

IELTS Writing Tips

- **Work with a teacher.** Write several sample essays and have them corrected by a teacher. You cannot prepare for the writing section of the IELTS alone, as you have no way of receiving feedback on your errors. If you are short on money, at least invest in a teacher or class to prepare for the writing and speaking sections of the IELTS, and then do the listening and reading sections on your own by working with a good preparatory IELTS guidebook.
- **Read the questions** very carefully. Often the question will ask you to do three or four different things, aside from the main question. Jot them down and make sure you address all of them in your answer. *The IELTS examiner will be checking for this.*
- **Practice writing tasks** within the given time limits. It really doesn't matter if you can write a beautiful answer in two hours. Always recreate the conditions of the exam as closely as possible, when doing any kind of practice exercises.
- **Plan before you write.** Even though you feel under pressure for time, spend the first few minutes planning your writing. Decide what you're going to say and how you'll expand on it. When you know *what* to write, you can concentrate on *how* to write it best. Experiment with the great variety of outlining and mind-mapping techniques to help you sketch out a plan quickly.
- **Write in an organized way.** When you've planned in advance, you'll end up with a more organized, logical piece of writing, which will earn you higher marks. There are many ways to be organized – linear, circular, etc. – but in the end the final product must be cohesive.
- **Stay on topic.** You will be penalized if you stray off topic. This is where the initial few minutes of planning can help you a great deal.
- **Divide your writing** into paragraphs. It is confusing to be faced with a block of writing, with no divisions. You wouldn't expect to read a magazine article or book like this. Always divide your writing into paragraphs.
- **Write clearly.** This is not the time or place to experiment with new vocabulary or idioms. Use simple, clear English to get your ideas across in a powerful way.

- **Write legibly.** Though marks are not granted or taken away for poor or messy writing, the examiner should be able to read what you have written without undue difficulty.
- **Spell correctly.** Yes, this does affect your score so avoid careless mistakes. A careless mistake is when you have spelt the same word in various ways in the same piece of writing or when you misspell a word which is already given in the exam topic and all you have to do is copy it correctly. That's not okay. Watch for this when you're practicing and resolve to overcome it.
- **Don't use slang.** This is the time to show off the best English you know. Find the correct way to express your thoughts and convey your ideas, without resorting to slang. Be aware that certain expressions, such as "kids" instead of "children" and "guys" or "gals" instead of "men" or "women", also fall into the category of slang and should be avoided.
- **Don't use contractions** in the Academic Writing tasks. In English, contractions are used in informal writing, and the Academic tasks demand formal writing.
- **Use rich vocabulary.** You have learned English for many years and this is the time to use what you know. Stay away from over-used adjectives such as "good" or "bad". Instead, use more dramatic, expressive words, such as excellent, wonderful, superb, or adverse, horrible, terrible, etc. Choose the more precise word over the more general one. This will make your language come alive, in speech or in writing, and earn you higher marks.
- **Don't write more or less words than you need to.** Writing too many will take too much time, and there is a greater possibility of making mistakes. Writing too few is worse – it will cause you to lose marks.
- In the essay, **don't repeat major chunks of the question** in your answer. Instead, state what you understand of the questions and what you plan to include in your answer.