

IELTS TOEFL FCE CAE ESSAY WRITING

20 TYPICAL MISTAKES

IN STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

tips
illustrative examples
practical exercises



About the book

The book was written for those students who are planning to sit for EFL exams or tests such as FCE, CAE, the TOEFL and IELTS tests. The content is built on the description of typical mistakes made by exam-takers in their essays; it also includes comments and tips on how to avoid these errors, and practical exercises.

IELTS TOEFL CAMBRIDGE EXAMS

ESSAY WRITING

20 TYPICAL MISTAKES IN STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

tips illustrative examples practical exercises

By TANIA BENNETT

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TOEFL ESSAY WRITING
TYPICAL MISTAKES IN STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT
45 PRACTICAL EXERCISES WITH ANSWERS

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IELTS ESSAY WRITING
TYPICAL MISTAKES IN STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT
PART 1
INTRODUCTION
PART 2
MAIN PARAGRAPHS
PART 3
CONCLUSION
PART 4
PRACTICAL EXERCISES

Part 2, Part 3 and Part 4 will be issued in 2017

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MISTAKE 1

CONFUSING THE TYPES OF ESSAY QUESTIONS

Many students often forget to establish the type of their essay question; as a result they answer the wrong question.

TIP:

Identify the essay type before beginning to write the essay; each essay type has a different organizational structure.

The most common EFL exam essay question types are

- 1) Agree/disagree**
- 2) Preference**
- 3) Explanation**
- 4) Description**
- 5) Problem solving**
- 6) Contrast and compare**
- 7) Imaginary situation**
- 8) Advantages / Disadvantages**

Exercise 1-1

Study the essay questions 1-7. Identify the question types. Check with the answers.

Essay question 1 An increasing number of people today frequently change their careers and places of residence several times during their lives. Is this a positive development?

Essay question 2 Why is daily homework important? What is your opinion?

Essay question 3 Some students prefer learning a foreign language online; others don't. Which do you prefer?

Essay question 4 Money for postgraduate research is limited. Therefore, some people claim that financial support from governments should only be provided for scientific research rather than research for less useful subjects. Do you agree or disagree?

Essay question 5 Some people believe that the government should increase the number of sports facilities to improve public health, while others believe this has little effect and we need other measures to improve it. Discuss and give your own opinion.

Essay question 6 If you were given a sum of money to start your own business, what business would you start?

Essay question 7 The movement of people from agricultural areas to cities for work can cause serious problems in both places. What are the serious problems and what measures can be taken to solve the problems?

Essay question 8 How do people in your country typically spend their money?

Essay question 9 Many people support the development of renewable energy sources. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

Exercise 1-2

Study the introductions below. Do they address the right questions?

Essay question 1 An increasing number of people today frequently change their careers and place of residence several times during their lives. Is this a positive development? What is your opinion?

Intro 1 New technology has transformed all spheres of people's lives including the attitude to employment and place of living. In the modern world many people welcome and use the opportunities to live and work in different countries. I belong to this group of people.

Essay question 2 Why is daily homework important? What is your opinion?

Intro 2 Many students will confess that they do not enjoy doing their homework. However, from my point of view home assignments are an integral part of any educational process.

Essay question 3 Some students prefer learning a foreign language online; others don't. Which do you prefer?

Intro 3 Learning a foreign language online has many advantages. Instant access to educational materials and their variety are among the main benefits of online studies

in comparison to traditional classroom lessons.

Essay question 4 Money for postgraduate research is limited. Therefore, some people claim that financial support from governments should only be provided for scientific research rather than research for less useful subjects. Do you agree or disagree?

Intro 4 Many people think that postgraduate research is underfunded. I entirely disagree with this statement. Although public financial support to universities is often criticized for being too low, laboratories and science centres always receive abundant private funding.

Essay question 5 Some people believe that the government should increase the number of sports facilities to improve public health, while others believe this has little effect and we need other measures to improve it. Discuss and give your own opinion.

Intro 5 Public health is amid the main concerns of local governments. Its improvement depends on two factors – medical care and sports facilities. I totally agree with the statement that local authorities should fund building more sports centres to encourage people to do more sport.

Essay question 6 If you were given a sum of money to start your own business, what business would you start?

Intro 6 Some people choose to work independently, others prefer working for a company. From my point of view, the first scenario is more beneficial for an individual.

Essay question 7 The movement of people from agricultural areas to cities for work can cause serious problems in both places. What are the serious problems and what measures can be taken to solve the problems?

Intro 7 Many people prefer living in major cities to the countryside. Although it may not always be the route to personal and social wellbeing the advantages of this attitude outweigh the disadvantages.

MISTAKE 2

MISREADING OF THE ESSAY QUESTION

Many students often misread the essay question and so lose marks.

TIP:

In order not to confuse the task identify the key vocabulary in the essay question at the very beginning of the writing test.

Study the essay questions:

Essay question 1 Nowadays people can **work from home** using modern **technology**. Some think this is extremely **beneficial for workers**. Do you **agree** or **disagree** with this opinion?

