IELTS Writing Task 2 · Two-Question Essay, Sentence by Sentence

For each sentence: the frame (____ marks a blank), the example (bold words are what was filled in), the meaning in plain English, and the scoring point.

The Question

Nowadays, more and more people decide to have children later in their life. What are the reasons? What are the effects on society and family life?

Question type: two questions (two question marks: reasons + effects).

The Structure

Paragraph	What it does	Sentences
Introduction	Describe the trend + promise to answer both questions	2
Body 1	Question 1: three reasons	5
Body 2	Question 2: effects, each one leading to the next	6
Conclusion	One sentence for each question	2

Introduction

Sentence 1 · Describe the trend

Frame: It is undoubtedly the case that _____, as _____ take it for granted that _____.

Example: It is undoubtedly the case that **people around the world increasingly defer starting families**, as **couples** take it for granted that **children can wait**.

Meaning: More and more people are delaying having children, because couples believe children can wait.

Scoring point: “defer” = delay; “take it for granted that” = believe something without questioning it.

Sentence 2 · Promise to answer both questions

Frame: In this essay, I examine the reasons for this trend and suggest some possible effects on _____.

Example: In this essay, I examine the reasons for this trend and suggest some possible effects on **society and family life**.

Meaning: This essay looks at why it happens and what it changes.

> **Why it matters**: In a two-question essay this is the most important sentence. Before the examiner reads your body paragraphs, they already know you have understood the task.

Scoring point: “the reasons” + “effects” in one sentence: both questions are covered.

Body Paragraph 1 · Reasons

Sentence 1 · Topic

Frame: The first step is to understand why _____.

Example: The first step is to understand why **individuals are having children later in life**.

Meaning: First, let's see why people have children later.

Scoring point: A clear signal: this paragraph is about reasons.

Sentence 2 · How many reasons

Frame: Broadly speaking, there are three main reasons for this. (use as it is)

Meaning: In general, there are three main reasons.

Scoring point: Nothing to fill in. Works in any essay that asks “why”.

Sentence 3 · Reason one

Frame: One is that it is _____ that now _____, increasing the extent to which _____.

Example: One is that it is **career ambition** that now **takes precedence**, increasing the extent to which **couples delay parenthood**.

Meaning: Careers now come first, so couples wait longer to become parents.

Scoring point: Cleft sentence “it is ... that”; “the extent to which” (= how much); “take precedence” (= become more important).

Sentence 4 · Reason two

Frame: A second reason is that _____ are increasingly prone to _____, not least because _____, having _____, _____ — hardly conducive to _____.

Example: A second reason is that **young adults** are increasingly prone to **financial insecurity**, not least because **housing costs**, having **soared**, **absorb most income** — hardly conducive to **raising children early**.

Meaning: Young people often lack money, mainly because housing is so expensive, which makes early parenthood difficult.

Scoring point: “prone to” (= likely to suffer from); “not least because” (= especially because); “having soared” (perfect participle); “hardly conducive to” (= not helpful for).

Sentence 5 · Reason three

Frame: The third reason is that _____; that _____ makes it inevitable that there are more _____ than ever.

Example: The third reason is that **fertility treatments have advanced**; that **people can safely wait** makes it inevitable that there are more **older parents** than ever.

Meaning: Medical progress lets people wait safely, so there are more older parents than ever.

Scoring point: A whole clause as the subject (“that people can safely wait…”); “more … than ever”.

Body Paragraph 2 · Effects

Sentence 1 · Topic

Frame: _____ may have several serious effects on family life and society.

Example: **Late parenthood** may have several serious effects on family life and society.

Meaning: Having children late can cause serious problems.

Scoring point: “may”, not “will”: softer and more academic.

Sentence 2 · The first problem

Frame: The first and most obvious problem is this: so _____ could _____ become that _____, be it _____.

Example: The first and most obvious problem is this: so **drained** could **older parents** become that **they struggle with childcare**, be it **sleepless nights or active play**.

Meaning: Older parents may become so tired that childcare is hard, whether it is sleepless nights or active play.

Scoring point: Two inversions: “so drained could older parents become that…” and “be it …” (= whether it is).

Sentence 3 · A consequence

Frame: One consequence of such a possibility could be that they resort to _____ without taking it into account whether _____.

Example: One consequence of such a possibility could be that they resort to **relatives' help** without taking it into account whether **this widens the generation gap**.

Meaning: They may rely on relatives without considering whether this widens the generation gap.

Scoring point: “resort to” (= turn to, often with no better choice); “take it into account whether” (= consider whether).

Sentence 4 · A bigger risk

Frame: This, in turn, could lead to a further problem — _____.

Example: This, in turn, could lead to a further problem — **a greying population**.

