IELTS Writing Task 2: Problem-Solution Essay Analysis
Band 5 vs Band 8 Comparison

Introduction

This document provides a comprehensive comparison between Band 5 and Band 8 responses to an IELTS Writing Task 2 problem-solution essay question. The analysis demonstrates the key differences in writing quality, structure, vocabulary usage, and grammatical complexity that distinguish these two band levels.

The comparison focuses on four main IELTS assessment criteria: Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. By examining these responses side by side, students can better understand what constitutes high-level academic writing and identify areas for improvement in their own work.

Essay Question

> **You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.**
>
> Many cities around the world are facing serious air pollution problems that affect the health of their residents and contribute to climate change.
>
> **What are the main causes of air pollution in urban areas, and what solutions can be implemented to address this problem?**
>
> Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.
>
> Write at least 250 words.

Band 8 Essay Response

Band 8 Response (294 words)

Urban air pollution has emerged as one of the most pressing environmental challenges of the 21st century, significantly compromising public health and exacerbating global climate change. This essay will examine the primary contributors to this crisis and propose comprehensive solutions to mitigate its devastating effects.

The predominant cause of air pollution in cities stems from vehicular emissions, as millions of cars, buses, and motorcycles release harmful particulates and greenhouse gases daily. Industrial activities represent another major contributor, with manufacturing plants and power stations emitting substantial quantities of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides into the atmosphere. Additionally, construction activities generate considerable dust and debris, while residential heating systems, particularly those relying on fossil fuels, further deteriorate air quality.

To address these multifaceted challenges, governments must implement a combination of regulatory measures and technological innovations. Firstly, cities should invest heavily in public transportation infrastructure, including electric buses and metro systems, thereby reducing private vehicle dependency. Singapore's comprehensive MRT system exemplifies how efficient public transport can dramatically decrease urban emissions. Secondly, stringent environmental regulations must be enforced on industrial facilities, mandating the installation of advanced filtration systems and promoting the transition to renewable energy sources.

Furthermore, urban planning strategies such as creating green corridors and expanding park networks can naturally purify air while providing recreational spaces for residents. Cities like Copenhagen have successfully integrated cycling infrastructure, encouraging environmentally-friendly commuting alternatives.

In conclusion, while urban air pollution presents formidable challenges requiring immediate intervention, the implementation of sustainable transportation systems, strict industrial regulations, and innovative urban planning can collectively transform our cities into healthier, more liveable environments for future generations.

Band 5 Essay Response

Band 5 Response (267 words)

Air pollution is a big problem in many cities today. It makes people sick and also bad for environment. I will talk about why this happens and what we can do about it.

There are many reasons for air pollution in cities. First, cars and buses make a lot of smoke and bad gases. When people drive to work every day, all these cars together make the air dirty. Also, factories make pollution because they burn things and make products. The smoke from factories goes into the air and makes it bad to breathe. Another reason is that people burn things like coal and wood in their homes for heating and cooking.

To solve this problem, there are several things we can do. The government should make better public transport so people don't need to use cars so much. For example, they can build more bus routes and train lines. This will reduce the number of cars on roads. Also, factories should use better technology that doesn't make so much pollution. They can use clean energy like solar power instead of coal.

People can also help by using bicycles more and walking instead of driving short distances. In my country, some people already do this and it helps a little bit. The government can also plant more trees because trees clean the air naturally.

In conclusion, air pollution in cities comes from cars, factories and homes. We can fix this problem by improving public transport, using clean technology, and planting more trees. Everyone needs to work together to make the air cleaner.

Detailed Comparative Analysis

Task Achievement

Band 8: Fully addresses all parts of the task with comprehensive coverage of causes (vehicular emissions, industrial activities, construction, residential heating) and solutions (public transport investment, industrial regulations, urban planning). Provides specific examples (Singapore's MRT, Copenhagen's cycling infrastructure) and maintains clear focus throughout.

Band 5: Addresses the task but in a limited way. Identifies basic causes (cars, factories, home heating) and simple solutions (public transport, clean technology, trees), but lacks depth and detail. Examples are vague ("in my country") and development is insufficient.

Coherence and Cohesion

Band 8: Uses sophisticated linking devices ("Furthermore," "Secondly," "thereby") and demonstrates clear progression of ideas. Each paragraph has a distinct purpose with smooth transitions between concepts. Conclusion effectively summarizes main points.

Band 5: Basic organization with simple connectors ("First," "Also," "In conclusion"). Ideas are presented sequentially but connections between paragraphs are weak. Some repetition and unclear referencing reduce overall coherence.

Lexical Resource

Band 8: Wide range of vocabulary with precise usage ("emerged," "predominantly," "multifaceted," "stringent," "formidable"). Demonstrates collocations ("pressing environmental challenges," "devastating effects") and academic register throughout.

Band 5: Limited vocabulary range with repetitive word choices ("big problem," "bad for environment," "make pollution"). Simple, everyday language with basic adjectives and limited precision in expression.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Band 8: Complex sentence structures including conditional clauses, relative clauses, and participial phrases. Demonstrates variety in sentence length and structure with high accuracy. Minor errors do not impede communication.

Band 5: Predominantly simple sentences with some attempts at complex structures. Frequent grammatical errors ("makes people sick and also bad for environment," "factories should use better technology that doesn't make so much pollution") that sometimes affect clarity.

Key Differences Summary

Aspect	Band 8	Band 5
Vocabulary	Sophisticated, precise, academic register	Simple, limited, repetitive
Grammar	Complex structures, high accuracy	Simple sentences, frequent errors
Task Response	Comprehensive, detailed examples	Basic coverage, vague examples
Organization	Clear progression, sophisticated linking	Simple structure, basic connectors
Development	Ideas fully extended and supported	Limited development, lacks depth

Tips for Improvement from Band 5 to Band 8

Vocabulary Enhancement

- Replace basic words with more sophisticated alternatives (big → significant, bad → detrimental)
- Use academic collocations and precise terminology
- Avoid repetition by employing synonyms and varied expressions
- Learn topic-specific vocabulary for environmental issues

Grammatical Complexity

- Practice complex sentence structures (relative clauses, conditionals)
- Use participial phrases and reduced relative clauses
- Vary sentence length and structure throughout the essay
- Focus on accuracy while maintaining complexity

Task Achievement

- Provide specific, relevant examples from real-world knowledge

- Fully develop each main point with supporting details

- Address all parts of the question comprehensively

- Maintain clear focus on the problem-solution structure

Organization and Cohesion

- Use sophisticated linking devices and transitional phrases

- Ensure clear logical progression between paragraphs

- Develop coherent paragraph structure with clear topic sentences

- Create strong conclusions that synthesize main arguments

This document serves as a comprehensive guide for understanding the differences between Band 5 and Band 8 IELTS Writing Task 2 responses, providing students with clear benchmarks for improvement and specific strategies to enhance their academic writing skills.