

●●● Academic Module

**IELTS™**

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# Writing Tutorial series

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A comprehensive reference

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# Acknowledgements

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The author would like to refer to the following sources as their illustrations were used here in this pamphlet:

Page 4 pics A and D adopted from IELTS graduation, page 4 pic B adopted from focus on academic skills for IELTS, page 5 pic D adopted from improve your writing for IELTS, page 5 pic E adopted from insight into IELTS, page 7 exercise 1 pic adopted from improve your writing for IELTS , page 11 pic adopted from focus on academic skills for IELTS, page 12 exercise 4 pic adopted from instant IELTS, page 14 exercise 5 pic adopted from focus on academic skills for IELTS, page 17 exercise 6 pic adopted from focus on academic skills for IELTS, page 20 exercise 7 pic adopted from improve your writing for IELTS, page 22 pic adopted from New insight into IELTS, pages 23 to 25 pics adopted from improve your writing for IELTS

# Describing Diagrams

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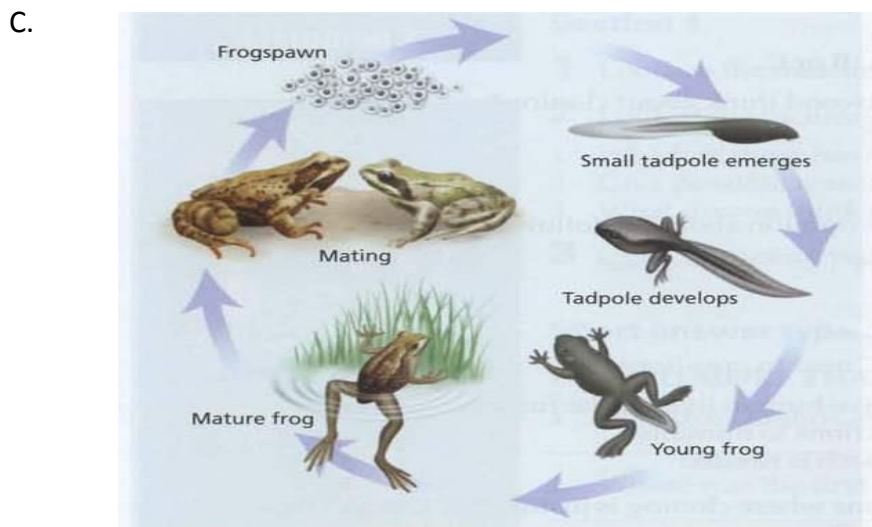
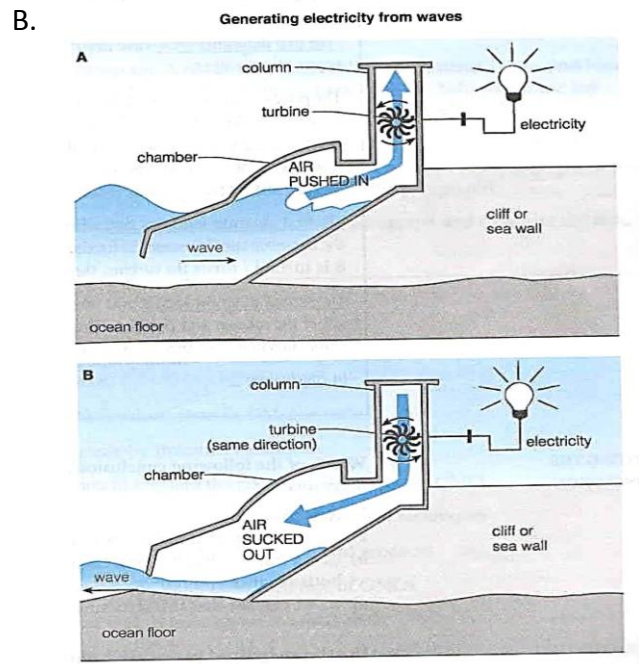
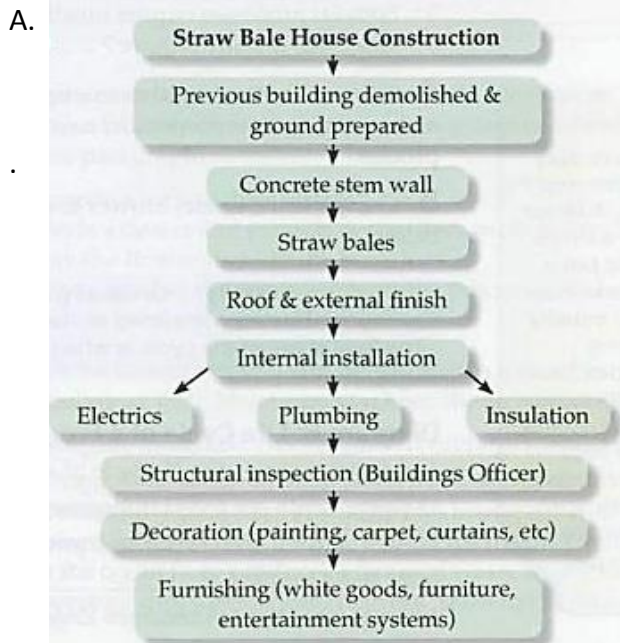
## **Unit aims**

- Different types of diagrams: man-made or natural
- The elements of a good diagram description
- Describing picture of an object
- Maps
- Question bank

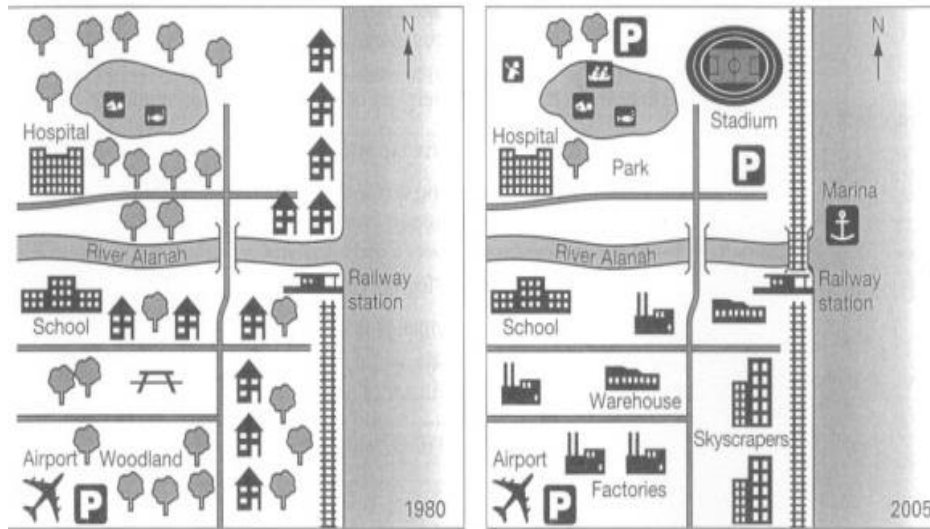
### Different types of diagrams: man-made or natural

Diagrams generally fall into 2 categories. Man - made and natural. However, there are often different forms of diagrams in IELTS test. The following ones are among the most common types. Match each type with the correct picture on the following page.

