



IELTS™ =9

Essay

Do Advantages Outweigh Disadvantages

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In this section you will learn about the structure of a “Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?” essay, as well as how to maximise your mark / avoid making typical mistakes.

What is the overall structure of a “Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?” essay?

Format 1

Introduction = give your direct answer

Paragraph one = (usually two) advantages OR disadvantages

Paragraph two = (usually two) disadvantages OR advantages

Conclusion = summarize your answer / reasons

Format 2

Introduction

Paragraph one = advantages AND disadvantages

Paragraph two = advantages AND disadvantages

Conclusion = summarize your answer / reasons

As with the “What are the advantages and disadvantages” essay, the second format is suitable if each advantage you have matches a disadvantage. If not, or in any case, you can use the first format

How is this different from a “advantages / disadvantages” essay?

You may have noticed in the format section one difference. In the “outweigh” essay you state your opinion, i.e. whether advantages or disadvantages are more. In the “adv / disadv” essay you state you will discuss the advantages and disadvantages.

Training:

Which of the two introductions is for “Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?” and which is for “What are the advantages and disadvantages?”

1. *It is common now in different countries to use chemicals for the production and preservation of food . Although there are downsides to such use, the benefits are undoubtedly greater.*
2. *It is common now in different countries to use chemicals for the production and preservation of food . The positive and negative aspects of this trend will be discussed in this essay.*

Answer:

Introduction 1 is for “Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?”

Introduction 2 is for “What are the advantages and disadvantages?”

Another difference is that in the “outweigh” essay, you are supporting your opinion as opposed to discussing. Which of the topic sentences below is supporting an opinion and which is introducing a discussion?

The primary reason why I believe so is that a far larger amount of food is available for consumption.

One of the main advantages is that there is a far larger amount of food is available for consumption.

Answer:

The first one is supporting a “direct” opinion / answer, the second is introducing a general discussion of the advantages. NOTE: In an “outweigh” essay, you can have a topic sentence that introduces a discussion, as you will see below. The key thing to keep in mind is that you should according to IELTS criteria

present a clear position throughout (in all) your response

Many candidates lose marks because their position is not clear OR changes in the essay

Make your position clear by answering the question **in the introduction**, and keep it clear in your main body.

Example answer 1:

Training:

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?

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

Do the advantages of this use outweigh the disadvantages?

Read the example answer, do you think it is a strong or weak example?

It is common now in different countries to use chemicals for the production and preservation of

food . Although there are downsides to such use, the benefits are undoubtedly greater.

Beginning with the downsides, the main one is safety. Firstly, chemical usage in food production causes damage not only to people making the food, but also to everyone consuming it. Scientific research has shown that heart disease, the main killer in the West, has risen due to chemicals added to food. Another problem is that such chemicals kill our ability to taste. Not only has the food become deadlier, our ability to even appreciate its taste is disappearing and disappearing rapidly.

However, there are some advantages. The first is that there is more food available for consumption. In some cases the chemicals help produce more and keep the food longer, but not by much. The second positive is that a small group of scientists can develop themselves. If there was no chemical production connected with producing food, and preserving it, then this would mean people who worked in this industry would not have jobs and would need to look for a new one. This is not a pleasant experience.

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the positives are greater. Even though there are some problems, unemployment is a serious problem nowadays and we definitely need more food because of problems with starvation.

Answer:

Despite the fact that it is “native-speaker” English, it is a weak example. TA = 5

Training:

Let's use checklists to see why the TA mark is so low:

Introduction Checklist

Use the checklist to see if the introduction is appropriately done

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 = answer the question)
- ◆ avoid referring directly to the exam task
- ◆ make up **about** *12% - 20% of the total essay size (**CC**)
- ◆ use paraphrasing where possible / reasonable **WITHOUT** changing meaning

It is common now in different countries to use chemicals for the production and preservation of food . Although there are downsides to such use, the benefits are undoubtedly greater.

Answer:

It meets all the criteria.

Training:

Main Body Paragraph Checklist

Now use the main body paragraph checklist to check this paragraph

- ◆ Does the topic sentence (TS) clearly signal the central topic of the paragraph?
- ◆ Is the TS connected as clearly as possible / reasonable with a specific part of the task ?
- ◆ Are the ideas in the paragraph supported with reasons and/or examples?
- ◆ Do the ideas in the paragraph address the relevant parts of the task?
- ◆ Does the position in the paragraph clearly match the position for the whole essay?

Beginning with the downsides, the main one is safety. Firstly, chemical usage in food production causes damage not only to people making the food, but also to everyone consuming it. Scientific research has shown that heart disease, the main killer in the West, has risen due to chemicals added to food. Another problem is that such chemicals kill our ability to taste. Not only has the food become deadlier, our ability to even appreciate its taste is disappearing and disappearing rapidly.

