



IELTS WRITING TASK 1

WORKBOOK



2010-2018



From Simon Corcoran:

About IELTS-Simon (website)



My name is Simon Corcoran. I'm an ex-IELTS examiner and I now run IELTS exam preparation courses in Manchester, UK (I'm a native speaker of English).

The aim of this website is to provide good advice about the IELTS exam, and also to help you improve your English language skills.

Some advice about how to use ielts-simon.com:

1. You can begin anywhere; there is no special lesson order.
2. I write a short lesson every day because I believe that daily practice is important.
3. Please use "comments" to communicate with me and with other students.

Every day I'll add another lesson:

- Monday: IELTS Reading (Academic)
- Tuesday: IELTS Listening
- Wednesday: IELTS Writing Task 2 (Academic)
- Thursday: IELTS Writing Task 1 (Academic)
- Friday: IELTS Speaking
- Saturday: Grammar / Advice
- Sunday: Grammar / Advice

Good luck with your studies. I hope this website helps!

Simon

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1

The IELTS Writing Test should start at 11.45am, after the Reading Test. There are 2 parts to the Writing Test, and you have a total of 60 minutes to complete them.

You should spend 20 minutes doing IELTS Writing Task 1. You must write 150 words or more. You will have to describe a graph, chart, table, diagram or map.

The good news is that you can quickly learn how to write a Task 1 essay. I'll make sure you know exactly what to do in the exam.

We'll work on these areas:

- How to structure a good Task 1 essay.
- How to decide what information to include in your description.
- The words, phrases and grammatical structures for describing graphs, charts, tables, diagrams and maps.

By using the right techniques, you can write the kind of essay that examiners like.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [About the exam](#), [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(25\)](#)

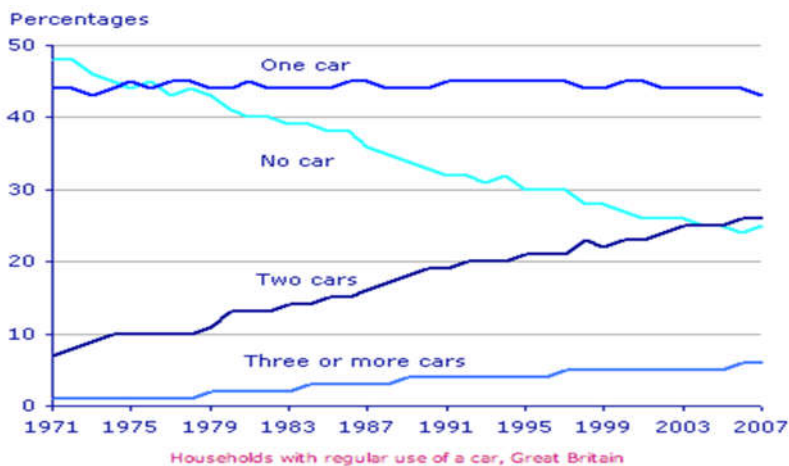
Thursday, June 03, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: general to specific

My IELTS Writing Task 1 essays follow a "general to specific" structure.

- The introduction is the most general part of the essay; it simply tells the reader what the graph is about.
- Then I write a paragraph about the main points or a general trend.
- Finally, I write 2 paragraphs describing specific facts or figures.
- I don't write a conclusion because I have already summarised the information in paragraph 2.

Look at the graph below. First, make sure you understand it. Then look for a general trend. Finally, select specific points on the graph to describe in detail.



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(54\)](#)

Thursday, July 08, 2010

IELTS Essay Correction: July only

Many students have asked me to check their IELTS essays. For July only, I can offer this service, but I'm afraid it will not be free.

- For £20 I will give you a score and some advice. I will also correct your mistakes.
- For £10 I will give you a score and some advice (a short comment).

The prices above are for **one essay** (either task 1 or task 2). If you send me two essays, the price will be double.

So, if you want to check your writing progress, here's what you need to do:

1. Send me one essay (task 1 or task 2) by email. Put the essay in the email, not as an attachment. Tell me whether you want the £10 or £20 service.
2. I will send you an email with a link to pay me using PayPal.
3. When I receive the payment I will check your essay. I will try to return your essay **the next day**.

Hopefully, by using the website, the ebook, and now the essay correction service, you can make real progress with your writing this month.

If you have any questions, use the "comments" area below. To send an essay, email me at ieltssimon@gmail.com.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [IELTS Writing Task 2](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#)

Thursday, July 15, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: describe a map

According to some students, 'map' questions have been popular in recent IELTS exams. There are 2 types of map:

1. A map that shows a comparison (see [this lesson](#))
2. A map that shows development of an area.

For a good example of the second type of map, have a look at [this question](#) from Cambridge IELTS book 1 (go down to page 91), or look at the same map [here](#).

To help you think about how to describe the map, answer these questions:

1. How could you paraphrase "the map shows the development of the village"?
2. How many periods of development are shown, and which period saw the most development?
3. What is the relationship between transport and the growth of the village?
4. How could you group the information in order to write two 'specific details' paragraphs?

I'll give you my answers to these questions tomorrow, and I'll write the full essay for next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, August 05, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: how to write an introduction

The introduction to an IELTS writing task 1 essay should explain what the chart/graph shows. To do this, just paraphrase the question (rewrite it in your own words).

Here is an example description from an IELTS Task 1 question:

The graph below shows the proportion of the population aged 65 and over between 1940 and 2040 in three different countries.

By rewriting this description with a few changes, I can quickly create a good introduction:

The line graph compares the percentage of people aged 65 or more in three countries over a period of 100 years.

If you practise this technique, you will be able to write task 1 introductions very quickly. You will be able to start the writing test quickly and confidently.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(64\)](#)

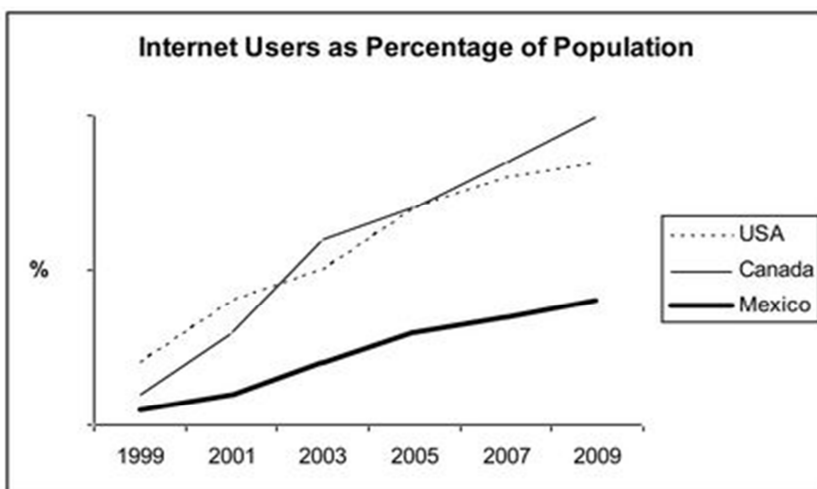
Thursday, August 12, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: graph trends

After your introduction (see last week's lesson), you should write a general summary of the information in the graph, chart etc.

For graphs that show time periods (years, months etc.):

- Look for the overall trend from left to right on the graph. Is there a change from the first year to the last year?
- Do the lines on the graph follow a similar trend, or can you see any differences?



In the paragraph below, I describe the overall trend for all 3 countries. Then I point out a clear difference in the trends for 2 countries.

Summary of trends:

It is clear from the graph that the proportion of people who use the Internet increased in each country

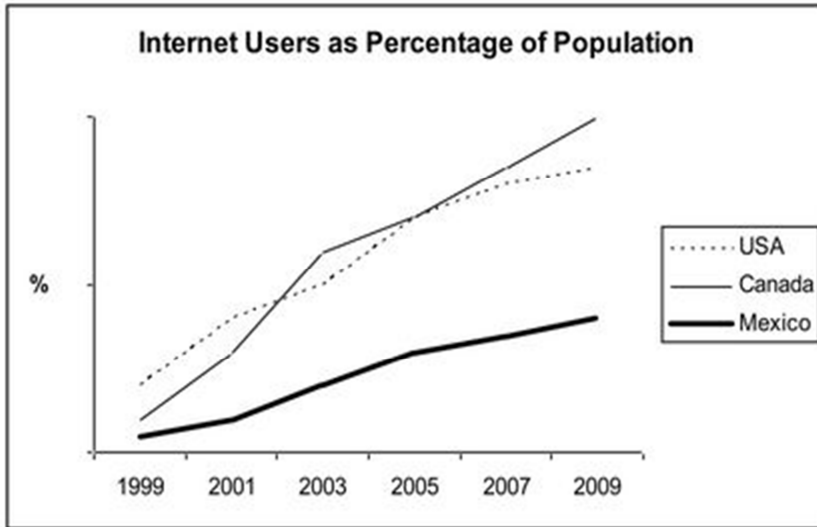
over the period shown. Overall, Mexico had the lowest percentage of Internet users, while Canada experienced the fastest growth in Internet usage.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, August 19, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: easy verbs

For IELTS writing task 1, don't worry about using "difficult" verbs or verb tenses. Forget about continuous and perfect tenses; just use present or past simple.



Fill the gaps in the graph description with the past simple verbs below.

In 1999, the proportion of people using the Internet in the USA _____ about 20%. The figures for Canada and Mexico _____ lower, at about 10% and 5% respectively. In 2005, Internet usage in both the USA and Canada _____ around 70% of the population, while the figure for Mexico _____ just over 25%.

By 2009, the percentage of Internet users _____ highest in Canada. Almost 100% of Canadians _____ the Internet, compared to about 80% of Americans and only 40% of Mexicans.

Verbs:

rose to, were, used, reached, was (x2)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS:

1. was
2. were
3. rose to
4. reached
5. was
6. used

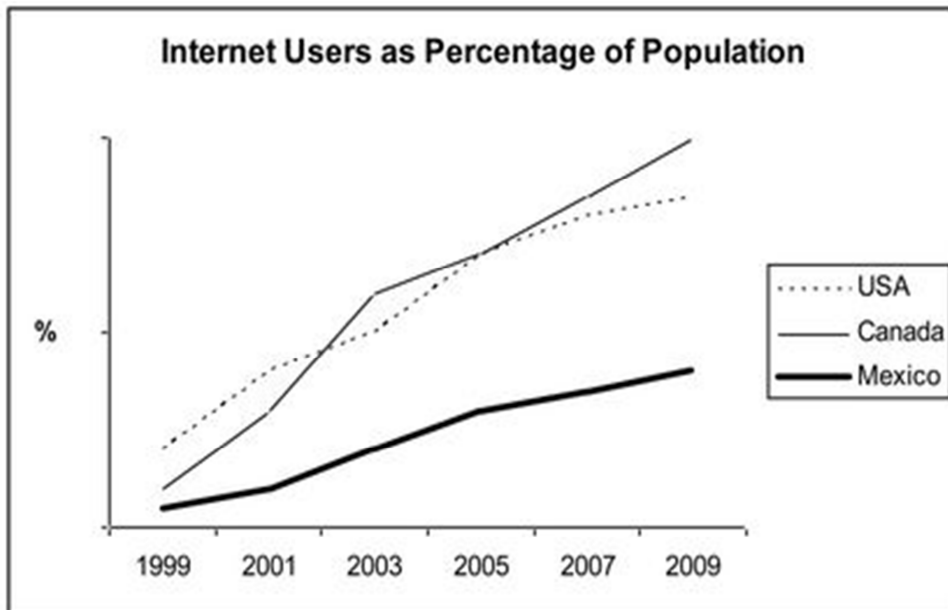
Felora, your paragraphs are good, but don't write "In overall", just write "Overall".

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, August 20, 2010 at 17:55](#)

Thursday, August 26, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay

The essay below is 151 words long. I've tried to make it as simple as possible, but it's still good enough to get a band 9.



The line graph compares the percentage of people in three countries who used the Internet between 1999 and 2009.

It is clear that the proportion of the population who used the Internet increased in each country over the period shown. Overall, a much larger percentage of Canadians and Americans had access to the Internet in comparison with Mexicans, and Canada experienced the fastest growth in Internet usage.

In 1999, the proportion of people using the Internet in the USA was about 20%. The figures for Canada and Mexico were lower, at about 10% and 5% respectively. In 2005, Internet usage in both the USA and Canada rose to around 70% of the population, while the figure for Mexico reached just over 25%.

By 2009, the percentage of Internet users was highest in Canada. Almost 100% of Canadians used the Internet, compared to about 80% of Americans and only 40% of Mexicans.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

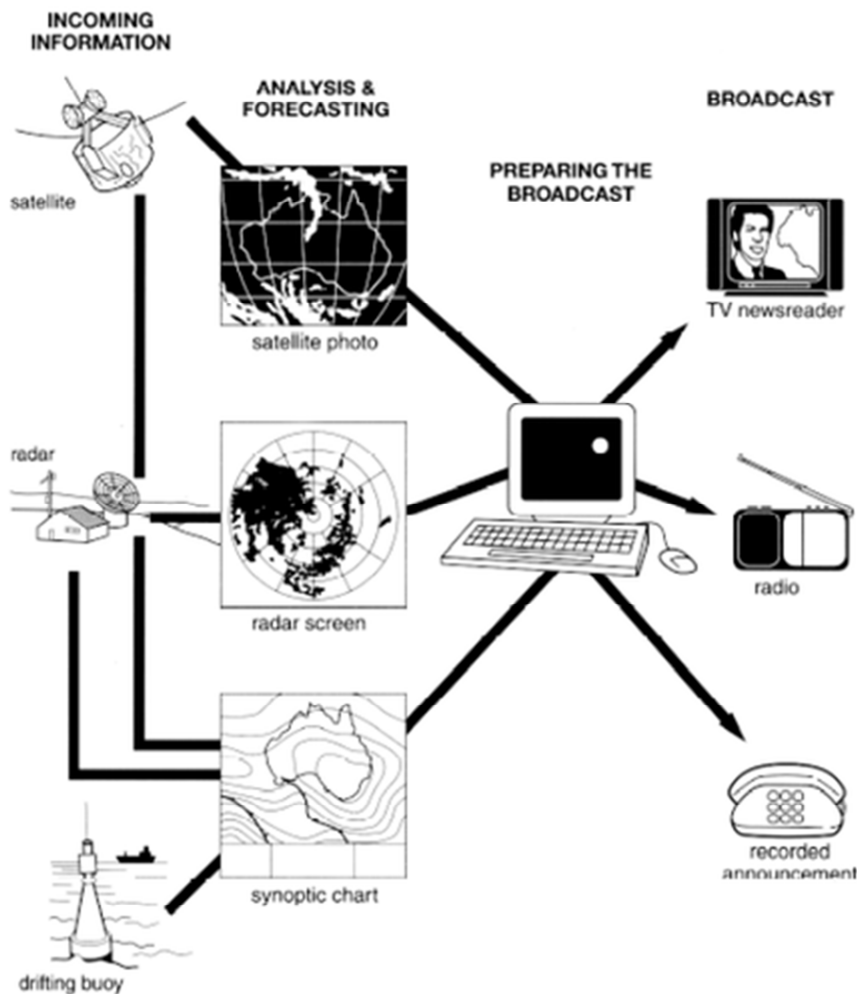
Thursday, September 09, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagram

A 'process diagram' is any diagram that shows steps or stages in a process. Many students worry about this type of question, but they are really quite easy if you know what to do.

Look at the following example from Cambridge IELTS 1, page 51:

The diagram below shows how the Australian Bureau of Meteorology collects up-to-the-minute information on the weather in order to produce reliable forecasts.



Here are some tips for describing this diagram:

1. Introduction: rewrite the question in a different way
2. Summary: say that there are 4 steps, and briefly mention each one
3. Main body: describe steps 1 and 2
4. Main body: describe steps 3 and 4

I'll show you my full essay next week.

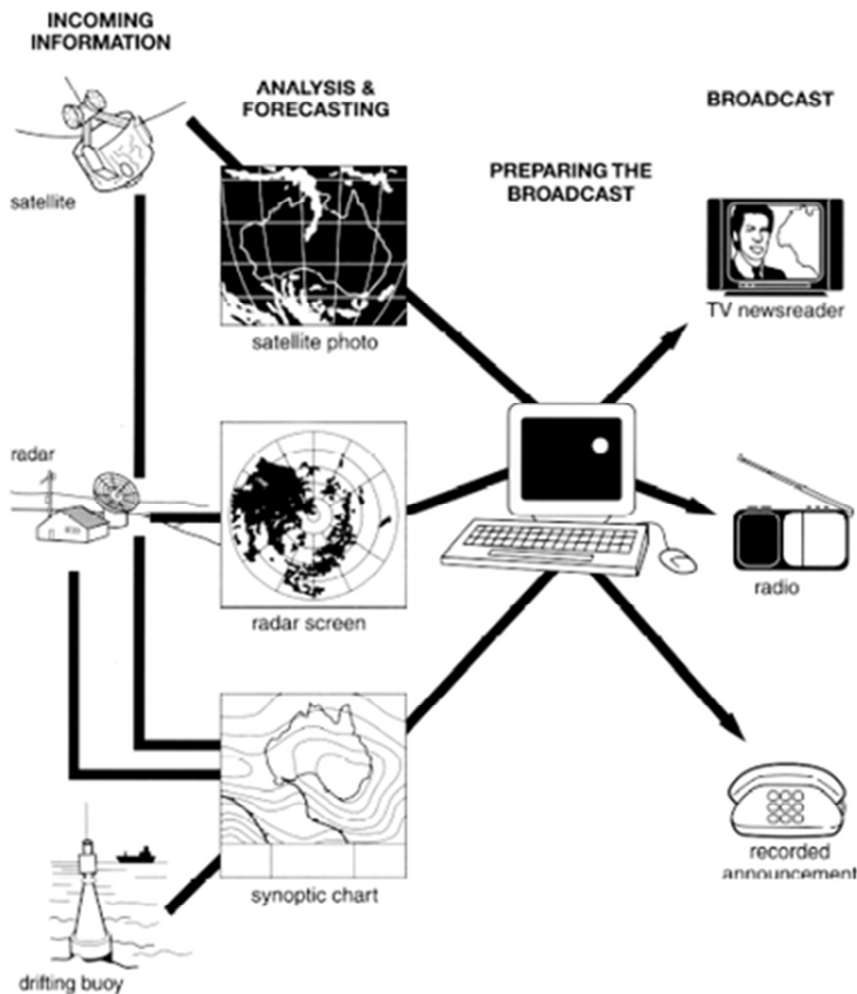
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Thursday, September 16, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagram essay

Last week I suggested an essay structure for the following question:

The diagram below shows how the Australian Bureau of Meteorology collects up-to-the-minute information on the weather in order to produce reliable forecasts.



Here is my full essay (170 words):

The figure illustrates the process used by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology to forecast the weather.

There are four stages in the process, beginning with the collection of information about the weather. This information is then analysed, prepared for presentation, and finally broadcast to the public.

Looking at the first and second stages of the process, there are three ways of collecting weather data and three ways of analysing it. Firstly, incoming information can be received by satellite and presented for analysis as a satellite photo. The same data can also be passed to a radar station and presented on a radar screen or synoptic chart. Secondly, incoming information may be collected directly by radar and analysed on a radar screen or synoptic chart. Finally, drifting buoys also receive data which can be shown on a synoptic chart.

At the third stage of the process, the weather broadcast is prepared on computers. Finally, it is delivered to the public on television, on the radio, or as a recorded telephone announcement.

Note:

I've also sent a full essay version of yesterday's task 2 lesson to everyone who has bought the [ebook](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(53\)](#)

Thursday, September 30, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: more than one chart

How do you answer a task 1 question that has more than one chart or graph?

Here's my advice:

Introduction

Write your introduction in the usual way: paraphrase the question. For this kind of question, it's easier to write 2 sentences e.g. "The first chart illustrates... The second chart shows..."

Summary

Write a paragraph describing the main points. If possible, try to summarise all of the information, rather than writing a separate summary for each chart. Look for a topic or trend that links the charts.

Details

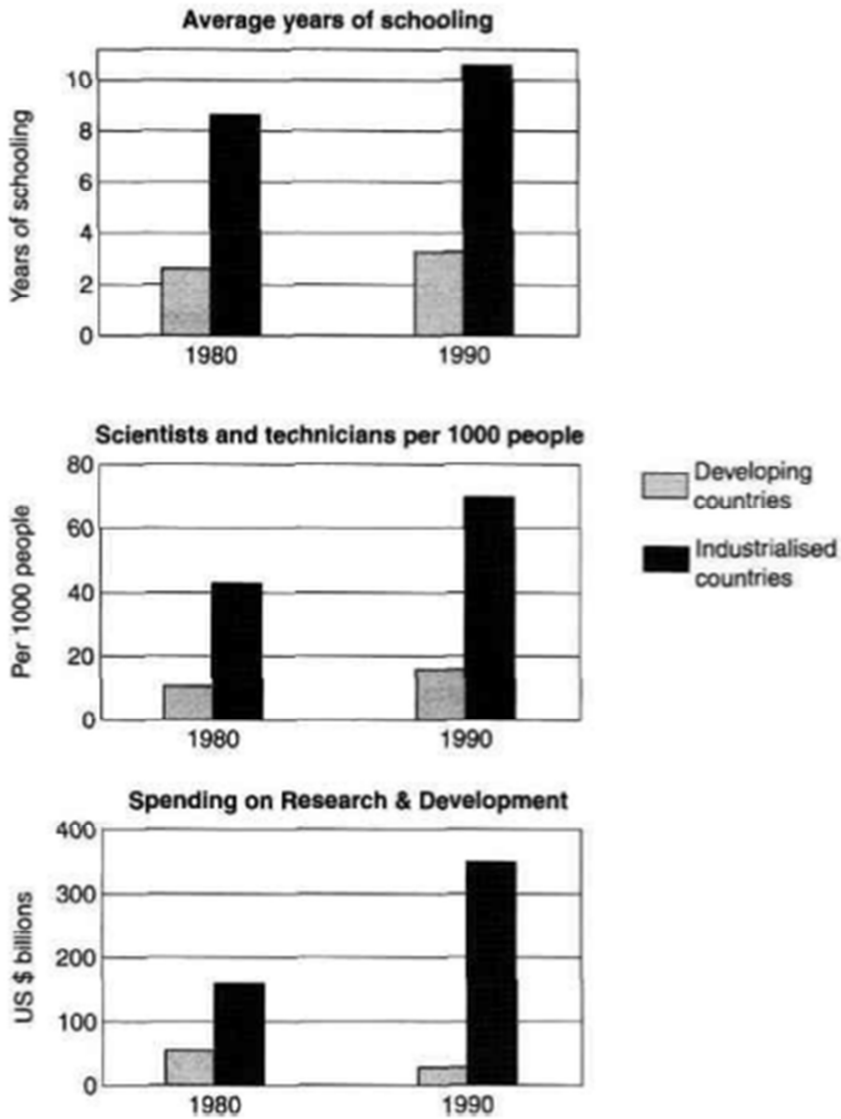
Describe each chart separately. Just write a short paragraph about each chart. Choose the most important information from each one.

Thursday, October 07, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: more than one chart

Look at the following bar charts, taken from Cambridge IELTS 3, page 73.

The charts below show the levels of participation in education and science in developing and industrialised countries in 1980 and 1990.



Advice for band 7 or higher:

You must give an overview of the information. This means that you need to find an overall trend that connects all 3 charts.

Can you find any overall trends? Feel free to discuss your ideas in the "comments" area. I'll tell you what I think tomorrow.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(40\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

Thanks for your contributions. You have all got the right idea.

I think there are 2 key things to notice for the "overview" or summary paragraph:

1. The figures for industrialised countries are/were much higher.
2. There is/was an overall increase in participation in education and science from 1980 to 1990 (for the moment, we can ignore the one figure that decreased).

So, here's my overview. Remember, it comes after the introduction (in which I would already have mentioned that what figures in each chart refer to).

OVERVIEW:

It is clear from the three charts that the figures for developed countries are much higher than those for developing nations. Also, the charts show an overall increase in participation in education and science from 1980 to 1990.

Keep working hard!

Simon

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, October 08, 2010 at 10:34](#)

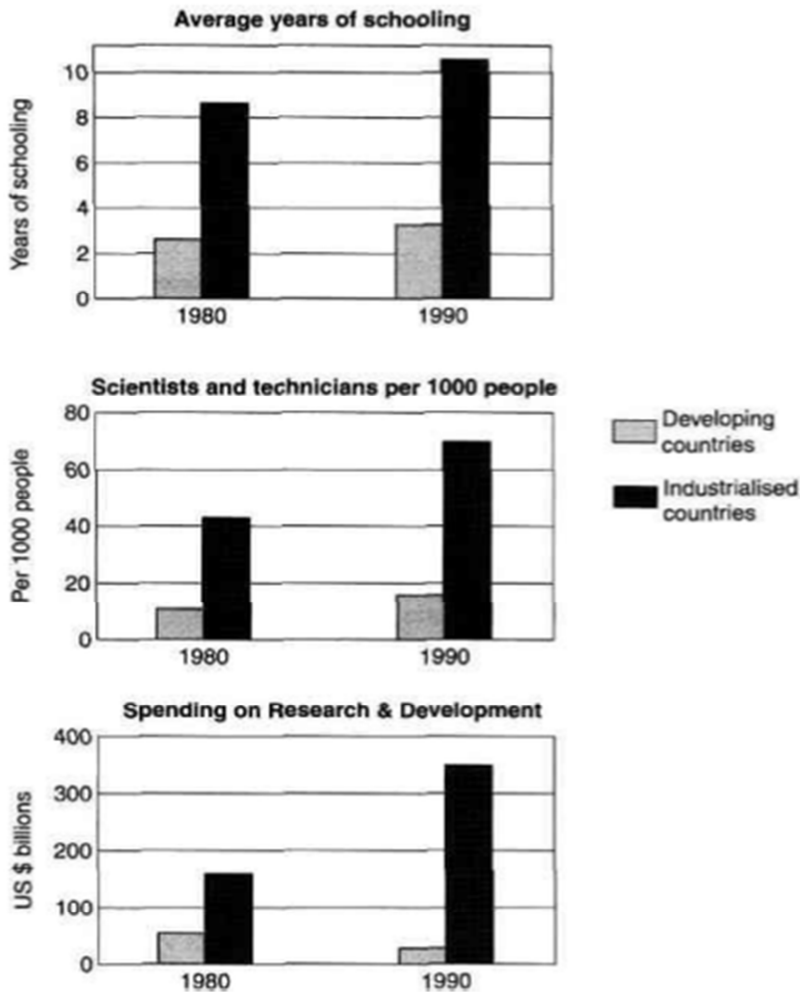
Thursday, October 14, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar charts essay

Here is my full essay for last week's bar chart question. Study the essay carefully to see which details I selected for each paragraph. Notice that I describe the two science bar charts in the same paragraph.

[Click here to see the question](#)

The charts below show the levels of participation in education and science in developing and industrialised countries in 1980 and 1990.



The three bar charts show average years of schooling, numbers of scientists and technicians, and research and development spending in developing and developed countries. Figures are given for 1980 and 1990.

It is clear from the charts that the figures for developed countries are much higher than those for developing nations. Also, the charts show an overall increase in participation in education and science from 1980 to 1990.

People in developing nations attended school for an average of around 3 years, with only a slight increase in years of schooling from 1980 to 1990. On the other hand, the figure for industrialised countries rose from nearly 9 years of schooling in 1980 to nearly 11 years in 1990.

From 1980 to 1990, the number of scientists and technicians in industrialised countries almost doubled to about 70 per 1000 people. Spending on research and development also saw rapid growth in these countries, reaching \$350 billion in 1990. By contrast, the number of science workers in developing countries remained below 20 per 1000 people, and research spending fell from about \$50 billion to only \$25 billion.

(187 words)

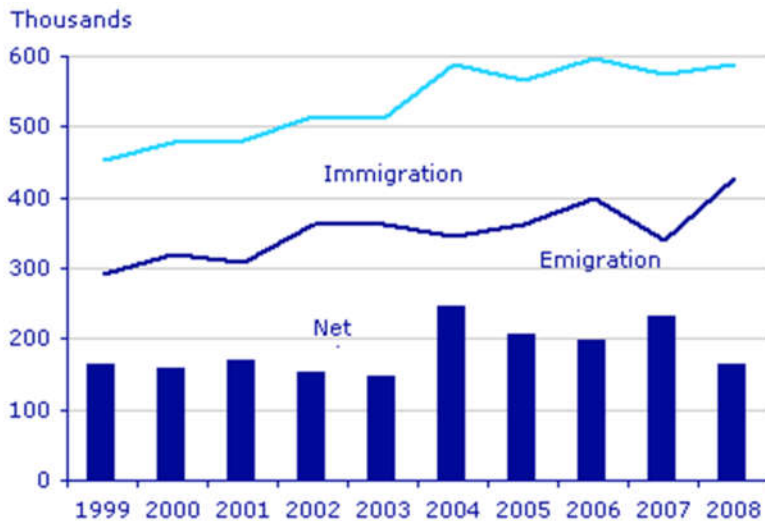
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: look at the chart first

A good piece of advice for IELTS writing task 1: look at the chart/graph/picture **before** you read the question.

Sometimes the question contains words that you don't know, and this can cause you to panic. But you don't really need to understand the question if you already understand the chart.

If you understand the chart below, you will understand any IELTS chart, graph or picture! Feel free to explain this chart in the "comments" area.



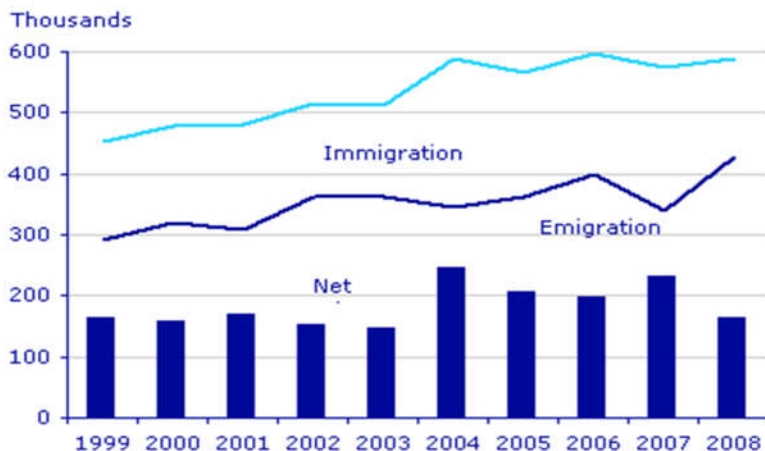
Long-Term International Migration, UK, 1999-2008

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)

Thursday, November 04, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: sample essay (migration)

Read my full essay for the chart below. How have I organised the information? What language have I used to explain **changes** and to make **comparisons**?



Long-Term International Migration, UK, 1999-2008

Full essay (159 words):

The chart gives information about UK immigration, emigration and net migration between 1999 and 2008.

Both immigration and emigration rates rose over the period shown, but the figures for immigration were significantly higher. Net migration peaked in 2004 and 2007.

In 1999, over 450,000 people came to live in the UK, while the number of people who emigrated stood at just under 300,000. The figure for net migration was around 160,000, and it remained at a similar level until 2003. From 1999 to 2004, the immigration rate rose by nearly 150,000 people, but there was a much smaller rise in emigration. Net migration peaked at almost 250,000 people in 2004.

After 2004, the rate of immigration remained high, but the number of people emigrating fluctuated. Emigration fell suddenly in 2007, before peaking at about 420,000 people in 2008. As a result, the net migration figure rose to around 240,000 in 2007, but fell back to around 160,000 in 2008.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Thursday, November 18, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: two different charts

Sometimes you are given two different charts e.g. a line graph and a bar chart, or a bar chart and a pie chart.

How to describe two different charts in 4 paragraphs:

1. Mention each chart in the introduction. Sometimes it's easier to write a sentence for each.
2. Describe the main feature of each chart. If there is a connection between the charts, describe it.
3. Describe the first chart.
4. Describe the second chart.

Find Cambridge IELTS 4, page 54, which shows a line graph and a pie chart.

[Click here](#) to see a website that has a copy of this question.

Here is my introduction and summary paragraph for the above question:

The line graph compares daily electricity consumption in England during the winter and summer, while the pie chart shows information about the different uses of this electricity in an average English household.

It is clear that English homes use around double the amount of electricity in the winter compared to the summer. Throughout the year, just over half of the electricity consumed by English households is used for heating rooms and water.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, November 25, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts are easy!

A lot of people seem to be worried about pie charts. Here are some questions to get you thinking about how to describe them:

1. What does a pie chart **always** show?
2. Are pie charts used for comparing?
3. Do pie charts show changes (increase, decrease)?
4. What verb tense would you use to describe pie charts?

Feel free to answer these questions in the "comments" area below. I'll add my answers tomorrow.

PS. There could be more than one answer to some of the questions.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

1. Yes, pie charts always show you percentages because the whole "pie" is always 100%.
2. Yes, you can compare the percentages/numbers within a pie chart, or you might have to compare between 2 or more pie charts. "Comparing" will be the main focus of a pie chart task.
3. You can only write about increases and decreases if there are 2 or more pie charts and they show percentages for different years (changes over time).
4. Yes, past simple when past years are shown, or present simple if no years are shown.

I'll look at a pie chart question next week.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, November 26, 2010 at 18:22](#)

Thursday, December 02, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: four pie charts essay

Here is my full essay for a question about 4 pie charts.

Cambridge IELTS book 7, page 101:

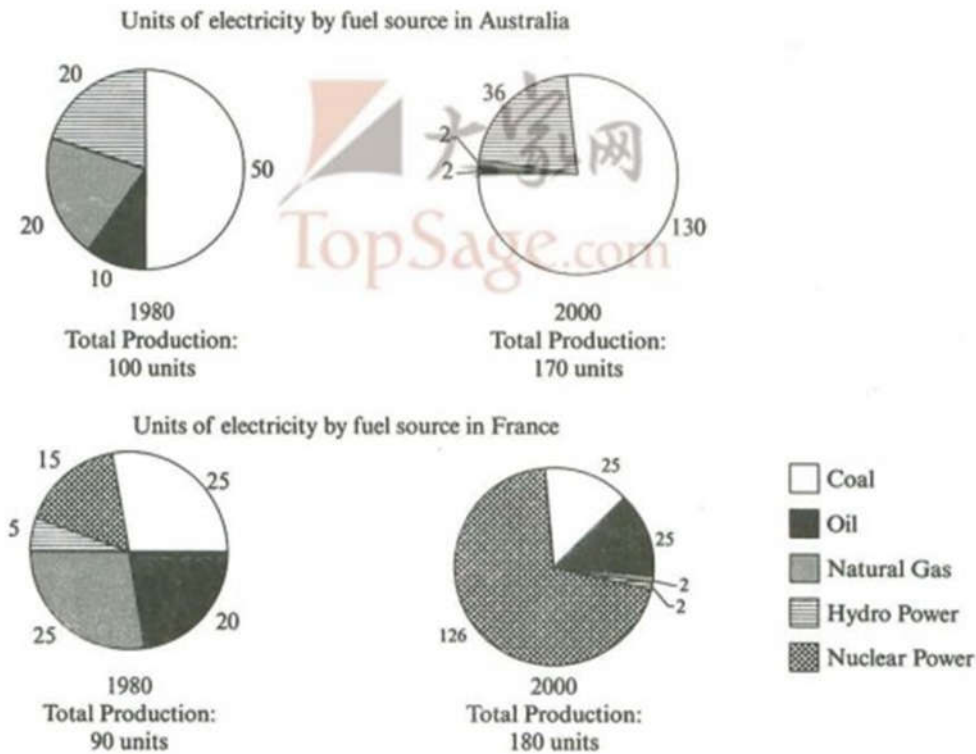
WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The pie charts below show units of electricity production by fuel source in Australia and France in 1980 and 2000.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



The pie charts compare the amount of electricity produced using five different sources of fuel in two countries over two separate years.

Total electricity production increased dramatically from 1980 to 2000 in both Australia and France. While the totals for both countries were similar, there were big differences in the fuel sources used.

Coal was used to produce 50 of the total 100 units of electricity in Australia in 1980, rising to 130 out of 170 units in 2000. By contrast, nuclear power became the most important fuel source in France in 2000, producing almost 75% of the country's electricity.

Australia depended on hydro power for just under 25% of its electricity in both years, but the amount of electricity produced using this type of power fell from 5 to only 2 units in France. Oil, on the other hand, remained a relatively important fuel source in France, but its use declined in Australia. Both countries relied on natural gas for electricity production significantly more in 1980 than in 2000.

(170 words)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(63\)](#)

Thursday, December 09, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagrams

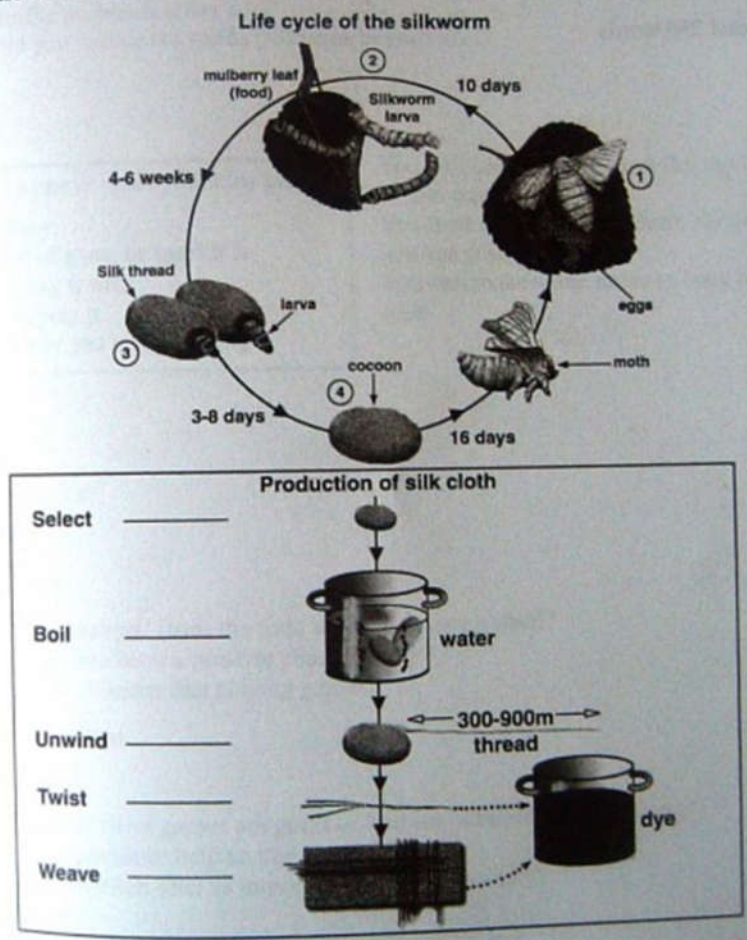
Here is some advice for describing a process diagram. The question I'm using comes from Cambridge IELTS 6. It's also on [this website](#) (go down the page to test 3).

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The diagrams below show the life cycle of the silkworm and the stages in the production of silk cloth.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



Advice:

1. Introduction: paraphrase the question (one sentence).
2. Summary paragraph: write how many steps there are. You could also mention the first step and the last step (two sentences).
3. Details: describe each step in the diagrams.

Introduction and summary paragraphs:

The figures illustrate the stages in the life of a silkworm and the process of producing silk cloth.

There are four main stages in the life cycle of the silkworm, from eggs to adult moth. The process of silk cloth production involves six steps, from silkworm cocoon to silk material.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, December 16, 2010

IELTS Writing Task 1: describing steps

For process diagrams, you will need to describe each step in order.

[Click here](#) to see an example process diagram.

Here are my 2 main paragraphs describing the steps:

At the beginning of the process, clay is dug from the ground. The clay is put through a metal grid, and it passes onto a roller where it is mixed with sand and water. After that, the clay can be shaped into bricks in two ways: either it is put in a mould, or a wire cutter is used.

At the fourth stage in the process, the clay bricks are placed in a drying oven for one to two days. Next, the bricks are heated in a kiln at a moderate temperature (200 - 900 degrees Celsius) and then at a high temperature (up to 1300 degrees), before spending two to three days in a cooling chamber. Finally, the finished bricks are packaged and delivered.

Note:

Look at the use of passive verbs e.g. is dug, can be shaped, are placed.

I divided the stages into 2 paragraphs to make the essay easier to read.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Thursday, January 06, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: comparisons

Yesterday I looked at [this question](#) with my students. When describing a line graph:

- Do not describe each line separately.
- You must compare the figures.

Here is an example of how to compare the 4 lines for the year 1990:

In 1990, almost 90% of 14 to 24 year olds went to the cinema at least once a year. Cinema attendance was about 30% lower than this among people aged 25 to 34 and 35 to 49, while the figure for those aged over 50 was the lowest, at only 40%.

If you can write comparisons like this, you will get a very high score. Try using my comparison as a model to help you compare the figures for 2010.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(43\)](#)

Thursday, January 13, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'consumer durables' table

Yesterday I looked at the following question with my students.

The table below shows the consumer durables owned in Britain from 1972 to 1983.

Consumer durables	1972	1974	1976	1978	1979	1981	1982	1983
Percentage of households with:								
central heating	39	43	48	52	55	59	60	64
television	93	95	96	96	97	97	97	98
video								18
vacuum cleaner	87	89	92	92	93	94	95	
refrigerator	73	81	88	91	92	93	93	94
washing machine	66	68	71	75	74	78	79	80
dishwasher				3	3	4	4	5
telephone	42	50	54	60	67	75	76	77

Here's our essay plan:

1. Introduction: paraphrase the question
2. Overview: highest = TV, biggest change = telephone and central heating
3. Describe figures for the 4 items with highest percentages
4. Describe figures for the 4 items with lowest percentages

We did paragraph 3 as an example:

In 1972, 93% of British homes had a television, and this increased to 98% in 1983. The majority of homes also had a vacuum cleaner and a refrigerator. These consumer durables were owned by over 90% of households by the end of the period. Washing machines were the fourth most common item, with 66% of households owning one in 1972, rising to 80% of households in 1983.

Thursday, February 17, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: active & passive for processes

When describing a process, verbs may be 'active' or 'passive'.

Active: A chicken lays an egg.

Passive: An egg is laid (by a chicken).

We often use the active to describe a natural process and the passive to describe a man-made process. The sentences below come from [this lesson](#). I've underlined the active and passive verbs.

Life cycle (natural process):

The adult moth lays its eggs.

The silkworm larva produces silk thread.

Production of silk cloth (man-made process):

The cocoon is boiled in water.

The silk thread is unwound, twisted and then dyed.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, March 03, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'table' essay

The table below gives information about the underground railway systems in six cities.

City	Date opened	Kilometres of route	Passengers per year (in millions)
London	1863	394	775
Paris	1900	199	1191
Tokyo	1927	155	1927
Washington DC	1976	126	144
Kyoto	1981	11	45
Los Angeles	2001	28	50

Full essay (band 9):

The table shows data about the underground rail networks in six major cities.

The table compares the six networks in terms of their age, size and the number of people who use them each year. It is clear that the three oldest underground systems are larger and serve significantly more passengers than the newer systems.

The London underground is the oldest system, having opened in 1863. It is also the largest system, with 394 kilometres of route. The second largest system, in Paris, is only about half the size of the London underground, with 199 kilometres of route. However, it serves more people per year. While only third in terms of size, the Tokyo system is easily the most used, with 1927 million passengers per year.

Of the three newer networks, the Washington DC underground is the most extensive, with 126 kilometres of route, compared to only 11 kilometres and 28 kilometres for the Kyoto and Los Angeles systems. The Los Angeles network is the newest, having opened in 2001, while the Kyoto network is the smallest and serves only 45 million passengers per year.

(185 words)

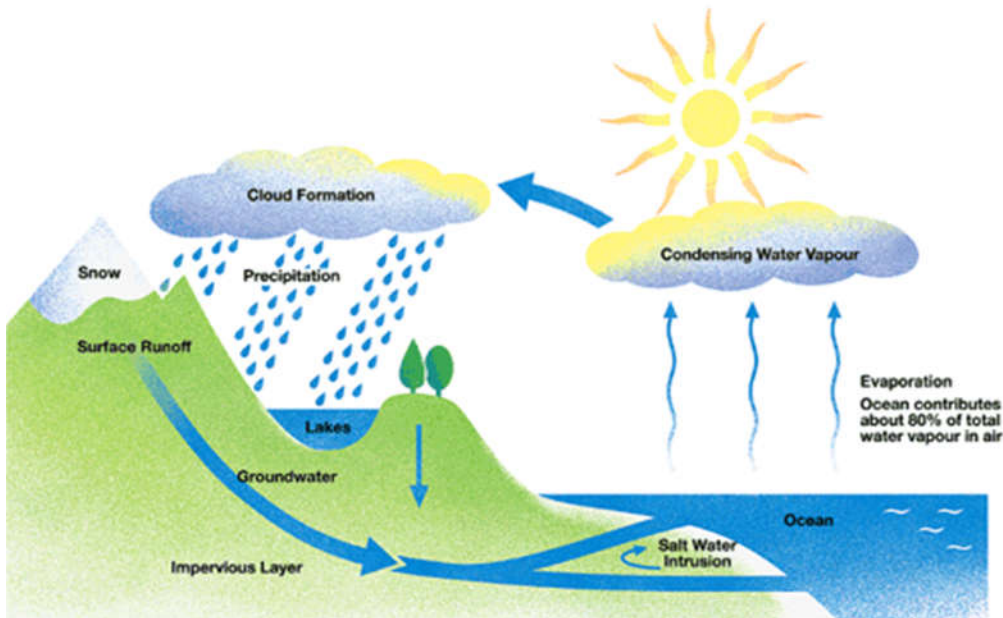
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(47\)](#)

Thursday, March 10, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'natural process' diagram

Some of my students are working on the following question:

The diagram below shows the water cycle, which is the continuous movement of water on, above and below the surface of the Earth.



Here are some tips:

- 1. Introduction:** Paraphrase the question. You could use the words 'natural process'.
- 2. Summary:** Say how many steps there are, and mention the first and last steps. You can choose where the cycle begins, but I'd start from the ocean.
- 3. Details (2 paragraphs):** Describe the process step by step. You don't have to mention every word shown on the diagram, so don't worry if you don't understand 'salt water intrusion'.
- 4. No conclusion:** It's a description, so there is nothing to conclude.

Note:

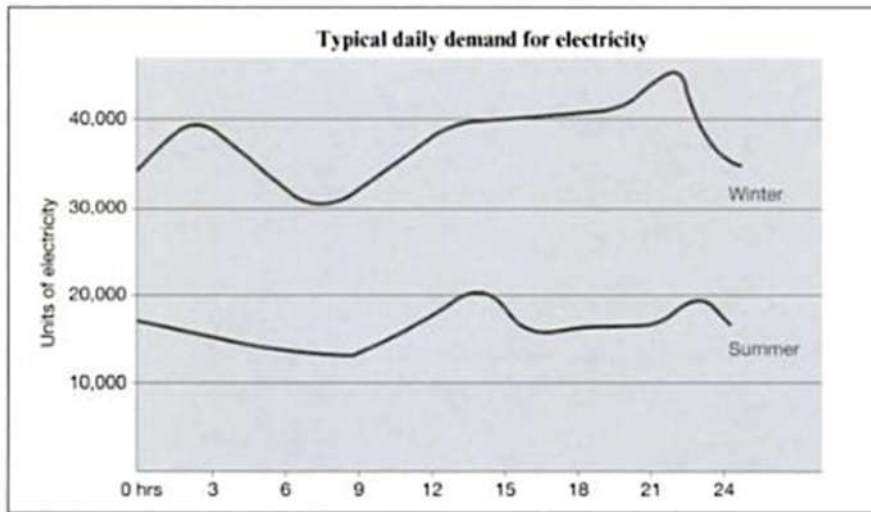
Verbs will be active, not passive e.g. "water evaporates", not "water is evaporated".

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Thursday, March 17, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph

The graph below shows the demand for electricity in England during typical days in winter and summer. (Cambridge IELTS 4, page 54)



Fill the gaps below using words from the following list:

demand (x2)
 lowest
 at (x2)
 in
 highest
 consumption (x2)
 peaks
 twice

1. The daily _____ of electricity in England is about _____ as high in the winter compared to the summer.
2. During the winter, _____ for electricity _____ around 45,000 units between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m.
3. During the summer, _____ of electricity is at its _____, at about 20,000 units, between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.
4. _____ for electricity is _____ its _____ between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. _____ both seasons.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(38\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. consumption, twice
2. demand, peaks at
3. consumption, highest
4. demand, at, lowest, in

Note: "demand FOR", "consumption OF"

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, March 18, 2011 at 17:00](#)

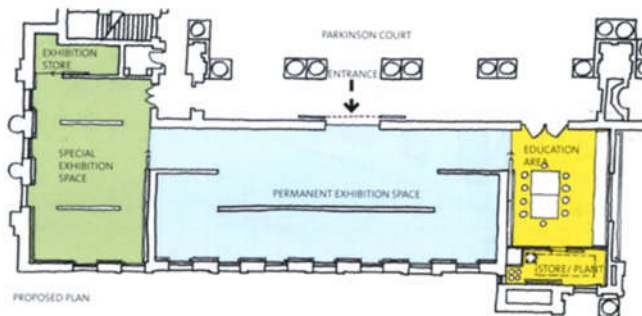
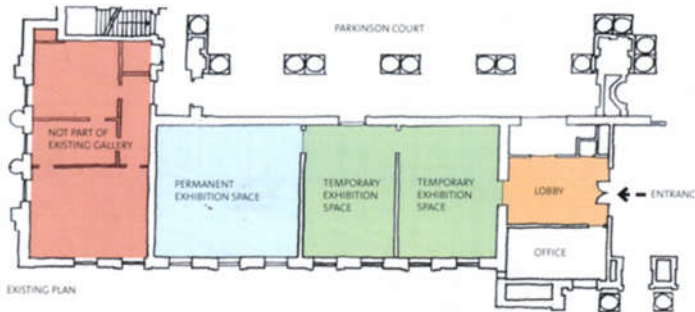
Thursday, March 24, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'before and after' diagram

Several students have asked for help with the following type of question.