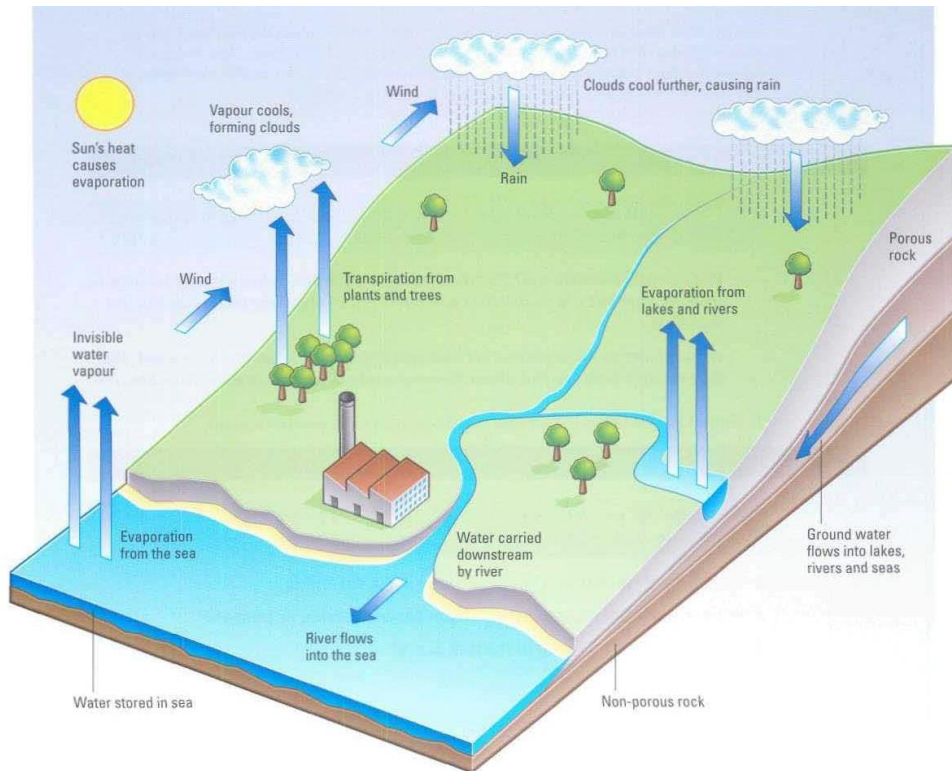
1. Linear process
2. Cycle
3. Maps
4. Natural phenomenon
5. Machinery



D.



E.



The language and overall paragraphing used for diagrams is different from the ones for graphs, charts and tables. The following table summarises the key differences.

	Diagrams	Graphs, charts, and tables
<b>Overall paragraphing and structure</b>	Introduction + Body + Conclusion (optional)	Introduction + Body + Conclusion
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Words describing steps are used (is made, is produced, etc)	Words describing changes (rise, fall, etc)
<b>Tense</b>	Present tense is normally used	Variety of tenses are used
<b>Voice</b>	Active and passive	Active

## The elements of a good diagram description

The following elements should be included in a good piece of writing. These points will be elaborated upon in the following pages.

- Analyzing the diagram
- Passive or active?
- Sequence words, purpose, cause and result
- Relative clauses

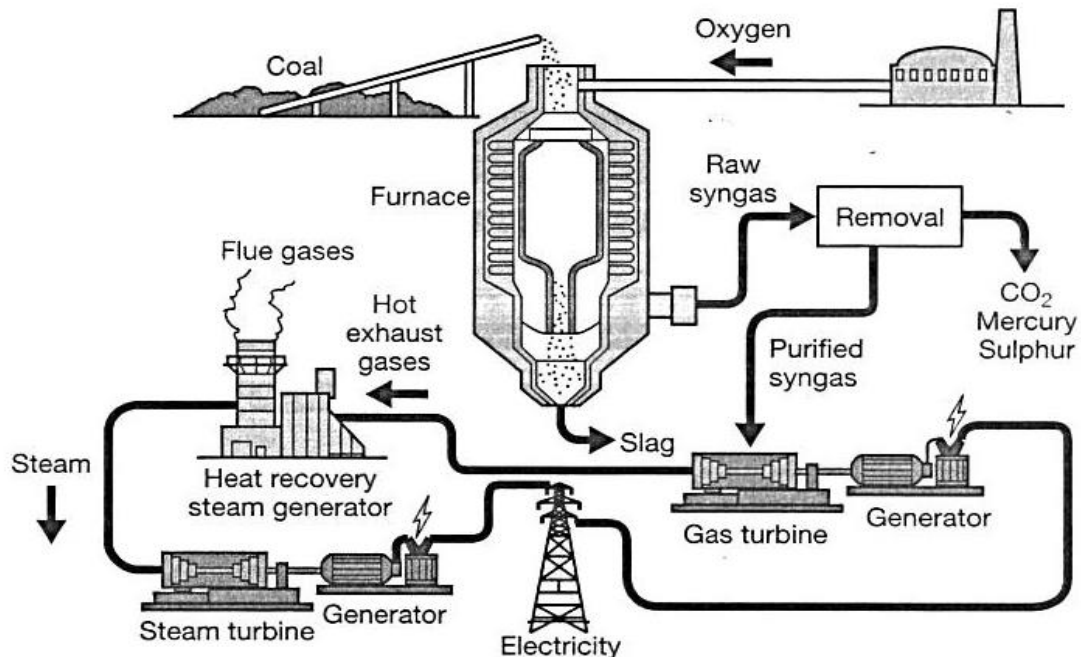
### 1. Analyzing the diagram

***Firstly, make sure that you know where the diagram starts, how it continues and where the ending is. If you have difficulty with understanding the beginning or ending then the question itself is a good help. In fact, when the question, for instance, says that the diagram shows how...X..is produced then it means that the final step is the production of ...X.....***



## Exercise 1: analyzing diagrams

Look at the following diagram for a careful analysis. Try to answer the questions to see where to start and how to develop your description.



