

## FAMILY

Learn ideas for the topic of family. Each of the sections below contains ideas and vocabulary that you can use in your IELTS essay for writing task 2. The sections are based on common IELTS essay questions. Do not memorise sentences. You can use the ideas and vocabulary, but sentences must be created by yourself in your essay.

There are 10 sections to this topic:

1. Family size is smaller than before.
2. Women are having children later in life.
3. Childless marriages.
4. Divorce.
5. Single parent families.
6. Children spending more time with grandparents.
7. Disciplining children.
8. Both parents working.
9. Care of the elderly.
10. Researching family history.

### The Family is Smaller than Before

#### Bigger Families Previously

- A bigger family meant more children to help and earn money.
- Agricultural families relied on children as farmhands.
- Having more children was important because the infant mortality rate was higher.
- Many children provided security for parents in their old age.
- Lack of social benefits meant elderly parents were dependent on their children.

#### Smaller Families Nowadays

- Smaller families can move city more easily.
- Being geographically mobile makes it easy to find work.
- Children cost more money to bring up.
- Mothers often work and do not have time to take care of large families.
- Modern life is geared towards small families.
- Women have access to birth control.

- Women have more awareness and choice these days.

**Vocabulary Exercise:** Match the words and phrases from the sentences with their definitions.

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1 mortality rate    | a) a baby or very young child  |
| 2 infant            | b) contraception   |
| 3 geared towards    | c) needing the help of someone or something in order to exist                            |
| 4 bring up          | d) organised in a way that is suitable for a particular situation or purpose             |
| 5 birth control     | e) raise   |
| 6 (be) dependent on | f) the number of people who die in a particular group during a particular period of time |

## Women Having Children Later in Life

**Collocations Exercise:** Match the verbs 1 – 5 with the nouns a) – e) to make common collocations. Then read the sentences below to check your answers.

- |            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| 1 to build | a) a child           |
| 2 to climb | b) birth             |
| 3 to enter | c) one's career      |
| 4 to give  | d) one's teens       |
| 5 to raise | e) the career ladder |

### Reasons

- There are more working women these days.
- Some women wish to focus on building their career.
- Women prefer to wait until they have climbed the career ladder.
- Some couples prefer to save money before having children.
- The increase in divorce can affect when a woman decides to have children.
- Improved health care helps older women give birth.

### Effects

- Children enter their teens having retired parents.
- The age gap is bigger between parent and child.
- The age difference makes it difficult to understand a child's problems.
- Older parents get tired more easily when raising a child.
- When parents are tired, they do not enjoy parenthood as much.

## Childless Marriages

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married couples can focus on their careers.</li> <li>• Children change a marriage and add too many _____ (1).</li> <li>• Without children, there is more freedom.</li> <li>• Children are a financial _____ (2).</li> <li>• Childless couples can spend more time _____ (3) to each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is hard to relate to other married couples whose lives _____ (4) around their children.</li> <li>• No children means no family.</li> <li>• Some societies view childless couples as _____ (5).</li> <li>• Some childless couples did not choose this and suffer without children.</li> <li>• Without children there is a lack of support in old age.</li> </ul>

abnormal    burdened    devoted    responsibilities    revolve

**Sentence Completion Exercise:** Use the words in the box to complete the arguments *for* and *against* childless marriages.

## Divorce

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is better for parents to separate than to argue all the time.</li> <li>• An unhappy marriage can cause a child to suffer distress and witness unpleasant scenes.</li> <li>• Divorce is no longer stigmatised in society.</li> <li>• Children are unsure of who they might live with afterwards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process of divorce can be stressful for children.</li> <li>• Children feel insecure as their family falls apart.</li> <li>• Each parent can devote quality time to their children rather than quantity.</li> <li>• Children may miss the other parent after the divorce.</li> </ul>

- A happy parent is a good parent.

- Some divorce settlements result in hostility between parents.
- Children may feel caught between both parents

**Spot the Mistake Exercise:** Identify the two arguments which are in the wrong category.

## Single Parent Families

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children do not need two parents to have a stable upbringing.</li> <li>• Children benefit from a loving environment provided by one parent.</li> <li>• Single parent families are preferable to a dysfunctional marriage.</li> <li>• Children from dysfunctional marriages can suffer emotional distress.</li> <li>• Children may have more responsibilities in the house, which helps their development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The financial strain is sometimes placed on only one parent.</li> <li>• The children might miss the influence of having parents of each gender around.</li> <li>• Children are not given a role model for a healthy adult relationship.</li> <li>• Children are not able to grow up understanding adult relationships.</li> <li>• Children are not able to witness how adults work through difficulties and disagreements.</li> <li>• Children have no other parent to turn to for comfort or support.</li> </ul>

**Vocabulary Exercise:** Find words and phrases in the sentences above that mean:

- 1 a feeling of extreme unhappiness (two words)
- 2 a person who someone admires and whose behaviour, attitudes, etc they try to copy (two words)
- 3 not working properly or normally (one word)
- 4 the way your parents taught you to behave when you were growing up (one word)
- 5 worry and pressure caused by lack of money (two words)

