

IELTS Writing Task 2 Band Descriptors Study Guide

TR, CC, LR and GRA Explained in Plain English

Prepared by EssayGradeWise

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Important Note

This is an independent study guide created by EssayGradeWise. It explains the public IELTS Writing Task 2 assessment criteria in plain English for learners.

For the official IELTS Writing band descriptors, always refer to the official IELTS sources:

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

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Official IELTS Writing Task 2 Band Descriptors (Updated May 2023)

The table below reproduces the official IELTS Writing Task 2 band descriptors updated in May 2023.

Source: IELTS Writing Band Descriptors (updated May 2023), jointly owned by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment.

Official PDF links:

- https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/ielts_writing_band_descriptors.pdf

A script must fully fit the positive features of the descriptor at a particular level. In the official PDF, bolded text indicates negative features that will limit a rating.

WRITING TASK 2: Band Descriptors (updated May 2023)

Band	Task Response	Coherence & Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range & Accuracy
9	The prompt is appropriately addressed and explored in depth. A clear and fully developed position is presented which directly answers the question/s. Ideas are relevant, fully extended and well supported. Any lapses in content or support are extremely rare.	The message can be followed effortlessly. Cohesion is used in such a way that it very rarely attracts attention. Any lapses in coherence or cohesion are minimal. Paragraphing is skilfully managed.	Full flexibility and precise use are widely evident. A wide range of vocabulary is used accurately and appropriately with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features. Minor errors in spelling and word formation are extremely rare and have minimal impact on communication.	A wide range of structures is used with full flexibility and control. Punctuation and grammar are used appropriately throughout. Minor errors are extremely rare and have minimal impact on communication.

8	The prompt is appropriately and sufficiently addressed. A clear and well-developed position is presented in response to the question/s. Ideas are relevant, well extended and supported. There may be occasional omissions or lapses in content.	The message can be followed with ease. Information and ideas are logically sequenced, and cohesion is well managed. Occasional lapses in coherence and cohesion may occur. Paragraphing is used sufficiently and appropriately.	A wide resource is fluently and flexibly used to convey precise meanings. There is skilful use of uncommon and/or idiomatic items when appropriate, despite occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation. Occasional errors in spelling and/or word formation may occur, but have minimal impact on communication.	A wide range of structures within the scope of the task is flexibly and accurately used. The majority of sentences are error-free, and punctuation is well managed. Occasional, non-systematic errors and inappropriacies occur, but have minimal impact on communication.
7	The main parts of the prompt are appropriately addressed. A clear and developed position is presented. Main ideas are extended and supported but there may be a tendency to over-generalise or there may be a lack of focus and precision in supporting ideas/material.	Information and ideas are logically organised, and there is a clear progression throughout the response. (A few lapses may occur, but these are minor.) A range of cohesive devices including reference and substitution is used flexibly but with some inaccuracies or some over/under use. Paragraphing is generally used effectively to support overall coherence, and the sequencing of ideas within a paragraph is generally logical.	The resource is sufficient to allow some flexibility and precision. There is some ability to use less common and/or idiomatic items. An awareness of style and collocation is evident, though inappropriacies occur. There are only a few errors in spelling and/or word formation and they do not detract from overall clarity.	A variety of complex structures is used with some flexibility and accuracy. Grammar and punctuation are generally well controlled, and error-free sentences are frequent. A few errors in grammar may persist, but these do not impede communication.
6	The main parts of the prompt are addressed (though some may be more fully covered than others). An appropriate format is used. A position is presented that is directly relevant to the prompt, although the conclusions drawn may be unclear, unjustified or repetitive. Main ideas are relevant, but some may be insufficiently developed or may lack clarity, while some supporting arguments and evidence may be less relevant or inadequate.	Information and ideas are generally arranged coherently and there is a clear overall progression. Cohesive devices are used to some good effect but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical due to misuse, overuse or omission. The use of reference and substitution may lack flexibility or clarity and result in some repetition or error. Paragraphing may not always be logical and/or the central topic may not always be clear.	The resource is generally adequate and appropriate for the task. The meaning is generally clear in spite of a rather restricted range or a lack of precision in word choice. If the writer is a risk-taker, there will be a wider range of vocabulary used but higher degrees of inaccuracy or inappropriacy. There are some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but these do not impede communication.	A mix of simple and complex sentence forms is used but flexibility is limited. Examples of more complex structures are not marked by the same level of accuracy as in simple structures. Errors in grammar and punctuation occur, but rarely impede communication.
5	The main parts of the prompt are incompletely addressed . The format may be inappropriate in places. The writer expresses a position, but the development is not always clear. Some main ideas are put forward, but they are limited and are not sufficiently developed and/or there may be irrelevant detail. There may be some repetition.	Organisation is evident but is not wholly logical and there may be a lack of overall progression. Nevertheless, there is a sense of underlying coherence to the response. The relationship of ideas can be followed but the sentences are not fluently linked to each other. There may be limited/overuse of cohesive devices with some inaccuracy. The	The resource is limited but minimally adequate for the task. Simple vocabulary may be used accurately but the range does not permit much variation in expression. There may be frequent lapses in the appropriacy of word choice and a lack of flexibility is apparent in frequent simplifications and/or repetitions. Errors in spelling and/or word formation may be	The range of structures is limited and rather repetitive. Although complex sentences are attempted, they tend to be faulty, and the greatest accuracy is achieved on simple sentences. Grammatical errors may be frequent and cause some difficulty for the reader. Punctuation may be faulty.

