

IELTS Writing

Task 2: Advantages & disadvantages essay

Many young people

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Elements of a good IELTS essay

1. Good **organisation** (makes the structure clear)
2. Good **ideas** (relevant - logical – supported)
3. Good **writing**
 - good collocations
 - natural and appropriate
 - accurate
 - relevant and clear

General planning

1. 250+ words (write 280+)
2. No maximum
3. 40 minutes: write task 2 after task 1
4. 10 minutes planning
5. 4 paragraphs usually
6. Leave a blank line between paragraphs
7. Position must be clear throughout*
8. Ideas must be: relevant / extended / supported*
9. Each paragraph must have ONE topic*

*see Band Descriptors

The question

At the present time, the population of some countries includes a relatively large number of young adults, compared with the number of older people. (SUBJECT)

Do the advantages of this situation outweigh the disadvantages? (TASK)

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

In the exam:

1. Read the question carefully – check all the elements that you need to answer.
2. Decide the kind of essay.

The question

At the present time, the population of some countries includes a relatively large number of young adults, compared with the number of older people. (SUBJECT)

Do the advantages of this situation outweigh the disadvantages? (ADVANTAGES - DISADVANTAGES)

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

In the exam:

1. Read the question carefully – check we answer it fully.
2. Decide the kind of essay: **advantages - disadvantages**
3. If you are asked for an **an opinion – make it strong and clear from the start & throughout.**
4. Focus planning on content: **relevant ideas – fully extended and well supported** (see Band Descriptors)

Advantages - disadvantages: Essay Structure

Template for Ad-Disadvantages essay:

Paragraph 1	Introduction: Lead in sentence What I am going to do + My opinion.	
	Side A	Side B
Paragraph 2	Ad or Disadvantages Side which is smaller!	
Paragraph 3		Ad or Disadvantages Side which is bigger!
Paragraph 4	Conclusion – summarise - logical Repeat my opinion.	

The question: 2 sides

At the present time, the population of some countries includes a relatively large number of young adults, compared with the number of older people. (SUBJECT – FACT)

Do (1) the advantages of this situation outweigh (2) the disadvantages? (ADVANTAGES – DISADVANTAGES – 2 SIDES)

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

Pick a side – a point of view:

- (1) the advantages outweigh disadvantages Or (2) the disadvantages outweigh advantages
- (2) do NOT choose a third position (eg it varies depending on the situation) - too complex!

The question: 2 options for my opinion:

Option 1: The advantages outweigh the disadvantages:

Paragraph 1	Introduction: Lead in sentence What I am going to do + My opinion.	
	Side A	Side B
Paragraph 2	Disadvantages	
Paragraph 3		Advantages
Paragraph 4	Conclusion – summarise - logical Repeat my opinion.	

The question: 2 options for my opinion:

Option 2: The disadvantages outweigh the advantages:

Paragraph 1	Introduction: Lead in sentence What I am going to do + My opinion.	
	Side A	Side B
Paragraph 2	Advantages	
Paragraph 3		Disadvantages
Paragraph 4	Conclusion – summarise - logical Repeat my opinion.	

Choose:

1. the advantages of a large number of young people relative to old people outweigh the disadvantages
2. the disadvantages of a large number of young adults relative to old people outweigh the advantages

I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages

My personal opinion will be strong and clear throughout the essay.

I firmly believe that the disadvantages of a large number of young people relative to the number of old people outweigh the advantages.

The question: my choice:

Option 2: The disadvantages outweigh the advantages:

Paragraph 1	Introduction: Lead in sentence What I am going to do + My opinion.	
	Side A	Side B
Paragraph 2	Advantages	
Paragraph 3		Disadvantages
Paragraph 4	Conclusion – summarise - logical Repeat my opinion.	

Planning:

1. the advantages of a large number of young people relative to old people outweigh the disadvantages
2. the disadvantages of a large number of young adults relative to old people outweigh the advantages

I firmly believe that the disadvantages of a large number of young adults relative to the number of old people outweigh the advantages.