Essay question 2 Nowadays people can **work from home** using modern **technology**. Some think this only **benefits the workers, but not the employers**. Do you **agree** or **disagree** with this opinion?

Essay question 3 Nowadays people can **work from home** using modern **technology** and are employed **from around the world**. Some think this **only benefits the employers, but not the workers**. Do you **agree** or **disagree** with this opinion?

Notes:

These three similarly worded questions require absolutely different answers.

In the answer to the first question – say if you agree/agree to some extent/disagree with the opinion that it's “beneficial for workers to work from home”; explain why; pay attention to the fact that there is no specification in the question if the employee is located in the same place/country or not with the

employer.

In the answer to the second question—say if you agree/agree to some extent/disagree with the opinion that “working from home benefits workers not employers”; explain why; pay attention to the fact that there is no specification in the question if the employer and employee are located in the same place/country or not.

The third question is about working internationally only; say if you agree/agree to some extent/disagree with the opinion that this opportunity is beneficial only for companies, not for workers. Take notice that this question also asks about working from home.

Exercise 2-1

Study the essay questions below, pay attention to the key words in the questions. How do the tasks differ in the groups? Compare your answers with the Answer key.

1.

Essay question 1 Many countries aim to improve living standards by economic development in small towns. Do you support these changes?

Essay question 2 Many countries aim to improve living standards by economic development. Do you support these changes?

Essay question 3 Many countries aim to improve living standards by economic development. Do you think the advantages of economic development outweigh the disadvantages?

2.

Essay question 1 The movement of people from agricultural areas to cities for work can cause serious problems in both places. What are the serious problems and what measures can be taken to solve the problems?

Essay question 2 The movement of people from small towns to cities for work can cause serious problems in both places. What are the serious problems and what measures can be taken to solve the problems?

Essay question 3 The movement of people from rural areas to cities for work can cause serious problems in both places. What are the serious problems and what measures can be taken to solve the problems?

3.

Essay question 1 The development of technology changes the way people interact with each other. In what way does it change the types of relationship between people? Is this a positive or negative development?

Essay question 2 The development of technology changes the way people interact with each other. Is this a positive or negative development?

MISTAKE 3

FAILING TO ADDRESS THE ESSAY QUESTION IN THE INTRODUCTION

The absence of a clear answer to the essay question in the introduction is a common mistake many students make in their essays.

TIP 1:

Make sure that by the time a reader reaches the beginning of the main body of your essay, your answer to the essay question is clear to them.

Essay question Nowadays people can work from home using modern technology. Some think this is extremely beneficial for workers. Do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Study the introductions 1-3:

Intro1 The trend of distance working is becoming more and more widespread around the world. However, I do not entirely agree with the opinion that working from home is always advantageous for employees.

Intro 2 I wholly agree with the opinion that remote working benefits employees and the bottom line. There are three reasons for that.

Intro 3 In the age of modern technology the image of office space has become fluid: many employees work flexibly and often remotely. In comparison to commuting staff remote workers enjoy three main benefits.

Comment: **Intro 1** answers the question clearly – it is the best version among the three; although **Intro 2** states the answer to the question, however it includes the empty and unnecessary phrase “the bottom line”; the author’s opinion is clear in **Intro 3**, but it is not stated explicitly, the passage only implies the answer.

Exercise 3-1

Study the introductions below. Which version is the best and why?
Compare your answers with the Answer key.

1.

Essay question 1 Many countries aim to improve living standards by economic development in small towns. Do you support these changes?

Intro 1 Economic development in small towns creates new jobs and fosters the growth of income; in sync with this change housing, healthcare and educational systems are improved.

Intro 2 I support the idea that to raise living standards – increase incomes and improve public services – in a country, governments should foster economic development in small settlements.

Intro 3 I agree with the statement that economic development in small towns and agricultural regions is necessary for the rise of the standards of living.

2.

Essay question 2 Some people believe that the government should increase the number of sports facilities to improve public health, while others believe this has little effect and we need other measures to improve it. Discuss and give your own opinion.

Intro 1 Some people are convinced that building more sports facilities will herald the improvement of public health in the area. Others disagree and believe that promotion and education are the ultimate avenues to assist people change their sedentary lifestyle to be more active and become healthier.

Intro 2 Many people think that more sports centres and stadiums in the area will encourage people to do more sport and, consequently, will strengthen public health. I do not support this approach.

Intro 3 The significance of sports activities in people’s lives is unquestionable in the world of stressful work and sedentary lifestyle. A community which enjoys a variety of sports facilities combined with sports events for adults and children is bound to be physically and mentally healthy.

3.

Essay question 3 The movement of people from agricultural areas to cities for work can cause serious problems in both places. What are the serious problems and what measures can be taken to solve the problems?

Intro 1 The increasing flow of people from agricultural areas to big cities results in many serious problems. This trend grows steadily and transforms the social landscapes of the places.

Intro 2 In the modern world many agricultural areas see the migration of people to major cities. The reasons behind this trend are work-related, educational and cultural.

Intro 3 The trend of moving from agricultural areas to major cities has adverse effects on both places. Whilst it brings environmental, housing and work-related problems to city dwellers, agricultural productions lose workers and the sector is likely to suffer.