IELTS Writing Preparation Guide

A practical, independent-learning resource | Academic Writing focus

01 / Know the test format

Academic Writing: 60 minutes for two tasks. Task 1 asks you to describe visual information (at least 150 words); Task 2 asks you to respond to a point of view, argument or problem (at least 250 words). Task 2 contributes twice as much as Task 1 to the Writing score.

Suggested time allocation: approximately 20 minutes for Task 1 and 40 minutes for Task 2. General Training Task 1 is a letter rather than a visual description.

02 / Task 1: describe the information

Four-part structure: (1) paraphrase the question, (2) give a clear overview of main trends or features, (3) compare important details, (4) report remaining relevant figures. Do not invent reasons for trends.

Practice example (illustrative data): A chart shows library visits rising from 1,200 in January to 1,800 in June, while online loans increase from 400 to 900.

Sample overview: “Overall, both library visits and online loans increased over the period, with physical visits remaining higher throughout.”

Useful language: rose steadily; remained relatively stable; peaked at; accounted for; in contrast; respectively. Use figures accurately and avoid repeating every number.

03 / Task 2: build a coherent argument

Suggested structure: Introduction (paraphrase topic and state position); Body 1 (main idea, explanation, example); Body 2 (another developed idea, explanation, example); Conclusion (summarise position without new arguments). Address every part of the question.

Practice prompt: “Some people believe universities should focus mainly on employment skills. Others think broader knowledge is equally important. Discuss both views and give your opinion.”

Sample thesis: “Although career-focused teaching helps graduates enter the workforce, I believe universities should also develop critical thinking and wider intellectual skills.”

Body paragraph pattern: Topic sentence → reason → specific example → link to the question. A relevant, well-explained example is more useful than an unsupported claim.

04 / Assessment criteria and common errors

Writing is assessed using Task Achievement (Task 1) or Task Response (Task 2), Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy.

Avoid memorised essays, irrelevant examples, unclear paragraphing, overly complex sentences, inaccurate word choice, and missing overviews in Academic Task 1. Proofread for agreement, articles, punctuation and spelling.

05 / Final writing checklist

☐ I answered every part of the task and met the minimum word count.

☐ My Task 1 has a clear overview / my Task 2 has a clear position.

☐ Each paragraph has one main purpose and supporting detail.

☐ Comparisons, data and examples are accurate and relevant.

☐ I checked grammar, spelling, punctuation and time.

Practice plan

Day 1: Study the task types and scoring criteria. Day 2: Write two Task 1 overviews. Day 3: Plan three Task 2 essays. Day 4: Write a timed Task 1. Day 5: Write a timed Task 2. Day 6: Review errors and rewrite weak paragraphs. Day 7: Complete a 60-minute writing practice.

Note: These are original practice materials, not official IELTS test questions. Always check the latest test information at ielts.org.

IELTS Speaking Preparation Guide

Questions, sample responses, techniques and a practice checklist

01 / Understand the speaking test

The IELTS Speaking test is a face-to-face interview with an examiner and typically lasts 11–14 minutes. It has three parts: Part 1 (introduction and familiar topics), Part 2 (individual long turn), and Part 3 (more abstract discussion).

The four equally weighted assessment criteria are Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, and Pronunciation. An accent is not a problem if your speech is understandable.

02 / Part 1: short, natural answers

Typical topics include home, work or study, hobbies, daily routines and preferences. Give a direct answer plus a reason or small detail; do not deliver a memorised speech.

Practice question: “What do you enjoy about studying?” Sample answer: “I enjoy discovering how ideas connect. For example, when I read about environmental issues, I often find links to economics and public policy.”

Practice question: “Do you prefer studying alone?” Sample answer: “Usually, yes, because I can work at my own pace. However, group discussions are useful when I need to compare perspectives.”

03 / Part 2: plan a two-minute talk

You receive a task card, one minute to prepare, and up to two minutes to speak. Make brief notes using prompts such as who, what, where, when, why and how you felt.

Original practice cue card: Describe a useful skill you learned. You should say what the skill was, how you learned it, when you use it, and explain why it is useful.

Sample opening: “One skill that has made a real difference to my studies is organising information. I began practising it while preparing for university examinations…”

Expansion strategy: Give background, describe a specific incident, explain its impact, and reflect on what changed. Use a real experience rather than memorising an entire answer.

04 / Part 3: explain and evaluate ideas

Part 3 explores broader issues related to Part 2. Support opinions with reasons, comparisons and examples. It is acceptable to qualify your view.

Question: “Should schools teach practical life skills?” Sample answer: “I think they should, particularly skills such as financial planning and communication. These lessons can help young people make informed decisions, although they should complement rather than replace academic subjects.”

Useful transitions: In many cases; one possible reason is; on the other hand; compared with the past; that depends on; for instance.

05 / Pronunciation and fluency practice

Record a 60-second answer and listen for unclear sounds, rushed endings, long pauses and misplaced sentence stress. Practise speaking in meaningful phrases instead of word by word.

If you need thinking time, use natural phrases sparingly: “That is an interesting question” or “I would say…” Do not force idioms or advanced words that you cannot use accurately.

If you did not hear a question clearly, politely ask the examiner to repeat it. Do not invent facts simply to sound impressive.

06 / Speaking practice checklist

☐ I answered the question directly before adding detail.

☐ I supported opinions with reasons or examples.

☐ I spoke clearly at a natural pace and varied sentence structures.

☐ I used vocabulary accurately instead of forcing difficult expressions.

☐ I recorded and reviewed at least one practice response.

Seven-day speaking routine

Day 1: Record ten Part 1 answers. Day 2: Practise follow-up questions. Day 3: Complete three Part 2 cue cards. Day 4: Practise abstract Part 3 questions. Day 5: Focus on pronunciation and sentence stress. Day 6: Run a timed mock interview. Day 7: Review recordings and repeat difficult topics.

Note: All sample questions and answers here are original educational examples, not official IELTS questions. Verify current details at ielts.org.