learn about **our** history as can others from other countries. Such knowledge can also help **us** to understand how to modernize **our** countries in the best way.

You will likely not use personal pronouns in essays for IELTS to this extent as this question is particularly suitable for it more than some others, but it shows you that it is not necessarily a problem.

This is a good essay and it would not lose marks because of the use of personal pronouns.

Summary

So to sum up, **it is ok to use personal pronouns in essays for IELTS**, but **don't overuse them** as it may start sounding too informal.

Certainly make use of them in opinion essays in your introduction and / or conclusion as this will make your opinion very clear.

You are less likely to use them in your body paragraphs, but it is not wrong to do so.

As you saw in the essay above, using personal pronouns did not detract from the style of the essay. You may also have a particularly good example from your experience that



means you need to use a personal pronoun.

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