

Session One

Academic and General Training Task 2

Sample question 1

Traffic jams are now a major problem in most cities. However, it seems that people are not prepared to give up their cars and use other forms of transport. Discuss the reasons for these two situations and suggest how the situation might be improved or resolved.

Understanding the question and the topic:

The question has three parts. This actually makes the task easier because you don't need to write so much on each question to reach the required minimum of 250 words. What do you think these three parts are?

1. -----

2. -----

3. -----

Note: The question does not ask you to:

1. discuss problems that cities have.
2. say how big the traffic problem is.
3. judge whether people are right or wrong to want to drive.
4. discuss other forms of transport at length.

Brainstorming: Now what you need is to brainstorm ideas for the three parts in the question.

Why traffic jams are a major problem?

Why people are not prepared to give up their cars

Possible solutions

Organizing the essay:

The essay has really been organized for you by the way that the question is presented. Each part of the essay deals with a different aspect of the question. Of course an introduction and conclusion are also required.

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Why traffic jams are a major problem in many cities.**
- 3. Why people are not prepared to give up their cars.**
- 4. Solutions.**
- 5. Conclusion.**

Writing the introduction:

Task 2 introductions are short. However, a few different styles are possible.

1. Restate the question. Simple, but shows you understand what you are required to do.
2. Restate the question and add general personal opinion. This method is quite popular with students.
3. Restate the question and give a hint of the arguments you will use. This is similar to 2, but replaces opinion with an introduction to the arguments.

This time we will follow style 1.

Even people who live in the countryside know about the traffic jams that cause problems in cities around the world. In this essay, I would like to investigate why traffic jams have become such a problem and suggest how the problem could be resolved. (44 words)

Writing a paragraph:

You have probably already heard of the idea of a 'topic sentence' followed by 'supporting sentences'. This means that the first sentence for each paragraph introduces the subject of the paragraph and the sentences that follow it give support to the first sentence. This support is most often given through the use of arguments and examples.

First, let's deal with why traffic jams are a major problem. As was mentioned before, this part of the question can be interpreted in two ways. It could mean the problems that traffic jams cause or the causes of traffic jams. Therefore this part could be dealt with in two paragraphs. Which of these sentences do you think would be the best 'topic sentence' for the first paragraph?

1. The three main problems with traffic jams are that they cause loss of time, extra expense and damage the environment.
2. Traffic jams cause many problems and are caused by several different factors.
3. I think traffic jams cause pollution, which can be harmful to our bodies and the environment.

Sentence 3 gives the support in the topic sentence.

Sentence 2 is not specific enough and also introduces the first two paragraphs, not only the first one.

Sentence 1 is the most suitable because it clearly states the problems traffic jams cause and open the paragraph for an analysis of these points.

Now, let's look at some possible supporting sentences.

Each individual who is stuck in a traffic jam may only waste 20 minutes and a few centiliters of fuel, but multiply those figures by the number of people in the jam, and then by the number of jams in the world, and you end up with a substantial waste of time, fuel, and money, every day. Think of what could be done with it all. Everyone is aware of the extra pollution caused, and it has been suggested by numerous medical experts that this pollution is linked to illnesses such as cancer and asthma. (95 words)

These sentences clearly cover the main thrust of the argument. Traffic jams cause problems because they waste substantial amounts of time, fuel, and money. That argument is undeniable, though the exact amount is hard to actually quantify. The fact that pollution is unhealthy is equally undeniable. If possible, always develop your arguments in this way-strong and simple! Try not to become 'emotional'. Don't use weak arguments where there is clearly a stronger one. Don't use long complex arguments, where there is a shorter, simpler one. When discussing pollution, in this essay for example, it is much better to focus on the effect on human health rather than the effect on wildlife, because there is not much wildlife in cities.

Why people are not prepared to give up cars

Someone once said that " people are slaves to their cars ". I can understand why someone would say that. My sister uses her car even if she only has to drive 200 meters to the corner shop! The car is advertised as an expression of freedom. Look at the advertisements of cars on TV. Each car runs freely through the countryside, in stark contrast to the reality of driving in even a small city. To deny, or even restrict, 'the right to drive' could cause massive protests from drivers.

In addition, cars are very often status symbols. You don't buy a status symbol only to hide it away and never be used or shown. That contravenes the whole idea of a status symbol. Restricting car use would cause protests from those eager to show off their wealth. (136 words)

Suggested Solutions

I think there are a few ways to try to deal with the problem. One that many people suggest is improved public transport. People use cars because they can use them to go where they want to go. If public transport served this purpose, people might protest less about giving up their cars. The problem is that public transport operates most efficiently on routes which people often use, not those less

frequented. Therefore, people may keep cars for use when they travel on less-used routes or at times when they need to save time, such as in emergencies.

Another way is to introduce laws to restrict car use. This could be done by introducing time restrictions, i. e. not allowing cars in certain zones at given times, or by limiting the cars that can go into certain Zones according to their license plates.

A third way-one which I personally favour- is charging drivers to use their cars in designated areas at particular times. I am in favour of this solution as it uses the market mechanism of supply and demand. It also raises more money than it expends. (186 words)

Conclusion

Certainly, there are still many other constructive ways that need us to find out. In a word, it's a tough task which can not be managed in two or three days. (31 words)

Practice:

Based on the above explanations, try to analyze the following topic and then brainstorm ideas for it.

Many people consider the death penalty to be an appropriate punishment in certain cases, whilst others think that there is never a reason for it to be used. What is your opinion on the issue? Give reasons for your answers.

Homework

Now write an essay of no less than 250 words for the above writing topic.

Many people consider the death penalty to be an appropriate punishment in certain cases, whilst others think that there is never a reason for it to be used. What is your opinion on the issue? Give reasons for your answers.

Understanding the question and the topic:

1. Give reasons why traffic jams are a major problem in many cities.
2. Say why people are not prepared to give up their cars.
3. Suggest solutions.

