

Problem and Solution Questions

These questions first ask you to explain what causes a problem, and then to offer solutions to it. These questions are phrased in different ways. Here are some examples. I have highlighted the parts that ask you to describe the problem and underlined the parts that ask you to provide solutions.

- *Overpopulation in many major urban centers around the world is a major problem. **What are the causes of this?** How can this problem be solved?*
- *More and more wild animals are on the verge of extinction and others are on the endangered list. **What are the reasons for this?** What can be done to solve this problem?*
- *Many offenders commit more crimes after serving the first punishment. **Why is this happening,** and what measures can be taken to tackle this problem?*
- *Scientists have been warning for many years about the importance of protecting the environment and that we must limit the use of energy in our daily lives. Despite warnings, many people do not do this. **What are the reasons for that** and how can people be encouraged to take an interest in protecting the environment?*

Suggested Structure

This is a four-part structure that can be used for these questions.

Introduction: Short and simple. Just write two sentences:

It is certainly true that... **(Introduce the problem)**

There are several reasons for this problem, and various measures can be taken (by governments/individuals/parents/schools etc.) to improve the situation.

Paragraph 1: Problems

(Problem) may be caused by a variety of factors.

Firstly, Secondly, **(Use this structure to organise several points)**

Paragraph 2: Solutions

The best way to solve this problem would be to... **(Suggest a solution)**

Firstly, In addition, **(Add another suggestion)**

Conclusion: Summarise the problems and solutions:

In conclusion, governments/individuals (etc.) should tackle **(Problem)** by... **(Suggestions)**

If these measures are taken, **(Predict the result of your suggestions)**

Model Answer

Childhood obesity is increasing in many countries. Explain the main reasons for this, and suggest some possible solutions.

It is certainly true that childhood obesity is a serious issue in many countries. There are several reasons for this problem, and various measures can be taken by parents to improve the situation.

Childhood obesity may be caused by a variety of factors. Firstly, the proliferation of fast food has caused a dramatic increase in childhood obesity. These days, it is relatively cheap and easy to buy unhealthy snacks, such as chocolate bars and crisps. Many children love these foods; however, they often do not understand how unhealthy they are. Secondly, many children have gadgets such as tablets and phones, which give them access to a lot of entertainment. This often encourages children to stay indoors instead of playing outside with their friends.

The best way to solve this problem would be for parents to monitor their children's behaviour more. Firstly, they should control what their children eat, making fast food an occasional treat rather than a regular meal. To this end, parents must spend more time preparing not only their children's meals but also their snacks. In addition, they should restrict the amount of time that children spend watching television and going online, and instead encourage them to do exercise. For example, parents can get together and organise sporting activities in their community.

In conclusion, parents should tackle childhood obesity by limiting children's consumption of fast food and the amount of time they spend watching entertainment. If these measures are taken, childhood obesity is very likely to decrease.