

Test section – Writing Task 2

Essay structure and writing an introduction

Activities

1. Understanding the question – True or False
2. Generating ideas
3. Planning the structure
4. Writing the introduction

Aims

- to help students understand how to prepare for writing
- to help students identify and plan the structure of an essay
- to help students write clear and concise introductions

Learning outcomes

- Students will have understood how to structure their essay by looking at possible essay outlines.
- Students will have analysed two introductions.

Information about this section of IELTS

In Writing Task 2, test takers will be asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. They will be expected to write at least 250 words and are advised to spend 40 minutes on this task. The essay should be written in formal, academic English.

Time	45 minutes (90 if doing writing in class)
Level	B1+
Class	Suitable for groups / large classes F2F / Online
Interaction	Pair or group work Individual work
Materials	Worksheets x3 attached

Activity 1: Understanding the question – True or False

Material: Worksheet 1

Time: 15 minutes

Procedure:

- introduce focus of the lesson: Writing Task 2 – Essay structures and introductions
- give each student a copy of Worksheet 1 and one minute to read the Task 2 question.
- elicit possible next steps before writing e.g. brainstorming ideas.
- draw attention to the True / False task and clarify the importance of spending time with the question before rushing into an answer.
- give students time to work on the T/F task alone before checking answers in pairs and then open-class.

Answers

- a) discuss reasons why distance learning can be good for learners **True**
- b) discuss reasons why distance learning is good for colleges and universities **False**
- c) discuss the history of distance learning **False**
- d) discuss the problems associated with distance learning **True**
- e) discuss reasons why distance learning is not suitable for some learners **True**
- f) give a detailed account of the types of course that can be followed by distance learning **False**
- g) discuss reasons why distance learning is bad for colleges and universities **False**
- h) describe the kind of learner that would be suitable for distance learning **True**
- i) come to a logical conclusion about the value of distance learning in your view **True**
- j) say what you would like to learn by distance if you had time. **False**

Activity 2: Generating ideas

Material: Worksheet 1 and students' notebooks / whiteboard

Time: 5 minutes

Procedure:

- draw attention to exercise 2 at the bottom of the worksheet.
- students work together to generate ideas for both sides of the argument.
- if you wish, you can do this as a class by using the whiteboard as a mind map / table and eliciting ideas from students.

Activity 3: Planning the structure

Material: Worksheet 2

Time: 5 minutes

Procedure:

- before handing out Worksheet 2, elicit a possible essay structure.
- give each student a copy of Worksheet 2.
- draw attention to the 2 different essay outlines and exercise 1.
- students complete the 2 essay outlines with words and phrases provided.
- check open class.
- working in pairs or small groups, students discuss the analysis questions.
- get class feedback, elicit and focus on the importance of following a logical structure, no one structure is the 'ideal', no one of these is better than the other, as long as it adds to the coherence of the essay.

Answers

Essay outline 1:

Introduction, disadvantages for unsuitable learners, advantages for suitable learners, conclusion.

Essay outline 2:

Introduction, advantages and disadvantages of distance learning, suitable and unsuitable learners for distance learning, conclusion.

Activity 4: Writing the introduction

Material: Worksheet 3

Time: 20 minutes

Procedure:

- before handing out Worksheet 3, elicit what an introduction should / shouldn't include.
- clarify for students that an introduction sets out for the reader, the examiner in the case of IELTS, what the essay is going to be about. It should clearly refer back to the question but not simply copy whole phrases from it. From reading the introduction, the reader, i.e. the examiner, should have a good understanding of what they are about to read and the writer's position.
- draw attention to the analysis questions in exercise 1.
- allocate 2 minutes for students to read the first introduction and consider their answers.

- students discuss the analysis questions with a partner / in small groups.
- repeat the procedure for introduction 2.
- get class feedback and answers to exercise 3 open class.

Answers

Exercise 1 (Introduction 1)

a) No. The opening sentence has been completely copied from the question.

