



**IELTS™ =9**

# Essay

## Advantages and Disadvantages

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## General Structure:

In this section for the advantages and disadvantages essay we will look at typical structures, DO's and DON'Ts and examples to help you maximize your answer to such a question.

*What is the overall structure of an advantages and disadvantages essay?*

### Format 1

Introduction

Paragraph one = (usually two) advantages OR disadvantages (usually two)

Paragraph two = disadvantages OR advantages

Conclusion = summarize

### Format 2

Introduction

Paragraph one = advantages AND disadvantages

Paragraph two = advantages AND disadvantages

Conclusion = summarize

*Which one should I choose?*

If you have advantages and disadvantages that match each other, you can choose the first or the second one. If one or more of the advantages do not match the disadvantages, then the first one is more logical.

Generally follow the IELTS criteria advice: "Organize logically" as you see best.

*Why should I choose two advantages and two disadvantages and not more or less?*

To get a maximum 9, you need to fully support your ideas. The size of the essay allows you to support two ideas, or in this case two advantages, in a paragraph but not more. You can have 3 advantages if they are all supported. This might be possible if two of them are connected somehow.

In some cases this can be good, as you show greater flexibility, but be careful.....

**MANY candidates who should get an 8/9 for TA get a 6 because they introduce an idea but do not support it**

What should I do and what should I not do in an advantages / disadvantages essay?

**DO**

- show in the introduction that the essay will discuss advantages and disadvantages
- paraphrase the words in the statement (advantages / benefits )
- connect the language of your introduction to the specific question

**DON'T**

- talk about whether advantages or disadvantages are more
- give advice on how to make things better
- give your opinion of how good or bad the situation is

**MANY candidates who should get an 8/9 for TA get a 6 because they do one or more of these “DON'Ts”**

As well as these “DO's” and “DON'Ts” we can add the two following

**TRY TO**

- give a summary or signal in the introduction of ideas to come later (without detailing them)

**AVOID**

- using long structures that are not specific to the particular question

The reason why these two are not in the “DO's” and “DON'Ts” is that if you don't give a signal or if you do use long structures not specific to the exam task, it is not automatically bad

## **Example Answer 1:**

a) Read the exam task:

- What are the different parts of the task?
- What position is it asking your essay to take?
- What are your ideas?

More and more people are going overseas for their holidays. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this for the traveler?

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

b) Read the essay below. Does it follow the DO's, DON'Ts, TRY TO and AVOID?

The popularity of travelling abroad on holiday is growing. Such a holiday has both a positive and negative side, both of which will be discussed in this essay.

Regarding the advantages, there are two main ones. The first is that when you visit another country, you discover more about another culture. You can come across different cultural dress and try different national cuisine. Such experience often helps broaden people's horizons and appreciate life more. The second plus is that for some the holiday feels like a greater break. Most people would agree that, as you have experienced such new things, you are more likely to return with more fully recharged batteries than if you had holidayed within your country.

When discussing the disadvantages, many would say that cost is one of the main ones. Generally speaking, a trip overseas will cost more due to factors such as greater plane ticket costs and visa fees. It is no surprise that in times of economic difficulty, the overseas tourist sector drops more than average. Another downside is possible stress to the person traveling. Although, as mentioned above, there are those who feel refreshed by new cultural experiences, for others a trip overseas is not as relaxing for the nervous system, particularly if you need to operate in an environment where the language is not familiar to you.

In conclusion, the benefits are discovering new cultures and feeling more refreshed after such a holiday. The disadvantages are the cost and possible stress involved.

### **Answer:**

It does everything successfully, except the "TRY TO" (give a signal in the introduction of ideas to come later without detailing them). It is not a problem if an essay does not have any such signals / summaries.

## What are some useful structures for this writing type?

b) You can find useful structures by taking out topic specific language. For example, in the introduction

*The popularity of \_\_\_\_\_ is growing. Such \_\_\_\_\_ has both a positive and negative side, both of which will be discussed in this essay.*

Go through the rest of the essay and isolate “non-topic” specific structures that can be used in any “advantages and disadvantages” essay.

