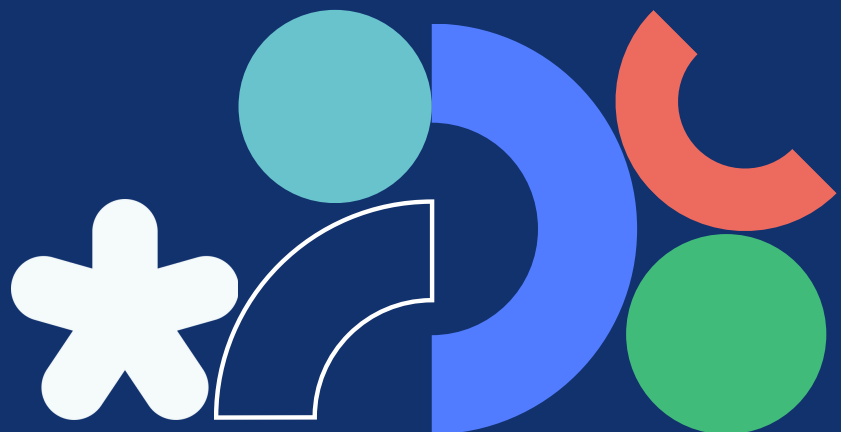


Writing Task 2 Self-Audit Checklist

How to find the criterion that's holding your score at 6.5.

A companion to the *'IELTS Writing Task 2: How to Finally Break Through Band 6.5'* video on the E2 IELTS YouTube channel.

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How to use this checklist

This is a self-audit tool. It works best when you run it on a real essay you've already written - ideally, one you wrote under timed conditions within the last two weeks.

You'll need: - A printed or digital copy of your essay - A pen or highlighter - About 25 minutes - Honesty

You won't need: - A second person (yet) - A scoring rubric (we've translated the criteria into plain language)

What this audit will tell you

It will surface **which of the four marking criteria is currently sitting at Band 6** - that's almost certainly what's keeping your overall at 6.5.

What this audit can't replace

It can't replace a trained IELTS examiner reviewing your work. Self-audits catch the obvious patterns. A trained examiner catches the subtle ones. For full feedback, see the final page of this document.

The four criteria — quick reference

Criterion	Weight	Asks
Task Response	25%	Did you actually answer the question, fully, with a clear position?
Coherence and Cohesion	25%	Do your ideas flow logically - not just connect with linking words?
Lexical Resource	25%	Did you use the right words in the right context, with natural collocation?
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	25%	Did you use a variety of structures, mostly correctly?

Each criterion is scored 0–9 separately, then averaged to give your Task 2 score.

A 6.5 overall = two criteria at 7, two criteria at 6. **Find the two at 6.**



TASK RESPONSE AUDIT

Audit 1 — Task Response

This is the criterion most students underestimate.

Read your introduction. Answer these questions.

- ☐ **1. Could I have written this introduction *before* reading the prompt?** If yes, that's a Task Response problem. The introduction needs to respond directly to the specific question.
- ☐ **2. Is my position stated clearly in one sentence?** "This essay will discuss both views" is not a position. A position **takes a side**.
- ☐ **3. Have I addressed every part of the question?** Many prompts have two or three tasks (discuss view 1, discuss view 2, give your opinion). Check that all are present.

Read your body paragraphs. Answer these questions.

- ☐ **4. Does each body paragraph have one clear main idea, stated in the first sentence?**
- ☐ **5. Does my position stay consistent throughout the essay?** A common Band 6 trap is taking a position in the introduction, then leaning the other way in body paragraph 2.
- ☐ **6. Is every sentence in the body relevant to the question?** If a sentence could be removed without affecting your argument, it's likely off-task.

Read your conclusion. Answer these questions.

