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General IELTS Writing
Example Questions for Preparation

10 Letter questions
10 Essay questions

Plus suggested answers

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There are two areas that many students world wide have problems with in the IELTS exam that cannot be corrected with self study alone. These are speaking and writing.

If you are having problems in these areas the only real solution, even if it is just for a short time, is to have a private tutor help you. You could write hundreds of letters and essays and get better at your English as you do, but unless you've got someone to double check everything, how will you know for sure?

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Kind regards

James Hogan
Principal
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IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 1

Dear Sir

Subject: Broadcast Schedule Of "Health Capsule" Programme

I write to you about the recent change in the broadcast schedule of the programme - "Health Capsule" - from its earlier slot of 9:00 pm to the present slot of 11:00 pm.

Let me first compliment you for the excellent content and presentation of this bi-weekly programme. It gives a succinct snapshot of the happenings in the health-and-fitness world. Being avid fitness enthusiasts, I and my friends at the gym relate quite well to it.

However, the shifting of the broadcast slot to such a late hour is an inconvenience. Besides my friends, I am sure I echo the sentiments of the other fans of the programme in the locality, who have to get up early the next morning and so cannot stay awake till so late in the night.

I appreciate your rationale behind the decision to shift the programme. However, perhaps you have underestimated the fan-following that this programme has acquired over such a short period of time? Given its popularity, I request you to revert back to the original broadcast schedule.

Thank you for your attention regarding this matter.

Yours faithfully

Gene Eric

Essay 1

For an average child growing up in the cocooned environs of home, school and playground, the world appears to be just what they see around them - doting parents who take care of all their needs, school staff who nourish their intellect with structured learning, and fellow friends whom to share and fight with. How should we make the children aware of the existence of the rest of the world and its grown-up ways?

One very good way of introducing the real world that exists beyond this shielded life is by putting novels into their hands. As the child begins to turn page after page, they are inexorably drawn into the fantasy woven by the author. As they navigate the story arc, they begin to get an inkling of what exactly to expect when they become adult. Well-read parents or seniors can discuss the pros and cons of the plot over lunch or dinner with the child and give their thinking the right, constructive direction.

Each genre - whether science fiction or sport, romance or crime and horror - has some different perspective to offer to the child. Because the children themselves do not know which genre of novel might hold their interest, the best way is to let them discover what attracts them most by forcing them to read novels of all possible genres. Quite naturally, the kids will discard the genre that is not to their liking, and will gravitate towards the one that is.

The best way to give children an education that goes beyond the learning of the classroom is to inculcate in them the taste for literature. What better way to round out their personality than by gently handholding their imagination into the world of fantasy of diverse authors?

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 2

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you with reference to my purchase of a computer from your shop recently. The invoice number was #09/762, dated 24/09/2010.

Ever since it was brought home, I haven't been very satisfied with the computer's performance. The tray of the DVD drive gets stuck while coming out and has to be nudged before it can fully expose itself. In the front panel for the USB ports, port #2 on the left does not work. The printer cable does not connect properly.

I had phoned your customer support and was promised that the problems will be looked into that very day. However, one week has passed since the complaint was registered and still nobody has turned up. Is this the kind of service and support that your shop is famed for?

A dissatisfied customer, as you must be aware, can badmouth the business. I would like to therefore courteously request you to arrange for a qualified computer expert to look into the problems and rectify them at the earliest.

I look forward to hearing your response to this matter.

Yours faithfully

M Board.

Essay 2

For a busy human being, travelling from point A to point B in the fastest possible time is more important than enjoying the scenery that presents itself to them along the way. When speed takes higher priority over the pleasure of the journey itself, what better mode of transportation than air travel?

It is quite natural that the economics of transport have followed the burgeoning demand for speed. Governments around the world have opened air travel to the private sector in recent years. Businesses have been quick to capitalize, and rightly so, on the basic human need to take advantage of air travel that takes them to their destination as quickly as possible. As more and more airline companies set up shop, seat capacities have risen exponentially. This has led to a situation where supply has matched - and in some cases exceeded - demand. Lowering of fares is a logical outcome of this competition.

Presented with the alternatives of travelling by air versus travelling by rail or road, it is natural to opt for air travel because the fares have now become more-or-less equal. The time saved by reaching the destination earlier can be more productively spent elsewhere - perhaps in seeking more business, or spending quality time with the family, or simply in rest and recreation.

Whether it is to rush to one's fiancée to make that lifetime decision, to one's ailing grandmother on the deathbed, to the meeting with the client on the verge of placing that all-important order, or to reach the exact spot on earth where the perfect solar eclipse is visible in time; whatever the motive, air travel is the way to go. Lower airfares are quite obviously a positive development.

