

Community service in high schools

IELTS Writing Task 2 model answer and worksheet

“Some people believe that unpaid community service should be a compulsory part of high school programmes (for example working for a charity, improving the neighbourhood or teaching sports to younger children.)

To what extent do you agree or disagree?”

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0. Key

C n = countable noun ; **U n** = uncountable noun ; **n** = noun

v = verb ; **phrv** = phrasal verb ; **adj** = adjective ; **adv** = adverb

Blue text = natural, academic or useful language and example answers for exercises.

Red text = common errors.

Green text = comments.

_____ = write your answer here.

E.g. = example or example sentence of the language given.

1. General comments

Some people believe that unpaid community service should be a compulsory part of high school programmes (for example working for a charity, improving the neighbourhood or teaching sports to younger children.)

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

There are often issues with understanding the vocabulary in this question, namely the 'unpaid', 'community service', 'compulsory' and 'charity' parts. 'Unpaid' is often paraphrased with 'voluntary' but this is not exactly the same and even contradicts the 'compulsory' part of the question. 'Voluntary' means that one does the work without being paid but also *chooses* to do it because he *wants* to. 'Compulsory', on the other hand, means that the teenagers would not have any *choice* about doing the work; community service would be part of their high school duties as much as attending Maths classes is. Regarding 'community service', this is about doing work to benefit one's community or whichever community a person is a part of. Doing work for 'a charity' relates to helping people regardless of where or who they are i.e. these people could be in another city or country. The 'charity' work given in the question is an example of community service and thus should not be the focus of the answer. If you would like more clarification about these key words of the question, please see the [vocabulary list](#).

Apart from this, I've noticed many students having difficulties with explaining their ideas in the body paragraphs. Often, they will be vague in their explanations or give benefits of doing community work which are not clearly unique to this type of work. For example, one might argue that the teenagers could learn how to work as part of a team from doing community service. This skill is not unique to this kind of work, however, and is something they would likely learn from school (while doing project-type activities for instance or playing sports). For this problem, I recommend using examples of real community service work and being specific. For instance, "if a teenager helps the elderly people in a retirement home, they will learn nursing skills. This is something they would likely not learn at school."

2. Model answer

Some people believe that unpaid community service should be a compulsory part of high school programmes (for example working for a charity, improving the neighbourhood or teaching sports to younger children.)

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

It cannot be doubted that societies must do all they can to support future generations and, in particular, adolescents. While many may think that making teenagers do community work without payment as part of the secondary school curriculum would be beneficial, I strongly oppose this position for a couple of reasons.

The most significant reason why adolescents ought not to be forced into doing free services in the community is that it would likely breed resentment. The reason for this is people are naturally averse to doing anything that seems forced upon them. In other words, if teenagers are pushed into doing work for free, they may perceive it as slavery and resent not only the work itself, but the school and community as well. As a result, they will not take to the experience and thus not learn or grow as much as they could. If, by contrast, they had a choice about doing charitable work, then those who were interested could apply for it and benefit a lot more.

Furthermore, inserting community work into teenagers' schedules would cause them additional undue stress. This is because they are already obligated to study a lot of subjects and they have other commitments as well, which are arguably more important. For instance, it is during one's teenage years when he not only is required to prepare for university entrance exams, but is also under pressure to decide on his own career. Having adolescents serve their community at this busy time of their lives, therefore, will only jeopardise their examination results and futures.

In conclusion, I do not support community service programmes being incorporated into high school curriculums. In addition to it leading to the potential risk of holding the students back in their studies, it would also be highly likely that they would carry out the work begrudgingly in any case.