### **Answer:**

*The popularity of \_\_\_\_\_ is growing. Such \_\_\_\_\_ has both a positive and negative side, both of which will be discussed in this essay.*

*Regarding the advantages, there are two main ones. The first is that \_\_\_\_\_. Such \_\_\_\_\_ often helps \_\_\_\_\_. The second plus is that \_\_\_\_\_. Most people would agree that \_\_\_\_\_.*

*When discussing the disadvantages, many would say that \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the main ones. Generally speaking, \_\_\_\_\_ due to factors such \_\_\_\_\_. It is no surprise that \_\_\_\_\_. Another downside is \_\_\_\_\_. Although, as mentioned above, there are those who \_\_\_\_\_, for others \_\_\_\_\_, particularly if \_\_\_\_\_.*

*In conclusion, the benefits are \_\_\_\_\_. The disadvantages are \_\_\_\_\_.*

## How can my essay be different from other ones?

c) As you can see from the previous exercise, it is not difficult to “put together” an advantages and disadvantages essay using the generic structure. This means a lot of candidates produce essays that have similar structures.

*In order to make your essay “different”, you should, as said before,*

- in the introduction try to give a signal of ideas to come later (without detailing them)
- avoid using long structures that are not specific to the particular question

Below are two alternative introductions to the same essay as before. As you read:

- highlight the words that are specific to the topic / are a “signal” of the ideas to come
  - choose which one is better
1. *It is no surprise that going overseas for a holiday has been growing in popularity, given the new experiences it provides and the energy it brings to those doing it. There are, however, some drawbacks to this process which may not appeal to some. This essay will discuss both the advantages and downsides to such holidaying for the holidayers themselves.*
  2. *It is no surprise that going overseas for a holiday has been growing in popularity, given the new experiences it provides as people come into contact with other cultures and the energy such contact brings to those doing it. There are, however, some drawbacks to this process which may not appeal to some. The holidays are costly, and can be stressful. This essay will discuss both the advantages and downsides to such holidaying for the holidayers themselves.*

**Answer:**

Note: it is **NOT** necessary to introduce your arguments in the introduction. It is fine to introduce them later in the body, then develop them, then summarize in the conclusion. It is not appropriate to extend the introduction **too much** listing the arguments. For this reason, the first introduction is better. Only a small amount of words are added to give the specific ideas of what is to come later, **and** these words are included **naturally** in the opening statement.

Twice as many are added in the second introduction. Firstly, this means it is now too long. The essay would need to be almost 400 words to balance it. Secondly, and just as importantly, it means there will be repetition later in the essay as the arguments are introduced a second time.

Here are the highlighted versions

1. *It is no surprise that going overseas for a holiday has been growing in popularity, given the **new experiences it provides** and the **energy it brings to those doing it**. There are, however, some drawbacks to this process which may not appeal **to some\***. This essay will discuss both the advantages and downsides to such holidaying for the holidayers themselves.*
2. *It is no surprise that going overseas for a holiday has been growing in popularity, given **the new experiences it provides as people come into contact with other cultures** and **the energy such contact brings to those doing it**. There are, however, some drawbacks to this process which may not appeal to some. **The holidays are costly, and can be stressful**. This essay will discuss both the advantages and downsides to such holidaying for the holidayers themselves.*

## Can I keep the conclusion / introduction shorter if I have timing difficulties?

Yes. Time is an important consideration. Below are two conclusions: the previous one and a longer alternative. Although the alternative is better, the first one is fine. If you do not have much time or do not know how to summarize well without repeating at length, use it.

1. In conclusion, the benefits are discovering new cultures and feeling more refreshed after such a holiday. The disadvantages are the cost and possible stress involved.
2. In conclusion, the main benefits to a person traveling overseas are discovery of other cultures and renewal from exposure to the unfamiliar. The main disadvantage is the increased cost, and, for some, another could downside could be stress.

## Example Answer Two: Advantages and Disadvantages (of a solution)

a) 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?