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 3

Dear Sir,

As my new roommate, it has been a pleasure to welcome you. I hope that you have settled down comfortably in the new environs.

Unfortunately, there are a couple of issues that I would like to point out to you that I find unacceptable.

The first issue is disorderliness. There is a provision for our belongings to be stacked separately. Yet, I find your clothing and books, etc, mixing with mine. This is a totally avoidable embarrassment.

The second issue is hygiene. Since we both have to share the toilet, it is important to flush it and keep it clean after use, so that the next person using it is not inconvenienced.

In addition to this, leftover food must be thrown in the garbage, and must not litter the floor.

This lackadaisical attitude towards orderliness and hygiene might be acceptable if you were living alone. However, when you share the room with others, consideration of them is a must.

I hope that you take both this letter and my suggestions in the right spirit, and that you will mend your ways. I look forward to a more mutually congenial stay during the rest of our period of sharing this living space.

Thanks and regards,

Percy Nickety

Essay 3

Child obesity is a cause for concern for all the stakeholders of society - from parents to educators, to governments and the medical system. Rightly so, as obesity, and at such a young age, poses hazards on quite a few fronts.

Thanks to industrialization and technology, people no longer have to indulge in as much physical exercise in order to earn money as they had to in the pre-industrial days. Jobs have become more and more sedentary with time, with the result that the importance of physical exercise and the benefits of maintaining one's physique become known only when the doctor is called in after some major health issue crops up. With parents taking their own physical exercise so casually, their attitude naturally reflects on their children's lifestyles too. The end result is that children invariably spend a lot of their free time sitting before the television instead of playing outside, and the only part of the body that gets ample exercise is the thumb that presses the buttons on the remote control.

As if lack of exercise wasn't enough, unhealthy food has replaced nutritious food on the dining table. The increased level of lard leads to health problems for the child, straining not only the family's bills, but also stretching the medical system as a whole. Research has revealed that obese kids are more likely to be accident-prone, and more susceptible to disease conditions such as diabetes, which lowers their productivity as adults when they begin working.

The remedy for child obesity begins at home. Parents need to be educated first on the negative side-effects of the kind of lifestyles their children are leading. A healthy, and not obese, child is what should be aimed for.

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 4

Dear Sir,

Subject: Loss Of Wallet On The Train

I am writing to inform you that I lost my wallet today (October 10, 2010) on the Sydney to Canberra train. I had boarded the train from Sydney at 12:05 pm at Central station, and got down at Queanbeyan at 4:14 pm. I was in the third car from the engine.

It is most likely that the wallet must have slipped out onto the seat from my coat unnoticed, after I took it out to pay a hawker. I realized that the wallet was not with me after reaching Henderson Street.

It is a dark-brown leather wallet with three compartments. I have my car driving licence and passport in it along with a photograph of my fiancée. If I remember correctly, I was carrying AUD 500 in notes along with some coins.

I shall be grateful if you can forward this letter to your lost-and-found service, and direct the officials of the onward stations to urgently look into the matter. I shall also appreciate being informed the moment any information about the wallet becomes available, as without the driving licence and the passport I am helpless.

Thanks and regards,

Juan Bornaminit

Essay 4

The debate over the advantages and disadvantages of the structured, formal learning systems that we put the children through has been raging ever since education institutions were first set up. Are we constricting the child's innate creativity with the straitjacket of a practice that does not take cognizance of their natural talents?

There is no doubt that the present education system has its inherent limitations. Given the inadequate infrastructure required for "customized" education, it is a very regimented pedagogy that has evolved over time. This pedagogy administers a standardized dose of learning to the entire class based on curricula prescribed by educationists. This approach is blind towards whether cherubic Mary sitting in the front row likes Math or not, or whether the dreamy John sitting near the window likes Chemistry or not. Is it any surprise, therefore, that given the chance, children invariably slip away towards doing things they really like, rather than doing the school work that they do not?

Young minds require a lot of freedom to explore the world from their own perspective. The music playing from the play-station might hold to them more attraction than the set of problems they have been asked to spend time on. Yet, despite all limitations, the present education system prepares children to join the mainstream of society with ease. Without glossing over its flaws, the system does provide a standard measure of individual scholastic abilities, which can help decide where exactly in society each individual can fit.

In conclusion, a balanced approach that allows the child the freedom to do their thing, but at the same time that keeps reminding them of the benefits of the education they are getting in school, might help give them the motivation to complete the school assignments in time.

