

# What Do the IELTS Writing Band Descriptors Mean?

Below you will find some information about the meaning of the Writing band descriptors and what IELTS examiners are looking for when evaluating the Writing tasks.

Firstly, let's review a few key things to keep in mind as you prepare for your test:

- There are two versions of the IELTS test: IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. Before registering for your test, you must determine which version of the test you will take.
- There are two Writing tasks on both versions of the IELTS. Writing Task 1 on the General Training test is a letter to a friend, manager, landlord, etc.
- Writing Task 1 on the Academic test is describing a table, graph, chart, or diagram. Writing Task 2 on both versions of the test is an essay.
- The band score descriptors range from Band 1 – 9.

There are four different and distinct categories for the band descriptors for both Task 1 and Task 2:

- Task achievement/response
- Coherence and cohesion
- Lexical resource
- Grammatical range and accuracy

Each category above has specific criteria that your examiner will look at when evaluating your writing.

**Task achievement/response** considers the thoroughness of the response. Some important points to keep in mind related to task achievement/response include:

**Purpose of letter** (Task 1 - General Training test) – *Is the purpose of the letter clear?*

**Key features/bullet points** – *Are the key features and bullet points from the question included in the response?*

**Tone** – *Is the tone of the letter appropriate and consistent throughout?* Keep in mind that the tone of our writing may vary depending on the audience.

**Overview** (Task 1 - Academic test) – *Is there an overview (i.e. a summary without all of the specific details)? Is there information about the key points (trends, data, etc.)?*

**Development of position** (Task 2 – both tests) – *Is the writer's position developed and is it clear? Are the main ideas included, and are the ideas developed? Is the most relevant information included?*

**Coherence and cohesion** considers the organization and progression of the answer. Some important points to keep in mind related to coherence and cohesion include:

**Organization** (Task 1 Academic and Task 2 essays) – *Is there an introduction, a body (including reasons and support), and a conclusion? Are these sections clear and organized?*

**Cohesive devices** (i.e. pronouns, conjunctions, articles, etc.) – *Are cohesive devices included and used effectively?*

**Referencing** (replacing a noun/noun phrase with a pronoun) and **substitution** (not repeating the same thing, but rather substituting forms for words and phrases) – *Is referencing and substitution used correctly?*

Use of paragraphs – Are paragraphs used effectively? Are the paragraphs well-organized?

**Lexical resource** considers the variety and use of vocabulary. Some important points the examiner will be looking at include:

**Range of vocabulary** – *What range of vocabulary is used in the response?*

**Errors** – *Are there errors in spelling, word form and word choice?*

**Grammatical range and accuracy** considers the sentence forms (i.e. simple sentences vs. complex sentence forms) used in the response. Some important things to keep in mind:

**Range of structures** – What kinds of sentence forms are used? Is there a variety used?

**Errors** - Are there errors in grammar and punctuation ?

The above provides a sense of the kinds of things your IELTS examiner will consider when evaluating the Writing tasks. To help prepare for your IELTS test, take some time to familiarize yourself with the online public version of the band descriptors. There is no question that becoming acquainted with these descriptors will help you better understand what IELTS examiners look for when evaluating the Writing tasks.