

# Master IELTS Writing Task 2

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## IELTS Writing Task 2

**Question types: ADVANTAGES + DISADVANTAGES**



Iain

Rebecca

**FORMER IELTS EXAMINERS**

Prepare for {IELTS}

## **ADVANTAGES + DISADVANTAGES**

**Strategy 1: All  
ads + all disads**

**INTRODUCTION:** Include a general comment on the topic; paraphrase the question; include a thesis statement which indicates that the question is important or a thesis statement which indicates your plan

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 1:** Describe all the advantages in a 'list' paragraph – you can include support for individual advantages

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 2:** Describe all the disadvantages in a 'list' paragraph – you can include support for individual disadvantages

**CONCLUSION:** Comment on the question with a 'consensus' or by giving an opinion which refers to advantages and disadvantages; make a general comment about your arguments/points; express a hope, wish, fear, worry or prediction for the future

**COMMENT:** This is a good option if you have several advantages and disadvantages, but do not want to include too much support for each one

# Look at this IELTS Writing Task 2

Judges often prefer to sentence young offenders to community service. Rather than going to prison, youngsters who commit a crime might be made to pick up litter, do gardening or work in residential homes for the elderly. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

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

**Write at least 250 words**

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**Write at least 250 words**

Starting your essay with a general comment about the topic is a good idea, but you can write a strong essay without this sentence

Judges often prefer to sentence young offenders to community service. Rather than going to prison, youngsters who commit a crime might be made to pick up litter, do gardening or work in residential homes for the elderly. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

Those in their late teens and early twenties are far more likely to commit a crime than any other age-group. The vast majority of these offences - such as joy-riding, vandalism and anti-social behaviour when under the influence of drink - are petty crimes. In many cases, the legal system is reluctant to impose a custodial sentence and instead asks these juveniles and young adults to carry out community service. Clearly, this approach can have a hugely positive effect on young criminals, but it can also backfire.

Paraphrasing the question is usually a good idea, but you can write a strong essay without this paraphrase

Judges often prefer to sentence young offenders to community service. Rather than going to prison, youngsters who commit a crime might be made to pick up litter, do gardening or work in residential homes for the elderly. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

Those in their late teens and early twenties are far more likely to commit a crime than any other age-group. The vast majority of these offences - such as joy-riding, vandalism and anti-social behaviour when under the influence of drink - are petty crimes. In many cases, the legal system is reluctant to impose a custodial sentence and instead asks these juveniles and young adults to carry out community service. Clearly, this approach can have a hugely positive effect on young criminals, but it can also backfire.

In this type of essay, your thesis statement should indicate that there are both pros and cons, or it can just indicate that you plan to write about the pros and cons

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A short topic sentence at the beginning of a main paragraph helps to guide your reader

Judges often prefer to sentence young offenders to community service. Rather than going to prison, youngsters who commit a crime might be made to pick up litter, do gardening or work in residential homes for the elderly. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

**Judges are reluctant to lock youngsters up.** They may fear that imposing a custodial sentence will turn a juvenile into a hardened criminal and lead to a life of crime. There is statistical evidence to suggest that this happens. In addition, by making those found guilty work with the elderly, the disabled or the vulnerable, it is hoped that they will come to appreciate how fortunate they are and develop into mature, responsible and law-abiding citizens. Finally, there is the economic perspective: prison is horrendously expensive and community service is a far cheaper alternative.



You can support your topic sentence with a list of points. You can provide support for some of these points

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**You can support your topic sentence with a list of points. You do not need to support all of these points**

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A short topic sentence starting with 'However' shows the reader that you have moved from advantages to disadvantages

Judges often prefer to sentence young offenders to community service. Rather than going to prison, youngsters who commit a crime might be made to pick up litter, do gardening or work in residential homes for the elderly. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

**However, this approach certainly has its critics.** Some criminologists complain that not punishing juveniles severely gives them the impression that they can get away with further criminal activity. Some experts say that the short, sharp shock of a period of incarceration will often lead youngsters to reconsider their behaviour. Furthermore, there is often very little supervision of criminals doing work in the community and many of them may just find the experience boring and pointless. Finally, it should not be forgotten that vulnerable adults and children may prefer not to be looked after or helped by convicted criminals.