- How do you think the process starts?
- What is the coal mixed with before entering the furnace?
- After this mixture is heated what kind of gas is produced and what is removed from this gas?
- What product is obtained after this removal?
- Where does this purified gas go to and what does it do?
- Where do the hot exhaust gases come from and what happens to them?

## 2. The use of active or passive voice

Depending on the type of process you need to change between active or passive voice. If the diagram is man-made then the most common voice is passive and when the diagram is natural then active is the main voice.

Remember that the most common tense used either in active or passive is present simple.

Present simple passive

To be + past participle

Example:

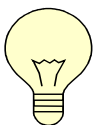
After beans are collected they are transported to the factory using lorries.

### Exercise 2: active or passive?

Read the following sentences and complete them with either active or passive form of the words given in brackets.

When the sun .....1.....(heat) the earth, water from rivers, lakes and seas .....2.....(evaporate). When this evaporation.....3.....(move) to higher levels, cloud .....4.....(form) due to cold weather. Wind .....5.....(push) these clouds even higher causing rain to fall.

In normal conditions the winds which .....6.....(blow) from the east are stronger than the winds from the west. These winds .....7..... (force) warm water westwards bringing rain to Australia.



#### Common mistake:

Subject - verb agreement is important and many learners often have problem in this area..

If there is no subject or doer of the action, you need to use passive.

*The book publishes every six month. (The book itself cannot do the action of publishing so passive is needed.)*

*The book is published every six months. (Correct)*



### 3. Sequence words, purpose, effect and result

Since you need to describe different steps, the following words can be used to organize them.

<i>Useful language: Ordering, purpose and result</i>	
<i>First stage</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
<p><i>The first stage is when + noun + verb</i>  <i>To begin with,</i>  <i>The process commences with</i>  <i>The process starts when + noun + verb</i></p>	<p><i>A is done (so as) to provide / produce B.</i>  <i>A is done in order that B can be done / produced.</i>  <i>A is done so that B is provided / produced.</i>  <i>The aim in this step is to + verb</i>  <i>The main purpose of this stage is to + verb</i></p>
<i>Middle stages</i>	<i>Cause and result</i>
<p><i>In the next stage of the process</i>  <i>Once A has finished, B is able to start.</i>  <i>After this stage is complete,</i>  <i>This step involves +verb(ing)</i>  <i>At the same time,</i>  <i>The next step is when + noun + verb</i></p>	<p><i>A happens. As a result, B is produced.</i>  <i>A happens. This results in + noun</i>  <i>A happens, which results in + noun</i>  <i>A happens resulting in + noun</i>  <i>A happens which leads to/ causes B</i>  <i>A happens, with the result that B is produced.</i></p>
<i>Last stage</i>	
<p><i>In the final stage of the process,</i>  <i>The final step is when + noun + verb</i>  <i>Finally/ lastly,</i>  <i>Once the final stage has been completed,</i></p>	

### 4. Relative clauses: a technique for making complex structures

Who, which, that are the most common relative pronouns. These words often follow a noun and they give further information about this noun. The following examples can help to clarify the purpose of relative clauses and how they are used.

**Example:**

*The first stage is collecting beans.*

*Beans are taken from cocoa trees.*

Notice that the second sentence above gives more information about the beans so you can join these two short statements to produce a much more complex structure.

**Example:**

*The first stage is collecting beans which are taken from cocoa trees.*

*Exercise 3: relative clauses*

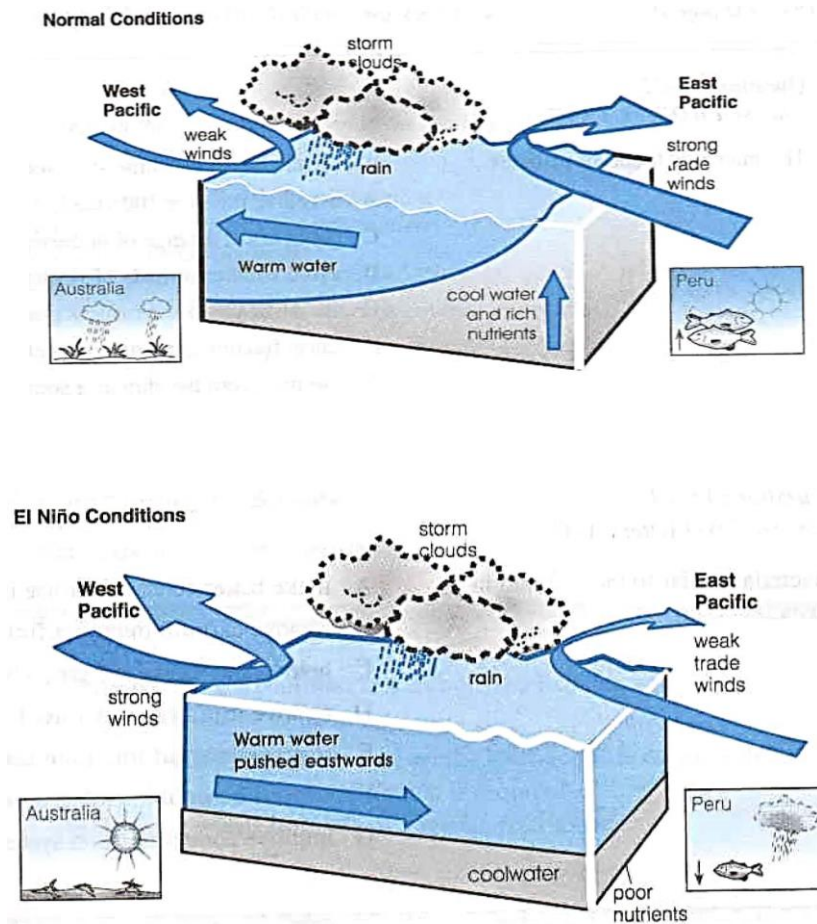
A. Now try to link the following statements to produce complex structures using relative clauses.

1. The product is heated. This product is taken to factory by Lorries.  
.....
2. The information is sent to the team of proof readers. This information is collected from different sources.  
.....
3. The paper is finally published. The paper is corrected.  
.....
4. Coal is mixed with oxygen in this step. Coal is carried to factory using conveyor belt.  
.....
5. In the next stage of the process this liquid is heated in a furnace up to a certain temperature. The temperature is normally 300 degrees Fahrenheit.  
.....