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.**

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

*Beginning with the advantages, most people would agree that owners of private cars are one of the primary causes of problems with traffic. So discouraging private owners from driving via a tax would go a long way to fixing such problems. The second positive of the proposed solution is that improved public transport would provide a viable alternative to those not happy to pay the tax. This would increase the likelihood of people switching to public transport, thereby decreasing traffic problems.*

*The first disadvantage of such a solution is the use of not just a tax but a heavy. While it may seem like a great source of income in theory, in reality governments almost always face protests when trying to introduce taxes in general, let alone large ones. Secondly, even assuming the government in question passed such a tax, we cannot say for sure that people will change to public transport. There is some chance that drivers will not want to use public transport even if it is better, and the money would be better spent on improving road infrastructure to help resolve traffic issues.*

*In conclusion, the advantages of the solution are that it might both discourage people from driving and encourage use of public transport means. The downsides are its likely political unpopularity and assumption of how best to use the raised funds.*



## What are some useful structures?

As before and with any (suitable) example answer, you can find useful structures by taking out topic specific language. For example, in the introduction here

In many countries nowadays problems connected with \_\_\_\_\_ are growing and they need to be solved. Some people believe that to solve them, \_\_\_\_\_. The benefits and drawbacks of such an idea will be discussed in this essay.

b) Go through the rest of the essay and isolate “non-topic” specific structures that can be used in any “advantages and disadvantages” essay.

### Answer:

In many countries nowadays problems connected with \_\_\_\_\_ are growing and they need to be solved. Some people believe that to solve them, \_\_\_\_\_. The benefits and drawbacks of such an idea will be discussed in this essay.

Beginning with the advantages, most people would agree that \_\_\_\_\_ are one of the primary causes of problems with \_\_\_\_\_. So discouraging \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ via \_\_\_\_\_ would go a long way to fixing such problems. The second positive of the proposed solution is that improved \_\_\_\_\_ would provide a viable alternative to those not happy to \_\_\_\_\_. This would increase the likelihood of people \_\_\_\_\_, thereby decreasing traffic problems.

The first disadvantage of such a solution is \_\_\_\_\_. While it may seem \_\_\_\_\_ in theory, in reality \_\_\_\_\_, let alone \_\_\_\_\_. Secondly, even assuming \_\_\_\_\_, we cannot say for sure that \_\_\_\_\_. There is some chance that \_\_\_\_\_ even if \_\_\_\_\_.

In conclusion, the advantages of the solution are that \_\_\_\_\_. The downsides are \_\_\_\_\_.

## How can I increase my Lexical Resource mark? (LR = vocabulary)

You can do this by using more idiomatic / less common language, **but use it appropriately.**

c) Use the idiomatic / less common expressions in the box to replace the more common ones in the introduction.

issues    are on the increase    resolve    overcome    enhance    funds    proposal

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

**Answer:**

*In many countries nowadays **issues** (problems) connected with traffic are **on the increase** (growing) and they need to be **resolved** (solved). Some people believe that to **overcome** (solve) them, the government ought to **enhance** (make) public transport (better) with **funds** (money) raised by placing a heavy tax on owners of private cars. The benefits and drawbacks of such a **proposal** (an idea) will be discussed in this essay.*

Here is an example of a similar introduction that uses less common language inappropriately. Why is each part **in bold** inappropriate?

*In many countries nowadays (1) **unsolvable** issues connected with traffic are (2) **rocketing** and they need to be (3) **cracked down on**. Some people believe that to overcome them, the government ought to (4) **renovate** public transport with funds raised by placing a heavy tax on owners of private cars. The benefits and drawbacks of such a proposal will be (5) **pondered** in this essay.*

**Answers:**

- 1) If the issues are “unsolvable” how can they be “overcome”?
- 2) “rocketing” is too strong for this context. Issues with traffic hardly ever, if ever, “rocket”.
- 3) We don't “crack down” of traffic issues.
- 4) we don't “renovate” public transport. If you use, for example, a google search “renovate public transport”, you will see that the results are from the Ivory Coast, Iran, Armenia, Russia, Venezuela websites. So in these places perhaps they say “renovate public transport”, but not in native English-speaking countries.
- 5) “pondered” is not appropriate for an essay