Advantages: 2 : (1) related to large number of young (2) related to small number of elderly

Content planning: thinking

General:

Large numbers of young people relative to old

- available for work
- if work can pay taxes
- good for growth – growth can lay the foundation for future
- young people need less health care than old
- current spending on pensions / health is relatively low
- dynamic – future focused

Content planning: thinking

General:

But:

- Large numbers of young does NOT mean there will be jobs for them
- Often poorly educated – and if well educated still the problem of WHERE are the jobs coming from
- Don't need a lot of health care now but WILL become old
- Lots of energy – no jobs / not enough money – recipe for social unrest
- And they become older and will have future need for pensions / health care etc
- So this type of problem is only delayed and not solved

Content planning: planning paragraph 2

Advantages (1) of a lot of young adults – (2) relative to the number of old people

Two points:

1. ONE: lots of young people - a lot of energy to work
2. This can lead to growth
3. This growth can finance welfare costs of the future
4. Example: baby boom in post war west help finance development of welfare state
5. TWO: relatively few older people – currently low welfare costs (eg sickness / pension)
6. This gives a window of opportunity – before the young group ages!

Content planning: planning paragraph 3

Disadvantages of a lot of young people relative to older people: two

1. **ONE**: large numbers of young people put immediate financial pressure on the social system: education / housing / medical care and support
2. And poor education can make it difficult for these young adults to obtain work / support themselves
3. As a result, large numbers of young people may lead to high youth unemployment – not high growth
4. High unemployment can lead to unrest & social problems
5. **TWO** And these people will become older and need pensions and medical care so the costs are only postponed – not solved!

Model answer: paragraph 1

1. In some countries, particularly developing countries, the ratio of young to old people is very high. (LEAD IN)
2. This presents both challenges and opportunities for these countries. (STATEMENT OF FACT)
3. In this essay I will discuss both, and explain why I, believe that the negatives dramatically outweigh the positives. (WHAT I AM GOING TO DO + MY CLEAR OPINION + LINK)

Model answer: paragraph 2

1. **One important advantage is that** a youthful population means that there are a lot of people with the energy and ability to work. (TOPIC: SUB-TOPIC 1)
2. These people can help a country develop and achieve higher growth. This growth will be necessary to finance the welfare costs that will be incurred as this generation ages. (EXTEND)
3. In western countries the post-war baby boom contributed to the rapid growth of the fifties and sixties and led to the development of effective welfare systems in many countries. (EXAMPLE)
4. **And secondly,** the relatively low number of elderly people in these countries means that the current costs for taking care of old people are low. (SUB-TOPIC 2)
5. This gives a window of opportunity to, in theory, lay the foundations for a better future. (EXTEND)

Model answer: paragraph 3

1. Unfortunately, however, I believe that these potential benefits are unlikely to be realised, and there are major, very probable, drawbacks. (LINK - TOPIC)
2. **First**, a large number of young people also puts great financial pressure on the system as they require education, healthcare, and later housing and work. (SUB-TOPIC 1)
3. Many governments cannot afford these and as a result poorly educated young adults cannot find the work they need to support themselves. (EXTEND)
4. This can lead to crime and social unrest, and dealing with all these issues prevents the government from investing in long term development. (EXTEND – SUPPORT)
5. **And secondly**, although the number of elderly people may be lower at the moment, the young people will eventually become old and need social and health support. (SUB-TOPIC 2)
6. This means that the problems of a large number of elderly people are only postponed and not resolved. (EXTEND)

Model answer: paragraph 4

1. **Consequently**, I believe that the young people bring an additional set of problems, which are in addition to the problems of the elderly – which are, in reality, only delayed and not solved
2. **Therefore** I think it is clear that the disadvantages of a large number of young adults, relative to the numbers of old people, far outweigh the advantages.