



Sentence Length & Control

What's This About?

This grammar pack is designed to help IELTS candidates gain control over their sentence length and structure, which are critical for achieving high scores in the Writing section. Many students fall into the trap of writing long, tangled sentences that try to express too many ideas at once. These sentences often become confusing and are difficult for the reader to follow, especially when punctuation is weak or missing. In IELTS, clear communication is essential. If your sentences are overloaded, your ideas get lost and your band score suffers. This pack walks you through the most common issues with sentence length, how to spot and fix them, and how to vary your writing to sound more natural, coherent, and examiner-friendly.

You'll learn how to avoid common traps like 'run-on' sentences, comma splices, and repetitive linking. You'll also practice techniques for breaking long sentences into more effective parts, while still keeping your argument clear and connected. Using real student examples and model rewrites, we'll help you move from a flat, breathless writing style to something that shows rhythm, variety, and control. Mastering sentence length doesn't just make your writing readable—it boosts your Coherence and Cohesion score and strengthens your grammar range.

IELTS Scoring Impact

Sentence control affects two main band descriptors: Coherence and Cohesion (CC), and Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GRA). If your sentences are long, poorly punctuated, or confusing, your CC score will drop because your message isn't delivered clearly. Examiners look for writing that guides them through a logical sequence of ideas. If they lose the thread due to sentence length issues, you'll likely get stuck at Band 6 or lower. In contrast, writing that shows control—sentences that are logically organized, clearly punctuated, and appropriately varied—makes the examiner's job easier and raises your score.

Under GRA, variety and control are critical. Many students try to write long, complex sentences thinking it shows high-level grammar. But if those sentences are repetitive or hard to follow, it works against them. Band 7+ writing includes a mix of sentence types: short, medium, and long. More importantly, it shows that the writer knows when to end a sentence and start a new one.

In other words, using full stops effectively is just as important as using advanced structures. This pack teaches that balance.

Common Mistakes

Many IELTS students fall into the trap of creating long, unbroken sentences linked by conjunctions such as 'and', 'but', or 'because'. These words are useful for joining ideas, but when overused, they can lead to sentences that lack control and clarity. For example, a student might write: 'People go to university and they study hard and they want a job and they hope they will succeed.' This kind of structure feels repetitive, flat, and difficult to follow. There is no clear hierarchy of information, and the message feels crammed together. Another mistake is relying on commas instead of full stops to separate ideas, which results in comma splices—a common sign of Band 5 writing.

Students also frequently fail to vary their sentence structure. Using the same sentence length or rhythm repeatedly makes the writing monotonous. In contrast, strong writing alternates between shorter and longer sentences to create a natural flow. Long sentences are not inherently wrong, but they require precision: good punctuation, logical structure, and a clear main idea. Without those elements, the sentence collapses under its own weight. In IELTS, your job is not to impress with length but to communicate with clarity. This section will show you what to avoid and what to do instead.

Rewrite Rules

Mastering sentence control starts with knowing when to stop. These five rules will help you break long, confusing structures into clear, examiner-friendly writing:

1. One idea = one sentence. If you're introducing a new concept or point, consider starting a new sentence.
2. Use full stops often. Don't be afraid of short sentences. They are easy to follow and force you to focus.
3. Avoid three or more clauses in one sentence unless you're confident with punctuation.
4. Mix lengths. Use a short sentence to highlight an idea, then a longer one to explain or support it.
5. Read aloud. If a sentence takes more than one breath, it's probably too long and needs to be split.

For example, a weak sentence might be: 'People want to succeed and they work hard and they don't take breaks and they burn out.' A better version would be: 'Many people work extremely hard because they want to succeed. However, this often leads to burnout due to a lack of rest.' The difference lies not just in grammar, but in clarity and rhythm. These rules are designed to help you recognise when to pause and how to structure your thoughts more logically.

Comparison Examples

Let's examine how sentence control affects quality. The first version is typical Band 5 writing. The second is a Band 7+ rewrite:

Band 5: 'Nowadays people are very busy and they go to work and they come home late and they do not have time and they feel tired and they just watch TV and sleep.'

Band 7: 'Modern life is busy. Most people work long hours and return home exhausted. As a result, they often lack time and energy for personal activities, choosing instead to relax by watching television or going straight to bed.'

The Band 5 version tries to express too much in one go, without breaks or structure. It uses 'and' repeatedly and lacks punctuation. In contrast, the Band 7 version uses shorter, clearer sentences that still cover the same points but in a more readable and logical way. Your goal isn't to eliminate long sentences altogether—it's to use them with control, always guided by clarity.

Rewrite Practice

Below is a paragraph that contains multiple overloaded sentences. Your task is to rewrite it, breaking the ideas into clear, manageable chunks that are easy to follow:

"Many people want to improve their lives and they try to work harder and they do not rest enough and this causes problems and they feel stress and they do not enjoy what they are doing."

Your version should aim for three or four well-structured sentences that keep the meaning but improve the clarity. Remember to vary your sentence length and use appropriate punctuation. Here's one possible rewrite:

"Many people are eager to improve their lives, so they work harder to reach their goals. However, they often fail to rest properly, which leads to increased stress. Over time, this pressure affects their wellbeing, and they lose enjoyment in what they are doing."

Mini Quiz: Fix the Structure

Which of the following sentence groups shows the best sentence control? Choose the best option:

- A. The students go to school and they learn many things and they take exams and they get tired and they want holidays.
- B. Students attend school to learn a variety of subjects. After taking multiple exams, they often feel exhausted and look forward to holidays.
- C. When the students go school they learn much and they get tired and exams is hard and they feel stressed.

Strategy Add-ons

Here are three powerful techniques to strengthen your control over sentence length:

-Colour Coding Model Essays: Print a high-scoring sample and highlight sentence lengths using different colours (e.g., green for short, blue for medium, yellow for long). This helps you visualise the natural rhythm of good writing.

Read It Aloud Test: If you can't read a sentence aloud without gasping for breath, it's too long. Stop and split it.

Sticky Sentence Detection: After drafting, go through each paragraph and underline any sentence that feels clunky or overstuffed. Then revise it by applying the “one idea = one sentence” rule.

By consistently applying these strategies, you'll internalise better sentence rhythm. Not only will this improve your IELTS score, it will also make your writing clearer and more persuasive in any context. Practising these small habits regularly will transform the way you write under pressure in the exam.

Paragraph Upgrade Exercise

Band 5 Example: In big cities people work all day and they travel a lot and they have no time and they feel tired and they eat outside because they are busy.

Band 7 Rewrite: Life in large cities is often hectic. People spend most of their day commuting and working long hours. As a result, they usually feel tired and do not have time to cook at home, so they eat out more frequently. This lifestyle, although convenient, can be exhausting over time.

Get in Touch

If sentence structure and rhythm are stopping you from reaching Band 7, now's the time to fix it. You don't need to be perfect—you just need to be clear, consistent, and confident. Let's work on this together. We'll build sentence control, polish your grammar, and then you can show examiners exactly what they want to see.

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✓ Correct Answer: **B** – It breaks ideas into logical groups, uses varied sentence length, and presents a natural flow. A is overloaded, and C contains errors in grammar and structure.