

Why You Keep Getting 6.5 in Writing — and the 3 Fixes That Move You to 7.0

A Writing 6.5 is often two criteria at 7 and two at 6. Find your two, use the fix for each, and count whether it moved before you book again.

[Click here https://freeieltsbooks.net/en/about/](https://freeieltsbooks.net/en/about/)

Contents

Why You Keep Getting 6.5 in Writing — and the 3 Fixes That Move You to 7.0

Part 1 — What a Writing 6.5 is made of

- 1.1 Two tasks, eight marks
- 1.2 "Must fully fit"
- 1.3 Where the line is
- 1.4 Is Writing really your wall?

Part 2 — Why it keeps coming back

- 2.1 You only ever see one number
- 2.2 New essays instead of rewrites
- 2.3 Working on the criterion that is already at 7
- 2.4 The fix is the first thing to go
- 2.5 Checking with the same eyes

Part 3 — Three writers, three pairs

- 3.1 Three writers

3.2 Finding your own two

Part 4 — Fix 1: Answer all of it

4.1 Task 2: every part, and one position

4.2 Task 1 Academic: the overview, written first

4.3 Task 1 General Training: the purpose, every bullet, one tone

4.4 The count

Part 5 — Fix 2: Take two ideas further

5.1 The list paragraph

5.2 Steps

5.3 Two ideas, not four

5.4 One centre, and clear reference words

5.5 Task 1's version: compare, and add the detail

5.6 The rewrite drill

5.7 The count

Part 6 — Fix 3: Make the sentences you already write correct

6.1 The count: error-free sentences, long and short

6.2 Your three

6.3 Search, do not reread

6.4 Keep the range

6.5 The count

Part 7 — Proving it moved

7.1 One fix at a time

7.2 Practice and checkpoints

7.3 Who marks it

7.4 When to stop

7.5 Sixty minutes, with the fixes in

Part 8 — Your Writing sheet

The end

Why You Keep Getting 6.5 in Writing — and the 3 Fixes That Move You to 7.0

Free IELTS Books — freeieltsbooks.net Updated October 2026

What this book is

Your Writing has come back at 6.5. Maybe twice, maybe three times. You have written more essays, learned more words, perhaps paid for a course, and the number has not moved.

This book explains why a Writing 6.5 repeats, and what moves it. The explanation comes from the public band descriptors that examiners mark against. A criterion reaches band 7 only when every band-7 feature in it is there. One missing feature holds it at 6, however good the rest is. A 6.5 is often two criteria at 7 and two at 6, so the work is to find your two and move them.

The book gives three fixes. It shows which criteria each one moves, and it gives you a count for each, so you can see whether a fix has worked before you pay for another test.

What this book is not

It is not a sentence book or a Task 2 book. Two books on this site already do those jobs, and this one sends you to them rather than repeating them. *Writing 7.0: The Four Criteria, Decoded Sentence by Sentence* shows the line between 6.5 and 7 inside single sentences, one criterion at

a time. *Band 7 Writing Task 2* has a model essay for each of the five Task 2 question types, and the habits that keep essays at band 6.

It does not repeat *Stuck at 6.5? The Half-Band Wall and How to Break It*, which shows how far your overall 6.5 is from 7.0, whether Writing is really the skill holding you there, and whether to book a re-mark, a One Skill Retake or the whole test. Nor does it repeat *The Band 7.0 Blueprint*, which explains the four criteria in plain terms. This book points to all four where they already have the answer.

It is not a study plan. *The 6.5 → 7.0 Sprint: A 30-Day Correction Plan* lays out the move from 6.5 to 7.0 day by day.

The one promise this book makes

By the end of this book you will know which two criteria are most likely holding your Writing at 6.5, which fix moves each of them, and how to count whether they have moved. No fix here is claimed to guarantee a band. A Writing band is decided by a trained examiner reading your whole response, and only an official result tells you where you stand.

One thing to know before you start

The three writers in this book, their essays and their marks were invented for it. So was every question, table, letter and paragraph. None is a real IELTS question or a copy of one.

When an example is labelled "At band 6", it shows a feature that the band 6 descriptor describes. It is not a mark that an examiner gave it. The marking rules come from ielts.org and from the public Writing band descriptors, and each one is named where it is used.

© 2026 OurSharedCode — freeieltsbooks.net. This book is an independent publication, distributed free of charge for educational purposes.

IELTS® is a registered trade mark of the British Council, IELTS Australia Pty Ltd (owned by IDP Education), and Cambridge English (part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment) — together, the 'IELTS Partners'. This publication and its author are not affiliated with, sponsored by, endorsed by, or approved by the IELTS Partners; 'IELTS' appears in the title and text solely to describe the subject of this book.

