# Impressive essays for IELTS and school

## Samples and exercises

A collection of 10 high-level short and 5-paragraph essays, each complemented by practice questions on comprehension, upgrading language, synonyms, and structure.

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# Introduction

This essay sample and practice book is aimed at students who have, or want, a high level of English. It presupposes the user already has an understanding of how to build a basic argumentative essay, and focuses on how to elevate writing through varied phrases, vocabulary, and structures. The purpose of the book is not to have students agree with the essay arguments, but to provide evidence of how elements are used to produce short essays with an academic tone above the norm.

Each of the essays is complemented by a set of questions based around comprehension, upgrading language, synonyms, and structure. Answers and their reasons are included, although language is open to interpretation and it is certainly possible that a user may contest the given solution. The ultimate aim for students should be to understand and produce high-level work, and consequently the questions and answers are tools rather than definitive exams.

Finally, the essays collected in this book were originally used as teaching materials for tutoring academically advanced students, and the use of a teacher remains the recommended approach to using them. Having a teacher or tutor on hand can help explain certain aspects. Moreover, a teacher or tutor can help identify and prioritise which structures or phrases a student can use first. That said, it is hoped that those learning independently can still gain much from the book in terms of academic language and its rhythms.

Essay 1

**Advertisements discourage us from being different individuals and make us look the same.**

**Do you agree or disagree?**

*Essay*

The modern world is awash with advertising, a commercialism that has stretched far beyond traditional media. Advertising now occupies space while you move and you wait; it exists as events and ties in with success; via branding it has become actual people and holdable objects. The aim of this advertising is to create aspiration as a purchasable unit, and in this sense it definitely does curtail individualism.

The most obvious place to see this collectivism is in mass consumerism and the idea that 'you need this product'. Many products, such as new electronics, are marketed as being 'must have' items and play on the fears of isolation and rejection - to not have this product will make you socially unacceptable. Similarly (albeit the advertisements use a different tactic) luxury and counter-culture goods create brands that proclaim to make you different from the masses, unique in either taste or economic success, whilst really just creating an identikit elite.

Such marketing and consumerism is not new, but in the world of big data there are new trends emerging that are equally faceless. Websites that record your preferences and offer recommendations ('if you liked x, you will like y') are a prime example of treating customers not as individuals but as a definable group; in this case you are not 'you', but 'people like you', the result of which is a gentle steering towards products 'people like you' buy.

As technology and data increases, and advertising stretches further, the pressure on the individual to succumb to trends becomes greater. Children and those that have a herd-mentality will pour money into companies in order to fit in. More individualistic types will try to resist, but the chances are high that one purchase will be driven by

peer-pressure or advertising. This one crack is all the advertisers need.

*Comprehension*

1. **'Advertisements discourage us from being different individuals and make us look the same.'**

   **Does the writer agree or disagree with the statement?**

   a) agree
   b) disagree

2. **What is the main argument in paragraph 2?**

   a) that people are prone to mass consumerism
   b) that luxury brands and counter-culture are different from mass consumerism
   c) that people buying products in order to fit in and people buying products in order to feel different are both partaking in mass consumerism

3. **In paragraph 3 the writer alludes to a change in the way websites view their users. What is it?**

   a) each user is not an individual, but part of a group with similar tastes
   b) users tend to buy more when given recommendations
   c) users' preference should be tracked in order to improve the online experience

4. **Why is using the grouping 'people like you' useful to advertisers?**

   a) they can guide consumers towards products the consumers might buy
   b) they can track consumers' data

c) they can know consumers' exact preferences

5. **Overall, what chance does the writer believe there is of a person buying something because of advertising?**

a) high
b) low
c) non-existent

## *Upgrading Language*

1. **(Paragraph 1) 'The aim of this advertising is to create aspiration as a purchasable unit, and in this sense it definitely does curtail individualism.***'*

   **The phrase 'create aspiration as a purchasable unit' conveys a want to:**

   a) replace aspiration with the want to buy
   b) create products that match aspirations
   c) make people aspire towards things they can buy
   d) unite everyone's aspirations into a single product

2. **(Paragraph 2) 'Many products, such as new electronics, are marketed as being 'must have' items and play on the fears of isolation and rejection - to not have this product will make you socially unacceptable.'**

   **What could be a simplified version of the phrase 'play on the fears of isolation and rejection' in this sentence?**

   a) use people's fears of being alone and rejected
   b) make people scared
   c) overlook people's fears of being alone and rejected
   d) turn people's fears of being alone and rejected into something they enjoy

3. **(Paragraph 2) 'Similarly (albeit the advertisements use a different tactic) luxury and counter-culture goods create brands that proclaim to make you different from the masses, unique in either taste or**

**economic success, whilst really just creating an identikit elite.'**

**Which variation of the quoted sentence is the closest in meaning?**

a) While they are not the same as 'must have' items, luxury and counter-culture goods also make people part of a group.
b) Luxury and counter-culture products are not the same as 'must-have' items and make people part of a group.
c) Luxury and counter-culture items make you unique, but unique is not special.
d) Although they pretend to make you unique, luxury and counter-culture goods also make you part of a group.