You can include a list of points which support the topic sentence

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Using linking words like 'Furthermore' and 'Finally' can help your reader to follow your list

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**Your two main body paragraphs do not need to have exactly the same number of points or sentences, but try to keep a balance**

**Judges often prefer to sentence young offenders to community service. Rather than going to prison, youngsters who commit a crime might be made to pick up litter, do gardening or work in residential homes for the elderly. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?**

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If you want to give your opinion in this type of essay, make sure it relates to both sides of the argument – writing that one option is completely right is a bad idea

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**Overall, I would suggest that, in certain circumstances, community service can be successful in making the young less likely to re-offend.** The likelihood of a positive outcome probably depends on the character and attitude of the young criminal and the quality of the community service which she or he is expected to do. I hope that in the future, law-enforcement agencies use this policy with greater care, only offering this privilege to those who will genuinely benefit.

You can provide support for the opinion you give at the beginning of the conclusion

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**Ending the essay  
with a hope is  
usually a strength**

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# Look at this IELTS Writing Task 2

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

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

**Write at least 250 words**

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**Write at least 250 words**

Starting your essay with a general comment about the issue is a good idea, but you can write a strong essay without this sentence

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

**Democracies tend to hold general elections once every four or five years, allowing everyone considered an adult to participate.** A small number of governments have taken the bold step of inviting those aged sixteen or over to join the electorate. This essay will seek to identify the most important positive and negative consequences of such a policy.



Including sentences which both comment on the topic and paraphrase the question can be a strength

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

Democracies tend to hold general elections once every four or five years, allowing everyone considered an adult to participate. **A small number of governments have taken the bold step of inviting those aged sixteen or over to join the electorate.** This essay will seek to identify the most important positive and negative consequences of such a policy.

If your thesis statement just gives your plan, make sure it is specific to the question – ‘I will discuss the benefits and drawbacks of this issue’ is weak

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

Democracies tend to hold general elections once every four or five years, allowing everyone considered an adult to participate. A small number of governments have taken the bold step of inviting those aged sixteen or over to join the electorate. **This essay will seek to identify the most important positive and negative consequences of such a policy.**

A short topic sentence at the beginning of a main paragraph helps to guide your reader

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

Some express concern about those still at school or college being able to influence the nation's choice of leaders. They claim that younger teenagers are immature and lack the mental capacity to make an informed and mature decision. They may not take the matter seriously. Critics worry that adolescents will be easily swayed by less relevant factors such as a politician's physical appearance, and that they will fail to grasp the complex arguments put forward in political debate. Above all, sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds are said to lack experience.

You can support your topic sentence with a list of points

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You can support some of your points with explanation or even evaluation

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**It is not necessary  
for you to support  
every point**

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Adding a sentence which summarises the paragraph's main point can be a strength in a longer paragraph

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One strength of this topic sentence is that it strongly connects to the previous paragraph

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

**However, some of the assertions underlying these concerns can be challenged.** Young people are probably at least as well informed as their older fellow-citizens, thanks to the prevalence of social media. In addition, they tend to be astute and able to discriminate clearly between honesty and deceit. Unlike older voters, teenagers are not restricted in how they think and can disagree with the status quo and demand change. Finally, it should be noted that elections are about the future, and the young have a greater stake in it than the old.



If you include more than three supporting points, you will need to write them concisely

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If you give your opinion, make sure it supports both sides

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

Having examined some of the principal arguments associated with the issue of voter age, I have come to the conclusion that it may sometimes make sense to permit those below the age of eighteen to take part in the democratic process. At the same time, the authorities should ensure that younger voters learn about citizenship, civics and world affairs, thus ensuring that they are equipped to make such an essential choice. Widening democracy in this way could, if done with care, make societies fairer and more harmonious, convincing adolescents that their voice matters.

Using a second sentence to explain why you may not completely support one side of the debate can be a strength

In many parts of the world, citizens are allowed to vote in elections at the age of eighteen or even twenty-one. A few countries have lowered the age at which people can vote to sixteen. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving the vote to those aged 16 and 17?