The diagrams below are existing and proposed floor plans for the redevelopment of an art gallery.

(click on the diagram to enlarge it)



Here's my advice:

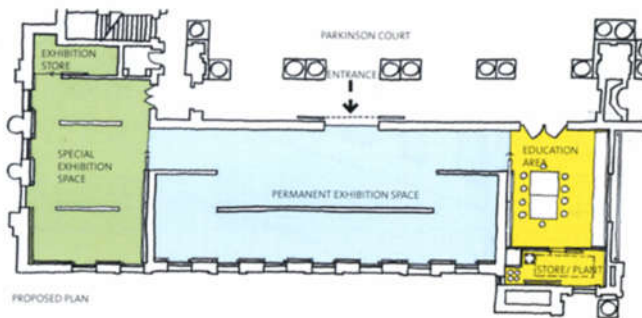
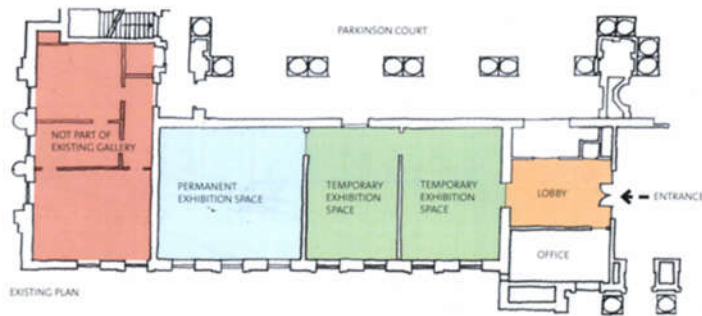
1. Introduction: paraphrase the question
2. Summary: the main changes to the gallery (entrance and use of space)
3. Paragraph comparing entrance, lobby, office, education area
4. Paragraph comparing use of space for exhibitions

Thursday, March 31, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'building plans' essay

Here is my full essay for last week's question.

[Click here to see the question](#)



The first picture shows the layout of an art gallery, and the second shows some proposed changes to the gallery space.

It is clear that significant changes will be made in terms of the use of floor space in the gallery. There will be a completely new entrance and more space for exhibitions.

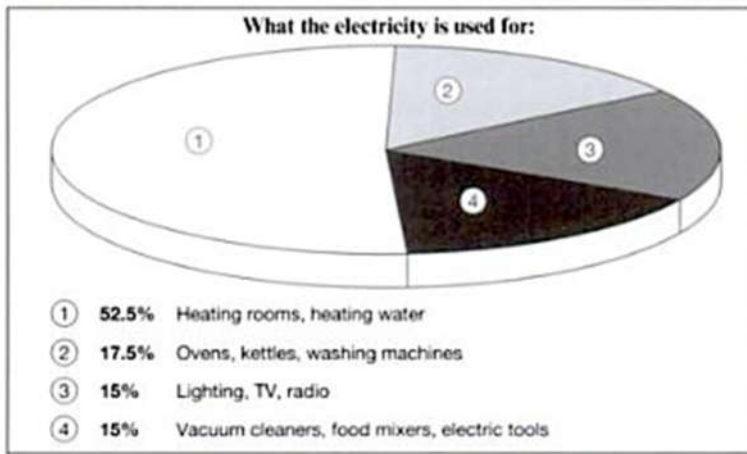
At present, visitors enter the gallery through doors which lead into a lobby. However, the plan is to move the entrance to the Parkinson Court side of the building, and visitors will walk straight into the exhibition area. In place of the lobby and office areas, which are shown on the existing plan, the new gallery plan shows an education area and a small storage area.

The permanent exhibition space in the redeveloped gallery will be about twice as large as it is now because it will occupy the area that is now used for temporary exhibitions. There will also be a new room for special exhibitions. This room is shown in red on the existing plan and is not currently part of the gallery. (178 words, band 9)

Thursday, April 07, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart

The pie chart below shows how electricity is used in an average English home. (Cambridge IELTS 4, page 54)



Fill the gaps using words from the following list.

appliances
 remaining
 account
 proportion
 for
 largest
 household

In an average English home, the _____ of electricity, 52.5%, is used for heating rooms and water.

Three kitchen _____, namely ovens, kettles and washing machines, _____ 17.5% of _____ electricity use.

The _____ 30% of electricity is used for lighting, televisions and radios (15%), and vacuum cleaners, food mixers and electric tools (15%).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(46\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

largest proportion
 appliances, account for, household
 remaining

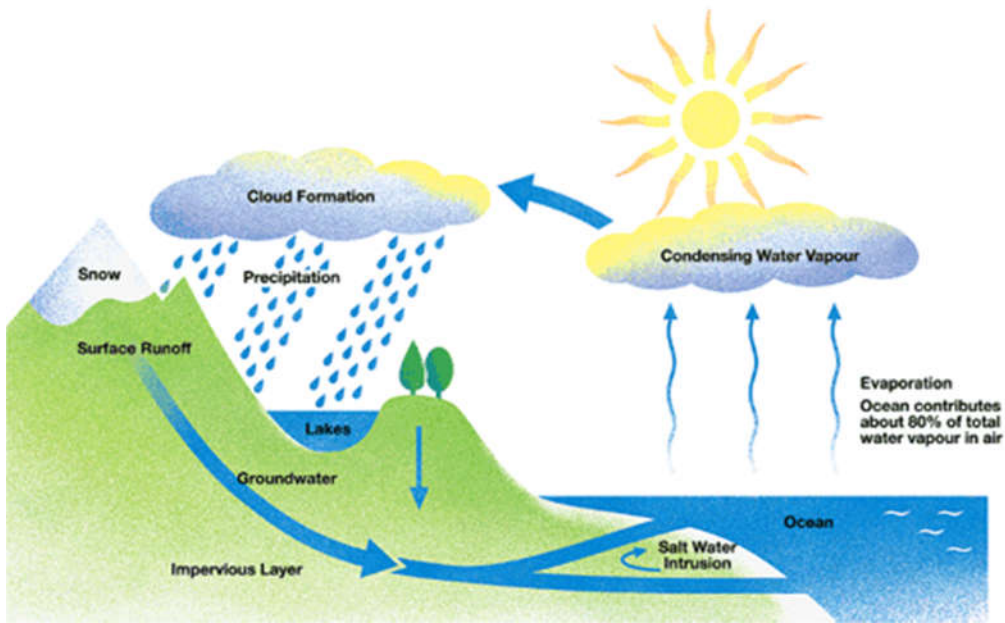
Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, April 08, 2011 at 15:36](#)

Thursday, April 14, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'water cycle' essay

Several people have asked me for the full essay for this question, so here it is!

The diagram below shows the water cycle, which is the continuous movement of water on, above and below the surface of the Earth.



The picture illustrates the way in which water passes from ocean to air to land during the natural process known as the water cycle.

Three main stages are shown on the diagram. Ocean water evaporates, falls as rain, and eventually runs back into the oceans again.

Beginning at the evaporation stage, we can see that 80% of water vapour in the air comes from the oceans. Heat from the sun causes water to evaporate, and water vapour condenses to form clouds. At the second stage, labelled 'precipitation' on the diagram, water falls as rain or snow.

At the third stage in the cycle, rainwater may take various paths. Some of it may fall into lakes or return to the oceans via 'surface runoff'. Otherwise, rainwater may filter through the ground, reaching the impervious layer of the earth. Salt water intrusion is shown to take place just before groundwater passes into the oceans to complete the cycle.

(156 words, band 9)

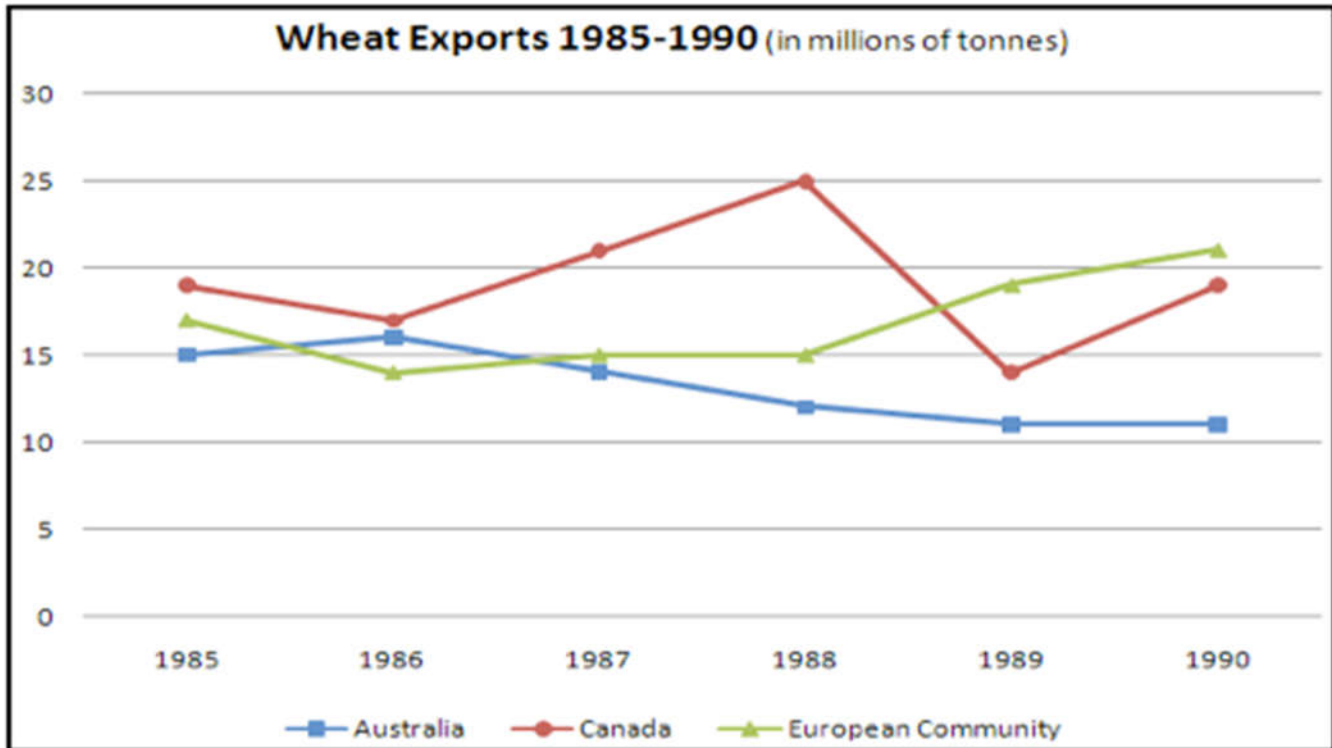
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Thursday, April 21, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: common mistakes

Many students make the same mistakes when describing numbers. You must express numbers correctly if you want to get a high score.

Look at the graph below (thanks to Magi for sending it to me).



What is wrong with these sentences?

1. In 1985, Canada was about 19 million tonnes.
2. Australia was lower, at 15 million tonnes of wheat exports.
3. In 1988, Canada increased by about 5 million tonnes of wheat exports.
4. Australia exported about 11 millions of tonnes of wheat in 1990.

What big mistake in the first 3 sentences has not been made in the 4th sentence?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(39\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. In 1985, Canada exported about 19 million tonnes of wheat.
2. Australia exported less wheat, at 15 million tonnes.
3. In 1988, Canadian wheat exports increased by about 5 million tonnes.
4. Australia exported about 11 million tonnes of wheat in 1990.

NOTE 1:

You can't say "Canada was 19 million tonnes" or "Australia was lower" or "Canada increased" - the country didn't increase, the wheat exports increased.

NOTE 2:

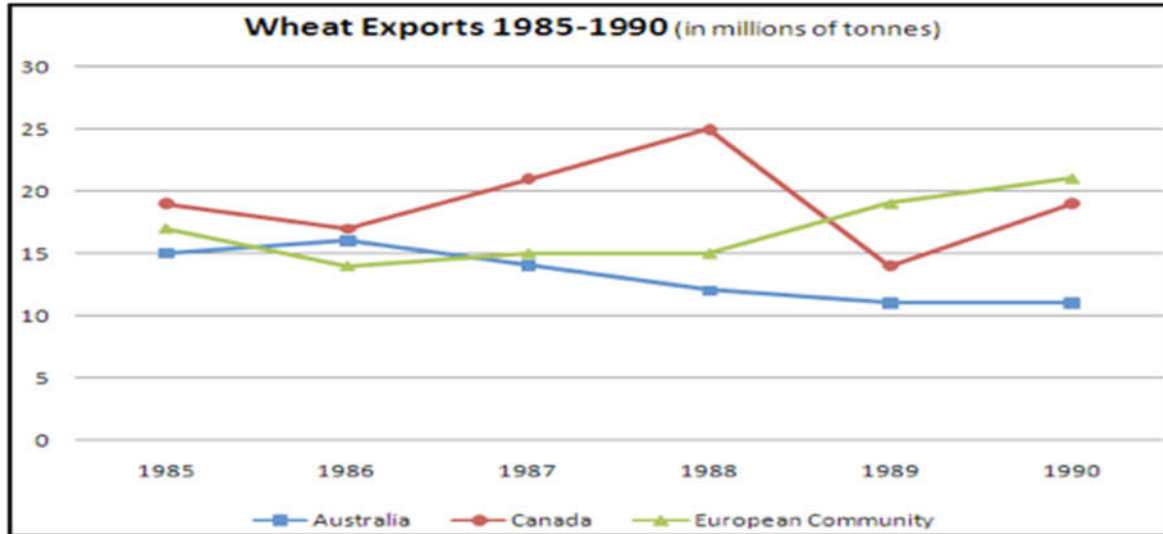
The verb use was the big mistake in the first 3 sentences (e.g. 'Canada was' - see note 1). The 4th sentence is better because the verb 'exported' is used. However, we don't say "11 millions of tonnes", we say "11 million tonnes".

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Saturday, April 23, 2011 at 12:00](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: the 'overview'

If you want to get a high score for task 1, you must write an 'overview' of the information. An overview is a summary of the main points or general trends.

How would you write an overview for this graph?



I try to write two sentences for my overview, so I look for two main points or trends. I don't usually mention any numbers because I save them for my 'details' paragraphs.

Example overview:

It is clear that Canada exported more wheat than Australia and the European Community for most of the period shown. However, while Canada's wheat exports fluctuated and Australia's fell, wheat exports from the European Community rose steadily.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(51\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: to, by, with, at

Several people have asked me to explain how to use **to**, **by**, **with** and **at** when describing numbers. Here are some examples to give you a basic idea of the differences:

1) Use **to** when describing what happened to the number:

In 2008, the rate of unemployment rose to 10%.

2) Use **by** when describing the amount of change between two numbers:

In 2009, the rate of unemployment fell by 2% (from 10% to 8%).

3) Use **with** to give the idea of 'having' the number:

Obama won the election with 52% of the vote.

4) Use **at** to add the number on the end of a sentence:

Unemployment reached its highest level in 2008, at 10%.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

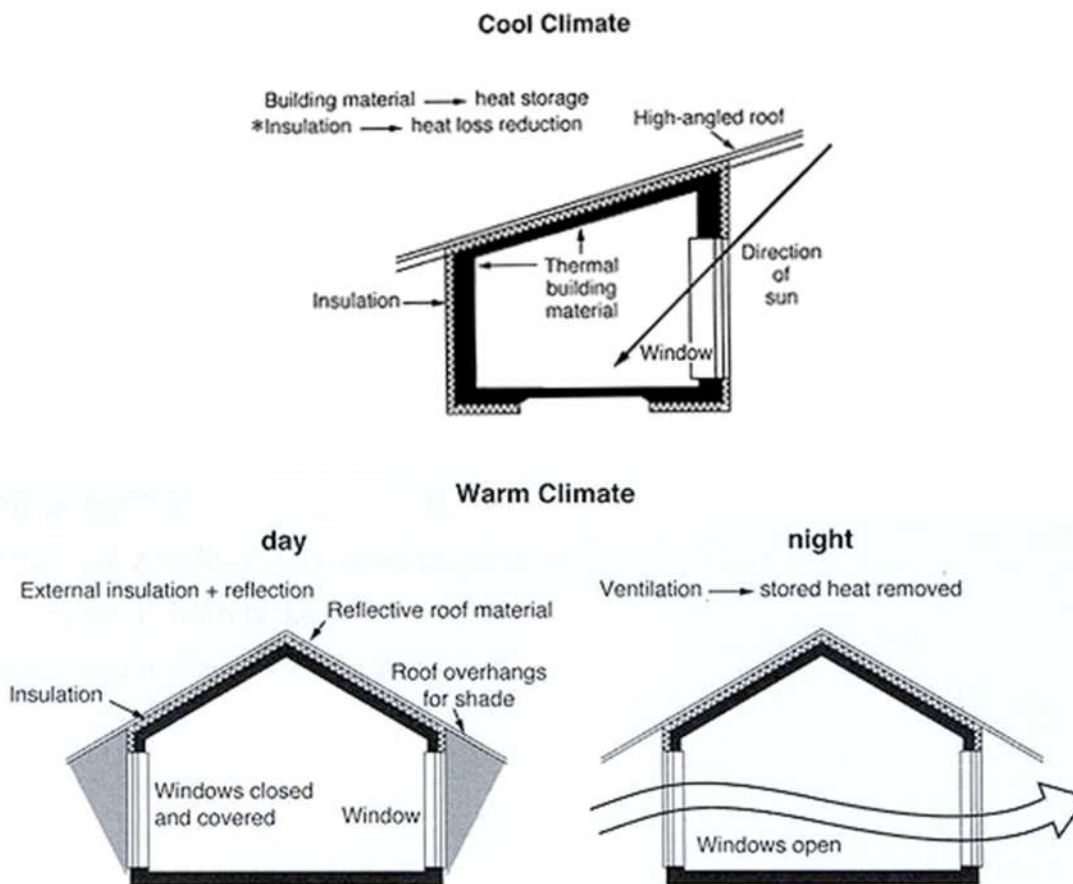
Thursday, May 26, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: always the same method

Students worry about how to describe diagrams, but the basic method is always the same: introduction, summary of main points, specific details.

Look at the following question for example:

The diagrams below show some principles of house design for cool and for warm climates.



Although this question is different from the normal graph/chart questions, you should structure your answer in the same way. Try to write 4 paragraphs:

1. **Introduction:** paraphrase the question.
2. **Summary:** describe the main differences - the design of the roof and windows, and the use of insulation.
3. **Details:** compare the roof design and use of insulation.
4. **Details:** compare the window design and how windows are used during the day and at night.

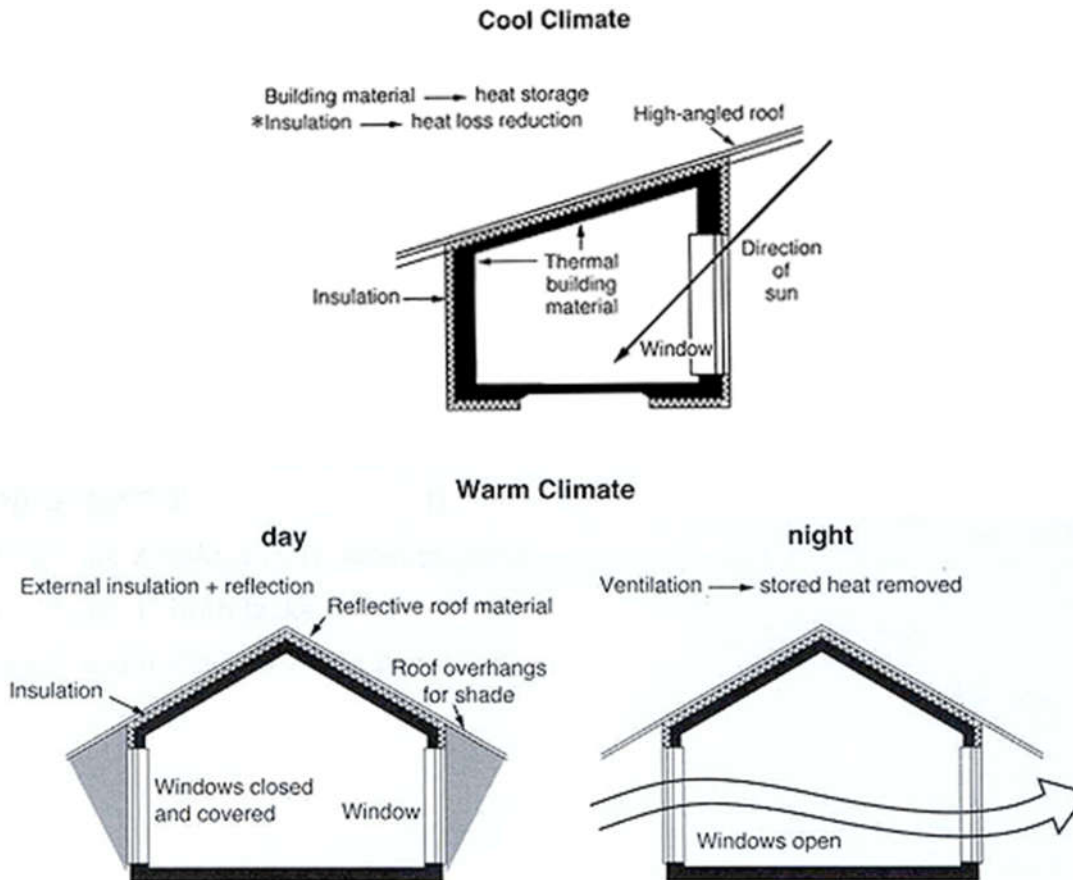
I'll write the full essay for next week's lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(34\)](#)

Thursday, June 02, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: house design essay

Here is my full essay for [last week's question](#):



The diagrams show how house designs differ according to climate.

The most noticeable difference between houses designed for cool and warm climates is in the shape of the roof. The designs also differ with regard to the windows and the use of insulation.

We can see that the cool climate house has a high-angled roof, which allows sunlight to enter through the window. By contrast, the roof of the warm climate house has a peak in the middle and roof overhangs to shade the windows. Insulation and thermal building materials are used in cool climates to reduce heat loss, whereas insulation and reflective materials are used to keep the heat out in warm climates.

Finally, the cool climate house has one window which faces the direction of the sun, while the warm climate house has windows on two sides which are shaded from the sun. By opening the two windows at night, the house designed for warm climates can be ventilated.

(162 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, June 09, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: selecting

The following bar chart has a total of 24 bars. It's impossible to describe 24 pieces of information in only 20 minutes, so you need to *select*.

A simple rule is to select at least one key thing about each country. Here are some examples:

Britain: highest spending on all 6 products, give the figure for photographic film.

France: second highest for 3 products, but lowest for the other 3.

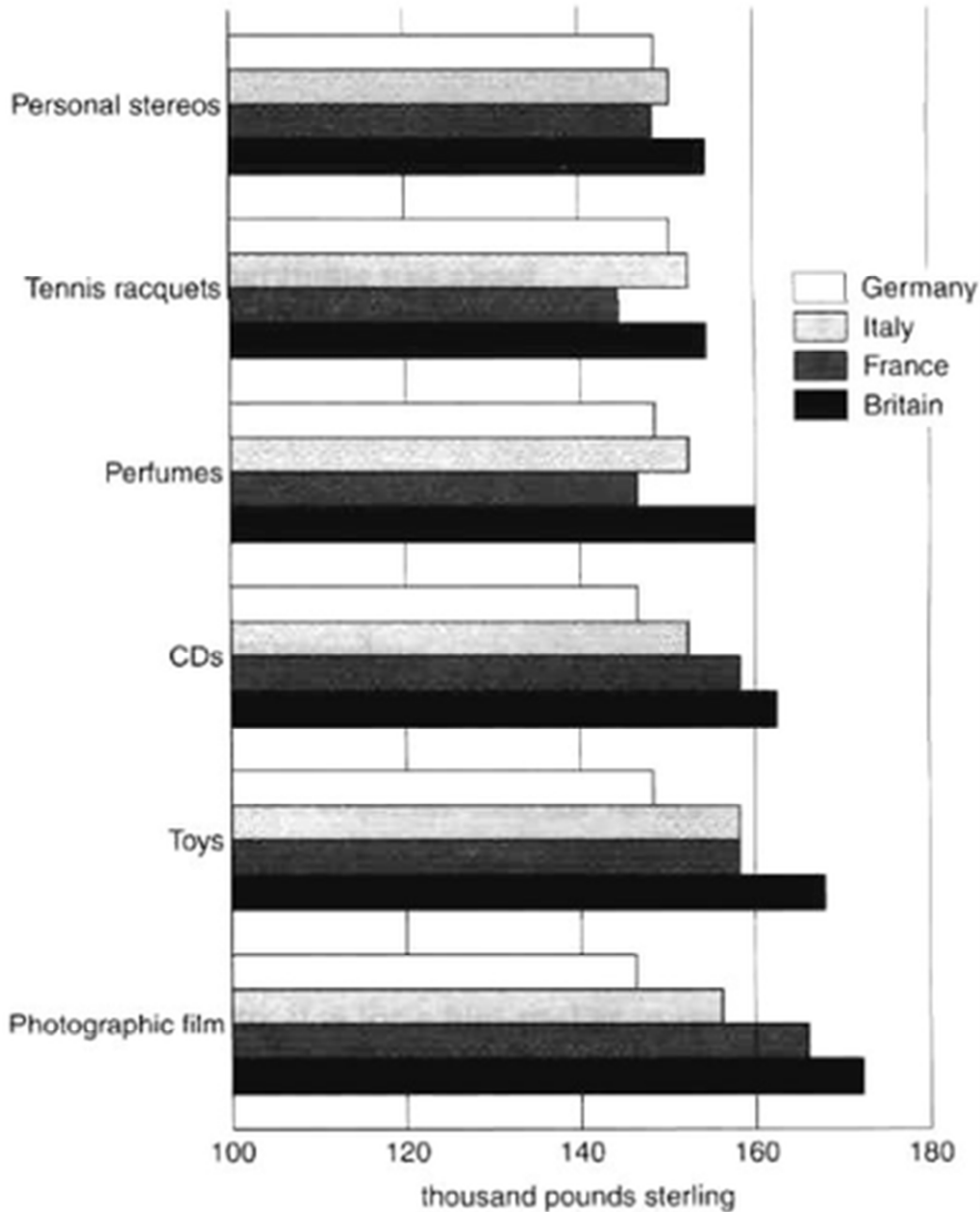
Italy: Italians spent more money on toys than on any other product.

Germany: lowest spending overall, similar figures for all 6 products.

I'll write a full essay about this chart for next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(43\)](#)

Amount spent on consumer goods



A simple rule is to select at least one key thing about each country. Here are some examples:

Britain: highest spending on all 6 products, give the figure for photographic film.

France: second highest for 3 products, but lowest for the other 3.

Italy: Italians spent more money on toys than on any other product.

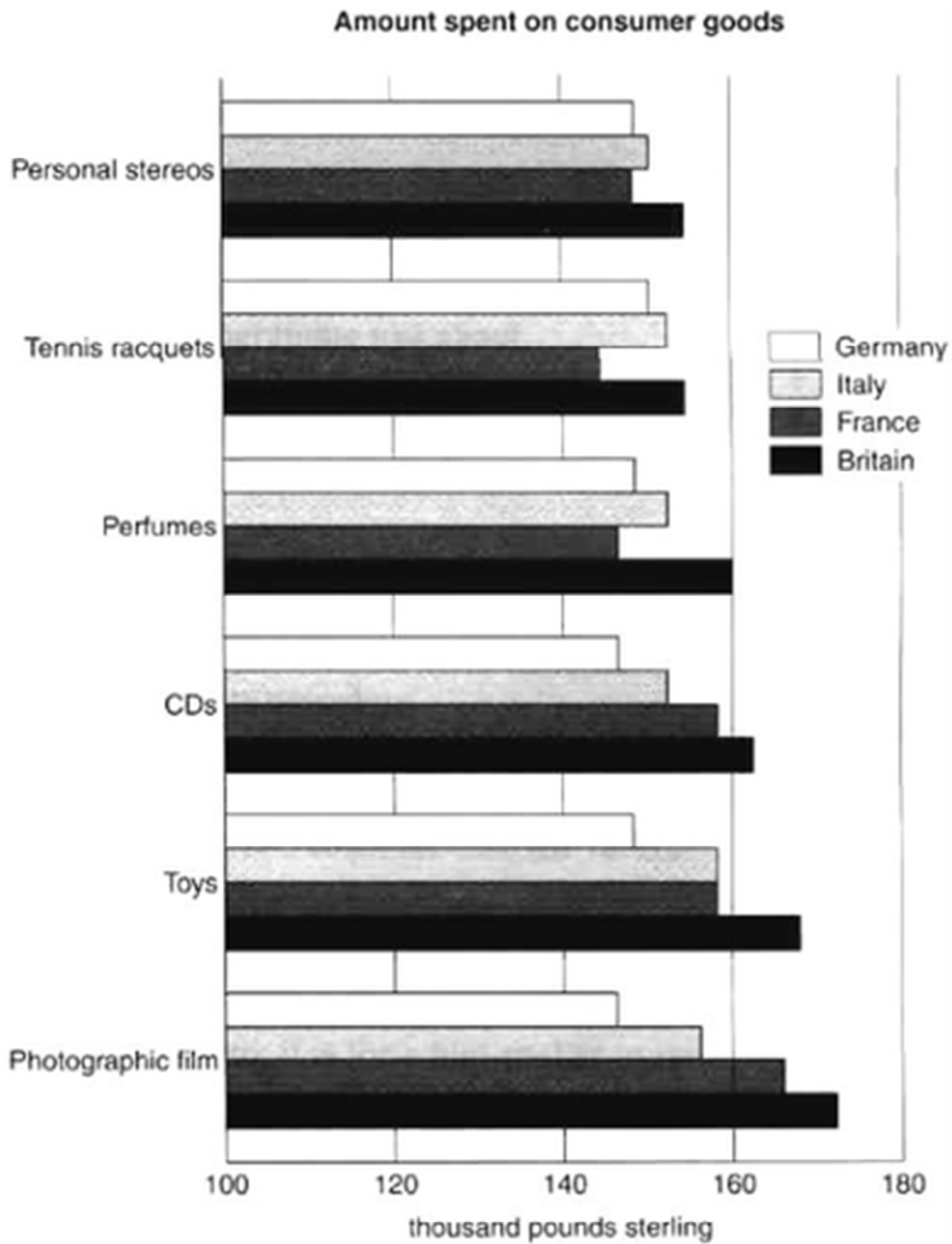
Germany: lowest spending overall, similar figures for all 6 products.

I'll write a full essay about this chart for next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(43\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart essay

Here's my full band 9 essay for [last week's question](#):



The bar chart compares consumer spending on six different items in Germany, Italy, France and Britain.

It is clear that British people spent significantly more money than people in the other three countries on all six goods. Of the six items, consumers spent the most money on photographic film.

People in Britain spent just over £170,000 on photographic film, which is the highest figure shown on the chart. By contrast, Germans were the lowest overall spenders, with roughly the same figures (just under £150,000) for each of the six products.

The figures for spending on toys were the same in both France and Italy, at nearly £160,000. However, while French people spent more than Italians on photographic film and CDs, Italians paid out more for personal stereos, tennis racquets and perfumes. The amount spent by French people on tennis racquets, around £145,000, is the lowest figure shown on the chart.

Note:

- I tried to keep the essay short (154 words) by selecting carefully.
- It's difficult to change *spend*, but I used *spending*, *spenders* and *paid out*.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(40\)](#)

Thursday, June 23, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: comparisons

You can use "compared to", "compared with" and "in comparison with" in the same way. For example:

- Prices in the UK are high **compared to / with / in comparison with**(prices in) Canada and Australia.
- **Compared to / with / in comparison with** (prices in) Canada and Australia, prices in the UK are high.

When writing about numbers or changes, I find it easier to use "while" or "whereas":

- There are 5 million smokers in the UK, **while / whereas** only 2 million Canadians and 1 million Australians smoke.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of smokers in the UK decreased dramatically, **while / whereas** the figures for Canada and Australia remained the same.

Please note:

We don't say "comparing to".

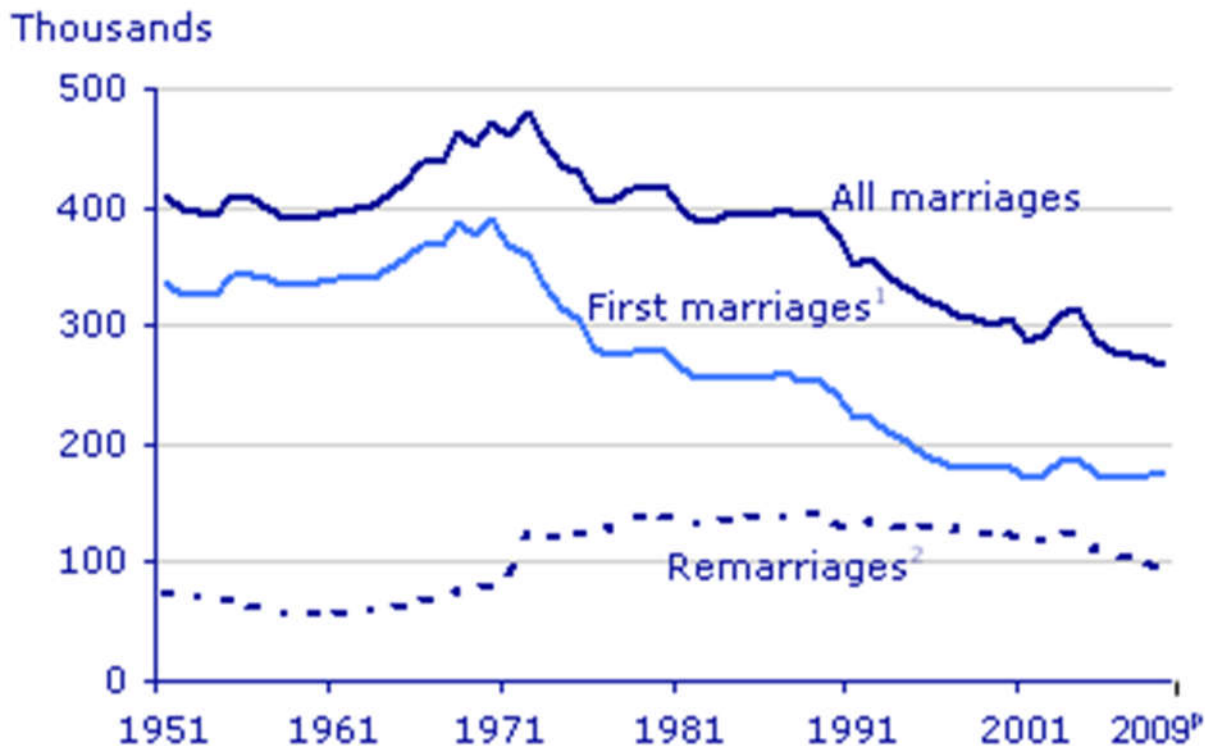
We say "2 million" not "2 millions".

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Thursday, June 30, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: describing numbers

A good exercise is to choose one piece of information (a number) from a graph or chart, and try to describe it in several different ways.



UK marriages, 1951 - 2009

Here are 5 different sentences describing the 'all marriages' figure for the year 1951 (from the graph above):

- Around 400,000 couples got married in the UK in 1951.
- Around 400,000 weddings took place in the UK in the year 1951.
- In 1951, there were around 400,000 marriages in the UK.
- In 1951, the number of UK marriages stood at about 400,000.
- In 1951, the figure for marriages in the UK was approximately 400,000.

Don't spend all your time writing full essays; do some focused exercises too.

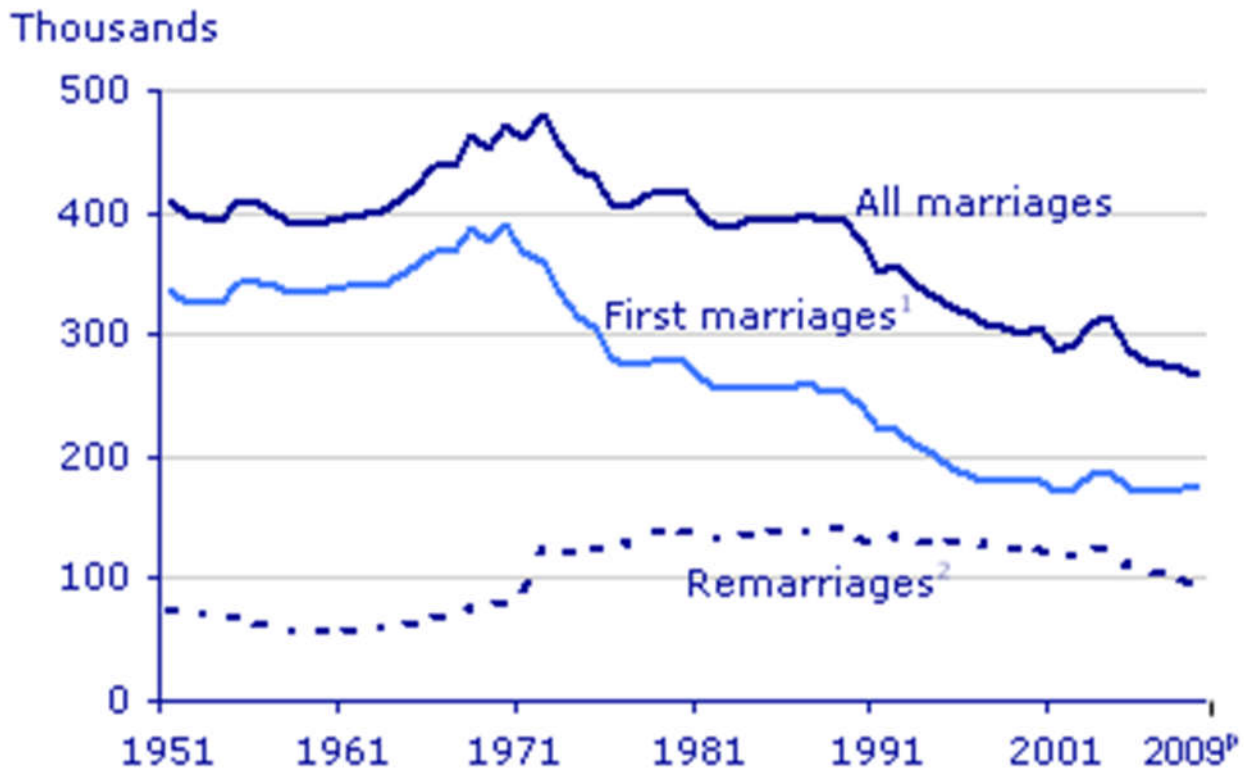
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Thursday, July 07, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: the summary paragraph

As part of your task 1 essay, you need to write a general summary of the information (examiners call this the 'overview'). I usually write my summary straight after the introduction, but you can also put it at the end of the essay.

To summarise graphs, I look for the overall change from the first year to the last year shown. I also look for the main trends or the highest and lowest numbers.



Here's my 2-sentence summary for the graph above:

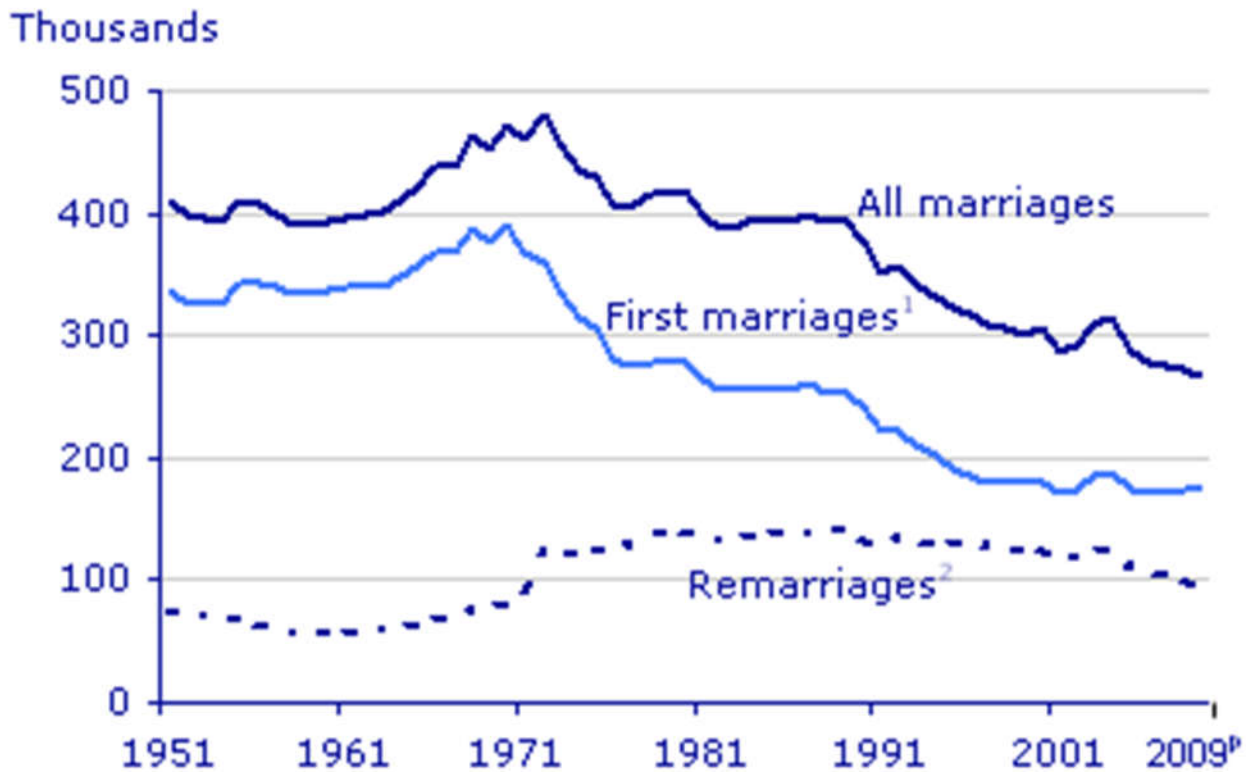
It is clear that the total number of marriages per year fell between 1951 and 2009. While the number of first marriages fell dramatically from the end of the 1960s, the figure for remarriages remained stable.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

Thursday, July 14, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: describing details

Last week I wrote a lesson about summarising the information on a graph. After your summary, you then need to describe specific details. It's important to include numbers and make some comparisons.



Try to write 2 paragraphs describing details. It looks more organised if you divide the information into 2 parts.

For line graphs, I always use the following approach:

1st detail paragraph: compare the numbers for the first year (e.g. 1951), then describe the changes up to a key point on the graph (e.g. peak numbers in 1971).

2nd detail paragraph: explain the general trend for each line after the key point (1971), then compare the numbers for the last year shown (2009).

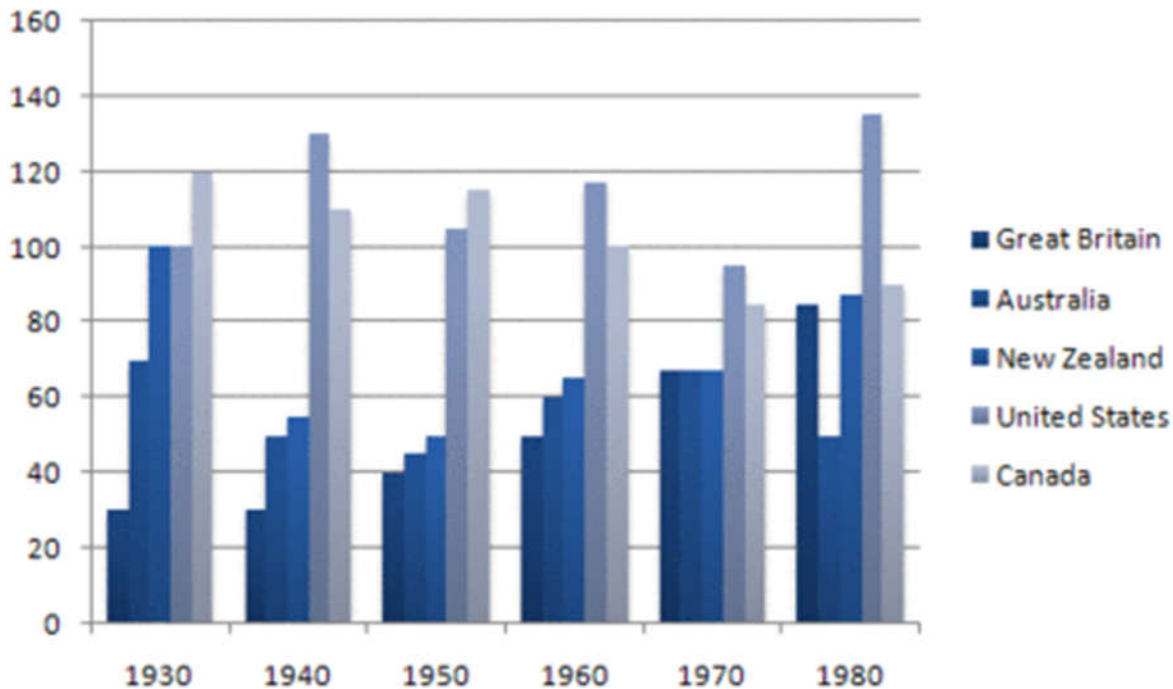
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(38\)](#)

Thursday, July 21, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: how to select main points

After a short introduction, I always try to write a paragraph which summarises the main points. When there is a lot of information (like in the bar chart below), it can be difficult to select the main points.

The table below shows the figures for imprisonment in five countries between 1930 and 1980. (The y axis shows numbers of prisoners in thousands)



(Cambridge IELTS 2)

Usually I look for a change from the beginning to the end of the period. However, there is no overall trend because the figures fluctuate. So, I'll talk about the highest and lowest figures instead.

Here is my summary of the main points:

While the figures for imprisonment fluctuated over the period shown, it is clear that the United States had the highest number of prisoners overall. Great Britain, on the other hand, had the lowest number of prisoners for the majority of the period.

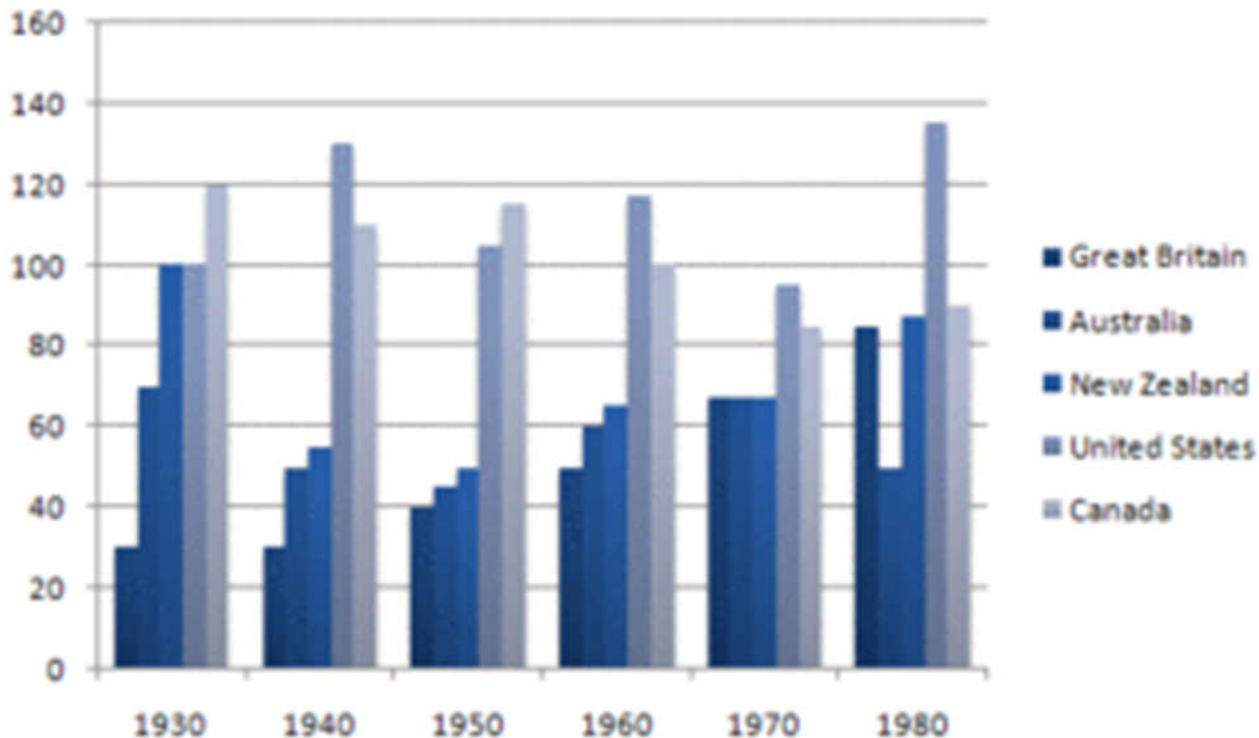
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(50\)](#)

Thursday, July 28, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: selecting details

[Last week's lesson](#) was about selecting the main points. After that you need to describe specific details.

The bar chart we saw last week contains a lot of information, so you will not be able to include everything.



Make sure that you write something about each country. Select the most relevant point for each country, and don't forget to mention some figures. I've written an example sentence about each country below.

United States

The United States had the highest number of prisoners in four out of the six years shown on the chart, and in 1980 the figure for this country peaked at nearly 140,000 prisoners.

Canada

Canada had the highest figures for imprisonment in 1930 and 1950, with about 120,000 prisoners in both years.

New Zealand and Australia

The figures for New Zealand and Australia fluctuated between 40,000 and 100,000 prisoners, although New Zealand's prison population tended to be the higher of the two.

Great Britain

In contrast to the figures for the other countries, the number of prisoners in Great Britain rose steadily between 1930 and 1980, reaching a peak of about 80,000 at the end of the period.

