

Task 2 Writing

1) Identify the Topic

In the writing for task 2, one of the first things you need to do is identify the topic of the essay.

If you write about the wrong topic or go off topic when you write your answer, this is likely to substantially reduce your band score.

How do I identify the topic?

Remember, in IELTS writing, you are usually presented with some issue or problem that is currently affecting society and you need to discuss it.

So you need to read the question carefully and identify what the issue is. You will normally only be looking for one or two key words.

Have a look at the following question. What is the issue?

The crime rate among teenagers has increased dramatically in many countries.

Discuss some possible reasons for this increase and suggest solutions.

You should have identified *teenage crime* as the topic.

The **crime** rate among **teenagers** has increased dramatically in many countries.

What if I identified 'crime' as the topic?

Your essay would be wrong if you wrote about crime generally. When you have a topic, it may require you to talk about a particular area, group of people or place.

In this case, the question specifically wants you to address the issue of TEENAGE crime.

When you identify the topic, always look carefully to see if it is being narrowed down to a particular area that you need to focus on.

2) Identify the Task

Once you have [identified the topic](#) for your essay, you need to identify the task.

The ‘**task**’ is the part of the question that tells you *what you have to do* to answer it.

This is one of the most important things you will have to do when you analyze the essay question because 25% of your grade for the essay is based on ‘Task Response’ - how you have responded to the task.

How do I identify the task?

In order to grade your task response, the examiner will be looking to see if you have **answered the question**. If you have only partially answered the question, this will decrease your grade for this criteria.

Let’s look at the same essay question we looked at in lesson 1 when you identified the topic:

The crime rate among teenagers has increased dramatically in many countries.

Discuss some possible reasons for this increase and suggest solutions.

In the previous lesson, we identified the topic for this question as ‘*teenage crime*’.

The task - or ‘what you have to do’ - is usually at the end of the prompt. As you can see, you are being told to ‘*Discuss some possible **reasons** for this increase and suggest **solutions***’.

It’s very common in task 2 IELTS essay questions to get asked to do **two things**, and this question is a good example of this:

1. Why teenage crime has increased
2. Ways to solve this problem

You **MUST** discuss both those things to ensure you have fully answered the question and you must write roughly equal amounts about each part.

Doing any of the following things will reduce your score for task response, and hence may reduce your overall score:

1. Only writing about reasons or only solutions
2. Writing most of your essay about reasons and only a small part on solutions (or visa versa)

3. Writing about the reasons and solutions for crime in general, and not referring to *teenage* crime (the topic)
4. Writing about neither reasons nor solutions

This is why it is so important to spend some time at the beginning making sure you identify the task so that you know what you have to write about.

A Common Mistake

It is a common mistake for students to rush at the beginning to start writing as they are worried about not finishing, and then **write about the wrong thing**.

For example, when you have finished identifying the task, you will brainstorm your ideas. You may come up with *reasons* for an increase in crime such as **'lack of parental supervision'** and **'boredom'**.

However, I have seen students come up with *problems* of teenage crime, such as **'more young people being put in prison'** and **'stress for their parents'**.

This particular task asks you to write about *'reasons'*, not *'problems'* (though being asked to write about 'problems and solutions' is common).

So if you do this you will not be answering the question. This comes from rushing and not taking enough time to identify the task properly.

Other Question Types

The previous question was fairly easy, so to identify the task was hopefully not too difficult.

Some questions, though, will take more thought in order to identify what you need to write about.

Here is another example:

Advances in technology and automation have reduced the need for manual labour. Therefore, working hours should be reduced.

To what extent do you agree?

Again, look to the end of the prompt to identify the task.

You have to say if you agree or disagree with working hours being reduced, or, in other words, automation (machines) taking over from some human's duties.

You must also say **how much** you agree or disagree ("to what extent").

Let's assume you want to look at both sides of the issue. You therefore need to discuss the reasons **why you agree**, and the reasons **why you disagree**. Or put another way:

1. The advantages of reducing working hours
2. The disadvantages of reducing working hours

And of course in the introduction or conclusion you need to make it clear what your opinion is.

If you do all of these things then you will have answered all parts of the prompt. If you find more reasons to agree than disagree, then you can write more about this side of the argument, or visa versa.