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Even if you want to show quite strong support for one side of the debate, try to avoid complete agreement

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## **ADVANTAGES + DISADVANTAGES**

**Strategy 1b: all  
ads + all disads  
(long)**

**INTRODUCTION:** Include a general comment on the topic; paraphrase the question; include a thesis statement which indicates that the question is important or a thesis statement which indicates your plan

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 1:** Describe/explain advantage 1

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 2:** Describe/explain advantage 2

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 3:** Describe/explain disadvantage 1

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 4:** Describe/explain disadvantage 2

**CONCLUSION:** Comment on the question with a 'consensus' or by giving an opinion which refers to advantages and disadvantages; make a general comment about your arguments/points; express a hope, wish, fear, worry or prediction for the future

**COMMENT:** This can work for stronger students with lots of ideas, but can be dangerous if you substitute quantity for quality



# Look at this IELTS Writing Task 2

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

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

**Write at least 250 words**

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

**Write at least 250 words**

It is sometimes a good idea to combine a general statement and a paraphrase of part of the question. This lets you write a concise introduction

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

Thanks to a range of factors such as improved transport and communication links, as well as the increased affluence of middle-class parents, it has become feasible to send youngsters to educational establishments in far-off lands. Experts differ on whether this approach is beneficial to the children concerned.

In this type of essay, your thesis statement can indicate that the issue is important, interesting, relevant to many people or contentious

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

Thanks to a range of factors such as improved transport and communication links, as well as the increased affluence of middle-class parents, it has become feasible to send youngsters to educational establishments in far-off lands. **Experts differ on whether this approach is beneficial to the children concerned.**

If your topic sentence refers to people 'broadening their minds', the rest of the paragraph should also refer to this issue

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

**The principal benefit is that those sent abroad have the opportunity to broaden their horizons.** They will undoubtedly be taught using different strategies and approaches, their teachers and classmates will have cultural backgrounds which they find perplexing and challenging. This process should make them question their beliefs and assumptions, and lead them to maturity.

Because this essay has more main paragraphs, each paragraph will probably include less support (maybe just 2 sentences)

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

The principal benefit is that those sent abroad have the opportunity to broaden their horizons. They will undoubtedly be taught using different strategies and approaches, their teachers and classmates will have cultural backgrounds which they find perplexing and challenging. This process should make them question their beliefs and assumptions, and lead them to maturity.

This is a short but well-structured paragraph with a topic sentence followed by support

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

A further positive aspect - assuming children go to a country where a different language is spoken - is that they will become proficient in a second language. This will make them stand out in the jobs market and enable them to live more prosperously when they become adults. It also has proven cognitive benefits.

This is a short but well-structured paragraph with a topic sentence followed by support

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A further positive aspect - assuming children go to a country where a different language is spoken - is that they will become proficient in a second language. **This will make them stand out in the jobs market and enable them to live more prosperously when they become adults. It also has proven cognitive benefits.**



Starting your third main body paragraph with 'However' shows the reader that you have moved from advantages to disadvantages

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

**However, we should not ignore the downsides of making young and potentially vulnerable individuals live in an alien culture with limited support.** Many youngsters of both primary-school and secondary-school age may feel homesick, lonely and even depressed. They might struggle to make friends and to get used to important aspects of life such as food and weather. This could certainly affect their education and be detrimental in the long-run.

**This support explains some of the problems of living in an 'alien' culture**

**Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?**

**However, we should not ignore the downsides of making young and potentially vulnerable individuals live in an alien culture with limited support. Many youngsters of both primary-school and secondary-school age may feel homesick, lonely and even depressed. They might struggle to make friends and to get used to important aspects of life such as food and weather. This could certainly affect their education and be detrimental in the long-run.**

This is a well-structured paragraph with a clear topic sentence and support

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

**Finally, it is worth considering what these boys and girls will lose by leaving their homeland.** Friendships are likely to be broken and, when the children eventually return, they will have missed important aspects of growing up with their friends. They might struggle to re-integrate themselves into their own culture, and this could be damaging emotionally, mentally and even physically.

This is a well-structured paragraph with a clear topic sentence and support

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Finally, it is worth considering what these boys and girls will lose by leaving their homeland. Friendships are likely to be broken and, when the children eventually return, they will have missed important aspects of growing up with their friends. They might struggle to re-integrate themselves into their own culture, and this could be damaging emotionally, mentally and even physically.

You can start your conclusion by stating that it is difficult to reach a decision or form an opinion

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

**Having considered the arguments related to foreign study, I find it hard to reach a definitive conclusion.** Undoubtedly, learning in another country can be a wonderful adventure and a life-enhancing experience for some. Others will certainly regret being sent abroad. I suspect that character traits such as introversion and extroversion are connected to how successful the experience is, and I would welcome research to ascertain exactly which children would gain the greatest reward from study overseas.

