

B2 First (FCE) Writing – Improve an Essay

A. Look at this example question for B2 First Writing Part 1.

Is it better to live in the city or the countryside?

Write about

1. Local facilities
2. Transport
3. (your own idea)

B. Now look at this sample answer. It doesn't have any grammar, spelling or vocabulary errors, but it isn't a very strong answer. Why not?

Living in the city or the countryside is an important question. Some people prefer the city because it has more facilities, but others prefer the countryside.

In the city, people have lots of local facilities such as shops, sports centres or even a post office. On the other hand, in the countryside, these facilities can be very far away from your house.

Another consideration is transport options. People who live in the countryside need a car whereas in the city there is a bus, train or underground system. Public transport is better for the environment than driving a car.

To sum up, living in the city can be a good option, but living in the countryside also has many advantages. Depending on the person you are, either one option or the other will be better.

C. Here are some elements that a B2 essay must include and the marking criteria they are related to. Does the sample essay include these elements? How could it be improved?

- CONTENT
 - i. three clear content points (2 given and 1 your own idea)
- COMMUNICATIVE ACHIEVEMENT
 - i. holding the readers interest
 - ii. effective elements of an essay (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion)
- ORGANISATION
 - i. variety of linking words and expressions
- LANGUAGE
 - i. variety of less common vocabulary
 - ii. some complex grammar

D. Now write your own improved answer to the essay question from A. Write 140-190 words. When finished, compare with the model answer in the answer key.

ANSWER KEY

Reasons the sample essay isn't good

- It doesn't include a 3rd content point
- The writer's opinion isn't clear
- The writer doesn't choose the best option
- It doesn't hold the reader's interest because the arguments are uninteresting
- The introduction and conclusion are weak
- The linking words used are quite simple (but acceptable for B2 level)
- The vocabulary is ok, but doesn't show range
- The grammar is ok, but few complex forms are attempted
- It's too short (135 words)

Model answer (182 words)

There are a great deal of advantages and disadvantages to living in the city or the countryside. Considering the benefits of improved local facilities, better public transport options and job opportunities, most people prefer living in the city.

Facilities such as shops, sports centres and cultural sites make living in the city an exciting option. While in the countryside you may have attractive natural surroundings, having local facilities available is vital and the city provides that.

Furthermore, the countryside generally lacks adequate transportation options. This causes people to use their cars more often. In contrast, city residents can choose to leave their cars at home and ride a bus, underground or even ride a bike.

Finally, living in a city is by far the best option for professionals. The headquarters of desirable companies are generally located in large cities. The bigger the city, the better the professional opportunities.

In conclusion, the advantages of living in the city are vast. Although the countryside may be an attractive option for some people, it is undeniable that the city is the best place to live.