Answer:

The TS clearly signals the topic, and is linked to “disadvantages”. The ideas are supported by reasons / examples, it is very clear why the disadvantages are disadvantages. However, in answer to the question: Do the ideas in the paragraph address the relevant parts of the task? = NO. It misses the part about preserving food. Also, Does the position in the paragraph clearly match the position for the whole essay? = No. The introduction has the position that “ the benefits are undoubtedly greater”, but this paragraph's disadvantages make it hard to believe that they could not be more. i.e. the disadvantages are too “Strong”

Now use the same checklist for the second body paragraph

- ◆ Does the topic sentence (TS) clearly signal the central topic of the paragraph?
- ◆ Is the TS connected as clearly as possible / reasonable with a specific part of the task ?
- ◆ Are the ideas in the paragraph supported with reasons and/or examples?
- ◆ Do the ideas in the paragraph address the relevant parts of the task?
- ◆ Does the position in the paragraph clearly match the position for the whole essay?

However, there are some advantages. The first is that there is more food available for consumption. In some cases the chemicals help produce more and keep the food longer, but not by much. The second positive is that a small group of scientists can develop themselves. If there was no chemical production connected with producing food, and preserving it, then this would mean people who worked in this industry would not have jobs and would need to look for a new one. This is not a pleasant experience.

Answer:

This time “preserving” is included, but again the “position” is not clear when compared with the previous paragraph / introduction. The advantages are actually weak because of words like “in some cases” / “but not by much” / “a small group of”. Compare the result as well “some people would need to look for a new (job)” with “not only has the food become deadlier, our ability to even appreciate its taste is disappearing and disappearing rapidly.”

Conclusion Checklist:

Use this checklist for the conclusion. Does the conclusion

- ◆ summarize clearly your position (answer) for **all** parts of the specific exam task

- ◆ avoid including new information / ideas not covered in the body
- ◆ make up 10%-20% of the total essay
- ◆ link the ideas in your conclusion with parts of the main body to show flexibility

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the positives are greater. Even though there are some problems, unemployment is a serious problem nowadays and we definitely need more food because of problems with starvation.

Answer:

The conclusion clearly summarizes a position, but this position does not match the “mixed signals” from the main body.

It is surprising, even shocking, how many candidates write a conclusion that does not match the ideas / position of the body paragraphs in such an essay.

The second problem with the conclusion is that it introduces ideas not in the main body.

If you introduce ideas but do not support them your TA can go down from a 9 to a 6

This is why new ideas should not be introduced in the conclusion.

Example Answer 2:

This is the same exam task but the answer is a TA 9. This is because the writer has used language to weaken the other side and strengthen their side.

If you improve your ability to weaken “the other” side and “strengthen” your side, you will improve your TA and Lexical resource (vocabulary) mark.

Let's see how. Read the exam task again if you need to:

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

Do the advantages of this use outweigh the disadvantages?

Training:

In the main body paragraphs and conclusion highlight any language that helps strengthen an advantage or weaken the disadvantages. (introduction and first part of main body paragraph 1 are

done)

It is common now in different countries to use chemicals for the production and preservation of food. Although there are **some** downsides to such use, the benefits are **undoubtedly** greater.

The primary reason for this is that a **far** larger amount of food is available for consumption. The chemicals used help **both** produce a larger amount and keep it fresh for consumption longer, both factors in overall availability. This access to food is of great importance in a world growing shorter in the resources by the day. The second benefit is that chemicals allow enhancement of what nature provides. Natural flavor is produced by chemical reactions occurring, for example, when bread is baked. Modern science allows us to add to these chemicals, thereby improving the taste.

Some people would rightly point out that there are downsides. There was certainly a question mark over the safety of food in the early days of chemical use, but nowadays that negative has all but disappeared thanks to advances in modern science. Another concern people have is a moral one, that we should not play with nature. While I agree that this is an appropriate rule in general, when producing more food and preserving it for longer enables us to overcome hunger in poorer countries I believe it is a relatively minor issue. This is especially true given the higher scientific safety levels already mentioned.

In conclusion, it is clear that the ability to solve a serious world issue is a major reason why the advantages of chemical usage in food preservation and production outweigh the possible moral drawback. Modern science has further supported this idea by removing possible dangers while even enhancing the taste.

Answer:

It is common now in different countries to use chemicals for the production and preservation of food. Although there are **some** downsides to such use, the benefits are **undoubtedly** greater.

The primary reason for this is that a **far** larger amount of food is available for consumption. The chemicals used help **both** produce a larger amount and keep it fresh for consumption **much** longer, **both** factors in overall availability. This access to food is of **great** importance in a world growing shorter in the resources **by the day**. The second benefit is that chemicals allow **noticeable** enhancement of what nature provides. Natural flavor is produced by chemical reactions occurring, for example, when bread is baked. Modern science allows us to add to these chemicals, thereby **significantly** improving the taste.

Some people would rightly point out that there are downsides. There **was** certainly a question mark over the safety of food in the early days of chemical use, **but** nowadays that negative has **all but disappeared** thanks to advances in modern science. Another concern **some** people have is a moral one, that we should not play with nature. While I agree that this is an appropriate rule in general, when producing more food and preserving it for longer enables us to **overcome hunger in poorer countries** I believe it is a **relatively minor** issue. This is **especially** true given the **higher** scientific safety levels already mentioned.

In conclusion, it is **clear** that the ability to solve a **serious** world issue is a major reason why the advantages of chemical usage in food preservation and production outweigh the possible moral drawback. Modern science has further supported this idea by removing possible dangers while **even** enhancing the taste.