If you do this, you can restate the two positions

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**You can suggest a factor which might determine whether the benefits or drawbacks are greater...**

**Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?**

**Having considered the arguments related to foreign study, I find it hard to reach a definitive conclusion. Undoubtedly, learning in another country can be a wonderful adventure and a life-enhancing experience for some. Others will certainly regret being sent abroad. I suspect that character traits such as introversion and extroversion are connected to how successful the experience is, and I would welcome research to ascertain exactly which children would gain the greatest reward from study overseas.**



...and you can suggest that research is carried out so that the question can be answered

Being educated in a foreign country has become increasingly popular over the last few decades. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country?

Having considered the arguments related to foreign study, I find it hard to reach a definitive conclusion. Undoubtedly, learning in another country can be a wonderful adventure and a life-enhancing experience for some. Others will certainly regret being sent abroad. I suspect that character traits such as introversion and extroversion are connected to how successful the experience is, and I would welcome research to ascertain exactly which children would gain the greatest reward from study overseas.

## **ADVANTAGES + DISADVANTAGES**

**Strategy 2: point  
by point**

**INTRODUCTION:** Include a general comment on the topic; paraphrase the question; include a thesis statement which indicates that the question is important or a thesis statement which indicates your plan

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 1:** Describe advantages and disadvantages connected to one issue

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 2:** Describe advantages and disadvantages connected to a second issue

**MAIN PARAGRAPH 3 (?):** Describe advantages and disadvantages connected to a third issue

**CONCLUSION:** Comment on the question with a 'consensus' or by giving an opinion which refers to advantages and disadvantages; make a general comment about your arguments/points; express a hope, wish, fear, worry or prediction for the future

**COMMENT:** A difficult strategy for weaker candidates; a strategy which only works if you have pros/cons on specific areas

# Look at this IELTS Writing Task 2

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

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

**Write at least 250 words**

# Look at this IELTS Writing Task 2

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. **What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?**

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

**Write at least 250 words**

A general statement can indicate that this subject is important, that it affects many people, that it is new or that it has existed for a long time

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

**The role of government in supporting families has long been debated.** One significant issue is that, in many parts of the world, mothers of toddlers and infants are forced to stay at home looking after children because alternative childcare is either non-existent or exorbitantly expensive. Providing state-run facilities would undoubtedly help in some respects, but may be a retrograde step in others.

If you use two sentences to introduce the topic or question, move from a more general sentence to a more specific one

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The role of government in supporting families has long been debated. **One significant issue is that, in many parts of the world, mothers of toddlers and infants are forced to stay at home looking after children because alternative childcare is either non-existent or exorbitantly expensive.** Providing state-run facilities would undoubtedly help in some respects, but may be a retrograde step in others.

You can use the thesis statement to show that there are positive sides and negative sides to this issue

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

The role of government in supporting families has long been debated. One significant issue is that, in many parts of the world, mothers of toddlers and infants are forced to stay at home looking after children because alternative childcare is either non-existent or exorbitantly expensive. **Providing state-run facilities would undoubtedly help in some respects, but may be a retrograde step in others.**

Your topic sentence should make it clear which issue you are going to consider in this paragraph

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

**The first point worth considering relates to parents themselves.**

There is no denying that many find bringing up their infants deeply fulfilling and consider this to be the most precious and meaningful period of their life. These parents may resent being pressured into returning to work at the earliest possible opportunity. If free state-run nurseries were available, all but the most affluent parents would feel significant economic pressure to take advantage. Nevertheless, some mothers and fathers love the independence and mental stimulation which returning to employment gives them.



**If you put a disadvantage before an advantage in this paragraph, do the same in the other main body paragraphs**

**Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?**

**The first point worth considering relates to parents themselves. There is no denying that many find bringing up their infants deeply fulfilling and consider this to be the most precious and meaningful period of their life. These parents may resent being pressured into returning to work at the earliest possible opportunity. If free state-run nurseries were available, all but the most affluent parents would feel significant economic pressure to take advantage. Nevertheless, some mothers and fathers love the independence and mental stimulation which returning to employment gives them.**

**Ideally, try to make your advantage and disadvantage of similar length, but this is not vital. The second/final point you make will seem stronger than the first point you make, so can be shorter**

**Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?**

**The first point worth considering relates to parents themselves. There is no denying that many find bringing up their infants deeply fulfilling and consider this to be the most precious and meaningful period of their life. These parents may resent being pressured into returning to work at the earliest possible opportunity. If free state-run nurseries were available, all but the most affluent parents would feel significant economic pressure to take advantage.**

**Nevertheless, some mothers and fathers love the independence and mental stimulation which returning to employment gives them.**

Your topic sentence should make it clear which issue you are going to consider in this paragraph

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

**The perspective of the infants themselves should also be taken into account.** Numerous studies suggest that an individual's social development depends considerably on the ability to form close bonds with caregivers during the first couple of years of life. This would probably be facilitated by parents remaining at home. Yet pre-school children also need a great deal of social interaction which they might get from spending time in a nursery with others their age. Such a place might also provide youngsters with more emotional and intellectual stimulation than the home.

**You can describe  
your points and  
support them**

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**You can get a very high grade with two main paragraphs – a third one is not necessary**

**Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?**

**Finally, this question has implications for society as a whole. State-funded pre-school nurseries may be costly and require taxpayers to make a greater contribution. However, they would provide employment prospects which could stimulate economic growth. Parents taking short periods of maternity or paternity leave and then returning to the workforce could likewise benefit the national economy.**

**Your topic sentence should make it clear which issue you are going to consider in this paragraph**

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Remember that all points in this paragraph must be connected to 'society'

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Finally, this question has implications for society as a whole. **State-funded pre-school nurseries may be costly and require taxpayers to make a greater contribution.** However, they would provide employment prospects which could stimulate economic growth. Parents taking short periods of maternity or paternity leave and then returning to the workforce could likewise benefit the national economy.



It is possible to include 2 advantages or disadvantages, but they must be related to the general topic of the paragraph

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

Finally, this question has implications for society as a whole. State-funded pre-school nurseries may be costly and require taxpayers to make a greater contribution. **However, they would provide employment prospects which could stimulate economic growth. Parents taking short periods of maternity or paternity leave and then returning to the workforce could likewise benefit the national economy.**

You can start your conclusion by repeating the idea that there are both pros and cons

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

It seems reasonable to conclude that putting this proposal into effect would have both benefits and drawbacks. Undoubtedly, it would be popular with some and be heavily criticised by others. Probably the most sensible approach would be to offer limited financial support to mothers and fathers who wanted to return to employment and who struggled to pay for childcare. I fervently hope that governments will bear this suggestion in mind when formulating policy on childcare.

A compromise or consensus suggestion works well in this type of essay

Just as the state provides schools for children, it should also provide free nurseries and crèches so that young mothers and fathers could go back to work. What would be the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?

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**You can end with  
a hope that your  
suggestion will be  
implemented**

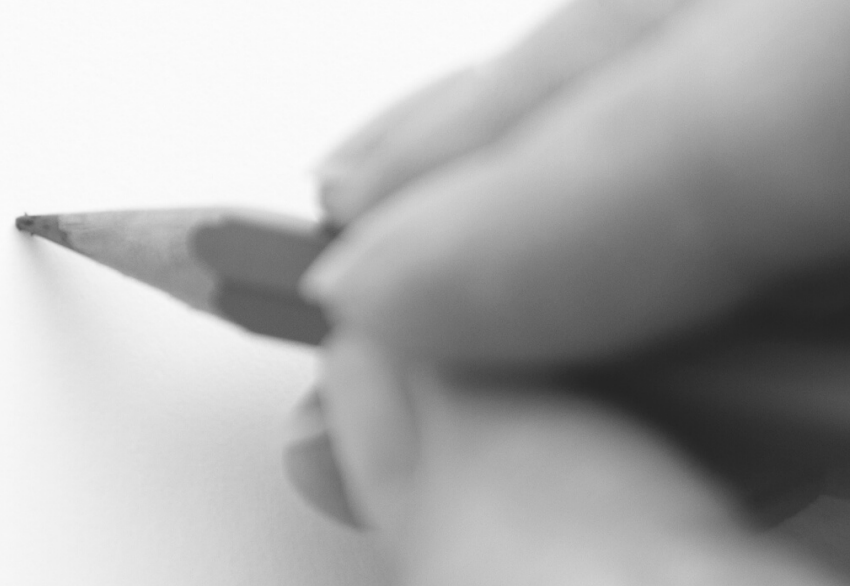
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# Master IELTS Writing Task 2

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Thanks for watching!



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