

Test section – Writing Task 2

Developing arguments

Activities

1. Understanding the question – True or False
2. Generating ideas
3. Organising a balanced argument
4. Writing the essay

Aims

- to help students understand how to prepare for writing.
- to help students identify and write balanced arguments.

Learning outcomes

- Students will have understood how to develop an argument through preparing to write by analysing the question, and the generation of ideas.
- Students will have analysed two approaches to providing a balanced argument.

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

Material: Worksheet 1

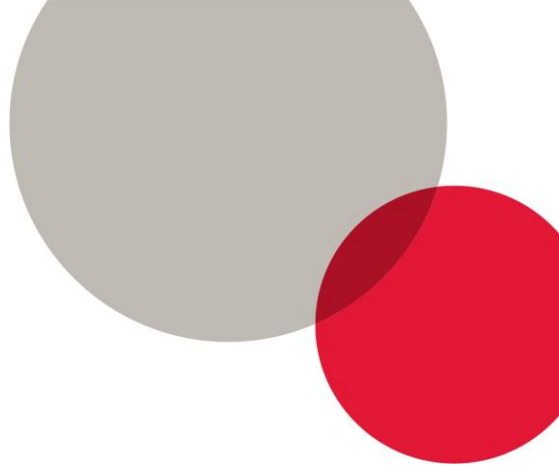
Time: 15 minutes

Procedure:

- introduce focus of the lesson: Writing Task 2 – developing an argument.
- give each student a copy of Worksheet 1 and one minute to read the Task 2 question.
- elicit possible next steps before writing i.e. 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 T/F task alone before checking answers in pairs and then open-class.

Answers

- 1 False. This is presented as fact and is not the area of debate.
- 2 False. The question is about the impact of nuclear energy as an alternative.
- 3 True. This is the focus of the debate.
- 4 True. Although you could write this response entirely one-sided, 100% agree, it is important to provide some balance by including at least one argument from the other side, even if it is to refute it.
- 5 False. This is not the area of debate.
- 6 True. It is appropriate to mention other alternatives as the question suggests that only nuclear is realistic. However, the discussion of nuclear energy should be the main focus of the response.
- 7 False. No expertise knowledge on any topic is required but examples from the test taker's awareness of the topic is fine. Citing studies or research is not what is expected of the task.
- 8 False. See answer to 4.
- 9 True. See answer to 4.
- 10 True. See answer to 7.



Activity 2: Generating ideas

Material: Worksheet 1

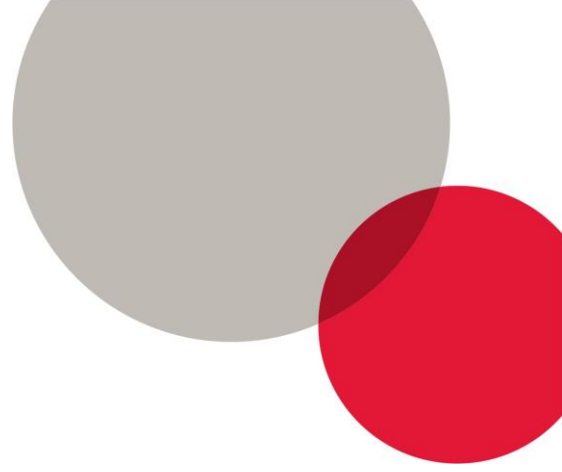
Time: 10 minutes

Procedure:

- draw attention to the brainstorm table and the headings for both columns.
- students work alone matching the arguments to the appropriate column.
- give students another 2 minutes to think of their own arguments to add to each column.
- students work in pairs or small groups to exchange arguments and add further ideas to their table.

Answers

Reasons I agree that the only realistic alternative is nuclear energy.	Reasons I disagree with the statement that the only realistic alternative is nuclear energy.
<p>b. Modern nuclear power stations are designed with many safety features.</p> <p>c. Nuclear power is a much more economical way to produce energy.</p> <p>d. Nuclear power offers an almost limitless supply of energy.</p> <p><i>Further possible arguments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All waste is contained instead of going directly into the atmosphere. ○ Nations that have no oil and gas reserves can produce their own energy independently. ○ Nuclear power stations are safer places for people to work than coal-fired power stations. ○ Nuclear power stations do not produce greenhouse gases. 	<p>a. There are other alternatives to fossil fuels, such as wind and solar power, which pose fewer risks.</p> <p><i>Further possible arguments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mining of uranium causes environmental damage. • There is always a danger that human error or negligence could cause an accident. • Safely disposing of radioactive waste is expensive. • Radioactive waste poses a danger for centuries.



Activity 3: Organising a balanced argument

Material: Worksheet 2

Time: 20 minutes

Procedure:

- give each student a copy of Worksheet 2.
- draw attention to the paragraph, clarify that this is only 1 body paragraph and the essay is likely to have more than one of these.
- working alone, students complete the gaps in the paragraph using the linking words in the box provided.
- students work in pairs and compare their answers.
- get class feedback.
- working pairs or small groups, students discuss the analysis questions.
- get class feedback, elicit and focus on the structure used here.