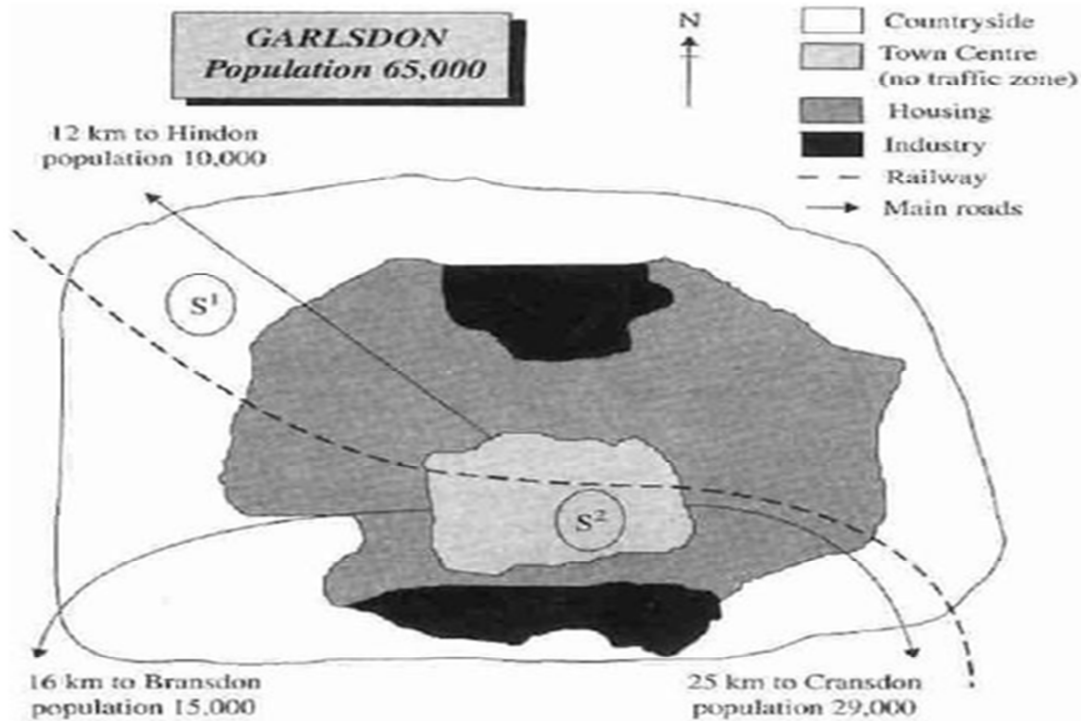
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, August 04, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: describe a map

Sometimes (quite rarely) you have to describe a map for IELTS Writing Task 1. Today I'll explain how I would answer this type of question.

The map below is of the town of Garlsdon. A new supermarket (S) is planned for the town. The map shows two possible sites for the supermarket.



(From Cambridge IELTS 5)

Here is some advice:

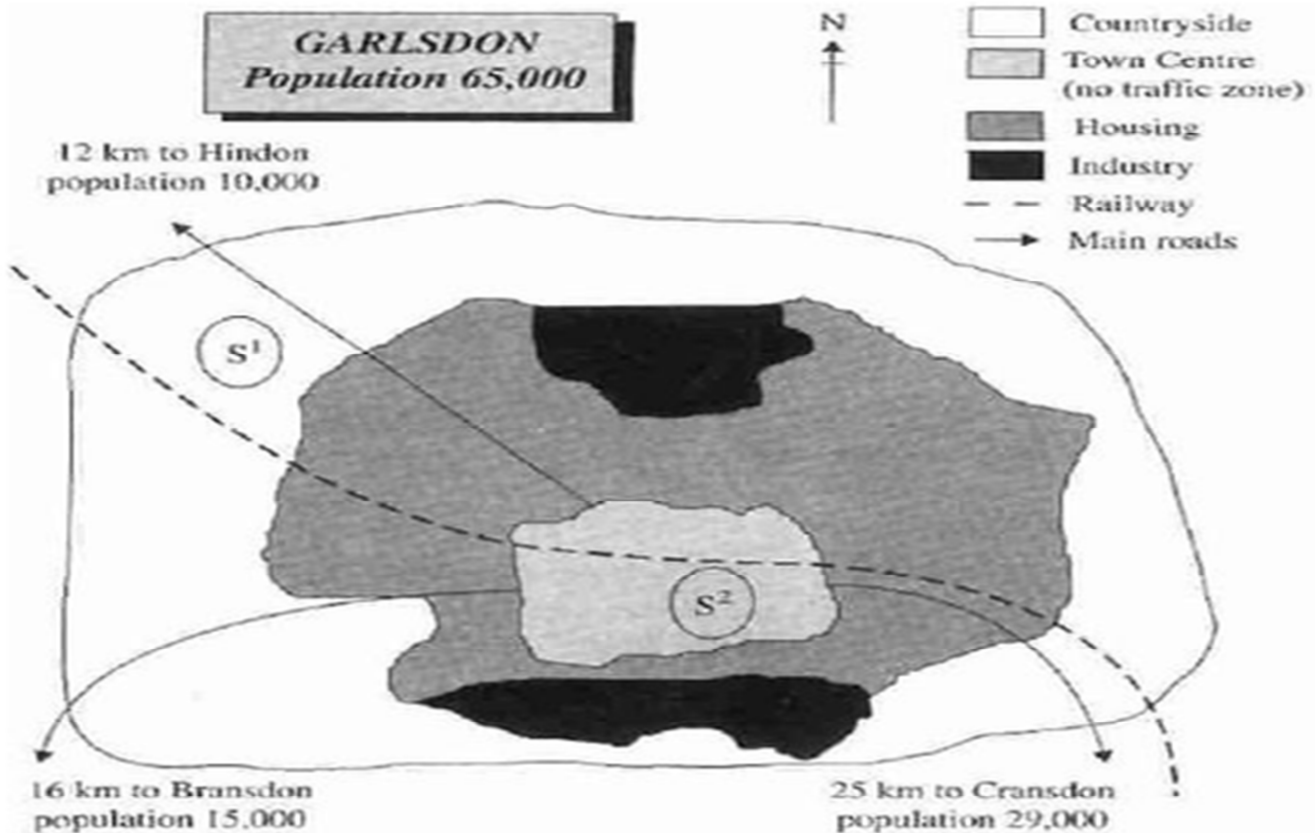
- 1. Introduction** - Just paraphrase the question (instead of 'two possible sites' you could write 'two potential locations').
- 2. Summary** - The main point is that the first site (S¹) is outside the town, whereas the second site is in the town centre. Also, you could mention that the map shows the position of both sites relative to a railway and three roads which lead to three smaller towns.
- 3. Details (2 paragraphs)** - Don't write a separate paragraph about each site; it's much better to compare the sites. I'd write one paragraph comparing the position of each site relative to Garlsdon (mention the different areas of the town), and another paragraph about the positions relative to transport links with the other three towns.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Thursday, August 11, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay (describe a map)

In [last week's lesson](#) we looked at a 'describe a map' question. If you wrote an essay for this question, compare it with my essay below.



Here's my band 9 essay. I focused on describing similarities and differences.

The map shows two potential locations (S1 and S2) for a new supermarket in a town called Garlsdon.

The main difference between the two sites is that S1 is outside the town, whereas S2 is in the town centre. The sites can also be compared in terms of access by road or rail, and their positions relative to three smaller towns.

Looking at the information in more detail, S1 is in the countryside to the north west of Garlsdon, but it is close to the residential area of the town. S2 is also close to the housing area, which surrounds the town centre.

There are main roads from Hindon, Bransdon and Cransdon to Garlsdon town centre, but this is a no traffic zone, so there would be no access to S2 by car. By contrast, S1 lies on the main road to Hindon, but it would be more difficult to reach from Bransdon and Cransdon. Both supermarket sites are close to the railway that runs through Garlsdon from Hindon to Cransdon.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#)

Thursday, August 25, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay

The table below shows the proportion of different categories of families living in poverty in Australia in 1999.

Family type	Proportion of people from each household type living in poverty
single aged person	6% (54,000)
aged couple	4% (48,000)
single, no children	19% (359,000)
couple, no children	7% (211,000)
sole parent	21% (232,000)
couple with children	12% (933,000)
all households	11% (1,837,000)

The table gives information about poverty rates among six types of household in Australia in the year 1999.

It is noticeable that levels of poverty were higher for single people than for couples, and people with children were more likely to be poor than those without. Poverty rates were considerably lower among elderly people.

Overall, 11% of Australians, or 1,837,000 people, were living in poverty in 1999. Aged people were the least likely to be poor, with poverty levels of 6% and 4% for single aged people and aged couples respectively.

Just over one fifth of single parents were living in poverty, whereas only 12% of parents living with a partner were classed as poor. The same pattern can be seen for people with no children: while 19% of single people in this group were living below the poverty line, the figure for couples was much lower, at only 7%.

(150 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(44\)](#)

Thursday, September 01, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graphs

Line graphs always show changes over time. Here's some advice about how to describe them:

- Try to write 4 paragraphs - introduction, summary of main points, 2 detail paragraphs.
- For your summary paragraph, look at the "big picture" - what changes happened to all of the lines from the beginning to the end of the period shown (i.e. from the first year to the last). Is there a trend that all of the lines follow (e.g. an overall increase)?
- You don't need to give numbers in your summary paragraph. Numbers are specific details. Just mention general things like 'overall change', 'highest' and 'lowest', without giving specific figures.
- Never describe each line separately. The examiner wants to see comparisons.
- If the graph shows years, you won't have time to mention all of them. The key years to describe are the first year and the last year. You should also mention any 'special' years (e.g. a peak or a significant rise/fall).

- Start describing details (paragraph 3) with a comparison of the lines for the first year shown on the graph (e.g. In 1990, the number of...).
- Use the past simple (increased, fell) for past years, and 'will' or 'is expected/predicted to' for future years.
- Don't use the passive (e.g. the number was increased), continuous (e.g. the number was increasing), or perfect tenses (e.g. the number has increased).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, September 08, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagrams

Process diagrams show how something is done or made. They always show steps/stages. Here's some advice about how to describe them:

- Try to write 4 paragraphs - introduction, summary of main points, 2 detail paragraphs.
- Write the introduction by paraphrasing the question (rewrite it by changing some of the words).
- For your summary, first say how many steps there are in the process. Then say where/how the process begins and ends (look at the first and last stages).
- In paragraphs 3 and 4, describe the process step by step. Include the first and last steps that you mentioned in the summary, but try to describe them in more detail or in a different way.
- You could describe the steps in one paragraph, but it looks more organised if you break the description into two paragraphs. Just start paragraph 4 somewhere in the middle of the process.
- Mention every stage in the process.
- Use 'sequencing' language e.g. at the first / second / following / final stage of the process, next, after that, then, finally etc.
- Times (e.g. past dates) are not usually shown, so use the present simple tense.
- It's usually a good idea to use the passive e.g. 'At the final stage, the product is delivered to shops' (because we don't need to know who delivered the product).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Thursday, September 15, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: house prices

If you want to learn how to describe trends (increase, decrease etc.), search for some news about house prices.

Here's part of a news article I found about UK house prices:

There was seemingly good news for UK home owners when Halifax announced house prices had risen by 0.3% in July 2011, boosting the average value of a property to £163,981. Halifax also noted that prices were 0.5% higher over the three months from May to July than in the previous three months.

But is it time to celebrate the renaissance of the housing market? Even Halifax's index shows that over the preceding 12-month period, prices actually fell by 2.6%. Despite the price increases seen in recent months, we are finding that the average price of a property remains just under 13% below its peak in 2007.

Try to answer the questions below. Write a full sentence for each answer.

1. What happened to UK house prices in July 2011?
2. What do the figures 0.5% and 2.6% refer to?
3. Compare the 2011 average UK house price with the 2007 average.

I'll share my answers in the "comments" area tomorrow, and we'll look at an IELTS question about house prices next week (Cambridge 7, test 3).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

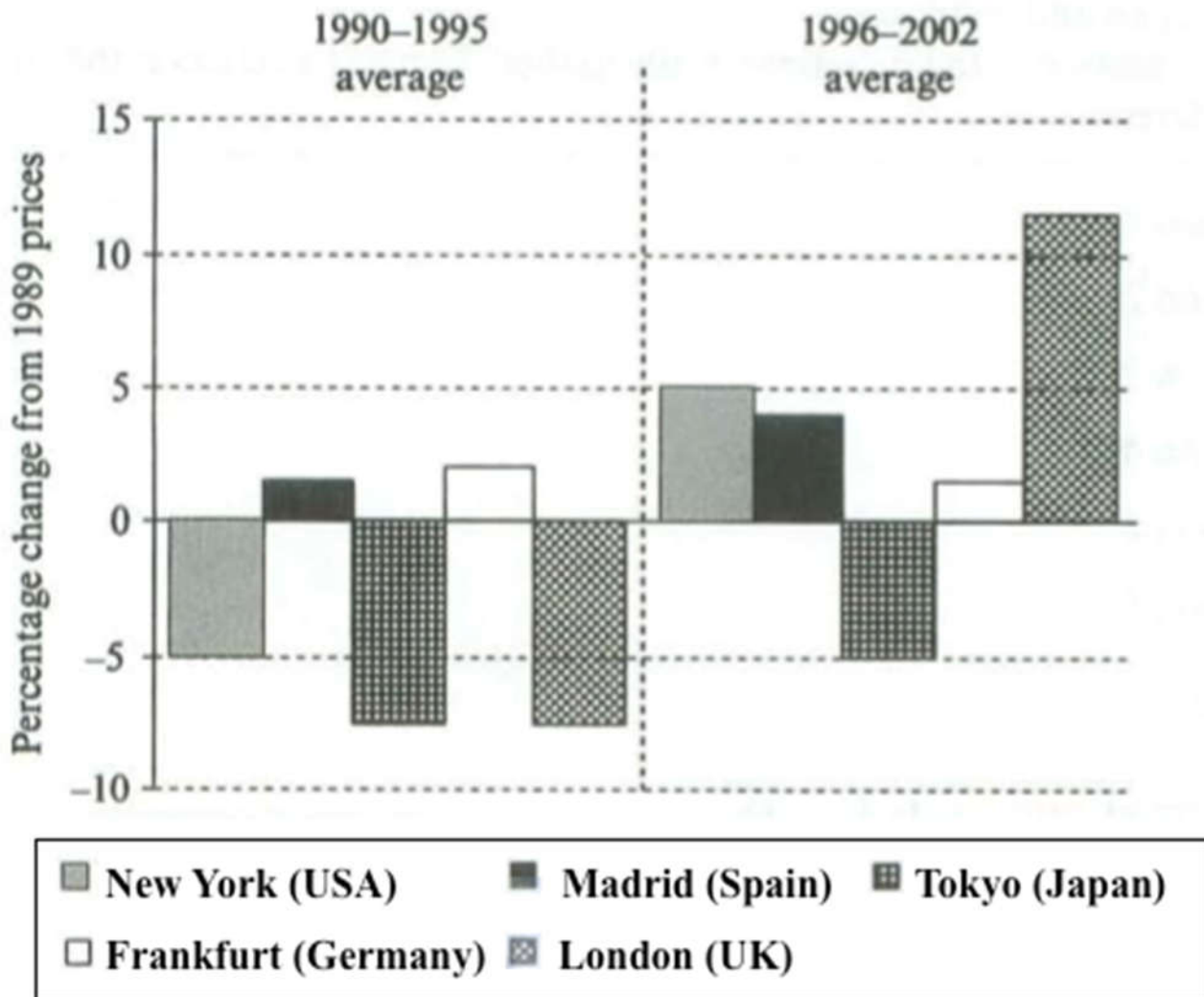
Thursday, September 22, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'house prices' chart

The question below comes from Cambridge IELTS book 7. Students tend to find this question difficult, but last week's lesson about house prices might help.

The chart below shows information about changes in average house prices in five different cities between 1990 and 2002 compared with the average house prices in 1989.

Percentage change in average house prices in five cities
1990–2002 compared with 1989



Some advice:

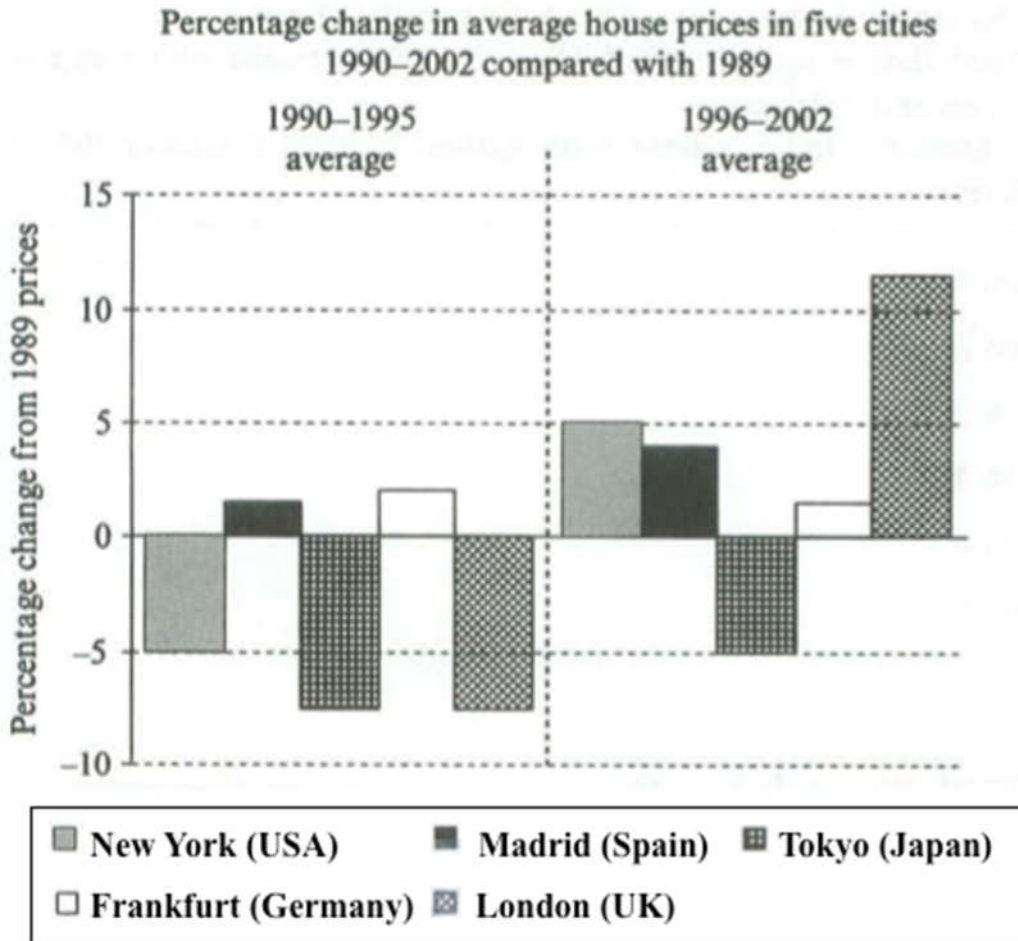
- Introduction: paraphrase the question.
- Summary: compare the two periods (prices fell overall from 1990-95, but rose from 1996-2002), and mention that London prices changed the most.
- Details: write one paragraph about each period.
- Note: don't write -5%, write "fell by 5%".

I'm afraid I can't give feedback for essays that people share in the "comments" area, but I'll share my own full essay next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(34\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: house prices (full essay)

Here's my full essay (band 9) for [last week's question](#):



The bar chart compares the cost of an average house in five major cities over a period of 13 years from 1989.

We can see that house prices fell overall between 1990 and 1995, but most of the cities saw rising prices between 1996 and 2002. London experienced by far the greatest changes in house prices over the 13-year period.

Over the 5 years after 1989, the cost of average homes in Tokyo and London dropped by around 7%, while New York house prices went down by 5%. By contrast, prices rose by approximately 2% in both Madrid and Frankfurt.

Between 1996 and 2002, London house prices jumped to around 12% above the 1989 average. Homebuyers in New York also had to pay significantly more, with prices rising to 5% above the 1989 average, but homes in Tokyo remained cheaper than they were in 1989. The cost of an average home in Madrid rose by a further 2%, while prices in Frankfurt remained stable.

(165 words)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: general to specific

If you read any of my example essays, you will see that I always write 4 paragraphs, and I use a "general to specific" essay structure.

- The introduction is the most general part of the essay; it tells the reader what the chart is about.
- Then I write a paragraph about the main points or the most general points.
- Finally, I write 2 paragraphs describing specific facts or figures.
- I don't write a conclusion because I have already summarised the information in paragraph 2.

One reason I put the summary near the beginning (rather than at the end) is because I think it's easier to describe general things first, then specific things later.

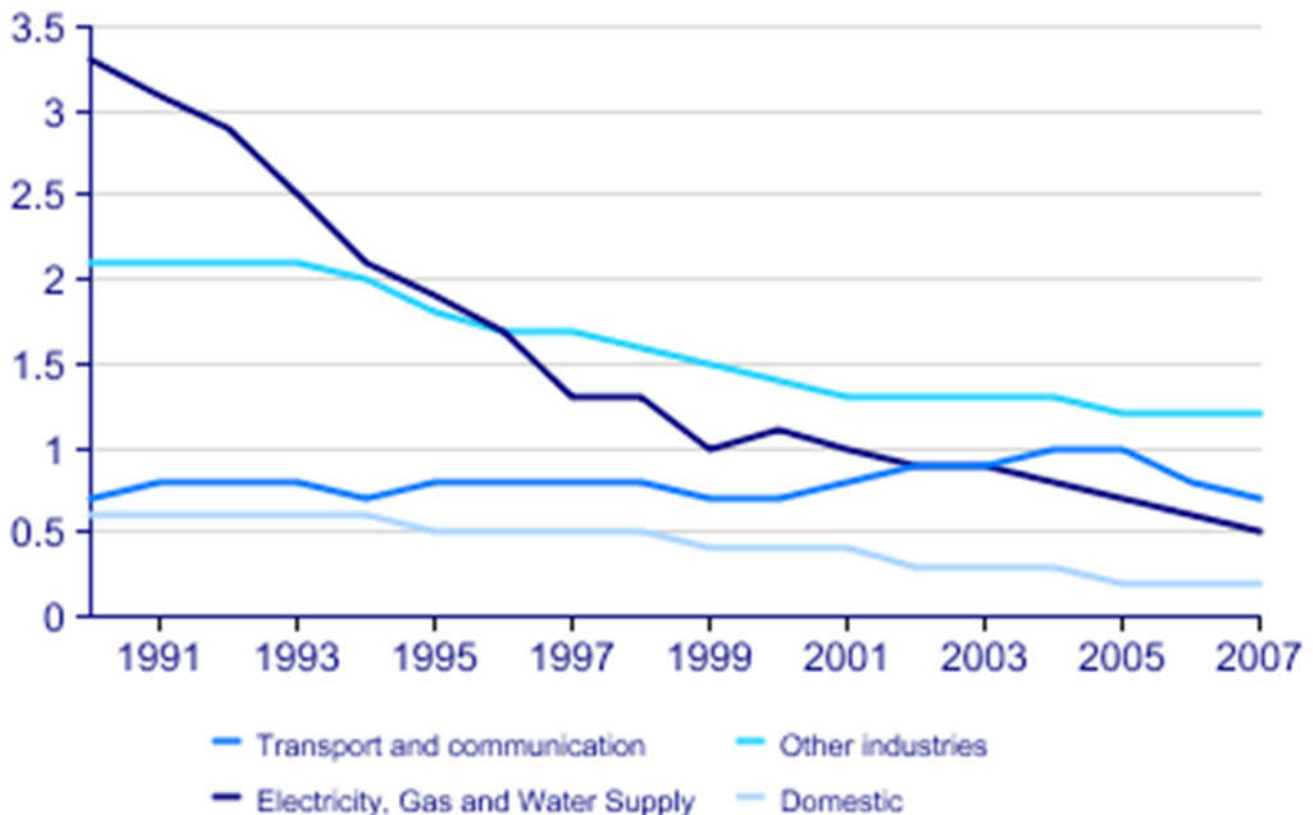
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Thursday, October 13, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph exercise

The graph below shows UK acid rain emissions, measured in millions of tonnes, from four different sectors between 1990 and 2007.

Million tonnes



I've made the following essay into a gap-fill exercise.

The line graph compares four sectors in _____ of the amount of acid rain emissions that they produced over a period of 17 years in the UK.

It is clear that the total amount of acid rain emissions in the UK _____ between 1990 and 2007. The most _____ decrease was seen in the electricity, gas and water supply sector.

In 1990, around 3.3 million tonnes of acid rain emissions came from the electricity, gas and water sector. The transport and communication sector was _____ for about 0.7 million tonnes of emissions, while the domestic sector _____ around 0.6 million tonnes. Just over 2 million tonnes of acid rain gases came from other industries.

Emissions from electricity, gas and water supply fell dramatically to only 0.5 million tonnes in 2007, a _____ of almost 3 million tonnes. While acid rain gases from the domestic sector and other industries fell gradually, the transport sector _____ a small increase in emissions, _____ a peak of 1 million tonnes in 2005.

Fill the gaps using these words:

produced, reaching, fell, responsible, saw, considerably, terms, drop, dramatic

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(44\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

terms
fell considerably
dramatic
responsible
produced
drop
saw
reaching

Thursday, October 20, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: tables

Tables seem difficult when they contain a lot of numbers. Here's some advice:

- Try to write 4 paragraphs - introduction, summary of main points, 2 detail paragraphs.
- Before you start writing, highlight some key numbers. Choose the biggest number in each category in the table (i.e. in each column and row). If the table shows years, look for the biggest changes in numbers over the time period. You could also mention the smallest numbers, but you can ignore 'middle' numbers (neither biggest nor smallest).
- For your summary paragraph, try to compare whole categories (columns or rows) rather than individual 'cells' in the table. If you can't compare whole categories, compare the biggest and smallest number. Write 2 sentences for the summary.
- In your two 'details' paragraphs, never describe each category (column or row) separately. The examiner wants to see comparisons. Try to organise the numbers you highlighted into 2

groups - one for each paragraph (e.g. highest numbers for all categories together, and lowest numbers together).

- Describe / compare the numbers you highlighted - include at least 3 numbers in each paragraph.
- Use the past simple for past years, and 'will' or 'is expected/predicted to' for future years. If no time is shown, use the present simple.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, October 27, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: table exercise

The chart below shows average hours and minutes spent by UK males and females on different daily activities.

Hours and minutes per day		
	Males	Females
Sleep	8.04	8.18
Resting	0.43	0.48
Personal care	0.40	0.48
Eating and drinking	1.25	1.19
Leisure		
Watching TV/DVD and listen to radio/music	2.50	2.25
Social life and entertainment/culture	1.22	1.32
Hobbies and games	0.37	0.23
Sport	0.13	0.07
Reading	0.23	0.26
All leisure	5.25	4.53
Employment and study	3.45	2.26
Housework	1.41	3.00
Childcare	0.15	0.32
Voluntary work and meetings	0.15	0.20
Travel	1.32	1.22
Other	0.13	0.15

I've made the following essay into a gap-fill exercise.

The table compares the average _____ of time per day that men and women in the UK spend _____ different activities.

It is clear that people in the UK spend more time _____ than doing any other daily activity. Also, there are significant differences between the time _____ by men and women on employment/study and housework.

On average, men and women in the UK _____ for about 8 hours per day. Leisure _____ the second largest proportion of their time. Men spend 5 hours and 25 minutes doing various leisure activities, such as watching TV or doing sport, _____ women have 4 hours and 53 minutes of leisure time.

It is noticeable that men work or study for an average of 79 minutes more than women every day. By contrast, women spend 79 minutes more than men doing housework, and they spend _____ as much time looking after children.

Fill the gaps using these words:

doing, up, over, spent, while, sleeping, sleep, twice, amount, takes

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(38\)](#)

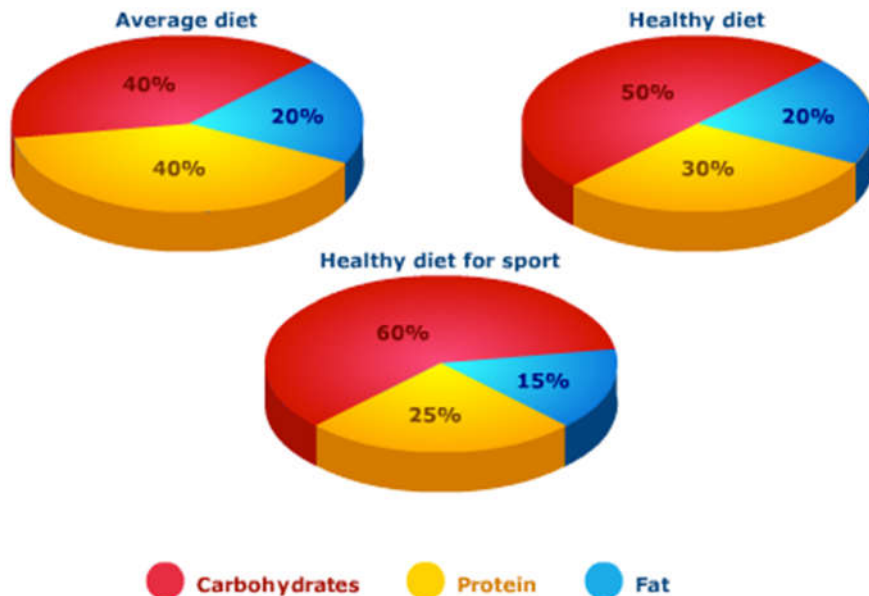
CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. amount
2. doing
3. sleeping
4. spent
5. sleep
6. takes
7. up
8. while
9. over
10. twice

Thursday, November 03, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart practice

Try doing a Google image search for 'pie charts' and you'll find plenty of charts that you could practise describing. Here's one I found:



To write an essay, you need to do 3 things:

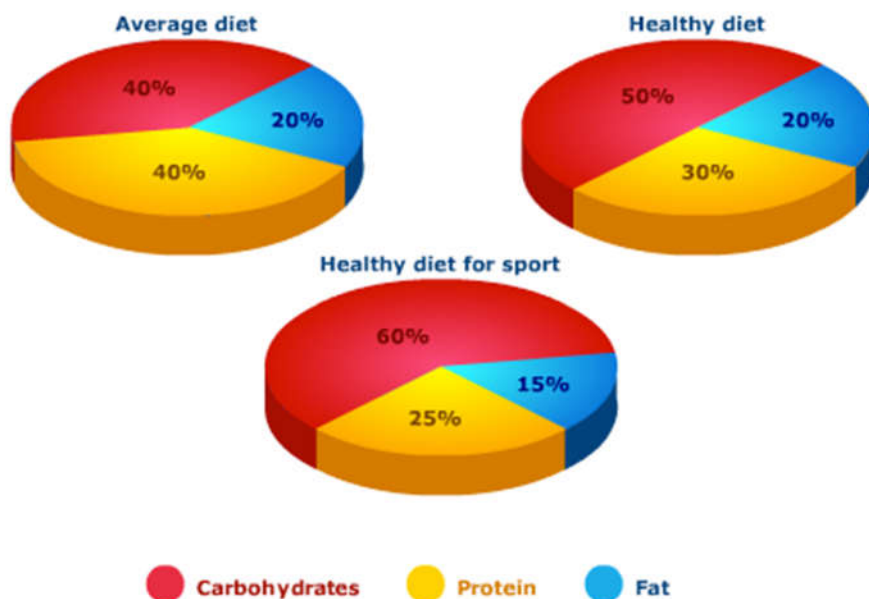
1. Introduce the chart by saying what it shows.
2. Summarise the information by describing the main/general points.
3. Describe the charts in detail, comparing the figures (2 paragraphs).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Thursday, November 10, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction and summary

Last week I said that you need to do 3 things to write a task 1 essay: introduce, summarise, and describe details. Today I'll look at the introduction and summary for the pie charts below.



Introduction - just say what the pie charts show:

The pie charts compare the proportion of carbohydrates, protein and fat in three different diets, namely an average diet, a healthy diet, and a healthy diet for sport.

Note: Don't try to 'show off' in your introduction. Just use 'show', 'compare' or 'illustrate'; don't use words like 'depict' or 'indicate'.

Summary - write 2 sentences about the main/general points:

It is noticeable that sportspeople require a diet comprising a significantly higher proportion of carbohydrates than an average diet or a healthy diet. The average diet contains the lowest percentage of carbohydrates but the highest proportion of protein.

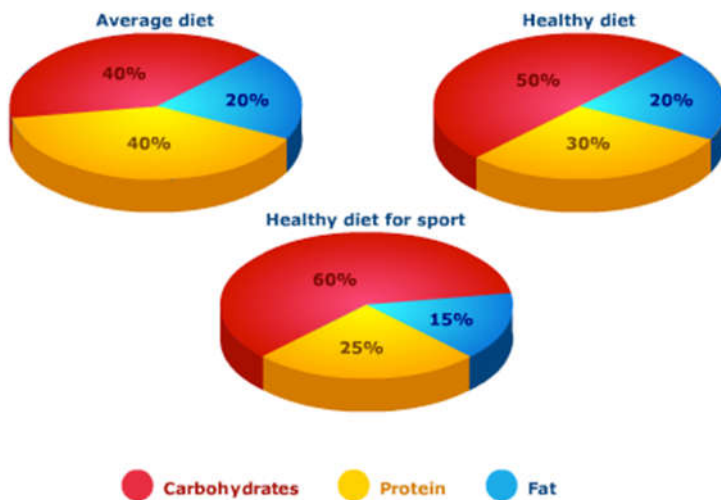
Note: There is no 'right' way to choose your main/general points. Just choose the two things that you notice first. I try to avoid specific numbers in my summaries - save numbers for the 'details' paragraphs. We'll look at those next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Thursday, November 17, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart essay

Here's my full essay for the pie charts in last week's lesson. I've made the last two paragraphs into a gap-fill exercise to focus your attention on some good ways to describe numbers.



Fill the gaps with these words:

constitutes, drops, amount, fifth, higher, make, one, relative, figure, up

The pie charts compare the proportion of carbohydrates, protein and fat in three different diets, namely an average diet, a healthy diet, and a healthy diet for sport.

It is noticeable that sportspeople require a diet comprising a significantly higher proportion of carbohydrates than an average diet or a healthy diet. The average diet contains the lowest percentage of carbohydrates but the highest proportion of protein.

Carbohydrates _____ 60% of the healthy diet for sport. This is 10% _____ than the proportion of carbohydrates in a normal healthy diet, and 20% more than the proportion in an average

diet. On the other hand, people who eat an average diet consume a greater _____ of protein (40%) than those who eat a healthy diet (30%) and sportspeople (25%).

The third compound shown in the charts is fat. Fat _____ exactly _____ of both the average diet and the healthy diet, but the _____ to only 15% for the healthy sports diet.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. make
2. up
3. higher
4. relative
5. amount
6. constitutes
7. one
8. fifth
9. figure
10. drops

Sunday, November 27, 2011

IELTS Grammar: using 'see' in writing task 1

A few people have asked me about using 'see' to describe numbers on a graph or chart. Look at the following sentence:

- In Britain, CD sales increased dramatically in the 1980s.

We can write the same sentence in various ways using 'see':

- Britain saw a dramatic increase in CD sales in the 1980s.
- The 1980s saw a dramatic increase in CD sales in Britain.
- British shops saw CD sales increase dramatically in the 1980s.

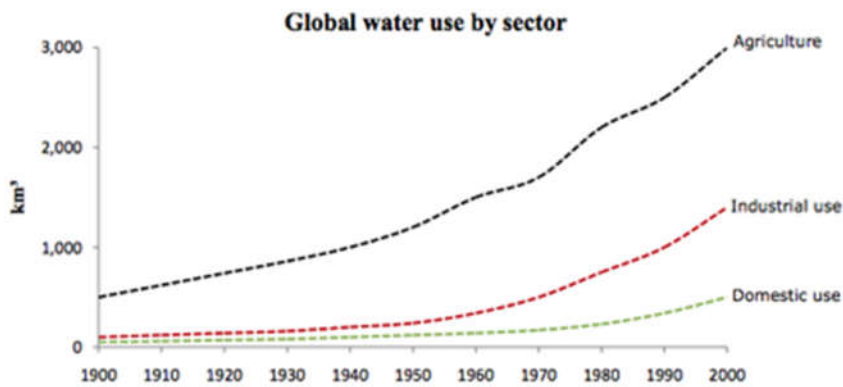
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1, Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, December 01, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'water use' graph and table

The following question comes from Cambridge IELTS book 6, page 30.

The graph and table below give information about water use worldwide and water consumption in two different countries.



Water consumption in Brazil and Congo in 2000

Country	Population	Irrigated land	Water consumption per person
Brazil	176 million	26,500 km ²	359 m ³
Democratic Republic of Congo	5.2 million	100 km ²	8 m ³

Here's my plan for a 4-paragraph essay:

1. Introduction - rewrite the question in a different way.
2. Summary - write one sentence summarising the trend shown on the graph, and one sentence summarising the table.
3. Details paragraph - describe the graph in detail (maybe 3 sentences).
4. Details paragraph - describe the table in detail (maybe 3 sentences).

Remember: we don't write a conclusion because a conclusion means a final decision or opinion. However, you can put the summary at the end (instead of second) if you want.

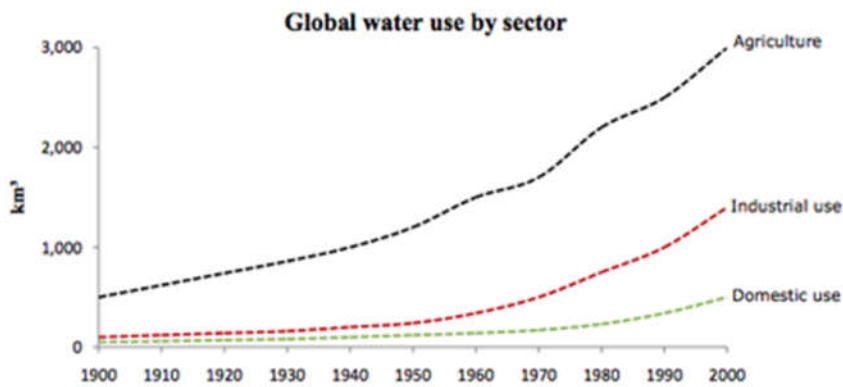
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)

Thursday, December 08, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: graph and table essay

Last week I wrote a plan for this question. Now I've added my full essay below.

The graph and table below give information about water use worldwide and water consumption in two different countries.



Water consumption in Brazil and Congo in 2000

Country	Population	Irrigated land	Water consumption per person
Brazil	176 million	26,500 km ²	359 m ³
Democratic Republic of Congo	5.2 million	100 km ²	8 m ³

The charts compare the amount of water used for agriculture, industry and homes around the world, and water use in Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is clear that global water needs rose significantly between 1900 and 2000, and that agriculture accounted for the largest proportion of water used. We can also see that water consumption was considerably higher in Brazil than in the Congo.

In 1900, around 500km³ of water was used by the agriculture sector worldwide. The figures for industrial and domestic water consumption stood at around one fifth of that amount. By 2000, global water use for agriculture had increased to around 3000km³, industrial water use had risen to just under half that amount, and domestic consumption had reached approximately 500km³.

In the year 2000, the populations of Brazil and the Congo were 176 million and 5.2 million respectively. Water consumption per person in Brazil, at 359m³, was much higher than that in the Congo, at only 8m³, and this could be explained by the fact that Brazil had 265 times more irrigated land.

(184 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(51\)](#)

Thursday, December 15, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: my thinking steps

Today I'm going to explain my thinking process when I answer an IELTS Writing Task 1 question. We'll use this question (Cambridge IELTS 7, page 30):

The table below gives information on consumer spending on different items in five different countries in 2002.

Percentage of national consumer expenditure by category - 2002

Country	Food/Drinks/ Tobacco	Clothing/ Footwear	Leisure/ Education
Ireland	28.91%	6.43%	2.21%
Italy	16.36%	9.00%	3.20%
Spain	18.80%	6.51%	1.98%
Sweden	15.77%	5.40%	3.22%
Turkey	32.14%	6.63%	4.35%

Before I worry about what language to use, it's really important to understand the information, and decide how to organise it. This is what I'm thinking:

1. I know that I can write a short introduction by paraphrasing the question.
2. I look for an overall trend. I can see that the food/drinks/tobacco category has the highest percentages, and leisure/education has the lowest.
3. Now I want to write two main body paragraphs. I need to select something to say about each country. Remember, there is no rule about what information you select; everyone will do this differently.
4. I look for the highest figures in each category: I can see that Turkey has the highest figure for food/drinks/tobacco AND for education/leisure. Italy has the highest figure for clothing/footwear.
5. So, I'll write a paragraph about Turkey and Italy.
6. My final paragraph needs to talk about Ireland, Spain and Sweden.
7. Maybe I'll point out that Ireland has a high figure for the first category, Spain has the lowest figure for education/leisure, and Sweden has the lowest figures for the first AND second categories.
8. I don't need a conclusion because I have already mentioned a general trend in point 2.

Try writing an essay following these steps. You can compare your essay with mine next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Thursday, December 22, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'table' essay

Here's my band 9 essay following the steps in [last week's lesson](#):

The table below gives information on consumer spending on different items in five different countries in 2002.

Percentage of national consumer expenditure by category - 2002

Country	Food/Drinks/ Tobacco	Clothing/ Footwear	Leisure/ Education
Ireland	28.91%	6.43%	2.21%
Italy	16.36%	9.00%	3.20%
Spain	18.80%	6.51%	1.98%
Sweden	15.77%	5.40%	3.22%
Turkey	32.14%	6.63%	4.35%

The table shows percentages of consumer expenditure for three categories of products and services in five countries in 2002.

It is clear that the largest proportion of consumer spending in each country went on food, drinks and tobacco. On the other hand, the leisure/education category has the lowest percentages in the table.

Out of the five countries, consumer spending on food, drinks and tobacco was noticeably higher in Turkey, at 32.14%, and Ireland, at nearly 29%. The proportion of spending on leisure and education was also highest in Turkey, at 4.35%, while expenditure on clothing and footwear was significantly higher in Italy, at 9%, than in any of the other countries.

It can be seen that Sweden had the lowest percentages of national consumer expenditure for food/drinks/tobacco and for clothing/footwear, at nearly 16% and just over 5% respectively. Spain had slightly higher figures for these categories, but the lowest figure for leisure/education, at only 1.98%.

Note:

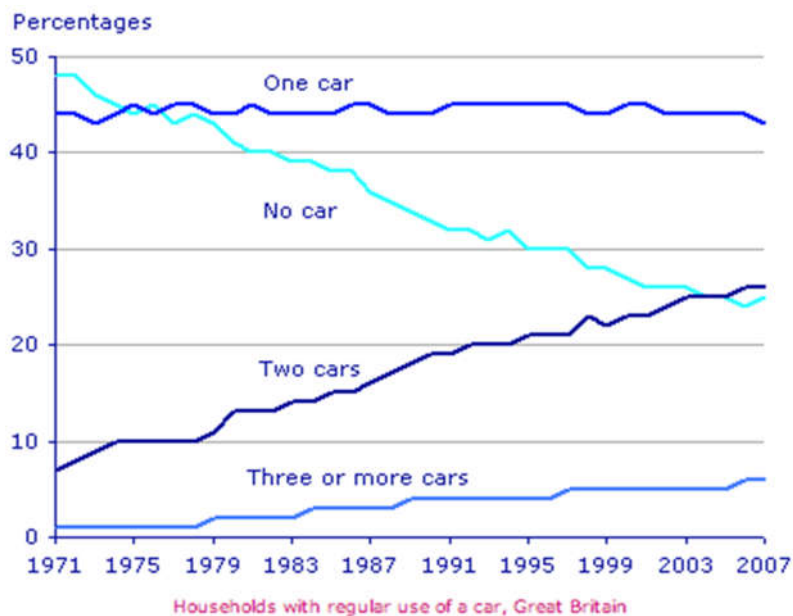
- Which information did I choose to include in my 'summary' paragraph?
- Why did I use past and present tenses in paragraph 2?
- How did I group the information for paragraphs 3 and 4?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(46\)](#)

Thursday, February 02, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph exercise

The graph below gives information about car ownership in Britain from 1971 to 2007.



The graph shows changes in the number of cars _____ household in Great Britain _____ a period of 36 years.

Overall, car ownership in Britain increased _____ 1971 and 2007. In particular, the percentage of households with two cars rose, while the figure for households _____ a car fell.

In 1971, _____ half of all British households did not have regular use of a car. Around 44% of households had one car, but only about 7% had two cars. It was uncommon for families to own three or more cars, _____ around 2% of households falling into this category.

The one-car household was the most common type from the late 1970's _____, although there was little change in the _____ for this category. The biggest change was seen in the proportion of households without a car, which fell steadily over the 36-year period _____ around 25% in 2007. In contrast, the proportion of two-car families rose steadily, reaching about 26% in 2007, and the proportion of households with more than two cars rose _____ around 5%.

Fill the gaps in the essay with the following words:

almost, to, figures, per, between, by, over, with, without, onwards

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(59\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. per
2. over
3. between
4. without
5. almost
6. with
7. onwards
8. figures
9. to
10. by

Thursday, February 16, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: grammar mistakes

Can you find the mistakes in the following sentences?

1. The first table shows us the rate of marriage and divorce between 1970 - 2000.
2. While the divorce rate increased from 1 million to 1.5 million during the same period.
3. As from 1990 to 2000 marriage rate has decreased relatively from 2.5 to 2 million.
4. As shown in table 1 that the total number of marriages were high in 1970.
5. Finally few people got divorced in 1970 than 2000.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(44\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. The first table shows us the rate of marriage and divorce between 1970 - 2000.
 - delete 'us'
 - make 'marriage' and 'divorce' plural
 - write '1970 and 2000'
2. While the divorce rate increased from 1 million to 1.5 million during the same period.
 - delete 'while' because there is no contrast in this sentence
3. As from 1990 to 2000 marriage rate has decreased relatively from 2.5 to 2 million.
 - delete 'as'
 - write 'the marriage rate'
 - use the past simple 'decreased', not 'has decreased'
 - delete 'relatively'
4. As shown in table 1 that the total number of marriages were high in 1970.
 - write 'the first table shows that' instead of 'as shown in table 1 that'
 - 'was' instead of 'were' because 'the total number' is singular
 - I think the student means 'highest' instead of 'high'
5. Finally few people got divorced in 1970 than 2000.
 - put a comma after 'Finally'
 - 'fewer' instead of 'few' because this is a comparison

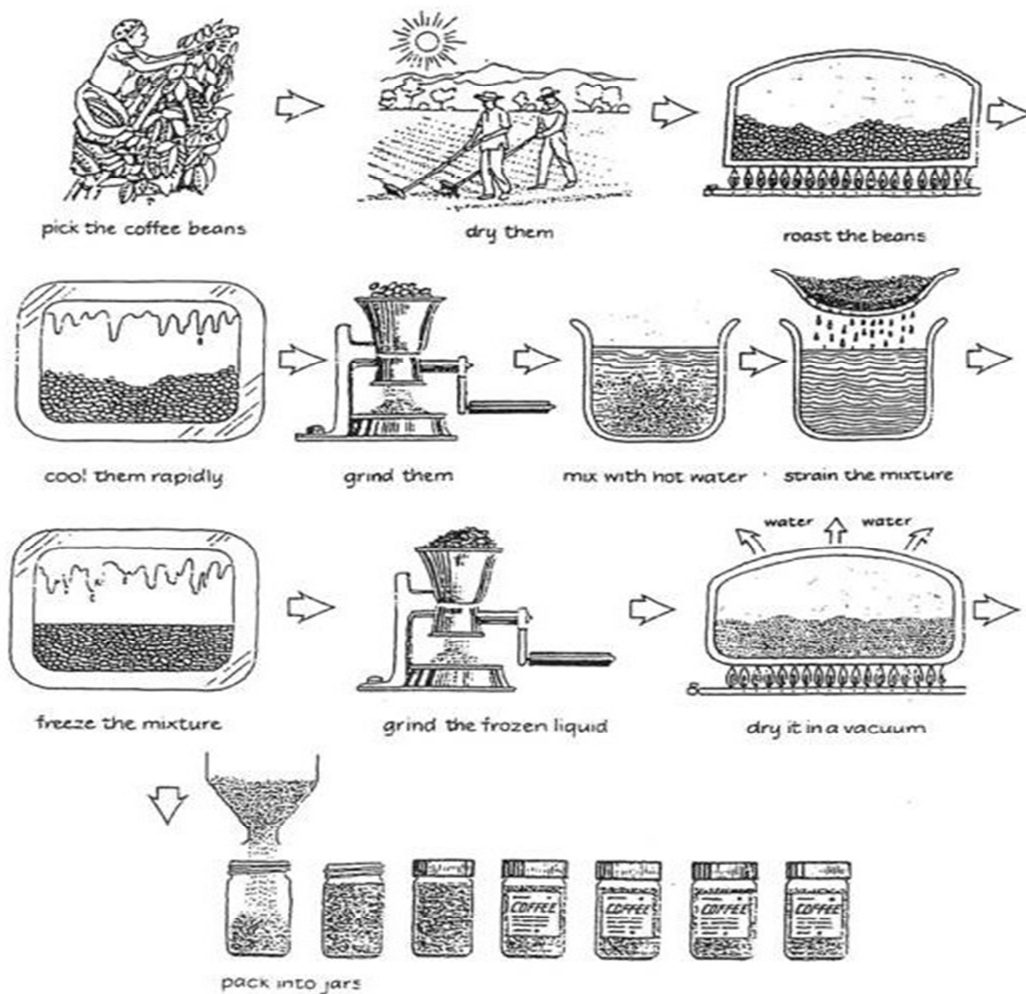
Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, February 17, 2012 at 10:31](#)

Thursday, February 23, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagram summary

When describing a process diagram, most students have no problem describing the stages in the process step by step. However, not many students are able to write a good summary (or 'overview') of the process as a whole.

Think about how you would summarise this process:



(Click on picture to make it bigger. Source: 'Meanings into Words Upper-Intermediate')

Here are my tips for summarising process diagrams:

Write 2 sentences:

- First say how many stages there are in the whole process.
- Then say how/where the process begins and ends.