		writing may be repetitive due to inadequate and/or inaccurate use of reference and substitution. Paragraphing may be inadequate or missing.	noticeable and may cause some difficulty for the reader.	
4	The prompt is tackled in a minimal way, or the answer is tangential, possibly due to some misunderstanding of the prompt. The format may be inappropriate. A position is discernible, but the reader has to read carefully to find it. Main ideas are difficult to identify and such ideas that are identifiable may lack relevance, clarity and/or support. Large parts of the response may be repetitive.	Information and ideas are evident but not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression within the response. Relationships between ideas can be unclear and/or inadequately marked. There is some use of basic cohesive devices, which may be inaccurate or repetitive. There is inaccurate use or a lack of substitution or referencing. There may be no paragraphing and/or no clear main topic within paragraphs.	The resource is limited and inadequate for or unrelated to the task. Vocabulary is basic and may be used repetitively. There may be inappropriate use of lexical chunks (e.g. memorised phrases, formulaic language and/or language from the input material). Inappropriate word choice and/or errors in word formation and/or in spelling may impede meaning.	A very limited range of structures is used. Subordinate clauses are rare and simple sentences predominate. Some structures are produced accurately but grammatical errors are frequent and may impede meaning. Punctuation is often faulty or inadequate.
3	No part of the prompt is adequately addressed, or the prompt has been misunderstood. No relevant position can be identified, and/or there is little direct response to the question/s. There are few ideas, and these may be irrelevant or insufficiently developed.	There is no apparent logical organisation. Ideas are discernible but difficult to relate to each other. There is minimal use of sequencers or cohesive devices. Those used do not necessarily indicate a logical relationship between ideas. There is difficulty in identifying referencing. Any attempts at paragraphing are unhelpful.	The resource is inadequate (which may be due to the response being significantly underlength). Possible over-dependence on input material or memorised language. Control of word choice and/or spelling is very limited, and errors predominate. These errors may severely impede meaning.	Sentence forms are attempted, but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate (except in memorised phrases or those taken from the input material). This prevents most meaning from coming through. Length may be insufficient to provide evidence of control of sentence forms.
2	The content is barely related to the prompt. No position can be identified. There may be glimpses of one or two ideas without development.	There is little relevant message, or the entire response may be off-topic. There is little evidence of control of organisational features. Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1.	The resource is extremely limited with few recognisable strings, apart from memorised phrases. There is no apparent control of word formation and/or spelling.	There is little or no evidence of sentence forms (except in memorised phrases).
1	Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. The content is wholly unrelated to the prompt. Any copied rubric must be discounted.	Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. The writing fails to communicate any message and appears to be by a virtual non-writer.	Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. No resource is apparent, except for a few isolated words.	Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. No rateable language is evident.
0	Should only be used where a candidate did not attend or attempt the question in any way, used a language other than English throughout, or where there is proof that a candidate's answer has been totally memorised.			