Answers

Ex 1

1 First of all, 2 Secondly, 3 Instead, 4 As a result, 5 Furthermore, 6 Finally

Ex 2

The writer agrees with the statement (based on this one paragraph). The paragraph contains only positive arguments in favour of nuclear energy. The writer lists positive arguments and provides examples of these, they provide examples based on their own knowledge of the topic – no expertise required.

They will likely have another paragraph outlining some negatives before a conclusion which clarifies their position (though do accept any logical responses to this).

Procedure:

- repeat the procedure for the next paragraph
- get class feedback, elicit and focus on the structure used here.
- elicit discussion on the two different structures used and which one students are used to using / would like to try in their own response to the question.

Answers

Ex 3

1 for instance, 2 while/although, 3 moreover, 4 causing, 5 despite, 6 while/although

The writer disagrees with the statement and is opposed to the use of nuclear energy. The entire paragraph argues against the positive arguments for its use. The writer presents a positive argument for nuclear energy and then refutes it. They may have a second main body paragraph which outlines why other alternative sources of energy are better than nuclear energy (though do accept any logical responses to this).

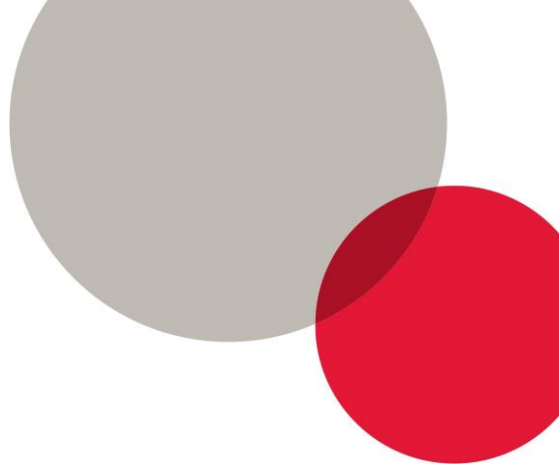
Activity 4: Writing the essay

Material: Worksheet 3

Time: 40 minutes (at home practice)

Procedure:

- draw attention to Worksheet 3 and the essay question.
- you may wish to carry out the first 3 points in class if you have time. Alternatively, you can ask students to submit their brainstorming table along with their completed essay.

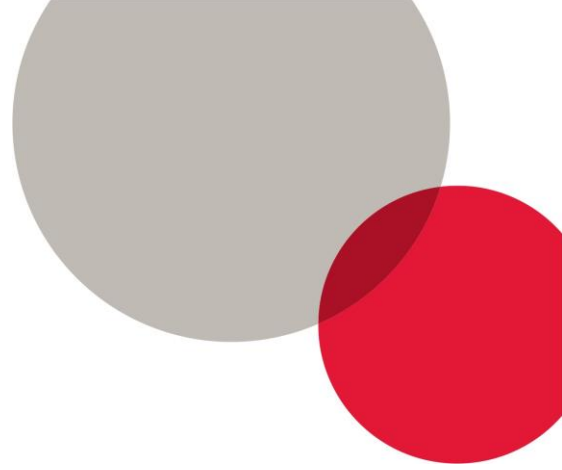


Follow-up activities

Draw attention to how preparing to write might affect their band score in **Task response** and **Coherence & Cohesion**. These are provided as guidance though you may need to adapt this to include your students' target band scores.

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

	Task response	Coherence & Cohesion
Band 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main parts of the prompt are appropriately addressed. A clear and developed position is presented. 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are logically organised and there is a clear progression throughout the response. (A few lapses may occur, but these are minor.) A range of cohesive devices including reference and substitution is used flexibly but with some inaccuracies or some over/under use. Paragraphing is generally used effectively to support overall coherence, and the sequencing of ideas within a paragraph is generally logical.
Band 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main parts of the prompt are addressed (though some may be more fully covered than others). An appropriate format is used. A position is presented that is directly relevant to the prompt, although the conclusions drawn may be unclear, unjustified or repetitive. Main ideas are relevant, but some may be insufficiently developed or may lack clarity, while some supporting arguments and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are generally arranged coherently and there is a clear overall progression. 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. 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.



	evidence may be less relevant or inadequate.	
Band 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main parts of the prompt are incompletely addressed. The format may be inappropriate in places. The writer expresses a position, but the development is not always clear. Some main ideas are put forward, but they are limited and are not sufficiently developed and/or there may be irrelevant detail. There may be some repetition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation is evident but is not wholly logical and there may be a lack of overall progression. Nevertheless, there is a sense of underlying coherence to the response. The relationship of ideas can be followed but the sentences are not fluently linked to each other. There may be limited/overuse of cohesive devices with some inaccuracy. The writing may be repetitive due to inadequate and/or inaccurate use of reference and substitution. Paragraphing may be inadequate or missing.

Writing Task 2

Worksheet 1

Understanding the question

Example question

The rising cost and decreasing supply of fossil fuels such as oil and gas, along with environmental concerns, means that their continued use as our main source of energy is impractical and alternative sources must be found. The only realistic alternative is nuclear energy.

