

Listen to the conversation between an IELTS examiner (IE) and an English teacher (T) about IELTS writing exams.

Optional exercise (The answers are at the bottom of the page).

Choose the best word or phrase in each sentence

1. The teacher thinks reports **are easier / more difficult** to write than narratives .
 2. Some students don't include **headings / all the information** .
 3. It **is / isn't** easy to see which students did not write a plan .
 4. You **should not use / should use** colloquial expressions in a formal report .
 5. Checklists are written by **individual students / the class** .
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T: Hi Tony? You look busy. Are you marking?

IE: Yes. I've got about twenty IELTS exams to mark. I've done half of them but I still have a lot to go.

T: How's it going?

IE: Not so bad. I am marking all of the writing sections first. Reports.

T: Any good?

IE: Well that's confidential information – but let's just say there are all sorts.

T: Reports are easy to write though. I would have thought that was what students found easiest. They aren't like narrative texts when you have to have a vivid imagination.

IE: Yes. You're right. But you'd be surprised at the silly mistakes that students make sometimes.

T: For example?

IE: Well, lots of people don't read the question carefully so they end up writing a report about the wrong thing.

Or

they read the question too quickly, think they understand what they have to do but miss out a whole chunk of information.

T: Yes. I know what you mean. My students do that in class. They don't seem to realise how important it is just reading the question and thinking about it a bit – what it means – who the report is for – what style they should use – they are always in too much of a hurry to start writing

IE: Yes. I am sure that half the candidates don't even write a plan. It is easy to spot the ones who do – their reports are much easier to follow, they include all the information and they are noticeably better written

T: Really?

IE: Yes. Absolutely.

T: I'll tell my students that. Can I?

IE: (laughing) of course. It should be obvious anyway. I am sure you've told them before.

T: Got any other tips?

IE: Well, I think it's a good idea to get your students used to using some sort of a checklist after they have finished writing their report – or at least after they've written the first draft.

T: A checklist?

IE: Yes. A list of things to check. Obvious things but things that often get forgotten.

T: For example?

IE: Well, to check that the register is the right one of course. So, if a report is supposed to be formal then it should be formal. No contractions, no colloquial expressions. And then spellings and headings.

T: Spellings?

IE: Yes, everyone makes spelling mistakes and usually the same ones again and again. If you can identify your own particular mistakes then you can add them to your checklist.

T: Yes, that's true. That's useful advice.

IE: And then the obvious things – like have I included all the information? Have I got a concise introduction and a conclusion that sums up all my ideas? Checklists are individual. Each student knows his or her own weak points and should write a list accordingly.

T: That's great. I like the idea of a checklist. I think I'll talk about that in class today. Fancy a coffee?

IE: No thanks, I haven't got time. I still have ten reports to correct and I am supposed to finish them by the morning.

T: Oh – well I won't disturb you any more – thanks for the advice

IE: No problem!

Answers: 1. easier 2. all the information 3. is 4. should not use 5. individual students