310 words

3. Vocabulary list

The following list provides useful information about some of the vocabulary in the essay. Collocations, comments and common errors made by students are given. Meanings of the words or phrases are provided also, but only in the same context as in the essay. If you want to learn more about the language in the list, you should look it up in an English dictionary such as <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/be-answerable-to-somebody-for-something> .

| Word or phrase | Collocations and synonyms | Comments and common errors |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <u>unpaid</u> [adj] | <p>To do something for free.</p> <p>To do something without payment.</p> | <p>A common error is to paraphrase this word with ‘voluntary [adj]’. This may be acceptable in some contexts, but it would contradict the question if used here. ‘Voluntary’ means to do work without payment but also to choose to do it or to do it willingly. This would contradict the ‘compulsory’ part of the question.</p> |
| <u>community service</u> [U n] | <p>Community work</p> <p>Work in the community</p> <p>Doing tasks in the community</p> <p>Being of service in a community.</p> | <p>This means doing work for the benefit of one’s community. This is usually voluntary but not always.</p> <p>A common error is to use ‘work for a charity’ as a paraphrase for this. This is not accurate however. ‘Charities’ are organisations, usually private, which work to help people who need it e.g. the sick, poor, victims of war etc. ‘Charity work’ thus would include activities such as travelling abroad to rebuild homes after an earthquake, cleaning oil soaked beaches, teaching refugees practical skills or giving first aid. It would also include befriending old people in a retirement home, teaching disadvantaged children at a community centre or picking up</p> |

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| | | <p>litter from streets.</p> <p>'Community service' is about helping your community or one local to you. It would not include helping a community you are not a part of or moving abroad like charity work could.</p> <p>Another common error is thinking that 'voluntary work' or 'volunteering' is a synonym for 'community service'. 'Voluntary work' or 'volunteering' only mean 'doing work without being paid'. This kind of work could be anything i.e. for the betterment of one's community or not.</p> |
| <u>should</u> | [v] | <p>Ought to</p> <p>The most common uses of 'should' in Task 2 are for giving advice and expressing expectation.</p> <p>For giving advice e.g. 'You look sick. You should see a doctor'.</p> <p>To express something that is expected e.g. 'The news said that it will rain tonight. Thus, it should rain tonight.'</p> |
| <u>compulsory</u> | [adj] | <p>Obligatory / mandatory [adj]</p> <p>To oblige [v] someone to do something</p> <p>To be obliged (or obligated) [v] to do something.</p> <p>If something is 'compulsory', it means that people have to do it; they do not have a choice and are thus forced to do it. Therefore, if community work is compulsory for teenagers as part of their high school programme, then they do not have a choice about doing it or not; in the same way as they do not have a choice regarding taking maths or science lessons.</p> <p>Opposite : voluntary / optional</p> |

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| <p>high school programmes</p> | <p>[C n] Curriculums.</p> | <p>Two commonly confused words related to this are 'syllabus' and 'curriculum'.</p> <p>A syllabus ('syllabi' = plural)</p> <p>[C n] : the subjects and topics taught in a specific course such as the content of a high school maths course.</p> <p>E.g. "The syllabus of our year 8 high school English course includes grammar, vocabulary, topics and skills practice."</p> <p>A curriculum [C n]: the academic content taught in a school, such as all the subjects taught at the school.</p> <p>E.g. "The curriculum of our year 8 high school students consists of 8 subjects including Maths, English and Science."</p> |
| <p>societies</p> | <p>[C n]</p> | <p>This means a large group of people who share laws and a government.</p> <p>A common error is using 'society' incorrectly. See "Using 'society'" in the 'General Exercises' document for more information.</p> |
| <p>adolescents</p> | <p>[C n]</p> <p>During adolescence [U n]</p> <p>Adolescent [adj]</p> <p>Teenagers [C n]</p> | <p>This means a person who is aged between 12 and 19.</p> <p>'Adolescent [adj]' refers to this time, e.g. "during one's adolescent years." ; "during one's adolescence."</p> <p>See "Paraphrasing 'child'" in the 'General exercises' document for more information.</p> |

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| work [U n] | | <p>There are various ways to paraphrase 'work'. See "Paraphrasing 'job'" in the 'General exercises' document.</p> |
| secondary schools [C n] | High school | <p>These are schools which pupils aged 11-16 years old attend.</p> <p>Words associated with educational institutions can be confusing, especially when comparing UK systems with the US. This doesn't usually cause problems in Task 2 writing, but if you would like some clarification, you should see the "School years chart" in the 'General exercises' document.</p> |
| be forced into [V] | <p>To force someone to do something</p> <p>To make someone do something.</p> | <p>A common error is to use 'force' as an exact synonym of 'compulsory'. This can work but 'force' has the extra meaning of the person being forced not wanting to do it, which 'compulsory' does not include.</p> <p>E.g. "His debt forced him to sell his company."</p> <p>Note : do not use 'to' with 'make' when using it to mean 'force', i.e. 'to make someone to do something.'</p> <p>E.g. "The boy made his sister to give him the money by twisting her arm."</p> |

