

PROBLEM & CAUSE ESSAY

How To Write an Introduction

Good introductions to IELTS problem solution essays have a simple 2 part structure:

- **Paraphrase the question**
- **State 1 key problem/cause and related solution/s (outline sentence)**

It should:

- **Have 2-3 sentences**
- **Be 40-60 words long**
- **Take 5 minutes to write**

1) Paraphrase the question

Start your introduction by paraphrasing the question.

Question: One problem faced by almost every large city is traffic congestion.

What do you think the causes are? What solutions can you suggest?

Paraphrased question:

One of the most serious issues facing the majority of large urban areas is traffic jams.

Note my use of synonyms to replace key words in the question statement. You don't have to replace every key word but do so where possible whilst ensuring that your language sounds natural.

2) Outline statement

Now we need to add an **outline statement** where we outline the two main points that we'll cover in the rest of the essay, that is, the cause and the solution I chose earlier. Here they are again.

Cause – Too many cars on the roads. Why? – increasing numbers of people own cars, more convenient than buses & trains

Solution – Park-and-ride schemes

And, this is one way to develop them into an outline sentence.

Outline statement:

The main reason for this is that there are too many private cars on the roads these days and a viable solution is to introduce more park-and-ride schemes.

So, let's bring the two elements of our introduction together.

Introduction

One of the most serious issues facing the majority of large urban areas is traffic jams. The main reason for this is that there are too many private cars on the roads these days and a viable solution is to introduce more park-and-ride schemes.

This introduction achieves three important functions:

- **It shows the examiner that you understand the question.**
- **It acts as a guide to the examiner as to what your essay is about.**
- **It also helps to keep you focused and on track as you write.**

The two ideas in your introduction will become your two main body paragraphs.

Main body paragraph 1 – Too many cars on the roads

Main body paragraph 2 – Park-and-ride schemes

How To Write Main Body Paragraphs

Main body paragraphs in IELTS problem solution essays should contain 3 things:

- **Topic sentence** – outline the main idea
- **Explanation** – explain it and give more detail
- **Example** – give an example

Main Body Paragraph 1

The **topic sentence** summarises the main idea of the paragraph. That's all it needs to do so it doesn't have to be complicated.

It plays an important role in ensuring that your ideas flow logically from one to another. It does this by acting as a signpost for what is to come next, that is, what the paragraph will be about.

If you maintain a clear development of ideas throughout your essay, you will get high marks for task achievement and cohesion and coherence.

We'll now take the idea for our first main body paragraph and create our topic sentence.

Obviously, we're going to write about the cause of the problem first.

Main body paragraph 1 – Too many cars on the roads

Topic sentence:

The number of people owning cars increases year on year, with most families now having more than one car.

Next, we must write an **explanation sentence** that develops the idea.

Explanation sentence:

Most people like the convenience of travelling at the time they want to rather than being restricted to public transport timetables, so they prefer to drive themselves around rather than taking the bus or train. This is despite the fact that they frequently have to sit in long traffic queues as they near the city centre.

Finally, we add an **example** to support our main point. If you can't think of a real example, it's fine to make one up, as long as it's believable. The examiner isn't going to check your facts. Alternatively, you could add another piece of information to support your idea.

Example sentence:

Whenever I have to attend a meeting in the city, I always drive because it means that I can leave home when I want to rather than getting stressed about getting to the station in time to catch the train.

That's the 3 parts of our first main body paragraph complete. Here's the finished paragraph.

The number of people owning cars increases year on year, with most families now having more than one car. Most people like the convenience of travelling at the time they want to rather than being restricted to public transport timetables, so they prefer to drive themselves around rather than taking the bus or train. This is despite the fact that they frequently have to sit in long traffic queues as they near the city centre. Whenever I have to attend a meeting in the city, I always drive because it means that I can leave home when I want to rather than getting stressed about getting to the station in time to catch the train.

We now follow the same process for our second main body paragraph.

Main Body Paragraph 2

Main idea 2 – Park-and-ride schemes

First, we write the **topic sentence** to summarise the main idea.