All questions, model answers and explanations are the original work of the author; no official IELTS material is reproduced. For current official information about the test, visit ielts.org.

You may share this book freely in its complete, unmodified form. It may not be sold. Voluntary donations support hosting, domain, translation costs only; no materials are sold, and donations are not connected with the IELTS Partners.

Part 1 — What a Writing 6.5 is made of

1.1 Two tasks, eight marks

The Writing test has two tasks, and each one is marked on its own. ielts.org says it directly: "Each task is assessed independently."

Each task is marked against four criteria:

- **Task Achievement** (Task 1) or **Task Response** (Task 2): did you do what the task asked?
- **Coherence and Cohesion**: can the reader follow you?
- **Lexical Resource**: your words.
- **Grammatical Range and Accuracy**: your sentences.

ielts.org again: "The criteria are weighted equally and the score on the task is the average." So each task gets four marks, and its score is their average. That is eight marks in all.

The two tasks do not count the same. ielts.org: "Task 2 contributes twice as much as Task 1 to the Writing score." So Task 1 is about a third of your Writing band. That is too much to treat as a warm-up.

ielts.org does not publish exactly how the two task scores are rounded into one Writing band, so this book never works one out. When it shows an average, it uses four marks whose average comes out exactly.

1.2 "Must fully fit"

The public Writing band descriptors open with one sentence that explains most of this book: "A script must fully fit the positive features of the descriptor at a particular level."

Read it slowly. To get a 7 in a criterion, your writing has to show every band-7 feature of that criterion, not most of them.

Take Grammatical Range and Accuracy. Its band 7 descriptor asks for a variety of complex structures, and it also asks for error-free sentences to be frequent. Picture a writer with a wide range of structures but an error in most of their long sentences. They show the first feature and not the second. They do not fully fit 7, so the criterion is marked lower.

This is why 6.5 is sticky. You can improve a great deal and see no change. If the one missing feature is still missing, the criterion stays where it was. Everything else you improved was already there.

Now put the four criteria together. When a task is marked in whole bands, a 6.5 average can come from marks like these:

Task Response	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy	Average
7	7	6	6	6.5

Two criteria at 7, two at 6: $7 + 7 + 6 + 6$ is 26, and 26 divided by 4 is 6.5. Other mixes give 6.5 too, such as $8 + 6 + 6 + 6$, and the method in this book works the same way for them.

So the question is not "How do I write better?" but "Which of my criteria are at 6, and what is each one missing?" That one has an answer.

1.3 Where the line is

Here is the line between 6 and 7 in each criterion, in plain words from the public descriptors (updated May 2023), and this book's fix for each.

Criterion	What band 7 adds	What holds it at 6	Fix
Task Response (Task 2)	Every main part answered. A clear position. Ideas extended and supported	Some parts covered less fully. A weak conclusion. Ideas not developed	1, 2
Task Achievement (Task 1)	Academic: a clear overview, data grouped. General Training: every bullet covered, a clear purpose	Academic: an overview only attempted. General Training: the purpose only generally clear	1, 2
Coherence and Cohesion	Clear progression. <i>This</i> and <i>they</i> used flexibly	Mechanical linking. Unclear reference. No clear centre	2
Lexical Resource	Some precision. Few spelling or word-form errors	A restricted range. Some spelling and word-form errors	3, in part
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	A variety of complex structures. Frequent error-free sentences	Complex sentences less accurate than simple ones	3

Two things stand out.

First, Fix 2 appears against two criteria. An idea that is never developed usually sits in a paragraph with no clear centre, so one habit can hold

Task Response and Coherence and Cohesion at 6 together, and one fix can move both.

Second, only part of Lexical Resource is in this book: spelling and word forms. The rest is knowing more words and using them exactly, which takes longer than any fix here. For that, use *Vocabulary & Phrasing for Band 7* and Part 5 of *Writing 7.0*.

1.4 Is Writing really your wall?

Before you work on Writing, check that it is the problem. One Writing 6.5 does not prove much. Scores move a little between sittings for reasons that have nothing to do with your English. *Stuck at 6.5?*, Part 2, shows how to read several results together. If Writing is your lowest score every time, it is a wall, and this book is for you. If a different skill is lowest each time, the problem may be the test day itself, and that book deals with it first.

Then check what your requirement asks for. If you need 7.0 overall, a half band in Writing is one way to get there among several. If you need 7.0 in every skill, or a minimum for Writing, the half band has to come from Writing. Part 1 of the same book shows how to count it.

Part 2 — Why it keeps coming back



If the line is that clear, why does a 6.5 come back again and again? Usually not because the writer is not working. Because the work is going somewhere else. Here are five ways that happens.

2.1 You only ever see one number

Your Test Report Form shows one Writing band. It does not show your eight marks, or which criterion was at 6. A second 6.5 tells you that something is still missing. It does not tell you what. *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 3.3, explains why a band is a result, not feedback.

