

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – teacher’s notes

Description

An activity to introduce Academic Writing task 2, involving task analysis, idea generation, essay planning and language activation. Students are then asked to write an essay and to analyse two sample scripts.

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| Time required: | <i>130 minutes (90–100 minutes for procedure 1-12. Follow up text analysis another 30–40 mins).</i> |
| Additional materials required: | <i>▪ None – although you might like to prepare OHTs of sample task; OHTs of Worksheets 1, 2, 3 and 4; photocopies of Worksheet 5 and the sample scripts.</i> |
| Aims: | <i>▪ to give students practice in the main steps required to write a task 2 answer</i> <i>▪ to analyse the task, generate ideas, consider idea relevance</i> <i>▪ to revise language for organising the essay</i> <i>▪ to practise writing a timed essay</i> <i>▪ to show students how to assess essays critically.</i> |

Procedure

1. Show the sample task on an OHT to the class. Hand out worksheet 1 or show it on an OHT and ask students to work in pairs to discuss their answers to it.
2. Hold a whole class feedback session, clarifying any points as necessary.
3. Ask students how many sides there are to this question. Make sure students realise there are four. Use an OHT of worksheet 2 or draw four boxes on the board as in worksheet 2 and ask students to copy them onto a piece of A4, or handout worksheet 2.
4. Ask students to brainstorm in pairs some ideas and examples for each box.
5. Show worksheet 3 on an OHT or handout. Ask the pairs of students to discuss which of these ideas are relevant for this essay. Remind students that they will be penalised if they include ideas which are not relevant to the essay question.
6. Re-divide the class so that new groups of four are formed with students who were not working together previously. Do this by taking four pairs and asking one student from each pair to form a group. If class numbers do not allow groups of four, use groups of three.

7. Students now pool their ideas and organise them to form a plan. They should consider which ideas go together. Perhaps they will need to drop some of the ideas if there are too many, so they will need to consider which ideas are the most relevant and important.
8. Once the groups have decided on the ideas they will use, ask them to consider which of their ideas are claims or views and which ones are supporting evidence. They should be sure to have supporting evidence or examples for each of their claims at this stage.
9. Hand out, or show on an OHT, worksheet 4. As a class, students think of as many expressions as possible for each box. Remind students that they will be penalised if they don't clearly organise their essay, and if they don't use a variety of these types of expressions.
10. Add to the worksheet as necessary by going through it with the whole class.
11. Students write their essay under timed conditions (30 minutes, plus 5 minutes self-checking at the end).
12. Students exchange their essays with a partner and check them again before handing them to the teacher.

Additional information

Make a copy of the assessment criteria available to the students before this lesson.

If time and interest allows, the follow-up activity can be done before they write their own essay i.e. between steps 10 and 11 in the procedure.

Suggested follow-up activities/questions (and answers)

1. Hand out the two sample scripts plus worksheet 5 either the same day or a following day. Alternatively use two essays that two of your students have written (ask the student for permission first), plus the worksheet.
2. Ask the students to read the sample scripts or essays and complete the worksheet as they read.
3. Students discuss their answers in pairs and then as a class.
4. Students apply the same questions to their own essay (if this is done as follow-up).

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – answer keys

Key to Worksheet 1

1. Is the text in normal print simply advice, or do candidates have to follow it?

These instructions appear on each Academic Writing Question Paper and candidates need to follow them so that they answer the questions correctly.

2. Are there two sentences that give candidates instructions here?

No. There are four separate instructions in this question:

Spend about 40 minutes on this task

Write about the following topic.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge and experience.

Write at least 250 words.

These instructions will appear with each Writing Task 2 and there may be other specific instructions in the question itself. Candidates should always make sure to read all of the printed information carefully.

3. Is the writing in bold italics the question candidates have to answer?

Yes. For each Academic Writing Question Paper, the Task 2 question itself is printed in bold italics.

4. Do candidates only have to answer the question ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree’?

No. The three sentences before this contain information which tells the candidates the exact topic that they need to discuss. They will need to present information which is relevant to the topic, in this particular case, the advantages and disadvantages associated with nuclear weapons and nuclear power. Any views expressed will need to be supported using examples or evidence which are specifically relevant to the task set.

Students need to answer the question ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree’ by giving their opinion, having evaluated the relevant pros and cons.

5. Is it enough for candidates to give just their own opinion about this topic?

No. In this case candidates have to say how much they agree or disagree with the use of nuclear technology, and for each Writing Task 2 they must be sure to follow the instruction which says ‘Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience’.

6. Do candidates have to pretend to be a specialist when they are writing their answer?

No. Candidates’ answers should be formal and academic but they are not expected to be a specialist and should write in a non-specialist way so that their answer can be clearly understood by someone with no specialist knowledge of this topic. This is reinforced by the instruction to ‘include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience’.