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 5

Dear Sir,

Subject: Bad Treatment Of Patient In Your Hospital

Through this letter, I would like to bring to your attention the shabby treatment received by my friend, Mrs. Sienna Boland, at the hands of the hospital staff while she was admitted here for a surgical procedure.

Mrs. Boland was admitted for laryngotomy on October 2nd, 2010. The entire period of her stay in the hospital, according to her, was not at all a satisfactory experience.

The behaviour of the nursing staff was casual, bordering on the indifferent. Her requests for assistance were fulfilled almost cursorily. The rooms were never cleaned. The doctors always seemed to be in a hurry, and never set her mind at ease about the procedure she was undergoing. Mrs. Boland has vowed never to return to the hospital.

As a responsible citizen, I would like to impress upon you the hospital's deteriorated standards. Your administration must pay more attention to cleanliness and hygiene. Further, you must inculcate professionalism and sensitivity in the staff. Only then will confidence be established in the minds of the public about the quality of healing in the hospital.

I trust that you will address the issues in this letter immediately.

Kind regards,

Con Cerne

Essay 5

The age at which the child is mentally ready to leave the warmth and cosiness of home to sit in a classroom along with peers - is an issue of debate amongst psychologists. Usually, the minimum age when the child should begin schooling is dictated by the law of the land. On the one hand there are countries, such as Sweden, where a child can enter school only after turning seven. On the other hand, there are countries, such as Northern Ireland, where a child can join school the moment they turn four.

Advocates of the early starting age posit the rationale of catching the mind early. The developing brain has begun to become receptive to recognizing symbols such as the alphabet and the numbers, they say, and it also is able to relate words with objects. The school only accelerates this process of learning, which helps them exit the "pipeline" that extends right up to college, earlier. Also, due to minimal distractions at this age, the brain's concentration and retention capacity is at its peak, which schooling puts to use immediately.

Opponents of the early-starting-age however dismiss the analogy that equates children with "learning machines". At the age of four, kids must be gently hand-held into the world of symbols and pictures at their own pace, they say, which is possible at home and at informal play centers. The cognitive overload of recognizing a set of alphabet letters and numbers at four years might be okay for some kids, but might permanently instil the loathe of a schooling environment in others, according to them.

Research on the impact of starting school early on individual cognition has been inconclusive thus far. While the debate continues to rage, the general opinion appears to be veering towards beginning school later rather than earlier.

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 6

Dear Sir

Subject: Recurrent Problems With Car Repair

I had brought my car - a 2000 Holden Rodeo DX TFR9 - to your garage on September 29th, 2010 for an overhaul. Since then I have had to return the car to the garage three more times, and still its problems don't seem to end.

After the overhaul, on returning home I discovered a leaking oil sump. After this problem was sorted out, the very next day there was a loud noise in the engine bay. Your staff had to haul the vehicle back to the garage with a trailer to carry out repairs. Today, there was a strange noise in the engine bay yet again.

I fail to understand why the garage is unable to resolve the car's problems once and for all. Is it a case of gross negligence, or downright incompetence? I am sure you understand the negative impact an unsatisfied customer can have on your business.

I would like you to direct your most experienced personnel to take a look and fix the car's problems to their most competent best immediately.

I look forward to receiving your response to this matter.

Yours faithfully

Rick Toff

Essay 6

There was a time when people completed their school or college, and eagerly sent out their resumes for a job in companies of their choice. The day the appointment letter hiring them for the job landed in their hands used to be a red-letter day. It was an indication that life was now well set, right up to retirement. Job-hopping was not the norm, and company loyalty mattered more than anything else.

Today, "company loyalty" is a forgotten term. It is now very common to have a string of job tenures not lasting more than two years in one's resume. The churn in human resources is a sign of the times. Downsizing and resizing are the order of the day, and one feels lucky upon leaving the place of work without the proverbial pink-slip being handed over. A resume is now a commodity, to be encashed at the next hiring round being conducted at the competitor's gate next door. An economy that has been swinging up and down is in major part the reason behind this change of attitude.

The implication of the attitude-change is clear. The next job might require a set of skills totally different from what one had excelled at in the last job, and different from what one had learned back in college. Today's organizational scenario demands a mindset that is open to the idea of learning new skills. It is not unusual, therefore, to see somebody who worked as a bean-counter for a garment-manufacturer in their earlier avatar, now marketing web-based solutions for an internet company.

It is obvious that the good old days are not going to return any time soon. Survival in the job market depends on one's marketability, which in turn depends on whether one can supply the skill that is in demand.

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 7

Dear Sir,

Subject: Compensation For Using Taxi Due To Delayed Train

I wish to bring to your attention the discomfort and inconvenience I had to undergo recently while using your public transport service.