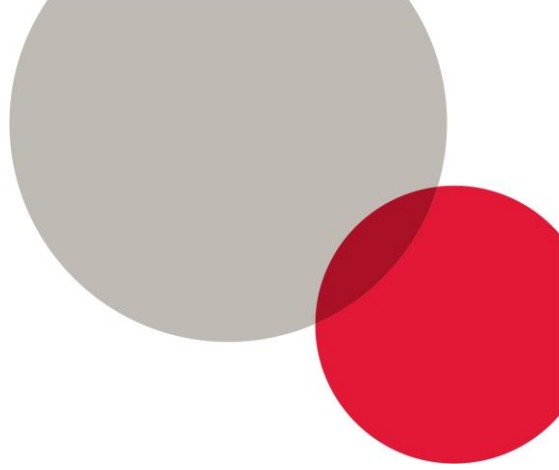
To what extent do you agree or disagree?

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

Write at least 250 words.

Look at the question above and decide if the following statements are **True** or **False**.

- 1 The question asks whether or not fossil fuels are impractical.
- 2 You should give a detailed description of how fossil fuels cause global warming.
- 3 The question asks whether nuclear energy is a good alternative to fossil fuels.
- 4 You should discuss the arguments for and against nuclear energy.
- 5 You should discuss the arguments for and against fossil fuels.
- 6 You should mention other alternative energy resources.
- 7 You should give detailed historical accounts of nuclear disasters.
- 8 You should only mention your opinions.
- 9 You should express your opinions, but show awareness of others.
- 10 You should include relevant facts that help to support your opinions.



Generating ideas

1 Put the following ideas into the correct column.

- a. There are other alternatives to fossil fuels, such as wind and solar power, which pose fewer risks.
- b. Modern nuclear power stations are designed with many safety features.
- c. Nuclear power is a much more economical way to produce energy.
- d. Nuclear power offers an almost limitless supply of energy.

Reasons I agree that the only realistic alternative is nuclear energy .	Reasons I disagree with the statement that the only realistic alternative is nuclear energy .

2 Add your own arguments to each column.

3 Compare your ideas with a partner. Try to add further arguments to the table.

Writing Task 2

Worksheet 2

Organising a balanced argument

1 Connect the ideas in the example paragraph below with words from the box.

As a result Finally First of all Furthermore Instead Secondly

There are a number of arguments in favour of using nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuels. [1] _____, it is an economical source of energy. The power generated by nuclear power stations costs much less to produce than from coal or oil fired stations. [2] _____, unlike traditional power stations, nuclear power plants do not pollute the atmosphere with their waste. [3] _____, the waste is stored in safe containers deep underground. [4] _____, a move to nuclear power will reduce greenhouses gases that are responsible for global warming in the atmosphere. [5] _____, power stations have been shown to be safer places for people to work than coal-fired power stations. [6] _____, nuclear power can potentially supply all our energy needs for many centuries to come.

2 Read the completed paragraph and answer the questions below with a partner.

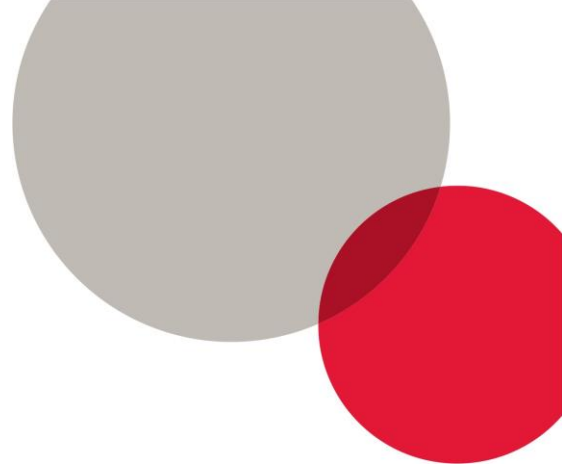
What is the writer's position?

How do you know?

How have they organised their argument?

What support have they provided?

What do you think the rest of the essay looks like?



3 Connect the ideas in the example paragraph below with words from the box.

causing despite for instance although moreover while

The claims made by those in favour of nuclear power do not stand up to close examination. It is often said, [1] _____, that nuclear power does not harm the environment. [2] _____ it is true that greenhouse gases are not produced by the use of nuclear energy, mining for uranium causes real environmental damage. [3] _____, many reactors use rivers for cooling. This raises temperatures in the river water, [4] _____ harm to life in and around those rivers. It is also argued that the technology of modern reactors makes accidents almost impossible. [5] _____ these claims, accidents have happened - most famously at Chernobyl. No amount of technology can prevent human error, carelessness or laziness. [6] _____ these types of accidents are incredibly rare, their consequences have devastating, lifelong effects.

4 Read the completed paragraph and answer the questions below with a partner.

What is the writer's position?

How do you know?

How have they organised their argument?

What support have they provided?

What do you think the rest of the essay looks like?

