

G L O C A L I S H

G L O B A L · L O C A L · E N G L I S H

The IELTS Band 7 Sentence Blueprint

The marking criteria, a sentence-building formula, and
the ten notes I write most often in the margin.

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Education is a rite of passage.

This note collects only what I return to again and again in class and in the margins of student essays. It was made to be kept open while you write, not read once and shelved.

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ON USING THIS

Everything here applies to **both Academic and General Training**. The criteria and the sentence-building principle are identical; only the form of Task 1 differs.

The problem is rarely the sentence.

It is the *criteria*.

Learners stuck at Band 6.0 have one thing in common. Their English is not weak; they are writing without knowing what the examiner reads for. There are four criteria, each worth twenty-five per cent, and most candidates attend to only two.

I Read the criteria first

Once you know what the criteria ask for, you begin to see what is missing from your own writing.

II Write the seven steps out by hand

Reading is enough to understand, not to remember. Take one sentence of your own and write it out from step one to step seven.

III Open the book and the Criteria checklist

A working final checklist—use the time you have.

At the end of the book, there is a checklist for you to use. Three minutes.

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PART ONE

What the Examiner Looks For

Four criteria, twenty-five per cent each.

Grammar and vocabulary together account for only half the mark.

The other half rests on whether you answered the question and whether the writing holds together. That is where bands are won and lost.

25 PER CENT

Each of the four criteria carries exactly the same weight.

Task Achievement

- i Have you covered every part of the question?
- ii Are main ideas developed with relevant explanation, examples, data, or detail?
- iii Academic Task 1 needs an overview; Task 2 needs a clear position where required.
- iv If the question uses a plural, cover the requirements clearly. IELTS gives no fixed number of ideas per body paragraph.

Coherence & Cohesion

- i Use a paragraph structure that makes the progression clear. IELTS does not prescribe a fixed number of paragraphs.
- ii Are linking words and cohesive devices used with purpose?
- iii Do reference words make the meaning clearer?
- iv Is each paragraph connected to the task?

**LEXIS &
GRAMMAR**

The precise word beats the difficult one; a mixture of sentences beats a run of long ones.

Lexical Resource

- i** Is there real range in your synonyms, **collocations** and phrasal verbs?
- ii** Did you choose the **precise** word rather than the difficult one?
- iii** Did you gamble on a word whose meaning you were not sure of?

in terms of · put into · well-received · a growing number of · play a crucial role in

Phrases of this kind will lift a score further than an unusual word will.

Grammatical Range & Accuracy

- i** Are simple and more complex sentence forms used naturally?
- ii** Does the range of forms help express the meaning clearly?
- iii** Relative clauses, passives, and appositive noun phrases are options—not required score devices.
- iv** Are grammar and punctuation accurate and easy to follow?

NOTE

Clarity and accuracy matter more than length. Complex sentences do not need to outnumber simple ones.

2× TASK TWO

Task 2 is worth twice Task 1 — 66.6% of the paper.

Task 2 carries more weight

Protect enough time for Task 2; it contributes more to the final Writing score.

TASK ONE

about 20 minutes · at least 150 words

Allow time to plan and check.

TASK TWO

about 40 minutes · at least 250 words

Task 2 carries more weight in the final Writing score.

A useful Academic Task 1 structure

Introduction

Paraphrase the task accurately.

Overview

For Academic Task 1, summarise the key features.

Body paragraphs

Develop selected key features with relevant detail.

THE OVERVIEW

An overview summarises the shape of the data.

The figures belong in the body.

An overview identifies the main features

the main trend

a key comparison

a notable stage or change

the clearest overall pattern

ACADEMIC TASK ONE

Report what the visual information shows. Do not add unsupported causes or personal opinion. A separate conclusion is usually unnecessary; prioritise a clear overview and selected supporting detail.

PART TWO

Seven Steps to a Band 7 Sentence

A sentence is built, not written.

A good sentence is not written long from the start. It is built by adding one element at a time to a short, correct one. Watch the same information change in rank at every step.

I

A subject and a verb are enough to begin.

Write the base sentence subject + verb

The number of Korean students who studied abroad increased.

Add the figures

The number of Korean students who studied abroad increased from 30,000 to 40,000.

From A to B — the basic frame for describing any change.

Add the period

The number of Korean students who studied abroad increased from 30,000 to 40,000 between 1990 and 2010.

between A and B · from A to B · over the period

CAUTION

A description that omits the time period loses marks for **task achievement** immediately. If the years are on the graph, they belong in the sentence.

IV

These are the words you use when the graph
cannot be read exactly.

Add approximation

The number of Korean students who studied abroad increased from
about 30,000 to just over 40,000 between 1990 and 2010.

about · around · approximately — roughly this figure · **just over · just under** — slightly above
or below it · **nearly · roughly** — approaching it

Add the adverb

The number of Korean students who studied abroad increased
significantly from about 30,000 to just over 40,000 between 1990
and 2010.

significantly · dramatically — a steep change · **steadily · gradually** — an even one · **slightly · marginally** — a small one

*One word for the size of a change
will change the rank of the sentence.*

VI

A way of adding information without starting a new sentence.