NOTE that an ing clause can also be used to create more complex structures in writing. They also avoid repetition of some words. Look at the following example based on the pictures below which compare normal and El Niño conditions.

Strong winds blow warm water westwards. **This process causes** storm clouds to form **and brings** rain to Australia.

Strong winds blow warm water westwards, **causing** storm clouds to form **and bringing** rain to Australia.



B. Now try to join the pairs of sentences about the pictures above using *ing* clauses.

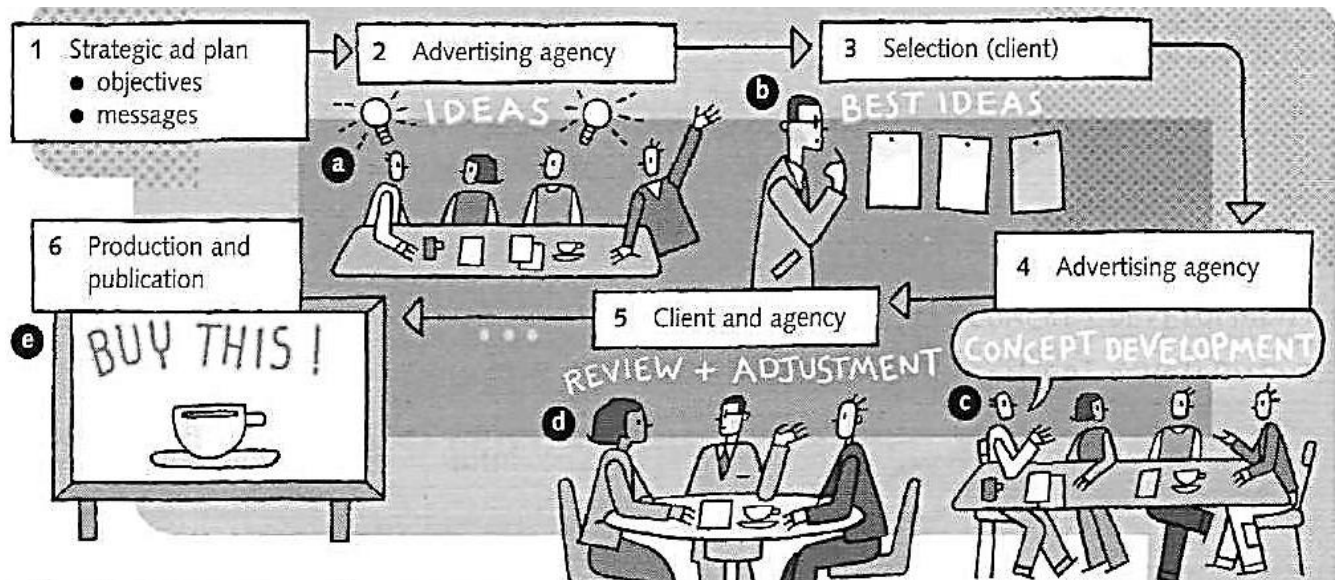
1. The warm water builds up in the west. This process allows cool water to rise to the surface in the east.  
 .....
2. The cool water brings rich nutrients to the surface. This process enables the numbers of fish to increase near Peru.  
 .....
3. In El Niño conditions, warm water flows eastwards. This process brings rain to Peru.  
 .....

### Exercise 4: writing a full task 1 diagram

The following samples help you gain an insight into how to integrate all these four items into writing.

- First try to analyze the diagram
- After that try to put the sentences in the correct order.
- Finally underline all passive forms, relative clauses, sequence words and purpose phrases.

*The diagram shows the process by which advertisements are produced. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information. You should write at least 150 words.*



- The process commences when a strategic advertising plan is developed which contains the objectives of the campaign as well as the messages which the company intends to send to the customers.
- After that it is put into production and when the definitive version of the advertisement is produced it is finally published.
- In the following stage, the client looks at and then chooses the best idea which he considers as the most suitable.

- d. The diagram shows the steps involved in the process of producing advertisements by agencies.
- e. In the next stage, the plan is passed to the advertising agency's creative team where a number of possible ideas are frequently brainstormed to be selected by the client.
- f. The client and the agency then review and more adjustments or changes are made in order to meet the company's demand.
- g. Next, the creative team of the agency develops the idea further so that it forms a concept framework.

**Common mistake:**

Many students confuse the use of next and then

- Next is used at the beginning of a new sentence as a sequence word. This is often followed by a comma .look at the example below:

*Next, the creative team of the agency develops the idea further so that it forms a concept framework.*

- Then is used in the middle of a sentence and NOT at the beginning and it often marks the effect of sth on sth else. Look at the example below:

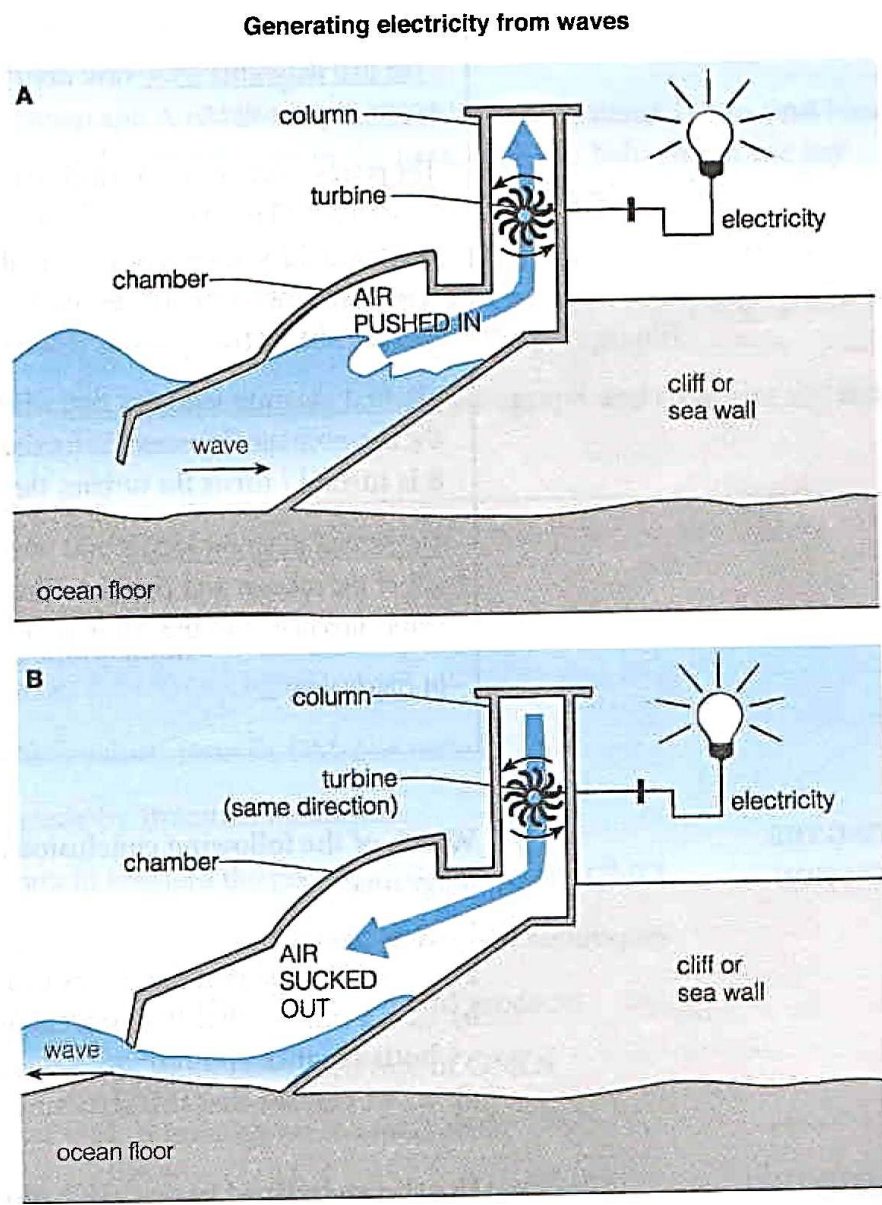
*In the following stage, the client looks at and then chooses the best idea which he considers as the most suitable.*