How IELTS Writing Task 2 Is Scored

IELTS Writing Task 2 is assessed using four criteria. Each criterion contributes equally to your Task 2 score:

Criterion	Short name	What it checks
Task Response	TR	Did you answer the question fully with

		a clear position and developed ideas?
Coherence and Cohesion	CC	Is your essay logically organised and easy to follow?
Lexical Resource	LR	Is your vocabulary precise, flexible and accurate?
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	GRA	Do you use a range of sentence structures accurately?

In simple terms:

- TR is about answering the task.
- CC is about organising the answer.
- LR is about choosing the right words.
- GRA is about building accurate sentences.

Most Band 6 writers do not fail because they know too few "advanced" words. They usually lose marks because their ideas are underdeveloped, their paragraphs do not progress clearly, or their grammar errors reduce control.

Quick Band 5-8 Overview

This table is a plain-English learning summary by EssayGradeWise. It is **not** a replacement for the official descriptors table above.

Band	What the essay usually looks like
5	The answer is partly relevant, but ideas are limited, organisation is weak, and errors are frequent.
6	The answer is generally relevant, but some parts are less developed; organisation works but may feel mechanical; language is adequate but inconsistent.
7	The answer covers all parts clearly, develops ideas, uses logical paragraphs, and shows enough vocabulary and grammar control.
8	The answer is well developed, logically controlled, flexible in language, and mostly error-free.

For most candidates, the important jump is from Band 6 to Band 7. That jump usually requires:

- a clearer position,
- fuller explanation of each main idea,
- more logical paragraph progression,
- fewer repetitive linking words,
- more precise vocabulary,
- more frequent error-free sentences.

Criterion 1: Task Response (TR)

Task Response asks: Did you answer the question?

A strong Task 2 essay should:

- address every part of the prompt,
- present a clear position,
- develop main ideas,
- support ideas with reasons, examples or explanations,
- avoid going off-topic.

Band 6 TR Pattern

A Band 6 response addresses the main parts of the prompt, though some parts may be more fully covered than others. A relevant position is presented, but conclusions may be unclear, unjustified or repetitive. Main ideas are relevant but some may be insufficiently developed or lack clarity.

Common Band 6 problems:

- The introduction gives a position, but body paragraphs do not support it clearly.
- One side of a discussion is developed more fully than the other.
- Examples are too general.
- The essay repeats the same idea in different words.

Band 7 TR Pattern

A Band 7 response appropriately addresses the main parts of the prompt and presents a clear, developed position. Main ideas are extended and supported, but the writer may over-generalise or lack focus in supporting ideas.

Band 6 to 7 fix:

Before writing, underline every instruction in the question. For each body paragraph, write:

1. Main idea
2. Explanation
3. Example or consequence
4. Link back to the question

Band 8 TR Pattern

A Band 8 response appropriately and sufficiently addresses the prompt. A clear, well-developed position is presented in response to the question. Ideas are relevant, well extended and supported, though there may be occasional omissions or lapses in content.

Common Band 7 problems:

- Ideas are relevant but sometimes too general.
- Supporting points may lack focus or depth.
- The essay answers the question, but not every idea feels fully developed.
- Conclusions may repeat earlier points instead of adding value.

Band 7 to 8 fix:

- Make each main idea more specific, not broader.
- Add one concrete example, consequence, or limitation for each major point.

- Remove sentences that repeat the same claim in different words.
- Check that every body paragraph clearly advances the argument, not just restates your position.

