



IELTS™ = 9

Module 1: Task Achievement

Essay Introduction

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*What should I do with my introduction to maximise my **Task Achievement** mark? (**TA** = how well you answer the question = 25% of your overall mark)*

From the IELTS criteria, we can see that your introduction should

- 1) introduce **all** parts of the specific exam task
- 2) either not introduce ideas that are not in the specific exam task or limit them
- 3) avoid over-generalizing *
- 4) show a clear position *in answer to the specific* exam task
- 5) NOT refer directly to the exam task using for example “this topic” without introducing the topic first

If your introduction is good, you increase the chances of a “Task Achievement” 9 (the maximum mark for how you answer the question).

In this module, we will look at some good and not so good example introductions for different IELTS essay types.

Example Task 1: Advantages and Disadvantages

Read the exam task, think of **your** ideas, and answer the following questions

- What are the specific “parts” (*as opposed to the general topic*)?
- What essay position is asked for?

Public transport is a popular form of transport in many cities. What are the advantages and disadvantages of public transport for the individuals using it?

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

Answer:

- The general topic is transport, more specifically it is public transport, even more specifically it is about the advantages and disadvantages of public transport, even more specifically it is about the advantages and disadvantages of public transport for the people who use public transport.

It is not about advantages and disadvantages for society, the environment etc

- The essay position that is asked for is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages. You are not asked to give your direct opinion on public transport, or say if advantages are more than disadvantages, or provide solutions for problems.

Use the following checklist to check the three introductions below

Does the introduction...

- ◆ introduce all parts of the specific exam task or only some?
- ◆ avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific exam task ?
- ◆ show a clear position in answer to the exam task?
- ◆ avoid referring directly to the exam task

e.g.

“Does introduction 1 introduce all parts of the specific exam task or only some?” - Yes, it introduces the ideas of public transport, advantages and disadvantages for those (individuals) who use it.

“Does introduction 1 avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific exam task?”. Yes

“Does introduction 1 show a clear position in answer to the exam task?” Yes. It states that the essay will discuss the advantages and disadvantages, which is what the task asks for.

“Does.....

1. *In a lot of cities, public transportation is a popular option for people when it comes to transport. The benefits and drawbacks for those who use such transport will be discussed in this essay.*
2. *In a lot of cities, public transportation is a popular option for people when it comes to transport. The benefits and drawbacks will be discussed in this essay.*
3. *The topic mentioned in this task is of great importance for everyone, and there are definitely benefits and downsides to using public transportation for those using it. This essay will discuss these positives and negatives.*

Answers:

Introduction 1 matches all the points in the checklists. It is an appropriate introduction

Introduction 2 is OK, but for checklist question “Does the introduction introduce all parts of the specific exam task?” the answer is “no”, as it misses one aspect / part of the task. It does not mention the specific point about “the individuals”. This is not a big mistake IF the writer focuses on the individuals in the answer. If the writer starts talking about advantages and disadvantages to businesses this will be bad for Task Achievement, as it is unasked for information. The writer is over-generalizing.

MANY candidates who should get an 8/9 for TA (Task Achievement = how you answer the question) get a 5/6 because they over-generalize the task

Introduction 3 makes a big mistake. For the checklist question “Does the introduction avoid referring directly to the exam task?”, the answer is “no” as it refers directly to the task with “The topic mentioned **in this task**”. You **MUST** write your introduction pretending the reader / examiner has not seen the exam task.

Not many candidates do this, but it writing something like “I agree with the exam statement” is the easiest way to lose marks in TA

Example Task 2: Advantages and Disadvantages

Read the exam task, think of **your** ideas and answer the following questions:

- What are the specific “parts” (*as opposed to the general topic*)?
- What “essay” position is asked for?

Public transport is a popular form of transport in many cities. What are the advantages and disadvantages of public transport for the elderly who use it?

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

This is almost the same, but one very big difference. It talks about **the elderly**.

Again, use the following checklist to check the introductions below

Does the introduction...

- ◆ introduce all parts of the specific exam task or only some?
- ◆ avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific exam task ?
- ◆ show a clear position in answer to the exam task?
- ◆ avoid referring directly to the exam task

e.g.

“Does introduction 1 introduce all parts of the specific exam task?” Yes

“Does introduction 1 avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific exam task?” No. It introduces “own car”, which is not in the specific exam task.

“Does.....”

1. *In a lot of cities, public transportation is one option for elderly people when it comes to transport. The benefits and drawbacks such people who use this transport instead of driving their own car will be discussed in this essay.*
2. *In a lot of cities, public transportation is one option for elderly people when it comes to transport. The benefits and drawbacks for people who use this transport will be discussed in this essay.*
3. *In a lot of cities, public transportation is one option for elderly people when it comes to transport. I believe the benefits for such people who use this transport are more than the drawbacks. The reasons for this will be outlined in this essay.*

Answers:

Introduction 1 includes the necessary information. But for the checklist question “Does the introduction avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific task” the answer is “no”, as it includes unnecessary / unasked for information. The exam task does not mention use of “own cars”, but introduction 1 introduces this. Although it is not bad to talk about cars, it is not the specific topic. It is fine to talk about them later in the body if you are supporting ideas connected to the specific topic. But including such information in the introduction should be avoided.