Meaning: This could lead to an ageing society.

Scoring point: “in turn” links each step; the dash adds the new problem. The essay moves from family to society.

Sentence 5 · It gets worse

Frame: The risk that _____ is compounded by the fact that _____.

Example: The risk that **the workforce shrinks** is compounded by the fact that **older citizens need more healthcare**.

Meaning: A smaller workforce is made worse by older people needing more healthcare.

Scoring point: Two noun clauses (“the risk that…”, “the fact that…”); “be compounded by” (= be made worse by).

Sentence 6 · Close the paragraph

Frame: Were this trend to continue, _____ would only grow.

Example: Were this trend to continue, **the pressure on families and public services** would only grow.

Meaning: If this continues, pressure on families and public services will keep rising.

> **Why it matters**: This question only asks for effects, so the paragraph ends by showing how serious they could become. It does not offer a solution. (In an advantages-and-disadvantages essay, the last sentence would solve the problem instead.)

Scoring point: Inverted conditional: “Were this trend to continue” = “If this trend continued”.

Conclusion

Sentence 1 · Answer question one

Frame: In conclusion, there are a variety of different factors that have led _____.

Example: In conclusion, there are a variety of different factors that have led **people to have children later**.

Meaning: In short, many factors explain why people have children later.

Scoring point: One sentence for the reasons.

Sentence 2 · Answer question two

Frame: While _____, it can harm _____.

Example: While **this trend reflects modern priorities**, it can harm **both family life and society**.

Meaning: This trend shows what people value today, but it can harm families and society.

Scoring point: “While” for contrast. Two questions, two answers in the conclusion.

Practice Sheet

Fill in each blank from the hint in brackets. Then check against the full essay on the next page and correct every difference.

Introduction

It is undoubtedly the case that _____ (people everywhere / delay starting families), as _____ (married pairs) take it for granted that _____ (kids can wait).

In this essay, I examine the reasons for this trend and suggest some possible effects on _____ (society and family).

Body Paragraph 1

The first step is to understand why _____ (people have children later).

Broadly speaking, there are three main reasons for this.

One is that it is _____ (wanting a career) that now _____ (comes first), increasing the extent to which _____ (couples delay becoming parents).

A second reason is that _____ (young people) are increasingly prone to _____ (money problems), not least because _____ (house prices), having _____ (risen fast), _____ (take most of their pay) — hardly conducive to _____ (having kids young).

The third reason is that _____ (fertility medicine has improved); that _____ (people can wait safely) makes it inevitable that there are more _____ (older mums and dads) than ever.

Body Paragraph 2

_____ (having children late) may have several serious effects on family life and society.

The first and most obvious problem is this: so _____ (very tired) could _____ (older parents) become that _____ (childcare is hard for them), be it _____ (nights without sleep or energetic games).

One consequence of such a possibility could be that they resort to _____ (help from family members) without taking it into account whether _____ (this makes the age gap wider).

This, in turn, could lead to a further problem — _____ (an ageing population).

The risk that _____ (there are fewer workers) is compounded by the fact that _____ (old people need more medical care).

Were this trend to continue, _____ (pressure on families and public services) would only grow.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are a variety of different factors that have led _____ (people to have kids later).

While _____ (this shows what people value today), it can harm _____ (families and society).

The Full Essay (Answer Key)

It is undoubtedly the case that people around the world increasingly defer starting families, as couples take it for granted that children can wait. In this essay, I examine the reasons for this trend and suggest some possible effects on society and family life.

The first step is to understand why individuals are having children later in life. Broadly speaking, there are three main reasons for this. One is that it is career ambition that now takes precedence, increasing the extent to which couples delay parenthood. A second reason is that young adults are increasingly prone to financial insecurity, not least because housing costs, having soared, absorb most income — hardly conducive to raising children early. The third reason is that fertility treatments have advanced; that people can safely wait makes it inevitable that there are more older parents than ever.

Late parenthood may have several serious effects on family life and society. The first and most obvious problem is this: so drained could older parents become that they struggle with childcare, be it sleepless nights or active play. One consequence of such a possibility could be that they resort to relatives' help without taking it into account whether this widens the generation gap. This, in turn, could lead to a further problem — a greying population. The risk that the workforce shrinks is compounded by the fact that older citizens need more healthcare. Were this trend to continue, the pressure on families and public services would only grow.

In conclusion, there are a variety of different factors that have led people to have children later. While this trend reflects modern priorities, it can harm both family life and society.

How to Practise

1. Read the essay until every paragraph flows.
2. Fill in the Practice Sheet from the hints, without looking at the essay.
3. Check against the full essay. Wherever yours is different, copy the original. Don't argue with it; just absorb it.
4. Pick three phrases you most want to remember and write them down.