

# TOP TIPS FOR IELTS

General Training Writing



# **Top Tips for IELTS** **General Training** **Writing**

# Official Cambridge IELTS Preparation

We provide you with the tools and resources you need to learn and show your skills to the world. Whether you're studying in a classroom, or at home, you can rely on us to help you get ready for test day.

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# Introduction

*Top Tips for IELTS General Training Writing* is an essential part of your revision for the IELTS test.

The tips are based on advice which IELTS materials writers have collected from many years' experience of involvement in the production of IELTS tests. Each section starts with a tip which is followed by an example taken from IELTS material.

## How to use *Top Tips for IELTS General Training Writing*

*Top Tips for IELTS General Training Writing* is flexible. You can look at a different tip from a different section every day, or you can start at the beginning and work through until you get to the end of the tips. Whichever method you prefer, read the example and the explanation carefully to make sure that you understand each tip. When you have understood all the tips, try the test on page 18.

## Guide to symbols



This symbol introduces the 'tip' which is at the top of the page. Each tip offers useful advice to help you find the right answer.



This is an extra piece of advice which is important for a particular part of the test.

# How to revise for IELTS General Training Writing

The General Training Writing test asks you to write a letter and an essay giving your opinion on a topic.

- Practise writing answers to exam-type tasks on a regular basis – if possible, ask a teacher or other good English speaker to correct your work. Pay attention to the comments they make and try to improve in the next piece of writing you do for them.
- Always think about the structure of what you are going to write – make a plan first.
- Always think about who the task says you are writing for – how does this affect what you need to write and how you should express it?
- In your writing make a point of using new words and expressions that you have recently learned – if necessary use a good learner’s dictionary for examples of how words are used in practice.
- Practise checking your writing carefully so that it is as accurate as possible – look particularly for the kinds of mistakes that you know you often make (mistakes with verb agreement, prepositions or articles, for example).
- Make sure that you know the conventions in English for writing different kinds of letters.


We hope these ideas will help you to make the most of your revision time. Above all, we hope that you enjoy your studies and wish you all the best for your exam.

Book your IELTS test at [ielts.org/book-a-test](https://ielts.org/book-a-test)




# Top Tips for IELTS General Training Writing test

## What's in the General Training Writing test?

**Task 1**  You have to respond to a given problem by writing a letter which requests information or explains a situation.

You have to write at least 150 words.

**Task 2**  You have to write a short essay in response to a topic which is presented as a point of view, an argument or a problem.

You have to write at least 250 words.



Task 2 contributes twice as much as Task 1 to the Writing score.



**1 hour**  
(*about 20 minutes for Task 1 and 40 minutes for Task 2*)

## Task 1



**TIP:** Make sure you deal with all the points that you need to cover in your answer.

### Example

Here is an example of a Task 1 question. The instructions tell you who to write to and why you are writing.



**You have had a problem with your next-door neighbour. You have not been able to speak to the neighbour about this.**

Write a **letter** to this neighbour. In your letter:

- explain the problem
- suggest a solution
- say what action you will take if the situation does not improve.

Here is an example of a student answer which covers each of the main points.

#### Introduction:

I am writing to you because of the noise late at night coming from your flat. I have tried to contact you by telephone on a number of occasions, but there was no response. I'm afraid that the noise has caused considerable disturbance to me and my family.

#### Explain the problem:

Every night the sound of musical instruments can be heard clearly through the walls of my flat and this goes on until the early hours of the morning, which prevents anyone in my family from getting a good night's sleep.

**Suggest a solution:**

I would like to suggest that you invest in soundproofing for your walls to prevent the noise coming through and disturbing your neighbours.

Furthermore, I would appreciate it if you could stop playing musical instruments by midnight at the latest.

**Say what action you will take if the situation does not improve:**

I very much hope that you will do something about this or I regret that I will have to inform the local authorities about the disturbance being caused.



*Write in a polite style even if you are complaining about something.*

## Task 1



**TIP:** Use language that is suitable for the type of letter.

### Example

Here are examples of things you might be asked to write in Task 1. For each one we have included examples of the language you can use.

**1 Make a complaint:**

I am afraid that ...

**2 Make a request:**

I would be very grateful if ...

**3 Make an apology:**

I am very sorry that ...

**4 Make a suggestion:**

Why don't you ...? / I would suggest ...