TR Self-Check

Before submitting your essay, ask:

- Did I answer every part of the question?
- Is my opinion clear from introduction to conclusion?
- Does each body paragraph develop one main idea?
- Did I include specific support, not only general claims?
- Would a reader know exactly what I think?

If you are aiming for Band 8, also ask:

- Is every main idea developed enough to feel complete?
- Did I avoid over-generalising?
- Does each paragraph add a distinct point, not a repetition?
- Would an examiner describe my response as well developed?

Criterion 2: Coherence and Cohesion (CC)

Coherence and Cohesion asks: Is the essay easy to follow?

A strong essay should:

- have clear paragraphing,
- move logically from one idea to the next,
- use linking words naturally,
- use pronouns and references clearly,
- avoid mechanical overuse of connectors.

Band 6 CC Pattern

A Band 6 essay is generally coherent with clear overall progression, but cohesion may be faulty or mechanical due to misuse, overuse or omission of cohesive devices. Reference and substitution may lack flexibility, and paragraphing may not always be logical.

Common Band 6 problems:

- Paragraphs contain more than one main idea.
- Linking words are used, but the logic is weak.
- Sentences are connected on the surface, but ideas do not truly progress.
- Referencing words like "this" or "they" are unclear.

Band 7 CC Pattern

A Band 7 essay is logically organised with clear progression. Cohesive devices including reference and substitution are used flexibly, though there may be minor inaccuracies or some over/under use. Paragraphing generally supports coherence.

Band 6 to 7 fix:

Give each body paragraph one clear job:

- Body paragraph 1: explain your first main reason.
- Body paragraph 2: explain your second main reason or contrast.
- Final sentence of each paragraph: connect the idea back to the question.

Band 8 CC Pattern

A Band 8 essay sequences information logically and manages cohesion well, so the message can be followed with ease. Paragraphing is used sufficiently and appropriately. Occasional lapses in coherence may occur but rarely distract.

Common Band 7 problems:

- Linking words are correct but still noticeable or repetitive.
- Paragraph roles are clear, but transitions may feel mechanical.
- Some cohesive devices are overused or underused.
- Referencing is mostly clear, but not always effortless.

Band 7 to 8 fix:

- Vary how you open paragraphs; do not always use "Firstly / Secondly / Furthermore".
- Make the logic strong enough that some links can be removed.
- Use referencing words ("this issue", "such policies", "these measures") to connect ideas naturally.
- Read each paragraph aloud: if the order feels jumpy, reorder sentences before adding more linking words.

CC Self-Check

Ask:

- Does each paragraph have one main purpose?
- Can I summarise each body paragraph in one sentence?
- Do my ideas move forward instead of repeating?
- Did I avoid using the same linking phrase again and again?
- Are pronouns like "this", "these" and "they" clear?

If you are aiming for Band 8, also ask:

- Does my essay flow without relying on obvious connectors?
- Is paragraphing helping the argument, not just dividing text?
- Can I remove one linking phrase and still keep the logic clear?
- Would cohesion feel natural rather than mechanical?

Criterion 3: Lexical Resource (LR)

Lexical Resource asks: Are your word choices precise and controlled?

A strong essay should:

- use topic vocabulary accurately,
- avoid too much repetition,
- choose words that fit the context,
- use collocations naturally,
- keep spelling and word formation errors under control.

Band 6 LR Pattern

A Band 6 essay has generally adequate vocabulary for the task, but the range may be restricted or word choice may lack precision. Risk-takers may use a wider range but with higher inaccuracy. Spelling and word-formation errors appear but rarely impede communication.

Common Band 6 problems:

- Overusing words like "good", "bad", "important", "people" and "things".
- Using "advanced" words incorrectly.
- Making collocation errors, such as unnatural word combinations.
- Repeating the wording of the question too often.

Band 7 LR Pattern

A Band 7 essay has sufficient vocabulary for some flexibility and precision. The writer shows some ability with less common and/or idiomatic items, and awareness of style and collocation, though inappropriacies may occur.