I am a regular commuter of the intercity train and use it to travel everyday from Graythorne station to Bowen Hills station. From here I switch to another train to reach Toowong, my home station. On the 10th of October 2010 trains were delayed on the Ferny Grove Line where Graythorne is located. Due to the delay, I reached Bowen Hills at 10:30 pm instead of the usual 7:00 pm. Since the last train from Bowen Hills to Toowong leaves at 7:30 pm, I had no alternative but to hire a taxi in order to reach home.

It cost me AUD \$300 that night to travel from Graythorne to Toowong by private taxi. Employed as an intern with a small firm in Graythorne, I can ill-afford to pay this amount, which I had to borrow from my room-mate that night.

I therefore request you to arrange for this money to be compensated to me at the earliest. I would be happy to forward you a copy of the taxi receipt.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

Amy Pond

Essay 7

These past few decades have thrown up a new breed of people who thrive on the challenge of being on their own. Increased globalization, advancements in technology and innovative models of doing business has generated a myriad number of avenues which has triggered the entrepreneurial itch in this new breed.

Reporting for work at 9 am every morning at somebody else's doorstep to perform whatever job is expected, returning back home in the evening, and performing this routine for the entire work-week without break, was the idea of a perfect lifestyle for people till not many years ago. Not anymore. Now, the very idea of performing the same dull, boring routine day-in and day-out for an equally unimaginative employer makes a lot of people uncomfortable. These people see a lot of opportunities opening up around them, where they feel they can fulfil their potential and actually do something that they are passionate about. These are the risk-takers; they have an innate confidence that they can earn the same, if not more, amount of money as an entrepreneur than they could while in regular employment.

The interest in entrepreneurialism as a calling has also been motivated by the way business is being conducted these days. Organizations are not only downsizing and flattening their hierarchy, they are also outsourcing many of their functions in order to concentrate on their core competence and cut down on employee costs. When entire departments are hived off, the people manning these departments turn around as entrepreneurs and offer their services to their own former employers. It is a win-win situation for both the employer and the now former-employee.

The trend towards setting up one's own business is a positive development. Owning one's own company is a matter of pride that no regular job can provide!

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 8

Dear Sir,

Subject: Damage Of Antique Goods Due To Faulty Ceiling

This letter is written with reference to the apartment located on the first floor, Oaks Grand Building, 187 Kent Street, Sydney, and leased by me with effect from October 1st, 2009.

Last night, I had left an open box of my vinyl music records on the centre table of the main hall before going to bed. I was in the process of cataloguing and archiving them for my collection. This morning I discovered that water from last night's rain had seeped through the cracks in the ceiling and dropped on these records, damaging them permanently. These records are antique, one-of-a-kind and therefore priceless.

I have some other pieces of furniture that are similarly highly priced. I do not wish to see them damaged because of any faulty construction. I am also concerned that the resultant mildew and mould may pose health hazards.

I therefore ask you to arrange to rectify the fault in the ceiling within the next thirty days, failing which I shall be forced to take legal redress. I am enclosing digital images of the leaking ceiling and the damaged records for your perusal. I also require compensation for these records and would be happy to forward you copies of the valuation certificates.

I look forward to your response to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

J Chow

Essay 8

Even in the best of times, youngsters never expected that a job with a description fitting their skills would be waiting for them when they stepped out of the hallowed precincts of the university. Today, given the uncertain times, the only thing they are certain of is the odd job in the fast food restaurant down the corner.

One reason for this mismatch between industry expectations and university outputs is that the academia is always a step behind industry requirements. The skill sets of the batches that universities churn out year after year do not find any takers in the industry because they are either for jobs that had dried up long ago, or for jobs that are too few and far between.

Lack of adequate on-the-job training, while undergoing formal education, is another culprit behind the malaise. All that the young graduate has to show by way of expertise is the sheet of paper with ornate lettering that grandiosely announces the education undergone by the holder of the paper. It is a sad truth of life that, after burning money on expensive education and after poring over the books in the library till late in the night for so many years, at the end of it all, the sheet of paper that they had so coveted and worked so hard for does not turn out to be their passport to a decent life.

It is time the industry and academia worked out a bridge that prepares job descriptions a number of years in advance, which can then be translated into course curriculum. Such a bridge does sound challenging, but is not infeasible to implement. Till such time, the fast food restaurant will continue to act as the bridge between academic learning and a real job.

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 9

Dear Sir,

Subject: Wrongly Charged Bill Of \$800

I was a subscriber to the "Freedom Plan" of your mobile service from May 2008. In September 2008, attracted by the features of the then newly-announced "Complete Plan", I switched over to this plan. On October 9, 2009, I terminated my subscription altogether from your services and have subscribed to another service provider.

