

10 Fame

Aims: Dealing with words often confused | Using appropriate vocabulary
Avoiding repetition by the use of synonyms

Part 1: Vocabulary



- 1 In IELTS Writing Tasks, it is important to demonstrate that you have a wide vocabulary by avoiding unnecessary repetition. Match the words 1–9 with the words a–i that have a similar meaning.

1 fame	a short-lived
2 ambition	b icon
3 achievement	c accomplishment
4 shortcoming	d approve
5 idol	e stardom
6 transient	f aspiration
7 endorse	g notorious
8 image	h flaw
9 infamous	i impression

- 2 Knowing which words go together is important. Complete the sentences 1–6 with words from Exercise 1 above to form common collocations. Make any necessary changes to part of speech or number.

- When meeting someone for the first time, it is natural to want to make a good _____.
- When starting a new project, it is common to be full of hopes and _____.
- Many people see celebrities as being all _____ and no substance.
- People often migrate to cities seeking _____ and fortune.
- Although he is undoubtedly famous, his character is deeply _____.
- She aspired to being a fashion _____.

- 3 Sometimes an idea can be expressed with greater or lesser degrees of strength by a group of words or phrases with similar meanings. For example: *satisfactory good excellent*. Arrange the groups of words below from left to right in terms of strength of meaning.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 famous legendary well-known | 3 like admire idolise |
| 2 bad imperfect worthless | 4 praise acclaim recognition |

- 4 The adverbs below can be placed at the beginning of a statement to show your attitude to what follows. Rewrite the sentences 1–7, beginning each sentence with an adverb that expresses the sentence in brackets.

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| fortunately | interestingly | surprisingly |
| importantly | obviously | unfortunately |
| inevitably | | |

- 1 Many people who achieve fame as children struggle to live a normal adult life. (This phenomenon is bound to happen.)

- 2 Many people who become famous as children struggle to live a normal life in adulthood. (This is not a good thing.)

- 3 Only a small percentage of people become truly obsessed with celebrities. (This is a good thing.)

- 4 The vast majority of respondents were critical of the amount of celebrity coverage in the news. (I didn't expect this.)

- 5 Fame can confer certain advantages. (This is clear.)

- 6 The majority of children surveyed said that they did not want to be famous. (I find this interesting.)

- 7 Many children were critical of the bad behaviour of people in the public eye. (This idea is significant.)

- 5 Some of the adverbs above can be modified by the use of: *more, less, not, somewhat*. Complete the sentences 1–4 below with an adverb and suitable modifier.

- 1 Fame can be stressful. (This is not as clear as the previous point.)

- 2 The majority of children said they did not want to emulate the bad behaviour of their idols. (This idea is more significant than the previous one.)

- 3 People find notorious criminals quite fascinating. (This is to be expected.)

- 4 The children of famous people rarely seek fame themselves. (This is a bit surprising.)

Part 2: Practice exercises: Task 1

- 1 Sentences 1–8 describe information in the table below, which compares the results of a survey of children's career aspirations in 1980 and 2010. Each sentence contains two commonly confused words in *italics*. Underline the correct word.

rank	1980	%	2010	%
1	Teacher	14	Sports star	13
2	Businessman/woman	9	Actor/Actress	12
3	Doctor/Nurse	8	Popular singer	11
4	Scientist	7	Astronaut	9
5	Lawyer	6	Lawyer	8
6	Vet	6	Businessman/woman	8
7	Sports star	5	Doctor/Nurse	6
8	Astronaut	4	Teacher	6
9	Banker	4	Chef	5
10	Archaeologist	3	Vet	4

- Children today appear to have a greater interest in careers associated with celebrities than did children in the *passed/past*.
- Surprisingly, the *number/percentage* of children wanting to work in medicine decreased.
- There were changes in the rankings of all of the occupations *accept/except* that of lawyer.
- The percentage of children choosing 'sports star' as one of their top ten careers *rose/raised*.
- In 2010, a higher proportion of children wanted to work in entertainment *then/than* in traditional professions such as medicine.
- A *smaller/fewer* percentage of respondents opted for 'teacher' in 2010 than in 1980.
- In contrast/On the contrary*, a much higher percentage of those surveyed chose 'sports star', which occupies first position in the 2010 list.
- Some professions that did not appear in the 1980 rankings, *feature/future* prominently in the 2010 list.

Now complete the sentences 9–13 below with some of the words in *italics* above.