**5 Make a recommendation:**

In my opinion it would be a good idea to ...

**6 Give an explanation:**

I am unable to do this because ... / The reason for this is that ...

**7 Remind somebody:**

Don't forget to ...

**8 Invite somebody:**

Would you like to ...?

## Task 1



**TIP:** Avoid using the same words as those given in the instructions.

### Example

Here is an example of a Task 1 question.



**You have had a problem with your next-door neighbour. You have not been able to speak to the neighbour about this.**

Write a **letter** to this neighbour. In your letter:

- explain the problem
- suggest a solution
- say what action you will take if the situation does not improve.

Here is a part of a student answer:

I will explain the problem. There is too much noise coming from your flat.


I suggest a solution could be for you to stop playing music late at night.

If the situation does not improve I will take action.

**Explanation:** The highlighted words show that the student has simply copied most of the words from the instructions. A better answer for the third point would be something like this:

If the noise continues, I will have to report you to the local authorities.

## Task 1

 **TIP:** Write in a style that is suitable, e.g. formal or informal. Write your whole letter in the same style.

### Example

Here is an example of a Task 1 question.

**Q** You have had a problem with your next-door neighbour. You have not been able to speak to the neighbour about this.

Write a **letter** to this neighbour. In your letter:

- explain the problem
- suggest a solution
- say what action you will take if the situation does not improve.

Here are some extracts from student answers.

#### Student A

I am writing to you because of the noise late at night coming from your flat. I'm afraid that this has caused considerable disturbance to my family.

#### Student B

I am writing because I am furious about the noise you make in your flat at night. You have disturbed my family far too much.

**Explanation:** Student A makes a complaint but in a polite and impersonal style. Student B is not impersonal because he/she uses the word 'you' twice, and 'furious' is a very strong word so it is not polite.


## Task 1



**TIP:** Check your letter when you have finished, using a checklist like the one below.

### Example

Here is an example of a checklist. Use it every time you practise writing a letter.

Checklist	
Have you covered all the main points?	
Have you used a range of vocabulary?	
Have you written the right number of words?	
Have you written in paragraphs?	
Have you linked the points clearly?	
Have you used language that is suitable for the type of letter?	
Have you ended your letter in a suitable way?	
Have you made any mistakes in spelling or grammar?	

## Task 2



**TIP:** Make sure you follow the instructions and answer all parts of the question appropriately.

### Example

Here is an example of a Task 2 question. You have to write at least 250 words about the following topic.



**In many countries people are eating more and more unhealthy food and taking less exercise.**

What do you think are the causes of this problem and what can be done about it?

Here are some example parts of what a student wrote to answer this question.

#### **Causes of the problem**

One of the reasons why the number of people eating food that is less nutritious is increasing is that there is so much fast food available nowadays. This type of food is often very affordable and as a result of price and availability more and more of it is consumed.

#### **What can be done about it?**

One possible solution to the problem could be to improve the amount of education about food and health given to schoolchildren. This would help them to make more informed choices about what they eat both as children and as adults.

**Explanation:** This question asks you to talk about **two** things – the causes of a problem and what can be done about it.

## Task 2



**TIP:** You should include examples from your own experience, but make sure that they are relevant to the question and not too personal.

### Example

Here is an example of a Task 2 question.



**In many countries people are eating more and more unhealthy food and taking less exercise.**

What do you think are the causes of this problem and what can be done about it?

Here are parts of answers written by students.

#### Student A

My friends always eat at fast food burger bars and they are getting really fat and unhealthy. I always tell them they should eat more healthy food.

#### Student B

Many people where I live eat at fast food outlets and as a result of the lack of good healthy food their health is suffering and they are gaining weight.

**Explanation:** The first example is too personal and not totally relevant to the question. The second example is a more relevant and less personal way of saying something similar.

## Task 2



**TIP:** Organise your writing clearly in paragraphs. Separate information into paragraphs according to the topic.

### Example

In this example of a Task 2 question you are asked to write about the advantages and disadvantages of living in cities.

The examples below are the beginnings of two paragraphs written by a student.

#### Paragraph 1

There are many *advantages* to living in a city. One of the main ones is the availability of employment ...

#### Paragraph 2

On the other hand, people living in cities can experience many *drawbacks*. For example, levels of crime are often higher than in rural areas ...