More and more colleges and universities are offering distance learning.

b) No, you could perhaps infer their opinion is against distance learning from the details offered of friends' experiences.

c) Yes, the writer outlines how they will respond to the question but seems to include an extra paragraph of unnecessary information on the history of distance learning.

I will examine these questions below, firstly by considering the advantages and disadvantages of learning in this mode, and then by looking at the kind of learner that suits distance learning. But first, here is a brief history of distance learning.

d) Yes. 'in the past this ...'; information about people the writer knows; reference to the history of distance learning.

In the past, this type of learning was sometimes called a correspondence course. I know several people who have tried this type of course and they all gave up after a few weeks.

But first, here is a brief history of distance learning.

Exercise 2 (Introduction 2)

a) Yes. The first line is a paraphrase of the topic.

The possibility of studying at further and higher education through distance learning has increased throughout recent years.

b) Yes. The introduction ends with a positive statement, they argue for distance learning.

... this way of study has revolutionised access to education and created more opportunity and benefits for a wider range of learners.

c) Yes. From the second sentence, you can see that the writer is likely to have a paragraph describing the disadvantages including inequality of access followed by a positive, perhaps longer paragraph describing the advantages.

Despite a few issues, including inequality of access for some learners, this way of study has revolutionised access to education.

d) No. A short concise introduction which includes no unnecessary information.

Exercise 3 Essay structure 1.

Follow-up activities

Encourage learners to complete the writing at home, using a paragraph plan and introduction similar to what they have created in class.

Draw attention to how writing a clear and concise introduction, which sets out their position and the overall structure of their essay, can impact their band score.

https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/ielts_writing_band_descriptors.pdf

	Task response	Coherence & Cohesion
7	<p>The main parts of the prompt are appropriately addressed.</p> <p>A clear and developed position is presented.</p> <p>Main ideas are extended and supported but there may be a tendency to over-generalise or there may be a lack of focus and precision in supporting ideas/material.</p>	<p>Information and ideas are logically organised, and there is a clear progression throughout the response. (A few lapses may occur, but these are minor.)</p> <p>A range of cohesive devices including reference and substitution is used flexibly but with some inaccuracies or some over/under use.</p> <p>Paragraphing is generally used effectively to support overall coherence, and the sequencing of ideas within a paragraph is generally logical.</p>
6	<p>The main parts of the prompt are addressed (though some may be more fully covered than others). An appropriate format is used.</p> <p>A position is presented that is directly relevant to the prompt, although the conclusions drawn may be unclear, unjustified or repetitive.</p> <p>Main ideas are relevant, but some may be insufficiently developed or may lack clarity, while some supporting arguments and evidence may be less relevant or inadequate.</p>	<p>Information and ideas are generally arranged coherently and there is a clear overall progression.</p> <p>Cohesive devices are used to some good effect but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical due to misuse, overuse or omission.</p> <p>The use of reference and substitution may lack flexibility or clarity and result in some repetition or error. Paragraphing may not always be logical and/or the central topic may not always be clear.</p>

Writing Task 2

Worksheet 1

Understanding the question

Example question

More and more colleges and universities are offering courses via distance learning. Distance learning has many benefits, but there are also drawbacks, and not every learner will be suited to this mode of study.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

1 Read the essay question and decide if the following statements are True or False.

For the essay question above, you should...

- a) discuss reasons why distance learning can be good for learners
- b) discuss reasons why distance learning is good for colleges and universities
- c) discuss the history of distance learning
- d) discuss the problems associated with distance learning
- e) discuss reasons why distance learning is not suitable for some learners
- f) give a detailed account of the types of course that can be followed by distance learning
- g) discuss reasons why distance learning is bad for colleges and universities
- h) describe the kind of learner that would be suitable for distance learning
- i) come to a logical conclusion about the value of distance learning in your view
- j) say what you would like to learn by distance if you had time.