The second introduction is OK, but it does start to over-generalize with “ The benefits and drawbacks for people who use this transport”. “People” is not in the task, the task has “the elderly”, which is a specific type of person, not a young person, not a child, not a middle-aged person. It is not a big problem as the writer already introduced “elderly” in the previous sentence. If they continue in the body to write about only the elderly, then it is fine. But if they start to over-generalize they will lose marks in TA

MANY candidates who should get an 8/9 for TA get a 5/6 because they over-generalize the task

For this reason it would be “safer” to write “ The benefits and drawbacks for **such** people”. This then directly refers to the “elderly” in the previous sentence, leaving no room for doubt.

Introduction 3 makes two big mistakes. It introduces an idea NOT asked for, i.e. that the advantages are more.

MANY candidates who should get an 8/9 for TA get a 5/6 because they do not clearly look at what the task is asking for

It also states the author's opinion “I believe that”. Again, in this essay it is not asked for.

Example Task 3: Advantages and Disadvantages (of a solution)

Read the exam task, think of **your** ideas, and answer the following questions

- What are the specific “parts” (as opposed to the general topic)?
- What “essay” position is asked for?

In order to solve traffic problems, governments should tax private car owners heavily and use the money to improve public transportation.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a solution?

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

Answer: This one has more “parts”.....

- The general topic is about the government taxing private car owners, more specifically it is about the government taxing private car owners heavily, even more specifically it is about the government taxing private car owners heavily to use the money to improve public transportation, even more specifically it is about the government taxing private car owners heavily to use the money to improve public transportation in order to solve traffic problems
- The essay position that is asked for is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages. You are not asked to give your direct opinion, make predictions (though this can be done in supporting arguments) or say if advantages are more than disadvantages

Use the checklist below to check the introductions below

Does the introduction...

- ◆ introduce all parts of the specific exam task or only some?
- ◆ avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific exam task ?
- ◆ show a clear position in answer to the exam task?
- ◆ Avoid referring directly to the exam task

1. *In many countries nowadays, problems connected with traffic are growing and they need to be solved. Some people believe that less people will drive and more will use public transport if the government places a large tax on privately owned cars. The benefits and drawbacks of such an idea will be discussed in this essay.*

2. *In many countries nowadays, problems connected with traffic are growing and they need to be solved. Some people believe that to address these problems, a heavy tax on privately owned vehicles could be used. The benefits and drawbacks of such an idea will be discussed in this essay.*

3. *In many countries nowadays problems connected with traffic are growing and they need to be solved. Some people believe that to address these issues, the government ought to enhance public transport with money raised by placing a tax on owners of private cars. The benefits and drawbacks of such an idea will be discussed in this essay.*

Answers:

The first introduction introduces a prediction “less people will drive.. if”. This prediction is connected with the idea of solving traffic problems. But the task specifically talks about a solution. For this reason, it is better to talk about a solution **directly**. Introduction 1 is more suitable for the exam task below, which is similar but still different!

Will less people drive if the governments tax private car owners heavily and use the money to improve public transportation?

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

The second introduction **does** talk about a solution, but it misses part of the exam task, as it does not talk about **improving public transport**. This brings down the task achievement mark. Note, if the writer talks about this later, it is not too bad a mistake, but it is “safer” to introduce all aspects of the task in the introduction. Introduction two would be suitable for this exam task

In order to solve traffic problems, governments should tax private car owners heavily. (****Note there is no “and...” + extra part of task here****)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a solution?

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

MANY candidates who should get an 8/9 for TA get a 5/6 because they MISS “and” in the task and so miss part of the task.

Underline “and” in the task when you see it so that in your essay you talk about both parts of

the “and” sentence.

The third one covers almost every part of the task. It misses one minor point. The task talks about a taxing “heavily”. Introduction two introduces this, but introduction three misses it. It is a minor omission, and, again, if covered later not a problem, but again, it is “safer” to introduce all aspects of the task in the introduction

An IELTS 9 for Task achievement (how you answer the question) could be something like this

In many countries nowadays problems connected with traffic are growing and they need to be solved. Some people believe that to address these issues, the government ought to enhance public transport with money raised by placing a heavy tax on owners of private cars. The pros and cons of such an idea will be discussed in this essay.

Example Task 4: Do Advantages Outweigh Disadvantages

Read the exam task. Think of **your** ideas and answer the following questions:

- What are the specific “parts” (*as opposed to the general topic*)?
- What “essay” position is asked for?

Nowadays in many countries chemicals are used to produce and preserve food.