So unless someone marks your practice essays criterion by criterion, you are guessing which two criteria to work on. Part 3 shows how to stop guessing.

2.2 New essays instead of rewrites

The usual way to practise is to write an essay, get it marked, read the comments, and then write a new essay on a new question. The comments said "develop your ideas" or "check your articles". The new essay is on a new topic, under new pressure, and the same thing happens again.

A new essay mostly shows what you can already do. Rewriting a paragraph you have already written, with one fix in mind, is where a habit starts to change. Part 5 shows how.

2.3 Working on the criterion that is already at 7

Many people spend most of their time on vocabulary, because it feels like the part of writing that makes you look good. But if your Lexical Resource is already at 7, more words do not move your 6s. *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, section 1.1, makes the same point: people keep improving the criterion they are already best at.

The same thing happens between the two tasks. Task 2 gets most of the attention, and that is right, because it counts twice as much. But Task 1 is still a third of your band. A Task 1 held at 6 by a missing overview is a mark you can win back with one sentence.

2.4 The fix is the first thing to go

Under time, people stop doing whatever is new. You may know that each paragraph needs one idea, developed. In a practice essay at home, you do it. In the test, at minute thirty, you are back to listing three ideas in one paragraph, because that is what your hand does when you are tired.

A fix has to become a habit before the test, not just something you understand. Part 7 shows how to check that it has.

2.5 Checking with the same eyes

In the last few minutes, most writers read their work again and look for mistakes. At 6.5, this finds very little. The mistakes that are left are the ones you believe are correct, as *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 3.2, explains. Reading again with the same eyes will not show them to you. Searching for one named mistake at a time will. Part 6 shows how.

Part 3 — Three writers, three pairs

3.1 Three writers

These three writers were invented for this book. Each has a Writing 6.5 on an official result. Each has also written three practice essays, marked by a teacher who works from the public band descriptors and gives a mark for each criterion. All three essays came back with the same marks, and that matters: one marked essay is a hint, but three that agree are a pattern.

Here are their Task 2 marks. TR is Task Response, CC is Coherence and Cohesion, LR is Lexical Resource, and GRA is Grammatical Range and Accuracy.

	TR	CC	LR	GRA	Total	Average
Lena	6	7	7	6	26	6.5
Tomás	6	6	7	7	26	6.5
Amara	7	7	6	6	26	6.5

The same 6.5, three times. Three different problems.

Lena writes well, and her teacher's comments repeat two things. In each essay, the second part of the question gets one short paragraph at the end, or only a sentence. And her long sentences break: a verb that does not agree with its subject, a sentence that starts one way and finishes another. Her two 6s are Task Response and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. She needs **Fix 1 and Fix 3**.

Tomás answers every part of the question, and his grammar is careful. But each body paragraph lists three or four reasons, one sentence each, and none of them goes anywhere. His teacher has written "develop" in every margin. His two 6s are Task Response and Coherence and Cohesion, and both come from the same habit. He needs **one fix: Fix 2**.

Amara plans well and develops her ideas. She loses her marks inside the sentences: articles, plurals, the wrong form of a word (*economical growth, the develop of cities*), and spelling when she is short of time. Her two 6s are Lexical Resource and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. **Fix 3** works on both. Part of her Lexical Resource mark is about precise word choice, though, and for that she will need the vocabulary books as well (1.3).

None of the three needs all three fixes. Your job is to find your own two criteria, and then the fix for each.

3.2 Finding your own two

With marked essays. Collect three essays that a teacher has marked against the public descriptors, with a mark for each criterion if possible. *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 4.3, explains how to read them together. A criterion that is at 6 in all three is one of your two. If the teacher gave only one band per essay, use the comments instead. Every comment belongs to one of the four criteria, so sort them, and see which two criteria collect the most.

Without a teacher. You cannot give yourself a band honestly. But you can count three things, and each count points to a fix. Take three essays you wrote under time, both tasks, and count:

1. **Parts answered.** List every part of each task: every question in the Task 2 prompt, the overview in an Academic Task 1, every bullet point in a General Training letter. Tick the ones you gave real space to. A part left unticked in two essays out of three points to **Fix 1**.
2. **Steps per idea.** For each Task 2 body paragraph, count how far its main idea goes. Part 5 explains what a step is. Paragraphs that stop after one step, essay after essay, point to **Fix 2**.
3. **Error-free sentences.** Count the sentences with no error at all, and count your long sentences and your short ones separately. If your long sentences are wrong much more often than your short ones, that points to **Fix 3**. Part 6 shows how to count.

These counts are not bands. They tell you where to look. Even one essay marked by a teacher, criterion by criterion, is better evidence than all three counts, so use the counts to choose where to start, and the teacher's marks to check.