- ☐ **7. Does my conclusion restate my position without introducing new ideas?**
- ☐ **8. Does my conclusion feel like the natural end of the argument I built?**

Score your Task Response (rough guide)

If you ticked 8 of 8 → likely Band 7+ If you ticked 6–7 of 8 → likely Band 6.5 If you ticked 5 or fewer → this is where to focus

My estimated Task Response band: _____



COHERENCE AND COHESION AUDIT

Audit 2 — Coherence and Cohesion

The criterion that most students misunderstand.

The cross-out test

Take a printed copy of your essay. Cross out every linking word and connector: *firstly, secondly, however, in addition, furthermore, on the other hand, moreover, in conclusion*.

Now read what's left.

- ☐ 1. Does each paragraph still have a clear main idea?
- ☐ 2. Do sentences still follow logically from the one before?
- ☐ 3. Can a reader still understand the argument?

If **yes** to all three, your coherence is strong. The linking words were doing extra work.

If **no** to any, your essay was leaning on linking words to *appear* coherent. The underlying ideas need more work.

The repetition check

- ☐ 4. Did I use the same linking words multiple times (e.g., *firstly* in three different paragraphs)? This signals a limited range.
- ☐ 5. Did I use linking words correctly in context? *Furthermore* introduces an additional supporting point. *However* introduces a contrast. Misused connectors hurt the score.

The reference and substitution check

- ☐ 6. Have I used pronouns, synonyms, and paraphrased references to avoid repeating the same nouns? *"The government should fund space exploration. The government should also..."* - repetitive. *"The government should fund space exploration. It should also..."* - natural.

The repetition check

- ☐ 7. Does each new paragraph clearly link back to the question - not just to the previous paragraph?

My estimated Task Response band: _____



LEXICAL RESOURCE AUDIT

Audit 3 — Lexical Resource

The criterion where “fancy words” are a trap.

The natural-collocation test

Underline any word in your essay that you specifically chose because it sounded “advanced.” Examples: *plethora, paramount, utilise, commence, myriad, leverage, garner*.

For each underlined word, ask:

- ☐ **1. Would a native English speaker naturally use this word in this context?**
- ☐ **2. Does the word collocate (pair naturally) with the word next to it?** “A *plethora* of governments” - uncommon. “A growing number of governments” - natural.
- ☐ **3. Could I have made the same point with a more common word, more clearly?** If yes, make the swap.

The topic-cluster test

Look at your essay’s topic. Common IELTS topics include environment, education, technology, health, work, urbanisation, and government.

- ☐ **4. Did I use** at least three topic-specific phrases** that show topic knowledge?** For environment: *carbon emissions, sustainable development, fossil fuels*. For education: *academic achievement, lifelong learning, vocational training*.

If your essay only has general words (“good,” “bad,” “important,” “many”), that’s a Lexical Resource ceiling.

The variety test

- ☐ **5. Did I use a variety of synonyms** instead of repeating the same word? *Important* → *significant* → *essential* → *critical*. Use variety, but don’t force unnatural alternatives.

My estimated Task Response band: _____



RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

Your audit results

Fill in your estimated bands from the previous pages:

Criterion	My estimated band
Task Response	_____
Coherence and Cohesion	_____
Lexical Resource	_____
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	_____
Average (your estimated Task 2 band)	_____

What this tells you

Look at your two lowest-scoring criteria. **Those are where the path to Band 7 is.**

Spend 80% of your study time over the next four weeks on those two criteria. The other two will hold steady.

Your next four-week plan

Week 1: Re-read your last three essays. For each, run only the two audits where your scores were lowest.

Week 2: Write three new essays. Before writing each one, write down what you'll do differently for your two weak criteria.

Week 3: Get expert feedback on at least one essay against all four criteria.

Week 4: Write one full and timed essay. Run the full self-audit again. Compare to today's results.



Want examiner-style feedback?

Self-audits catch the patterns you can see. A trained examiner catches the patterns you can't.

E2 has IELTS-trained teachers who provide written feedback against all four official criteria - Task Response, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. You'll see exactly where each mark comes from, and exactly what to change.



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