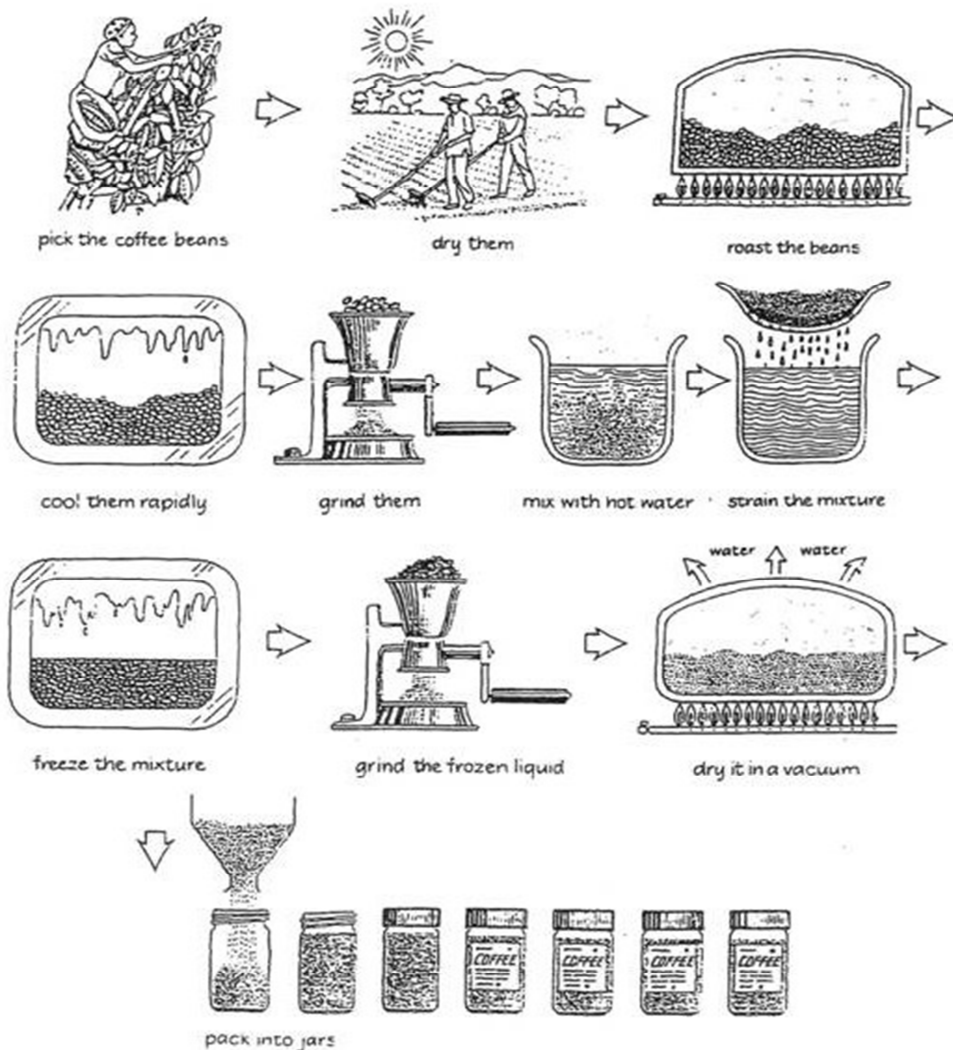
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Thursday, March 01, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'process' introduction and overview

Last week I gave some advice about how to write an overview (summary) for process diagram questions. Here's the question again:

The diagram below shows how coffee is produced and prepared for sale in supermarkets and shops.



(Click on picture to make it bigger. Source: 'Meanings into Words Upper-Intermediate')

Here's my introduction and overview:

The picture illustrates the process of coffee manufacture and preparation for sale on the market.

It is clear that there are 11 stages in the production of coffee. The process begins with the picking of coffee beans, and ends at the packing stage.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Thursday, March 08, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'process diagram' details

Here are my 'details' paragraphs to finish the essay I started [last week](#):

Looking at the coffee production process in detail, coffee beans must first be picked in the fields. These beans are then dried, roasted, and cooled before being put in a grinding machine, which turns the beans into coffee granules.

At the sixth stage in the process, the ground coffee is mixed with hot water, and the resulting mixture is strained. Next, the mixture is frozen and then passed once again through the grinder. After that, the

ground, frozen liquid is dried in a vacuum so that the water evaporates, leaving the coffee granules. Finally, these granules are packed into coffee jars for delivery to shops.

Did you notice the passives and sequencing phrases?

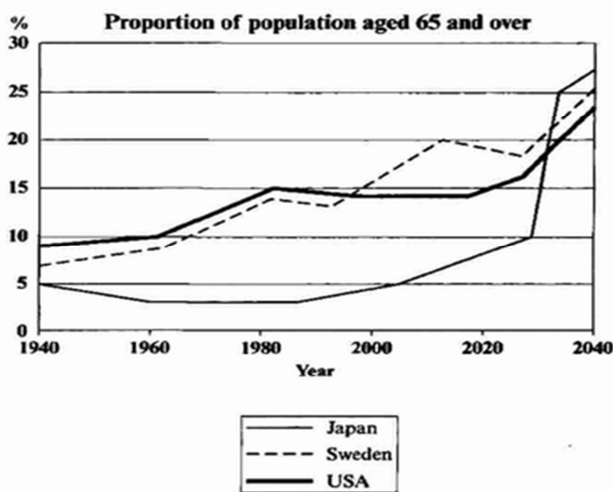
- Passives: must be picked; are dried, roasted and cooled; is mixed...
- Sequencing: then; and; at the sixth stage; next; after that; finally...

Thursday, March 15, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: graph showing future years

Several students have asked me about the following question from Cambridge IELTS book 5 (page 29).

The graph below shows the proportion of the population aged 65 and over between 1940 and 2040 in three different countries.



Here are the steps I would follow to write my essay:

1. **Introduction:** write one sentence to introduce what the graph shows. Just paraphrase the question statement (i.e. change a few words).
2. **Summary:** describe 2 main things e.g. the overall trend for all 3 countries, and the biggest change that you can see.
3. **Details:** compare all 3 countries in 1940, then in 1990.
4. **Details:** describe the dramatic increase predicted for Japan, and compare all 3 countries in 2040.

Note:

Try writing some essay plans like the one above. Planning makes you think about selecting and organising, so it's a useful skill to practise (even if you don't do a plan in your exam).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(42\)](#)

Thursday, March 22, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay

Here's my full essay for last week's [line graph question](#):

The line graph compares the percentage of people aged 65 or more in three countries over a period of 100 years.

It is clear that the proportion of elderly people increases in each country between 1940 and 2040. Japan is expected to see the most dramatic changes in its elderly population.

In 1940, around 9% of Americans were aged 65 or over, compared to about 7% of Swedish people and 5% of Japanese people. The proportions of elderly people in the USA and Sweden rose gradually over the next 50 years, reaching just under 15% in 1990. By contrast, the figures for Japan remained below 5% until the early 2000s.

Looking into the future, a sudden increase in the percentage of elderly people is predicted for Japan, with a jump of over 15% in just 10 years from 2030 to 2040. By 2040, it is thought that around 27% of the Japanese population will be 65 years old or more, while the figures for Sweden and the USA will be slightly lower, at about 25% and 23% respectively.

(178 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Thursday, March 29, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: analyse model essays

Maybe you read my [line graph essay](#) last week, but did you *really* study it?

Here's some example analysis of last week's essay:

- **Structure** - 4 paragraphs: introduction, overview, 2 specific details
- **Paraphrasing** - proportion of the population = percentage of people (find more examples)
- **Overview** - overall trend, then biggest change
- **Selecting key information** - first year (1940), middle years (1990, early 2000s), end of period (2030 to 2040)
- **Comparing** - in each country, most dramatic, and, compared to, by contrast, while, slightly lower, respectively (analyse my sentences to learn how to use these words correctly)
- **Verbs** - compares, increases, is expected to see, were, rose, remained... (look carefully at the use of tenses)

It's possible to read model essays quickly and learn a little. It's also possible to spend a long time studying them carefully and learn a lot!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, April 05, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction for 2 charts

You might find it easier to introduce two different charts by writing two separate sentences.

Here is an example question about a graph and bar chart:

The charts below give information about travel to and from the UK, and about the most popular countries for UK residents to visit.

Here is my 2-sentence introduction:

The graph shows numbers of visits to the UK and trips abroad by UK residents. The bar chart shows the five most popular destinations for UK travellers.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Thursday, April 12, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: essay about 2 bar charts

Last week I suggested a way of writing introductions for 2 charts.

Today I'm attaching a full sample essay for this type of question. Click the following link to open my essay: [download bar charts essay](#)

The charts below give information about USA marriage and divorce rates between 1970 and 2000, and the marital status of adult Americans in two of the years.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.



- Simple introduction:
Paraphrase the question. Use "the first chart... the second chart"

The first bar chart shows changes in the number of marriages and divorces in the USA, and the second chart shows figures for the marital status of American adults in 1970 and 2000.
 - Summary:
Describe one main point about each chart (2 sentences)

It is clear that there was a fall in the number of marriages in the USA between 1970 and 2000. The majority of adult Americans were married in both years, but the proportion of single adults was higher in 2000.
 - First chart:
Compare marriage and divorce rates. Mention 1970, 2000 and anything interesting in between (I mentioned 1980)

In 1970, there were 2.5 million marriages in the USA and 1 million divorces. The marriage rate remained stable in 1980, but fell to 2 million by the year 2000. In contrast, the divorce rate peaked in 1980, at nearly 1.5 million divorces, before falling back to 1 million at the end of the period.
 - Second chart:
Start by comparing the highest figures (married). I grouped 'never married' and 'divorced' together. Mention less important figures quickly (widowed)

Around 70% of American adults were married in 1970, but this figure dropped to just under 60% by 2000. At the same time, the proportion of unmarried people and divorcees rose by about 10% in total. The proportion of widowed Americans was slightly lower in 2000.
- (174 words)

IELTS Writing Task 1: singular or plural?

Students often make simple mistakes with singular and plural forms, especially in Writing Task 1. The problem is that the words used on graphs, charts and tables are usually singular.

So, the labels on a chart could be:

- single parent
- graduate
- only child
- laptop computer

But when you write a sentence, you might need to use a plural:

- The number of single parents increased.
- In 1999 nearly 55% of graduates were female.
- The UK has the highest number of only children.
- More laptop computers were sold in the UK than any other country.

Don't just copy the words from the graph or chart. Think first about how to use them correctly.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Thursday, April 26, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: table about waste

A student sent me the following question from a recent IELTS test:

The table below shows the amount of waste production (in millions of tonnes) in six different countries in three different years over a twenty-year period.

	1980	1990	2000
Ireland	0.6	*	5
Japan	28	32	53
Korea	*	31	19
Poland	4	5	6.6
Portugal	2	3	5
US	131	151	192

*Figure not available

A few things to consider before you write your essay:

1. Can you think of a few alternative ways to write "waste production"?
2. What is the most noticeable feature of the table?
3. Is there a general trend over the period of time shown?
4. How can you separate the information into 2 groups (in order to write 2 paragraphs about specific details)?

I'll share my answers to these questions next week.

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'waste' table

Last week we looked at the following question:

The table below shows the amount of waste production (in millions of tonnes) in six different countries in three different years over a twenty-year period.

	1980	1990	2000
Ireland	0.6	*	5
Japan	28	32	53
Korea	*	31	19
Poland	4	5	6.6
Portugal	2	3	5
US	131	151	192

*Figure not available

Here are my answers to last week's questions:

1. It's fine to repeat the word 'waste' because there isn't really an ideal synonym ('rubbish' and 'garbage' have a more limited meaning). However, we can vary our sentences by writing things like 'waste output', 'waste materials' or 'the waste that was produced'.
2. The most noticeable feature must be that the US produced by far the most waste in all 3 years. Use this idea in your 'overview' paragraph.
3. The general trend is that waste production rose in every country apart from Korea. This could be your second 'overview' idea.
4. I would write one main paragraph comparing the 3 countries with the highest figures (US, Japan, Korea), and a separate paragraph about Ireland, Poland and Portugal. Try to use some 'comparing' language when describing the countries (e.g. while, whereas, by contrast) and some 'trend' language when describing the years (e.g. increased, rose, fell).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Thursday, May 17, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: find the mistakes

Can you find the mistakes in the paragraph below?

In 1980, the US produced 131 millions of tonnes of waste. Japan was in second place with 28 millions, while the figures for Poland, Portugal and Ireland were less than 5 millions. In 1990, the US was 151, and in 2000 it rose to 192 millions.

Note:

Some of the mistakes are not related to grammar.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

Mistakes:

1. When there is a number we say "131 million tonnes". Only use "millions of tonnes" when there is no number.
2. Don't write "in first/second place". It's not a competition!
3. Don't write "the US was + number"

So, here's my corrected paragraph:

In 1980, the US produced 131 million tonnes of waste. Japan produced the second largest amount, with 28 million tonnes, while the figures for Poland, Portugal and Ireland were less than 5 million. In 1990, the US created 151 million tonnes of waste, and in 2000 this rose to 192 million tonnes.

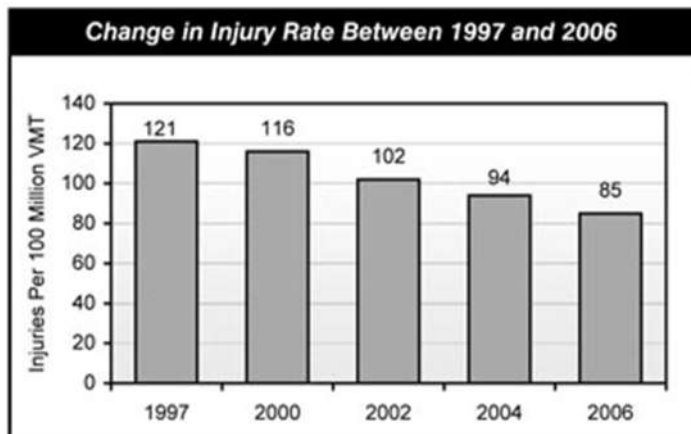
Posted by: Simon | [Friday, May 18, 2012 at 17:01](#)

Thursday, May 24, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: change or comparison?

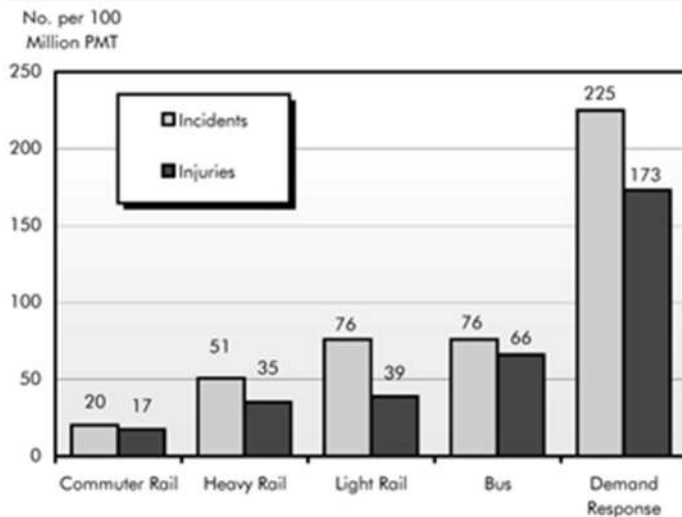
While line graphs always show changes or trends (increase, decrease etc.), this is not always true for bar charts, pie charts and tables.

Here is a bar chart that does show 'change':



And here is a bar chart that shows 'comparison' rather than change:

Incidents and Injuries per 100 Million PMT, 2002



Can you see the difference? How will this difference affect what you write in your essay? I'll go into more detail about the two charts next week, but the important thing for now is to see the difference.

(Charts taken from [US Department of Transportation](#) website)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Thursday, May 31, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart without years

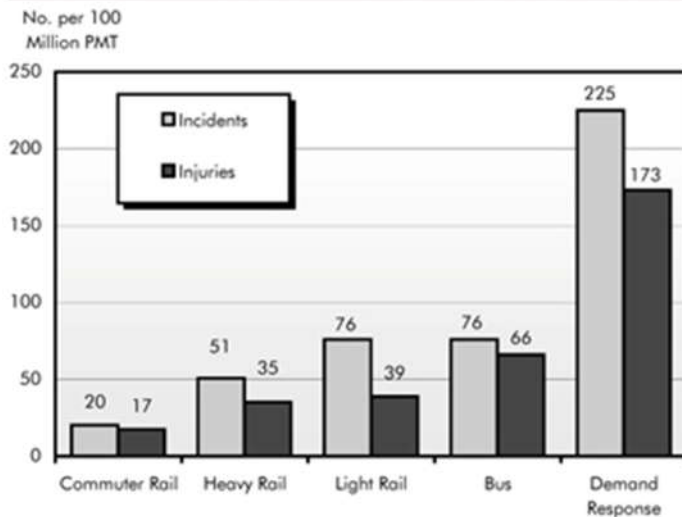
Last week we saw that there are two types of bar chart:

1. those that show changes over time
2. those that compare different items

The important thing to remember about the second type is that you can't describe increases and decreases. Let's look at this type in more detail.

The chart below shows numbers of incidents and injuries per 100 million passenger miles travelled (PMT) by transportation type in 2002.

Incidents and Injuries per 100 Million PMT, 2002



Here's my advice for a 4-paragraph essay:

1. **Introduction:** Explain what the chart shows by paraphrasing the question.
2. **Overview:** Look for two main things - in this case, we could mention the highest item and the fact that there were more incidents than injuries for all five transport types. You don't need to mention any numbers at this point.
3. **Details:** I'd probably group together the two highest items (demand response and bus) in this paragraph. Remember that you can't talk about an increase or decrease; you can only compare the numbers.
4. **Details:** I'd group the three types of rail transport together for this paragraph. Write some nice comparison sentences!

Note:

You don't need to know what 'demand-response' transport is (it's an American term which I've never used), but [click here](#) if you want to know.

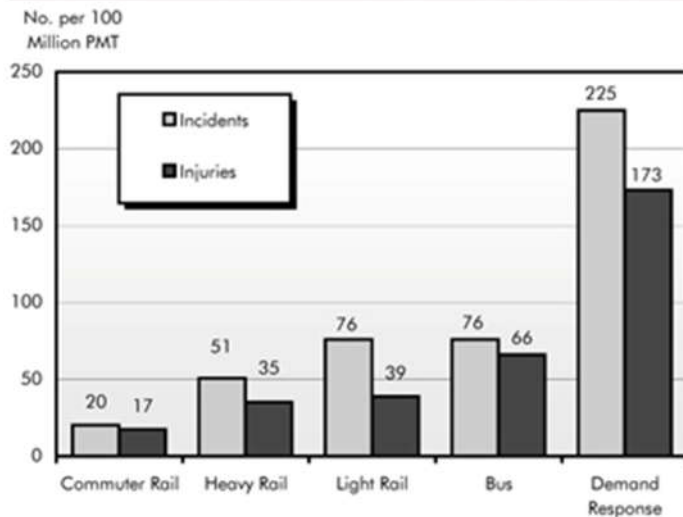
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Thursday, June 07, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'chart without years' essay

The chart below shows numbers of incidents and injuries per 100 million passenger miles travelled (PMT) by transportation type in 2002.

Incidents and Injuries per 100 Million PMT, 2002



The bar chart compares the number of incidents and injuries for every 100 million passenger miles travelled on five different types of public transport in 2002.

It is clear that the most incidents and injuries took place on demand-response vehicles. By contrast, commuter rail services recorded by far the lowest figures.

A total of 225 incidents and 173 injuries, per 100 million passenger miles travelled, took place on demand-response transport services. These figures were nearly three times as high as those for the second highest category, bus services. There were 76 incidents and 66 people were injured on buses.

Rail services experienced fewer problems. The number of incidents on light rail trains equalled the figure recorded for buses, but there were significantly fewer injuries, at only 39. Heavy rail services saw lower numbers of such events than light rail services, but commuter rail passengers were even less likely to experience problems. In fact, only 20 incidents and 17 injuries occurred on commuter trains.

(165 words, band 9)

Note:

Don't worry about the repetition of "incidents and injuries" in this essay. There are no perfect synonyms for these words, although I managed to use "problems" and "such events" later in the essay. The most important thing is to describe the data clearly and make some good comparisons.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(36\)](#)

Thursday, June 14, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: why I'd start with task 1

Students often ask whether it's better to do task 1 or task 2 first.

In my opinion, it's best to start any exam with something quick and easy that gives you confidence. Hopefully you'll agree that the quickest and easiest part of the whole writing test is the introduction to task 1.

You don't need to think too much about the introduction to task 1; simply rewrite the question statement by changing a few words. [Click here](#) to read one of my lessons about introductions, and then read [this lesson](#) about paraphrasing. If you practise these techniques, you'll start your IELTS writing test with confidence.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Thursday, June 21, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: more than one chart

Many students are still worried about questions with more than one chart. Here are some tips:

- 1.If there are 2 charts, they often show different information. Don't worry about comparing them. Just do: introduction, overview, then one paragraph for each chart.
- 2.If the units are different (e.g. one chart shows 'millions' and the other shows 'percentages'), you can't usually compare them.
- 3.If the units are the same, you can probably compare the charts.
- 4.If there are 3 or 4 charts, you can usually compare them.

To see an essay about 2 different charts [click here](#) (Cambridge IELTS 6, p98).

To see an essay about 4 related charts [click here](#) (Cambridge IELTS 7, p101).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Thursday, June 28, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: paraphrasing

The easiest way to start your Task 1 essay is by paraphrasing the question. Paraphrasing means writing something in a different way (using your own words).

Here are some simple changes you can make:

- graph = line graph
- chart = bar chart
- diagram = figure
- shows = illustrates (or 'compares' if the graph is comparing)
- proportion = percentage
- information = data

- the number of = the figure for
- the proportion of = the figure for
- people in the USA = Americans
- from 1999 to 2009 = between 1999 and 2009
- from 1999 to 2009 = over a period of 10 years
- how to produce = the process of producing
- in three countries = in the UK, France and Spain (i.e. name the countries)

Tip:

"The figure for / figures for" is a great phrase that not many people use (e.g. the graph shows figures for unemployment in three countries).

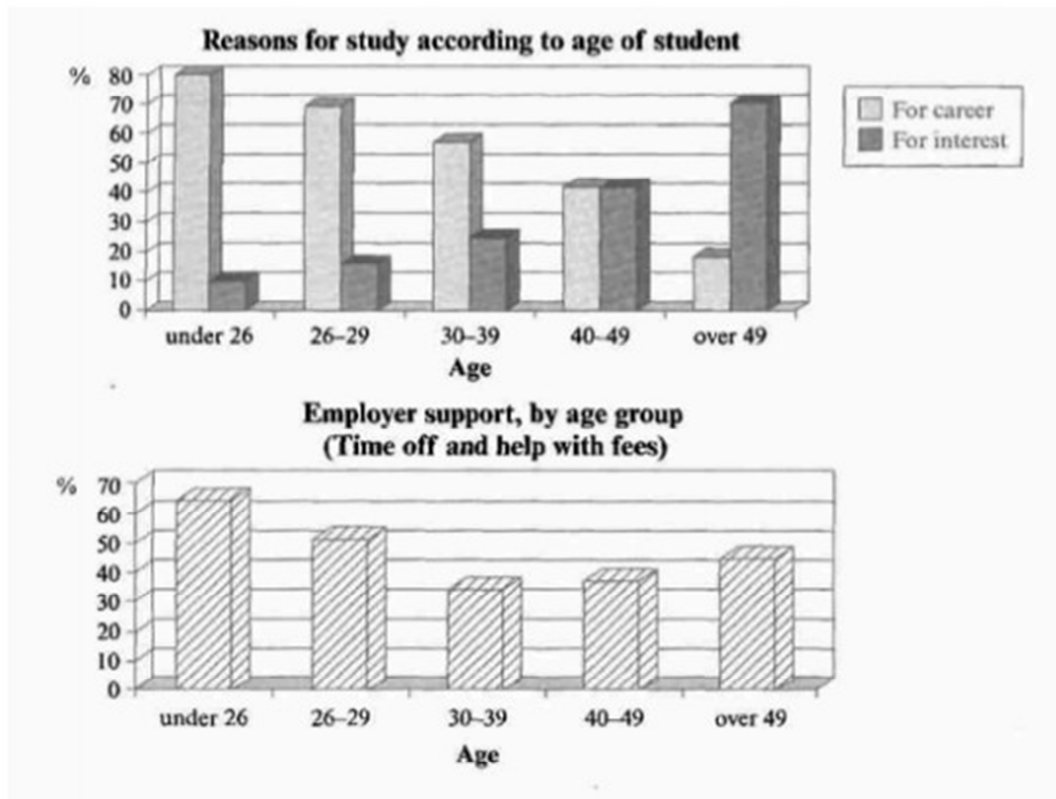
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Thursday, July 05, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar charts with age groups

A few people have asked about the question on page 52 of Cambridge IELTS 5. It shows two bar charts with age groups. [Click here](#) to see the question.

The charts below show the main reasons for study among students of different age groups and the amount of support they received from employers.



As usual, I recommend writing 4 paragraphs:

1. A quick introduction to say what the charts show.
2. An overview of the main features - one sentence for each chart.
3. Describe the first chart in detail.
4. Describe the second chart in detail.

Here's an example introduction and overview:

The first bar chart compares students of different ages in terms of why they are studying their chosen courses, and the second chart compares the same age groups in terms of the help they require at work.

It is clear that the proportion of people who study for career purposes is far higher among the younger age groups, and decreases steadily with age. The need for employer support also decreases with age, but only up to the point when employees enter their forties.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Thursday, July 12, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: choosing which details to include

In [last week's lesson](#) I wrote an introduction and overview for a question about two bar charts. For paragraphs 3 and 4, we need to describe each chart in detail.

I usually find that 3 sentences are enough for a good 'details' paragraph, which means that we only need to choose 3 things to describe for each chart.

3 sentences about the first chart:

1. Compare the percentages for students under 26.
2. Mention the overall trend as students get older, and that the proportions are the same for the 40-49 age group.
3. Compare the percentages for students over 49.

3 sentences about the second chart:

1. Write about the two youngest age groups.
2. Write about the 30-39 age group.
3. Write about the two oldest age groups.

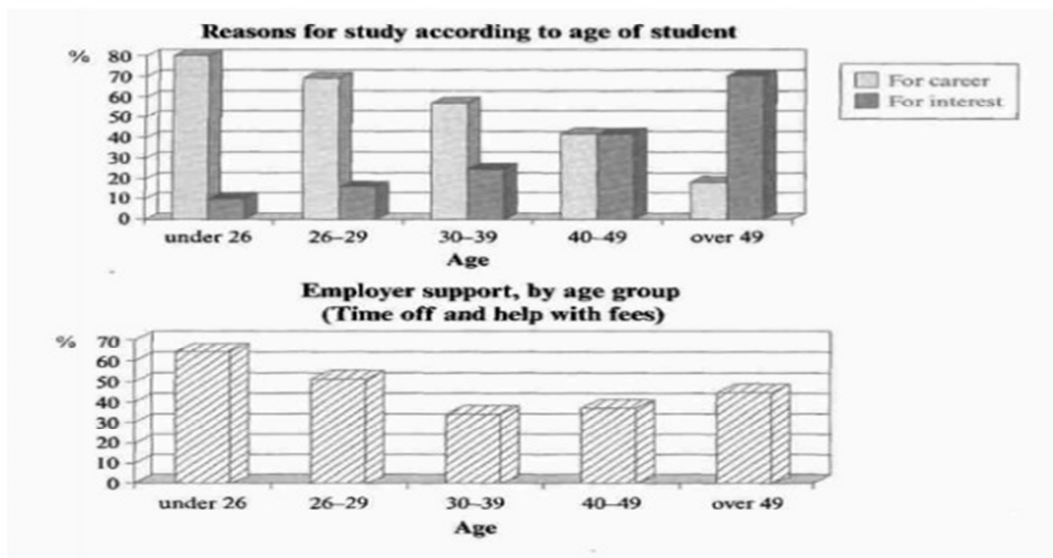
Thursday, July 19, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay about 2 bar charts

Here's my full essay for the ['age group bar charts'](#) question:

Cambridge IELTS 5, test 2 (page 52)

The charts below show the main reasons for study among students of different age groups and the amount of support they received from employers.



The bar charts compare students of different ages in terms of why they are studying and whether they are supported by an employer.

It is clear that the proportion of students who study for career purposes is far higher among the younger age groups, while the oldest students are more likely to study for interest. Employer support is more commonly given to younger students.

Around 80% of students aged under 26 study to further their careers, whereas only 10% study purely out of interest. The gap between these two proportions narrows as students get older, and the figures for those in their forties are the same, at about 40%. Students aged over 49 overwhelmingly study for interest (70%) rather than for professional reasons (less than 20%).

Just over 60% of students aged under 26 are supported by their employers. By contrast, the 30-39 age group is the most self-sufficient, with only 30% being given time off and help with fees. The figures rise slightly for students in their forties and for those aged 50 or more.

(178 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Thursday, August 02, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: the overview

A current examiner recently told me that the most common mistake in students' task 1 essays is that there is no overview. This was also true when I was an examiner.

So what makes a good overview? Here are a few tips:

- An overview is simply a summary of the main things you can see.
- Because the overview is so important, I recommend putting it at the beginning of your essay, just after the introduction sentence.
- I write two overview sentences. A one-sentence overview isn't really enough.
- Try not to include specific numbers in the overview. Save the specifics for later paragraphs.
- Look at the 'big picture' e.g. the overall change from the first year to the last year (if years are shown on the chart), the differences between whole categories rather than single numbers, or the total number of stages in a process.

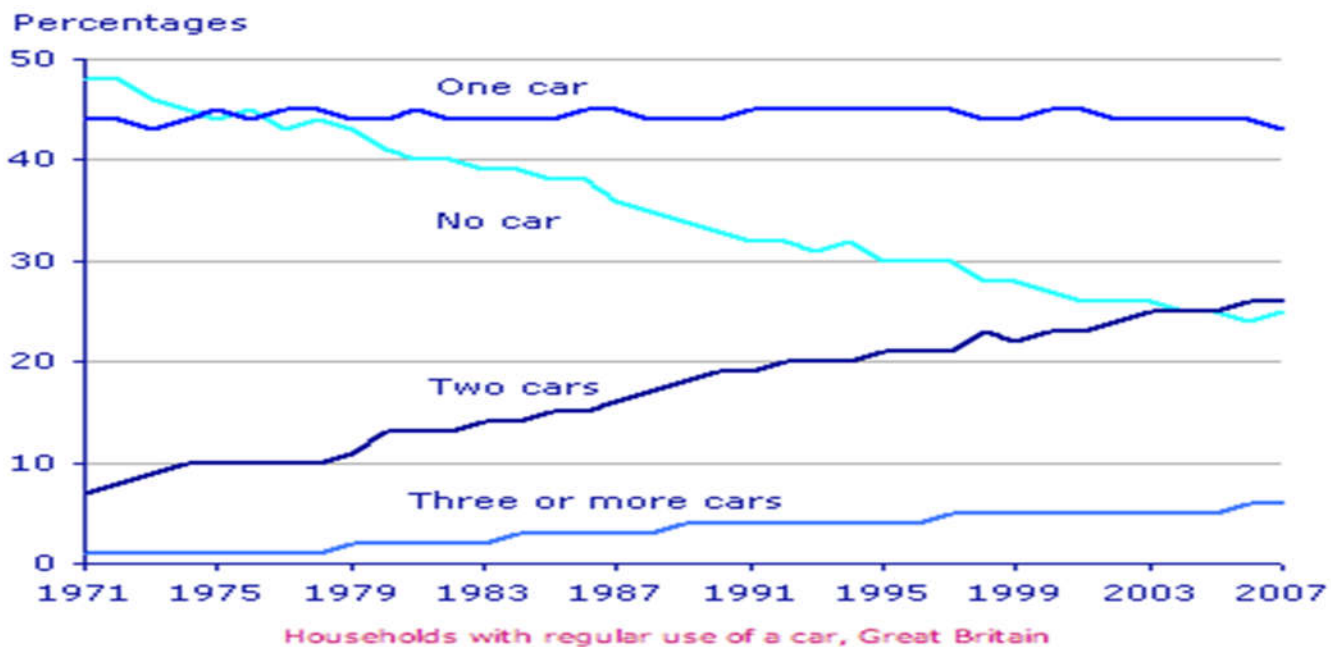
Have another look at the overview paragraphs (paragraph 2) in the essays I've written here on the site. Analyse them carefully, and practise writing your own overviews in the same way.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Thursday, August 09, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: example overview

In last week's lesson I gave some tips about how to write a good [overview](#) to summarise the information shown on a graph, chart or diagram. Let's look at an example overview of the graph below.



My overview:

Overall, car ownership in Britain increased between 1971 and 2007. In particular, the number of households with two cars rose, while the number of households without a car fell.

Analysis:

- Notice that I didn't include any specific numbers. Save the details for later.
- The first sentence describes the "big picture". The first thing I did was look at **all 4 lines and the whole period**. I noticed that there was an overall trend towards people having more cars (the word 'ownership' came from the question). Most students tend to miss this kind of general observation.
- The second sentence highlights the biggest changes over the whole period. With these 2 sentences, I've definitely summarised the main features of the graph.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, August 23, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: how to use your 20 minutes

You have 20 minutes for task 1, so try spending 5 minutes on each paragraph. This might help you to organise your time better.

First 5 minutes

Read the question, make sure you understand the chart, write your introduction by paraphrasing the question.

Second 5 minutes

Look at the chart and try to find 2 general points. Don't look at specific details; look for "the big picture". Write 2 sentences summarising the information.

Final 10 minutes

Describe specific details. Try to break this part into 2 paragraphs because it looks better. You could spend 5 minutes on each paragraph.

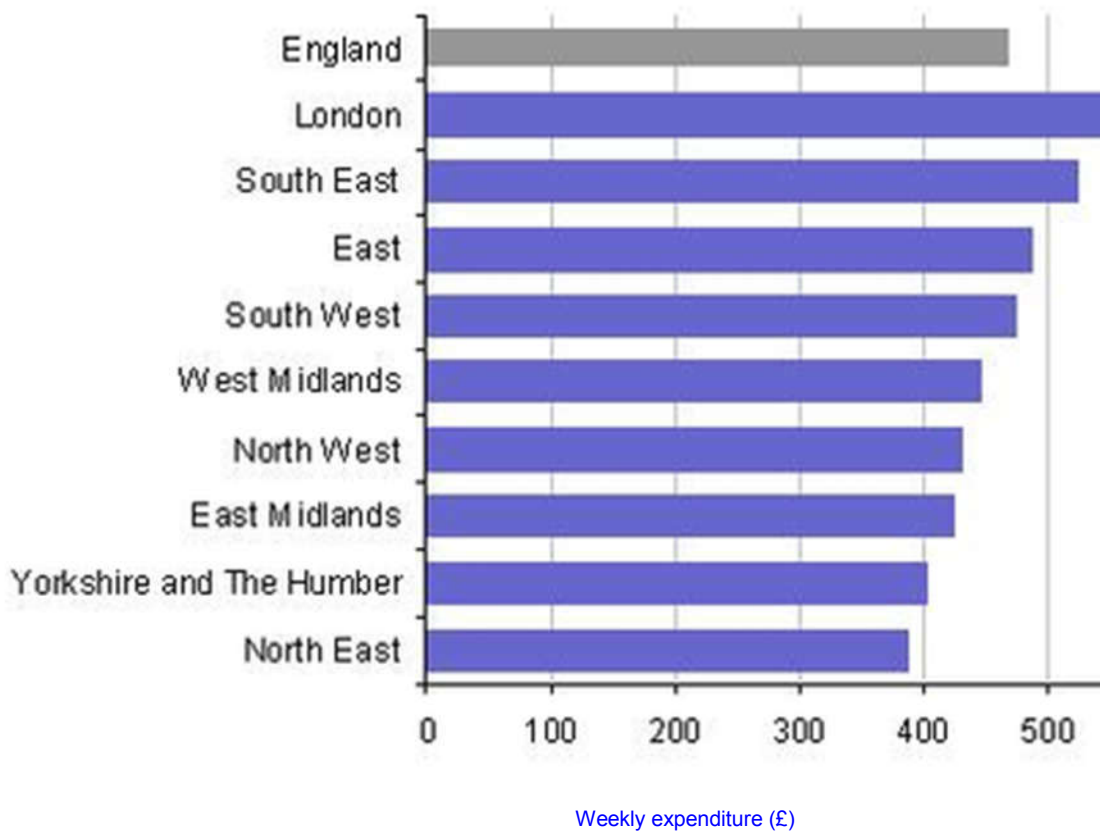
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, September 13, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart

The bar chart below is taken from the [UK national statistics website](#) that I mentioned in last week's lesson.

Average weekly household expenditure, by region, 2007-09



Try writing a full description of this bar chart. If you need some help, use the information below the bar chart on [this page](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Thursday, September 20, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: ten sentences

One way to practise for writing task 1 is to think in terms of sentences rather than worrying about the full essay. Just take a chart or graph and try to write 10 sentences about it.

Try writing the ten sentences suggested below about [last week's](#) chart.

- 1.State what the chart shows.
- 2.Make a general comparison between the South and the North.
- 3.Contrast London with the North East (without giving the figures).
- 4.Give the overall figure for England.
- 5.Give the figure for London and compare it with the average for England.
- 6.Add that figures for the South East, East and South West were also higher than the country average.
- 7.Give approximate figures for the three regions above.
- 8.Describe the similar figures for the West Midlands, North West and East Midlands.
- 9.Give figures for the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber.
- 10.Compare figures for the North East, national average and London.

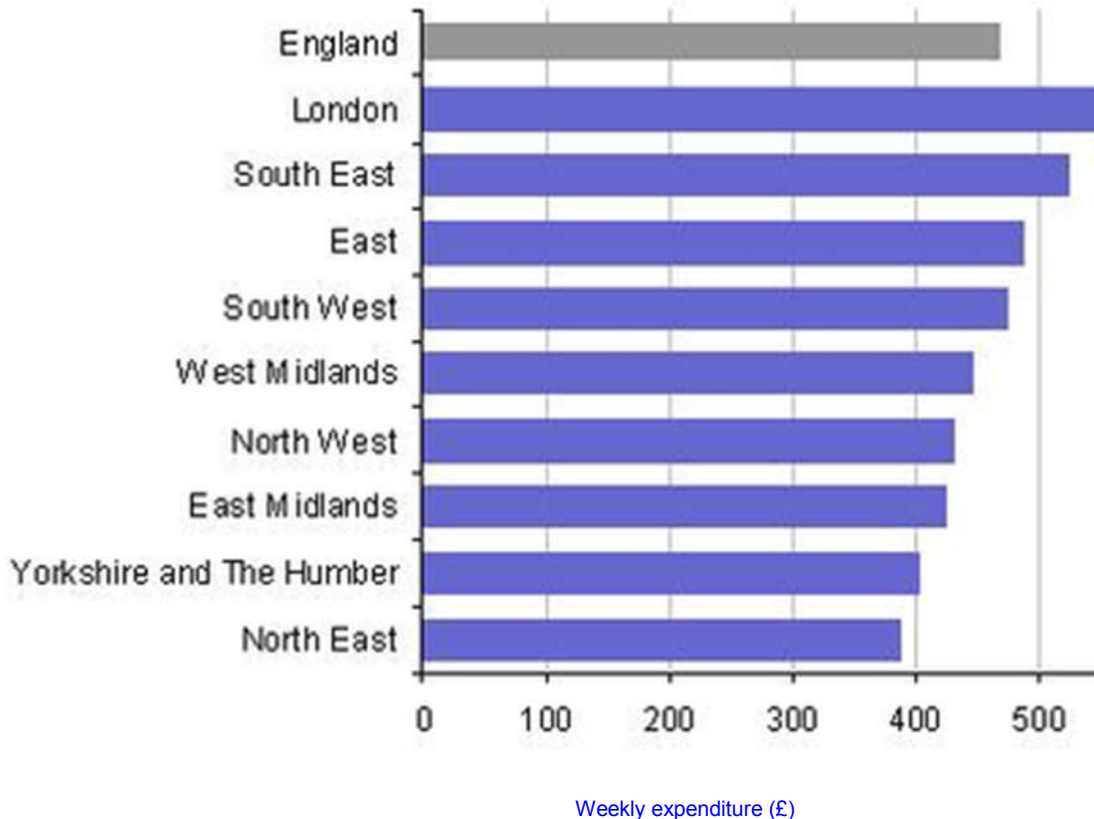
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Thursday, September 27, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: my 10 sentences

Last week I explained how to write 10 sentences about the chart below.

Average weekly household expenditure by region, 2007-09



Here are my 10 sentences:

1. The bar chart shows average weekly spending by households in different areas of England between 2007 and 2009.
2. Households in the south of the country spent more on average than those in the north.
3. Average weekly spending by households was highest in London and lowest in the North East.
4. English households spent on average around £470 per week.
5. The average expenditure for households in London was about £560 per week, almost £100 more than the overall figure for England.
6. Households in the South East, East and South West also spent more than the national average.
7. Weekly household spending figures for those three regions were approximately £520, £490 and £480 respectively.
8. Similar levels of household spending were seen in the West Midlands, the North West and the East Midlands, at about £430 to £450 per week.
9. In the region of Yorkshire and the Humber, households spent approximately £400 per week, while expenditure in the North East was around £10 per week lower than this.
10. It is noticeable that average weekly expenditure by households in the North East was around £80 less than the national average, and around £170 less than the London average.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, October 04, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: repeating key words

Students often worry about repeating the same words in writing task 1. For example, in last week's lesson I repeated the phrase **average weekly spending** maybe three times. Is this a big problem?

No! Repeating a key word or phrase a few times is not a problem; sometimes it is necessary to show that you are consistently talking about the same thing. If you try to use too much variety, there is a danger that you will confuse the reader or write something that does not mean what you want it to mean.

It's fine to either repeat the key words or make small changes. Look at these examples of small changes I made to the phrase **average weekly spending**:

- spent on average
- average expenditure
- weekly spending figures
- levels of spending
- spent per week
- expenditure per week

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Thursday, October 11, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: a common mistake

Students often make mistakes with thousands, millions and billions. It might seem strange, but you should say "10 million" not "10 millions". It's the same with hundred, thousand and billion. Try to avoid this mistake in writing task 1 - examiners notice it!

Correct: 10 million people

Wrong: 10 millions people, 10 millions of people, 10 million of people

Note:

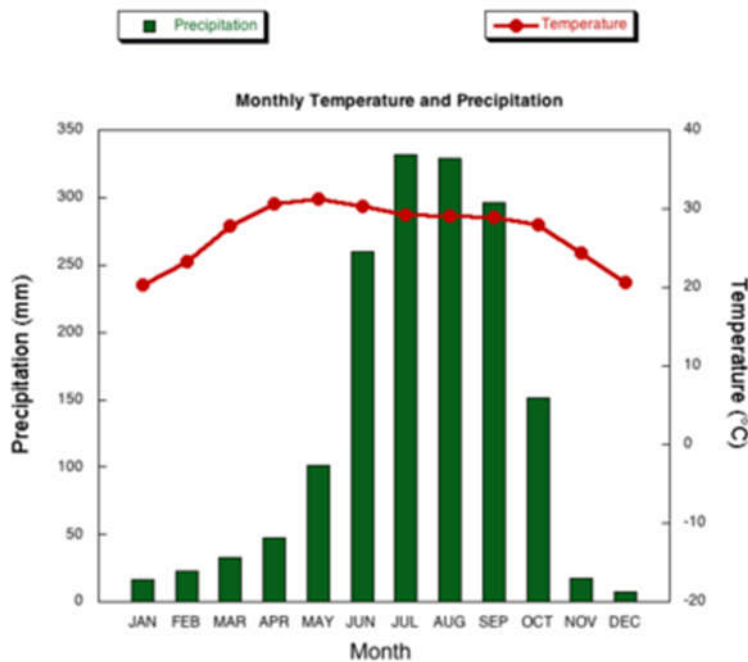
When there is no number, we do write "millions of".
e.g. Millions of people travel abroad each year.

Thursday, October 18, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: graph with temperatures

Somebody asked me to help with graphs or charts that show temperature. Let's look at the following graph, which I found on Wikipedia.

The climograph below shows average monthly temperatures and rainfall in the city of Kolkata (or Calcutta).



The following easy questions should help you to notice some key features:

1. Do temperatures and rainfall vary (change) significantly over the year?
2. In which months are temperatures highest and lowest? (include figures)
3. On average, how much rain falls in the months of July and August?
4. What is noticeable about January and December?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, October 25, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: climate graph

Here are my answers to [last week's questions](#):

1. Monthly figures for precipitation in Kolkata vary considerably, but monthly temperatures remain relatively stable.
2. Temperatures are highest between April and June, at around 30°C, and lowest in December and January, at approximately 20°C.
3. Average rainfall reaches around 330mm in the months of July and August.
4. It is noticeable that Kolkata experiences both its lowest temperatures and its lowest rainfall in January and December.

Note: the verbs used above are in the present simple (vary, remain, are, reaches, experiences) because the graph shows average figures, not particular years.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Thursday, November 01, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: double, twice as, twofold

A few students have asked me about how to use 'double', 'twice as', 'three times', 'twofold', 'threefold' etc. Compare how each word/phrase is used in the following examples:

1. 'double' (verb)

The number of unemployed people doubled between 2005 and 2009.

2. 'twice as...as/compared to', 'three times as...as/compared to'

There were twice as many unemployed people in 2009 as in 2005.
Twice as many people were unemployed in 2009 compared to 2005.

3. 'twofold', 'threefold' (adjective or adverb)

There was a twofold increase in the number of unemployed people between 2005 and 2009.
(adjective with the noun 'increase')

The number of unemployed people increased twofold between 2005 and 2009. (adverb with the verb 'increase')

Try using these forms in your own sentences. Make sure you follow the patterns.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, November 08, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction technique

The task 1 introduction should be fast and easy to do. Just write one sentence in which you paraphrase the question statement.

Here's the question statement from a [previous lesson](#):

The climograph below shows average monthly temperatures and rainfall in the city of Kolkata.

Here's my one-sentence introduction:

The chart compares average figures for temperature and precipitation over the course of a calendar year in Kolkata.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, November 15, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'to' or 'by'

In IELTS writing task 1, you might need to use verbs like increase, decrease, rise and fall. These verbs can be followed by the words 'to' and 'by', but what's the difference?

Let's use these figures:

- Company profit in 2005 = £20,000
- Company profit in 2010 = £25,000

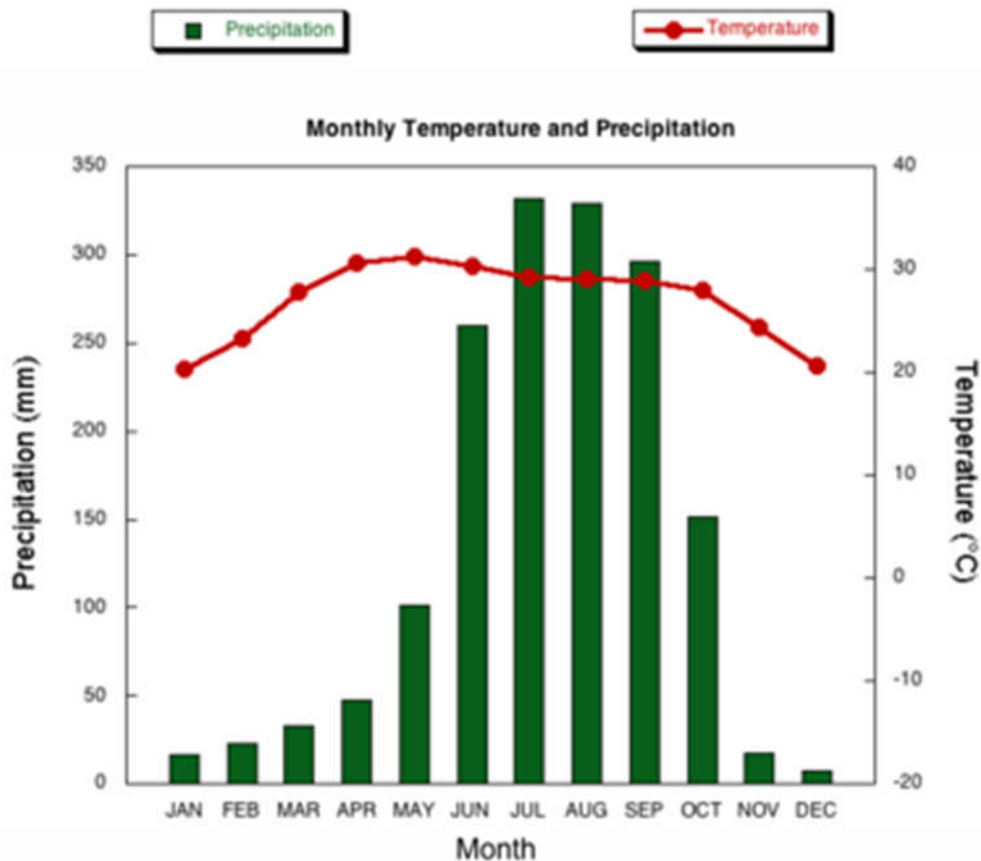
Now compare these sentences:

- Company profit rose **to** £25,000 in 2010.
- Company profit rose **by** £5,000 between 2005 and 2010.

It's easy: 'to' is used before the new figure, and 'by' is used to show the change. It's the same when you are talking about a fall.

IELTS Writing Task 1: climate essay

The climograph below shows average monthly temperatures and rainfall in the city of Kolkata.



The chart compares average figures for temperature and precipitation over the course of a calendar year in Kolkata.

It is noticeable that monthly figures for precipitation in Kolkata vary considerably, whereas monthly temperatures remain relatively stable. Rainfall is highest from July to August, while temperatures are highest in April and May.

Between the months of January and May, average temperatures in Kolkata rise from their lowest point at around 20°C to a peak of just over 30°C. Average rainfall in the city also rises over the same period, from approximately 20mm of rain in January to 100mm in May.

While temperatures stay roughly the same for the next four months, the amount of rainfall more than doubles between May and June. Figures for precipitation remain above 250mm from June to September, peaking at around 330mm in July. The final three months of the year see a dramatic fall in precipitation, to a low of about 10mm in December, and a steady drop in temperatures back to the January average.