Part 4 — Fix 1: Answer all of it



What it moves: Task Response (Task 2) and Task Achievement (Task 1).

The band 6 feature it removes: some parts of the task covered more fully than others; in Task 1, an overview that is only attempted, or a purpose that is only generally clear.

This is the quickest fix in the book. It costs a few minutes of planning and no new English.

4.1 Task 2: every part, and one position

Two other books on this site cover this well, so here it is in brief.

- **Count the parts.** Many Task 2 questions ask two things. Underline each thing the question asks you to do, and count them. *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, section 3.2, shows how in thirty seconds.
- **Give each part real space.** A part answered in one sentence at the end has been "more fully covered" by the other parts, which is the

band 6 descriptor's own description. If the question asks two things, each one needs a body paragraph of its own.

- **Show both parts at the start.** Your opening should tell the reader that both parts are coming. *Writing 7.0*, section 3.3, shows one sentence doing it.
- **Keep one position.** If the question asks what you think, say it in the introduction, keep it, and finish with the same view. The band 6 descriptor mentions conclusions that are "unclear, unjustified or repetitive". *Writing 7.0*, section 3.2, shows a position sentence at both bands.

Here is Lena's problem on an invented question.

In many countries, secondary schools now teach students how to manage money: making a budget, saving, and borrowing. Why are schools doing this? Is it a good use of school time?

LENA'S PLAN, BEFORE

Intro: money skills are important today.

Body 1: reasons - online shopping, student loans, parents do not teach it.

Body 2: more reasons - the economy, saving for a house.

End: I think it is a good idea.

Two parts asked. The first gets two paragraphs. The second, "Is it a good use of school time?", gets one line in the conclusion. Nobody can argue that it was covered as fully as the first.

LENA'S PLAN, AFTER

Intro: why schools have started + my view: yes, if short and practical.

Body 1: WHY? Many students now borrow before they earn. One idea, developed.

Body 2: GOOD USE OF TIME? Yes - mistakes are expensive and hard to undo.

But it must not replace maths, which it depends on.

End: same view as the intro, in new words.

Same knowledge, same English. Both parts now have a paragraph, and the position is the same at the start and at the end.

4.2 Task 1 Academic: the overview, written first

Academic Task 1 asks you to describe a chart, table, graph, map or process. The band 7 descriptor asks for three things that band 6 does not: a clear overview, data that is "appropriately categorised", and the main trends or differences picked out. At band 6, an overview is only "attempted".

An overview is a sentence or two that says what the whole picture shows, without the details. It is what a reader would remember if they forgot every number.

A common way to write Task 1 is to start with the first number, work through to the last, and then add an overview at the end if there is time. The fix is to turn that order round. Decide the overview first, before you write any detail, and put it near the start.

Here is an invented table. It shows how people in one city travelled to work, as a percentage of all journeys.

Journeys to work (%)	2005	2025
Car	58	41
Bus	22	24
Bicycle	6	19
On foot	14	16

At band 6: "In 2005, 58% of people went to work by car, and this fell to 41% in 2025. The bus was 22% and it rose slightly to 24%. Bicycle went from 6% to 19%. Walking was 14% and then 16%. Overall, there were some changes in how people travelled."

Every figure is right and every row is there. But the reader has to do the work: which change matters? And the overview at the end says almost nothing. "Some changes" is true of any table with two years in it. This is an overview attempted, not a clear one.

Here is an overview written first:

The car was still the most common way to get to work in 2025, but its share fell sharply over the twenty years, while cycling grew more than any other way of travelling. Bus use and walking changed very little.

No numbers, and it tells the reader what to look for. Now every detail has a job: it supports one line of the overview.

Group, do not list. "Appropriately categorised" means your paragraphs follow the groups in your overview, not the rows of the table.

Here, that is one paragraph on the two big changes, car down and cycling up, and one on the two that hardly moved. Each number appears where it proves a point.

The biggest change was the fall in car use, from 58% of journeys to 41%. Over the same years, the share made by bicycle more than tripled, from 6% to 19%, so that by 2025 almost one journey in five was made by bike.

Writing 7.0, section 3.1, takes the overview sentence apart in more detail. *The Band 7.0 Blueprint*, section 4.2, explains why choosing the main features matters more than mentioning every number.

4.3 Task 1 General Training: the purpose, every bullet, one tone

General Training Task 1 is a letter. The question gives a situation and three bullet points. The band 7 descriptor asks for every bullet point to be covered and clearly highlighted, for a clear purpose, and for a tone that is consistent and right for the reader. At band 6, the purpose is "generally clear", and there may be "minor inconsistencies in tone".

Here is an invented question.