Do the advantages of this use outweigh the disadvantages?

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

- The general topic is about using chemicals, more specifically it is about using chemicals to produce food, even more specifically it is about using chemicals to produce food and preserve food, even more specifically it is about whether the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages.
- The essay position that is asked for is **your opinion** (as opposed to a discussion) on whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. You will obviously need to discuss advantages and disadvantages, but in the context of supporting **your opinion** about which are more.

Now use the checklist below to check the introductions below..

Does the introduction

- ◆ introduce all parts of the specific exam task or only some?
- ◆ avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific exam task ?
- ◆ show a clear position in answer to the exam task? (here = show a clear opinion)
- ◆ avoid referring directly to the exam task

1. It is common now in different countries to use chemicals for food production and preservation. There are drawbacks and benefits to such use, both sides of which will be discussed in this essay.
2. It is common now in different countries to use chemicals to preserve and produce food . Although there are downsides to such use, the benefits are undoubtedly greater.
3. It is common now in different countries to use chemicals to preserve. Although there are downsides to such use, I believe the benefits are undoubtedly greater.

Answers:

The first introduction gives an incorrect position, which is bad for TA. There is no clear opinion in answer to the question in the task “Do the advantages of this use outweigh the disadvantages?”. If the writer only discusses, they will lose a lot of marks in TA.

MANY candidates who should get an 8/9 for TA get a 5/6 because they do not clearly look at what the task is asking for

The second introduction introduces all parts and presents a relevant position. There is no “in my opinion” / “I believe”, but the statement “the benefits are undoubtedly greater” gives a clear position. As the introduction is quite short, a sentence such as “the reasons for this will be outlined in this essay.” could be added, but it is ok without it.

The third introduction presents a relevant position, but misses one aspect of the task. It talks only about “preserve” and misses “produce”. Again, if this is included later it is not too bad, if it is missed then the TA mark will come down.

Example Task 5: Discuss Both Sides

Read the exam task. Think of **your** ideas and answer the following questions:

- What are the specific “parts” (*as opposed to the general idea*)?
- What “essay” position is asked for?

Some people believe that computer games are not good for children and their playing time should be restricted. Other people believe that there are many benefits to computer games, so children should be encouraged to play them.

Discuss both sides and give your opinion.

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

- The general topic is about using computer games, more specifically that computer games are not good for children, even more specifically that they are not good for children and their playing time should be restricted, even more specifically that one side believes they are not good for children and their playing time should be restricted, but another side believes they are benefits, even more specifically the first side + the other side believes there are many benefits to computer games, even more specifically the first side + the other side believes there are many benefits and for this reason children should be encouraged to play them.
- The essay position that is asked for is a discussion of two different opinions and your opinion. In this specific questions, the two opinions are connected with positive and negative, so it is similar to “advantages and disadvantages”, but it must be discussed via each side's viewpoint

Now use the checklist below to check the introductions below..

Does the introduction

- ◆ introduce all parts of the specific exam task or only some?
- ◆ avoid introducing ideas that are not in the specific exam task ?
- ◆ show a clear position in answer to the exam task?
- ◆ avoid referring directly to the exam task

1. *Teenagers and young adults nowadays love playing computer games. There are both advantages to this and disadvantages. Both sides will be discussed in this essay before a conclusion is drawn.*
2. *Children nowadays love playing computer games. There are those who believe that this is*

not so good for the children, so parents should limit the time. Others, however, say that there are some benefits, so we should encourage children to play such games. Both sides will be discussed before a conclusion is drawn.

- 3. Children nowadays love playing computer games. There are those who believe that this is not so good for the children, so the limit spent playing should be limited. Others, however, say that there are a lot of benefits, so we must encourage children to play such games. Both sides will be discussed before a conclusion is drawn.*

Answers:

The first introduction introduces ideas that are not in the specific exam task. It talks about teenagers and young adults, the task is about children. This will bring down the TA mark. It does not introduce aspects of the task like restricting playing time versus encouraging children to play. This may not bring the TA mark down if these ideas are introduced in the body, but if not, then the TA will go down. It is safer to introduce all aspects in the introduction where possible.

The second introduction covers most of the aspects of the task but changes some. In this way it introduces ideas that are not in the specific exam task. For example it talks about “parents” but the task does not say who should limit the time. This is not too bad, as it is most likely parents. But in a different situation introducing an idea not in the task may be worse. The introduction also says there are “some” benefits, but the task says “many”, this is a difference, so it will bring down the TA, though not a lot as it is a minor change. Lastly it says “we should encourage”, whereas the task does not say who. This is not a problem. With the first change, “parents” excludes other possible agents such as teachers, or even friends. “We”, however, includes everyone.

The third introduction is very close. It changes “**should** encourage” to “**must** encourage”, which is a bit different. It would be a perfectly suitable introduction if it said “we ought to encourage”.