Key to Worksheet 2

Possible ideas are:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Advantages of Nuclear Power</p> <p>Compared to fossil fuels, nuclear power is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- cheaper to produce- quicker to produce- cleaner to produce (e.g. no smoke as there is from coal) <p>It cannot run out (compared to e.g. oil – rising prices as it is running low)</p> | <p>Advantages of Nuclear Weapons</p> <p>The threat of them is enough to stop war breaking out (e.g. USA and former Soviet Union during the Cold War)</p> |
| <p>Disadvantages of Nuclear Power</p> <p>Possibility of serious health risks if not handled carefully (e.g. Chernobyl)</p> <p>Expensive to set up initially</p> <p>Poor image</p> | <p>Disadvantages of Nuclear Weapons</p> <p>Only rich countries can afford them, leading to an imbalance of power (e.g. America)</p> <p>Incredibly destructive</p> <p>Creates a climate of distrust e.g. North Korea</p> |

Key to Worksheet 3

The ideas in the first column are all irrelevant to this essay while those in the second column could be included.

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development of weapons through history – Although weapons are referred to here, it is only in the context of nuclear technology, so a discussion of weapons in general would be irrelevant here. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The depletion of natural resources – This is one possible reason why more countries are considering nuclear power and so is relevant. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggestions for achieving world peace – Although world peace is referred to, it would be a mistake to concentrate on this too much as it will inevitably lead the writer away from the topic of nuclear technology. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The high cost of fuel – This can be argued as a reason why cheaper power sources need to be found. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our increasing reliance on modern technology – Modern technology is not linked to the theme of nuclear technology. | |

Key to Worksheet 4

| Introduction | Cause and effect | Conclusion |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Today... This issue/problem... Generally speaking...</p> | <p>As a result... Because of... Owing to... So... Since... Given that...</p> | <p>In conclusion... Finally... In summary... To sum up... Therefore... There seems to be little doubt that...</p> |
| <p>And</p> | <p>But</p> | <p>For example</p> |
| <p>Also In addition Furthermore Moreover What is more Not only ...but also... Firstly... Secondly... Finally...</p> | <p>However Although Despite In spite of In contrast Nevertheless</p> | <p>Such as For instance A case in point One example of this In this way</p> |

Key to Worksheet 5

| | Sample Script A | Sample Script B |
|---|---|---|
| THE INTRODUCTION | | |
| 1. Does the introduction tell you exactly what the topic is? | No, it could be more fully developed or clearer. | Yes, though the second sentence introduces a new idea. |
| 2. Do any of the ideas need more information? | It is not clear why present sources of energy will finish. | No. |
| 3. What connectors have been used to improve the cohesion of the paragraph? | None. | Which; During these years; but |
| THE BODY OF THE ESSAY | | |
| 1. What benefits of nuclear technology does the writer give? | The same as the question + nuclear technology can help in the field of medicine and the engineering sector and nuclear rays can treat cancer. | No threat of pollution; limitless; effective for industrial purposes. |
| 2. Are the benefits given different to the ones in the title? | Some are. | Yes. |
| 3. What disadvantages of nuclear technology does the writer discuss? | None. | Limited only to a few countries; if mishandled there is a risk of contamination to nearby population. |
| 4. What connectors are used to link the ideas together? | And; that is why; because; then; so; though; but; on the other hand; in conclusion | And; this is due to; since; in fact; when and if ... then; the following; as stated before; the advantages are that ...; the disadvantages are that ...; also; as we all know; it is clear that; in conclusion; so that |
| 5. Is there enough evidence to support the writer's claims and ideas? | No. No examples given of disadvantages; no examples of how nuclear technology can help in engineering; can nuclear rays cure cancer? | Yes. |
| 6. Do any of the ideas need to be developed further? | Yes (see above) + why do other energy sources need 'large involvement like works, | Perhaps more information about the 'energy crisis' and what will cause it. |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| | | machineries etc'? | |
| 7. | Are any ideas repeated too often? | No. | The advantages are repeated. |
| THE CONCLUSION | | | |
| 1. | Is it clear where the conclusion begins? | Yes – 'In conclusion ...' though a separate paragraph would be better. | Yes. 'In conclusion ...' and it is also marked with a separate paragraph. |
| 2. | Does the conclusion summarise the ideas used in the body of the essay? | No, the problems are never discussed. | Yes. |
| 3. | Is the question 'Do you agree or disagree?' answered? | Not directly. | The writer's position is made clear 'Nuclear power is good'. |
| 4. | What connectors are used in the conclusion? | In conclusion; but | In conclusion; it is up to ...; so that |

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – Student’s Worksheet 1

1. Is the text in normal print simply advice, or do candidates have to follow it?
2. Are there two sentences that give candidates instructions here?
3. Is the writing in bold italics the question candidates have to answer?
4. Do candidates only have to answer the question ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree’?
5. Is it enough for candidates to just give their own opinion about this topic?
6. Do candidates have to pretend to be a specialist when they are writing their answer?

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – Student’s Worksheet 2

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Advantages of Nuclear Power | Advantages of Nuclear Weapons |
| Disadvantages of Nuclear Power | Disadvantages of Nuclear Weapons |



IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – Student’s Worksheet 3

Which of these ideas could be included in this essay?