You stayed at a hotel last week and left something in your room. Write a letter to the hotel manager. In your letter:

- *describe what you left*
- *say where in the room you think it is*
- *explain what you would like the hotel to do*

Three checks.

1. The purpose, in the first two lines. The reader should know why you are writing before they finish your first paragraph.

At band 6: "Dear Sir or Madam, I stayed at your hotel from 3 to 5 June and I really enjoyed my stay. The room was very clean and the staff were friendly, especially at reception. The breakfast was also very good."

It is polite and correct, and after three sentences the manager still does not know why you are writing. The purpose arrives in the second paragraph.

Dear Sir or Madam, I stayed in Room 214 at your hotel from 3 to 5 June, and I am writing because I think I left my reading glasses in the room.

2. One paragraph for each bullet point, in the order the question gives them. Then you can point at each one.

3. One tone, all the way through. Decide who the reader is before you start. A hotel manager you have never met gets a polite, plain letter from the first line to the last. A friend gets a warm, informal one. The slip to watch for is a letter that starts formally and ends with "Thanks a lot, see you!", or one that writes to a friend as if to a bank.

4.4 The count

For every task you write, put two numbers at the top of the page. **Parts asked** counts every question in the Task 2 prompt, the overview in an Academic Task 1, or the purpose and every bullet point in a General

Training letter. **Parts answered** counts each of those you can point to, with real space given to it.

Fix 1 is in place when the two numbers match in every task you write under time. Lena's early essays read "2 asked, 1 answered" again and again, because her second part was only ever a sentence. When they read "2 asked, 2 answered" in timed essays, on different questions, she moves on to Fix 3, and Part 7 shows how she checks that her teacher agrees.

Part 5 — Fix 2: Take two ideas further

What it moves: Task Response and Coherence and Cohesion, often both at once.

The band 6 features it removes: main ideas that are "insufficiently developed" or unclear; a paragraph whose central topic is not always clear.

5.1 The list paragraph

Here is a body paragraph by Tomás, on the money-skills question from 4.1.

At band 6: "There are many reasons why schools teach money skills. First, young people today have more chances to spend money online. Also, many students will go to university and need to manage a loan. In addition, some parents do not talk to their children about money. Finally, it is good for the country's economy if people save more."

Four reasons, one sentence each. Every one is relevant, and the English is fine. But none of them goes anywhere. The reader learns that there are four reasons and nothing more about any of them.

That is what the band 6 descriptor means by main ideas that are not developed enough. And because the paragraph has four points instead of one, its centre is not clear either. Notice the linking words too: *First*, *Also*, *In addition*, *Finally*. They are holding the list together, because nothing else is. The band 6 descriptor calls that kind of linking "mechanical". One habit, two criteria at 6.

5.2 Steps

A main idea is developed when it moves forward, one sentence at a time. Here are four kinds of step:

1. **The point.** What you are claiming.
2. **Why, or how.** The reason it is true, or the way it works.
3. **Something specific.** An example, a case or a number: something the reader can picture.
4. **So what.** What follows from it, tied back to the question.

Band 7 Writing Task 2, section 3.4, gives the same shape as four sentences. This book turns it into a count. A step is a sentence that takes the idea further. A sentence that says the same thing again in other words is not a step.

Here is Tomás's paragraph again, with three of the reasons taken out and one taken further:

Schools are teaching money skills partly because the first big financial decision many young people make now comes before they have ever earned a salary. A student who goes to university may sign for a loan at eighteen, often without understanding how the interest is added or how long repaying it will take. A friend of mine found out in her final year that the amount she owed had grown by almost a fifth since she started. A short course at school, two or three years earlier, could have shown her that before she signed, and that is the strongest reason to teach it there rather than leave it to chance.

Count the steps. The point, in the first sentence. How it works, in the second. Something specific, in the third: one person, one number. So what, in the fourth, tied back to the question of why schools are doing it. Four steps on one idea.

The friend may be invented. That is allowed. As *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, section 3.6, explains, the test is checking whether you can support a point with something specific, not whether the example is true.

5.3 Two ideas, not four

Dropping three reasons feels like losing marks. Look at the descriptors again. Band 7 asks for main ideas that are "extended and supported". It never asks for many of them.

There is a practical reason too. The developed paragraph above is about a hundred words. In an essay of 270 to 290 words, which *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, section 1.4, suggests, two paragraphs like it fit, with an introduction and a conclusion. Four do not. So the fix is two ideas, each taken three or four steps, instead of eight ideas taken one step each.

What happens to the other reasons? One of them may become the second body paragraph. The rest are left out. Choosing is part of the task.

5.4 One centre, and clear reference words

The Coherence and Cohesion side of the same fix is simple. When a paragraph follows one idea, the reader always knows what it is about, and its first sentence can say so. *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, section 3.4, has a quick test: read only the first sentence of each paragraph, in order, and see whether they tell the argument on their own.