(173 words, band 9)

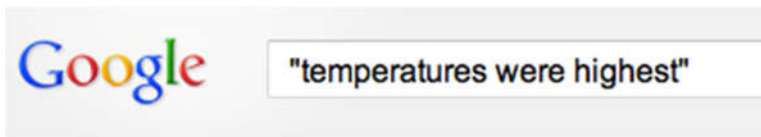
Thursday, November 29, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: articles

Correct or natural use of articles (the, a, an) is probably one of the most difficult things for learners of English to master. For example, why did I write "temperatures are highest" instead of "temperatures are the highest" in the essay I wrote last week? [Click here](#) to read an explanation.

There are many other complex 'rules' about article use in English, which grammar books and [websites](#) do their best to explain. I also recommend using Google in the way described below.

Task: try Googling the phrases "temperatures were highest" and "temperatures were the highest" (make sure you put the quotation marks so that Google searches for the whole phrase). Compare the number of search results to see which is more common, then look through the results to find good examples of full sentences for each phrase. You might find that good examples help you more than grammar rules do.



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagrams

The following paragraph describes the process of making cement.

At the first stage in the cement production process, limestone and clay are crushed to form a powder. This powder is then mixed and passed through a rotating heater. The resulting mixture is ground, and finally the end product, cement, is packed into large bags.

There are 2 things that make process descriptions special:

1. Phrases that order the process and link the steps (underlined)
2. Passive verbs (highlighted)

(See Cambridge IELTS book 8 for the full question)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Thursday, December 13, 2012

IELTS Writing Task 1: diagram overview

After the introduction, I tell my students to write an overview of the information shown on the chart. When the chart shows numbers, we look for the highest, lowest, biggest change, overall trend etc.

But how do you write an overview of a diagram that doesn't show numbers?

Here are some things you could put in a [process](#) diagram overview:

- The total number of steps in the process.

- Where the process begins and ends.

And this is what you could write about for a [comparing](#) diagram:

- The total number of changes or differences.
- The main changes or differences.
- The main similarities or what doesn't change.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)

Thursday, January 03, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: using the passive

In which of the following sentences is the passive used appropriately? Which sentences should be changed to the active?

- 1) The number of marriages was decreased between 1999 and 2009.
- 2) First, the raw materials are mixed together.
- 3) The figure for residents with no children has been increased this year.
- 4) The final product is packaged and delivered to shops.

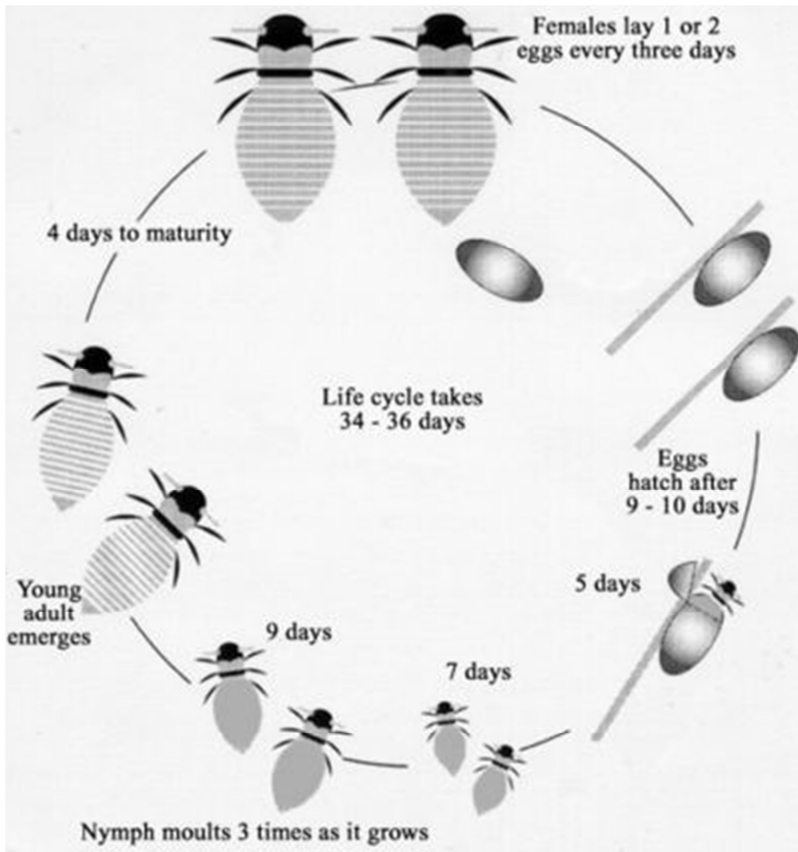
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, January 10, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: life cycle diagram

The diagram shows the life cycle of the honey bee. Two things to consider are:

1. how to summarise the diagram before describing the stages in detail
2. whether to use active or passive verb forms



nymph = immature form of an insect

moult = shed or lose old feathers, hair or skin to allow for new growth

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(42\)](#)

Thursday, January 17, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction and overview

As I've explained before, we don't write a conclusion for task 1, we write an overview. You can put this at the end of your essay, but I prefer to put it straight after the introduction. Let's return to last week's **life cycle** question.

Example introduction and overview:

The diagram illustrates the various stages in the life of a honey bee. We can see that the complete life cycle lasts between 34 and 36 days. It is also noticeable that there are five main stages in the development of the honey bee, from egg to mature adult insect.

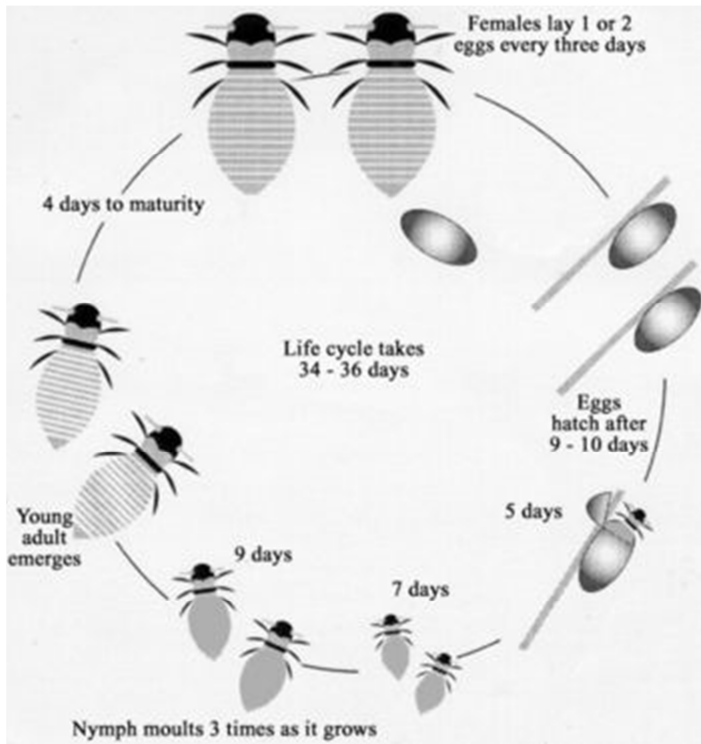
Note: I often separate the introduction and overview, but in this case I've put them together in the same paragraph. Both ways are fine.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Thursday, January 24, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: life cycle essay

Here's my full essay for the [life cycle](#) question:



The diagram illustrates the various stages in the life of a honey bee. We can see that the complete life cycle lasts between 34 and 36 days. It is also noticeable that there are five main stages in the development of the honey bee, from egg to mature adult insect.

The life cycle of the honey bee begins when the female adult lays an egg; the female typically lays one or two eggs every 3 days. Between 9 and 10 days later, each egg hatches and the immature insect, or nymph, appears.

During the third stage of the life cycle, the nymph grows in size and sheds its skin three times. This moulting first takes place 5 days after the egg hatches, then 7 days later, and again another 9 days later. After a total of 30 to 31 days from the start of the cycle, the young adult honey bee emerges from its final moulting stage, and in the space of only 4 days it reaches full maturity.

(169 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, January 31, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: describing percentages

Here are 3 useful techniques for describing percentages:

1. English speakers usually put the percentage at the start of the sentence.

2. Use *while*, *whereas* or *compared to* (after a comma) to add a comparison.

3. Use "the figure for" to add another comparison in the next sentence.

Use these examples as models for your own sentences:

In 1999, 35% of British people went abroad for their holidays, while only 28% of Australians spent their holidays in a different country. The figure for the USA stood at 31%.

Around 40% of women in the UK had an undergraduate qualification in 1999, compared to 37% of men. The figures for the year 2000 rose slightly to 42% and 38% respectively.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Thursday, February 07, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: ways to prepare

Yesterday I suggested some good ways to prepare for writing task 2, instead of just writing full essays. Here are some study ideas for task 1:

1) Print a collection of questions

Before you start writing any task 1 essays, it's a good idea to have an overview of the different types of questions that you might face. Try to get paper copies (printed) of around 10 different questions - it's useful to be able to see them all in one place. Your 'pack' of questions should include: a line graph, bar chart, pie chart, table, 2 different charts, 3 or more similar charts, process diagram, comparison diagram, life cycle, map.

2) Practise parts of essays

Instead of writing a full essay, try writing 10 [introductions](#) - one for each of the questions in your 'pack' (see point 1 above). The next time you are studying, just focus on writing [overviews](#). On a different day, practise describing percentages, or comparing numbers etc...

3) Use 'model' sentences

In [last week's lesson](#) I showed you some model sentences for describing percentages. If you look through my task 1 essays in the lessons on this site, you'll find all the sentence structures you need for the 10 question types mentioned in point 1. Use my sentences as models, and simply change the content according to the topic.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, February 14, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: charts showing countries

A few things to remember when the graph or chart shows countries:

1. If the question doesn't name the countries (e.g. "in three countries"), you could name them in your introduction (e.g. "in Britain, France and Germany"). You could even write "in three countries, namely Britain, France and Germany".
2. Don't forget the word "the" when writing about "the USA" and "the UK".
3. Always compare the countries; never describe the figures for each country in separate paragraphs.

Finally, try to vary the way you write about countries. For example:

- The number of elderly people in the USA rose.
- Canada also saw a rise in the number of elderly people.
- However, the figure for Australia fell.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

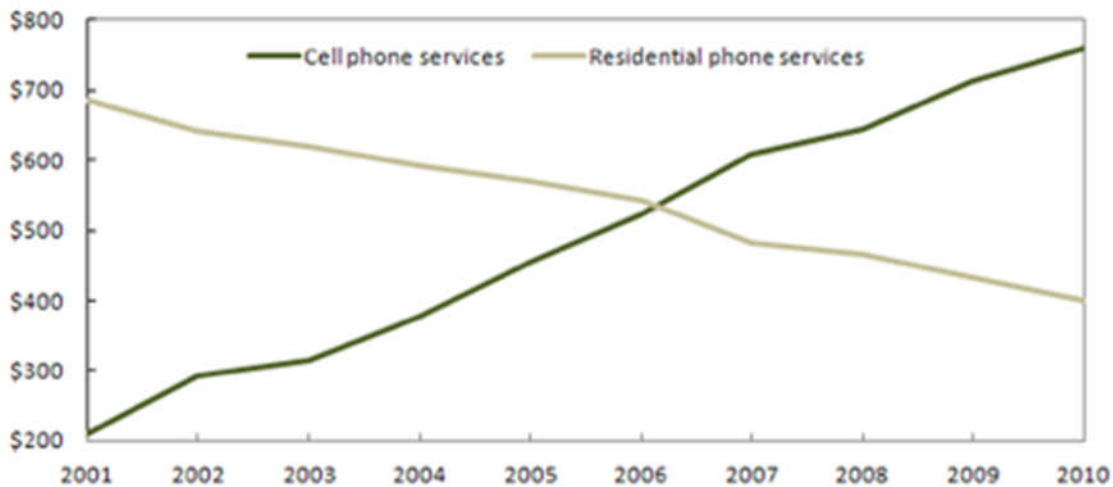
Thursday, February 21, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: make your own questions

Yesterday I suggested making your own questions for writing task 2. To make a task 1 question, just do a Google image search for graphs, charts etc. Choose something simple, and try describing it.

For example, here's a line graph that I found:

Chart 1. Average annual expenditures on cell phone and residential phone services, 2001–2010



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey

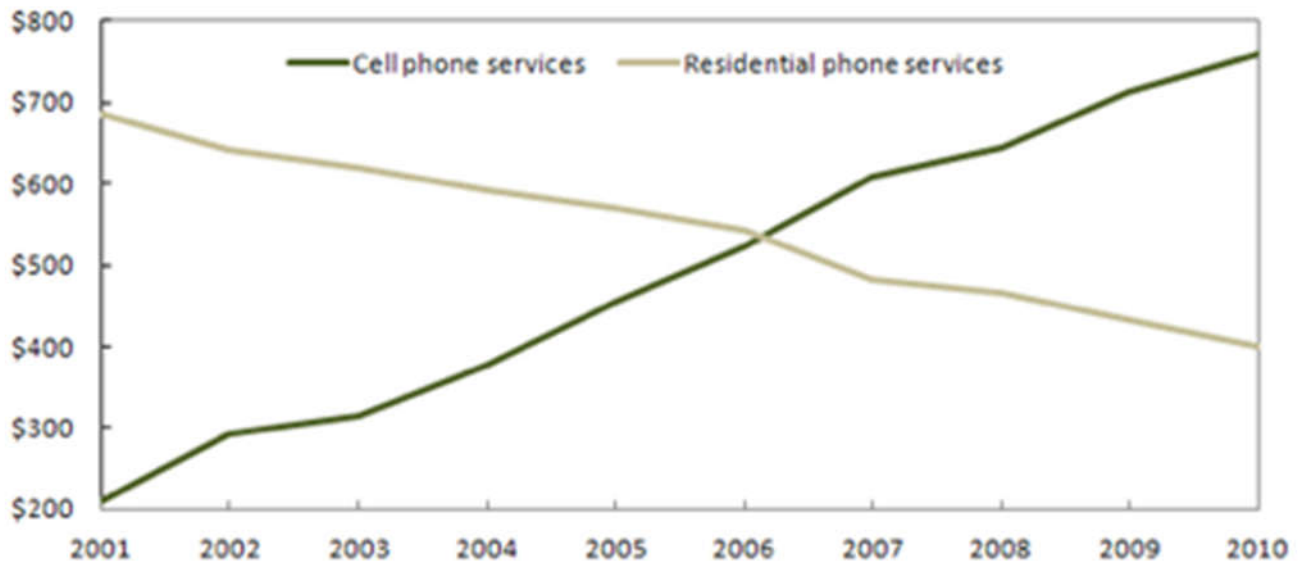
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, February 28, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph ideas

The graph below shows US consumers' average annual expenditures on cell phone and residential phone services between 2001 and 2010.

Chart 1. Average annual expenditures on cell phone and residential phone services, 2001–2010



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey

Some paraphrasing that you could use in your introduction:

- annual expenditures = yearly spending
- cell phone services = mobile phones
- residential services = landline phones

Two possible main points for your overview / summary:

- compare the two trends over the whole period
- say what happened in 2006

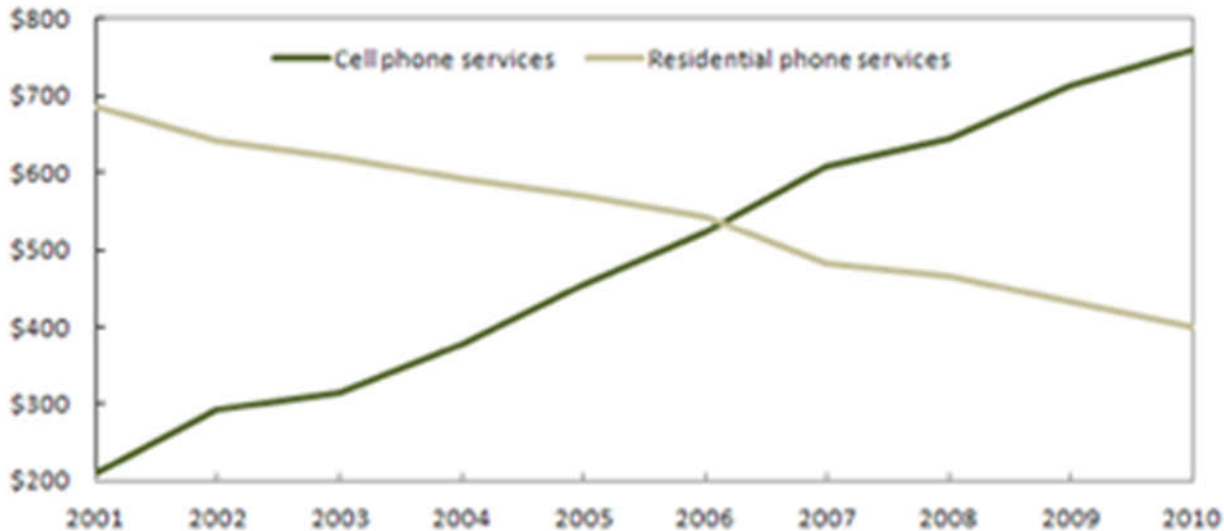
Select key details:

- compare the figures for 2001
- describe the changes in expenditure over the following 5 years
- give the figures for 2006 (where the two lines meet)
- finish with a comparison of spending in 2010

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph essay

Chart 1. Average annual expenditures on cell phone and residential phone services, 2001–2010



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey

Here's my full essay using last week's [ideas](#):

The line graph compares average yearly spending by Americans on mobile and landline phone services from 2001 to 2010.

It is clear that spending on landline phones fell steadily over the 10-year period, while mobile phone expenditure rose quickly. The year 2006 marks the point at which expenditure on mobile services overtook that for residential phone services.

In 2001, US consumers spent an average of nearly \$700 on residential phone services, compared to only around \$200 on cell phone services. Over the following five years, average yearly spending on landlines dropped by nearly \$200. By contrast, expenditure on mobiles rose by approximately \$300.

In the year 2006, the average American paid out the same amount of money on both types of phone service, spending just over \$500 on each. By 2010, expenditure on mobile phones had reached around \$750, while the figure for spending on residential services had fallen to just over half this amount.

(162 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, March 14, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: repeating words

In last week's [line graph essay](#) I repeated the word "expenditure" four times. Is this a problem?

The answer is no! If you look at the graph, you can see that the whole essay must be about expenditure. In fact, I needed to mention the idea of expenditure eleven times! Does the examiner really expect you to think of eleven synonyms for "expenditure"? Of course not.

It's impossible to avoid repeating some of the key words in writing task 1. Try to add variety where you can (I also used "spending", "spent" and "paid out"), but don't become obsessed with this. The important thing is to describe and compare the data.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

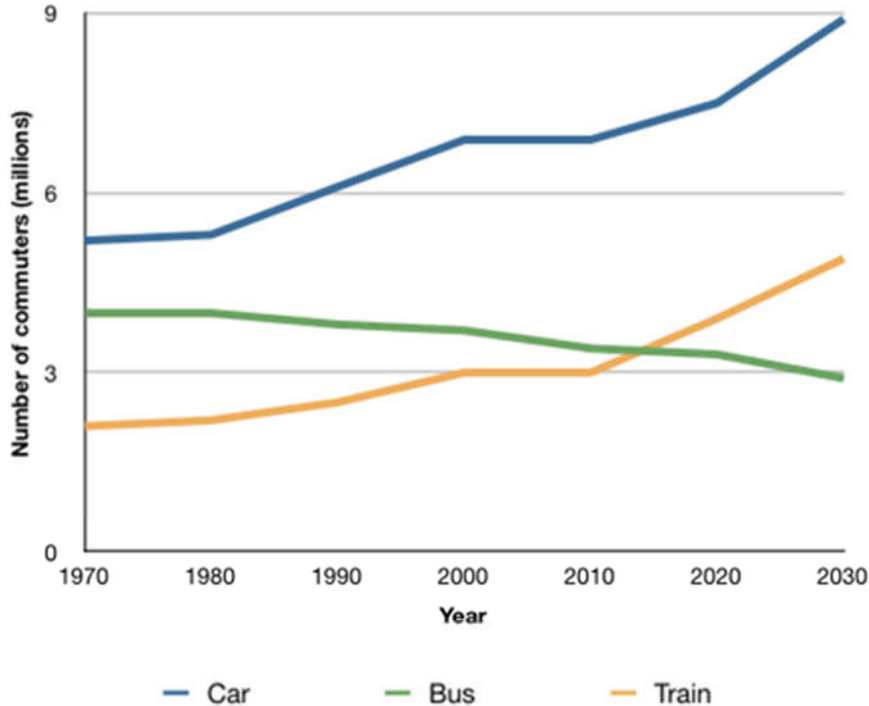
Thursday, April 25, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph overview

The 'overview' is a really important part of your task 1 essay. It's a summary of the main things that you can see on the graph or chart, and I suggest that you write two sentences describing two main things that you notice.

What two main things would you choose for the graph below?

The graph below shows the average number of UK commuters travelling each day by car, bus or train between 1970 and 2030.

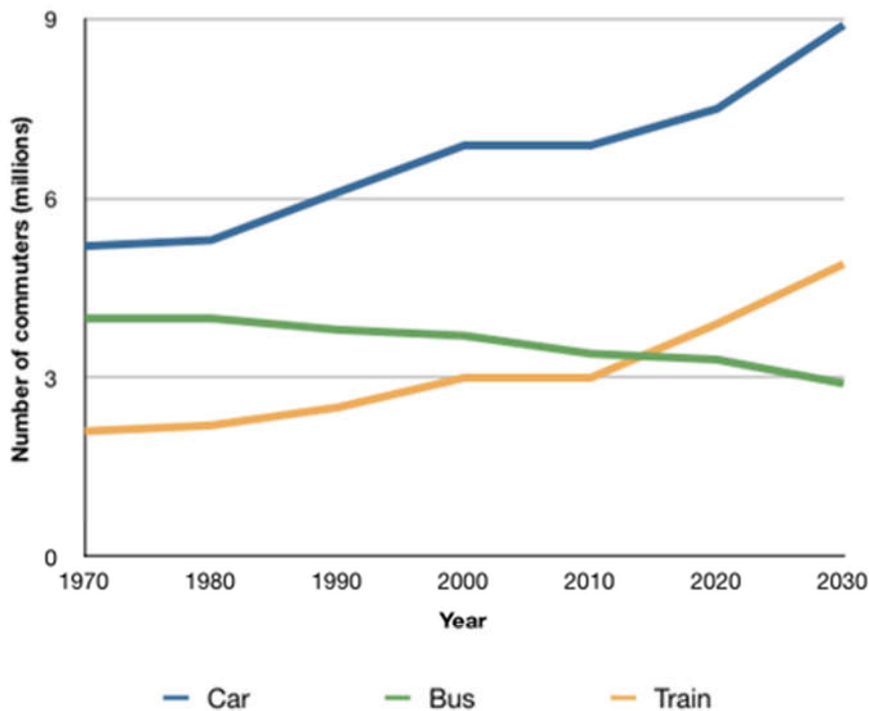


Tip: Don't look for particular years or numbers. Look at the overall trend over the whole 60-year period.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(43\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: two main points

Last week I asked you to choose two main things to write about for your overview (summary) of the graph below.



Here are my choices:

1. The first thing you should notice is that the car was easily the most popular form of transport in each of the years shown on the graph.
2. Secondly, you could contrast the rising trends for car and train use with the falling trend for bus users.

Here's my overview paragraph describing the two points above:

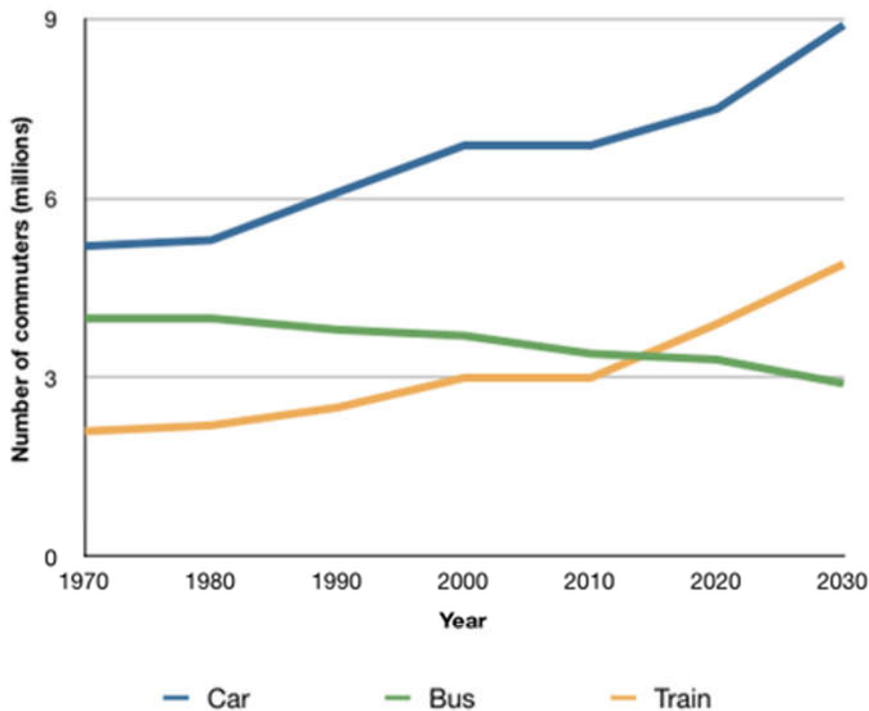
It is clear that the car is by far the most popular means of transport for UK commuters throughout the period shown. Also, while the numbers of people who use the car and train increase gradually, the number of bus users falls steadily.

PS. Sorry today's lesson is so late!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay

The graph below shows the average number of UK commuters travelling each day by car, bus or train between 1970 and 2030.



Here's the essay I wrote with my students' help:

The line graph compares figures for daily travel by workers in the UK using three different forms of transport over a period of 60 years.

It is clear that the car is by far the most popular means of transport for UK commuters throughout the period shown. Also, while the numbers of people who use the car and train increase gradually, the number of bus users falls steadily.

In 1970, around 5 million UK commuters travelled by car on a daily basis, while the bus and train were used by about 4 million and 2 million people respectively. In the year 2000, the number of those driving to work rose to 7 million and the number of commuting rail passengers reached 3 million. However, there was a small drop of approximately 0.5 million in the number of bus users.

By 2030, the number of people who commute by car is expected to reach almost 9 million, and the number of train users is also predicted to rise, to nearly 5 million. By contrast, buses are predicted to become a less popular choice, with only 3 million daily users.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(34\)](#)

Thursday, May 23, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: compare the maps

Cambridge IELTS book 9 contains a great 'map' question. These questions are quite rare compared to questions containing graphs or charts, but you still need to be prepared for them.

You can see the question on [this website](#), but I would write my essay in a slightly different way to the essay shown on the site.

Before doing the map question, have a look at [this similar question](#) and [this essay](#). I think we can write the 'map' essay in the same way.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Thursday, May 30, 2013

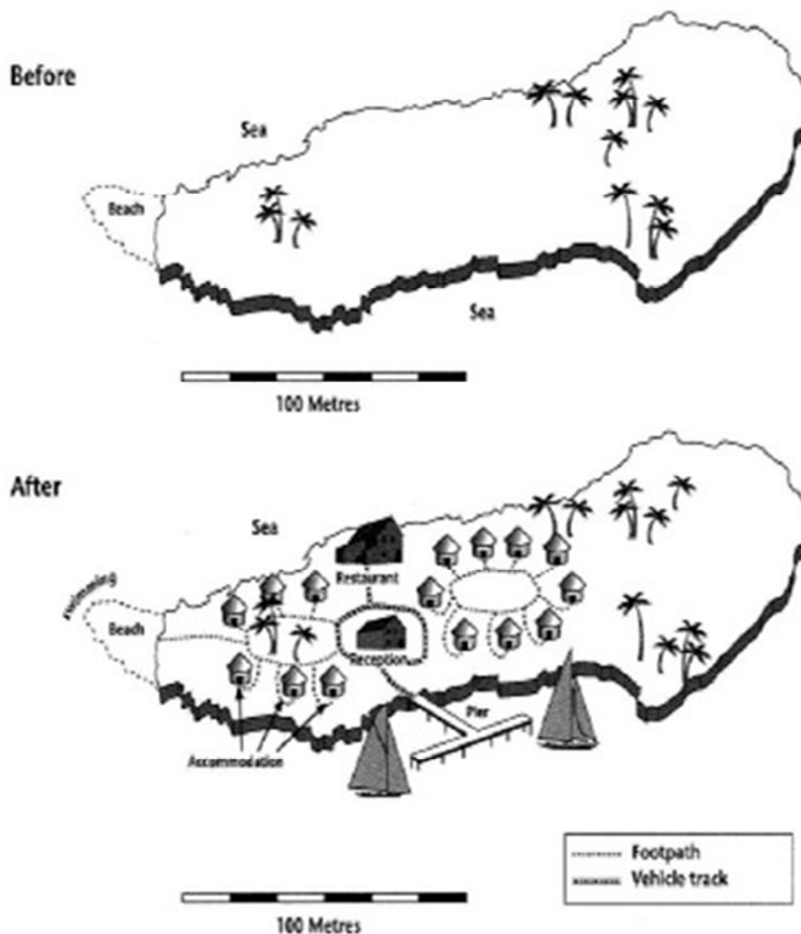
IELTS Writing Task 1: maps of an island

Last week I linked to [this webpage](#) which shows an interesting task 1 question. Now let's write our essay step by step. I'll write the first 2 paragraphs today, and the rest next week.

The two maps below show an island, before and after the construction of some tourist facilities.

Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words



1. Introduction: As usual, we can start the essay by paraphrasing the question (rewrite the question in your own words).

Question

The two maps below show an island, before and after the construction of some tourist facilities.

My introduction

The diagrams illustrate some changes to a small island which has been developed for tourism.

2. Overview: For our second paragraph we need to summarise the information in a couple of sentences. When comparing diagrams, we can count the **number** of changes and look for the main **types** of changes.

My overview

It is clear that the island has changed considerably with the introduction of tourism, and six new features can be seen in the second diagram. The main developments are that the island is accessible and visitors have somewhere to stay.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Thursday, June 06, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: maps essay

Here's my full essay for [this map question](#):

The diagrams illustrate some changes to a small island which has been developed for tourism.

It is clear that the island has changed considerably with the introduction of tourism, and six new features can be seen in the second diagram. The main developments are that the island is accessible and visitors have somewhere to stay.

Looking at the maps in more detail, we can see that small huts have been built to accommodate visitors to the island. The other physical structures that have been added are a reception building, in the middle of the island, and a restaurant to the north of the reception. Before these developments, the island was completely bare apart from a few trees.

As well as the buildings mentioned above, the new facilities on the island include a pier, where boats can dock. There is also a short road linking the pier with the reception and restaurant, and footpaths connect the huts. Finally, there is a designated swimming area for tourists off a beach on the western tip of the island.

(175 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)

Thursday, June 13, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: did you analyse?

Did you analyse the [map essay](#) I wrote last week, or did you just read it quickly? Here are some things that you might have noticed if you analysed it carefully:

Range of verb tenses, and use of both active and passive:

- has been developed, have been built
- has changed
- can be seen
- is, are, include
- was

Phrases and collocations that would impress the examiner:

- with the introduction of tourism
- new features
- main developments
- the island is accessible
- small huts*
- to accommodate visitors
- physical structures
- in the middle of, to the north of
- completely bare apart from
- where boats can dock*
- a designated swimming area
- the western tip* of the island

***huts**, **dock** and **tip** might be the words that most impress the examiner in this essay. Can you think why? Does this surprise you?

Thursday, June 20, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: look carefully!

It's really important that you take time to notice and select the main features for your description of a graph, chart or diagram.

Percentages of mobile phone owners using various mobile phone features

	2006	2008	2010
Make calls	100	100	99
Take photos	66	71	76
Send & receive text messages	73	75	79
Play games	17	42	41
Search the Internet	no data	41	73
Play music	12	18	26
Record video	no data	9	35

Look at the table above and a student's summary of main features below.

Overall, it can be seen that the people who used mobile phones for making calls were at the top in all three years. However, it is noticeable that there is no record of Internet usage and video recording in 2006.

I told the student that I thought she had missed some of the key features shown in the table. What main features can you see if you look more carefully?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(51\)](#)

Thursday, June 27, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: the main features

Last week I wrote about [looking carefully](#) to find the main features before you start your description of a graph, chart or diagram. In the table below, I've highlighted my choices for the main features (in purple).

Percentages of mobile phone owners using various mobile phone features

	2006	2008	2010
Make calls	100	100	99
Take photos	66	71	76
Send & receive text messages	73	75	79
Play games	17	42	41
Search the Internet	no data	41	73
Play music	12	18	26
Record video	no data	9	35

Here's my paragraph describing the information highlighted above:

It is clear that between 2006 and 2010 the main reason why people used their mobile phones was to make calls. However, during the same period there was a marked increase in the popularity of other mobile phone features, with the most dramatic increase being seen in the use of mobiles to search the Internet.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: the details

After describing the main features or general trends shown on a graph or chart, we need to describe specific details. It's important to include some numbers and make some comparisons.

Percentages of mobile phone owners using various mobile phone features

	2006	2008	2010
Make calls	100	100	99
Take photos	66	71	76
Send & receive text messages	73	75	79
Play games	17	42	41
Search the Internet	no data	41	73
Play music	12	18	26
Record video	no data	9	35

Whenever a chart shows years, I describe the details starting with the first year and the highest figure(s). Here's an example paragraph about the year 2006:

In 2006, 100% of mobile phone owners used their phones to make calls, while the next most popular uses of mobiles were for text messaging (73%) and taking photos (66%). By contrast, less than a fifth of owners played games or music on their phones, and there were no figures for users doing Internet searches or recording video.

After this, I would write a final paragraph containing a few key numbers for the other two years (2008 and 2010). I'll show you my full essay next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: mobile phones essay

Here's my full essay about the table in [last week's lesson](#):

Percentages of mobile phone owners using various mobile phone features

	2006	2008	2010
Make calls	100	100	99
Take photos	66	71	76
Send & receive text messages	73	75	79
Play games	17	42	41
Search the Internet	no data	41	73
Play music	12	18	26
Record video	no data	9	35

The table compares the percentages of people using different functions of their mobile phones between 2006 and 2010.

Throughout the period shown, the main reason why people used their mobile phones was to make calls. However, there was a marked increase in the popularity of other mobile phone features, particularly the Internet search feature.

In 2006, 100% of mobile phone owners used their phones to make calls, while the next most popular functions were text messaging (73%) and taking photos (66%). By contrast, less than 20% of owners played games or music on their phones, and there were no figures for users doing Internet searches or recording video.

Over the following 4 years, there was relatively little change in the figures for the top three mobile phone features. However, the percentage of people using their phones to access the Internet jumped to 41% in 2008 and then to 73% in 2010. There was also a significant rise in the use of mobiles to play games and to record video, with figures reaching 41% and 35% respectively in 2010.

Note:

The above essay isn't perfect, but it's still good enough for a band 9. You are not expected to write a masterpiece in only 20 minutes.

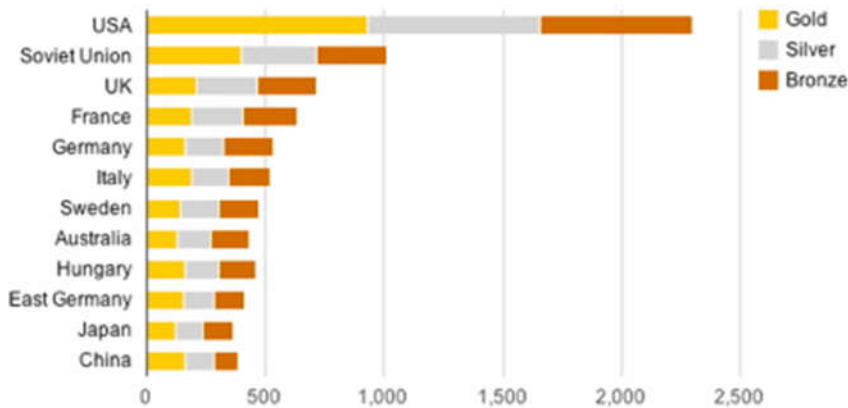
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, July 18, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: stacked bar chart

Someone wrote to me recently asking for advice about describing a 'stacked' bar chart. Here's a nice example of this kind of chart:

The chart below shows the total number of Olympic medals won by twelve different countries.



Why do you think a stacked bar chart has been chosen to illustrate this information?

Note: I'm not sure whether the information in this table is true. I found it on Google.

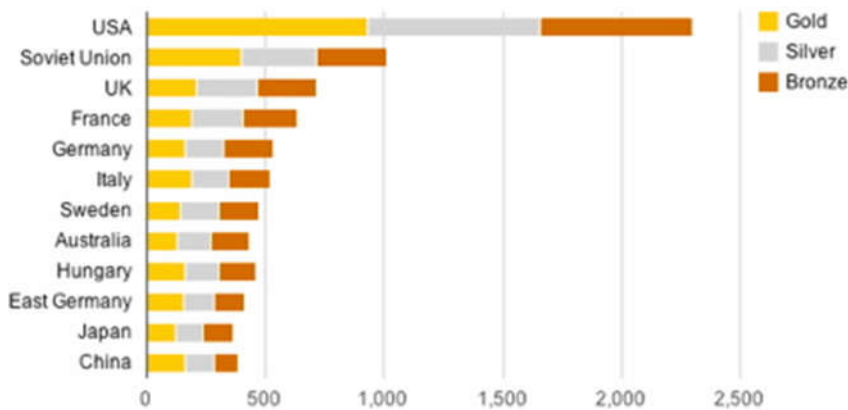
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Thursday, July 25, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: stacked bar chart

Last week I asked why a 'stacked' bar chart was chosen to illustrate the information in the figure below. The answer is that each stacked bar shows us 4 pieces of information (number of gold, silver and bronze medals, and the total number). This is surely the clearest way to show so much information on one chart.

The chart below shows the total number of Olympic medals won by twelve different countries.



Here are my first 2 paragraphs (introduction and overview):

The bar chart compares twelve countries in terms of the overall number of medals that they have won at the Olympic Games.

It is clear that the USA is by far the most successful Olympic medal winning nation. It is also noticeable that the figures for gold, silver and bronze medals won by any particular country tend to be fairly similar.

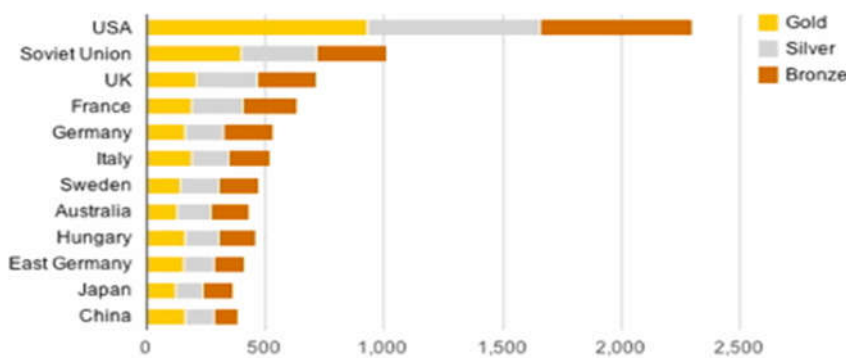
Note:

Notice that I don't mention any numbers in my overview paragraph. I just make two general observations: one about the highest total, and one about relative numbers of each medal colour.

Thursday, August 08, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: stacked bar chart essay

The chart below shows the total number of Olympic medals won by twelve different countries.



The bar chart compares twelve countries in terms of the overall number of medals that they have won at the Olympic Games.

It is clear that the USA is by far the most successful Olympic medal winning nation. It is also noticeable that the figures for gold, silver and bronze medals won by any particular country tend to be fairly similar.

The USA has won a total of around 2,300 Olympic medals, including approximately 900 gold medals, 750 silver and 650 bronze. In second place on the all-time medals chart is the Soviet Union, with just over 1,000 medals. Again, the number of gold medals won by this country is slightly higher than the number of silver or bronze medals.

Only four other countries - the UK, France, Germany and Italy - have won more than 500 Olympic medals, all with similar proportions of each medal colour. Apart from the USA and the Soviet Union, China is the only other country with a noticeably higher proportion of gold medals (about 200) compared to silver and bronze (about 100 each).

(178 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: language for comparing

If you look carefully at the [bar chart essay](#) I wrote last week, you'll find some good phrases for comparing. See if you can adapt them to other task 1 questions.

- The chart compares... in terms of the number of...
- ...is by far the most... **OR** ...has by far the highest number of...
- the figures for... tend to be fairly similar
- In second place on the chart is...*
- The number of... is slightly higher than...
- Only four other countries have...
- ...all with similar proportions of...
- ...is the only country with a noticeably higher proportion of...

***Note:** Only use phrases like "in second place" if the chart shows some kind of competition. Don't write "in first / second place" if the chart shows unemployment or health problems!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Thursday, August 22, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: different introductions

Have you ever tried writing several different introductions for the same question? It's a useful exercise. Take this question for example:

The table below shows the proportion of different categories of families living in poverty in Australia in 1999.

Family type	Proportion of people from each household type living in poverty
single aged person	6% (54,000)
aged couple	4% (48,000)
single, no children	19% (359,000)
couple, no children	7% (211,000)
sole parent	21% (232,000)
couple with children	12% (933,000)
all households	11% (1,837,000)

(Cambridge IELTS 4, page 31)

Here are 3 introductions that paraphrase the question in different ways. Notice that I sometimes use words from the table to help me.

1) The chart compares percentages of Australians from six different family types who were classed as poor in 1999.

2) The table gives information about poverty rates among six types of household in Australia in the year 1999.

3) The table compares different categories of Australian families in terms of the proportion of people living below the poverty line in each one.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Thursday, August 29, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: the most important skill

Probably the most important skill for task 1 is to be able to describe numbers correctly. Look at the table below.

Goods transported in UK (millions of tonnes)

Year	Road	Rail
1970	60	35
1980	65	38

It's useful to think about how to start your sentences. For example, here are some sentences about the year 1970:

- 1) 60 million tonnes of goods were transported by road.
- 2) The amount of goods transported by road totalled 60 million tonnes.
- 3) Road vehicles were used to transport 60 million tonnes of goods.

You should notice that it's much easier to begin with the number (sentence 1). This is how I usually prefer to write sentences for task 1.

Number 2 is good, but you might find that you repeat "the amount of goods" too many times if you only use this type of sentence.

Number 3 is the most difficult. You can't say "Road was used", so you have to add the word "vehicles". Most students make a mistake here.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, September 05, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: too many synonyms

Some students learn 10 different ways to write the word "shows" (e.g. the graph shows). They find words like depicts, indicates, reveals, displays, exhibits etc. But none of these words are really appropriate for the kind of essay we are writing.

I advise my students to keep it simple and avoid making mistakes. Just learn one or two different ways to write the same thing. For example:

- shows = illustrates / compares

- graph = line graph
- chart = bar chart / pie chart
- the number of = the figure for
- increased = rose / saw an increase / there was a rise

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, September 12, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: students' questions

Here are my answers to some questions about writing task 1:

1) Can I start my introduction like this: "It is on a line graph playing out over a 60 year time period that one sees..."?

No. That sentence looks very strange to me as a native speaker, and it won't impress the examiner. Just stick to the simple approach that I recommend in my task 1 lessons here on the website.

2) What will happen if my overview paragraph is different from what the examiner would write for an overview?

I tell my students to choose two main or general points for their overview (summary) paragraph. There are usually more than two main points to choose from, so don't worry about whether the examiner would choose something different. If your overview sentences summarise the information well, you'll be fine.

3) Is writing task 1 less important than task 2?

Yes. Task 1 is worth one third of your writing score. Task 2 is worth two thirds.

4) Can I write more than 150 words?

Yes. There is no maximum word count.

5) Is every word counted, even words like "a"?

Yes. All words are counted, even small words like "a" and "of".

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Thursday, September 19, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: comparing numbers

Can you work out what the missing words in the paragraph below are?

In 1970, around 5 million people travelled to work by car each day, _____ about 4 million who used the bus _____ 2 million who commuted by train. Over the next 30 years there was a significant increase in the number of car users, to almost 7 million, _____ a steady rise in rail passengers, to 3 million. _____, the number of bus commuters decreased slightly.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. compared to (with)
2. and only (about / around)
3. and
4. By contrast (In contrast)

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, September 20, 2013 at 14:47](#)

Thursday, September 26, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: the same language

People sometimes ask me to teach them "the language for pie charts" or "the language for tables". I tell them that they already know it. The language for the following 4 types of chart is **the same**:

- Line graphs
- Bar charts
- Pie charts
- Tables

These 4 types of chart all show the same thing: numbers. You can usually take the same set of numbers and present them in either of these 4 ways. The language you use to describe them will not change.

So what type of language are you going to use? You need to be able to 1) describe numbers 2) compare different numbers 3) describe changes in numbers (increase, decrease etc.). Easy!

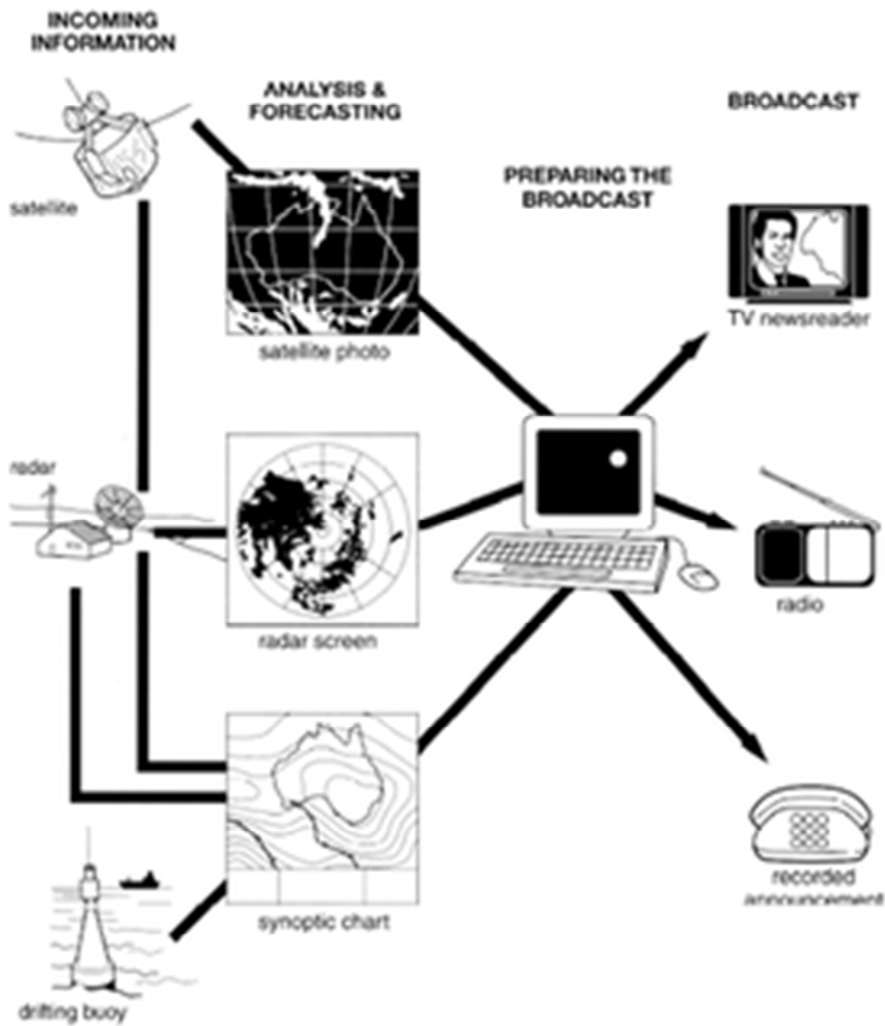
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Thursday, October 03, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'special' language

[Last week](#) I explained that the language you need for graphs, bar charts, pie charts and tables is the same: language for describing and comparing numbers.

Only one type of question requires 'special' language: **the process diagram**.



A process diagram shows steps or stages, not numbers.

Task:

Read the essay in [this lesson](#). What are the two 'special' language features in my description of the process?

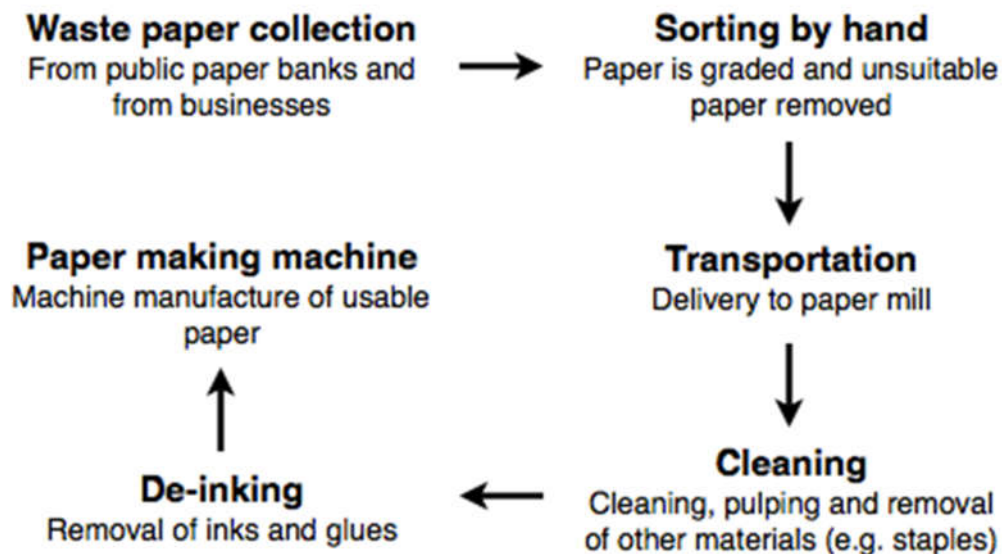
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Thursday, October 10, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: flow chart

A flow chart is really the same as a [process diagram](#), but I might use the term 'flow chart' when the process is shown without any pictures. Try writing 4 paragraphs about the flow chart below. I'll write something for next week.

The chart below shows the process of waste paper recycling.



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, October 17, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: flow chart essay

The chart below shows the process of waste paper recycling.

The flow chart shows how waste paper is recycled. It is clear that there are six distinct stages in this process, from the initial collection of waste paper to the eventual production of usable paper.

At the first stage in the paper recycling process, waste paper is collected either from paper banks, where members of the public leave their used paper, or directly from businesses. This paper is then sorted by hand and separated according to its grade, with any paper that is not suitable for recycling being removed. Next, the graded paper is transported to a paper mill.

