

IELTS GENERAL TRAINING

Linking & Cohesion

Connecting ideas so they read naturally, not like a list of connectors

Ronacker Solutions · LaunchPad Career Toolkit

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1. What cohesion actually means

Coherence and Cohesion is a full quarter of your Writing band. Candidates hear “linking words” and start bolting *Firstly*, *Moreover* and *In conclusion* onto the front of every paragraph. That is not what is being marked, and overuse is explicitly penalised.

Term	What it means
Coherence	Whether your ideas are ordered logically and each paragraph has one clear purpose
Cohesion	Whether the sentences are connected — by linking words, but also by pronouns, repetition and reference

The band descriptor says this explicitly

Band 6 describes cohesive devices used *mechanically* or with some *faulty or overuse*. Band 7 describes a *range* used with some flexibility. Band 8 describes cohesion *managed so well that it attracts no attention*.

In other words: the higher your band, the **less visible** your linking should be.

2. Cohesion beyond linking words

Four devices carry most of the connection in good writing, and only one of them is a connector. Master the other three and your writing will hold together without sounding assembled.

Reference words

Pronouns and determiners that point back to something already mentioned: *this, these, such, it, they, the former, the latter*.

REFERENCE IN ACTION

*Many trades face a shortage of qualified workers. **This** has driven wages up in several regions, and **employers in those** areas now compete for the same small pool of candidates.*

Never leave “this” floating

This has driven wages up is clear. *This is a problem* is vague — what is? Attach a noun: *This shortage is a problem*. Examiners mark unclear reference under Cohesion.

Substitution and ellipsis

Replacing a repeated element with a shorter one, or leaving it out where the meaning is obvious.

- *Some candidates hold a trade certificate; **others** do not.*
- *The first option is cheaper, the **second** more reliable.*
- *She applied in March and **was accepted** in May.*

Lexical repetition and word families

Repeating a key idea in varied form is a genuine cohesive device, not a weakness. The trick is varying the form rather than the word.

THREADING ONE IDEA THROUGH A PARAGRAPH

*Governments should **invest** in vocational training. Such **investment** produces workers who are employable immediately, and countries that have **invested** heavily in this area report lower youth unemployment.*

Paragraph-level linking

The strongest cohesion is usually the first sentence of a paragraph referring back to the previous one without a connector at all.

TWO WAYS TO OPEN A SECOND PARAGRAPH

Mechanical: Secondly, there is also the issue of cost.

Natural: Cost presents a more difficult obstacle.

3. The connector bank

Grouped by the job they do. Vary within each group rather than reaching for the same word each time.

Adding

Common	Better alternatives
Moreover / Furthermore	What is more • Beyond this • Equally important • A further consideration is • In addition to this
Also	Additionally • As well as this • Coupled with

Contrasting

Common	Better alternatives
However	Nevertheless • Even so • That said • On the other hand • Conversely
But	Yet • Whereas • While • Although • Despite this
In contrast	By comparison • Unlike • Where X is ..., Y is ...

Cause and effect

Common	Better alternatives
Because	Since • As • Given that • Owing to the fact that
Therefore	Consequently • As a result • For this reason • This means that
So	Accordingly • Hence • Which explains why

Giving examples

- For instance • To illustrate this • A clear example of this is
- In the case of • Take X, for example • As can be seen in

Conceding a point

- Admittedly • It is true that • While it may be argued that
- There is some merit in the view that • This is a legitimate concern, though

Concession language is undervalued. Raising the other side and then answering it is what pushes Task Response from Band 6 to Band 7 — it shows you have considered the question rather than just picked a

side.

Concluding

- In conclusion • On balance • Taking everything into account
- Weighing these arguments • The evidence suggests that

4. What to stop doing

Connectors that mark you as a Band 5 or 6 candidate

Avoid	Why	Instead
Firstly / Secondly / Thirdly / Lastly	The most obvious sign of mechanical cohesion	The strongest argument is... / A further consideration... / The remaining issue...
In a nutshell	Informal and formulaic	In conclusion • On balance
Last but not least	A memorised phrase, and inaccurate	Finally • The last point worth making
As far as I am concerned	Wordy and overused	I would argue that • To my mind
All in all	Informal	Overall • Taken together

Three habits that cost marks

1. **A connector at the start of every sentence.** Aim for roughly one in three. Sentences may simply follow one another.
2. **The same connector twice in a paragraph.** If you have used *However*, use something else next time.
3. **A connector that does not match the logic.** Using *Moreover* before a contrasting idea is worse than using nothing at all — it signals you are decorating rather than connecting.

Before and after

OVER-CONNECTED — BAND 6

Firstly, technology has changed the workplace. Moreover, it has created new jobs. However, it has also removed some jobs. Furthermore, workers need new skills. In conclusion, technology has both advantages and disadvantages.

NATURALLY CONNECTED — BAND 8

Technology has reshaped the workplace in ways that cut both directions. Entire categories of work have appeared that did not exist a generation ago, while others — particularly routine clerical roles — have largely disappeared. The workers caught in that shift face a demand for skills their training never covered, and it is this transition, rather than the technology itself, that governments have handled poorly.

The second version contains one visible connector (*while*). Everything else is held together by reference (*others, that shift, it is this*) and logical order. That is what Band 8 cohesion looks like.

How to practise

Take an essay you have written and delete every connector. Read it back. Where it still makes sense, leave the connector out permanently. Where it genuinely breaks, put one back — and choose a different one from what you had. Most candidates find they can remove half.

Ready to practise properly?

Reading a guide tells you what to do. Marked practice tells you whether you are doing it. The Ronacker LaunchPad gives you full timed IELTS practice with band feedback on every answer — Writing marked against all four criteria, Speaking with a live examiner-style roleplay, and Reading and Listening scored instantly.

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