It also helps your reference words. The band 7 descriptor asks for reference and substitution, words like *this*, *it* and *such a course*, to be used flexibly. The band 6 one says they "may lack flexibility or clarity". In a paragraph with four reasons, *this* could point back to any of them. In a paragraph with one idea, it can only point to that idea, so it is clear. *Writing 7.0*, section 4.3, shows reference words at sentence level.

5.5 Task 1's version: compare, and add the detail

Task 1 does not have arguments, but it has the same problem. In an Academic report, a step is a comparison. Compare these two sentences about the table in 4.2:

At band 6: "The bus was 22% and it rose slightly to 24%."

Bus use hardly moved, rising from 22% to 24%, while cycling more than tripled.

One sentence, two figures, and a difference the reader can see. Count the sentences in your Task 1 body paragraphs that compare two things. A report with none is a list of numbers.

In a General Training letter, a step is a useful detail. "I left my glasses" answers the first bullet point. "I left my reading glasses, in a brown case with my name written inside" lets the hotel find them.

5.6 The rewrite drill

This is how to practise Fix 2, and it works for the other two fixes as well.

1. Take a body paragraph you have already written and had marked.

2. Count its steps. Write the number in the margin.
3. Choose one idea from it. Cross out the others.
4. Rewrite the paragraph so that this one idea takes three or four steps.
Give yourself fifteen minutes.
5. Count again, and write the new number next to the old one.

Do it with your own paragraphs, not with model essays. A model shows you what development looks like. Rewriting your own paragraph shows you what it takes, in your English, against your own habits.

The drill is the practice. A full essay under time is the test of whether the habit has stuck, and Part 7 explains when to write one.

5.7 The count

For each Task 2 essay, write the number of steps in each body paragraph in the margin. Tomás's early essays looked like this: four ideas of one step each in the first body paragraph, three in the second. After a few weeks of the drill, his timed essays had one idea in each body paragraph, taken three or four steps.

Fix 2 is in place when every body paragraph in your timed essays carries one main idea, taken at least three steps. Three steps is this book's working line, not a number from the descriptors. The check that matters is still a teacher's mark (Part 7).

Part 6 — Fix 3: Make the sentences you already write correct

What it moves: Grammatical Range and Accuracy, and the spelling and word-form part of Lexical Resource.

The band 6 features it removes: complex sentences that are less accurate than simple ones; some errors in spelling and word formation.

This fix adds no new grammar. Look at the band 7 descriptor for Grammatical Range and Accuracy again. It asks for two things: a variety of complex structures, and error-free sentences that are "frequent". Most writers at 6.5 already have the first. They use relative clauses, conditionals and sentences that start with *Although*. What they do not have is the second, because those long sentences are where the errors are.

So the fix is not to learn more structures. It is to make the ones you already use correct.

6.1 The count: error-free sentences, long and short

Take an essay you wrote under time. Count three things:

1. **All your sentences.**
2. **Error-free sentences:** the ones with no error of any kind. One wrong article is enough to take a sentence off the list.
3. **The same count, split.** A long sentence here means one with more than one clause, joined by a word like *which*, *because*, *although*, *if* or *while*. A short sentence has one clause. Count how many of each are error-free.

Write it at the top of the page: "Error-free 6 of 17. Long 1 of 9, short 5 of 8."

The split is the part that matters. The band 6 descriptor says complex structures are not as accurate as simple ones, and the split shows you exactly that. A writer whose short sentences are almost all correct and whose long ones are mostly wrong has the band 6 picture, whatever their total.

Two other books on this site count accuracy too. *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, section 4.2, counts error-free sentences and calls it "the number that matters". *The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0*, section 2.3, counts errors per hundred words. Either works. This book splits the count because the descriptor talks about complex structures and simple ones separately.

One thing the count is not: a demand for zero errors. The band 7 descriptor says that a few errors may persist. *Writing 7.0*, section 6.2, explains why one slip does not decide the band.

Counting your own errors. You will not see all of them; if you could, you would not make them. So count on an essay a teacher has marked, or put the essay away for three days first, as *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, section 4.2, suggests. Errors you cannot see on the day are much easier to see later.

6.2 Your three

Most writers at 6.5 do not make many kinds of error. They make three or four kinds, in every essay. *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 4.3, shows how to find the one you make in every essay. Here you want three.

Go through your marked essays and copy every corrected error onto one list. Group them by kind: articles, agreement, word forms, prepositions, spelling, and so on. The three biggest groups are your three.

Now turn each one into a **search**: something you can look for on the page without reading for meaning. Here are four common ones.

