

# 10 Fatal Writing Mistakes

The errors keeping you below Band 6 (and how to fix them)

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## How These Kill Your Score

These aren't minor errors. Each one directly violates a Band 7 descriptor requirement. Fix these and you'll see your score jump -- often by a full band.

### Mistake 1: Not answering ALL parts of the question

*Band descriptor hit: Task Achievement drops to Band 5*

Many students answer only ONE part of a two-part question. If the question asks 'Do you agree or disagree? What are the reasons?' you MUST address BOTH parts.

**WRONG:** [Only discusses reasons without stating agreement/disagreement]

**RIGHT:** 'I strongly agree that... There are two main reasons for my view. Firstly... Secondly...'

### Mistake 2: No clear position throughout

*Band descriptor hit: TA Band 5 -- 'tendency to address task only partially'*

Sitting on the fence when asked for YOUR opinion. 'Some people think X, some think Y, both are valid' is NOT a position.

**WRONG:** 'There are advantages and disadvantages to both sides.'

**RIGHT:** 'While there are some drawbacks, I firmly believe the advantages significantly outweigh them.'

### Mistake 3: Memorised phrases and templates

*Band descriptor hit: Examiner flags as 'prepared response', score capped at Band 5*

Examiners recognise common memorised openings. 'In today's modern world' and 'This essay will discuss both sides' are red flags.

**WRONG:** 'In today's modern world, many people believe...'

**RIGHT:** 'The question of whether [specific topic paraphrase] has become increasingly relevant.'

### Mistake 4: One-sentence paragraphs

*Band descriptor hit: CC Band 5 -- 'inadequate paragraphing'*

Each body paragraph must be 5-6 sentences: Topic sentence + Explanation + Example + Result/Link. A paragraph with 1-2 sentences shows no development.

**WRONG:** 'Secondly, education is important for getting a job.'

**RIGHT:** 'Secondly, education plays a crucial role in employability. Graduates develop critical thinking and

communication skills that employers value. For instance, a recent study by...'

## Mistake 5: Overusing 'Firstly, Secondly, Thirdly, Finally'

*Band descriptor hit: CC Band 6 -- 'may be mechanical'*

Band 7 CC requires 'flexible' use of cohesive devices. Using the same pattern in every essay shows limited range.

**BETTER:** Use 'One significant reason...', 'Another key factor...', 'Perhaps most importantly...'

**MIX IT UP:** Cause-effect links (As a result, Consequently), Contrast (However, Nevertheless), Addition (Furthermore, Moreover)

## Mistake 6: Using informal language

*Band descriptor hit: LR Band 5 -- 'limited range; errors in word choice'*

IELTS Academic Writing requires formal register. Contractions, slang, and casual expressions pull your score down.

**WRONG:** 'Kids these days don't wanna study hard.'

**RIGHT:** 'Young people in contemporary society appear reluctant to dedicate sufficient time to their studies.'

## Mistake 7: Run-on sentences (no punctuation control)

*Band descriptor hit: GRA Band 5 -- 'frequent grammatical errors'*

Arabic speakers often write very long sentences connected by 'and' or commas. English requires full stops between complete ideas.

**WRONG:** 'Education is important and it helps people get jobs and it makes them smarter and society benefits from it.'

**RIGHT:** 'Education is fundamental to career prospects. It equips individuals with essential skills. Moreover, society as a whole benefits from a well-educated population.'

## Mistake 8: No overview in Task 1

*Band descriptor hit: TA Band 5 -- 'no clear overview'*

The overview is THE most important paragraph in Task 1. Without it, you cannot score above Band 5 for Task Achievement. Period.

**WRONG:** [Jumping straight into details without summarising the main trends]

**RIGHT:** 'Overall, the graph shows a clear upward trend in X, while Y decreased significantly over the period.'

## Mistake 9: Giving opinions in Task 1

*Band descriptor hit: TA Band 5 -- 'attempts to describe task but mixes data with personal opinion'*

Task 1 is a REPORT, not an essay. Never write 'I think' or 'In my opinion' in Task 1. Just describe what the data shows.

**WRONG:** 'I think the government should spend more on education because the chart shows...'

**RIGHT:** 'The chart indicates that government expenditure on education rose by 15% between 2010 and 2020.'

## Mistake 10: Writing less than 250 words (Task 2) or 150 words (Task 1)

*Band descriptor hit: TA penalised -- automatic deduction*

There is a REAL word count penalty. Under 250 for Task 2 or under 150 for Task 1 means you haven't fully addressed the task. Aim for 270-290 for Task 2 and 160-180 for Task 1.

**TIP: Practice counting your handwritten words quickly (count per line, multiply by lines).**

**TIP: If running out of time, write a short conclusion rather than no conclusion. An incomplete essay is penalised more harshly.**