

## IELTS Writing phrases Same or different?

*Do the following pairs of expressions have the same or different meaning (don't worry about grammar etc).*

- A great advantage/ The main advantage
- The best solution/ The best answer
- Banned/ Prohibited
- Allowed/ Permitted
- Make children watch violent images/ Let children watch violent images
- The government is to blame/ The government is responsible
- A solution could be/ One possible solution is
- However/ Nevertheless
- Nonetheless/ Nevertheless/ Even though that is true
- At the moment/ At that moment
- Nowadays/ These days
- Solve/ Sort out
- However/ On the other hand
- Many people feel that.../ A large number of people think that.../ It is thought by many that.../ There is a widespread belief that.../ A great number of people hold the view that...
- In contrast/ On the contrary
- At first/ First of all
- First of all/ First/ Firstly
- At last/ Lastly
- Last of all/ Lastly/ Finally
- One of the advantages/ An advantage
- The points below/ The following points
- Looking at.../ Moving on to...
- As for... / Moving on to...
- Pros and cons/ Advantages and disadvantages
- Pros/ Advantages
- Cons/ Disadvantages
- Compared with these two locations/ Comparing these two locations
- In the town centre/ Within the town centre
- In the town centre/ At the centre of town
- To the northwest/ In the northwest
- Is located/ Is situated
- Locates/ Is located
- Near/ In the vicinity of

*Use some of the phrases from near the bottom to describe a map, then use some of the other phrases to discuss a Writing Part Two question.*

## Answer key

*Phrases with different meanings with explanations of the differences:*

- A great advantage/ The main advantage – Different. “The main advantage” means the number one most important advantage.
- Make children watch violent images/ Let children watch violent images. – Different. The former would mean forcing children to watch violent images, so is very unlikely!
- The government is to blame/ The government is responsible – Slightly different. The government can be responsible for sorting something out even if it is not their fault.
- However/ Nevertheless – Different. Nevertheless is more specific and means “even though that is true”.
- At the moment/ At that moment – Different. At the moment means now and is fairly common in IELTS. At that moment is mainly used in stories.
- However/ On the other hand – Different. The latter is only used to weigh up the two sides of an argument or compare two things leading to a conclusion, so is much more specific than “however” or “in contrast” and is often used wrongly.
- In contrast/ On the contrary – Different. The latter means that the previous statement was actually incorrect, so it is often used after expressions like “... claims that.../ People assume that...”
- At first/ First of all – Different. “At first” means that things later changed and so is often used with phrases like “but later...”, and so is rare in IELTS.
- At last/ Lastly – Different. The former means after a long wait and so will not come up in IELTS writing.
- The points below/ The following points – Slightly different. The latter means that the points come straight after, whereas the former just means they are somewhere below.
- Looking at.../ Moving on to... - Slightly different. The latter can’t be used for the first topic, just for changing topics.
- Pros/ Advantages – Different. “Pros and cons” is a fixed expression that can’t be split up, so “pros” on its own would have to have the unrelated meaning of “professionals”.
- Cons/ Disadvantages – Different. (See above).
- Compared with these two locations/ Comparing these two locations – Different. The former compares those two locations to at least one other.
- In the town centre/ At the centre of town – Different. The former is an area and the latter is seen as a point.
- To the northwest/ In the northwest – Different. The former is outside whereas the latter is inside.
- Locates/ Is located – Different. The former means “finds” and is unlikely to be suitable for IELTS writing.