*Exercise 5: mastering active and passive*

Now look at the following model text and try to fill in the gaps with either active or passive form of the verbs given in brackets.

*The diagram shows a structure that is used to generate electricity from wave power. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information. You should write at least 150 words.*





The two diagrams illustrate how electricity can .....1.....(produce) from the power of sea waves.

The process .....2.....(involve) a structure which .....3.....(build) onto the side of a cliff or even sea wall. This structure .....4..... (comprise) a large chamber with one of its ends being open and the other leading into a closed vertical column. A turbine .....5..... (position) inside this column and this .....6.....(use) to generate electricity in two phases.

The first diagram depicts that when a wave .....7.....(enter) the mouth of the chamber, air.....8.....(force) up the column and this movement .....9.....(turn) the turbine, thereby producing electricity.

The second diagram shows that when the wave retreats, air .....10.....(suck) out of the column and chamber. This movement similarly turns the turbine in the same direction, and this .....11.....(generate) electricity.

Overall, we can see that this structure assists in producing electricity from waves as they both advance and retreat.



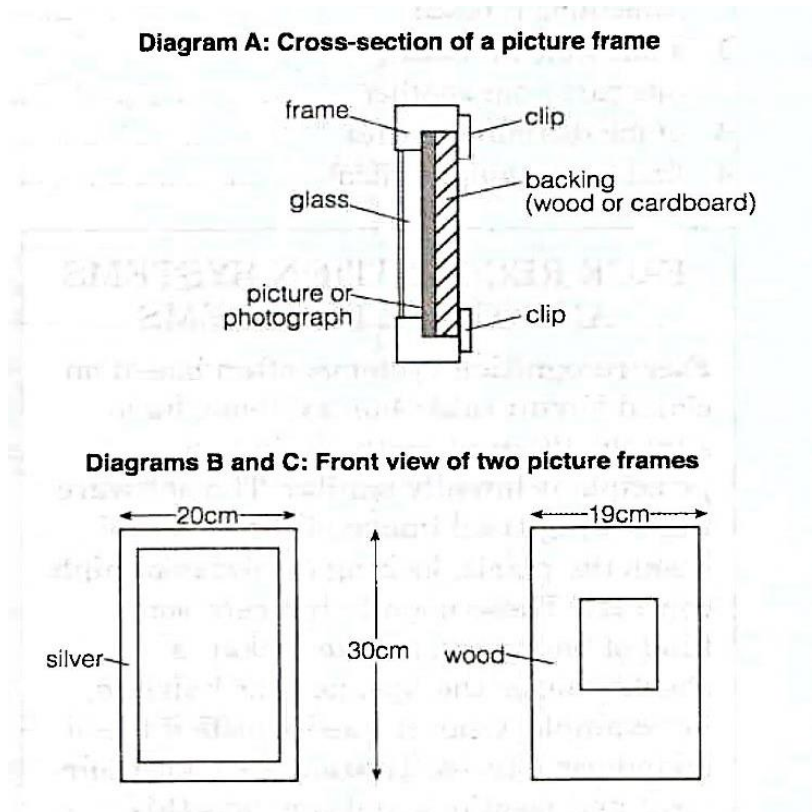
## Describing a picture of an object

In task 1 of the writing module you may have to describe a picture of an object or objects. This may involve describing and comparing shapes and sizes. The following table gives you a number of words which can be useful in such descriptions.

<b>Vocabulary for object description</b>	
<b>Shape</b>	Round, oval, rectangular, circular, spherical, cylindrical, shaped like a square/ cube/ sphere, long, thin, flat, curved, pointed
<b>Qualities</b>	Colored, striped, spotted, sharp
<b>Parts</b>	Head, face, eye, neck, top, main/ outer/ inner part, side, handle, bottom, end
<b>Position</b>	On one/ both side(s), in the middle, on/at the top, above, below, around, inside, horizontal, vertical
<b>Material</b>	Wood(en), metal, paper, glass, leather, plastic, rubber

### Exercise 6: object description

Now look at the following sentences. The underlined words are used incorrectly. Try to correct them.



1. A picture frame **is consists** of three main parts: the frame itself, the glass and the backing.
2. Its overall **high** is 30 cm, and its overall width is 20 cm.
3. The frame shown in diagram C is also rectangular, and it is **approximate** the same size, but it is made of wood instead of silver.
4. It is therefore clear that the first frame would be **use** for a large picture while the second would be suitable for a small picture.
5. However this frame is much **more wider** than the first one so the space left inside for the picture is only a fraction of the size of that in diagram A.

Now try writing four sentences of your own.

1.

.....

2.

.....

3.

.....

4.

.....

## Maps

Maps often depict changes. To describe such changes in location, direction, places and developments you need to learn the language first.