Stages four and five of the process both involve cleaning. The paper is cleaned and pulped, and foreign objects such as staples are taken out. Following this, all remnants of ink and glue are removed from the paper at the de-inking stage. Finally, the pulp can be processed in a paper making machine, which makes the end product: usable paper.

(160 words, band 9)

Note: I joined the introduction and overview together because they were both short. Try to analyse the essay - why is it worth band 9?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(34\)](#)

Thursday, October 24, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: why was it band 9?

The essay I shared [last Thursday](#) was good enough for a band 9, but why? Apart from being well organised and covering all of the necessary points, the essay contains some phrases that would ensure high vocabulary and grammar scores:

Vocabulary

- there are six **distinct** stages
- from the **initial** collection... to the **eventual** production
- members of the public
- directly from businesses
- separated according to its grade
- Stages four and five both **involve** cleaning
- foreign objects are taken out
- remnants of ink and glue
- the end product

Grammar

- six distinct stages, from... to... (good use of 'from-to' after comma)
- where members of the public... (inclusion of extra information between commas)
- This paper (use of 'this' to refer back to an idea in the previous sentence)
- with any paper... being (use of [with + ing](#) to add extra information)
- cleaned, pulped, taken out, removed (use of passive verb forms instead of nouns shown on the diagram)
- which makes the end product (use of relative pronoun 'which' to connect ideas)

Note: The best way to get a high grammar score is to reduce the number of mistakes that you make, not to use 'difficult' structures.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, November 07, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: technique review

Let's review the approach (method / technique) that I suggest for writing task 1. Your task 1 essay should contain three elements:

1. You need a short [introduction](#) to explain what the graph, chart or diagram shows. The easiest way to write this is by paraphrasing the question. The examiner will be impressed if you can paraphrase effectively.

2. You need an overview of the information. This means that you need to look at the "big picture", not the individual details. I recommend writing a short paragraph with two sentences that summarise two main things that you can see on the chart. If you forget the overview, you'll get a lower score.
3. Finally, you need to describe some specific details. This is where you select, describe and compare individual pieces of information (usually numbers). I try to separate this description of details into two paragraphs.

If you look through the task 1 lessons on this site, you'll see how I include these three elements in every essay.

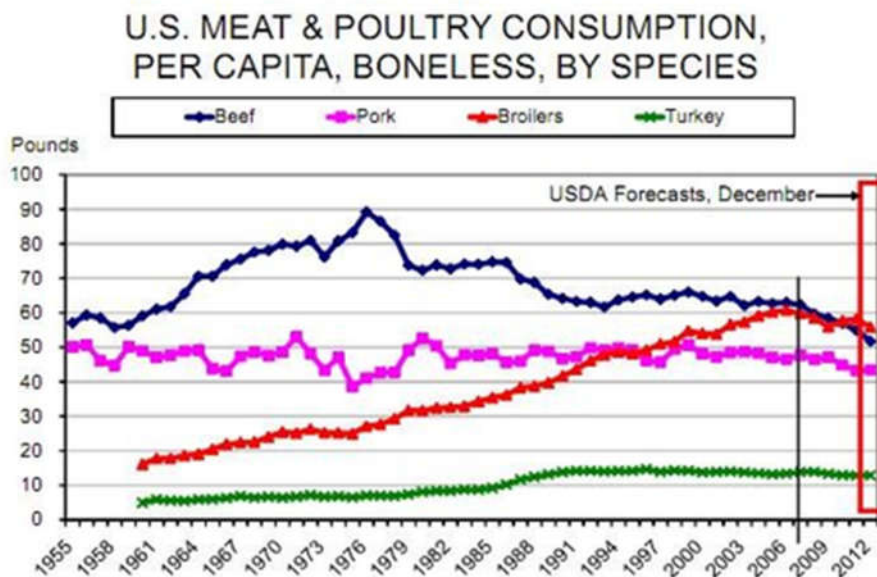
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Thursday, November 14, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: statistics in the news

Descriptions of statistics often appear in newspapers and on news websites, and they can give you some useful language for writing task 1.

The example below comes from the [Washington Post](#) website.



The description on the website is inappropriate for IELTS because there is too much analysis of reasons why meat eating habits are changing - don't try to give reasons in your IELTS essay!

However, there are a few nice phrases that we can use e.g. *Americans are projected to eat 12.2 percent less meat in 2012 than they did in 2007.*

Maybe you can share your ideas for an IELTS-style description of this graph.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Thursday, November 21, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction and overview

Today I'm going to write the first two paragraphs (introduction and overview) of an essay describing the graph below. I'll finish the essay by describing specific details next week.

The graph below shows trends in US meat and poultry consumption.

Introduction and overview:

The line graph shows changes in the per capita consumption of beef, pork, broilers and turkey in the United States between 1955 and 2012.

It is noticeable that beef was by far the most popular of the four types of meat for the majority of the 57-year period. However, a considerable rise can be seen in the consumption of broilers, with figures eventually surpassing those for beef.

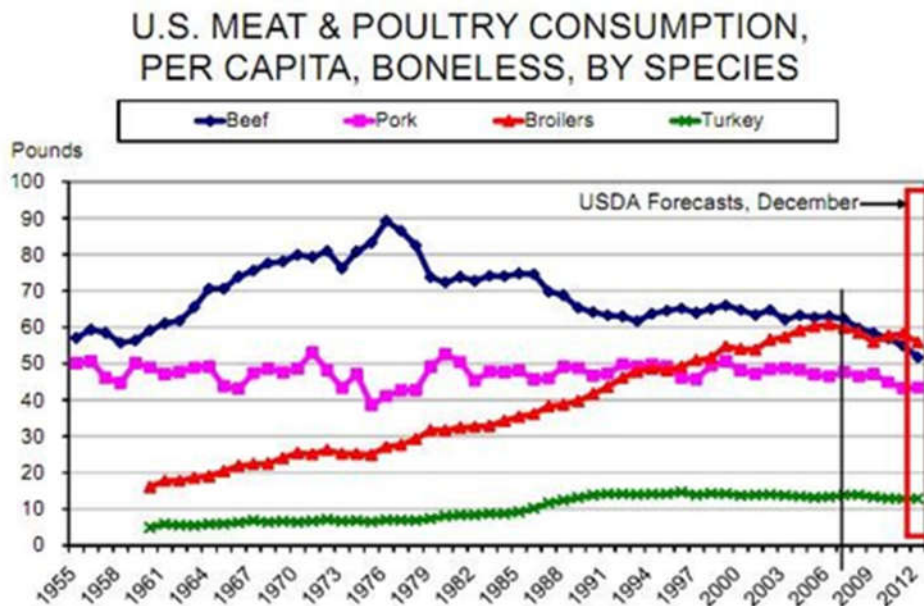
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Thursday, November 28, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: specific details

Last week I wrote an introduction and an overview for the graph below. Today I'm going to describe specific details.

The graph below shows trends in US meat and poultry consumption.



(Note: I'm ignoring the forecast and treating 2012 as a past year)

Between 1955 and 1976, US beef consumption rose from around 60 to a peak of 90 pounds per person per year. During the same period, consumption of broilers also rose, to nearly 30 pounds per person, while the figures for pork fluctuated between 50 and 40 pounds per person. Turkey was by far the least popular meat, with figures below 10 pounds per capita each year.

By 2012, the amount of beef consumed by the average American had plummeted to around 50 pounds, but the consumption of broilers had doubled since the 1970s, to approximately 55 pounds per capita. By contrast, there were no significant changes in the trends for pork and turkey consumption over the period as a whole.

Task:

Analyse the above paragraphs carefully. Look at which figures I decided to include, the language used for comparisons, and the way I divided the description into two separate paragraphs.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Thursday, December 12, 2013

IELTS Writing Task 1: paraphrasing

If you've read my advice about [how to write an introduction](#) for writing task 1, you'll know that we simply paraphrase the question statement (we rewrite it using different words). A good idea would be to go through all of my sample task 1 reports, and make a list of paraphrased items.

Working back from my most recent lesson, here's some paraphrasing that I used in my introductions:

- graph = line graph
- trends in = changes in
- US consumption = consumption in the United States
- chart = flow chart (also: bar chart, pie chart, table)
- the process of paper recycling = how paper is recycled
- the diagram = the figure
- shows = illustrates
- to produce forecasts = to forecast
- shows = compares
- the total number = the overall number
- various mobile phone features = different functions of mobile phones
- maps show = diagrams illustrate
- an island before and after = some changes to an island

See if you can continue this list. I'm sure you'll find it useful to have a large paraphrasing [repertoire](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: nouns and verbs

Charts and tables usually show nouns rather than verbs. However, you need to find the right verb in order to write a good sentence. Example:

Average distance in miles travelled per person per year

	1985	2000
Walking	255	237
Car	3,199	4,806

Don't write:

- Walking was 255 miles per person in 1985.
- Car was the highest form of transport.

Do write:

- The average person walked 255 miles in 1985.
- People travelled more miles by car than by any other form of transport.

(Table taken from Cambridge IELTS 6, page 52)

For notes:

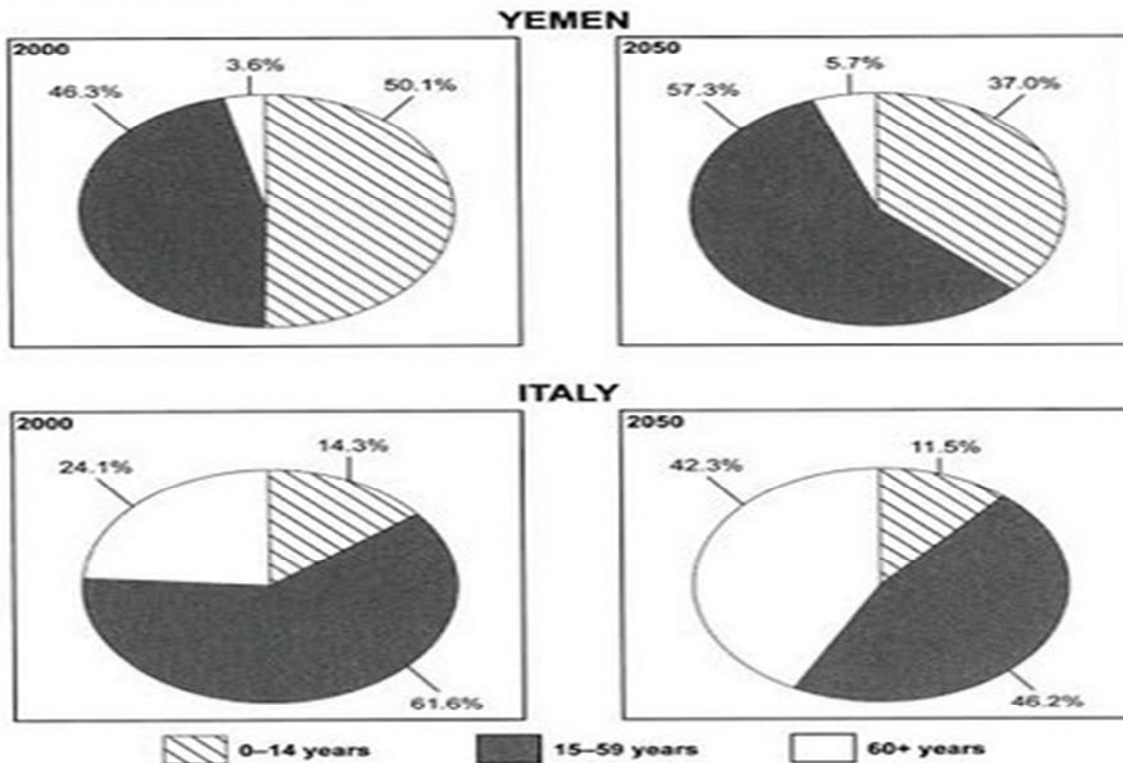
IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts

Several people have asked me about the pie chart question in Cambridge IELTS book 9 (page 76). [Click here](#) to see the pie charts, then consider the following questions:

The charts below give information on the ages of the populations of Yemen and Italy in 2000 and projections for 2050.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



1. Which country has the older population?
2. What trend do both countries have in common?
3. In a 4-paragraph essay, what would each paragraph be about?

I'll continue with this question next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(25\)](#)

Thursday, January 09, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts

Here are the first two paragraphs of a 4-paragraph report about the pie chart question from [last week's lesson](#):

...

The pie charts compare the proportions of people falling into three distinct age groups in Yemen and Italy in two different years.

It is clear that Italy had the older population in the year 2000, and the same is predicted for the year 2050. The populations of both countries are expected to age over the fifty-year period.

...

Notice that the first paragraph has been written by paraphrasing the question, and the second paragraph is an overview of two main or general points.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, January 16, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts essay

Today I'm attaching my full band 9 report for the question we looked at last week.

[Click here to see the question and essay](#)

The pie charts compare the proportions of people falling into three distinct age groups in Yemen and Italy in two different years.

It is clear that Italy had the older population in the year 2000, and that the same is predicted for the year 2050. The populations of both countries are expected to age over the fifty-year period.

In the year 2000, just over half of the population of Yemen was aged 14 or under, while most Italians (61.6%) fell into the 15 to 59 age group, and only 14.3% were children under 15 years of age. People aged 60 or over accounted for almost a quarter of the Italian population, but only 3.6% of the inhabitants of Yemen.

By 2050, the proportion of children under 15 is predicted to drop in both countries, most noticeably in Yemen where the figure is expected to fall by 13.1%. On the other hand, the figures for elderly people are expected to rise, by 2.1% in Yemen and a massive 18.2% in Italy. Finally, it is anticipated that the 15 to 59 age group will grow by around 10% in Yemen, but shrink by around 15% in Italy.

Notice that I separate the description of 'details' into two paragraphs: one about the first year, and one about the second year. I don't recommend writing a separate paragraph about each country (because this will mean that you don't compare the countries properly).

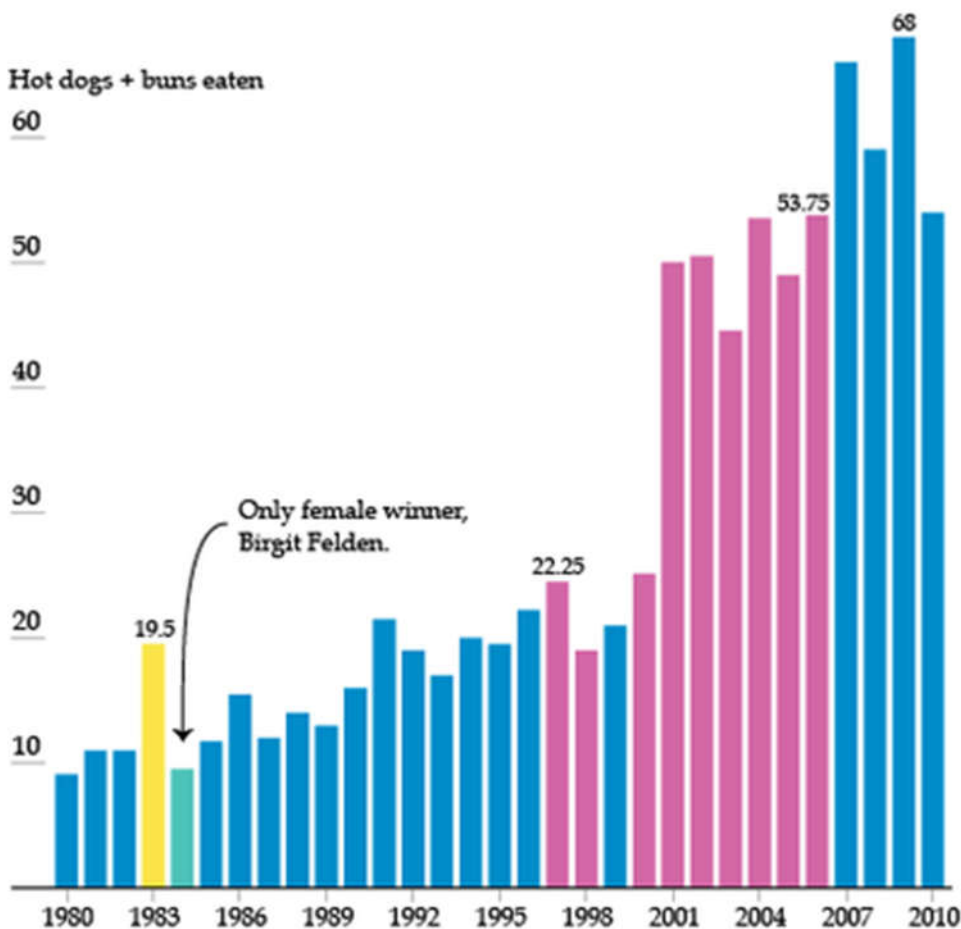
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: a funny topic!

I doubt the bar chart below would be used in a real IELTS test, but I think it's a brilliant topic! Let's see if we can describe it in the normal way.

Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest

Nathan's hot dog eating contest is held in Brooklyn's Coney Island every 4th of July. The current record of 68 hot dogs and buns consumed in 15 minutes is held by American Joey Chestnut. Prior to Chestnut's reign, Takeru Kobayashi of Japan won six years in a row.



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Saturday, February 01, 2014

IELTS Writing Advice: short, fast introductions

Here's my latest video lesson about writing introductions for tasks 1 and 2.

(Go to the ielts-simon.com to watch the video)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [IELTS Writing Task 2](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Thursday, February 06, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: my method

Here's a video lesson that I made 3 years ago. Sorry if you've seen it before - I just want to put it in the series of videos that I'm sharing every week at the moment.

(Go to the ielts-simon.com to watch the video)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Thursday, February 20, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: correct the mistakes

The following sentences were written about the table in [this](#) lesson. Try to correct or improve them.

1. In 2006, make calls was 100% of mobile phone users.
2. Text messaging was in second place and taking photos was third.
3. Playing games and music were less popular, they had less than 20% each.
4. In 2010, the use of mobiles to play games was increased significantly.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(34\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

First, I'll try to explain what is wrong with each sentence:

1. You can't write "make calls was...". The subject of the sentence should be the percentage of people.
2. Using "second place, third place" makes this sound like a competition! Also, we should try to include some figures in this sentence.
3. "Playing games and music" didn't "HAVE" anything, so we need to find a different way to express this idea.
4. The passive "was increased" is wrong here. It should be a normal active sentence without the word "was".

Here are my example answers:

1. In 2006, 100% of mobile phone owners used their phones to make calls.
2. The next most popular functions were text messaging (73%) and taking photos (66%).

3. Game and music applications were less popular, with under 20% of mobile phone owners using these features.

4. In 2010, the use of mobiles to play games increased significantly.

Thursday, March 06, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: sentence building

The following video lesson contains a useful exercise to help you build longer sentences when describing graphs and charts.

(Go to the ielts-simon.com to watch the video)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Thursday, March 13, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: add a comparison

In last week's [video lesson](#) I followed some easy steps to build the following sentence:

The number of Japanese tourists who travelled abroad increased dramatically from just under 5 million to around 15 million between 1985 and 1995, a rise of about 10 million in 10 years.

The next step after writing this sentence about Japanese tourists would be to add a comparison with tourists from the other countries shown on the graph or chart. Let's use the chart below as an example (numbers represent millions of tourists who travelled abroad).

	1985	1995
Japan	4.9	15.1
Australia	7.1	7.2
Canada	6.0	5.5

Here's my original sentence about Japan, with a comparison sentence about Australia and Canada. Look carefully at how I construct the comparison sentence. If you want a good score in writing task 1, these are the kinds of sentences that you need to be able to write!

The number of Japanese tourists who travelled abroad increased dramatically from just under 5 million to around 15 million between 1985 and 1995, a rise of about 10 million in 10 years. By contrast, the number of Australians who visited other countries remained stable, at just over 7 million, and the figure for Canada fell slightly, from 6 million travellers in 1985 to 5.5 million in 1995.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: map essay

Here is a band 9 answer for [this question](#):

	1985	1995
Japan	4.9	15.1
Australia	7.1	7.2
Canada	6.0	5.5

The map shows the growth of a village called Chorleywood between 1868 and 1994.

It is clear that the village grew as the transport infrastructure was improved. Four periods of development are shown on the map, and each of the populated areas is near to the main roads, the railway or the motorway.

From 1868 to 1883, Chorleywood covered a small area next to one of the main roads. Chorleywood Park and Golf Course is now located next to this original village area. The village grew along the main road to the south between 1883 and 1922, and in 1909 a railway line was built crossing this area from west to east. Chorleywood station is in this part of the village.

The expansion of Chorleywood continued to the east and west alongside the railway line until 1970. At that time, a motorway was built to the east of the village, and from 1970 to 1994, further development of the village took place around motorway intersections with the railway and one of the main roads.

Don't just read this essay once. Spend some time analysing it:

- In what order did I describe the information shown on the map?
- What information did I choose for paragraphs 3 and 4?
- What good vocabulary does the essay contain?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Thursday, April 03, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: diagrams and maps

I noticed a comment under last week's [map](#) lesson from a student who suggested that we could ignore maps because they are much less common than graphs and charts.

While it's true that graphs and charts are the most common types of question, I think it would be very unwise not to prepare for diagrams and maps too. What happens if you get one of these questions in your test and you haven't prepared for it?

Another point to note is that diagrams and maps are **really easy** to describe if you know what you're doing. Taking the time to study the lessons I've written about them could turn out to be a very good idea.

Thursday, April 10, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: ages and age groups

It's easy to make small mistakes when describing ages and age groups. Here are some examples that should help.

One person:

- He is 10 years old.
- He is a 10-year-old.
- He is aged 10.

More than one person:

- The children in the class are all 10 years old.
- It is a class of 10-year-olds (or "10-year-old children").
- The children in the class are all aged 10.

Age groups with more than one person:

- The chart shows the preferred hobbies of children (who are) between 10 and 12 years old.
- The chart shows the preferred hobbies of 10- to 12-year-olds (or "10- to 12-year-old children").
- The chart shows the preferred hobbies of children aged 10 to 12.

Note:

If you miss the hyphens (-), it's not a big problem. It won't affect your score.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#)

Thursday, April 17, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: easy introductions

Task 1 introductions should be fast and easy. Just paraphrase the question statement (rewrite it in your own words). If you practise this technique, you will be able to start the writing test with confidence.

Look at this question statement from Cambridge IELTS book 2, page 95:

The table below shows the figures for imprisonment in five countries between 1930 and 1980.

I'll change 3 elements of this sentence:

1. table shows = bar chart compares
2. figures for imprisonment = number of people in prison
3. between... and... = over a period of

So, here's my paraphrased introduction:

The bar chart compares the number of people in prison in five different countries over a period of 50 years.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, April 24, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: same question, two answers

Today's lesson is longer than normal, so I've attached it as a document. Just click on the link below to download it.

Essay 1

The map shows two potential locations (S1 and S2) for a new supermarket in a town called Garlsdon.

The main difference between the two sites is that S1 is outside the town, whereas S2 is in the town centre. The sites can also be compared in terms of access by road or rail, and their positions relative to three smaller towns.

This paragraph compares both sites in terms of their position

Looking at the information in more detail, S1 is in the countryside to the north west of Garlsdon, but it is close to the residential area of the town. S2 is also close to the housing area, which surrounds the town centre.

This paragraph compares both sites in terms of access to roads, railway and other towns

There are main roads from Hindon, Bransdon and Cransdon to Garlsdon town centre, but this is a no traffic zone, so there would be no access to S2 by car. By contrast, S1 lies on the main road to Hindon, but it would be more difficult to reach from Bransdon and Cransdon. Both supermarket sites are close to the railway that runs through Garlsdon from Hindon to Cransdon.

(171 words, band 9)

Essay 2

The map compares two potential locations for the building of a new supermarket in a town called Garlsdon.

The main difference between the two sites is that one is located in the countryside outside the town, whereas the other is in the town centre. Both potential sites are close to the railway, and reasonably near to a main road.

This paragraph is all about S1

The first possible site for the supermarket (S1) is located in an area of countryside to the north west of Garlsdon. It is close to the railway line and to a main road connecting Garlsdon to the smaller town of Hindon. It is also situated near to the residential housing area of Garlsdon.

This paragraph is mainly about S2, but I make sure that I contrast with S1 (by contrast, also, is similar to)

The second site (S2), by contrast, is in Garlsdon town centre. It is also accessible by rail, but not by road because the town centre is a no-traffic zone. Despite this, the main roads to Cransdon, Bransdon and Hindon are not too far away. The distance to Garlsdon's housing area is similar to the distance from S1 to the same area.

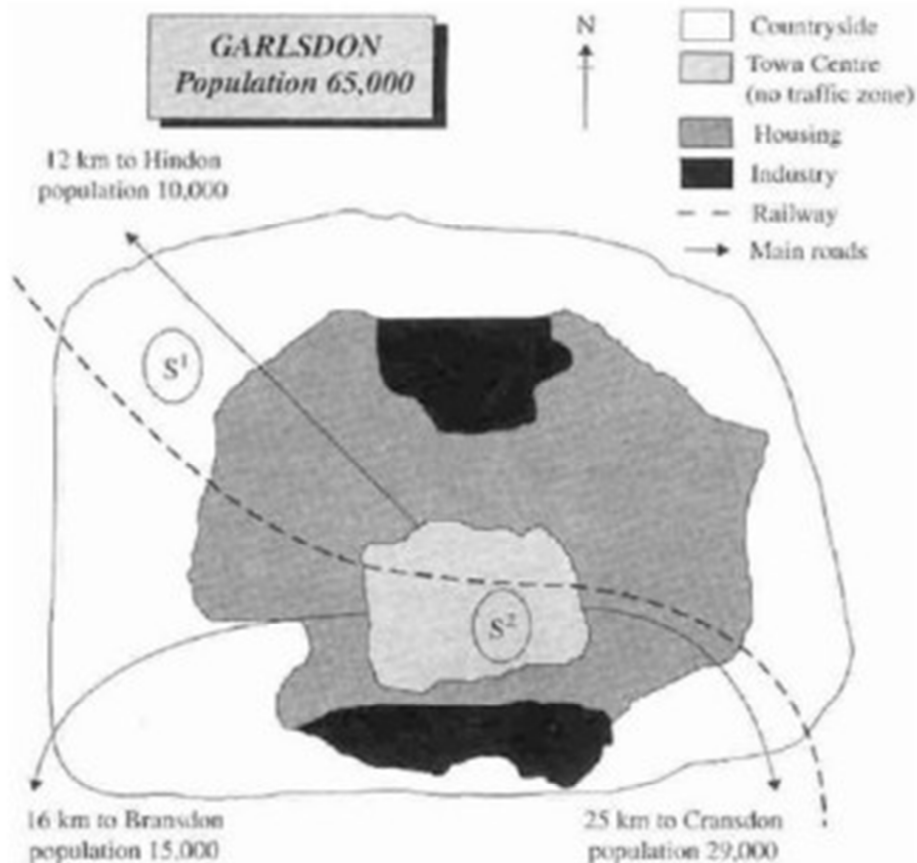
(174 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: same question, two answers

Look at the following question, then compare the two reports on the next page. I wrote both myself, the first one in August 2011 and the second one in April 2014. I did not look at the first report when writing the second one.

It's interesting that my first two paragraphs (the introduction and overview) are almost identical in each report. You can see that I always use the same approach when writing these paragraphs. On the other hand, I made different decisions when writing paragraphs 3 and 4 (describing specific details). I wouldn't say that one essay is better than the other; I just think it's interesting to compare two ways of answering the same question.

The map below is of the town of Garlsdon. A new supermarket (S) is planned for the town. The map shows two possible sites for the supermarket.



From Cambridge IELTS book 5

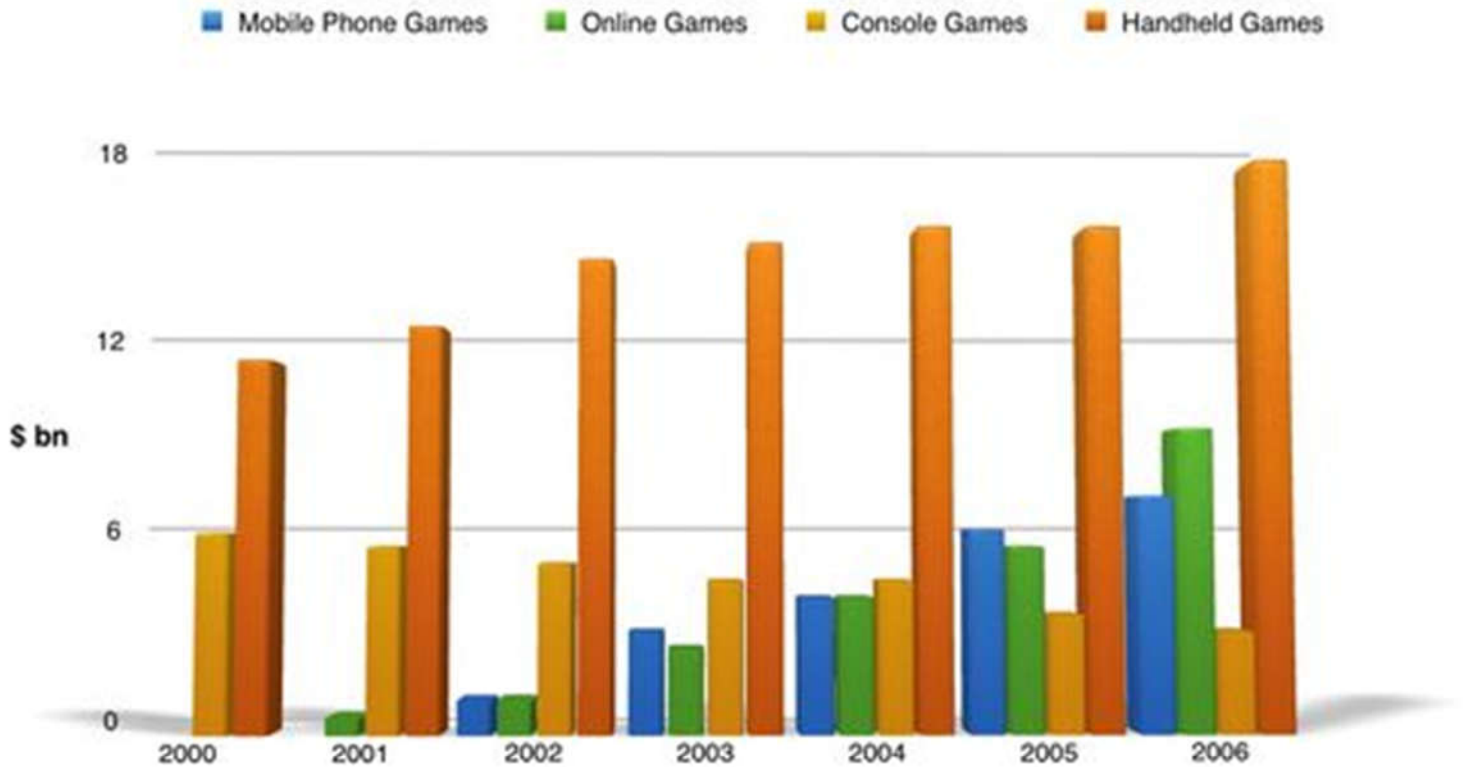
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, May 01, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: recent bar chart

The following question was used in a recent IELTS test. Thanks to Younes for remembering and sharing it.

The bar graph shows the global sales (in billions of dollars) of different types of digital games between 2000 and 2006.



Things to consider:

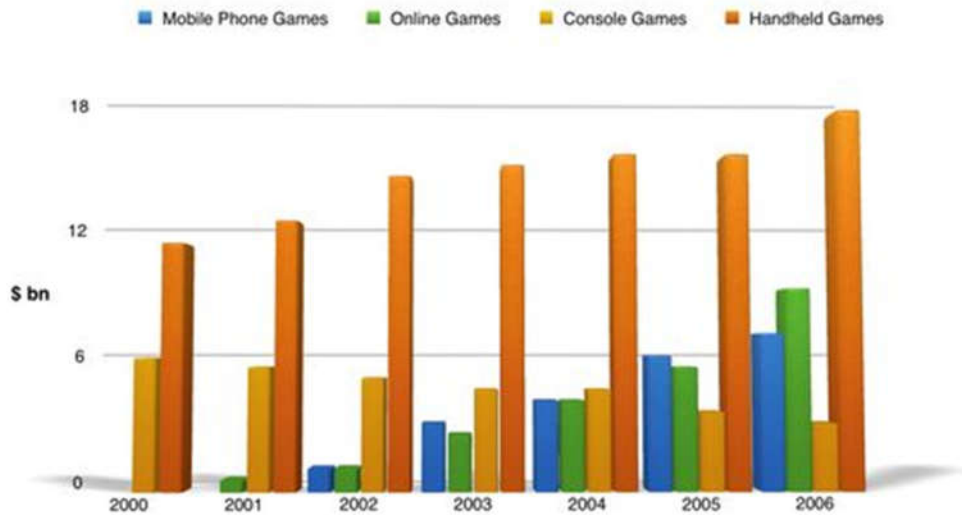
- how you would paraphrase the question for your introduction
- what two things to include in your overview paragraph
- how to separate your description of details into two paragraphs

Note: click on the photo to see a larger version.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(54\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart

The bar graph shows the global sales (in billions of dollars) of different types of digital games between 2000 and 2006.



Here's the first half of my model answer, the introduction and overview:

The bar chart compares the turnover in dollars from sales of video games for four different platforms, namely mobile phones, online, consoles and handheld devices, from 2000 to 2006.

It is clear that sales of games for three out of the four platforms rose each year, leading to a significant rise in total global turnover over the 7-year period. Sales figures for handheld games were at least twice as high as those for any other platform in almost every year.

Note:

What examples of paraphrasing can you see in my introduction? Which two main points did I choose for my overview?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart essay

Here's my full essay for [last week's question](#):

The bar chart compares the turnover in dollars from sales of video games for four different platforms, namely mobile phones, online, consoles and handheld devices, from 2000 to 2006.

It is clear that sales of games for three out of the four platforms rose each year, leading to a significant rise in total global turnover over the 7-year period. Sales figures for handheld games were at least twice as high as those for any other platform in almost every year.

In 2000, worldwide sales of handheld games stood at around \$11 billion, while console games earned just under \$6 billion. No figures are given for mobile or online games in that year. Over the next 3 years, sales of handheld video games rose by about \$4 billion, but the figure for consoles decreased by \$2 billion. Mobile phone and online games started to become popular, with sales reaching around \$3 billion in 2003.

In 2006, sales of handheld, online and mobile games reached peaks of 17, 9 and 7 billion dollars respectively. By contrast, turnover from console games dropped to its lowest point, at around \$2.5 billion.

Thursday, May 22, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: essay analysis

Did you analyse the [bar chart essay](#) in last week's lesson?

For example, did you highlight the paraphrasing used in the introduction, or the two main points in the overview paragraph? Did you note the words and phrases used to compare numbers or to describe changes in numbers?

It's not enough to simply read a model answer and understand it. You need to analyse it carefully, and use as much of it as you can in your own work.

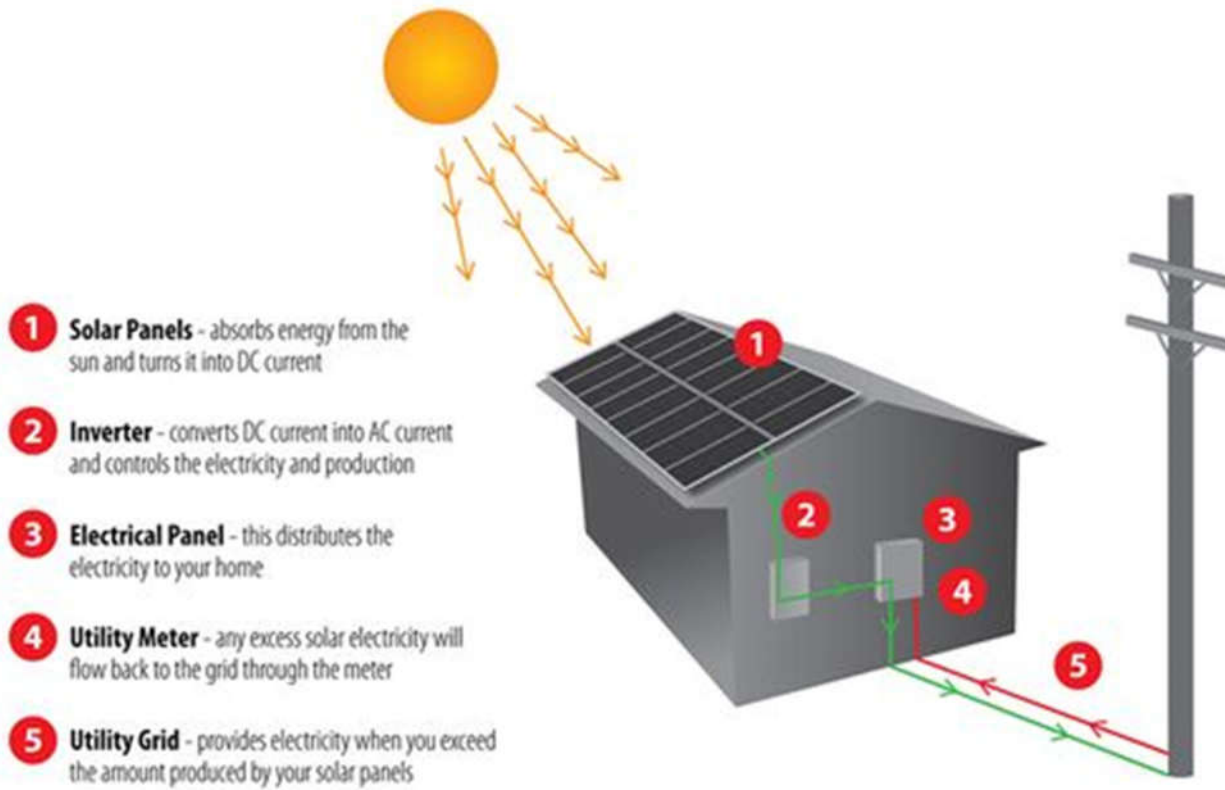
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Thursday, May 29, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: how something works

A diagram showing how something works is a type of 'process diagram'. Here's an example:

The diagram below shows how solar panels can be used to provide electricity for domestic use.



(Click on image to enlarge. Source: <http://www.easyassolar.com.au/solar-power-2/>)

For tips about writing a 'process diagram' report, go to [this lesson](#).

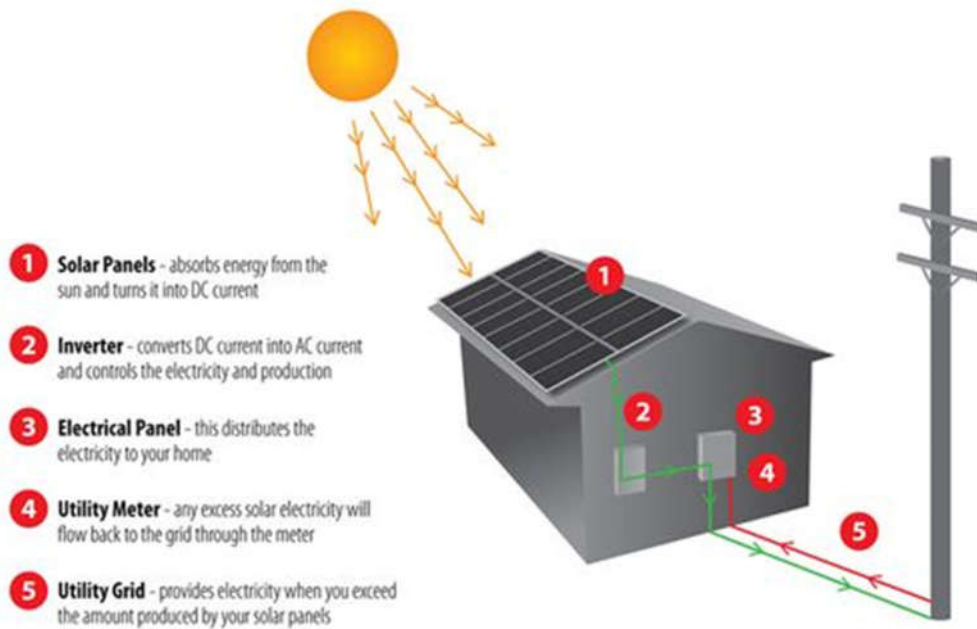
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Thursday, June 05, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagram

Last week I showed you the following question.

The diagram below shows how solar panels can be used to provide electricity for domestic use.



Let's start by writing the first two paragraphs: the introduction and overview. We'll look at the 'details' paragraphs next week.

Introduction: *paraphrase the question as usual*

The picture illustrates the process of producing electricity in a home using solar panels.

Overview: *say two general things about the diagram*

It is clear that there are five distinct stages in this process, beginning with the capture of energy from sunlight. The final two steps show how domestic electricity is connected to the external power supply.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Thursday, June 12, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'solar panel' process

Here's my full report for the [solar panel](#) process diagram:

The picture illustrates the process of producing electricity in a home using solar panels.

It is clear that there are five distinct stages in this process, beginning with the capture of energy from sunlight. The final two steps show how domestic electricity is connected to the external power supply.

At the first stage in the process, solar panels on the roof of a normal house take energy from the sun and convert it into DC current. Next, this current is passed to an inverter, which changes it to AC current and regulates the supply of electricity. At stage three, electricity is supplied to the home from an electrical panel.

At the fourth step shown on the diagram, a utility meter in the home is responsible for sending any extra electric power outside the house into the grid. Finally, if the solar panels do not provide enough energy for the household, electricity will flow from the utility grid into the home through the meter.

Note:

I've underlined examples of the two language features that make process diagram descriptions special: 'steps' language, and passive verbs.

Thursday, June 19, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: make a list of collocations

Collocations (explained in more detail in [this lesson](#)) are groups of words that are often found together.

I'm sure you already know several common collocations for writing task 1 (e.g. a significant rise, reach a peak), but why not make a list of as many as possible? Let's start the list by looking through my recent task 1 lessons.

Collocations for any topic:

- distinct stages
- final steps
- at the... stage
- a significant rise
- over a/the period

Collocations for specific topics:

- produce electricity
- the capture of energy
- take energy, convert energy
- global turnover
- sales figures, worldwide sales

See if you can add to the list. I'll give you some more advice about collocations this weekend.

Thursday, June 26, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: fill the gaps

The following sentences describe the bar chart on page 51 of Cambridge IELTS book 2. What words would you use to fill the gaps?

1. The chart compares the _____ of hours of free time that men and women had between 1998 and 1999.
2. It is _____ that men enjoyed more leisure time than women.
3. Unemployed males had just _____ 80 hours of leisure time per week.
4. The figures for retired men and women were exactly the same as _____ for the unemployed.
5. Housewives enjoyed the next highest _____ of spare time.
6. Part-time working women enjoyed only 3 extra hours of leisure _____ to those who worked full-time.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. number
2. clear
3. over / under (it depends whether you have seen the chart or not)
4. THOSE
5. amount
6. COMPARED

*Look carefully at numbers 4 and 6!

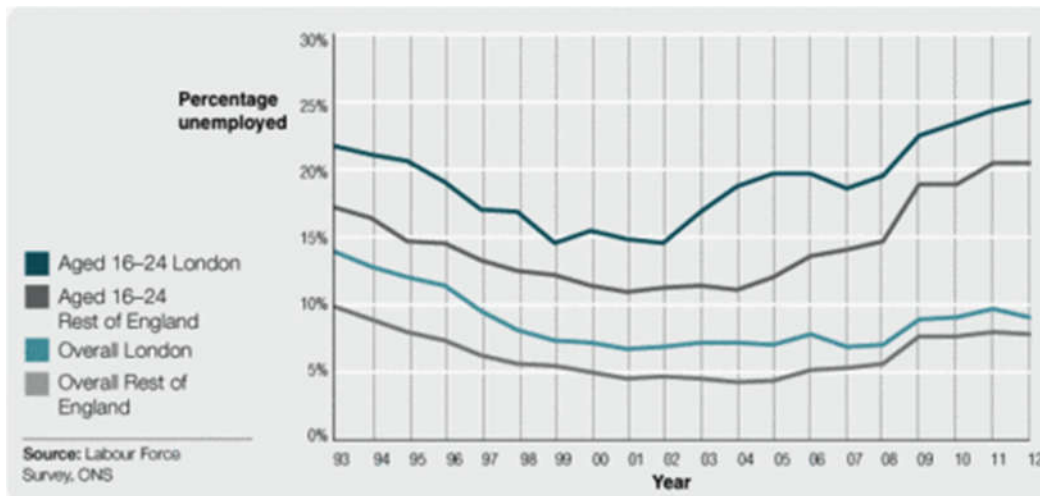
Posted by: Simon | [Friday, June 27, 2014 at 17:02](#)

Thursday, July 10, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph

We haven't looked at a line graph for a while, so let's try describing the one shown below.

The graph below shows changes in young adult unemployment rates in England between 1993 and 2012.

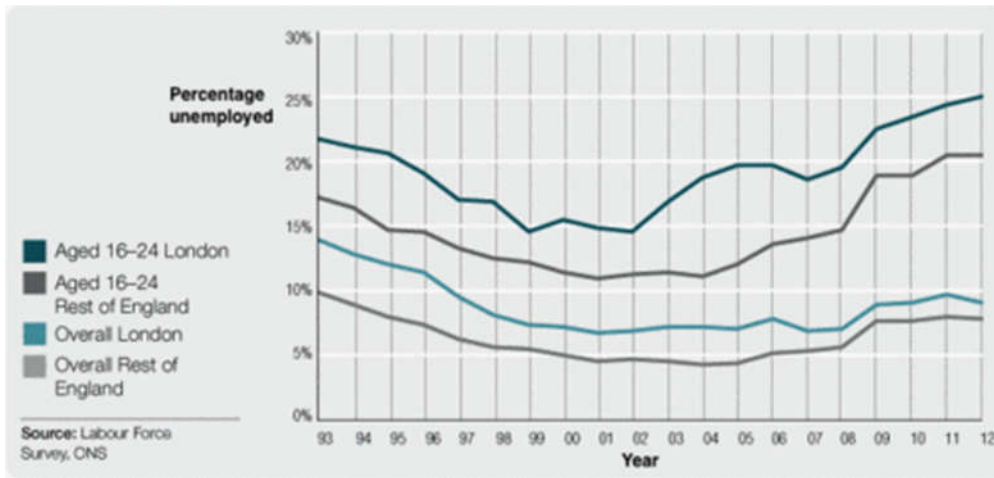


Thursday, July 17, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction and overview

Let's look at an introduction and overview for the line graph below.

The graph below shows changes in young adult unemployment rates in England between 1993 and 2012.



Introduction and overview paragraphs:

The line graph compares levels of unemployment among 16 to 24-year-olds with overall unemployment figures over a period of 20 years in England.

It is clear that the proportion of young adults who were unemployed at any time between 1993 and 2012 was significantly higher than the overall proportion of adults without work. Unemployment rates for both groups of adults were consistently higher in London than in the rest of England.

Analysis:

Can you see examples of paraphrasing in my introduction? Can you see which two main points I chose for my overview?

Thursday, July 24, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: describing details

Here are my two "details" paragraphs for the question that I started in last week's [lesson](#). Notice that I only mention three of the years, but I make lots of comparisons between the four groups of people.

Fill the gaps to complete my description:

In 1993, around 18% of English 16 to 24-year-olds living _____ London were unemployed, but the figure for those living in the capital was 5% higher, at 22%. Similarly, the overall adult unemployment rate in London, at 14%, was 4% higher than the rate in the rest of England. While levels of joblessness fell significantly over the _____ 10 years, the trend for higher levels in London and among young adults _____.

Young adult unemployment in England rose _____ between 2002 and 2012, from 12% to 21% outside London, and from around 15% to a _____ of 25% in the capital. By contrast, the proportions of all adults without work _____ below 10%, both in London and in the rest of the country.

ANSWERS FROM SIMON

Here are the words that I used when I wrote the paragraphs:

1. outside
2. following
3. continued

4. dramatically
5. peak
6. remained

I don't think anyone chose the same words as I did, so check my answers carefully to see what you can learn!

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, July 25, 2014 at 18:18](#)

Thursday, August 07, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: real statistics

A good place to find 'real' descriptions of graphs and charts is a government statistics website like [this one](#) for the UK. If you click on the different themes, you'll see graphs, charts and written summaries of recent statistics for the country.

Here's an example summary from the website:

The employment rate for those aged from 16 to 64 for the three months to June 2012 was 71.0 per cent. This is the highest figure since the three months to May 2009 and it is up 0.4 percentage points on the previous quarter. The number of people in employment aged 16 and over increased by 201,000 on the quarter to reach 29.48 million, the largest quarterly increase since the three months to July 2010. The number of people in employment was 96,000 lower than the pre-recession peak of 29.57 million recorded for March-May 2008.

Note:

I've underlined the verbs in the paragraph above. Notice that we tend to use 'easy' verbs when describing statistics.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, August 14, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: nouns and verbs

When describing changes I prefer to avoid words like *soar*, *rocket* and *plummet* because they are too "sensationalist" - they exaggerate too much, and are more journalistic than academic in style.

Instead, we can demonstrate good control of grammar by using words like **increase**, **rise** and **fall** as both nouns and verbs:

- London saw **a significant increase** in the cost of homes. (noun)
- The cost of homes in London **increased significantly**. (verb)
- There was **a rise** in house prices between 1990 and 1995. (noun)
- House prices **rose** between 1990 and 1995. (verb)
- There was **a 7% fall** in the average house price in Tokyo. (noun)
- The average Tokyo house price **fell** by 7%. (verb)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Saturday, August 16, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: soar, rocket, plummet

I suggested that you should avoid using words like soar, rocket and plummet when describing changes on a graph or chart. I explained that these words exaggerate too much, and that they are not 'academic'.

But someone asked this sensible question:

How can we get a high score for lexical resource (vocabulary) if we only use common words like 'increase', 'rise' and 'fall'?

The quick answer is that it's better to use 'less common vocabulary' for other aspects of your description. If you analyse [this](#) band 9 essay, you'll see that I used common words like *rose*, *decreased*, *reaching* and *dropped* to describe changes, but I managed to use 'less common vocabulary' for other aspects of my description e.g. global turnover, devices, namely, platform.