Your mistake	Search for	Then check
<i>The</i> with a general idea: <i>the education is...</i>	every <i>the</i>	Is it one particular thing, already named? If it is the idea in general, take <i>the</i> out.
Agreement with the wrong noun: <i>The number of students... have</i>	the verb in every long sentence	Find the real subject. Is it singular or plural?
Word forms: <i>economical growth, the develop of cities</i>	words ending in <i>-ic, -ical, -ment, -tion</i> , and the word after <i>the</i> or <i>a</i>	Is it a noun where you need a noun, an adjective where you need an adjective? Is it the word you mean?
Spelling	every word on your own spelling list	Is it spelled the way the list says?

Writing 7.0, section 6.3, shows the first two at sentence level. For spelling, keep a list of the words you have got wrong in marked essays. It will be shorter than you expect, and the same words come back.

Amara's three were articles, plurals (*many student*), and word forms. Her list fits on a card.

6.3 Search, do not reread

In the last minutes, most writers reread their work for meaning. The errors left at 6.5 are the ones you believe are correct, so a reread passes over them. *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 3.2, explains why.

A search is different. You run your eye down the page looking for one thing only: every *the*, then every verb in a long sentence, then every word on your list. You are not reading. You are checking one kind of word at a time. Three searches take about three minutes.

- **Task 2:** stop writing with five minutes left. Check that every part is answered (Fix 1), then run your three searches.
- **Task 1:** stop with about three minutes left and run the same three.

Band 7 Writing Task 2, section 3.7, gives an order for the last five minutes, with articles and agreement in it. This is the same idea, with your own three in place of everyone's.

If you are sitting the test on a computer, there is no spell checker. Practise the searches typing, in the same mode, so they work on a screen as well as on paper.

6.4 Keep the range

There is an easy way to raise the error-free count: write only short sentences. Do not take it.

Short, safe sentences trade one band 6 feature for another. The descriptor asks for a variety of complex structures as well as frequent error-free sentences, and a page of short sentences shows only the second. *Writing 7.0*, section 6.1, shows that trap. *Band 7 Writing Task 2*,

section 3.5, suggests a middle way: two or three complex structures you can use without thinking, used several times each.

The split count keeps you honest here. If your long sentences are becoming correct, good. If there are simply fewer of them, you are avoiding the problem, not fixing it.

6.5 The count

Amara's three timed essays before the fix:

Essay	Error-free	Long	Short
1	6 of 17	1 of 9	5 of 8
2	7 of 18	2 of 10	5 of 8
3	5 of 16	1 of 9	4 of 7

Her short sentences were mostly fine. Her long ones were not. That is the band 6 descriptor, in her own numbers.

She ran her three searches at the end of every practice essay, and used the rewrite drill from 5.6 on her long sentences: take one with an error, find which of her three it was, write it again correctly. After six weeks her timed essays read "Long 7 of 10, short 6 of 8".

The number to watch is not a target. It is the gap. Fix 3 is in place when your long sentences are about as clean as your short ones, and there are still as many long ones as before. The total is not a band, so the check that matters is still a teacher's mark (Part 7).

Part 7 — Proving it moved



A count that improves is a good sign. It is not yet a new band. This part is about the gap between the two: which fix to start with, how to test it, and when you have enough evidence to book.

7.1 One fix at a time

Work on one fix until it holds, then start the next. *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 3.5, explains why changing everything at once leaves you unable to tell what worked.

If Fix 1 is one of yours, start with it. It is the quickest: a few minutes of planning and no new English. And while one part of the question is left thin, Task Response stays at 6, however good the rest of the essay is.

The three writers:

- **Lena** starts with Fix 1, because her second part is only ever a sentence. When her count reads "2 asked, 2 answered" in timed essays, she moves on to Fix 3.

- **Tomás** has one fix, Fix 2, and it works on both his 6s. He does nothing else.
- **Amara** starts with Fix 3. Because part of her Lexical Resource mark is word choice, she works through the vocabulary books alongside it, a little each day. That part takes longer, and she knows it.

How long does one fix take? This book does not promise a number of weeks. But if your count has not moved after two weeks of real work, the problem is probably not the hours. Go back to 3.2. You may be working on the wrong criterion. *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 5.6, says the same about any skill.

The 6.5 → 7.0 Sprint turns the move from 6.5 to 7.0 into a day-by-day plan.

7.2 Practice and checkpoints

The rewrite drill (5.6) and the searches (6.3) are practice. They change the habit. They do not show whether the habit holds under time.

A **checkpoint** does that. It is a full Writing test:

- both tasks, sixty minutes, in one sitting;
- a question you have not seen before, from official practice material if you can;
- in the delivery mode you will sit. On computer, that means typing, with no spell checker.

The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0, section 2.3, sets out the same conditions. *Stuck at 6.5?*, section 5.2, explains the split: most of your

hours on practice, and a checkpoint when you want to know whether something has moved.