Band 6 to 7 fix:

Choose precise vocabulary over impressive vocabulary.

Instead of:

- "This is a big problem."

Write:

- "This creates a serious obstacle for low-income students."

Instead of:

- "Technology is good for education."

Write:

- "Digital tools can make feedback faster and more personalised."

Band 8 LR Pattern

A Band 8 essay uses a wide vocabulary resource fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings. Less common and/or idiomatic items are used skilfully when appropriate. Occasional inaccuracies in word choice or spelling are rare and have minimal impact.

Common Band 7 problems:

- Vocabulary is accurate but not always precise.
- Less common words appear, but occasionally sound forced.
- Collocations are mostly correct, but not consistently natural.
- The same safe words are repeated when a more exact word is possible.

Band 7 to 8 fix:

- Replace general nouns and adjectives with more exact topic vocabulary.
- Use one strong collocation per paragraph instead of several risky "advanced" words.
- Check word choice for style: formal academic writing, not spoken or exaggerated language.
- Keep a personal error list for words you often misspell or misuse.

LR Self-Check

Ask:

- Did I repeat the same key words too often?
- Did I use topic-specific vocabulary accurately?
- Are my collocations natural?
- Did I avoid words I cannot control?
- Would a teacher understand my meaning immediately?

If you are aiming for Band 8, also ask:

- Did I use vocabulary precisely, not just correctly?
- Are my less common words natural in context?
- Did I avoid repeating the same safe words?
- Are spelling and word-formation errors rare?

Criterion 4: Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GRA)

Grammatical Range and Accuracy asks: Can you use different sentence structures accurately?

A strong essay should:

- mix simple and complex sentences,
- use subordinate clauses naturally,
- control punctuation,
- avoid repeated sentence patterns,
- produce frequent error-free sentences.

Band 6 GRA Pattern

A Band 6 essay uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms, but flexibility is limited. Complex structures are often less accurate than simple ones. Grammar and punctuation errors occur but rarely impede communication.

Common Band 6 problems:

- Sentence fragments.
- Subject-verb agreement errors.
- Article errors with "a", "an" and "the".
- Long sentences with unclear grammar.
- Complex sentences used only to look advanced.

Band 7 GRA Pattern

A Band 7 essay uses a variety of complex structures with some flexibility and accuracy. Grammar and punctuation are generally well controlled, and error-free sentences are frequent. A few grammar errors may persist without impeding communication.

Band 6 to 7 fix:

Do not try to make every sentence complex. Aim for controlled variety:

- one clear simple sentence,
- one sentence with "because", "although" or "while",
- one sentence with a relative clause,
- one sentence using a conditional or comparison.

Band 8 GRA Pattern

A Band 8 essay uses a wide range of structures flexibly and accurately. The majority of sentences are error-free, and punctuation is well managed. Occasional non-systematic errors may occur but have minimal impact.

Common Band 7 problems:

- Complex grammar appears, but not consistently accurately.
- Some sentences are error-free, yet errors still appear often enough to notice.
- Long sentences sometimes reduce clarity.
- Punctuation errors remain in otherwise strong essays.

Band 7 to 8 fix:

- Keep complex structures, but shorten any sentence that becomes hard to follow.
- Aim for most sentences in each paragraph to be error-free.
- Check articles, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and commas in complex sentences.
- Do not add complexity unless it improves meaning.

GRA Self-Check

Ask:

- Are most of my sentences error-free?
- Did I use complex grammar naturally?
- Are my long sentences still easy to understand?
- Did I check verbs, articles and punctuation?
- Did I avoid repeating the same sentence pattern?

If you are aiming for Band 8, also ask:

- Are the majority of my sentences error-free?
- Do complex sentences stay clear?
- Are grammar errors rare rather than regular?
- Did I proofread for punctuation in long sentences?

Band 6 to Band 7 Upgrade Checklist

Use this checklist after writing one Task 2 essay.