However, I have received a bill from your company for \$800 for "breaking a 24-month contract with the company" purported to have been agreed upon by me when I signed up for the "Complete Plan". This is shocking, to say the least.

The sales person who presented the papers for me to sign for the switch-over from "Freedom" to "Complete" never informed me about any such contract. To my mind, this is an underhand way of doing business. Through this letter therefore, I am hereby rejecting this bill.

Further, I would like to suggest that the 24-month contract be highlighted in all your future interactions with prospective customers who might be interested in subscribing to the "Complete Plan".

Yours faithfully,

Fonny Busnis

Essay 9

Businesses the world over seem to have finally learnt their lesson the hard way: it is not the beautifully printed parchments with their florid writing that announces the degree of the holder of the paper that matter. What matters is the expertise that the person brings to the job. This realization has dramatically dropped the stratospheric value of academic learning in the eyes of both the society and the learners. The craze for degree, once at a frenzied high, has visibly ebbed.

Having burnt their fingers in experimenting with the bright young boys and girls who bring a bunch of fancy degrees but have nothing to show by experience, employers are now increasingly veering towards people who do not have any degrees to crow about, but who can place their finger on the pulse of the business and tell you exactly what is wrong, how to set it right, and then proceed to set it right without making any show of it.

It is not entirely the fault of the youth. Having sat through long hours in classrooms, listening to the steady drone of the lecturer, working on problems that make umpteen presumptions in order to make them solvable within the time-limits of the exams, these kids are fully versed in theory, but thoroughly out of touch with the reality of the wide world. Is it any surprise then that, faced with a real-life problem in corporate life, they are left scratching their head, with nary a clue about how to solve it?

The preference of experience over academic degree cannot be viewed as a positive or negative development. It is simply the demand of the times. For university degrees to still be relevant in today's society, universities should arrange to provide on-the-job training within the curriculum, so that the chances of the youth getting at least entry-level jobs will improve.

IELTS Writing Preparation - Suggested Answers

Letter 10

Dear Sir,

I am a regular customer of your store. Two days ago, on October 9th, 2009, I had the occasion to purchase a bag of sultanas from your store (invoice number 2009/517) on my way home from work.

After breaking open the seal of the bag at home, my children felt a certain gooeyness as they put their hands in to bring out the raisins. We dropped the entire content of the bag in a bowl and saw to our horror that all the sultanas were sticking together, as if glued, forming a squishy mass. A dark brown liquid oozed from the mass. A putrid smell emanated from the bag. We had no option but to get rid of the whole thing.

In a hurry, I did not look at the packaging closely while at the store, but now when I inspect it, I see that the expiry date is not to be found anywhere.

Your staff should be more alert when placing goods on the shelves.

I would like you to arrange for a replacement of the bag of sultanas when I visit the store again this week. Failing that I would like to request a refund.

I look forward to your immediate response to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Sue Permum

Essay 10

For several decades, the United States dollar had been the de facto world currency, striding powerfully on the stage of world finance, money and banking. However, the recent crisis in the global economy, triggered by the collapse of markets in the US, has lent credence to a long-standing demand for the creation of a global currency, also known as "supranational currency", to replace all other currencies. The question is, will this lead to a more stable economy worldwide, and will this lead to the removal of the disparity between the haves and the have-nots?

It has been proposed that the hundreds of currencies that float around the world in the name of money be consolidated into one single global currency, henceforth to be known as the "Terra". Arguments in its favour include the currency making international business more efficient, encouraging a freer flow of foreign direct investment, and being inflation-proof. When this is implemented, e-commerce will become simpler, though banks will be bereft of the exchange conversion commissions which they shave off and keep to themselves every time monies cross borders.

Critics however paint a more pessimistic picture, citing reasons why the proposal can never be implemented. The smaller, financially weaker countries will never be able to match the might of the more powerful nations when it comes to the strength of their currency. This can also lead to undermining the sovereignty of these countries, they claim. The conversion of European currencies to the Euro has not been smooth sailing, they point out, and difficulties still exist.

In conclusion, therefore, it is best to thrash out the issues first. Any hasty decision might plunge the world into a mess that will take a long time to unravel.

Thank you

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How long will it take me to pass the exam?

As a guide, it takes about 6 months of study to increase your band level by 0.5 marks. So, if you did the exam after studying, and got 5 in everything, it might take you 2 years to get to 7! Start studying now! If you got 5, but haven't studied, you may be able to increase your band score after learning some study techniques, depending on your level.

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