I'll explain more about how to get a high vocabulary score tomorrow.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1, Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, August 21, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: two different charts

From Simon: I've been busy moving house today, which is why this lesson is so late!

Question: How should you structure your task 1 report if the question shows two different charts (e.g. a line graph and a pie chart)?

Answer: It's easy. Just follow the 4-paragraph structure below:

1. Introduction - say what each chart shows (one or two sentences)
2. Overview - write one sentence about each chart, describing it's main feature
3. Describe the first chart in detail
4. Describe the second chart in detail

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Thursday, August 28, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: too many numbers!

Students often find it difficult to describe tables with lots of numbers.

The table below contains 36 numbers. We can't describe all of them, so which ones should we choose? How many numbers do we need to include?

The table below shows changes in the numbers of residents cycling to work in different areas of the UK between 2001 and 2011.

Area	2001	2011	Percentage Change (%)
Inner London	43,494	106,219	144
Brighton and Hove	3,168	6,635	109
Bristol, City of	8,108	15,768	94
Manchester	4,610	8,426	83
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,781	3,223	81
Sheffield	2,365	4,267	80
Cardiff	3,514	5,791	65
Gateshead	816	1,314	61
Exeter	2,304	3,542	54
Leeds	4,189	6,237	49
Liverpool	2,686	3,970	48
Outer London	33,836	49,070	45

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Thursday, September 04, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: choosing the numbers

In last week's lesson, I asked which numbers we should choose for a description of the table below.

The table below shows changes in the numbers of residents cycling to work in different areas of the UK between 2001 and 2011.

Area	2001	2011	Percentage Change (%)
Inner London	43,494	106,219	144
Brighton and Hove	3,168	6,635	109
Bristol, City of	8,108	15,768	94
Manchester	4,610	8,426	83
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,781	3,223	81
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Exeter	2,304	3,542	54
Leeds	4,189	6,237	49
Liverpool	2,686	3,970	48
Outer London	33,836	49,070	45

Here are my choices:

Introduction

Don't mention any numbers here.

Overview

Don't mention any numbers; just describe the main features / overall trend.

Paragraph 3

A description (and comparison) of the figures for Inner London and Outer London would probably be enough for this paragraph.

Paragraph 4

Maybe mention Brighton and Hove as the only area outside Inner London with a percentage change above 100%. We could also highlight Bristol as the second city in terms of cycling numbers. Finish with a general statement about the other areas (e.g. all below 10,000 residents cycling to work).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, September 11, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: table essay

Here's my full essay, which follows the plan in [last week's lesson](#).

The table below shows changes in the numbers of residents cycling to work in different areas of the UK between 2001 and 2011.

Area	2001	2011	Percentage Change (%)
Inner London	43,494	106,219	144
Brighton and Hove	3,168	6,635	109
Bristol, City of	8,108	15,768	94
Manchester	4,610	8,426	83
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,781	3,223	81
Sheffield	2,365	4,267	80
Cardiff	3,514	5,791	65
Gateshead	816	1,314	61
Exeter	2,304	3,542	54
Leeds	4,189	6,237	49
Liverpool	2,686	3,970	48
Outer London	33,836	49,070	45

The table compares the numbers of people who cycled to work in twelve areas of the UK in the years 2001 and 2011.

Overall, the number of UK commuters who travelled to work by bicycle rose considerably over the 10-year period. Inner London had by far the highest number of cycling commuters in both years.

In 2001, well over 43 thousand residents of inner London commuted by bicycle, and this figure rose to more than 106 thousand in 2011, an increase of 144%. By contrast, although outer London had the second highest number of cycling commuters in each year, the percentage change, at only 45%, was the lowest of the twelve areas shown in the table.

Brighton and Hove saw the second biggest increase (109%) in the number of residents cycling to work, but Bristol was the UK's second city in terms of total numbers of cycling commuters, with 8,108 in 2001 and 15,768 in 2011. Figures for the other eight areas were below the 10 thousand mark in both years.

(172 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Thursday, September 18, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: variety

In a comment below last week's [lesson](#), Lynn pointed out that my essay contained some good paraphrasing.

Instead of the phrase "the numbers of residents cycling to work", I wrote:

- the numbers of people who cycled to work
- the number of UK commuters who travelled to work by bicycle
- the number of cycling commuters
- ...residents commuted by bicycle
- this figure
- total numbers of cycling commuters
- figures for

It doesn't matter that I often repeated the word 'number' (it's normal to repeat this word in English). What the examiner will notice is that I am able to express "residents cycling to work" in a **variety** of ways. Doing this is harder than it looks!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Thursday, September 25, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'details' paragraphs

If you've read my task 1 lessons, you'll know that I always write 4 paragraphs:

1. Introduction - paraphrase the question
2. Overview - describe 2 main or general things
3. Details
4. Details

Let's forget the introduction and overview for the moment, and focus on the two 'details' paragraphs. Why do we need two paragraphs?

The answer is that this encourages you to divide the information into 2 groups, and hopefully this means that your essay will be better organised and you'll make some useful comparisons.

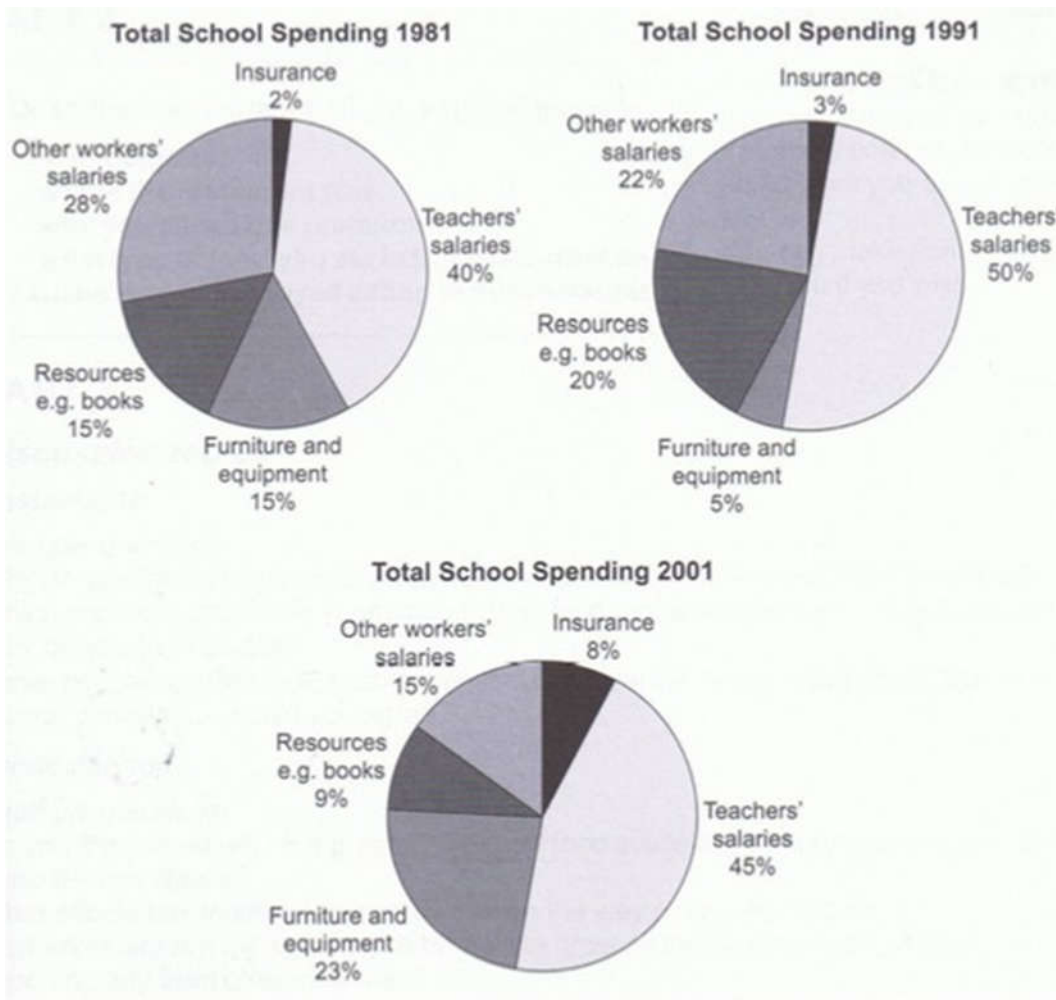
[Click here](#) to see 3 pie charts (taken from Cambridge book 8). Thinking about the 'details' paragraphs only, how would you divide the information into 2 groups?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, October 02, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'details' paragraphs

Last week I asked you to think about how to divide the information from 3 pie charts into 2 groups in order to write 2 'details' paragraphs ([click here](#) to see the pie charts again).



Here are two paragraphs that I wrote with my students:

In 1981, 40% of the school's budget went on teachers' salaries. This figure rose to 50% in 1991, but fell again by 5% in 2001. The proportion of spending on other workers' wages fell steadily over the 20-year period, from 28% of the budget in 1981 to only 15% in 2001.

Expenditure on insurance stood at only 2% of the total in 1981, but reached 8% in 2001. Finally, the percentages for resources and furniture/equipment fluctuated. The figure for resources was highest in 1991, at 20%, and the proportion of spending on furniture and equipment reached its peak in 2001, at 23%.

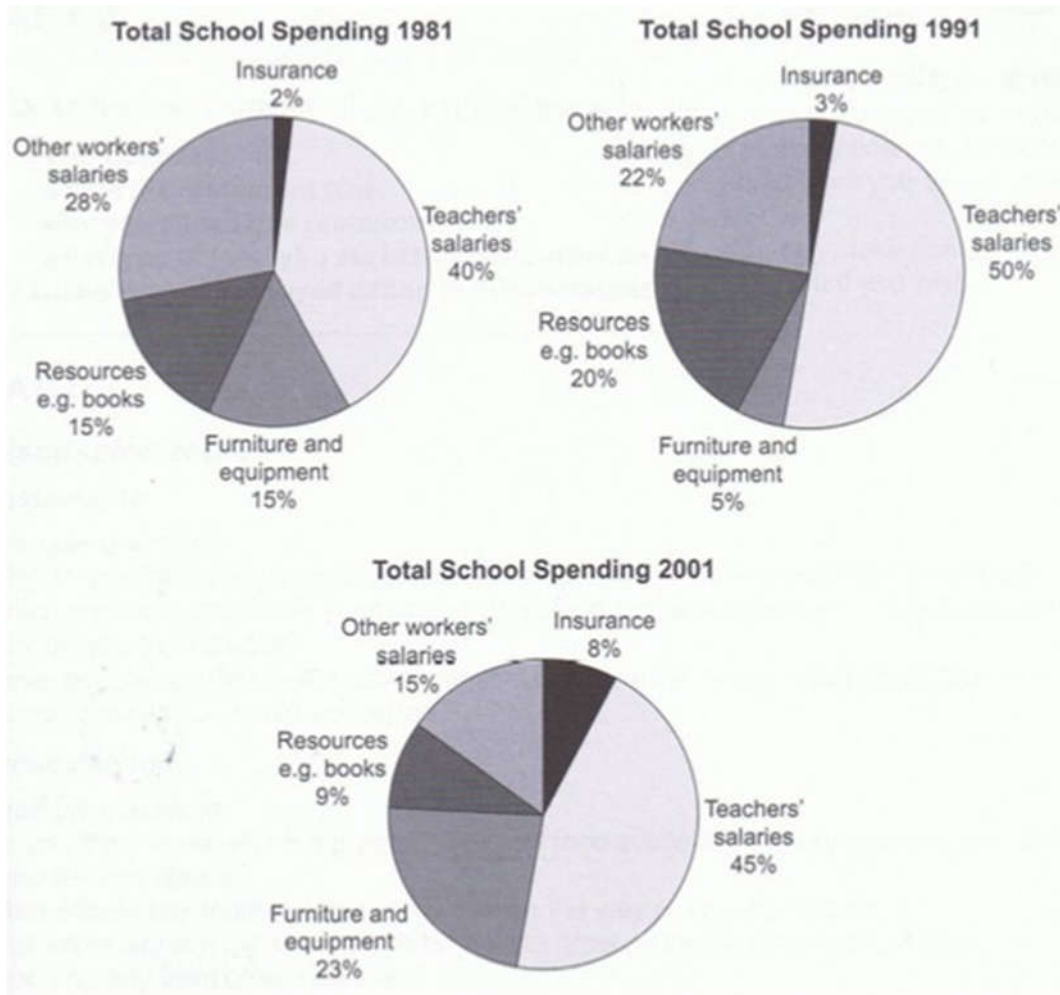
Analysis:

You can see that I chose to put the two types of salaries together in one paragraph, and the other three categories together in the second paragraph. There are other ways to divide the information, but this seemed the most obvious way to me.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts essay

Here's my full essay for the [3 pie charts](#) question that we've been looking at over the last two weeks:



The pie charts compare the expenditure of a school in the UK in three different years over a 20-year period.

It is clear that teachers' salaries made up the largest proportion of the school's spending in all three years (1981, 1991 and 2001). By contrast, insurance was the smallest cost in each year.

In 1981, 40% of the school's budget went on teachers' salaries. This figure rose to 50% in 1991, but fell again by 5% in 2001. The proportion of spending on other workers' wages fell steadily over the 20-year period, from 28% of the budget in 1981 to only 15% in 2001.

Expenditure on insurance stood at only 2% of the total in 1981, but reached 8% in 2001. Finally, the percentages for resources and furniture/equipment fluctuated. The figure for resources was highest in 1991, at 20%, and the proportion of spending on furniture and equipment reached its peak in 2001, at 23%.

(158 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: verbs

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with suitable verbs.

1. In 1995, people in the UK _____ around 72 billion minutes of local phone calls.
2. They _____ about half this amount of time making national or international calls.
3. In the same year, less than 5 billion minutes of mobile calls _____ made.
4. National and international calls _____ a high point of around 61 billion minutes in 2002.
5. The time spent on mobiles _____ from 15 billion minutes in 1999 to 45 billion in 2002.

Note: these sentences refer to a bar chart in Cambridge IELTS book 9.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(45\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. made
2. spent
3. were
4. reached
5. tripled / increased / rose

Thursday, October 23, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: percentages

Let's look at where to put the number in sentences that describe percentages.

Family type	Proportion of people living in poverty
single aged person	6%
aged couple	4%

You could put the percentage at the beginning of the sentence (example 1), or at the end of the sentence (example 2):

1. 6% of single aged people were living in poverty.
2. The level of poverty among single aged people stood at 6%.

You could also add a comparison:

1. 6% of single aged people were living in poverty, compared to only 4% of aged couples.
2. The level of poverty among single aged people stood at 6%, whereas the figure for aged couples was only 4%.

Which sentence do you think is clearer? Also, why have I used "people" and "couples" in my sentences when the table says "person" and "couple"?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: verbs exercise

The table below shows the amount of waste production (in millions of tonnes) in six different countries over a twenty-year period.

	1980	1990	2000
Ireland	0.6	*	5
Japan	28	32	53
Korea	*	31	19
Poland	4	5	6.6
Portugal	2	3	5
US	131	151	192

*Figure not available

I've missed out the verbs in the following description of the table. For some of the gaps, more than one verb is possible. Please note that the description is not a full essay.

Missing words:

risen, created, recorded, is, produced (x2), managed, given, had (x2), stood, were, increased

Description:

The US, Japan and Korea _____ by far the most waste. In 1980, the US _____ 131 million tonnes of waste, while the figure for Japan _____ at 28 million tonnes. No figure _____ for Korea in 1980, but in 1990, 31 million tonnes of waste _____ in that country. By 2000, waste production in the USA _____ to 192 million tonnes, while Japan's figure _____ to 53 million tonnes. However, Korea _____ to reduce its output to 19 million tonnes. Ireland, Poland and Portugal only _____ a total of around 30 million tonnes of waste between them, adding the figures for all three years together.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. produced (or created)
2. created (or produced)
3. stood
4. is given
5. were recorded
6. had increased (or risen)
7. had risen (or increased)
8. managed
9. produced (or created)

Thursday, November 06, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'waste table' essay

The table below shows the amount of waste production (in millions of tonnes) in six different countries over a twenty-year period.

	1980	1990	2000
Ireland	0.6	*	5
Japan	28	32	53
Korea	*	31	19
Poland	4	5	6.6
Portugal	2	3	5
US	131	151	192

*Figure not available

The chart compares the amounts of waste that were produced in six countries in the years 1980, 1990 and 2000.

In each of these years, the US produced more waste than Ireland, Japan, Korea, Poland and Portugal combined. It is also noticeable that Korea was the only country that managed to reduce its waste output by the year 2000.

Between 1980 and 2000, waste production in the US rose from 131 to 192 million tonnes, and rising trends were also seen in Japan, Poland and Portugal. Japan's waste output increased from 28 to 53 million tonnes, while Poland and Portugal saw waste totals increase from 4 to 6.6 and from 2 to 5 million tonnes respectively.

The trends for Ireland and Korea were noticeably different from those described above. In Ireland, waste production increased more than eightfold, from only 0.6 million tonnes in 1980 to 5 million tonnes in 2000. Korea, by contrast, cut its waste output by 12 million tonnes between 1990 and 2000.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#)

Thursday, November 13, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: a few good phrases

Here are some useful phrases to describe the chart in last week's [lesson](#). Check my essay to find the missing words.

- The US produced more waste than the other countries _____.
- Rising _____ were seen in five out of the six countries.
- Korea was the only country that _____ a fall in waste output.
- In Ireland, waste production increased more than _____.
- Korea managed to _____ its waste production between 1990 and 2000.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. combined
2. trends
3. SAW
4. eightfold
5. cut / reduce

Note: most people didn't get "saw" for number 3. Check that sentence if you got it wrong.

Thursday, November 20, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: rise or raise?

These two words are often confused by students. Here is the main difference:

- something rises (e.g. the price rose)
- somebody raises something (e.g. the company raised the price)

"Rise" (rose, risen) can be a verb or a noun. I often use it for IELTS writing task 1:

- The price of cigarettes **rises** every year. (verb, present)
- In 2008, the number of customers **rose from** 100 **to** 200. (verb, past)
- There has been **a dramatic rise in** Internet usage in the UK. (noun)
- In 2008, the UK saw **a rise in** the divorce rate. (noun)

"Raise" (raised) is almost always a verb. You probably won't use it for task 1:

- The Government raises the price of cigarettes every year.
- Charities work to raise the standard of living in developing countries.

Thursday, November 27, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: checklist

Here's my preparation checklist for writing task 1. Can you put a tick next to each point on the list?

1. Know what the six types of question are (e.g. line graph...).
2. Try several real test examples of each type.
3. Know the 4-paragraph method suggested in lessons on this site.
4. Practise paraphrasing the question to write introductions.
5. Understand why we don't write a conclusion for task 1.
6. Know how to write an 'overview', and what to include in this paragraph.
7. Practise selecting key information, rather than describing everything.
8. Be able to write good 'comparing' sentences.
9. Be able to describe changes and trends (e.g. increase, decrease).
10. Be able to use the passive to describe steps in a process.

Thursday, December 04, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: verbs and nouns for trends

In the following sentences the verbs are underlined. Can you rewrite the same sentences using nouns (e.g. a rise) instead of verbs?

1. In 2013, UK house prices rose by 10%.
2. The number of university applicants fell by 5% from 1999 to 2009.
3. The price of petrol increased significantly in 2009.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(38\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

There are several possibilities for each sentence, but here are three that seem 'natural' to me:

1. In 2013, there was a 10% rise in UK house prices.
2. There was a 5% fall in the number of university applicants between 1999 and 2009.
3. There was a significant increase in the price of petrol in 2009.

Notice that it's very common to use "there was" with nouns that show change.

An interesting alternative when describing a change in a particular country is to use "see". For example:

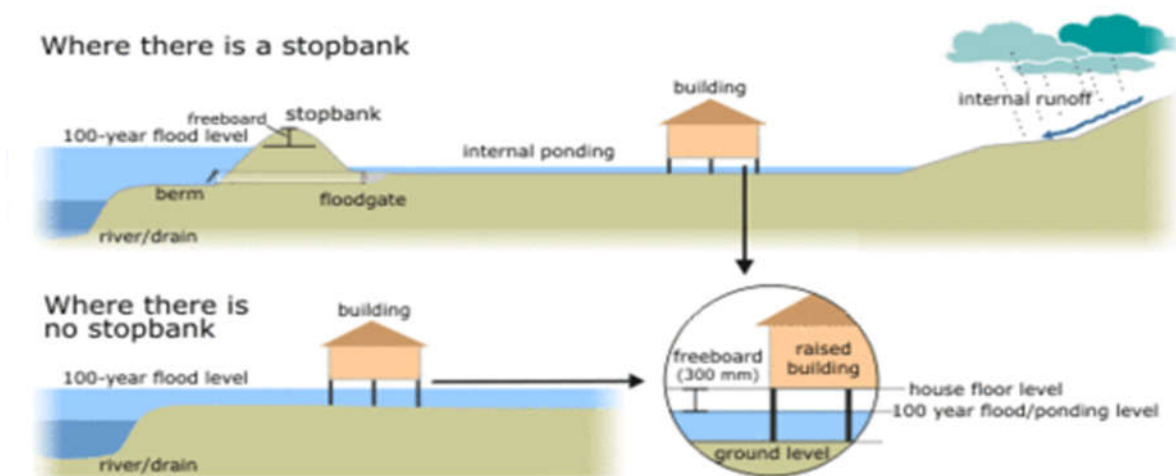
1. In 2013, the UK saw a 10% rise in house prices.

Thursday, December 11, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'flooding' diagrams

Try writing a task 1 report for the following diagram question.

The diagrams below show how houses can be protected in areas which are prone to flooding.



Note:

Freeboard = the height of the underside of a structure above a given level or water

Berm = a bank of earth

(Source: www.waikatoregion.govt.nz)

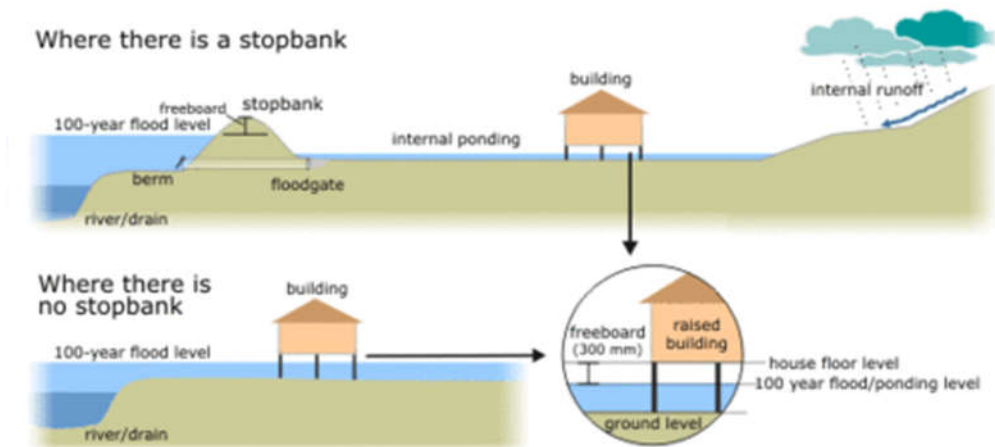
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Thursday, December 25, 2014

IELTS Writing Task 1: diagram introduction & overview

Here's the question that we were looking at two weeks ago:

The diagrams below show how houses can be protected in areas which are prone to flooding.



The full report will contain 4 paragraphs. Let's start with the introduction and overview.

Introduction - paraphrase the question

The diagrams compare two different methods of defence for homes which are at risk of being flooded.

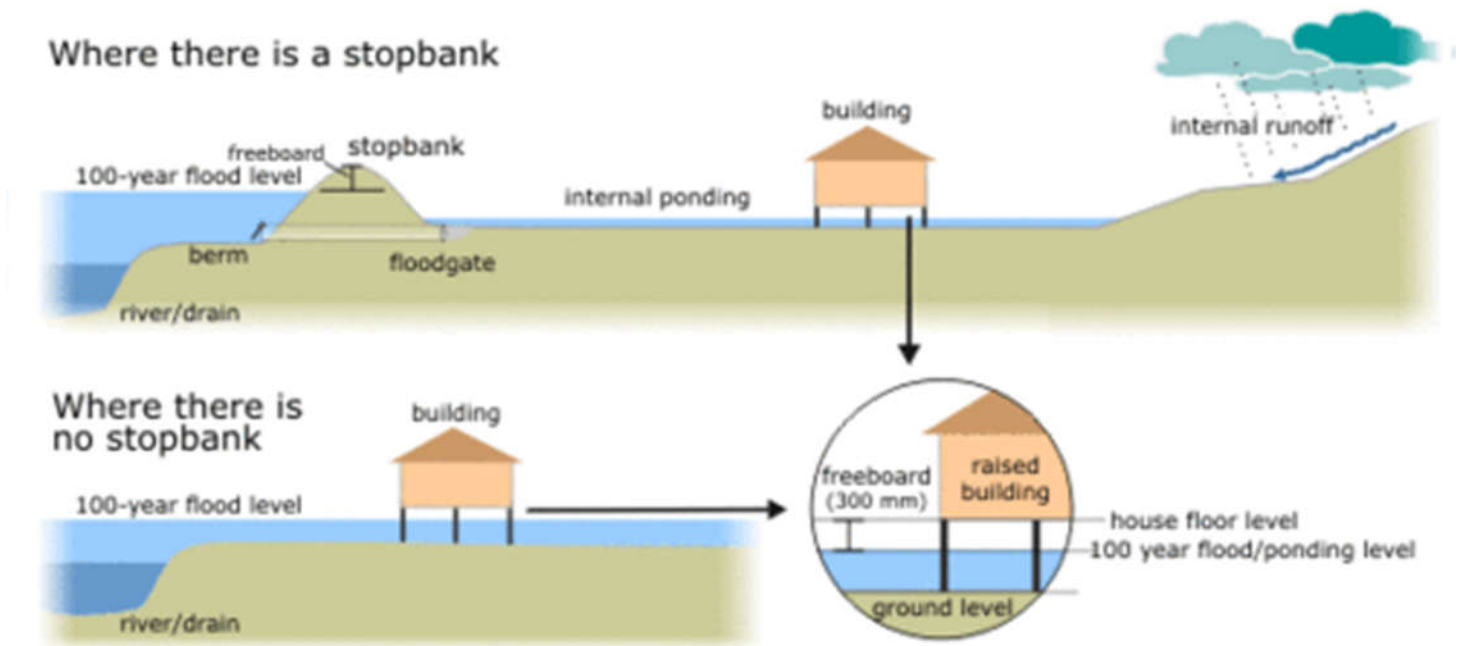
Overview - mention two main things

The key difference between the diagrams is that they show flood protection with and without a stopbank. In either case, the at-risk home must be raised on stilts above ground level.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'flood diagram' answer

The diagrams below show how houses can be protected in areas which are prone to flooding.



Here's my full band 9 report:

The diagrams compare two different methods of defence for homes which are at risk of being flooded.

The key difference between the diagrams is that they show flood protection with and without a stopbank. In either case, the at-risk home is raised on stilts above ground level.

The first diagram shows how a stopbank acts as a flood barrier to stop river water from flooding homes. The stopbank is a small mound of land next to the river that is higher than the 100-year flood level, and prevents the river from bursting its banks. Nearby houses can be built on stilts to prevent flooding from rainwater, and a floodgate beneath the stopbank can be opened to allow this 'ponding' to drain off into the river.

When there is no stopbank, as shown in the second diagram, there will be nothing to stop the river from flooding. In this case, the solution is to put buildings on stilts. The height of the stilts is measured so that the floor of the house is 300mm above the 100-year flood level. This measurement is called the 'freeboard'.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, January 08, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: analyse sample answers

Did you analyse the diagram report that I wrote for last week's [lesson](#)?

1. What paraphrasing can you see in the introduction?
2. Which two features did I choose as 'main points' in paragraph 2?
3. How did I divide the description of detail into two paragraphs (3 and 4)?
4. What good vocabulary did you notice in the report?

Analyse sample answers in this way, and use them as models when writing your own task 1 reports.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Monday, January 12, 2015

New video lesson: writing task 1

My first video lesson for IELTS writing task 1 is now available [here](#). In this lesson, I introduce the aims of the course, then show you the 6 question types. I also explain my 4-paragraph approach in some detail.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, January 15, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: some grammar / vocabulary

Using the report in [this lesson](#), find one word to fill each gap below.

- 1) something is _____ risk _____ happening
- 2) the stopbank acts _____ a flood barrier
- 3) to stop something _____ happening
- 4) to prevent something _____ happening
- 5) _____ shown in the second diagram, there will be...

Note:

Some people would call this a grammar exercise. I prefer to see it as a vocabulary (collocations) task.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. at, of
2. as
3. from
4. from
5. As

Posted by: Simon | [Thursday, January 15, 2015 at 22:13](#)

Tuesday, January 20, 2015

New video lesson for writing task 1

It took me longer than I expected, but I've now finished my latest video lesson. In this lesson I explain my approach to describing *line graphs*.

You can find the lesson at the bottom of [this webpage](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Thursday, January 22, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: using words from the chart

Be very careful when using the words (labels) that you see on the graph or chart. You may need to change them when writing full sentences.

Look at this chart for example:

Type of energy	% of energy used
Nuclear	30
Thermal	20

You **can't** just use the words in the table like this:

- Nuclear was 30% of energy used.
- Thermal produced 20% of energy used.

You need to write something like this:

- Nuclear power was used to produce 30% of the country's energy.
- Thermal power stations produced 20% of the energy used in... (year / country).

Can you see why we need to add words when writing full sentences?

(Answer: 'nuclear' and 'thermal' are adjectives, so we need a noun like 'power' after them)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

I asked:

"Can you see why we need to add words when writing full sentences?"

The simple answer came from Aria:

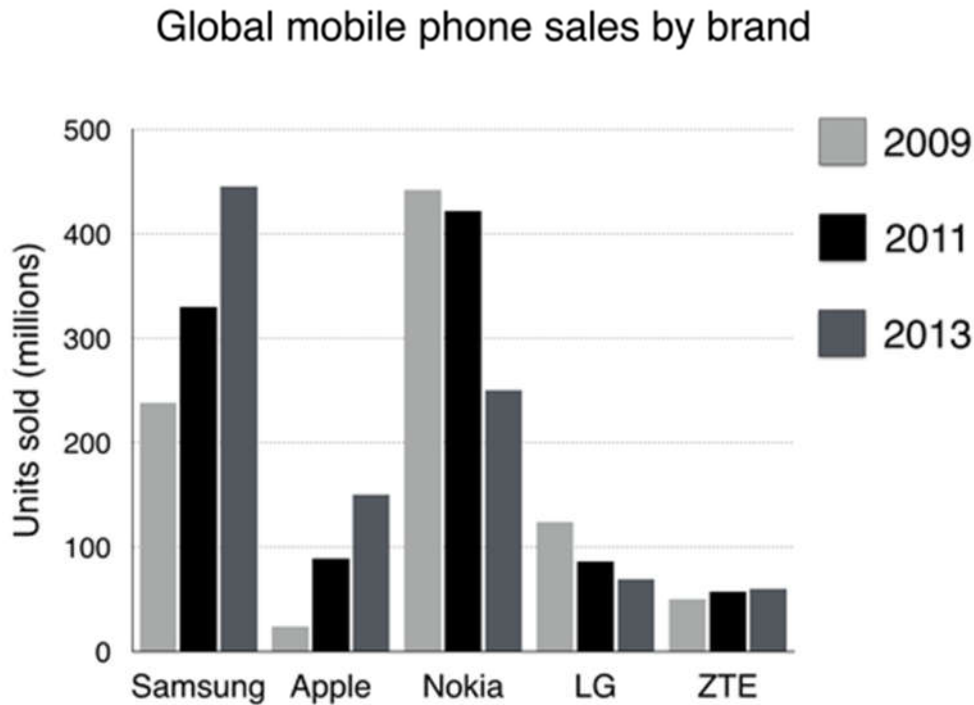
"Nuclear" and "Thermal" are adjectives and need to describe a noun (e.g. thermal POWER).

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, January 23, 2015 at 21:38](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart video

I've just published my latest video lesson at the bottom of [this page](#). In the lesson, I explain my approach to describing bar charts, and I work through this question:

The chart below shows global sales of the top five mobile phone brands between 2009 and 2013.



A few things to consider if you try writing a report for this question:

1. What alternative words could you use instead of *global sales*, *mobile phones*, and *brands*?
2. What do you think is the most noticeable feature on the chart?
3. How would you group the information into two 'details' paragraphs?

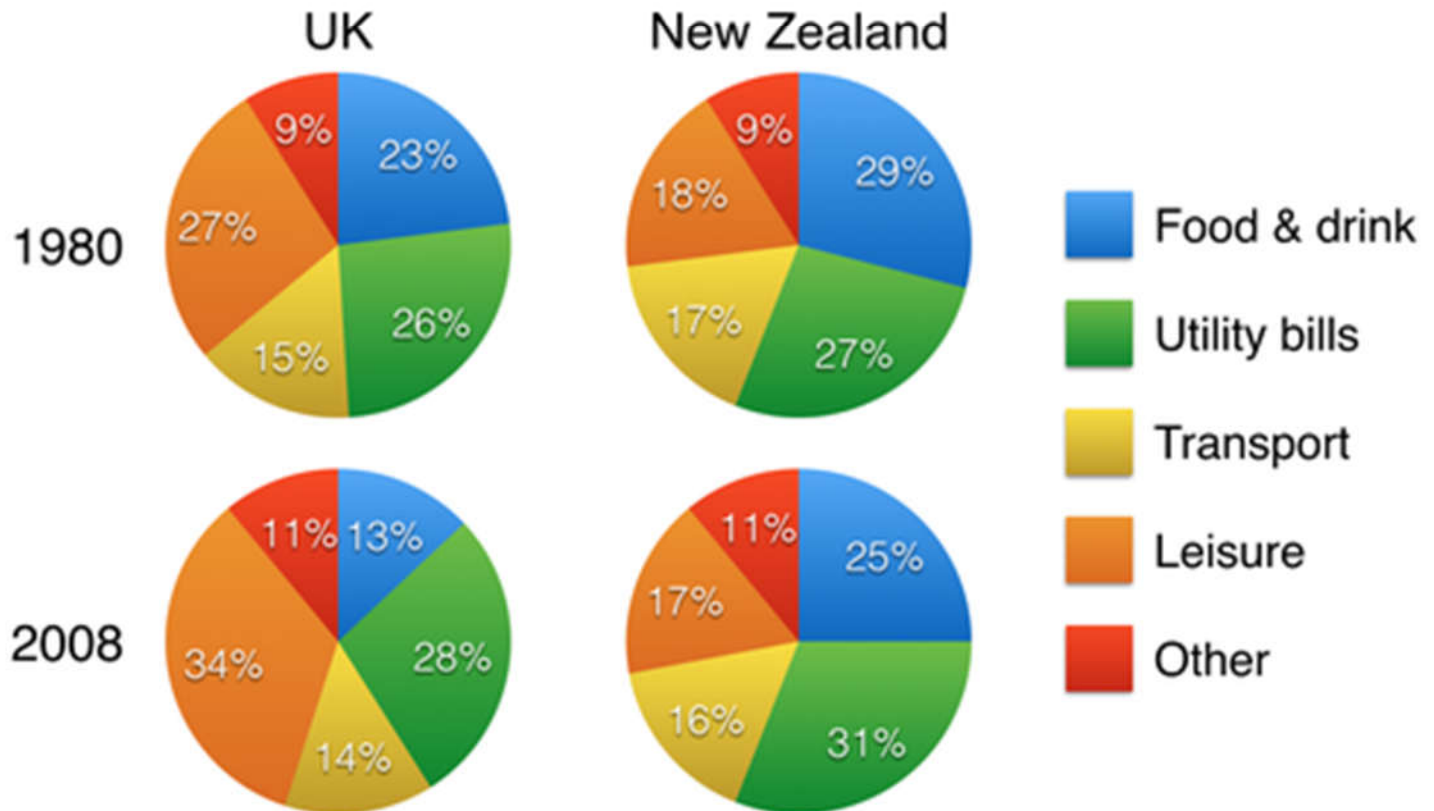
You can see how I deal with these issues in the video lesson, or you could share your own ideas in the 'comments' area below.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart video

I've just published my latest video lesson at the bottom of [this page](#). In the lesson, I explain my approach to describing pie charts, and I work through this question:

The charts below show household spending patterns in two countries between 1980 and 2008.



For this question, a key decision to make is how to divide the information into two 'details' paragraphs. You have three choices:

1. Write one paragraph about each year
2. Write one paragraph about each country
3. Group the information according to category (e.g. food and drink with utility bills in paragraph 3, and the other categories in paragraph 4)

Which way would you do it?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

I used approach 3 in the video lesson.

I prefer not to write separate paragraphs about the countries or years because we need to make comparisons between both.

So I compared the figures for food/drink and utility bills in paragraph 3 (in both countries and years), and I wrote about the other 3 categories in paragraph 4.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, February 06, 2015 at 21:53](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: the 'selecting' skill

One of the key skills when describing a graph, chart or table is **selecting**.

In the table below, for example, which 2 main points would you select for your summary? And how many of the 20 numbers would you manage to include in your 'details' paragraphs?

Country	Number of tourists, 2012 (millions)	Number of tourists, 2013 (millions)	Tourist spending, 2012	Tourist spending, 2013
France	83.0	84.7	\$53.6 billion	\$56.1 billion
USA	66.7	69.8	\$126.2 billion	\$139.6 billion
Spain	57.5	60.7	\$56.3 billion	\$60.4 billion
China	57.7	55.7	\$50.0 billion	\$51.7 billion
Italy	46.4	47.7	\$41.2 billion	\$43.9 billion

Note: I'm making a video lesson about the table above. It will be ready tomorrow.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(61\)](#)

4. As a teacher, I advise everyone to please be careful when receiving advice from other candidates. Sometimes they are correcting mistakes, and other times they are recommending you change something good into something wrong. I see this constantly (not just on this site...). Remember, one or two errors can easily be the difference between a 6.5 or a 7.

Posted by: sjm | [Friday, February 13, 2015 at 05:52](#)

Friday, February 13, 2015

New video lesson: describe a table

I've just published my latest video lesson. You can find it at the bottom of the homepage on [this website](#). It's the one called "Wr1, lesson 5".

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 9 sentences

Yesterday I wrote that you only need 13 sentences in your task 2 essay. For the task 1 report, I aim for 9 sentences:

- Introduction: 1 sentence
- Overview (summary): 2 sentences
- First 'details' paragraph: 3 sentences
- Second 'details' paragraph: 3 sentences

Remember that this is just my approach, and it's what I tell my students to **aim** for (some reports might contain 8, 10 or 11 sentences, which is fine).

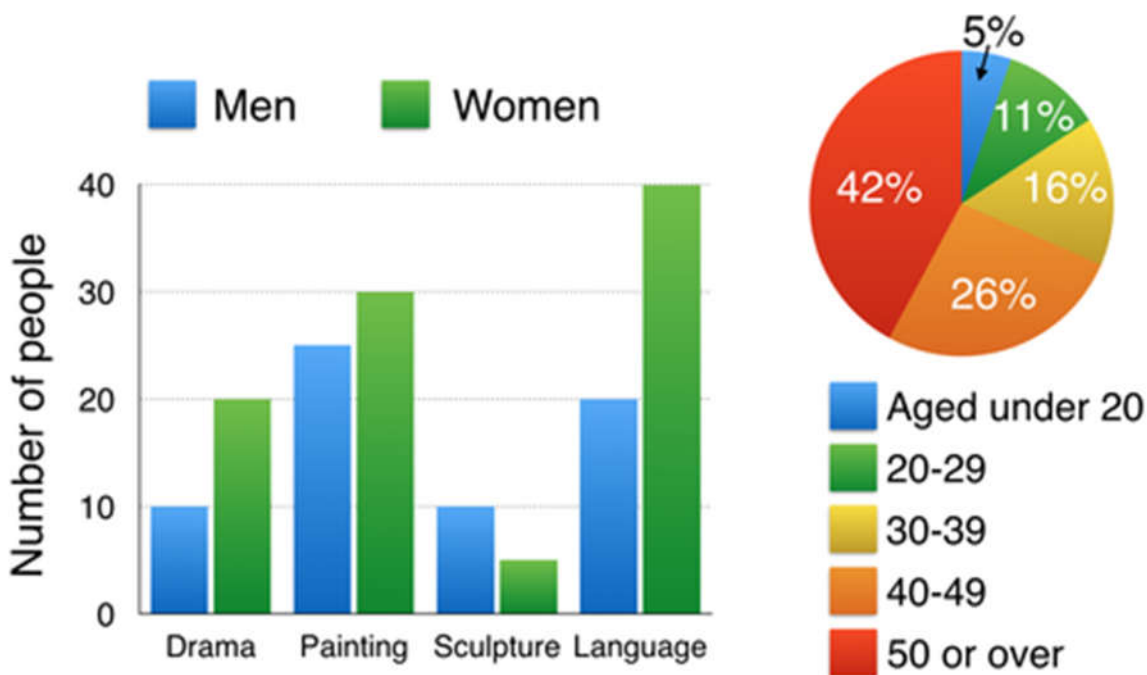
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, February 26, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: two different charts

I'm in the process of making a video lesson about the question below. It should be ready today or tomorrow.

The bar chart below shows the numbers of men and women attending various evening courses at an adult education centre in the year 2009. The pie chart gives information about the ages of these course participants.



Task:

Last week I recommended that you aim to write [9 sentences](#) for your task 1 report. Think about the 9-sentence structure for the question above.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(53\)](#)

Friday, February 27, 2015

New video lesson: two different charts

I've just published a new video for writing task 1, about questions with two different charts. You can find the lesson at the bottom of my [video course homepage](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, March 05, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: passive sentences

When describing a graph or chart, you almost never need to use the passive. However, you probably will use the passive when describing a process diagram.

Imagine we have a diagram that shows the process of recycling used glass. One step in the process is labelled "grinding machine" (*to grind* means to crush or reduce into small particles).



Do you know the past participle of the verb *grind*? If you don't, you won't be able to make a passive sentence. But don't worry; there are various ways to describe this step.

Using a different verb:

1. Next, the glass passes through a grinding machine. (active form of 'pass')
2. Next, the glass is passed through a grinding machine. (passive form of 'pass')
3. Next, a grinding machine is used to crush the glass. (passive form of 'use')

If you know the verb 'grind' and its past participle 'ground':

1. Next, a machine grinds the glass. (active)
2. Next, the glass is ground in a machine. (passive)

I would probably use the last sentence above in my report, but the others are all acceptable. I'm working on a video lesson about process diagrams, with more advice about passive sentences. It should be ready in the next few days.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Sunday, March 08, 2015

IELTS Grammar: using 'by'

A student asked me about the two uses of the word "by" in these sentences:

*Korea was the only country that managed to reduce its waste output **by** the year 2000. Korea cut its waste output **by** 12 million tonnes between 1990 and 2000.*

Questions:

1. Can you explain how "by" is used in the two cases above?
2. What is the difference between "by the year 2000" and "in the year 2000"?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1, Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

Most people commenting above have the right idea:

1. In the first sentence, "by" is used to refer to the years BEFORE AND UP TO the year 2000. In the second sentence, "by" is used to refer to a difference in numbers (e.g. decreased from 31 million to 19 million = decreased BY 12 million).

2. Use "by" when looking at the years BEFORE and UP TO. By contrast, "in 2000" would mean "only in the year 2000" (during that year only).

Note: when using "by" with years, we usually (but not always) use the past perfect e.g. By the year 2000, Korea had reduced its waste output.

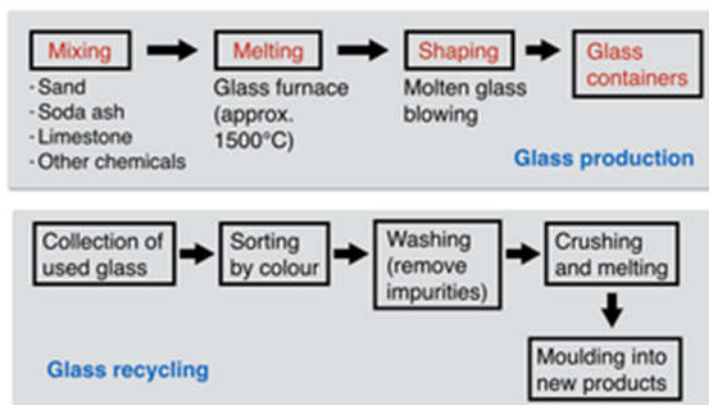
Thursday, March 12, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: process diagrams

I've just published a video lesson about process diagrams on [this webpage](#).

In the video lesson I focus on the most common type of process diagram, a production process. Here's the question that I used:

The diagrams below show how glass containers, such as bottles, are produced and recycled.



Apart from the 'production process', there are two other types of process diagram:

1. Natural process diagram: click [here](#) to see an example.
2. Map showing a process: click [here](#) to see an example.

The technique is basically the same for all 3 types of process, but it's a good idea to practise an example of each.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, March 19, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: a real process description

You might find it useful to read a *real* process description from [this website](#) about insulation manufacturing. The extract below looks very similar to a paragraph from an IELTS essay!

For glass wool, the raw materials are sand, limestone and soda ash, as well as recycled off-cuts from the production process. The raw materials are melted in a furnace at very high temperatures, typically between 1,300°C to 1,500°C. The smoke created during this process is filtered and flue gases are cleaned to minimise any environmental impact. The droplets of melt exiting the furnace are spun into fibres. Small quantities of binding agents are added to the fibres. The mineral wool is then hardened in a curing oven at around 200°C. The mineral wool is cut to the required size and shape.

Task:

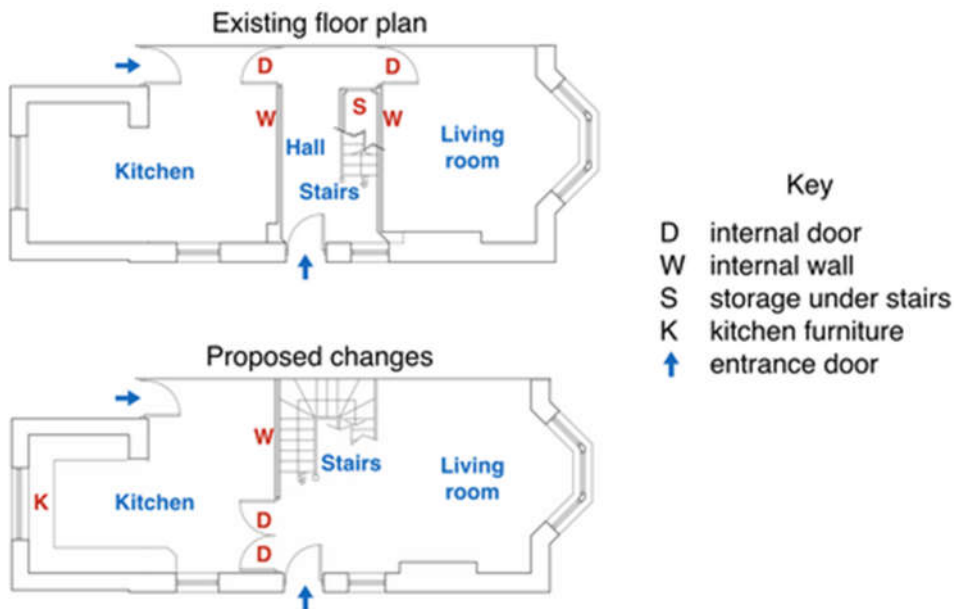
Can you find the passive verbs in the paragraph above? Can you improve the paragraph by adding some sequencing words (firstly, then etc.)?

Thursday, March 26, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: comparison diagram

Later today I'll publish a new video lesson about 'comparison diagrams' in writing task 1. The lesson will include the task below. Think about how you would write your answer.

The diagrams below show the existing ground floor plan of a house and a proposed plan for some building work.



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Friday, March 27, 2015

New video lesson: comparison diagrams

I've just published my latest video lesson at the bottom of [this page](#). Sorry I didn't keep my promise to release it yesterday - I made a mistake and had to re-record the whole thing!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, April 02, 2015

A real-life example of writing task 1

A student sent me [this link](#) to a BBC article about unemployment. It's a fantastic real-life example of the kind of language that I often use in my task 1 reports.

Here's part of the article with some useful language highlighted:

The UK unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest level since 2009, official figures show. At 7.4%, this is the lowest rate since the February-to-April period in 2009. The number of people out of work fell by 99,000 to 2.39 million in the three months to October.

In Northern Ireland the unemployment rate was slightly higher at 7.5%, while Scotland's figure was 7.1%. The North East of England had the highest unemployment rate, at 10.1%, while the lowest rate was 5.6% in the East of England.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, April 09, 2015

2 new videos (free)

I've just published two quick videos as part of my course of video lessons.

The first is a summary of my lessons for writing task 1, with some final advice about 'map' questions and an attached document showing three different 'map' answers. You can watch this lesson and download the sample map reports [here](#).

The second video is a useful introduction to IELTS Reading. Watch it [here](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Reading](#), [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, April 16, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: more pie charts!

There's a good pie chart question in 'Official IELTS Practice Materials' book 2. You can see the pie charts [here](#), and this is the question statement:

The pie charts below show how dangerous waste products are dealt with in three countries.

Let's start with an introduction and overview / summary:

1. How would you paraphrase the question statement above?
2. What two main or general points would you choose for the summary?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(51\)](#)

Thursday, April 23, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'waste' pie charts

Here are my first two paragraphs for the question in [last week's lesson](#). As usual, I wrote the introduction by paraphrasing the question statement, and then I chose two main features for the 'overview'.

The charts compare Korea, Sweden and the UK in terms of the methods used in each country to dispose of harmful waste.

It is clear that in both the UK and Sweden, the majority of dangerous waste products are buried underground. By contrast, most hazardous materials in the Republic of Korea are recycled.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Thursday, April 30, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'waste' pie chart details

Here are six sentences that my students and I wrote about the pie charts in [this lesson](#). To encourage you to look carefully at the sentences, I've put them in the wrong order. Can you find the correct order? You could also divide the description into two paragraphs.