Topic sentence:

A solution that is proving successful in many areas is park-and-ride schemes.

Now for the **explanation sentence** where we expand on this idea.

Explanation sentence:

This is where you park your car for free in a large car park on the outskirts of the city and take a bus for the final part of your journey. The fee you have to pay for the bus trip is usually very small and this public transport system is generally very regular, running every ten minutes or so.

Finally, an **example** to support this point.

Example sentence:

A survey carried out in the city of Exeter showed that the rush hour congestion decreased by 10% when the council set up a park-and-ride scheme to the north of the city. There was an additional drop of another 10% in traffic volume when a second scheme began operating to the south.

That's the 3 parts of our second main body paragraph complete. Here's the finished paragraph.

A solution that is proving successful in many areas is park-and-ride schemes. This is where you park your car for free in a large car park on the outskirts of the city and take a bus for the final part of your journey. The fee you have to pay for the bus trip is usually very small and this public transport system is generally very regular, running every ten minutes or so. A survey carried out in the city of Exeter showed that the rush hour congestion decreased by 10% when the council set up a park-and-ride scheme to the north of the city. There was an additional drop of another 10% in traffic volume when a second scheme began operating to the south.

Now we need a conclusion and our IELTS problem solution essay is done.

How To Write a Conclusion

The conclusion is a summary of the main points in your essay and can generally be done in a single sentence. It should never introduce new ideas.

If you're below the minimum 250 words after you've written your conclusion, you can add a prediction or recommendation statement.

Our essay is already over the minimum word limit so we don't need this extra sentence but you can learn more about how to write a prediction or recommendation statement for IELTS problem solution essays on the [Task 2 Conclusions](#) page.

The conclusion is the easiest sentence in the essay to write but one of the most important.

A good conclusion will:

- **Neatly end the essay**
- **Link all your ideas together**
- **Sum up your argument or opinion**
- **Answer the question**

If you achieve this, you'll improve your score for both task achievement and cohesion and coherence which together make up 50% of the overall marks. Without a conclusion, you'll score below band 6 for task achievement.

You can start almost any final paragraph of an IELTS problem solution essay with the words:

- **In conclusion**
- or
- **To conclude**

Now all you need to do is briefly summarise the main ideas into one sentence.

Here's a **top tip**. Go back and read the introduction to the essay because this is also a summary of the essay. It outlines what you are going to write about.

To create a good conclusion, you simply have to paraphrase the introduction.

Introduction:

One of the most serious issues facing the majority of large urban areas is traffic jams. The main reason for this is that there are too many private cars on the roads these days and a viable solution is to introduce more park-and-ride schemes.

To conclude, the major urban problem of traffic congestion caused by the excessive number of private cars on city roads can be partly alleviated by the introduction of park-and-ride systems on city fringes. I would certainly use one if it was introduced in my area.

One of the most serious issues facing the majority of large urban areas is traffic jams. The main reason for this is that there are too many private cars on the roads these days and a viable solution is to introduce more park-and-ride schemes.

The number of people owning cars increases year on year, with most families now having more than one car. Most people like the convenience of travelling at the time they want to rather than being restricted to public transport timetables, so they prefer to drive themselves around rather than taking the bus or train. This is despite the fact that they frequently have to sit in long traffic queues as they near the city centre. Whenever I have to attend a meeting in the city, I always drive because it means that I can leave home when I want to rather than getting stressed about getting to the station in time to catch the train.

A solution that is proving successful in many areas is park-and-ride schemes. This is where you park your car for free in a large car park on the outskirts of the city and take a bus for the final part of your journey. The fee you have to pay for the bus trip is usually very small and this public transport system is generally very regular, running every ten minutes or so. A survey carried out in the city of Exeter showed that the rush hour congestion decreased by 10% when the council set up a park-and-ride scheme to the north of the city. There was an additional drop of another 10% in traffic volume when a second scheme began operating to the south.

To conclude, the major urban problem of traffic congestion caused by the excessive number of private cars on city roads can be partly alleviated by the introduction of park-and-ride systems on city fringes. I would certainly use one if it was introduced in my area.

(328 words)