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| <p>resentment [U n]</p> | <p>To feel / bear / harbour / resentment</p> <p>To breed / cause / create resentment.</p> <p>Deep / bitter / considerable resentment.</p> <p>Resentment against / towards someone</p> <p>Resentment between one person and another person</p> <p>To be bitter [adj] (about something)</p> | <p>This means you are annoyed or angry because you were treated unfairly.</p> <p>E.g. “He bore some resentment towards his partner after she embarrassed him in public.”</p> <p>“Making the children do housework on the weekend caused bitter resentment between them and their parents.”</p> |
| <p>naturally averse [adj]</p> | <p>To be averse [adj] to something</p> <p>To have an aversion [C n] to something</p> | <p>This means strongly disliking or opposing something.</p> <p>E.g. “He is averse to working hard.”</p> <p>“Some have an aversion to shopping.”</p> <p>A common error is to confuse this word with ‘adverse [adj]’</p> <p>‘Something is adverse [adj]’ means that it is not good or favourable e.g. “Denying tourist VISAs would have an adverse effect on the economy of Thailand.” ; “Adverse weather conditions may cause traffic jams.”</p> |
| <p>perceive it as [v]</p> | <p>To perceive something as something else</p> <p>Perception [n]</p> <p>To see / understand [v] something as</p> | <p>This means to interpret or understand something in a particular way.</p> <p>E.g. “He mistakenly perceived her kindness as flirtation.”</p> <p>“For sexism to be eradicated, traditional perceptions about men and women will need to be challenged.”</p> |

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| <p>slavery [U n]</p> | | <p>This refers to the practice of owning people and forcing them to work for you without proper reward.</p> <p>This word is often used for describing other systems or activities though usually in an exaggerated or joking way e.g. "Working 9 to 5 is slavery."</p> |
| <p>take to [phrv]</p> | <p>To take to something or someone</p> | <p>This means to start to like someone or something or start doing something regularly.</p> <p>E.g. "Her son took to his classmates straightaway."</p> <p>"The man took to painting after retirement."</p> |
| <p>charitable work [U n]</p> | | <p>The differences in meaning between the different forms of 'charity' are confusing and so here are some you will find useful.</p> <p>'A charity [C n]' most commonly refers to charity organisations such as Oxfam, Amnesty International etc.</p> <p>E.g. "He volunteers for a charity which supports the elderly."</p> <p>'Charity [U n]' can refer to charity organisations in general, and it can also refer to help given to those who need it</p> <p>E.g. "She's too proud to accept charity from her parents."</p> <p>'Charitable [adj]', likewise, can refer to charity organisations or being generous to those who need help.</p> |

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| | | E.g. "He spent £5,000 on charitable causes." ; "That's a lot of money you're donating to the school. You're very charitable!" |
| undue [adj] | Undue delay / hardship / haste / pressure / interference / stress / pessimism | This means something is more than reasonable, suitable or necessary. This word is only used before a noun. E.g. "Some parents place undue pressure on their children to succeed." "People suffering from depression often show undue pessimism." |
| commitments [C n] | To have / take on commitments | This is something which you are obliged to do. E.g. "He took on extra work commitments with the intention of earning a promotion." |
| under pressure [U n] | To be under pressure from something or someone To put pressure on someone Economic / political / social / commercial / peer-pressure To give into pressure To withstand pressure To resist pressure To pressure [v] someone into doing something | One meaning of 'pressure [U n]' is something which causes a person to feel stressed because they feel they have to meet many demands or do a lot of work. E.g. "He is under a lot of pressure at work at the moment." 'Putting pressure [U n] on someone' means to persuade them to do something by using intimidation, such as threats or arguments. E.g. "Some superpowers put economic pressure on other countries by imposing sanctions on them." "Teenagers need to be taught not to give into peer-pressure." 'To pressure [v] someone into doing something' means to try to |