**Explanation:** The advantages and disadvantages are covered in different paragraphs.

## Task 2



**TIP:** Use linking words to connect your sentences and ideas. These help to give fluency and organisation to your writing.

Here are some linking words you might use.

**1 To show contrast:**

*Although ... However, ... Despite this, ...*

**2 To add information:**

*Furthermore, ... Moreover, ...*

**3 To give your viewpoint:**

*In my opinion, ... From my point of view, ...*

**4 To summarise:**

*In conclusion, ... To sum up, ...*

# General tips for Writing

- 1** Before you start writing, plan what you are going to say. Make sure you are going to answer the question, rather than writing something irrelevant or too general – there isn't time for this in the test.
- 2** Use a range of vocabulary and structures to demonstrate your knowledge of English.
- 3** Make sure you use a range of tenses accurately and appropriately to answer the question.
- 4** Check that you have written enough words. When you practise writing, count the number of words you have written so you have a good idea of what 150 or 250 words look like in your handwriting.
- 5** In Task 1, check you have included all the information you have been asked to write about.
- 6** In Task 2, make sure you support what you say with appropriate examples.

# IELTS General Training Writing test

## WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

*You recently attended a meeting at a hotel. When you returned home, you found you had left some important papers at the hotel.*

*Write a letter to the manager of the hotel. In your letter*

- *say where you think you left the papers*
- *explain why they are so important*
- *tell the manager what you want him/her to do*

Write at least 150 words.

You do **NOT** need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear Sir or Madam,

## WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

***News stories on TV and in newspapers are very often accompanied by pictures.***

***Some people say that these pictures are more effective than words.***

***What is your opinion about this?***

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

Write at least 250 words.

# Sample answers and examiner comments

## WRITING TASK 1

### SAMPLE ANSWER

This is an answer written by a candidate who achieved a **Band 4.5** score.

Dear Sir. Hello. I have a request to your hotel. I have been there and I hope you to remember that I conference your hotel few days ago.

My name is --- and room No. is 707. The date is start 12/02/14 to 17/02/14. Actually, I lost my report for presentation. That is total 280paper. It was specially requested to Japan Uni for 1 month. I'll using the report when I get a level of doctor.

I have no enough time for collected report again. Because the presentation will be opened after 4 days. I really want finding the report, and I belive you already have it when you before reading this mail.

Protect the lost goods is due the hotels.

And already it's a law.

When you finished reading it, then just call me or leave your message to my asistant. I have a plan that when I finised the presentation, I'll be go there again for celerbrat party with my friends.

Generally,

-----.

Here is the examiner's comment:

The candidate has written to the hotel manager as required, but the three bullet points are not covered adequately. It is not clear where the writer thinks he or she has left the papers (only that they are somewhere in the hotel), nor is it clear what he or she wants the manager to do with them when found. There are also problems with the tone and format of the letter. Information and ideas are presented, but these are not arranged coherently and there are few cohesive devices. The range of vocabulary is limited, but just adequate for the task, with some errors in word choice and formation (*I conference your hotel, total 280paper, a level of doctor*). The range of grammatical structures is limited and although there are a few attempts at subordination (*I hope you to remember that ..., I'll using the report when, I belive you already have it when, When you finished reading it, when I finised the presentation*), they are almost all 'when' clauses. The level of error is high, even in simple structures (*The date is start, I have no enough time, I really want finding*) and punctuation is also often faulty.

## WRITING TASK 2

### SAMPLE ANSWER

This is an answer written by a candidate who achieved a **Band 6** score.

In our daily life, we see many photos or images of news events in newspapers and on television. Some people say that the images are more effective to tell the truth than words. Basically I agree to this idea, but there are some different idea as well.

The idea that showing pictures is the effective way is obviously true, because we can see a lot of photos and images in media. We can see the atmosphere, facial expressions and background sceneries from the photos. Everybody believes that watching is more important than hearing.

In addition, young people do not like reading recently. They are used to collecting information from the internet rather than books. For the young generation, images should be much more effective than reading every single letters, needless to say.

However, photos cannot tell more than they show. You can see a facial expression of a murderer in the picture, but you never know his history or habits without reading an investigation about him. When the East Japan Earthquake occurred, I read a lot of newspaper articles about the families of victims. There are a huge amount of stories of children who lost parents with Tsunami and a man who lost his wife with a baby in her tummy, and so on. At that time, I felt strongly that words are much more effective that pictures.