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|--|
| The development of weapons through history |
| Suggestions for achieving world peace |
| Our increasing reliance on modern technology |
| The depletion of natural resources |
| The high cost of fuel |



IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – Student’s Worksheet 4

| | | |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| Introduction | Cause and effect | Conclusion |
| Today... | As a result... | In conclusion... |
| And | But | For example |
| Also... | However... | Such as... |



IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – Student’s Worksheet 5

Look at Sample scripts A and B and answer the following questions:

| | Sample Script A | Sample Script B |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| THE INTRODUCTION | | |
| 1. Does the introduction tell you exactly what the topic is? | | |
| 2. Do any of the ideas need more information? | | |
| 3. What connectors have been used to improve the cohesion of the paragraph? | | |
| THE BODY OF THE ESSAY | | |
| 1. What benefits of nuclear technology does the writer give? | | |
| 2. Are the benefits given different to the ones in the title? | | |
| 3. What disadvantages of nuclear technology does the writer discuss? | | |
| 4. What connectors are used to link the ideas together? | | |
| 5. Is there enough evidence to support the writer’s claims and ideas? | | |
| 6. Do any of the ideas need to be developed further? | | |
| 7. Are any ideas repeated too often? | | |
| THE CONCLUSION | | |

| | | | |
|----|--|--|--|
| 1. | Is it clear where the conclusion begins? | | |
| 2. | Does the conclusion summarise the ideas used in the body of the essay? | | |
| 3. | Is the question 'Do you agree or disagree?' answered? | | |
| 4. | What connectors are used in the conclusion? | | |





IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Activity – Sample Task

Sample task

Academic Writing Sample Task 2B

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic.

The threat of nuclear weapons maintains world peace. Nuclear power provides cheap and clean energy.

The benefits of nuclear technology far outweigh the disadvantages.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

② Nuclear power provides cheap

Nuclear power provides cheap energy sources. Sometimes the present sources of energy like oil, gas etc. will be finished.

Arguments in favour of nuclear power: The nuclear energy produces by chemical materials. It is comparatively cheaper than other energy. To produce the power it only involve some expert people and energy plant. Where to produce other energy it needs large involvement like worker, machineries, etc. And also takes more time. The nuclear power plants are well protected and monitor. That is why there is less possibility. The threat of nuclear weapons maintains world peace because the developed countries like: U.K., U.S.A., Canada, France etc. have nuclear weapons (warhead). Each country do not 'give' threat to other country. Because they know if

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One country distribute others, then
other will create problems from them,
so it is well balanced and world
peace maintains peacefully.

Though there are sometimes creates
problems by the nuclear technology
but sometimes it also help the
mankind in the field of medicine
and engineering sectors. In the medical
field we can say by nuclear ray
sometimes we can treat a cancer
patient. On the other hand in the
field of Engineering by the
nuclear power engines can do
lot of things like operate engine
instead of electricity. In conclusion
we can say though there are some
problem in the nuclear power but it
has some benefit for the mankind

Examiner comment

Band 5

Although the script contains some good arguments, these are presented using poor structures and the answer is not very coherent. The candidate has a clear point of view but not all the supporting arguments are linked together well and sometimes ideas are left unfinished. There is quite a lot of relevant vocabulary but this is not used skilfully and sentences often have words missing or lapse into different styles. The answer is spoilt by grammatical errors and poor expression.

Nuclear Power

Nuclear power is an alternative source of energy which is carefully being evaluated during these times of energy problems. During these years we can say that we have energy problems but in more or less 50 years, we will be facing an energy crisis.

Nuclear power is an alternative source of energy and unlike other sources such as solar energy, nuclear power is highly effective for industrial purposes. If it is handled correctly there really is no danger for the public. It is cheap, there is no threat of pollution and best of all it is limitless. It is difficult to think about nuclear power as a good source of energy for people in general. This is due to the use it has been given since its birth during the second world war. It is expressed as military power and in fact at the moment nuclear power is limited to few hands who consider themselves world powers. When and if there is a change of ideology regarding the correct use of nuclear power, then we may all benefit from all the advantages nuclear power can give us. ⇒

If we outweigh the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear technology we then have the following: As stated before, the advantages are that there is limitless supply, it is cheap, it is effective for industrial purpose and still there are many benefits which have not yet been discovered. The disadvantages are at present time that it is limited to only a few countries who regard it as safe military power. Also if mishandled, there is risk for the population around the plant to undergo contamination as we all know happened in Chernobyl. If these disadvantages can be overcome, then it is clear that nuclear energy can give us more benefits than problems. It will in the future be very important as the energy crisis is not far ahead.

In conclusion, nuclear power is good, it can be safe, and we will all benefit. It is up to our leaders to see that it is handled well so that we can all benefit from it.

Examiner comment

Band 7

The answer is well-written and contains some good arguments. It does tend to repeat these arguments but the writer's point of view remains clear throughout. The message is easy to follow and ideas are arranged well with good use of cohesive devices. There are minor problems with coherence and at times the expression is clumsy and imprecise. There is a wide range of structures that are well handled with only small problems in the use of vocabulary, mainly in the areas of spelling and word choice.