



IELTS/TOEFL Writing Task II Time Management

Here are the timelines of how I recommend you spend your time on the Task II writing response.

IELTS	TOEFL
1 minute: Read the question carefully and decide what your answer needs to cover.	1 minute: Read the question carefully and decide what your answer needs to cover.
2-3 minutes: Make a basic outline	2 minutes: Make a basic outline
30 minutes: Write	24 minutes: Write
5 minutes: Proofread	3 minutes: Proofread

So let's examine what each of these steps really mean:

Step 1: Read the question carefully and decide what your answer needs to cover.

Prompt 1: "Extreme sports such as sky diving and skiing are very dangerous and should be banned. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?"

This prompt has only 1 part. You only need to explain if you agree or disagree with the view.

Prompt 2: "Many elderly people are no longer looked after by their families but are put in care homes or nursing homes. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this trend and give your opinion."

This prompt has 3 parts. You need to explain the advantages, disadvantages, *and* give your opinion.

Prompt 3: "Happiness is considered very important in life. Why is it difficult? What factors are important in achieving happiness?"

This prompt has 2 sub-questions after the general statement, so this question has 2 parts. You need to answer both sub-questions fully.

Step 2: Make a basic outline.

For prompt 1 above my basic outline my look like this:

Intro: I disagree completely –if practiced safely

Body 1: Good exercise

- A. Burn calories skiing, skateboarding, rock-climbing
- B. Keep fit

Body 2: Help learn stress-management

- A. Must keep calm in dangerous situations

Conclusion: Safe practices are vital

Notice that my outline does not contain any full sentences. I also included two other extreme sports not listed in the original prompt. This will help improve my lexical –or vocabulary- score. The purpose of my outline is to put my thoughts down on paper to help get my essay organized. Each one of my body paragraphs has to have reasons for my opinion, and I have to support those reasons with examples. If I can come up with the basic ideas for my reasons and examples during a simple outlining exercise, I will be better equipped to write my essay in the short amount of time I have.

Practice making outlines when you are practicing your writing prompts before the exam. Do not attempt to make an outline for the first time on test day; do this every time you write.

Step 3: Write

Pay attention to your time here. You only have 30 minutes on the IELTS and 24 minutes on the TOEFL to write your full essay, and it's *your* responsibility to keep track of time!

Step 4: Proofread

Don't skip this step! When you go back and proofread your paper, be looking for missing words and punctuation. Check to make sure you used the correct words and verb tenses. If you notice that you used one word over and over again (for example, if you used the word little five times), try to change some of these words with a synonym, like small, minor, compact, miniature, slight, etc.