To sum up, if I am asked the question which more effective is, pictures or words, I would say pictures. But we should be more flexible to accept reading words as well as watching images, not escaping from letters. We have to try to collect the balanced information from media, not only by the pictures, but also valuable words.

Here is the examiner's comment:

All parts of the prompt are addressed and a position is presented that is directly relevant to the prompt. Main ideas are relevant, but some would benefit from further development. Ideas are generally arranged coherently and there is a clear overall progression. Some paragraphs are rather short, due to a lack of development of ideas. The range of lexis is generally adequate and appropriate for the task, with only a few spelling errors. There is a mix of simple and complex sentence structures, generally produced accurately.

# What to do on the day

Very few people like taking exams, but you can make the day of the exam easier if you make sure you know what to expect and what you will have to do before you go to the IELTS test centre.

## Rules and regulations

For any exam you take, there are some rules and regulations about what you **must** do and what you **mustn't** do during the exam. Read through the rules and regulations below and if there is anything you don't understand, ask your teacher or the administrator at the test centre.

### You must ...

- provide a proof of your identity (e.g. passport or national identity card) at registration and every examination session. Candidates taking the test outside their own country must produce a passport. This ID must contain a number, a signature, a date of birth and a photograph.
- inform the test centre of any changes to your identity document before the test date, bring the same identity document on the test day as the one recorded in your application, arrive at the test centre before the scheduled test start time. If you do not do any of the above you will not be allowed to take the test and you will not be eligible for a refund or transfer.
- consent for your identity to be verified both at test registration and on test day.
- only have on your desk your identification, a pen/pencil, a clear water bottle and an eraser.
- switch off your mobile phone, pager and any other electronic devices and put them with your personal belongings outside the test room.
- tell the test invigilator immediately if the conditions on the day of the test in any way impede your performance.

### You must not ...

- impersonate another person or have another person impersonate you.
- attempt to cheat, copy the work of another candidate or disrupt the test.
- use, or attempt to use, a dictionary, pager, spell-checker, electronic recorder or mobile phone for the duration of the test. Any candidate doing so will be disqualified.

- talk to or disturb other candidates once the examination has started.
- use, or attempt to use, a dictionary.
- reproduce any part of the test in any format/medium. Any candidate doing so will have their test results disqualified and be liable to prosecution.
- remove any materials used during the examination. This includes, but is not limited to, examination papers, Speaking task cards, answer sheets and working paper.

### Make sure you attend on time

- Know the date, time and place of your examination and arrive before the scheduled start time.
- If you arrive late for any of the components, report to the supervisor or invigilator. You may not be allowed to take the examination.

### Provide what you need

- Take into the examination room only a pen, pencil, an eraser, a water bottle and your ID.
- You must not use correction fluid or highlighters.
- Leave anything which you do not need, or which is not allowed, outside the examination room.
- You may not lend anything to, or borrow anything from, another candidate during the examination.
- Do not bring valuables as the test centre cannot be responsible for these.

### Examination instructions

- Listen to the supervisor and do what you are asked to do.
- Tell the supervisor or invigilator at once:
  - if you think you have the wrong question paper.
  - if the question paper is incomplete or illegible.
- Read carefully and follow the instructions printed on the question paper and on the answer sheet.
- Fill in the details required on the front of your question paper and on your answer sheet before the start of the examination.

## Advice and assistance during the examination

- If you are not sure about what to do, raise your hand and an invigilator will come to help you.
- You must not ask for, and will not be given, any explanation of the questions.
- If you do not feel well on the day of the examination or think that your work may be affected for any other reason, tell the supervisor or invigilator.

## Leaving the examination room

- You may not leave the examination room without the permission of the supervisor or invigilator.
- You cannot leave your seat until all papers have been collected and you have been told you can leave.
- When you leave the examination room you must leave behind any paper used for rough work, clearly crossed through, and any other materials provided for the examination.
- Do not make any noise near the examination room.

## Results

- Results are issued by test centres, usually 13 days after the paper-based test.
- Results may be delayed or withheld where any of the rules and regulations have been breached.
- In exceptional circumstances, results may be delayed and you may be required to retake one or more modules where the pattern of module results is highly unusual.