Task Response

- ☐ I answered every part of the question.
- ☐ My position is clear.
- ☐ Each body paragraph has one main idea.
- ☐ Each main idea is explained and supported.
- ☐ I did not memorise a generic answer.

Coherence and Cohesion

- ☐ My introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion have clear roles.
- ☐ Paragraphs progress logically.
- ☐ I used linking words naturally.
- ☐ I avoided repeating the same connector too often.
- ☐ Each paragraph is easy to summarise.

Lexical Resource

- ☐ I used topic-specific words.
- ☐ I avoided unnecessary "advanced" vocabulary.
- ☐ I reduced repetition.
- ☐ My collocations sound natural.
- ☐ Spelling and word formation errors are limited.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

- ☐ I used a mix of sentence types.
- ☐ I included some complex structures accurately.
- ☐ Most sentences are error-free.
- ☐ I checked punctuation.
- ☐ Grammar errors do not reduce clarity.

If you ticked fewer than 4 boxes in one section, that criterion is probably your next practice focus.

Band 7 to Band 8 Upgrade Checklist

Use this checklist if you are already close to Band 7 and want to push higher.

Task Response

- ☐ Every part of the task is sufficiently addressed.

- ☐ My response feels well developed, not just complete.
- ☐ Each main idea is supported with specific explanation or example.
- ☐ I avoided over-generalising.
- ☐ My conclusion adds value rather than repeating the introduction.

Coherence and Cohesion

- ☐ Information and ideas are sequenced logically.
- ☐ Paragraphing is clear and appropriate.
- ☐ Cohesive devices are varied and natural.
- ☐ I did not rely on repetitive linking phrases.
- ☐ The essay is easy to follow without effort.

Lexical Resource

- ☐ I used a wide enough range of vocabulary for the topic.
- ☐ Word choice is precise, not just understandable.
- ☐ Less common vocabulary is used naturally.
- ☐ Collocations sound accurate.
- ☐ Spelling and word-formation errors are rare.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

- ☐ I used a wide range of sentence structures.
- ☐ The majority of my sentences are error-free.
- ☐ Complex grammar is accurate and clear.
- ☐ Punctuation is controlled.
- ☐ Grammar errors are only occasional.

If you ticked fewer than 4 boxes in one section, that criterion is probably blocking Band 8.

How EssayGradeWise Can Help

EssayGradeWise gives IELTS Writing learners:

- estimated overall band scores,
- TR, CC, LR and GRA sub-scores,
- essay diagnosis,
- a 20-day Writing study plan,
- unlimited free essay scoring,
- free Practice 1-2 access.

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Suggested practice routine:

1. Write one Task 2 essay.
2. Check it with this guide.
3. Submit it to EssayGradeWise for an estimated score.

4. Identify your weakest criterion.
5. Rewrite one paragraph before writing a new essay.

The fastest improvement usually comes from revising one weak criterion at a time, not from writing more essays without feedback.

Practice Worksheet

Page 1 — Prompt and Position

IELTS Task 2 question

My position / overall answer

Every part of the question I must answer

Page 2 — Body Paragraph 1

Main idea

Explanation

Example / support

Link back to the question

Page 3 — Body Paragraph 2

Main idea

Explanation

Example / support

Link back to the question

Page 4 — Body Paragraph 3 (if needed)

Main idea

Explanation

Example / support

Link back to the question

Page 5 — After Writing Review

Criterion	My estimate	Why?
TR	___ / 9	
CC	___ / 9	
LR	___ / 9	
GRA	___ / 9	

My weakest criterion is

One sentence I should rewrite first

My improved version

My next practice goal

Check your essay free: <https://www.essaygradewise.com>

Final Reminder

The official IELTS band descriptors are the source document for understanding how IELTS Writing is assessed. This guide is designed to make those criteria easier to apply during practice.

For the official public IELTS Writing band descriptor document, use the official links provided at the beginning of this guide.

For practice feedback, visit:

<https://www.essaygradewise.com>