After each checkpoint, write down your counts: parts asked and answered, steps per idea, and error-free sentences, long and short. Then get it marked.

7.3 Who marks it

Your counts tell you whether the fix is in place. They do not tell you whether the criterion has moved. Only a mark does that, and a mark you give yourself is the weakest evidence you have.

The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0, section 2.3, puts it plainly: "if you can get one piece of feedback from a teacher on any skill, make it this one." For this book's work, ask the teacher for a mark on each criterion of each task, not one band for the essay. You are watching two criteria, so you need to see them.

If your counts hold and the marks do not move, the fix is not the missing feature. Read the teacher's comments against the table in 1.3 and look again at which two criteria are at 6.

7.4 When to stop

Use the stopping rule from *The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0*, section 2.3, applied to your two criteria:

- both of them marked 7 or higher, in both tasks,
- with your other two criteria still at 7 or higher,
- on **two checkpoints in a row, on different questions**,

- and with your counts holding: every part answered, ideas taken three steps or more, long sentences about as clean as short ones.

One good checkpoint can be chance. Two in a row, on different questions, is much harder to explain that way.

When you get there, you have the evidence this book can give. What you do next is in *Stuck at 6.5?*, Part 6, which compares a re-mark, a One Skill Retake and a full resit. A One Skill Retake, where it is offered and your organisation accepts it, sits Writing again on its own.

If you are not there yet, do not book. Go back to the fix that has not held.

7.5 Sixty minutes, with the fixes in

Here is a sixty-minute plan with each fix in its place. It does Task 1 first. If you prefer to do Task 2 first, keep the same minutes for each task.

Minutes	What you do	Fix
0–3	Task 1. Decide the overview, or the purpose and the bullet points. Plan the groups.	1
3–17	Write. Compare, do not list.	2
17–20	Your three searches.	3
20–25	Task 2. Count the parts. Choose your two ideas.	1, 2
25–55	Write. One idea in each body paragraph, three or four steps.	2
55–60	Is every part answered? Then your three searches.	1, 3

Practise with this plan until you do not have to look at it.

Part 8 — Your Writing sheet

Everything in this book fits on this page. Copy it, and fill in a row after every marked essay and every checkpoint, with your Task 2 marks. Parts: asked and answered. Steps: per idea. Error-free: long and short.

	Date	TR	CC	LR	GRA	Parts	Steps	Error-free
Essay 1								
Essay 2								
Essay 3								
Check 1								
Check 2								

Five questions. Answer each one in a single line.

- 1. **Is Writing really my wall?** (1.4)
- 2. **Which two criteria are at 6?** (3.2)
- 3. **Which fix for each, and in what order?** (1.3, 7.1)
- 4. **My three mistakes, written as searches.** (6.2)
- 5. **Two checkpoints in a row, on different questions, with my counts holding?** (7.4)

If the answer to question 5 is no, do not book anything. Go back to the fix that has not held.

The end

You started this book with one number, a Writing 6.5. You finish it with eight marks behind that number, two of them at 6, and a fix for each. Answer all of the question. Take two ideas further. Make the sentences you already write correct.

None of the three asks for new English. What they ask for is attention in the right place, for long enough to become habit. The writers who get past 6.5 are rarely the ones who wrote the most essays. They are the ones who found the feature that was missing, worked on that alone, and checked that it had changed before they paid for the next test.

About the writers and the marks. Lena, Tomás and Amara, their essays and their marks were invented for this book. The marking rules are from ielts.org and the public Writing band descriptors, checked when this edition was written. Rules like these get adjusted over time. Confirm the current ones with ielts.org before you rely on them.

Good luck with the test, and with whatever it is a step toward.

About these books

[Click here https://freeieltsbooks.net/en/about/](https://freeieltsbooks.net/en/about/)

This book is free. It was written to be given away, and you are welcome to pass the file on to anyone preparing for the test — a classmate, a study group, a teacher. You do not need permission and there is nothing to pay.

More free books are at **freeieltsbooks.net**.

Come back next week

Write the address down now, while you are thinking about it:
freeieltsbooks.net

Save it in your bookmarks, or set a reminder on your phone for next week — we are adding more books. The site shows the date it was last updated, so you can see at a glance what has changed since you were there.

There is nothing to sign up for and no email address to give. The reminder is yours, on your own phone — that is the only way we have of reaching you, and we prefer it that way.

This edition was updated October 2026.

[Click here https://freeieltsbooks.net/en/about/](https://freeieltsbooks.net/en/about/)

Independent publication — not affiliated with or endorsed by the IELTS Partners.

The three writers in this book, their essays and their marks were invented for it. The marking rules are from ielts.org and the public Writing band descriptors; nothing here is official IELTS content.