4. **(Paragraph 3) 'Websites that record your preferences and offer recommendations ('if you liked x, you will like y') are a prime example of treating customers not as individuals but as a definable group; in this case you are not 'you', but 'people like you', the result of which is a gentle steering towards products 'people like you' buy.'**

**What is a simpler way to rewrite this sentence?**

a) Websites treat people as a group, not individuals, then subtly guide them towards products.
b) Websites record preferences, then make suggestions based on these preferences.
c) Websites ignore your tastes and instead try to guide you towards products they want you to buy.
d) Websites are a good example of how shopping recommendations are successful.

5. **(Paragraph 4) 'Children and those that have a**

**herd-mentality will pour money into companies in order to fit in.'**

**What is the main idea of this sentence?**

a) people who act like children will waste their money
b) people who follow children's ideas will spend more money
c) people who are prone to acting on social pressure will buy more things
d) people who want to fit in should buy more things, just as children do

## *Synonyms*

1. **(Paragraph 1) 'The modern world is awash with advertising, a commercialism that has stretched far beyond traditional media.'**

   **Which phrase could not be used as a replacement for 'awash with'?**

   a) swimming in
   b) bucketing in
   c) overflowing with
   d) saturated with

2. **(Paragraph 1) 'The aim of this advertising is to create aspiration as a purchasable unit, and in this sense it definitely does curtail individualism.'**

   **What are two synonyms for 'curtail'?**

   a) break
   b) hinder
   c) arrest
   d) destroy

3. **(Paragraph 2) 'Similarly (albeit the advertisements use a different tactic) luxury and counter-culture goods create brands that proclaim to make you different from the masses, unique in either taste or economic success, whilst really just creating an identikit elite.'**

   **In the context of this sentence, what does the word 'masses' relate to?**

a) your peers
b) the wider public
c) common people
d) poor people

4. **(Paragraph 2) 'Similarly (albeit the advertisements use a different tactic) luxury and counter-culture goods create brands that proclaim to make you different from the masses, unique in either taste or economic success, whilst really just creating an identikit elite.'**

   **Which word could act as a synonym for 'albeit' in this sentence?**

   a) thus
   b) because
   c) although
   d) regardless

5. **Which phrase in paragraph 4 means 'give in to'?**

   a) stretch further
   b) driven by
   c) crack
   d) succumb to

*Structure*

1. **(Paragraph 1) 'Advertising now occupies space while you move and you wait; it exists as events and ties in with success; via branding it has become actual people and holdable objects.'**

   **What is the purpose of the semi-colons ( ; ) in this sentence?**

   a) to connect two similar clauses
   b) to separate different clauses
   c) to separate longer phrases in a list
   d) to separate items in a long list

2. **(Paragraph 2) 'Many products, such as new electronics, are marketed as being 'must have' items and play on the fears of isolation and rejection - to not have this product will make you socially unacceptable.'**

   **Commas ( , ) are used to insert the clause 'such as new electronics' into another clause. Which two other punctuation devices could also be used ?**

   a) parentheses ( ( ) )
   b) semi-colons ( ; )
   c) dashes ( - - )
   d) periods ( . )

3. **(Paragraph 3) 'Such marketing and consumerism is not new, but in the world of big data there are new trends emerging that are equally faceless.'**

**In this context, the word 'such' is used to:**

a) link to the previous subject before expanding upon it
b) stress the importance of the nouns in the sentence
c) act as a substitute for 'therefore'
d) act as a negative conjunction

4. **(Paragraph 3) 'Websites that record your preferences and offer recommendations ('if you liked x, you will like y') are a prime example of treating customers not as individuals but as a definable group; in this case you are not 'you', but 'people like you', the result of which is a gentle steering towards products 'people like you' buy.'**

   **What is the purpose of the semi-colon ( ; ) in paragraph 3?**

   a) to connect clauses of similar ideas
   b) to separate clauses of different ideas
   c) to separate longer items in a list
   d) as a substitute for 'therefore'

5. **(Paragraph 4) 'This one crack is all the advertisers need.'**

   **Why does the writer use a short punctual sentence at the end of the piece?**

   a) to clarify a position
   b) to emphasise a point
   c) to make an argument
   d) to contradict the previous sentence

*Essay 1*

*Answers*

## *Comprehension*

**1.  a)**

Paragraph 1 Sentence 3 states:
*The aim of this advertising is to create aspiration as a purchasable unit, and in this sense <u>it definitely does curtail individualism</u>.*

Paragraph 2 Sentence 3 also notes the creation of '<u>an identikit elite</u>', while Paragraph 3 discusses the loss of individuality to the generic 'people like you' grouping.

