

Skills development

Understanding the instructions and the question

IELTS Writing Task 2 questions usually include the following statements:

- You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.
- Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.
- Use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

1 Decide if these statements are True or False.

- A You must spend exactly 40 minutes on this task.
- B To write about the topics, you need general rather than specialist knowledge.
- C You don't need to include your opinions.
- D You should present a clear argument giving examples and reasons.
- E Your writing should be in an informal, personal style.

Writing Task 2 questions usually include one of these instructions:

- To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- Discuss.
- What are your opinions on this?

2 Match the instructions above to these explanations.

- A Present both sides of this issue
- B Give your personal views on this issue
- C How much do you agree or disagree with this issue?

Understanding the topic and the task

Answer these questions.

Settling into a new culture can be extremely difficult. Although some 'culture shock' is inevitable, there are a number of ways to make living overseas much easier.

Discuss.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 What is the main topic? | 2 What is the task? |
| A Visiting foreign countries and new cultures. | A Suggest ways to reduce the effects of 'culture shock'. |
| B The difficulties of studying overseas. | B Write about the advantages of living overseas. |
| C Adapting to life in a new country. | C Give reasons why living in the UK is more difficult than living in other countries. |

Remember

- Make sure you understand what the topic or subject of the question is. Underline key words if necessary.
- Read the question carefully to identify exactly what you need to do.
- Focus on the question itself, not on what you want to write about.

Skills practice

1 Identify the topics and tasks for these questions.

1 *One of the most serious problems that cities now face is crime. What are the most effective measures to tackle crime in urban areas?*

Main topic:
Task:

2 *The effects of increased global tourism are more likely to be harmful than beneficial. Discuss.*

Main topic:
Task:

3 *Using animals to test the safety of cosmetics or drugs used for medical reasons is never acceptable. To what extent do you agree with this statement?*

Main topic:
Task:

In the IELTS Writing Task 2, candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- i present the solution to a problem
- ii present and justify an opinion or evaluate and challenge ideas
- iii compare and contrast evidence and opinions

2 Find the verbs in statements i–iii above that mean:

- to consider how things are different and how they are similar
- to show a good reason for something
- to compare two things to show how they are different
- to question whether something is true or accurate

3 Now match statements i–iii to questions 1–3.

Remember

- You must write at least the number of words specified or you will lose marks.
- You will not have time to count words in the exam, so count words when you are practising so you know roughly how much to write.

Brainstorming and planning

1 Look at the question about settling into a new culture. Then decide where to put the items in the table. The first one has been done for you as an example.

Settling into a new culture can be extremely difficult. Although some 'culture shock' is inevitable, there are a number of ways to make living overseas much easier.

Discuss.

keep in contact with friends/family people language culture and lifestyle
 accommodation find out about the place before you go
 try and meet/speak to local people food and drink religion
 join a club or society sample local food observe/respect local customs
 miss friends/family learn the language

Remember

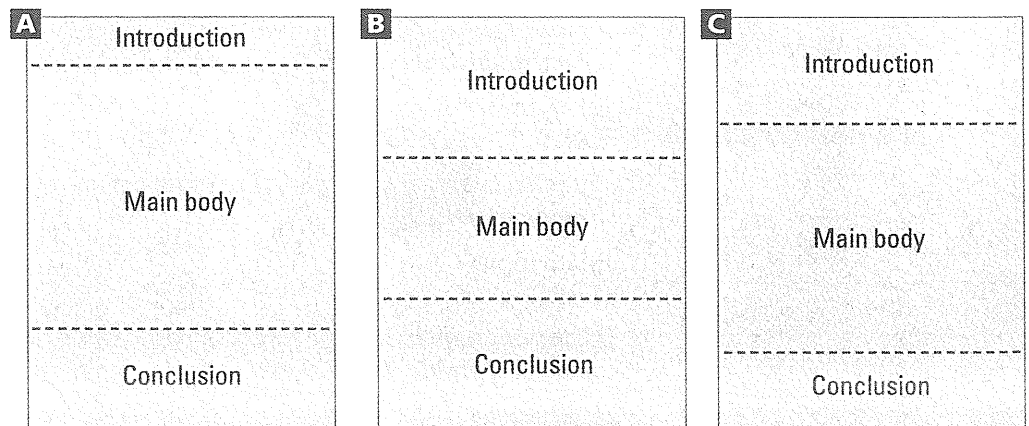
- It is important to generate ideas as quickly as possible.
- Use mindmaps, spidergrams and lists to organize information quickly.