### Words showing location and direction

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Left/ right</li> <li>• To the left/ to the right of</li> <li>• At the top of / at the bottom of</li> <li>• In the right hand corner</li> <li>• In the top left corner</li> <li>• In the center/ in the middle</li> <li>• Along</li> <li>• Across from / opposite</li> <li>• Next to / close to/ adjacent to</li> <li>• Beyond (the border, etc.)</li> <li>• From (the station, etc.)</li> <li>• Facing (the station, etc.)</li> <li>• At the mouth of...</li> <li>• ...x....runs to the north of....</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Place A) is situated/ located/ positioned around B.</li> <li>• (Place A) is placed to the right of B.</li> <li>• (Place A) is covered with B.</li> <li>• (Place A) is connected to B by means of C.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### Words describing places / changes / development

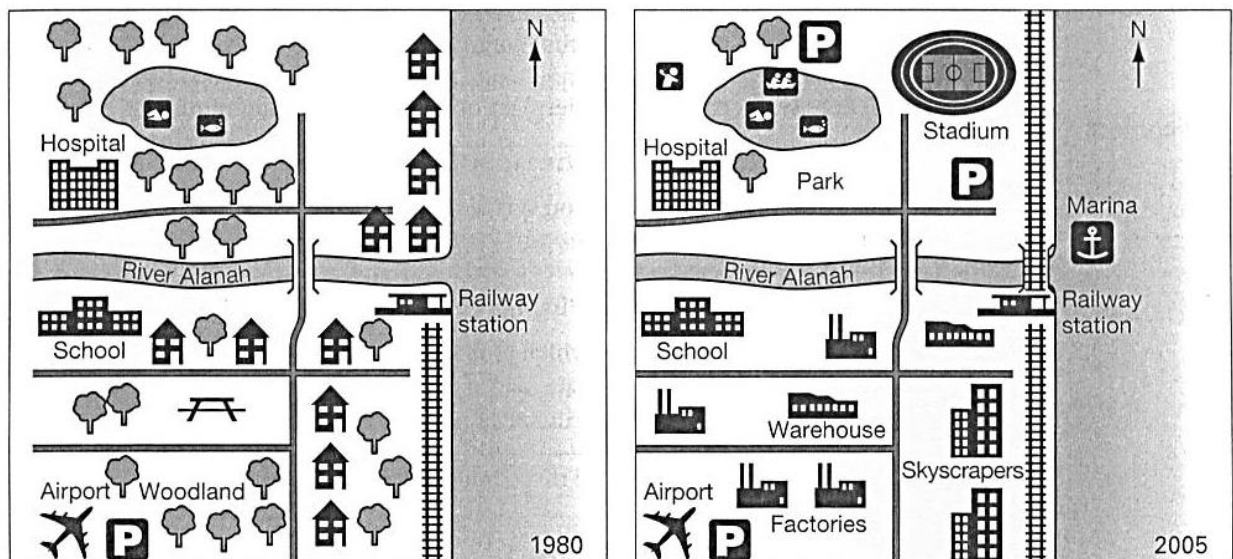
- (Place A) was first opened / established.
- A bypass and an industrial estate were built around B.
- The most noticeable difference between place A and B is ...X...
- The town has become more / less residential in the year...compared to ....
- Some of the changes are negligible but .....(a change)... is dramatic over these years.
- The biggest change occurred to the north of (place A).
- ...X...has experienced a transformation since more ....X... is constructed in the area.
- (Place A) has undergone considerable changes in ....X.... and ...Y....
- The (place A) was a much greener residential area with a large number of trees and individual houses.
- (Place A) experienced a number of noticeable changes. The greatest is that....
- (Place A) was knocked down / destroyed/ demolished/ cleared and replaced by....
- ...X.... sprang up around the area.
- Only a few....X....remained and further facilities including...X... and ...Y... were added.
- Further developments in the area included construction of ....X....near (place A) and a new stretch of .....Y....near the southern corner.
- A comparison of both maps reveals a shift / change from..... to .....

#### Exercise 7: describing a map

Now read the following model text to gain an understanding of how to use these words, phrases and clauses into writing.

*The map below shows changes in the coastal town Youngsville in two years 1980 and 2005.*

*Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information. You should write at least 150 words.*



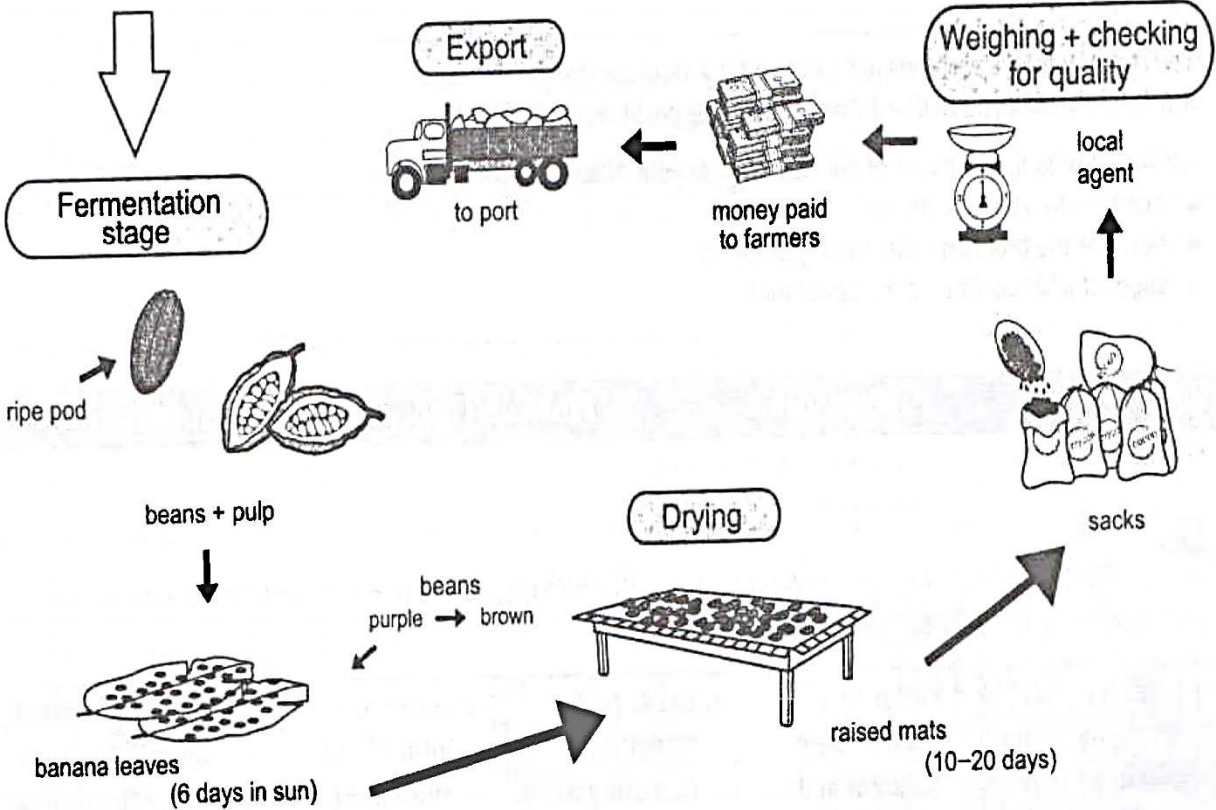
The maps illustrate the developments occurring in the coastal town of Youngsville between 1980 and 2005.

