

21 Formal Idioms and Collocations for IELTS Task 2 Essays

An active/A sedentary lifestyle – lifestyle that involves a lot of/very little exercise

Example: When employees are required to work long hours, it is difficult for them to maintain an active lifestyle/it is easy for them to adopt a sedentary lifestyle.

Beside the point – not relevant to the argument

Example: Some people might argue that providing free treatment for diseases brought on by unhealthy lifestyle choices will encourage poor behavior, but that is beside the point.

Cost-effective solution – action designed to save money, usually in response to rising prices

Example: Some companies treat outsourcing* as the most cost-effective solution to rising expenses.

A daunting task – large and overwhelming job or chore

Example: In a competitive housing market, purchasing a home can be a daunting task for many prospective buyers.

Financial incentive(s) – policy that allows people to get or save money to encourage a particular action or behavior

Example: Some cities may offer financial incentives to business owners in the form of tax breaks** and reduced startup fees.

*The practice of hiring external usually foreign, workers

**Reduction in taxes

A/The key factor – something that contributes directly and significantly to a result

A key factor = one of many important factors

The key factor = the single most important factor

Example: A person's work ethic is **a/the key factor** in the amount of professional success they achieve.

A major transformation – very significant change

Example: Over the last half-century, medical training has undergone **a major transformation** in many countries.

A natural affinity for – inborn skill or preference for

Example: It is evident that people are born with different talents: some people learn new languages easily, while others have **a natural affinity for** math(s) or science.

On the verge of (+ noun or verb + ing) – about to occur

Example: As a result of climate change and persistent drought, some countries are now **on the verge of** (experiencing) a serious humanitarian crisis.

On the whole – in general

Example: While money is certainly a significant consideration in one's choice of career, I believe that **on the whole**, other factors should play an even more important role.

Pose a problem – More sophisticated way of saying "be a problem"

Example: The question of how to balance a demanding job with personal and family responsibilities **poses a problem** for many workers.

Primarily concerned with (+ noun or verb + ing) – mainly interested in or about

Example: A person who is **primarily concerned with** money may indeed find satisfaction in a finance career.

Example: A person who is **primarily concerned with** helping others is well-suited to a career in a “caring” field such as nursing or social work.

Quality time – time spent with others (usually family or friends) devoted to enjoyment and building relationships

Example: When employees are required to work long hours and weekends, they are unable to spend **quality time** with their friends and family.

(Face) Serious consequences – significant (negative) results

Example: Students usually **face serious consequences** if they are discovered to have plagiarized* or cheated on exams.

*plagiarize (n., plagiarism) – presenting someone else’s work as one’s own

A or in sharp contrast to – very large contrast

Example: 2015 saw average housing prices hit record highs, which was a** sharp contrast to the situation 2014.

Example: In sharp contrast to 2014, 2015 saw average housing prices hit record highs.

A significant/substantial impact – a large effect (either positive or negative)

Example: The rising popularity of urban living has had a significant/substantial impact on the housing market in many cities.

*Present someone else's work as one's own

**This version is typically used after a form of of the verb *to be*.

Take into account – consider

Even though this is a phrasal verb, it is commonly used in formal contexts.

Example: Many people argue that providing free or low-cost treatment for diseases that result from poor lifestyle choices will only encourage to pursue bad habits, but they do not **take into account** such a policy's effects on society as a whole.

The vast majority of – almost everyone, or almost all of something

Example: **The vast majority of** people would presumably agree that industrial manufacturers should not be allowed to determine environmental policy.

A wide/broad range – a large variety

Example: People reject high-paying jobs in favor of positions with lower compensation for **a wide/broad range** of reasons.