**2.  c)**

Although answer a) is in Paragraph 2, the answer is slightly vague. Answer c) goes into the main argument of different groups partaking in similar consumer activities.

**3.  a)**

Paragraph 3 Sentence 2 notes that this is:
*a prime example of treating customers <u>not as individuals but as a definable group</u>.*

**4.  a)**

Paragraph 3 Sentence 2 concludes that advertisers use the group 'people like you' in order to provide:
*a gentle steering towards products 'people like you' buy.*

**5.  a)**

Paragraph 4 Sentence 3 says:

*More individualistic types will try to resist, but <u>the chances are high that one purchase will be driven by peer-pressure or advertising</u>.*

**1. c)**

All four answers appear plausible, with answers a) and c) both strong possibilities. The use of the verb 'create' in the original sentence aligns better with 'make' (answer c)) than 'replace' (answer a)): the advertisers are therefore making new aspirations that can be bought.

**2. a)**

'Play on one's weaknesses' is a phrase that means use/abuse/manipulate another's weaknesses for personal gain. Answer a) best expresses this.

**3. d)**

The original sentence is can be simplified to '*luxury and counter–culture goods say they make you different, although really they just make you the same as others.*' The key element is therefore that the advertising of these goods pretends to make you unique.

Answer d) sums up this same point. Answers a), b) and c) talk about the products themselves being different or making a person unique, rather than the element of pretending.

**4. a)**

The original sentence highlights that websites treat people as groups so they can try to sell items these people may like.

Answer a) covers this idea. Although the original sentence

mentions 'preferences', it does not describe the same process as answer b). Answer c) can be disregarded because the original sentence states websites record preferences rather than ignore them. The success of shopping recommendations is not mentioned, and so answer d) can also be dismissed.

## 5. c)

The implication in the original sentence is that both children and those people who simply follow others (have a 'herd-mentality') will throw money at products because they want to be part of a group ('fit in'). This is an example of being 'prone to acting on social pressure' (answer c)).

## *Synonyms*

**1.  b)**

Note the question asks which answer is <u>not</u> a suitable replacement term.

'Awash with' emphasizes '*x* is everywhere'. Answers a), c) and d) are all terms that mean this. Whereas 'bucketing down' is a casual term meaning 'raining heavily', 'bucketing in' is not a recognized English term.

**2.  b) & c)**

'Curtail' means to reduce or limit the effectiveness of an action. 'Hinder' has a similar meaning. 'Arrest' (answer c)) means 'put a stop to an action'. Although not a direct synonym, it could work as a substitute in this context.

'Break' and 'destroy' (answers a) and d)) do not mean halting progress, but rather putting something into a state of disrepair.

**3.  b)**

Although it is possible to use 'masses' in a disdainful or judgemental manner (such as in answers c) and d)), in this context it merely means the general population.

**4.  c)**

'Albeit' is used to add an undermining negative to a positive statement, or a positive to a negative statement (e.g. 'He is popular with the girls, albeit only because of his looks'), and

therefore works in a similar way as 'although'.

## 5. d)

'Succumb to' means 'to give in to pressure'. 'Crack' (answer c))
may be a synonym if used as a verb, but in Paragraph 4 it
appears as a noun.

## *Structure*

**1. c)**

The original sentence is a list of where advertising exists. When items in a list are long, or include punctuation or conjunctions that may look confusing if commas are used, semi-colons are used to separate items instead of commas.

**2. a) & c)**

A clause can be inserted into another clause if separated by appropriate punctuation. Possible punctuation includes commas, parentheses, and dashes (the last of which is generally reserved for long interjections).

**3. a)**

Using 'such' before a noun in this style implies the noun is already the subject (even if inferred, rather than directly stated). As a result, in the context of the original sentence (being used at the beginning), it must link to the previous sentence.

**4. a)**

One of the primary functions of a semi-colon is to link two similar ideas without the need to create two separate sentences. Whereas a conjunction could also do this role, it may result in an overly long and confusing sentence; a semi-colon provides a clear break so that the reader can easily see the separate clauses.

**5. b)**

In writing that often uses long or complicated sentences, the contrast that simplicity makes can be used to make a clear point (especially at the beginning or end of a paragraph). In comparison to the majority of other sentences in this essay, the final sentence appears sharp, to the point, and therefore emphasized.