Regarding the first year, the town proved to be a much greener spot with densely planted trees besides individual houses, but during the next 25 years this place experienced a number of major changes. The most substantial one is that all of the trees south of the river Alanah were cut down and at the same time the houses along the railway were demolished and replaced by towers and skyscrapers. What is more, a new industrial site accommodating factories and warehouses sprang up around the airport.

A small number of trees north of the river remained. The woodland was cleared to pave the way for further facility development including a park, a golf course, and car park. Moreover, a stadium was constructed near the north – east corner of the lake. Also, from the river runs a new stretch of railway directly to the north. In addition to these a marina was also built at the mouth of the river.

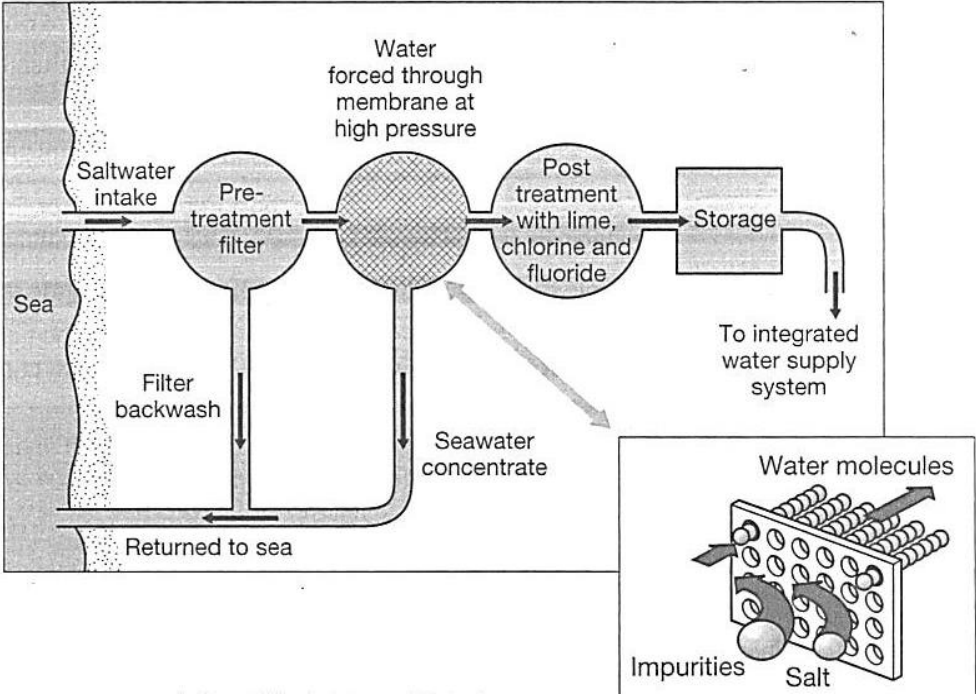
Overall, a comparison of both maps reveals the fact that a rural area has been transformed into a mainly urban landscape. (196 words)

The diagram below shows how cocoa are prepared for export to the countries that make chocolate. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information. You should write at least 150 words.

