99 Questions to Develop Critical Thinking Skills for IELTS

Ask a partner these questions in order. Occasionally, follow up by asking them "Why?" to encourage them to develop their ideas.

The Environment

- Do you think humans are responsible for certain animals becoming extinct?
- How many extinct animals can you name?
- Do humans have a responsibility to protect animals that are in danger of becoming extinct?
- Which human actions and activity cause harm to the environment?
- What can individuals do to protect the environment?
- What can companies do to protect the environment?
- What can governments do to protect the environment?
- Who has a greater responsibility to protect the environment: individuals, companies, or governments?
- What stops individuals/ companies/ governments from taking action to improve the environment?
- What ways can we raise awareness of the importance of protecting the environment?
- Is protecting the environment more important than economic growth?
- Do you think countries that are developing rapidly now should be held accountable for the pollution that they produce?
- Many developed countries produced a lot of pollution when they were industrialising but weren't restrained by being environmentally conscious. Is it fair that countries that are industrialising now should have to pay attention to the environment?
- What problems can a growing world population cause to the environment?

Geography (buildings and cities, travel)

- What are some ways to relieve heavy traffic in major cities?
- Nowadays, more people own their own passenger car. Is that a good thing?
- What are the environmental effects of more people owning their own passenger car?
- Should the government subsidise public transport?
- Do most people live in large cities in your country?
- What are the effects of rural to urban migration?
- Why do some people choose to live in the countryside?
- What can be difficult about living in the countryside?
- Do tourists visiting your country usually visit the cities or the countryside?
- What factors are contributing to the increase in tourism?
- Is tourism a good thing?
- Should the government actively encourage tourists to visit the country?
- What problems can tourism cause?
- Do you think that there should be areas of a country that people are not allowed to visit, in order to protect those areas?
- How can the government protect natural areas?

Education (skills and learning)

- What kind of skills do people learn from living in a foreign country?
- Are there any skills that are especially important for young people to learn before they leave home?
- How do you like to learn new skills?
- What ways can people learn new skills?
- What advice would you give to someone who is preparing for IELTS?
- Why do some people learn more quickly than others?
- Should schools divide classes by ability level?
- What is the purpose of testing in school?
- Is testing the best way to understand a student's level?
- Should teenagers be given regular tests at school?
- What is the purpose of going to school?
- Should subjects such as art and music be taught in schools?
- Do schools adequately prepare young people for life after leaving school?
- What kind of important decisions to students make while they are at school?
- How can schools/ teachers help children make important decisions?
- Why do some young people decide not to go to university?
- Should university education be free?
- What do young people need to consider when choosing a major at university?
- Should parents help children to choose their major at university?
- What factors should young people consider when choosing a career?
- Why do many children end up choosing similar careers to their parents?
- What makes a career or profession a "good" one?

People (upbringing, health and happiness)

- How do you think that parenting styles differ between countries?
- How do you think that parenting styles were different in the past?
- What makes someone a "good" parent?
- What makes a child a "good" son or daughter?
- What stops children from being a "good" son/daughter?
- Nowadays many people are having fewer children and to have those children later in life. What effects will this have on society and the parent-child relationship?
- Who has a larger influence on children, their parents or teachers?
- Who influences teenagers more, their parents or close friends?
- Should parents let their children be friends with whomever they want to be friends with?
- What kind of rules do you think it is important for parents to have for their children as they are in different stages of their youth?
- Why are rules important?
- What is the difference between rules and laws?
- Are there any laws in your country that you do not agree with?
- Why do countries have different laws?
- Do you think that the laws in a country can affect how happy people feel?
- What factors contribute to happiness?

Work and the economy

- Do you think people's smartphone makes them more or less productive at work?
- Does your phone help you to study/work or does it make it more difficult to pay attention?
- Do you think that advances in technology will create or destroy more jobs?
- How many jobs can you think of that have been replaced by machines?
- How do businesses use technology to increase productivity?
- Do you think that the importance of technology in the workplace has meant that older people will find it more difficult to find work?
- How can the government ensure that older people don't fall behind the trend of technological development?
- Should the government, or old people themselves, be responsible for staying up to date with technology?
- Why might companies want to hire older staff, rather than younger members of staff?
- Do you think that companies should offer young people internships?
- Is it important for companies to pay young people who intern there?
- What benefits do young people get from doing an internship at a large company?
- Do you think that people who stay at a company for longer should be paid a higher salary?
- Why do you think people with different roles in a company are paid different salaries?
- Do you think people with more qualifications should be paid more money in a company?
- Do you think that people that do physically demanding jobs (like construction work) should be paid more money?
- What would happen if people who did physically demanding jobs got paid more than people who did academically demanding jobs?
- What jobs are considered "respectable" jobs in your country?
- What makes a job "respectable"?
- Is money the most important aspect when choosing a job?
- Are there any jobs that are paid well in your country but are still unpopular?
- Do you think it's a good idea for people to change their job regularly?
- Why do people often complain about how much they have to work but don't change their job?
- What can people do to get a better balance between their work and personal life?
- What would happen if everybody collectively decided to work less?
- What effect do you think the growing world population has on the job market?
- What other factors determine the job market?
- What can people do to stay competitive in the job market?
-Do you think that the opportunities that you have later in life are influenced by the opportunities that you have early in life?
- What differences are there in terms of the opportunities you have if you are born into a rich family or a poor family?
- What other factors affect the type of opportunities that you have later in life?
- Should the government try to ensure equal opportunities for citizens? If so, how?