- The percentage of children wanting to be an astronaut _____.
- In 2010, a _____ percentage of children wanted to be a vet.
- A smaller percentage of children today want to work in business and banking than did children in the _____.
- Not surprisingly, 'banker' did not _____ in the 2010 list.
- All of the professions in the 1980 list appeared in the 2010 list _____ scientist, astronaut and banker.

- 2 The paragraph below contains six informal expressions in italics. Replace them with more appropriate words or expressions.

There were (1) *really big* changes in the children's career aspirations between 1980 and 2010. (2) *Lots of* traditional professions either declined in popularity or disappeared. (3) *E.g.* in 1980, 14 per cent of respondents wanted to be teachers whereas thirty years later, only 6 per cent of those surveyed chose this profession. (4) *Amazingly*, scientist, ranked fourth in 1980, (5) *didn't even* (6) *show up* in the top ten occupations of 2010.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1 _____ | 4 _____ |
| 2 _____ | 5 _____ |
| 3 _____ | 6 _____ |

- 3 The passage below contains some unnecessary repetition. Replace the words 1–6 in italics with synonyms from Exercise 1 on page 82. Make any other necessary changes to the words.

A number of professions typically associated with celebrities, which were not included in the 1980 list, appeared among the top ten in 2010. Acting and singing were particularly popular, ranking second and third respectively. Chef, chosen by five per cent of respondents, also (1) *appeared* in the 2010 list. Other (2) *professions* increased significantly in popularity. The percentage of (3) *respondents* (4) *choosing* sports star and astronaut more than doubled. The only (5) *profession* that did not change in the rankings was lawyer, which (6) *appeared in* fifth place in both 1980 and 2010.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1 _____ | 4 _____ |
| 2 _____ | 5 _____ |
| 3 _____ | 6 _____ |

- 4 The words in italics in the extracts 1–7 from unit 2 below are too informal. Rewrite the sentences using more appropriate words and phrases.

- 1 One of the *biggest steps* in civilisation is the development of modern *ways of making and getting food ready*.

- 2 Convenience foods have now become the *done thing* in many societies.

- 3 Although some people *love* traditional cooking practices and believe they will *be around for a long time*, ...

- 4 In more traditional societies, where families tended to be big, it made economic sense for one person to *give* him/herself to time-consuming *jobs at home* such as growing and preparing food.

5 Nowadays, people *by and large* live in ever smaller family units.

6 If each family were to spend *hours and hours* growing and processing food, this would be a *silly* use of society's human resource.

7 ... the increase in the number of *grown ups*, especially women with *kids*, who work in *jobs all day long*.

5 The table below shows the results of an opinion poll of media coverage. Read the description and circle the most appropriate option in the items 1–7 in italics. Then underline the expressions the writer has used to avoid repeating the word *respondents*.

Too much coverage of:	%	Too little coverage of:	%
Celebrity gossip	42	Good news	18
Political leaders	10	Poverty/Homelessness	11
War/Conflict	9	Environment	10
Crime	8	Education	9
The economy/recession	8	Health	8
Sports	5	International news	4

The table presents the findings of a public opinion survey of media coverage.

On the whole, the respondents felt there was too much coverage of individuals in the entertainment industry and politics, 'bad' news and sports. Dissatisfaction with the amount of coverage given to celebrity gossip was particularly high at 42 per cent. Individuals in politics were also seen as (1) *receiving/getting* too much attention by one in ten of those surveyed. A similar (2) *number/percentage* of respondents said the media focused too much on (3) *awful/negative* news stories, war and the recession, for example. At the other end of the scale, a (4) *small/few* percentage of people questioned said there was too much sports news. (5) *On the contrary/On the other hand*, respondents said that there (6) *wasn't/was not* enough coverage of good news, social and issues and international news. Nearly one in five of those who took part in the survey felt that there was not enough focus on good news. A relatively high percentage also felt that there was too little coverage of issues relating to quality of life: poverty, the environment, education and health. A small percentage (4 per cent) wanted more international news.

In short, (7) *there appears to be/you could say there was* a mismatch between the types of news stories covered and the stated preferences of the survey respondents.

Part 2: Practice exercises: Task 2

- 6 The language required for IELTS Writing Task 2 is often quite predictable. Listed below are ten common expressions. Write one or two words with a similar meaning for each.

1 advantage	_____	6 problem	_____
2 disadvantage	_____	7 solution	_____
3 opinion	_____	8 important	_____
4 however	_____	9 issue	_____
5 people	_____	10 situation	_____

- 7 Study the four introductions a–d to an essay written in response to the question:
In your view, why have celebrities become such an important feature of modern life?
Answer questions 1–2.

