



Problem Solution Essays

IELTS Problem Solution Essays

Problem solution essays are a type of essay question sometimes given to you in the test.

In this type of essay you need to discuss the problems with regards to a particular topic and then suggest possible solutions to these problems.

One of the first things you want to make sure that you are able to do is identify one of these questions when it arises.

Here are some examples of this type of question.

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Problem Solution Essay Questions:

Overpopulation of urban areas has led to numerous problems.

Identify one or two serious ones and suggest ways that governments and individuals can tackle these problems.



Nowadays many people have access to computers on a wide basis and a large number of children play computer games.

What are the negative impacts of playing computer games and what can be done to minimize the bad effects?

The internet has transformed the way information is shared and consumed, but it has also created problems that did not exist before.

What are the most serious problems associated with the internet and what solutions can you suggest?

In the developed world, average life expectancy is increasing.

What problems will this cause for individuals and society?

Suggest some measures that could be taken to reduce the impact of ageing populations.

An important note. Some essays ask for **reasons** and solutions, not problems and solutions. Writing about a reason (or cause) is not the same as writing about a problem.

Check these model essays to see the difference.



IELTS Problem Solution Essay Example

In order to understand these types of problem solution essays further and how to organize your writing, we'll look at a problem solution example essay:

The internet has transformed the way information is shared and consumed, but it has also created problems that did not exist before.

What are the most serious problems associated with the internet and what solutions can you suggest?

Model Answer

The enormous growth in the use of the internet over the last decade has led to radical changes to the way that people consume and share information. Although serious problems have arisen as a result of this, there are solutions.

One of the first problems of the internet is the ease with which children can access potentially dangerous sites. For example, pornography sites are easily accessible to them because they can register with a site and claim to be an adult. There is no doubt that this affects their thoughts and development, which is a negative impact for the children and for society. Another major problem is the growth of online fraud and hacking. These days, there are constant news stories about government and company websites that have been hacked, resulting in sensitive information falling into the hands of criminals.

It is important that action is taken to combat these problems. Governments should ensure that adequate legislation and controls are in place that will prevent young people from accessing dangerous sites, such as requiring more than simply confirming that you are an adult to view a site. Parents also have a part to play. They need to closely monitor the activities of their children and restrict their access to certain sites, which can now be done through various computer programs. Companies must also improve their onsite IT security systems to make fraud and hacking much more difficult by undertaking thorough reviews of their current systems for weaknesses.

To conclude, the internet is an amazing technological innovation that has transformed people's lives, but not without negative impacts. However, with the right action by individuals, governments and businesses, it can be made a safe place for everyone.

(285 words)

Writing about Problems

From the problem solution essay, look at the problems paragraph, and answer the following questions (then click on the link below to see the answers):

1. How many problems are discussed?
2. What are they?
3. What expressions are used to introduce the problems?
4. How are the problems illustrated further?
5. What results are discussed for each problem?

[Show / hide answers](#)

Your answers to these questions should tell you a lot about how to plan and organize a problem paragraph.

You only need two or three problems as remember you do not have much time and you need to explain the problems.

When you brainstorm your ideas for problem solution essays, think about **(a) what the problem is (b) how you will explain it (c) and what the effect is**. Your paragraph will then follow this pattern.

Here is an example of the brainstorming for this paragraph:

Problem 1: *children can access potentially dangerous sites*

- **Explanation / Example:** *Pornography sites*
- **Result:** *Affects thought & development – negative for children & society*

Problem 2: *growth of online fraud and hacking*

- **Explanation / Example:** *Evident from the constant news stories*
- **Result:** *Criminals get sensitive information*

Here they are illustrated in the paragraph, with the introductory expressions underlined:

One of the first problems of the internet is the ease with which children can access potentially dangerous sites. **For example, pornography sites are easily accessible to them because they can register with a site and claim to be an adult.** There is no doubt that this affects their thoughts and development, which is a negative impact for the children and for society. Another major problem is the growth of online fraud and hacking. **These days, there are constant news stories about government and company websites that have been hacked,** resulting in sensitive information falling into the hands of criminals.

Writing about Solutions

Answer the following questions about the solutions paragraph:

1. How many solutions are given?
2. What are they?
3. What three different groups of people does the writer say are responsible for these solutions?
4. How would the solutions be implemented?
5. What three modal verb structures are used to make the suggestions?

[Show / hide answers](#)

Your answers to these questions provide you with some key tips on writing a solutions paragraph. Some of these points are now explained further.

a) The people involved

When you come to brainstorm your solutions, think of the key 'actors' who are involved. It is usually governments and individuals in some way or another.

There may be another group specifically related to the topic. For example, in this case it is companies and parents. If you are discussing crime it could be the police. If it is violence on TV it could be TV and film producers.

You can then brainstorm your ideas under each 'group' and organize them in the same

way.

b) Developing your solutions

Also, try to make sure your solutions are not too simplistic. It's all too easy to make sweeping generalizations about what people can do. For example, look at this idea:

The government should introduce stricter laws.

It is common to see such statements in IELTS problem solution essays with no further explanation. Give more detail about how or why this would work. For example:

Governments should ensure that adequate legislation and controls are in place that will prevent young people from accessing dangerous sites, such as requiring more than simply confirming that you are an adult to view a site.

Some specific detail has now been given on how this solution could work.

b) Modal Verbs

Modal verbs can be used to make suggestions in problem solution essays. These are usually found in solutions paragraphs.

Check out this grammar lesson if you are unsure how to use [modal verbs](#).

Here again is a plan for the problem solution essay for the solutions paragraph:

Solution 1: Governments

- **Idea:** *Adequate legislation and controls for young people*
- **How:** *More complex website access criteria*

Solution 2: Parents

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- **Idea:** *Monitor children and restrict access*
 - **How:** *Use a computer program*

Solution 3: Companies

- **Idea:** *Improve IT security systems*
- **How:** *Review current systems in place*

Here is the paragraph again. Note how it follows the plan and the clear topic sentence that tells the reader the essay is moving on to discuss solutions (modals verbs are underlined):

It is important that action is taken to combat these problems. Governments should ensure that adequate legislation and controls are in place that will prevent young people from accessing dangerous sites, such as requiring more than simply confirming that you are an adult to view a site. Parents also have a part to play. They need to closely monitor the activities of their children and restrict their access to certain sites, which can now be done through various computer programs. Companies must also improve their onsite IT security systems to make fraud and hacking much more difficult by undertaking thorough reviews of their current systems for weaknesses.

Here is another example of a problem solution essay: Overpopulation

