

# The Most Common Mistakes in IELTS Writing Task 2

It is a good idea to be familiar with common mistakes candidates make when writing their task 2 essays so that you can avoid them in your IELTS Exam. The following are the most common writing mistakes:

## **Using contractions.**

For example, 'I don't think' or 'We can't say', instead of the full form. 'I do not think' or 'we cannot say.' Never use contractions in academic writing.

## **Writing too few words.**

If you write less than the required word count, the examiner has to reduce your score, even if your essay is well written. You should check the number of words in your essay after each paragraph and keep a continuous total; this way, you can be sure of reaching at least 250 words in 40 minutes. In the computer-delivered test, there is a running word count at the top of the screen.

## **Writing too many words.**

The examiner has marking targets to meet, and so may not read the end of an essay if it exceeds the required word count by too many words. This means he or she will not see the end of your argument, and your score could be reduced.

Remember: 250 words minimum and about 300 words maximum for Academic Task 2.

## **Using informal words**

Using informal words, for example, 'a nice idea' or 'a silly thing to do', instead of academic words. Such as 'a positive idea' or 'a regrettable thing to do.' Remember that academic vocabulary is different from the language you would use in English when talking to friends.

### **Giving a personal opinion in an IDEAS (non-opinion) type task.**

Check if the task sentence is asking for your opinion or not. The first question you should ask yourself is 'Is this an OPINION or an IDEAS (non-opinion) task?'

### **Telling stories about your personal history, friends, or family.**

This is a very easy mistake to make because the task tells you to use 'examples from your own experience,' but this does not mean describing stories from your personal life or people you know! It means describing examples of things in the world that you know about, have studied, or have learned about in the media.

### **Using vocabulary that is too detailed or specific to a subject.**

You may be an expert in a particular social or scientific field, but the examiner probably has a different specialty. You need to make your ideas and examples understandable to a general reader. For example, if the task topic is about money and you are an accountant, do not use specialized accounting terms.

### **Being emotional or too dramatic when giving your views in an opinion task.**

You may feel strongly about certain issues, such as animals or crime, but academic writing must be unemotional. So avoid phrases such as 'a disgusting idea' or 'I hate this view.' It is much better to say 'an unacceptable idea', or 'I disapprove of this view,' which is more impersonal and academic, similar to the type of writing that people use in business reports or academic journals.