Writing

Structuring a Task 2 opinion essay



Develop your exam skills

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Task 2 in the IELTS exam asks a question about a social topic such as the environment, education or the media. You must answer this question by giving your opinions, along with reasons and examples, in an essay. You must write at least 250 words and you should spend about 40 minutes writing the essay.

It is important to use a standard essay structure consisting of separate paragraphs: an introduction (one paragraph), followed by the main body of the essay (two or three paragraphs), and then a conclusion (one paragraph).

see GRAMMAR page 157 and more PRACTICE online



1 **Read about one view of parenting. Do you agree or disagree with the author? Then read about how the paragraph is structured below.**

I believe [1]the family is one of the most important structures in society. [2]Within the family, children can learn how to get on with other people and how to behave, and these things are important for life in the wider world. The family should also be a stable unit that [3]provides children with love and support. Without this love and support, children might find it difficult to manage in the wider world. For example, children without loving, supportive parents could feel unable to do the things they would like to do, like go to university.

1 Main idea: *The family is important.*
2 Supporting idea which explains/adds to main idea: People *learn how to get on with others and how to behave in a family.*
3 Supporting idea: *The family gives love and support.*

Circled words = use of cautious language

2 **Read the following statements and write T (True) or F (False).**

1 A paragraph should have more than one *main idea*. _____
2 A paragraph should have more than one *supporting idea*. _____
3 The first sentence of a paragraph should contain the *main idea* of the paragraph. _____
4 The last sentence of a paragraph should contain the *main idea* of the paragraph. _____
5 You should mainly use definite modal verbs, e.g. *will, must*. _____
6 You should mainly use less definite modal verbs, e.g. *can, might, could, should*. _____

see GRAMMAR pages 147 and 157 and more PRACTICE online

3 **Now read the following three paragraphs. Decide which one follows the rules in Exercise 1. Discuss with a partner what is wrong with the other two.**

Paragraph A: Children should learn rules from their parents because teachers alone cannot teach a child how to behave. If a child doesn't have to obey strict rules at home, they could ignore the rules of the school and behave badly. Parents should teach a child rules from an early age so that when they reach school age they are more likely to behave and make friends with the other children at school.

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