Below are some extra tips for an IELTS opinion essay. For more tips, please see my free IELTS website (www.ieltsliz.com).

Instructions from IELTS

The instructions may vary and be re-worded by IELTS for an opinion essay. Here are some ways in which IELTS can phrase the opinion essay instructions:

- To what extent do you agree or disagree?
- Do you agree or disagree?
- What is your opinion?
- What is your view of this opinion?

All of those instructions indicate that you must present your opinion. Regardless of the wording, you can choose a one-sided approach or a balanced approach.

Recommended Word Count

The model essays attached to my video lessons are band score 9. For that reason, they are around 300 words in length. Band score 9 level students are able to express themselves more fluently in English and, therefore, are able to write more while still keeping the essay focused and relevant.

Students who are below band 9, should probably aim for between 260 and 280 words. This will allow you to develop your ideas sufficiently in the body paragraphs while keeping inside the recommended time allowed.

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Body Paragraphs

You can have either two or three body paragraphs for your IELTS writing task 2 essay. In these videos, I have used three body paragraphs. If you choose only two, make sure you lengthen each body paragraph to ensure you hit the word count.

Check list for an Opinion Essay

1. Identify the issue or issues in the essay question. There might be more than one. Make sure you know how many you are responding to.
2. Brainstorm ideas for your essay and decide your opinion.
3. Plan how you will organise your ideas into body paragraphs. Each body paragraph must have a central topic. This is a requirement of students aiming for band score 7 and above.
4. Plan how you will support and explain your ideas.
5. Write your introduction. Paraphrase the essay question for the background statement without altering the meaning. Introduce your exact opinion for the thesis statement.
6. Make sure your topic sentences (the first sentence of each body paragraph) present the main idea which relates to the essay question.
7. Explain your ideas in the body paragraphs. Students aiming for a high score must remember that developing and extending your ideas is assessed by the examiner and is a requirement of the higher scores.
8. Pause between each body paragraph to re-read the essay question. This will help you keep focused on the exact issues you are responding to.
9. Your conclusion can contain one or two statements. The essential statement is a summary of your opinion. Make sure your opinion in the conclusion matches that given in your thesis statement. The optional statement is a concluding comment which might be a prediction or a general comment on your opinion.

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10. An opinion essay only requires you to give your opinion. If you agree with one side, then your whole essay should explain your opinion and should not contain any information about the other side.
11. A balanced approach does not mean sitting on the fence and discussing both sides. A balanced approach means presenting a specific opinion which is neither completely agreeing nor completely disagreeing. Don't attempt a balanced approach if you are unclear about the strategy or your English language is not strong.
12. Always make time to check your writing when you finish your essay. Check your use of linking devices. It is easy to use linkers well and any errors will reduce your score. Check your use of vocabulary and grammar. Aim for accuracy at all times.

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