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| | | <p>To overwhelm [v] someone</p> <p>To feel overwhelmed [v]</p> | <p>persuade the person using intimidation such as power, arguments or threats.</p> <p>E.g. “The teacher pressured the students into studying harder by threatening to take away their break time if they didn’t.”</p> <p>An exact synonym of this meaning of ‘pressure [v]’ is ‘pressurise’ [v]</p> |
| <u>decide on</u> | [phrv] | to choose [v] | <p>This means to choose something or someone after thinking carefully.</p> <p>E.g. “They decided on May 15th for their wedding.”</p> |
| <u>serve their community</u> | | Provide a service [C n] for their community | <p>‘To serve [v] someone’ means to perform duties or services for them.</p> |
| <u>jeopardise</u> | [v] | To put something in jeopardy [U n] | <p>‘To jeopardise [v] something’ means to put it at risk.</p> <p>‘To put something or someone in jeopardy [U n]’ means it is at risk of loss, harm or failure.</p> <p>E.g. “His career was in jeopardy after he lost his best clients.”</p> |
| <u>incorporated</u> | [v] | To incorporate something into something else | <p>This means to take in something as part of a whole. This is similar to ‘include’ or ‘combine’.</p> <p>E.g. “Some argue that it would be too costly to incorporate recycling appliances in every household.”</p> |
| <u>holding the students back</u> | [phrv] | To hold someone or something back | <p>This means to prevent them from progressing or developing.</p> <p>E.g. “Some feel that the British economy is held back because of excessive bureaucracy.”</p> |

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| <p>be highly likely [adv]</p> | <p>Something is likely / unlikely</p> <p>Probability / likelihood [U n]</p> <p>The likelihood of something happening is high / low</p> | <p>This is the degree to which something can reasonably be expected to happen.</p> <p>E.g. "It is highly unlikely that it will snow in the summer time."</p> <p>"The likelihood of sales dropping is low if we begin selling products internationally."</p> |
| <p>carry out [phrv]</p> | <p>To carry something out</p> <p>To do work</p> | <p>This means to complete a task.</p> <p>E.g. "Only trained engineers should carry out health and safety tests on equipment."</p> |
| <p>begrudgingly [adv]</p> | <p>To begrudge [v] someone something</p> <p>To begrudge [v] doing something</p> <p>To resent [v] someone</p> | <p>'To do something begrudgingly [adv]' means to do it but feel annoyed that you have to do it.</p> <p>E.g. "The child begrudgingly did the washing up."</p> <p>'To begrudge [v] someone something' means to be angry at that person because they have something they do not deserve. It can also mean to feel angry that you have to do something (or be reluctant).</p> <p>E.g. "People begrudge politicians for their wealth."</p> <p>"We shouldn't begrudge spending money on healthcare."</p> |

4. Vocabulary exercises : Comprehension 1/2

The following is language from the essay I regard to be of most practical use in Task 2 writing. These exercises have been made to help you understand and use the vocabulary.

- Complete the sentences (1-6) using the words in the box. **One** has been done for you.

| | | |
|--------|----------|-------------|
| averse | resent | aversion |
| holds | pressure | jeopardises |

1. Some are particularly **averse** to stressful situations and so would not thrive in a military career.
2. The continual use of plastic _____ the food chain.
3. Raising a family _____ many parents back in their career development.
4. Many people cannot handle the _____ of running their own business.
5. Unfortunately, the areas surrounding tourist attractions become dirty and littered and this causes locals to _____ tourists.
6. Despite having an _____ to public speaking, he still joined the debate team.

ANSWERS

1. Some are particularly **averse** to stressful situations and so would not thrive in a military career.

'To thrive [v] in something' means to become very successful in it.

2. The continual use of plastic **jeopardises** the food chain.

'The food chain' refers to the one food chain all living beings share.

3. Raising a family **holds** many parents back in their career development.

4. Many people cannot handle the **pressure** of running their own business.

5. Unfortunately, the areas surrounding tourist attractions become dirty and littered and this causes locals to **resent** tourists.

'Litter [U n]' is small rubbish that is left on the street, such as empty bottles, cans or packets of crisps.

