

Approach to OET & IELTS writing

12 November 2019 | IELTS and OET Writing

IELTS TASK 2 Writing band descriptors (public version)

Band	Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully addresses all parts of the task presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention skillfully manages paragraphing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sufficiently addresses all parts of the task presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sequences information and ideas logically manages all aspects of cohesion well uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings skillfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures the majority of sentences are error-free makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task presents a clear position throughout the response presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to overgeneralise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use presents a clear central topic within each paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a variety of complex structures produces frequent error-free sentences has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task attempts to use less common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms makes some errors in grammar and

IELTS Band Descriptor

This is a question asked over and over by candidates: what should we do to be successful in our exams? There is a logical answer to this question and this what I am going to explain here. There are some references and studies available, but as you might have noticed, there are too many opinions and too few facts!

Let us look at an example: how to score band 7.0 in IELTS Writing?

The first fact to consider is that language tests are tests of skill (performance) as well as knowledge (competence). Many professionals have taken numerous tests in their academic lives but sometimes ignore the skill part. In simple words, if you are a very knowledgeable professional but would not put your knowledge into action, as expected in the test, you would not score high. Yes, if you do not show what you know, or do not know how to show it, or even you are not aware of what is expected, you will not receive a desirable score.

The question that arises here is: what is expected of us in the IELTS writing section?

Fortunately, there is a reference that answers this question. If you refer to the marking criteria, you can check the requirements of a band 7.0 writing. Let us have a look.

https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/ielts_task_2_writing_band_descriptors.pdf

As you can see, there are 4 criteria for marking your writing: Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. Here is what you need to do.

In Task Achievement, the candidate is supposed to:

1. addresses all parts of the task
2. presents a clear position throughout the response
3. present, extend and support main ideas, but there may be a tendency to overgeneralize and/or supporting ideas may lack focus

In Coherence and Cohesion, the candidate needs to:

1. logically organize information and ideas
2. make sure there is clear progression throughout
3. use a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use
4. present a clear central topic within each paragraph

In Lexical Resource, the candidate should:

1. use a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision
2. use less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation
3. (may) produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation

In Grammatical Range and Accuracy, the candidate is expected to:

1. use a variety of complex structures
2. produce frequent error-free sentences
3. have good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors

There is a problem here, and it is the interpretation of a few words such as 'sufficient' or 'occasional'. We may argue that a clear benchmark or guidance for the standard is not available; hence, standards may change or vary among different examiners, and in short, marking criteria can become subjective.

However, what we need to realize is that the IELTS is a test that is standardized on a regular basis, and there is much thinking or activity behind the scene. There are dynamic teams that look at the results and ensure the validity and reliability of the tests. We, therefore, should not pay attention to rumours and should get to work harder.

As a last word, for those of you who have taken the test a few times and scored less than 7, I suggest you check the band descriptors and compare your score with your desirable one; this will show you what you need to change, or better say, improve, to achieve your goal.

I hope this is helpful, but should you wish to have a more detailed study plan, please make a booking at the classes section for a needs analysis and study plan session.

The same is true for other tests such as OET. I will explain the OET marking criteria in the next lesson, so you know how to prepare for the test and what you should do to score higher.

#IELTS test # IELTS score