Problems of living overseas	Ways to make living overseas easier
language	learn the language

2 Can you add one more point to each column in the table?

3 Now decide which you think are the three greatest difficulties when settling into a new culture.

4 Look at the three diagrams below. Which is the most appropriate essay structure for a Task 2 answer?



Remember

- A good essay or composition must have a beginning, a middle and an end.
- Decide what you're going to write and make a brief plan outlining what each paragraph will contain.
- Write brief notes on what you want to include in each paragraph. This helps to prompt you as you write your essay and serves as a useful checklist when you have finished.
- A useful guideline to follow is to write an introduction of approximately 50 words, the main body of 170 words or more and a conclusion of 30–40 words. However, these amounts are flexible.

Remember

- Don't copy out the question. You will not gain marks for this.
- The introduction needs to be relevant to the question.
- Write in an impersonal, academic style.

5 Which would be the best overall structure for this question?

Settling into a new culture can be extremely difficult. Although some 'culture shock' is inevitable, there are a number of ways to make living overseas much easier. Discuss.

A

- Para. 1 – Intro: main difficulties of living overseas
- Para. 2 – Examples of inevitable culture shock
- Para. 3 – Suggestions on how to reduce culture shock
- Para. 4 – Summary / conclusion of points above

B

- Para. 1 – Intro: living and working overseas
- Para. 2 – Examples of positive points of living overseas
- Para. 3 – Examples of negative points of living overseas
- Para. 4 – Summary of your opinion

C

- Para. 1 – Intro: why you enjoy living overseas
- Para. 2 – Reasons why people live overseas
- Para. 3 – Suggestions on best places to live and study overseas

THE INTRODUCTION

Aim and contents

- A good introduction includes a general statement about the topic and says what the purpose of the essay is.
- It may also include the initial views of the writer on this subject – views that will be developed later.
- An introduction must be clear and relevant.

Which of the introductions below is most appropriate for this question. Why?

Settling into a new culture can be extremely difficult. Although some 'culture shock' is inevitable, there are a number of ways to make living overseas much easier. Discuss.

- 1 *Settling into a new culture can be very difficult. Although some 'culture shock' is inevitable, there are many ways to make living abroad easier.*
- 2 *I really enjoy living abroad but sometimes it is very hard and I miss my friends and family. I have been living in the UK for two years now and the best thing about it is learning English. However, the weather is awful and I really hate the food!*
- 3 *People move overseas to live, study or work for many different reasons. Although this can be a very positive experience there will often be difficulties to overcome. These problems might include getting used to living in a different culture, not knowing the language or simply missing friends and family.*

THE MAIN BODY

Aim and contents

- This is the main part of your essay and will develop the key ideas and topic mentioned in the introduction.
- In IELTS Writing Task 2, this section will probably consist of two or three paragraphs.
- This section must be related to the opening and closing paragraphs.

1 Read the question again. Then rearrange the sentences A–F below to make a clear paragraph. Consider:

- 1 Which is the topic sentence (the sentence that gives the main idea of this paragraph)?
- 2 Which sentences provide supporting evidence for the main idea?
- 3 Which sentence provides the link with the next paragraph?

Settling into a new culture can be extremely difficult. Although some 'culture shock' is inevitable, there are a number of ways to make living overseas much easier.

Discuss.

- A Not being able to speak the language very well can make life even more difficult.
- B However, there are a number of ways to reduce the difficulties.
- C Adjusting to a new culture can often take weeks or months.
- D In addition, other problems may arise from different lifestyles, types of food or accommodation.
- E During this period it is not uncommon for people to feel very homesick and really miss their friends and family.
- F There is no doubt that living overseas can be very difficult at times.

2 Now write the first paragraph of the main body of your answer using sentences A–F above.

3 Put the linking words in the box in the appropriate place in the table. Then add one more word for each column.

Remember
Paragraphs and topic sentences give your writing structure and provide links between sections.