6. Despite having an **aversion** to public speaking, he still joined the debate team.

Comprehension 2/2

- The words in the sentences below (1-5) are in an incorrect order. Rewrite the sentences by reordering the words. There is more than one possible answer. **One** has been done for you.

1. I begrudge tax-payers' money / when there are / being spent on athletes / for hospital appointments / long waiting lists /

I begrudge tax-payers' money being spent on athletes when there are long waiting lists for hospital appointments.

2. Some believe that / act against / if it is not under strict control / will likely / humanity's interests / AI technology

Some believe that ...

...

3. The likelihood of / is often very slim / a protracted divorce battle / a peaceful solution to

The likelihood of ...

...

4. A retirement home / in one location / incorporates / social, nursing and psychological care

A retirement home ...

...

5. The annual budget for / well in advance / within a corporation / professional development / should be decided on.

The annual budget for ...

...

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. I begrudge tax-payers' money being spent on athletes when there are long waiting lists for hospital appointments.

2. Some believe that AI technology will likely act against humanity's interests if it is not under strict control.

'To act against someone's interests' means to behave in such a way that it will harm that person. This usually refers to harm unrelated to health e.g. damaging finances or opportunities.

3. The **likelihood** of a peaceful solution to a protracted divorce battle is often very slim.

If there is a 'slim likelihood' of something happening, it means that it is unlikely to happen.

'Protracted [adj]' means that something continues for a longer time than is necessary or expected.

E.g. a protracted **discussion / debate / negotiation**. **Lengthy [adj]**.

4. A retirement home **incorporates** social, nursing and psychological care in one location.

5. The annual budget for professional development within a corporation should be **decided on** well in advance.

- For more information about this vocabulary, see the [vocabulary list](#).

4. Vocabulary exercises : Production 1/2

There is no single correct answer for these questions. Each model answer given is one possible answer among many.

- Paraphrase the sentences (1-5) using the given language in blue. One has been done for you.

1. Not receiving praise when it is deserved could **hold back** a child in their education.

– **be held back** [phrv] (passive voice)

A child can be held back in their education if they do not receive praise when it is deserved.

2. The mass emigration of people in recent years has **jeopardised** many economies.

– **jeopardy** [n]

3. Many of the older generation are **averse** to using modern technology. – **aversion** [n]

4. Some harbour **resentment** towards their employer for not receiving promotions they feel they deserve. – **resent** [v]

5. Teachers are often **pressured** by parents to give their child more attention in class.

– **pressure** [n]

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. Not receiving praise when it is deserved could **hold back** a child in their education.

– **held back** [phrv] (passive voice)

A child can be held back in their education if they do not receive praise when it is deserved.

2. The mass emigration of people in recent years has **jeopardised** many economies. –**jeopardy** [n]

The mass emigration of people in recent years has put many economies in jeopardy.

3. Many of the older generation are **averse** to using modern technology. – **aversion** [n]

Many of the older generation have an aversion to using modern technology.

4. Some harbour **resentment** towards their employer for not receiving promotions they feel they deserve. – **resent** [v]

Some resent their employer because they do not receive the promotion they feel they deserve.

5. Teachers are often **pressured** by parents to give their child more attention in class.

– **pressure** [n]

Teachers are often under pressure by parents to give their child more attention in class.

Production 2/2

- Complete the sentences (1-5) using your own ideas. **One** has been done for you.

1. A lot of pressure is put on the government to ...

... **treat all citizens fairly.**

2. The likelihood of most plastic straws being replaced with ...

...

3. Carpooling should be incorporated into public transportation systems because ...

...

4. These days, when raising a family, women have to decide on ...

...

5. Citizens will begrudge the money demanded for taxes if ...

...

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. A lot of pressure is put on the government to **treat all citizens fairly**.
2. The likelihood of most plastic straws being replaced with **paper ones in the next 10 years is high**.
3. Carpooling should be incorporated into public transportation systems because **it would help reduce traffic congestion considerably**.
'Carpooling [U n]' refers to the activity of people travelling together to share the cost of the journey.
4. These days, when raising a family, women have to decide on **either becoming a housewife or a career woman**.
5. Citizens will begrudge the money demanded for taxes if **they do not witness the government using it to improve their lives**.