## Children Spending More Time with Grandparents

**Matching and Categorising Exercise:** Match these sentence halves. Are the completed sentences *for* (+) or *against* (-) children spending more time with grandparents? See the Answer Key for six more ideas for this topic.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 Both child and grandparents          | a) they are relied on for child care too often.    |
| 2 Children might be confused if        | b) can enjoy a closer relationship.                |
| 3 Grandparents can offer children      | c) a different perspective on life.                |
| 4 Grandparents might feel exploited if | d) grandparents say one thing and parents another. |

## Parents or Teachers Should Discipline Children

Parents	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents know their children better than teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers must maintain discipline in their classroom.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents might be able to understand reasons behind bad behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should learn correct conduct at school.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents need to be responsible for their child's conduct at home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are qualified in different discipline techniques.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are ultimately responsible for the upbringing of their child.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If teachers do not discipline a naughty child, other children will suffer from the disruption.</li> </ul>

**Vocabulary Exercise:** Find the odd-one-out in each of these groups of words and phrases. Use a good dictionary to help you if necessary.

1 bad behaviour / obedience / misbehaviour / unruliness

2 to lack discipline / to keep discipline / to impose discipline / to maintain discipline

3 to discipline sb // to penalise sb / to punish sb / to reward sb



4 disobedient / disruptive / well-behaved / naughty / unruly

## Both Parents Working

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some families need two incomes for financial stability.</li> <li>• Children benefit from the extra family and income. (1)</li> <li>• Children learn to appreciate the value of the money.</li> <li>• Children might need to take more of responsibilities in the home. (2)</li> <li>• Additional responsibilities help children mature more quickly.</li> <li>• Some parents are happier if they have a working life as well as a family life.</li> <li>• Children benefit from having a healthy, happy parents. (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with both parents working lack parental guidance.</li> <li>• Parents do not have the time available to care for their children sufficiently.</li> <li>• Children might lack support with a homework and other personal issues. (4)</li> <li>• Parents struggle to cope when a child is sick as they must both go to work.</li> <li>• Parents might argue about whose job it is most important and who takes time off for domestic issues. (5)</li> <li>• Children sometimes feel abandoned.</li> </ul>

**Spot the Mistake Exercise:** In arguments 1 – 5 above, there is *one extra word* which does not fit. Spot the incorrect extra word.

## Family Responsible for Care of the Elderly

- 1 Elderly people have paid taxes which should be used for their care.
- 2 Elderly people thrive better when cared for by people who love them.
- 3 Family should support one another whatever the situation.
- 4 Family understand the needs of the elderly best.
- 5 Grandparents have looked after their child in the past, now the children should look after them.
- 6 If both adults work, there may be no one at home to provide the necessary support.
- 7 Nursing homes and retirement homes are structured to provide the right support and care.
- 8 Retirement homes provide support but not the love that the elderly person needs.
- 9 Some families do not have the extra finances available.

- 10 Some elderly people require specialised care that the family cannot provide.
- 11 The elderly should be surrounded by familiar objects and people.
- 12 The family are not trained to take care of elderly people.

**Categorisation Exercise:** Mark the arguments above (+) if they are *for* the idea of the family being responsible for the care of the elderly or (-) if they are *against* it.

## Researching Family History

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People like to know more about their ancestors to help them discover who they are.</li> <li>• Knowing about their ancestors helps people feel part of a larger family.</li> <li>• Family history can reveal hereditary medical conditions which might be prevalent among the current generation.</li> <li>• Knowing if cancer, for example, is common in their family can help people take the necessary preventive measures.</li> <li>• Researching family history can show cultural history.</li> <li>• Some members of the family might have come from different countries or cultures.</li> <li>• There might be a common trend of skills within a family's history which might be interesting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is better for people to focus on present family members rather than those in the past.</li> <li>• Unpleasant information might be unearthed.</li> <li>• A past member of the family might have been an embarrassment which is best forgotten.</li> <li>• People might discover secrets that are damaging to family members today.</li> <li>• The past is best left in the past.</li> <li>• Hereditary diseases do not necessarily reoccur and may cause undue stress and worry.</li> </ul>

**Vocabulary Exercise:** The words in *italics* all appear in the sentences *for* and *against* researching family history. Choose the best option (**a**, **b** or **c**) to complete the following statements.

- 1 Your *ancestors* are ...      **a)** your close friends      **b)** relatives who lived a long time ago  
**c)** places where your parents and grandparents were born.

- 2 A *hereditary* disease ...     **a)** is passed to a child by its parents     **b)** requires a surgical intervention     **c)** affects the heart and the arteries.
- 3 A condition or belief that is *prevalent* is ...     **a)** rare     **b)** new     **c)** common.
- 4 *Preventive* measures or actions are intended to ...     **a)** cure a disease very quickly     **b)** replace medical insurance     **c)** stop something bad from happening.
- 5 If you *unearth* evidence or information about something bad, you ...     **a)** try to keep it secret     **b)** discover it after careful searching     **c)** share it with all the print and electronic media.
- 6 If you say that somebody is an *embarrassment* to you, you mean that they make you feel ...     **a)** nervous and uncomfortable     **b)** sad and angry     **c)** proud and happy.
- 7 If something is *damaging* to someone, it affects them ...     **a)** for a very long time     **b)** in a bad way     **c)** both physically and mentally.
- 8 If something *reoccurs*, it ...     **a)** gets better     **b)** happens again     **c)** stops after a short time.