Add a noun phrase after a comma

The number of Korean students who studied abroad increased significantly from about 30,000 to just over 40,000 between 1990 and 2010, a rise of around 10,000 in 20 years.

Of everything on this page, this single element lifts the grammar score most.

This is one optional way to vary form. It is not inherently higher-scoring; use it only when it keeps the meaning clear.

Recast it as *there was*

There was a significant increase in the number of Korean students who studied abroad, from about 30,000 to just over 40,000 between 1990 and 2010, a rise of around 10,000 in 20 years.

The verb *increased* becomes the noun *increase*. Once you can write the same fact two ways, nothing in the essay has to repeat itself.

PRACTICE

Take **one sentence** from your own task and write it out from step one to step seven. Three times through and your hand will remember it. You do not, however, need to take every sentence to step seven — **one per paragraph is plenty**.

PART THREE

Eighteen

Sentence Patterns

Structures, not words.

Learning structures is faster than learning words. With the frame of a sentence already in place, you can spend the exam thinking about what you actually want to say.

**CITING
EVIDENCE**

Four ways to bring a source or a figure into the argument.

Reporting task material

The chart shows that the proportion rose from 24% to 31%.

Using a supplied source

According to the survey, ... (only when a survey is provided).

Comparing data

The figure for A was higher than that for B.

Giving a cautious reason

This may be because public transport is less available in rural areas.

Offering a possible explanation

One possible reason is that housing costs have risen.

Important

Do not invent sources, surveys, statistics, or expert opinions.

**FRAMING
A CLAIM**

Qualifying, conceding and settling a position.

Conceding

Although private cars are convenient, they can increase congestion.

Qualifying

This approach may be effective when local conditions are favourable.

Stating likelihood

It is likely that demand will continue to rise.

Identifying a limitation

One limitation is that the policy may be costly to implement.

Generalising carefully

In many cases, public transport is more efficient than private cars.

Avoid

Obviously and similar assertions when reasoned support is needed.

DESCRIBING

Impression, appearance, resolve — and how to use
all of these.

Describing an impression

The policy appears to have reduced waiting times.

Describing a pattern

It seems that the two groups followed different patterns.

Describing a process

The diagram is divided into three stages.

Comparing

By contrast, the figure for B remained stable.

Linking time

Over the period, the proportion increased gradually.

Use

Choose direct, task-appropriate wording; there is no target number of structures.

PART FOUR

The Ten Notes I Write Most Often

Not grammar. Judgement.

These are drawn from the comments that recur in my own marking.

What is worth noticing is that almost none of them concern grammar. That is why correct writing can still stall at the same band.

OI

In order of how often the comment appears.

OI

The same point, said twice in different words

If two sentences amount to the same thing, one of them must go. It comes from trying to reach the word count, and it is marked as **repetition** rather than rewarded as length.

O2

Wording lifted straight from the question

Copied wording may still be counted in the word total, but excessive copying does not demonstrate lexical range. Paraphrase where natural; retain essential task language.

O3

O4

only takes up room.

O5

Academic Task 1 is a report, not an argument. A concise introduction may state what the visual information shows; prioritise the overview and selected detail.

A WAY TO CHECK

Write a **one-word summary** beside each sentence. If the same word appears twice, one of those sentences is doing no work.

06

Register and convention read as signals of accuracy.

06

A sentence whose meaning isn't clear

Clear to the writer; read twice by everyone else. It happens when a sentence is **carried over from the first language**. Breaking it in two solves most cases.

07

Register a degree too low

as a response from your request

→ in response to your request

Thank you in advance

→ I thank you in advance

I want to

→ I would like to

08

The wrong sign-off

Opened with *Dear Sir / Madam*

→ Yours faithfully,

Opened with a name, *Dear Ms Carter*

→ Yours sincerely,

09

Giving your own name in the body

The letter is signed at the end; the body need not say who is writing.

10

One preposition, two meanings

in the letter — what the letter **says**

on the letter — the **sheet of paper** itself

PART FIVE

The Final Check

Use the time available; there is no official fixed checking order.

A final scan can help you catch omissions and errors, but it is not a score formula. Start with anything that could leave part of the task unanswered or change the meaning.

CHECKLIST

Use the list selectively; there is no fixed score-impact order.

Use the list selectively; IELTS does not prescribe a score-impact order.

Task Achievement / Response

- ☐ Have I addressed every part of the task?
- ☐ For Academic Task 1, have I selected key features and included an overview?
- ☐ For Task 2, have I developed a clear response to the prompt?

Coherence & Cohesion

- ☐ Can the reader follow the progression between paragraphs?
- ☐ Does each paragraph have a clear purpose?

Lexical Resource

- ☐ Are my words accurate and appropriate?
- ☐ Have I avoided invented sources or unnecessary forced paraphrase?

Grammatical Range & Accuracy

- ☐ Are sentence forms clear and controlled?
- ☐ Have I corrected errors that affect meaning?
- ☐ Do I meet the official minimum word count?

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Knowing the criteria is the first half. The second is having someone read your writing. Writing is the hardest skill to improve alone, because the problem in your own work is the one thing you cannot see.

Glocalish runs group programmes focused on Writing and Speaking, and one-to-one coaching designed around a target band and a deadline.

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