1 Which is the best introduction?

2 What is the problem with each of the other three?

- a There are more and more television programmes, magazines, and newspaper articles about celebrities these days. The 'cult of celebrity' is one of the one of the things about modern pop culture that really stands out. Some people say that because there have always been famous people around, this isn't anything new. But I say that there's something different about fame today.
- b The number of television programmes, magazines, and newspaper articles focusing on the lives of celebrities has rocketed over the last few decades. Indeed, the 'cult of celebrity' is the defining feature of modern popular culture. People say that, because there have always been famous people, this is not a new phenomenon. However, I insist that fame today is unique to our times.
- c The number of television programmes, magazines, and newspaper articles focusing on the lives of celebrities appears to have grown considerably over the last few decades. Indeed, the 'cult of celebrity' seems to be one of the defining features of modern popular culture. Some people insist that, because there have always been famous people, this is not a new phenomenon. However, I would suggest that there are aspects of fame today that are particular to our times.
- d The number of television programmes, magazines, and newspaper articles focusing on the lives of celebrities appears to have grown considerably over the last few decades. Indeed, the 'cult of celebrity' seems to be one of the defining features of television programmes, magazines and newspapers. Some people insist that, because there have always been famous people, the 'cult of celebrity' is not a new phenomenon. However, I would suggest that there are aspects of the 'cult of celebrity' that are particular to our times.

- 8 Read the first two body paragraphs of the essay on page 86. Improve the text by:

- 1 changing the informal expressions into more formal language. (The first one has been marked for you in italics.)
- 2 adding hedges to the statements 1–5 that are too sweeping. Use the hints to help you.

Add a hedge to show that this is a generalisation.

Add a hedge to show that this is not the only reason.

Add a hedge that indicates this is a possibility.

In the past, people (1) _____ became famous for *doing great things*. Einstein, Dickens, and Gandhi, for instance, were all celebrated for what they'd done for science, literature and public life. People were interested in them (2) _____ because they were role models. One of the reasons fame today is so different is because celebrities (3) _____ meet a range of people's emotional needs, not just the need for role models. Lots of people in the public eye today are famous simply for being famous. The public are (4) _____ interested in them because, when news of scandals comes out into the open, they (5) _____ get the satisfaction of feeling superior to people they've been encouraged to envy.

Add a hedge to indicate that this seems to be what happens.

Add a hedge to indicate that this doesn't happen all of the time.

- 9 Read the third body paragraph and the conclusion to the essay below. Reduce the unnecessary repetition in the text by replacing repeated words with synonyms.

Another reason fame today is unique is the desire for ordinary people to explore the nature of fame itself. Many celebrities that have emerged from reality television programmes, for example, come from the same walks of life as ordinary people. Reading about or watching such celebrities allow ordinary people to imagine what it might be like to suddenly find themselves in the public eye. Celebrities may, therefore, allow ordinary people to indulge in wish fulfilment fantasies without having to worry about whether they are capable of significant achievement.

The third and perhaps most significant reason that celebrities play such an important role in modern life is the fact that commercial pressures encourage media organisations to focus on information that is immediately attractive to ordinary people. As we have seen, celebrities appear to tap into powerful emotional needs, the need to feel superior, the need to imagine oneself to be the centre of attention; therefore, news about celebrities sells.

Exam tip: Remember that some repetition is acceptable and can even be effective as a means of signposting key ideas. If you do not know suitable synonyms for some key terms, it is better to repeat these words than to use expressions that are a poor match or inappropriate to the context.

- 10 Read the concluding paragraph below. Make any changes to word choice and style that you think necessary.

In brief, the nature of fame today is different from fame in the past. There's a greater need to denigrate, rather than celebrate the actions of people in the public eye, as well as huge interest in fame itself. Whether the public will eventually get tired of denigrating people in the public eye or of fame itself we'll never know.

Part 3: Exam practice

WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The table shows the results of a survey of people's perception of celebrity news coverage.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

Celebrities receive:	%	Who is responsible for the amount of coverage?	%	Who gives celebrities the most coverage?	%
too much news coverage	85	news organisations	56	television news	60
not enough news coverage	6	the public	34	Internet news websites	15
right amount of coverage	7	both	7	newspapers	12
don't know	2	don't know	3	radio news	5
				other	3
				don't know	5

WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Many people believe that media coverage of celebrities is having a negative effect on children.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

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

Write at least 250 words.