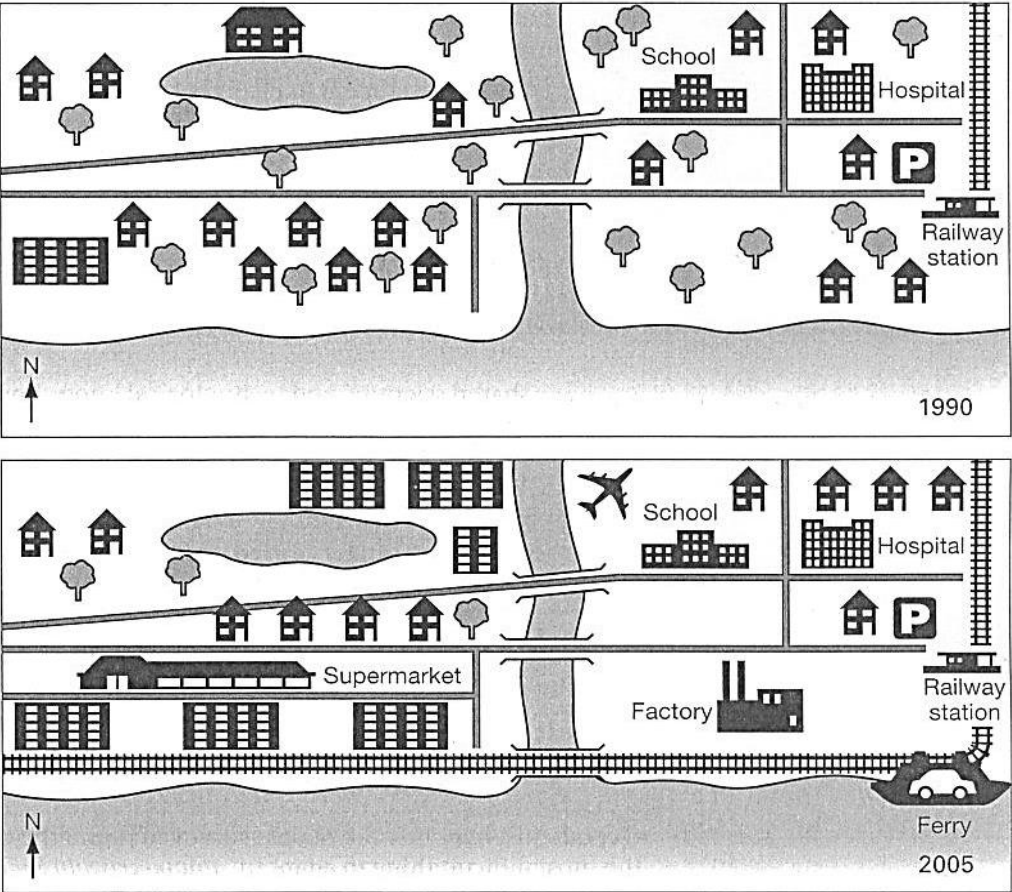




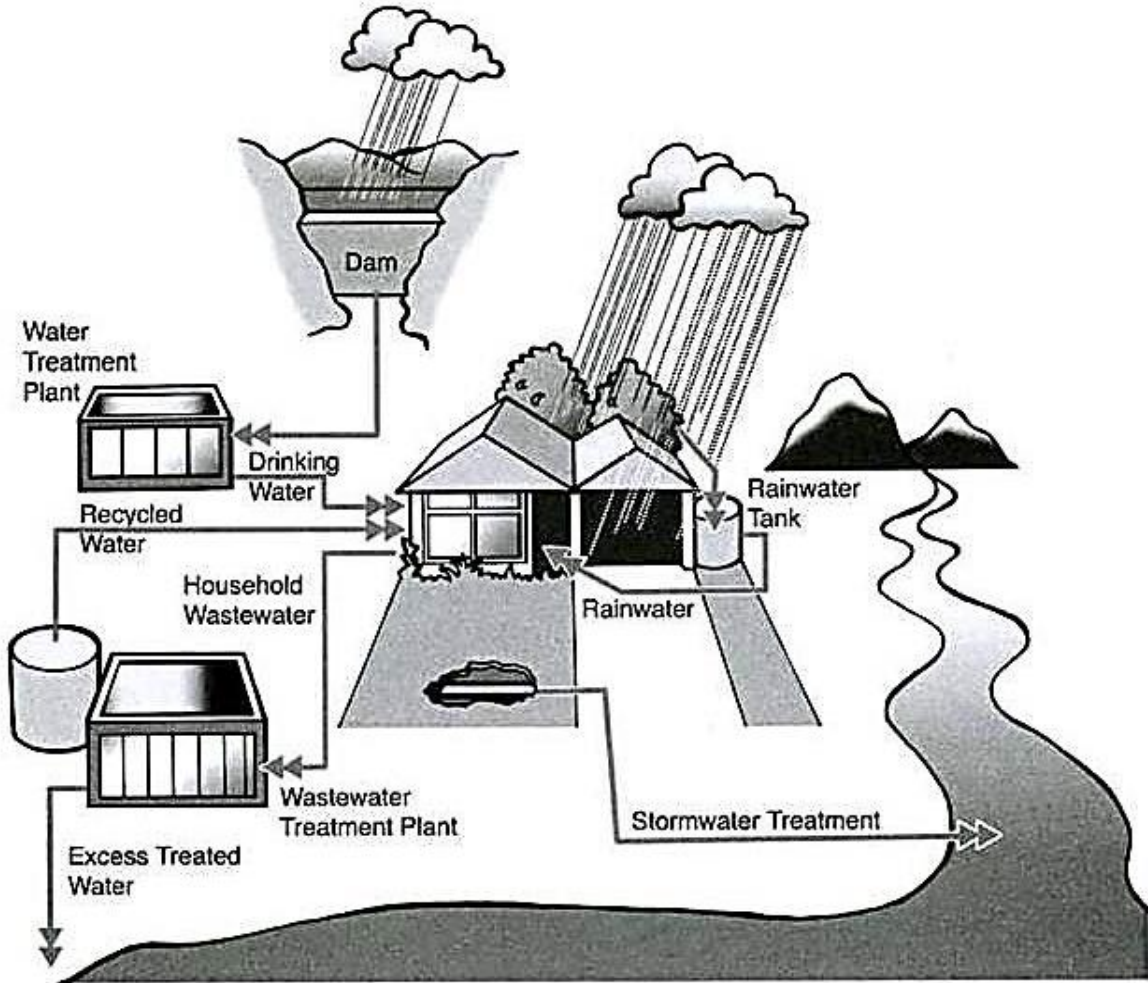
The diagram below shows how salt is removed from sea water to make it drinkable. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information. You should write at least 150 words.



The map below shows the changes that have taken place at the seaside resort of Templeton between 1990 and 2005. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information. You should write at least 150 words.



The diagram below shows how rain water is reused. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information. You should write at least 150 words.



# Answer Key

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**exercise 1**

- a) It starts by transporting coal to company using conveyor belt.
- b) Oxygen
- c) Raw syngas – CO<sub>2</sub>, Mercury, Sulphur are removed
- d) Purified syngas
- e) It goes to gas turbine and produces electricity
- f) They come from the gas turbine and go to heat recovery section where steam is produced.

**exercise 2**

1. Heats
2. Transpires
3. Moves
4. Is formed
5. Pushes
6. Blows
7. Force

**exercise 3****A.**

1. The product which is taken to factory by Lorries.is heated.
2. The information which is collected from different sources is sent to the team of proof readers.
3. The paper which is first corrected is finally published.
4. Coal which is carried to factory using conveyor belt is mixed with oxygen in this step.
5. In the next stage of the process this liquid is heated in a furnace up to a certain temperature which is normally 300.

**B.**

1. The warm water builds up in the west, allowing cool water to rise to the surface in the east.
2. The cool water brings rich nutrients to the surface, enabling the numbers of fish to increase near Peru.
3. In El Niño conditions, warm water flows eastwards, bringing rain to Peru.

**Exercise 4**

The order of statements is:

1. D
2. A
3. E
4. C
5. G
6. F
7. B

**exercise 5**

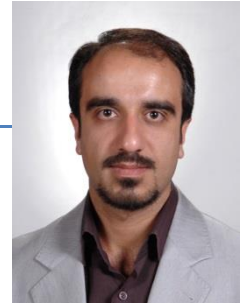
1. Be produced
2. Involves
3. Is built
4. Comprises
5. Is positioned
6. Is used
7. Enters
8. Is forced
9. Turns
10. Is sucked
11. Generates

**exercise 6**

1. Consists
2. Height
3. Approximately
4. Used
5. Much wider

## About the author

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Mr. Reza Atashzamzam is an MA graduate of English language teaching. He has been working as a lecturer at university, teacher trainer and teacher in Shiraz and Tehran, Iran since 2004. He has been internationally trained by **McMillan University** on teaching IELTS. He has spent time on holding workshops for IELTS candidates both in person and online. His teaching career includes:

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