2 Work with a partner and brainstorm ideas for both sides of the argument.

Writing Task 2

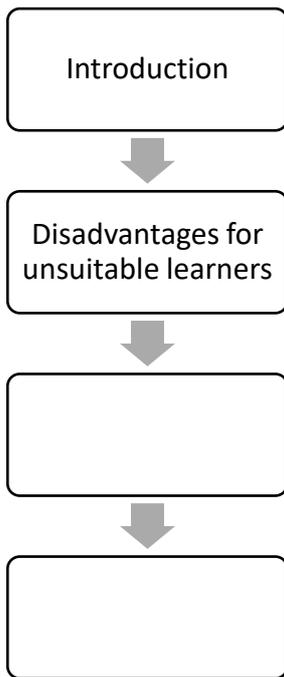
Worksheet 2

Planning the structure

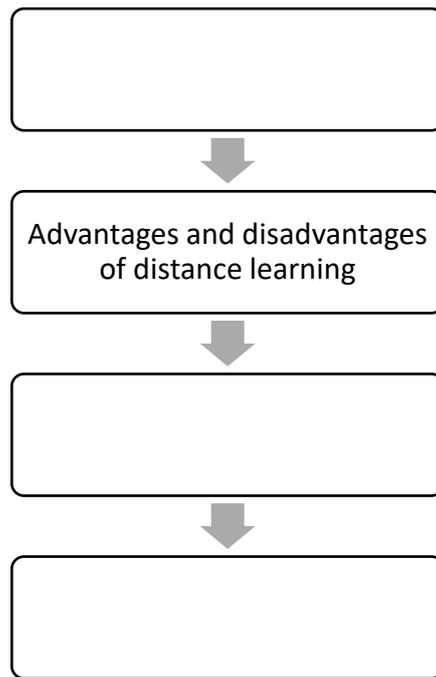
1 Complete the 2 possible essay outlines with notes from the box below.

Advantages for suitable learners Conclusion Introduction
 Suitable and unsuitable learners for distance learning

Outline 1



Outline 2



2 Discuss with a partner:

- How are the essay structures different from each other?
- In which ways are they similar?
- Is one structure 'better' than the other?
- Which one will you choose to write this essay?

Writing Task 2

Worksheet 3

Writing the introduction

1 Read through the introduction below considering the following questions:

- a) Has the writer paraphrased the topic?
- b) Is the writer's position clear? What is it?
- c) Is it easy to tell how the rest of the essay will be structured?
- d) Is there any unnecessary extra information?

More and more colleges and universities are offering distance learning. In the past, this type of learning was sometimes called correspondence learning. The advent of the Internet as a learning medium has helped to create distance learning opportunities worldwide. Learners need to have a computer and an Internet connection in order to follow these courses. However, is it really possible to learn from home? Are such courses suitable for all learners? I know several people who have tried this type of course and they all gave up after a few weeks. I will examine these questions below, firstly by considering the advantages and disadvantages of learning in this mode, and then by looking at the kind of learner that suits distance learning. But first, here is a brief history of distance learning.

2 Read through the introduction below considering questions a-d again:

The possibility of studying at further and higher education through distance learning has increased throughout recent years. Despite a few issues, including inequality of access for some learners, this way of study has revolutionised access to education and created more opportunity and benefits for a wider range of learners.

3 Which of the essay structures is the writer of introduction 2 likely to use?

Outline 1

Outline 2

Writing the essay

Work through the steps covered today to write your essay.

1 Analyse the question

2 Brainstorm possible ideas

3 Plan which ideas to write about and the structure of your paragraphs

4 Write an introduction which paraphrases the topic, establishes your position and makes it clear to the reader what the rest of the essay will be about

Many city centres these days have traffic flow problems, causing congestion and pollution. One solution is to build fast ring roads on the outskirts of a city, taking traffic away from the centre. While this is helpful in some ways, it also causes new problems.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.
Write at least 250 words.