~~in addition~~ because
secondly therefore
finally besides
~~however~~ despite this
so although ~~firstly~~
moreover ~~as a result~~

Sequencers	Reason or result	Contrast	Extra information
<i>firstly</i>	<i>as a result</i>	<i>however</i>	<i>in addition</i>

4 Choose an appropriate linking word from the box to complete the paragraph.

(1) , it is a good idea to find as much information as possible before you move to another country by reading books or searching the Internet. (2) , speak to other people who have lived abroad and discuss their experiences. (3) , it is important to learn the language and (4) taking lessons is advisable. When you are living in a new country, if possible, try and make friends with local people (5) you do not become lonely or isolated. (6) , it is useful to keep in contact with people from your own country too. (7) aim to be open-minded about the whole experience.

5 What are the four suggestions given in this paragraph about how to reduce 'culture shock'?

6 Improve the information by using an appropriate linking word. The first one has been done for you as an example.

0 The city centre flat was very expensive. A lot of traffic noise could be heard.
(Extra information)

The city centre flat was very expensive. In addition/Moreover, a lot of traffic noise could be heard.

1 Many women have successful careers nowadays. Compared to men, not many women have senior positions. (Contrast)

2 In England I live with a host family. My spoken English has improved rapidly. (Result)

3 Many students go overseas to study. They believe the quality of education is higher. (Reason)

Remember
Use linking words to give your writing cohesion

CONCLUSION

Aim and contents

The concluding paragraph sums up the key points covered in the essay.

1 Read the question again and choose the best conclusion for it from A–C below. Give your reasons.

Settling into a new culture can be extremely difficult. Although some 'culture shock' is inevitable, there are a number of ways to make living overseas much easier. Discuss.

A *Last but not least, living abroad is very difficult.*

B *Although living abroad results in inevitable problems, it is clear that a number of strategies could be useful in preventing many of these difficulties. If this advice is taken, the experience is likely to be far more positive.*

C *To sum up, here's my advice to you. Try and learn a language, speak to local people and follow local habits and traditions. I'm sure if you do this you'll be fine and everything will be great. That's all.*

Remember

- The conclusion must refer back to the points made in the essay. Don't include new information.
- The conclusion can sum up your views but should be written in an impersonal, academic style.

2 Use the words below to write a different conclusion for this question.

In / conclusion / settling / new / country / cause / problems

Some / difficulties / cannot / avoided / example ...

However / there / solutions / such as ...

Living / abroad / often / positive / experience / enjoy / possible

.....
.....
.....

Skills practice

1 Do you remember what the topic and the task were for this question?

One of the most serious problems that cities now face is crime. What are the most effective measures to tackle crime in urban areas?

Topic:

Task:

2 Brainstorm ideas for the question above. Use the table to make notes.

Other problems in cities	Crimes	Ways to prevent/reduce
<i>congestion</i>	<i>murder</i>	<i>more police</i>

3 Suggest an outline for the question.

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Paragraph 3

Paragraph 4

Paragraph 5

4 Choose the best topic sentence A, B or C for the introduction below.

A *Crime is a really big problem in all cities.*

B *There is no doubt that numerous problems exist in most modern cities.*

C *Nowadays crime is more important than any other city problem.*

Although traffic congestion, pollution and overcrowding often occur, many people believe that crime is the most serious problem in urban areas. Indeed, television and newspaper reports often tell us that crime continues to rise. However, it is possible to tackle this serious issue in a number of ways.

5 In the first paragraph of the main body, you could say that your first solution to reduce crime would be to increase the number of police. Write a suitable topic sentence below.

.....
If more police were on the streets, whether on foot or in patrol cars, criminals would be less likely to commit crimes and people would feel much safer. Having more police visible at night would be particularly beneficial.

6 In the next paragraph, the topic sentence is given. Write two or three supporting sentences.

A second possibility would be to make laws stricter and punishments more severe.

.....
.....
.....
.....

7 In the next paragraph, number the sentences in the correct order.

- This would reduce burglary and theft.*
- Thirdly, methods to increase security might deter potential criminals.*
- In terms of personal safety, rape alarms or even small weapons could prevent some attacks on people.*
- For example, more effective alarms in houses and cars.*
- In addition, more information about home security would also be useful.*

8 Choose an appropriate word or phrase from the box to complete the gaps in the final paragraph.

increased do however would are ways reduced although in addition methods

In conclusion, (1) crime is a major problem in most cities in the world, the situation can be addressed by adopting the (2) mentioned above. In this way, the negative effects could be (3) and people living in cities (4) feel much safer.

Now check the model answer on page 82.

Further practice

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Using animals to test the safety of cosmetics or drugs used for medical reasons is never acceptable. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

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

Write at least 250 words.