- (A) The latter country recycles 69% of hazardous materials, which is far more than the other two nations.
- (B) These two methods are not employed in Korea or Sweden, which favour incineration for 9% and 20% of dangerous waste respectively.
- (C) Looking at the information in more detail, we can see that 82% of the UK's dangerous waste is put into landfill sites.
- (D) While 25% of Sweden's dangerous waste is recycled, the UK does not recycle at all.
- (E) This disposal technique is used for 55% of the harmful waste in Sweden and only 22% of similar waste in Korea.
- (F) Instead, it dumps waste at sea or treats it chemically.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

Here's the original order of sentences that my students and I wrote:

C E A D F B

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, May 01, 2015 at 13:14](#)

Thursday, May 07, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: three sentence types

Here are three 'sentence types' that I like using:

1. **while** sentence
2. **respectively** sentence
3. **saw** sentence

Try using 'while' at the beginning of a sentence when you want to make a contrast between two numbers or trends. Use 'respectively' at the end of a sentence that compares two or three numbers. Use 'saw' to say what happened in a country (e.g. the UK saw an increase in...).

Can you write an example sentence for all three types, with no mistakes?
Look through my lessons to find examples if you need help.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)

Thursday, May 14, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: past simple, past perfect

Several people have asked me to explain how the past perfect tense can be used in writing task 1. The example below might help.

Look at the following description:

In 2002, the cost of an average house in the UK was £130,000. By 2007, the average house price had risen to almost £190,000.

Notice the verbs used with "in" and "by":

- I used "in" with the past simple "was" to talk about what happened in one year only (2002).
- I used "by" with the past perfect "had risen" to talk about an increase that happened in the years **before** 2007 (from 2002 to 2007).

Try writing your own sentences with "in" and "by" to practise describing numbers with the past simple and past perfect.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, May 21, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart answer

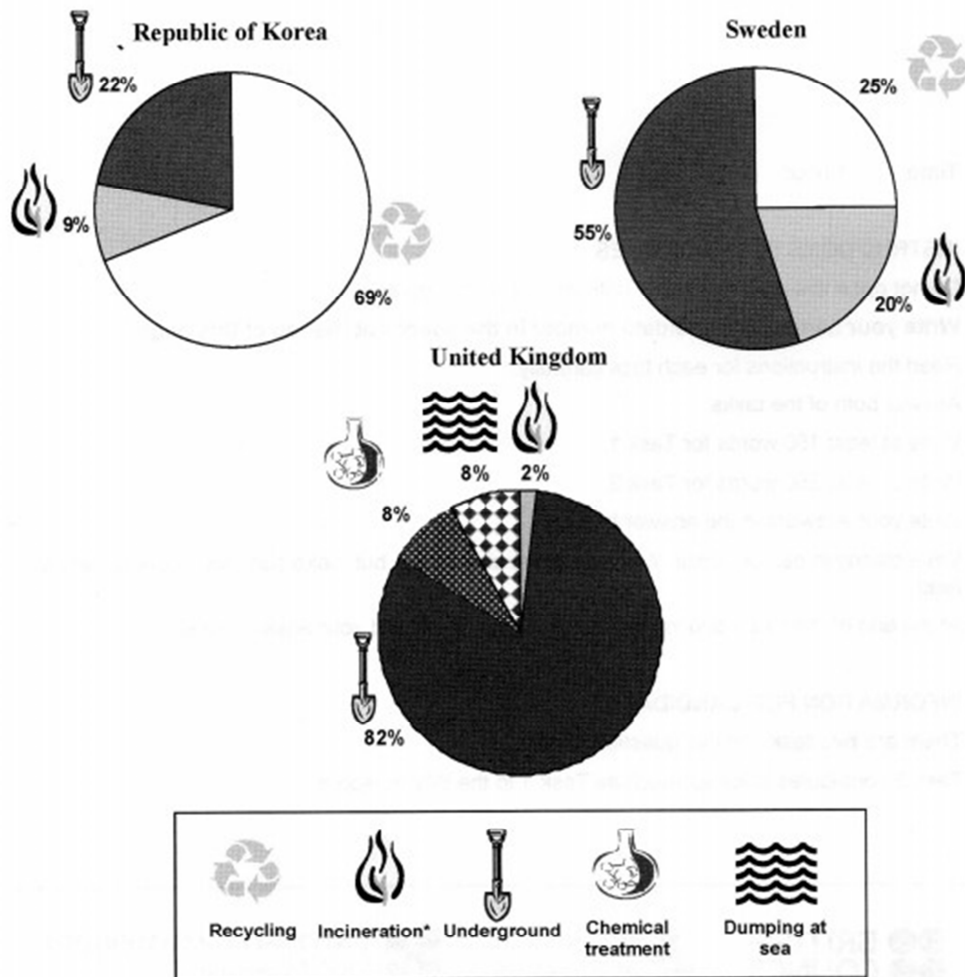
A few people asked me to put the 'waste' pie chart paragraphs together in one place. So here's the full report that my students and I wrote. You can see the pie charts by clicking [here](#).

WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The pie charts below show how dangerous waste products are dealt with in three countries.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.



* Incineration: a way of destroying something by fire

The pie charts below show how dangerous waste products are dealt with in three countries.

The charts compare Korea, Sweden and the UK in terms of the methods used in each country to dispose of harmful waste.

It is clear that in both the UK and Sweden, the majority of dangerous waste products are buried underground. By contrast, most hazardous materials in the Republic of Korea are recycled.

Looking at the information in more detail, we can see that 82% of the UK's dangerous waste is put into landfill sites. This disposal technique is used for 55% of the harmful waste in Sweden and only 22% of similar waste in Korea. The latter country recycles 69% of hazardous materials, which is far more than the other two nations.

While 25% of Sweden's dangerous waste is recycled, the UK does not recycle at all. Instead, it dumps waste at sea or treats it chemically. These two methods are not employed in Korea or Sweden, which favour incineration for 9% and 20% of dangerous waste respectively.

(159 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Thursday, May 28, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: using 'in terms of'

In last week's [sample answer](#) I began my introduction with:
"The charts compare Korea, Sweden and the UK in terms of..."

Try this exercise:

Rewrite the following two introduction sentences using the formula below.

"The chart(s) compare(s) + countries + in terms of + finish the sentence"

1. The pie charts show household spending patterns in the UK and New Zealand between 1980 and 2008.
2. The table shows the amounts of money spent by tourists in five different countries over a period of two years.

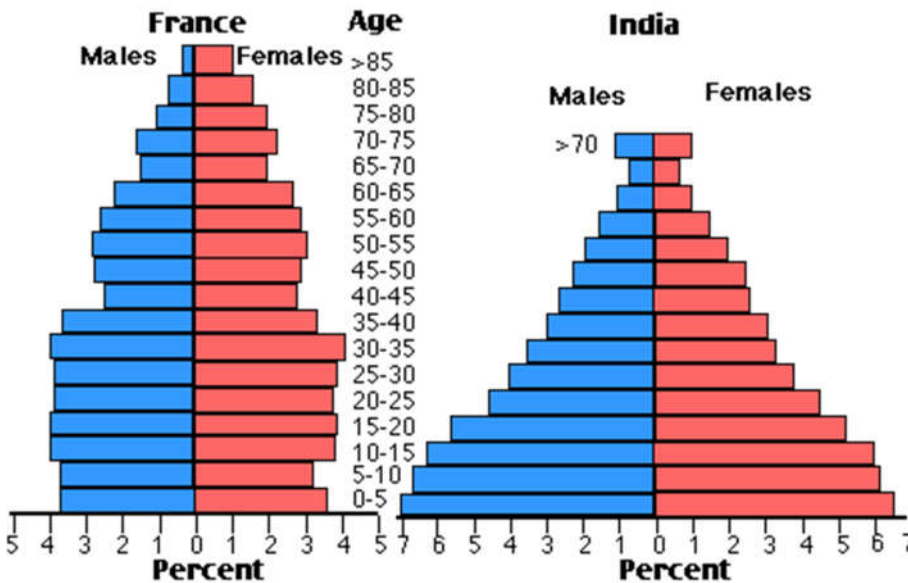
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(47\)](#)

Thursday, June 04, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: population pyramids

Have you ever tried describing this type of chart?

The charts below compare the age structure of the populations of France and India in 1984.



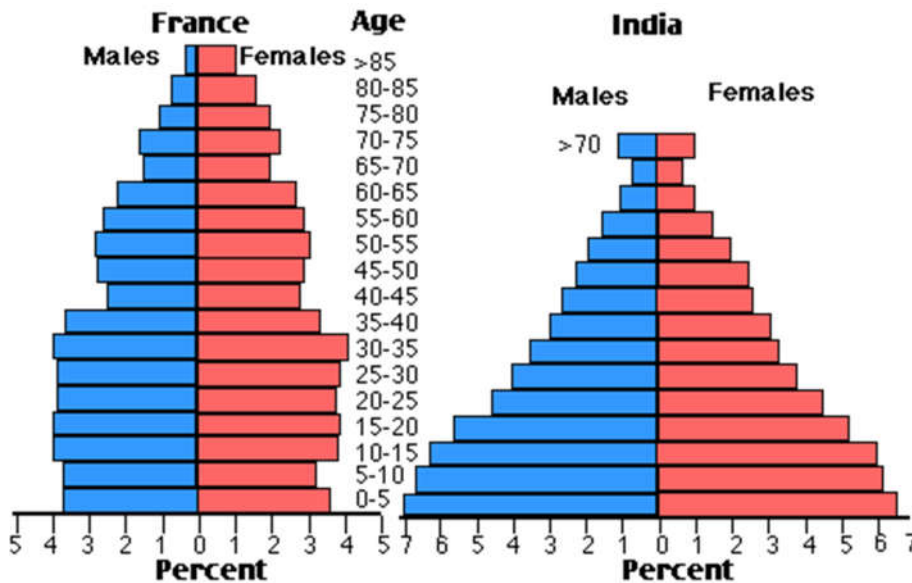
(Source: [biology-pages.info](#))

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(36\)](#)

Thursday, June 11, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction and overview

The charts below compare the age structure of the populations of France and India in 1984.



Introduction: paraphrase the question statement

The two charts compare the populations of France and India in terms of age distribution by gender in the year 1984.

Overview: two main points

It is clear that the population of India was younger than that of France in 1984, with a noticeably larger proportion of people aged under 20. France, on the other hand, had a significantly larger percentage of elderly inhabitants.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, June 18, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: six 'details' sentences

After writing an introduction and overview (summary), we need to describe some specific details that are shown on the graph, chart or diagram.

I usually write two 'details' paragraphs, with three sentences in each. That means we only need six 'details' sentences in total.

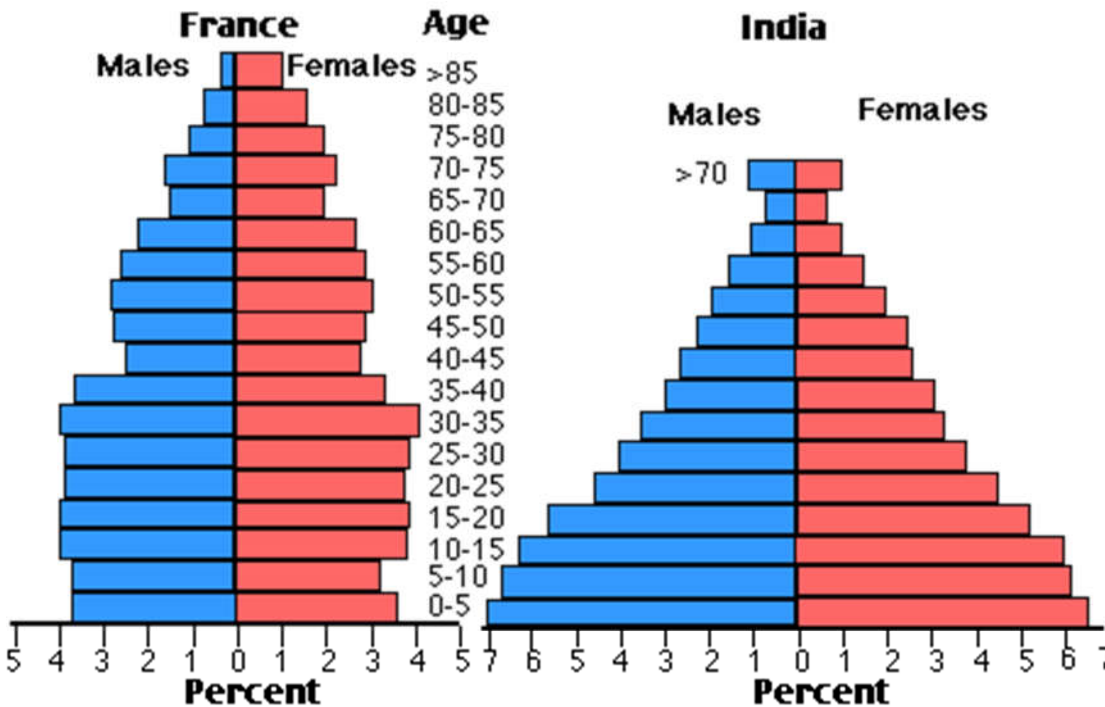
So, which details would you choose for your description of the two population pyramids in [last week's lesson](#)? Try writing just six sentences.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'age distribution' answer

Here's my full report for the question below. I found this one difficult, so don't worry if you did too!

The charts below compare the age structure of the populations of France and India in 1984.



The two charts compare the populations of France and India in terms of age distribution by gender in the year 1984.

It is clear that the population of India was younger than that of France in 1984, with a noticeably larger proportion of people aged under 20. France, on the other hand, had a significantly larger percentage of elderly inhabitants.

In India, close to 14% of people were aged 5 or under, and each five-year age bracket above this contained an increasingly smaller proportion of the population. France's population, by contrast, was more evenly distributed across the age ranges, with similar figures (around 7% to 8% of all people) for each five-year cohort between the ages of 0 and 40. Somewhere between 10% and 15% of all French people were aged 70 or older, but the equivalent figure for India was only 2%.

Looking more closely at gender, there was a noticeably higher proportion of French women than men in every cohort from age 50 upwards. For example, almost 3% of French 70- to 75-year-olds were women, while just under 2% were men. No significant gender differences can be seen on the Indian population chart.

(199 words, band 9)

Note:

Can you see how I grouped the information in paragraphs 3 and 4?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(35\)](#)

Thursday, July 02, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'with' or 'at'?

Fill the gaps in the sentences below using the word 'with' or the word 'at'.

1. The figure for resources peaked in 1991 _____ 20%.
2. Bristol was the UK's second city in terms of the number of cyclists, _____ 8,108 in 2001.
3. It is uncommon for families to own three or more cars, _____ only 2% of households falling into this category.
4. The percentage change, _____ only 45%, was the lowest of the twelve areas shown in the table.
5. The North East of England had the highest unemployment rate, _____ 10.1%.
6. France's population was more evenly distributed across the age ranges, _____ similar figures for each five-year cohort.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(94\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. at
2. with
3. with
4. at
5. at
6. with

Thursday, July 09, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'with' and 'at'

After last week's [lesson](#) about 'with' and 'at', a few people told me that they were still confused about the difference. The best way to see the difference is by trying to present the same information using both words. For example:

AT:

Petrol prices were particularly high in January, at £1.30 per litre.

WITH:

Petrol prices were particularly high in January, with a litre costing £1.30.

Try doing the same thing with sentences from last week's lesson. For more help, click [here](#) to see another lesson about the use of 'with'.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: correct the mistakes

Here are some sentences that my students wrote. Can you correct them? Each sentence refers to a graph showing complaints about noise.

1. The graph shows how many complaints gave to the Environmental Health Organisation.
2. Complaints due to domestic noise were at the top in 1996, by 1200 complaints.
3. The complaints of roadworks finished the period decreasing.
4. The domestic household is the most problem that causes noise.
5. The number of complaints to roadworks was remained static.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

First, I'll try to explain the problems:

1. We don't say "give a complaint", we say "make a complaint".
2. Don't use "at the top". We also need "at" instead of "by" before the number.
3. We don't say "complaints of", we say "complaints about". I would also change the phrase "finished the period".
4. "the most problem" is grammatically incorrect.
5. "was remained" is wrong - it shouldn't be in the passive.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, July 17, 2015 at 13:02](#)

FROM SIMON (continued):

Here are my sentences:

1. The graph shows how many complaints WERE MADE to the Environmental Health Organisation.
2. Complaints due to domestic noise PEAKED in 1996, AT 1200.
3. The number of complaints ABOUT roadworks DECREASED TOWARDS THE END OF THE PERIOD.
4. Domestic household noise caused the highest number of complaints.
5. The number of complaints ABOUT roadworks remained stable.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, July 17, 2015 at 13:10](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'while' sentences

I often write 'while' sentences in my task 2 introductions (see yesterday's [lesson](#) for example). I also like using 'while' in writing task 1 to make comparisons.

In the following example sentences, notice the position of 'while' and where I put the comma that separates the items being compared.

1) 'while' at the beginning of the sentence:

While the number of people who travelled by train increased gradually, the number of bus passengers fell steadily.

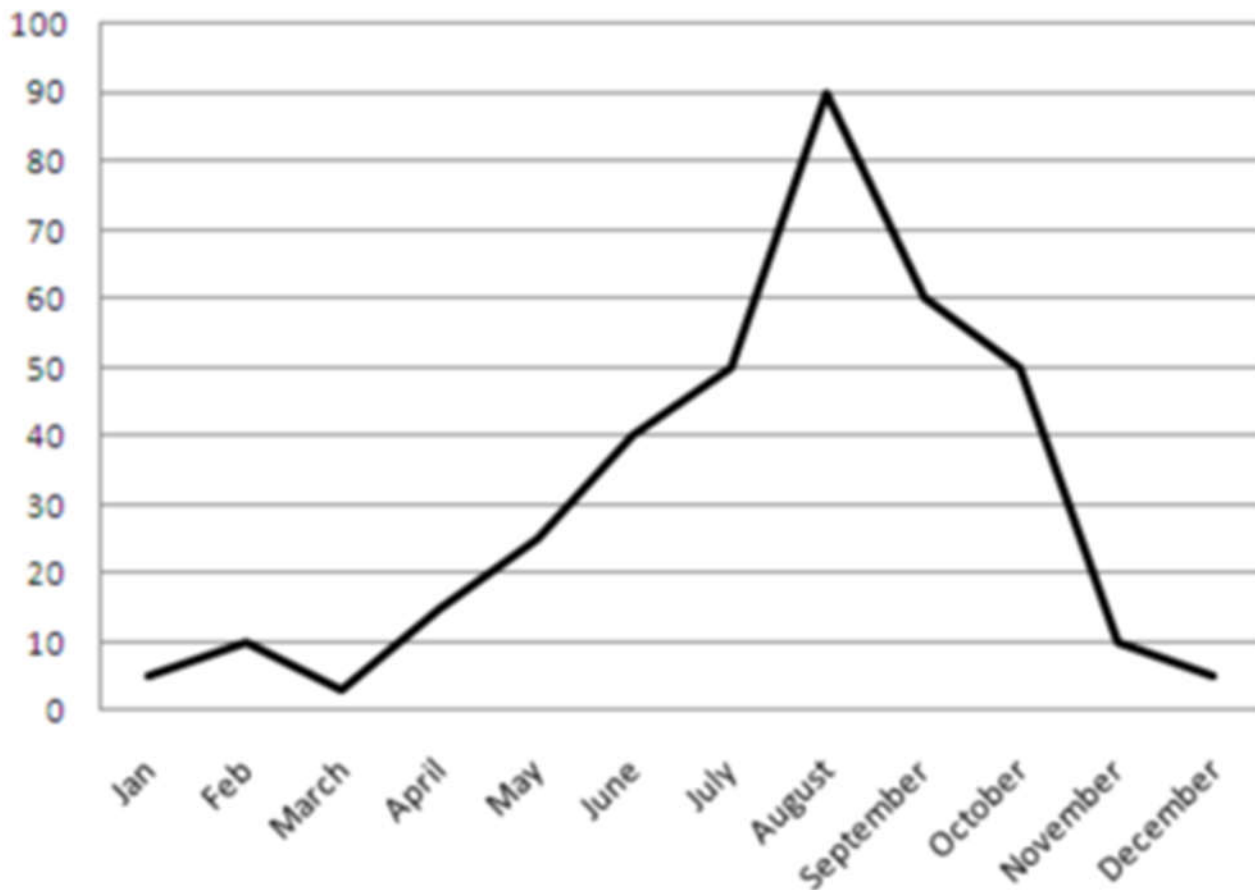
2) 'while' in the middle of the sentence:

In 1970, around 5 million UK commuters travelled by car on a daily basis, while the bus and train were used by about 4 million and 2 million people respectively.

Thursday, July 30, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: don't practise this!

I **don't** recommend that you practise describing graphs like the one below. Can you explain why I'm giving this advice?



FROM SIMON:

The key problem is that there is only one line (as many people said above). Graphs in IELTS questions always have at least two lines. I'll try to explain why practising with "single-line" graphs is a problem.

1. TOO MUCH FOCUS ON 'TREND' DESCRIPTION:

If you practise describing just one line, you'll get into the habit of writing about peaks, troughs and plateaus. You'll probably also write lots of 'verb-adverb' descriptions like "increase steadily" or "fall dramatically". There is nothing wrong with this type of language, but it won't be the MAIN type of language that you need when you're describing more than one line.

2. WITH SINGLE-LINE GRAPHS, YOU CAN'T PRACTISE COMPARING:

When the graph shows more than one line, your MAIN task will be to COMPARE the figures on each line at certain points. If you describe each line separately, you'll get a lower score. Have a look through my task 1 lessons, and find some of the example graph reports that I've written. You'll see lots of 'comparing' and not many examples of single-line 'trend' descriptions.

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, July 31, 2015 at 12:25](#)

Thursday, August 06, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: students' questions

Here are some questions about writing task 1 that people have asked me recently, with my answers below each one.

1) Can I write "A glance at the graph shows..." in my overview paragraph?

No, I don't recommend using this phrase. It's not normal to use the word "glance" when describing graphs or charts, and it seems strange to me as a native speaker. If you try too hard to use 'original' words, your writing will probably seem forced, unnatural or inappropriate to the examiner.

2) Can I write "the rate of" instead of "the figure for"?

In many cases, no you can't. I like the phrase "the figure for" because it can be used instead of "the number of" e.g. "the number of people who live in cities" could be "the figure for people who live in cities". But I wouldn't write "the rate of people who live in cities". You have to be careful with the word "rate" - look it up on Google to find common uses e.g. unemployment rate, birth rate, crime rate, [rate of change](#). Here's my tip: if you're not sure, don't use it.

3) Can we use "the data of" instead of "the number of"?

No. I would only use "data" instead of the word "information" e.g. "the chart gives/shows information about..." could be "the chart gives/shows data about...".

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Thursday, August 13, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'school building' diagrams

A student asked me to help with this question from *Official IELTS Practice Materials book 2*:

The diagrams below show the site of a school in 2004 and the plan for changes to the school site in 2024.

[Click here to see the diagrams](#)

Before trying to write a report for the question above, have a look at these lessons about similar questions:

1. [Comparing house designs](#)
2. [Comparing art gallery plans](#)
3. [Comparing house plans](#)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Thursday, August 20, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'school building' diagrams

Let's start writing a report for the question in last week's [lesson](#). Today I'll write an introduction and summary, and next week I'll describe the specific details.

Introduction - paraphrase the question statement

The two pictures compare the layout of a school as it was in the year 2004 with a proposed site design for the year 2024.

Overview - summarise the information (look for 2 main points)

It is clear that the main change for 2024 involves the addition of a new school building. The school will then be able to accommodate a considerably larger number of students.

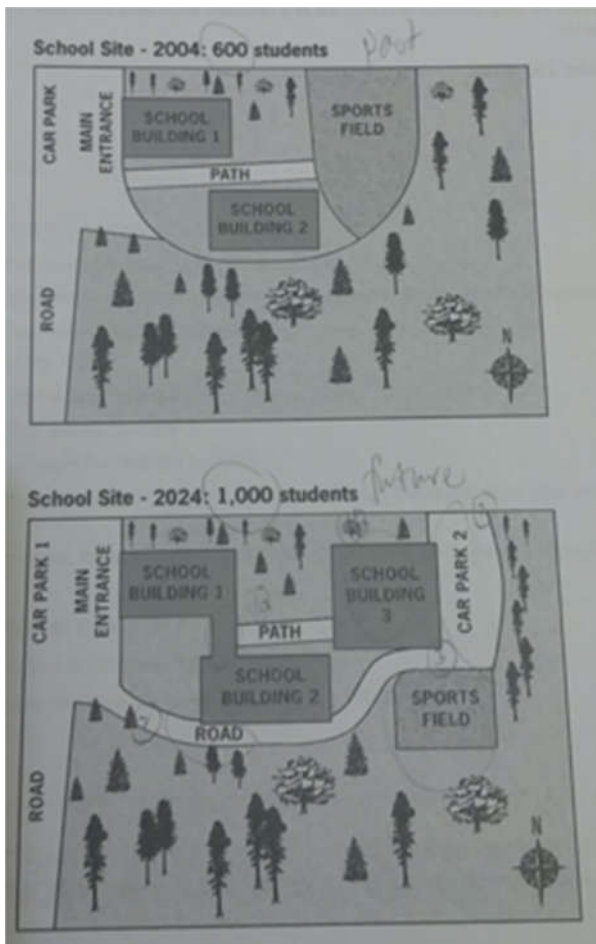
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Thursday, August 27, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'school buildings' answer

Here's my full answer for the task below.

The diagrams below show the site of a school in 2004 and the plan for changes to the school site in 2024.



(Source: Official IELTS Practice Materials 2)

The two pictures compare the layout of a school as it was in the year 2004 with a proposed site design for the year 2024.

It is clear that the main change for 2024 involves the addition of a new school building. The school will then be able to accommodate a considerably larger number of students.

In 2004, there were 600 pupils attending the school, and the two school buildings were separated by a path running from the main entrance to the sports field. By 2024, it is expected that there will be 1000 pupils, and a third building will have been constructed. Furthermore, the plan is to join the two original buildings together, creating a shorter path that links the buildings only.

As the third building and a second car park will be built on the site of the original sports field, a new, smaller sports field will need to be laid. A new road will also be built from the main entrance to the second car park. Finally, no changes will be made to the main entrance and original car park.

(183 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(25\)](#)

Thursday, September 03, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: the most common mistake

The most common mistake in IELTS writing task 1 is **not** a grammar mistake. Find the 2 big mistakes in the sentences below:

The unemployment rate in the UK rose by 2% between 2008 and 2009, whereas Canada decreased by about 1%. The USA was the highest, at just over 4%.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(40\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

Here's the big mistake:

You can't write "Canada decreased" or "the USA was the highest".

These phrases don't make sense. Canada, the country, didn't decrease! We need to describe the thing that decreased properly - in this case it's the "unemployment rate".

So, instead of saying that countries decreased or were highest, describe the topic properly. For example:

- Unemployment in Canada decreased.
- The USA had the highest rate of unemployment.

Remember: saying that a country increases or decreases is very strange!

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, September 04, 2015 at 13:45](#)

Saturday, September 05, 2015

IELTS Advice: typical mistake in writing task 1

In case you didn't see my lesson on Thursday, or the answer I gave in the comments below it, here's one of the most typical mistakes that I see people making in their writing task 1 answers:

They write things like "Canada decreased" or "the USA was the highest".

These phrases don't make sense. Canada, the country, didn't decrease! You must remember to describe the topic properly. For example:

- Unemployment in Canada decreased.
- The USA had the highest rate of unemployment.

Remember: saying that a country increases or decreases sounds very strange!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: the most important skill

Probably the most important skill for writing task 1 is being able to describe numbers correctly. IELTS candidates make a lot of basic mistakes in this area.

Take the simple table below for example. It shows the percentages of people who used two different forms of communication in the year 2012.

Form of communication	2012
Text message	95%
Email	52%

Can you write one correct sentence to describe the numbers in the table? Here is the big mistake that examiners see all the time:

In 2012, text message was 95%, while email was only 52%. (don't write this)

Can you see what the problem is here? Try translating the sentence into your language exactly as it is. Does it make sense?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(110\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

Of course, you can't say "text message was 95%". To describe the numbers properly, you need to think about WHO did WHAT (subject and verb).

WHO did something? = PEOPLE

WHAT did they do? = COMMUNICATE IN DIFFERENT WAYS, OR USE DIFFERENT FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

So, here's an easy sentence that properly describes the numbers:

In 2012, 95% of people communicated by text message, while only 52% of people used email.

Note:

Don't overcomplicate your sentences when describing numbers. Try to be as clear and concise as possible.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, September 11, 2015 at 10:15](#)

Thursday, September 17, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: one correct sentence!

Here is an exercise that I often do with my students: I choose some information from a graph or chart, and I ask the students to write one correct sentence to describe that information.

Take this information for example (from a question in Cambridge book 10):

- year 1999
- Switzerland
- highest sales of Fairtrade coffee and bananas
- Fairtrade coffee sales: 3 million Euros
- Fairtrade banana sales: 15 million Euros

Can you write one correct sentence that contains this information? This isn't as easy as it looks. When my students try it, I usually find mistakes!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(80\)](#)

Thursday, September 24, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: different word forms

A good way to vary the language you use is by learning different word forms. For example:

Verbs and nouns

- the number increased
- there was an increase in the number
- UK house prices fell
- the UK saw a fall in house prices

Adverbs and adjectives

- sales rose dramatically
- there was a dramatic rise in sales
- with sales reaching €3 million and €15 million respectively
- with sales of the two respective products reaching €3 million and €15 million

Tip:

Use a dictionary to find some different forms of words that you already know. This is a good way to improve your English in general, not only for writing task 1.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart and table

If you get a question like [this one](#) from Cambridge IELTS book 8, you don't need to worry about comparing the two charts. Just describe them separately:

WRITING TASK 1

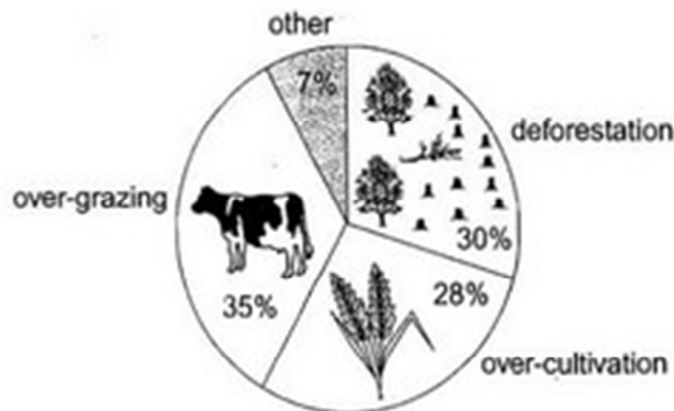
You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The pie chart below shows the main reasons why agricultural land becomes less productive. The table shows how these causes affected three regions of the world during the 1990s.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

Causes of worldwide land degradation



Causes of land degradation by region

Region	% land degraded by...			Total land degraded
	deforestation	over-cultivation	over-grazing	
North America	0.2	3.3	1.5	5%
Europe	9.8	7.7	5.5	23%
Oceania*	1.7	0	11.3	13%

* A large group of islands in the South Pacific including Australia and New Zealand

1. Introduction: say what each chart shows
2. Overview: write one general sentence about the pie chart, and one about the table
3. Details: describe the pie chart
4. Details: describe the table

Here's an example 'overview'. Notice that I write a separate sentence about each chart, and I paraphrase several of the words from the question.

Overview (paragraph 2):

It is clear from the pie chart that there are three principal reasons why farmland becomes degraded, and over-grazing is the main one. The table shows that Europe had a far higher proportion of unproductive land than Oceania or North America in the 1990s.

Task: Find the examples of paraphrasing in the paragraph above.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, October 08, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: trying too hard!

One of my students asked me why she isn't getting band 7 in writing task 1. When I looked at one of her reports, the main problem was clear:

She was trying too hard to use 'difficult' vocabulary or sentence constructions, and she was making mistakes that could easily be avoided.

Here are some examples, with problems underlined:

- 1) *The highest number of people residence in Australia are those living in cities.*
- 2) *The highest population of birth are those born within Australia.*
- 3) *This figure was over 50% of those given birth to outside Australia.*

Can you suggest 'easier' versions of these sentences, without any mistakes?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(43\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

I'll show you my suggestions in next Thursday's lesson. For now, my tip is to be as simple as possible:

1. Try using the verb "live" instead of the word "residence".
2. Try using "Most Australians..."
3. Try making a phrase with the word "born"

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, October 09, 2015 at 11:16](#)

Thursday, October 15, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: easy but accurate

If you can use "less common" vocabulary correctly, that's great. However, using "difficult" words or grammar often leads to lots of mistakes. It would be better to choose "easy but accurate" language instead.

Here are the sentences from last week's lesson, with problems underlined:

- 1) The highest number of people residence in Australia are those living in cities.
- 2) The highest population of birth are those born within Australia.
- 3) This figure was over 50% of those given birth to outside Australia.

Let's rewrite these sentences in an "easy but accurate" way:

- 1) The majority of Australians live in cities.
- 2) Most of the people who live in Australia were born there.
- 3) This was over 50% higher than the figure for people born outside Australia.

Task:

Can you rewrite sentence 1 using **residence**, **resident(s)** or **reside** correctly?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

It's difficult to use "residence" in a natural way in this context, so I would avoid using that.

You could write:

- The majority of Australians are residents of cities.
- The majority of Australians reside in cities.

Posted by: Simon | [Saturday, October 17, 2015 at 17:18](#)

Thursday, October 22, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: table

Several people have asked me for help with the following task from Cambridge IELTS book 10.

The tables below give information about sales of Fairtrade*-labelled coffee and bananas in 1999 and 2004 in five European countries.

Sales of Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas (1999 & 2004)

Coffee	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	1.5	20
Switzerland	3	6
Denmark	1.8	2
Belgium	1	1.7
Sweden	0.8	1

Bananas	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	15	47
Switzerland	1	5.5
Denmark	0.6	4
Belgium	1.8	1
Sweden	2	0.9

*Fairtrade: a category of products for which farmers from developing countries have been paid an officially agreed fair price.

As usual, this is what we need to do:

1. Write an introduction by paraphrasing the question statement.
2. Write a summary of the information (2 sentences). Look for overall trends, not individual numbers.
3. Select the most important information to describe in detail (include between 5 and 10 specific numbers from the table, for example). Try to group this description of details into two paragraphs.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(47\)](#)

Thursday, October 29, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: timing and introduction

20 minutes is a very short amount of time, so you need to be very organised. I suggest breaking the 20 minutes into four parts, each lasting 5 minutes.

Part 1

First five minutes: read the question, understand it, underline key figures or trends, **and** write your one-sentence introduction.

Parts 2, 3 and 4

Five minutes for each paragraph: overview, details, details.

Let's start with the first 5 minutes. Go to last week's [lesson](#), read the question, underline key information, and write your introduction by paraphrasing the question statement. Time yourself - can you do this in 5 minutes or less?

Here's my introduction:

The tables show the amount of money spent on Fairtrade coffee and bananas in two separate years in the UK, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium and Sweden.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, November 05, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: table overview

In last week's [lesson](#) I suggested taking 5 minutes to understand the question and to write your one-sentence introduction.

Next, try to spend another 5 minutes on your 'overview' paragraph. Just choose two main points, and write two sentences. Don't look at specific numbers; try to find general trends.

Look again at the table below, and choose two main / general points. Can you write a two-sentence summary in 5 minutes or less?

Sales of Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas (1999 & 2004)

Coffee	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	1.5	20
Switzerland	3	6
Denmark	1.8	2
Belgium	1	1.7
Sweden	0.8	1

Bananas	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	15	47
Switzerland	1	5.5
Denmark	0.6	4
Belgium	1.8	1
Sweden	2	0.9

It took me less than 5 minutes to write the following overview:

It is clear that sales of Fairtrade coffee rose in all five European countries from 1999 to 2004, but sales of Fairtrade bananas only went up in three out of the five countries. Overall, the UK saw by far the highest levels of spending on the two products.

Thursday, November 12, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: paragraphs 3 and 4

After writing your [introduction](#) and [overview](#), you should try to write two more paragraphs to describe the most important details that you can see on the graph, chart or diagram.

Looking again at the table below, one problem that we have is how to separate the information into two groups, for paragraphs 3 and 4.

Sales of Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas (1999 & 2004)

Coffee	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	1.5	20
Switzerland	3	6
Denmark	1.8	2
Belgium	1	1.7
Sweden	0.8	1

Bananas	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	15	47
Switzerland	1	5.5
Denmark	0.6	4
Belgium	1.8	1
Sweden	2	0.9

Examiners like comparisons, so I would prefer not to write a separate paragraph for each table. Because the countries and the years are the same, I would try to compare the information in the two tables.

So how can we separate the information in a different way? Here's what my students and I did:

- Paragraph 3: Write about sales of both products in the UK and Switzerland (which have the highest figures).

- Paragraph 4: Say something about sales of the two products in the other three countries.

Try this, and I'll show you my full report next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Thursday, November 19, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'coffee and bananas' table

Here's my full answer for the table question that you can see [here](#):

The tables show the amount of money spent on Fairtrade coffee and bananas in two separate years in the UK, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium and Sweden.

It is clear that sales of Fairtrade coffee rose in all five European countries from 1999 to 2004, but sales of Fairtrade bananas only went up in three out of the five countries. Overall, the UK saw by far the highest levels of spending on the two products.

In 1999, Switzerland had the highest sales of Fairtrade coffee, at €3 million, while revenue from Fairtrade bananas was highest in the UK, at €15 million. By 2004, however, sales of Fairtrade coffee in the UK had risen to €20 million, and this was over three times higher than Switzerland's sales figure for Fairtrade coffee in that year. The year 2004 also saw dramatic increases in the money spent on Fairtrade bananas in the UK and Switzerland, with revenues rising by €32 million and €4.5 million respectively.

Sales of the two Fairtrade products were far lower in Denmark, Belgium and Sweden. Small increases in sales of Fairtrade coffee can be seen, but revenue remained at €2 million or below in all three countries in both years. Finally, it is noticeable that the money spent on Fairtrade bananas actually fell in Belgium and Sweden.

Note:

This report is a bit longer (216 words) than necessary, but I think it's a useful model answer in terms of its structure and the language used.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Thursday, November 26, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: grammar exercise

Try this quick exercise to practise your grammar and vocabulary for IELTS writing task 1. The phrases come from the report that I wrote for last week's [lesson](#).

Fill each gap with one word.

1. the amount of money spent _____ coffee
2. sales of coffee _____ up in 2004
3. the UK saw by _____ the highest levels of spending
4. revenue _____ bananas was highest in the UK, _____ €15 million
5. the year 2004 _____ dramatic increases _____ the money spent

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. on
2. went
3. far
4. from, at
5. saw, in

Thursday, December 03, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: avoid common mistakes

Here's some advice to help you avoid common mistakes in IELTS writing task 1:

1. Don't copy the question for your introduction. You should **paraphrase** the question (i.e. rewrite it using some different words).
2. Don't forget to separate your paragraphs clearly.
3. Don't forget to write a good summary/overview of the information. A quick one-sentence conclusion is not good enough. I prefer to put the overview straight after the introduction, and I try to write 2 sentences describing the information in general. You won't get a high score if you don't write a good overview.
4. Don't describe items separately (e.g. 2 lines on a graph). You should always try to **compare** things if it is possible to do so. Instead of describing 2 lines separately, compare the 2 lines at key points.
5. Don't try to describe every number on a chart or graph (unless there are only a few numbers). A key skill in task 1 is being able to **select** the key information and describe or compare it well. I usually mention around 6 or 7 numbers in my main paragraphs.
6. Don't spend longer than 20 minutes on task 1. Practise spending 5 minutes on each of your 4 paragraphs. Stop yourself after 20 minutes; remember that task 2 is worth more marks.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

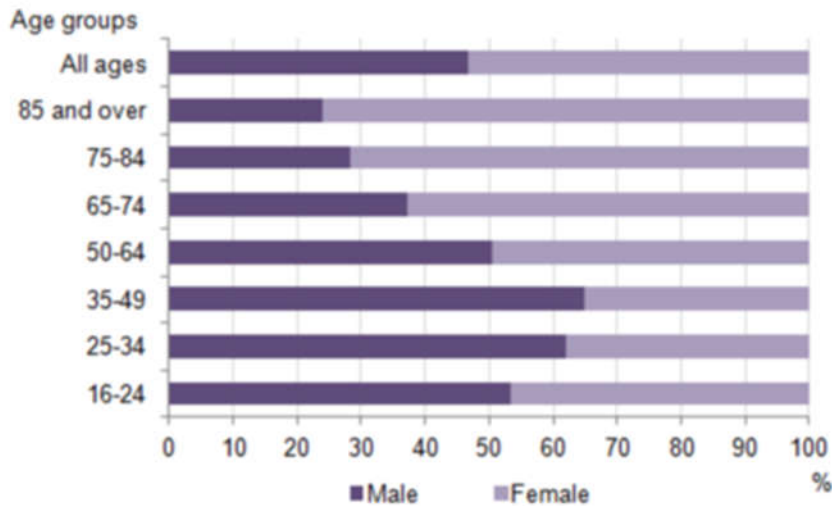
Thursday, December 10, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'living alone' charts

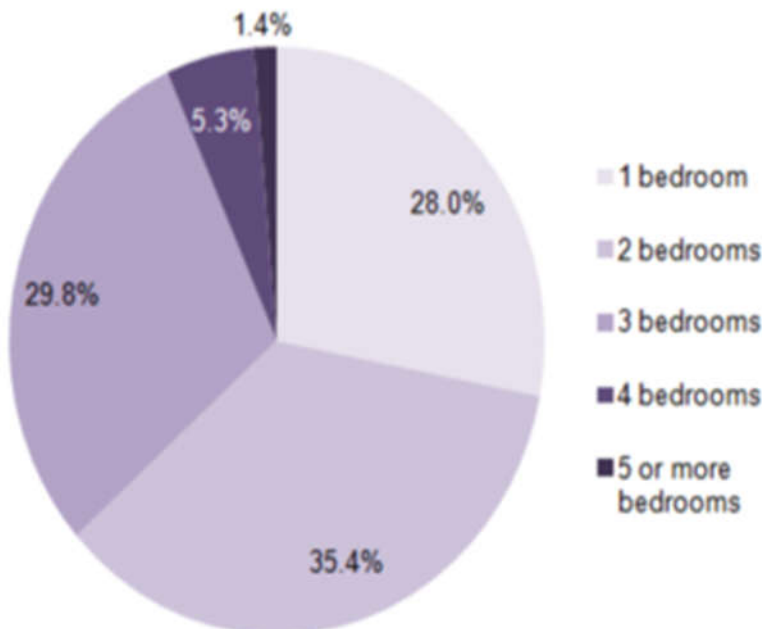
How would you write a report about the following charts?

The bar chart below shows the proportions of English men and women of different ages who were living alone in 2011. The pie chart compares the numbers of bedrooms in these one-person households.

Living alone in England by age and gender, 2011



Number of bedrooms in one-person households (England, 2011)



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Thursday, December 17, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: two-sentence introduction

My normal advice for task 1 introductions is to write one sentence that paraphrases the question statement. However, there's nothing wrong with writing a two-sentence introduction if there's a lot of different information to introduce.

Last week's [question](#) contains a lot of information, so I found it easier to write a two-sentence introduction.

Here's the question statement again:

The bar chart below shows the proportions of English men and women of different ages who were

living alone in 2011. The pie chart compares the numbers of bedrooms in these one-person households.

And here's my introduction:

The two charts give information about single-occupant households in England in the year 2011. The bar chart compares figures for occupants' age and gender, and the pie chart shows data about the number of bedrooms in these homes.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, December 31, 2015

IELTS Writing Task 1: overview of 2 charts

If the question shows two *different* charts, we can summarise each one *separately*. After the introduction, we can write a 2-sentence 'overview' of the information, with one sentence to summarise each chart.

Let's try this with the question that you can see [here](#).

Overview / summary paragraph:

Overall, females made up a higher proportion of people living alone than males, and this difference is particularly noticeable in the older age categories. We can also see that the most common number of bedrooms in a single-occupant home was two.

Thursday, January 07, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: don't use these phrases

Can you see what's wrong with the phrases below? Try to explain the problem with each phrase, and suggest a better alternative.

1. The bar chart displays the percentage of...
2. A glance at the bar chart provided reveals...
3. From an overall perspective, it is clear from the evidence that...
4. Looking at the pie chart, it is noticed that...
5. As can be seen, the figures show that...

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

First, it's important to point out that there were no grammar mistakes in the phrases. In each case, the problem is that there is something 'unnatural', unnecessary, or inappropriate in the phrase. Here are my suggestions.

1. I wouldn't use "displays". "The bar chart displays" seems strange to me as a native speaker. Just stick with "shows", "compares" or "illustrates". Read this lesson:

<http://ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2014/07/ielts-writing-task-1-shows-compares-illustrates.html>

2. "A glance at the bar chart reveals" is very strange - no native speaker would write this. Although the meaning of "glance" is to look quickly, this word isn't appropriate in this context. Just use: "It is clear that" or "it is noticeable that".
3. Just write: "Overall, it is clear that...". Adding the words "perspective" and "evidence" just make the phrase seem forced and unnatural. The examiner won't be impressed.
4. Don't write "it is noticed that". Change it to "it is noticeable that".
5. "As can be seen" and "the figures show" seems like unnecessary repetition to me - too many words for such a simple job. Just write "we can see that..." OR "the chart shows". Don't write both phrases together.

NOTE:

The overall problem that I'm highlighting in this lesson is that so many students think that "difficult" linking phrases are the key to a high score. They are not!

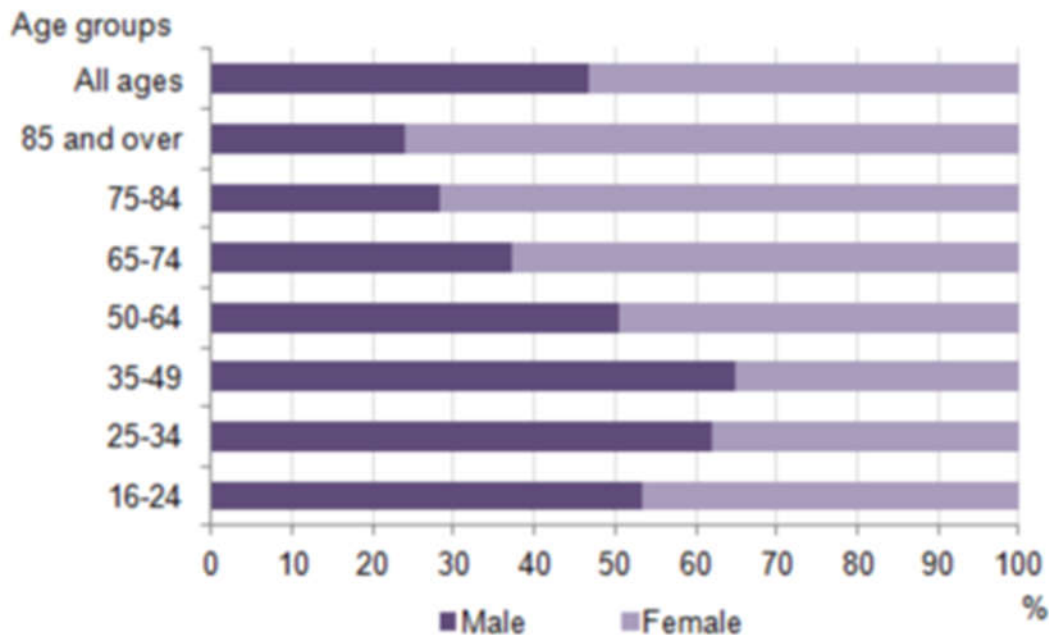
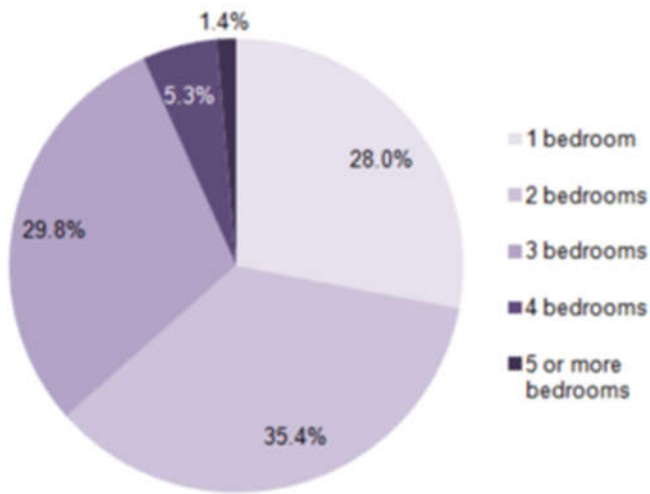
Remember: the examiner wants to read your description of the information shown on the chart. Use short, simple linking phrases, and spend more time describing the information in detail. This is the key to a high score. Look through my task 1 lessons to see how I focus on the information rather than the linking.

Posted by: Simon | [Saturday, January 09, 2016 at 11:48](#)

Thursday, January 14, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'living alone' answer

Here's my full report for the "living alone" charts from [this lesson](#).



The two charts give information about single-occupant households in England in the year 2011. The bar chart compares figures for occupants' age and gender, and the pie chart shows data about the number of bedrooms in these homes.

Overall, females made up a higher proportion of people living alone than males, and this difference is particularly noticeable in the older age categories. We can also see that the most common number of bedrooms in a single-occupant home was two.

A significant majority of the people aged 65 or over who were living alone in England in 2011 were female. Women made up around 72% of single occupants aged 75 to 84, and 76% of those aged 85 or over. By contrast, among younger adults the figures for males were higher. For example, in the 35-49 age category, men accounted for nearly 65% of people living alone.

In the same year, 35.4% of one-person households in England had two bedrooms, while one-bedroom and three-bedroom homes accounted for 28% and 29.8% of the total. Under 7% of single-occupant homes had four or more bedrooms.

(189 words, band 9)

Tip:

Notice that I was forced to leave out some of the information from the bar chart. This is normal when you only have 20 minutes; examiners expect you to select some key figures, not to try to include everything.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, January 21, 2016

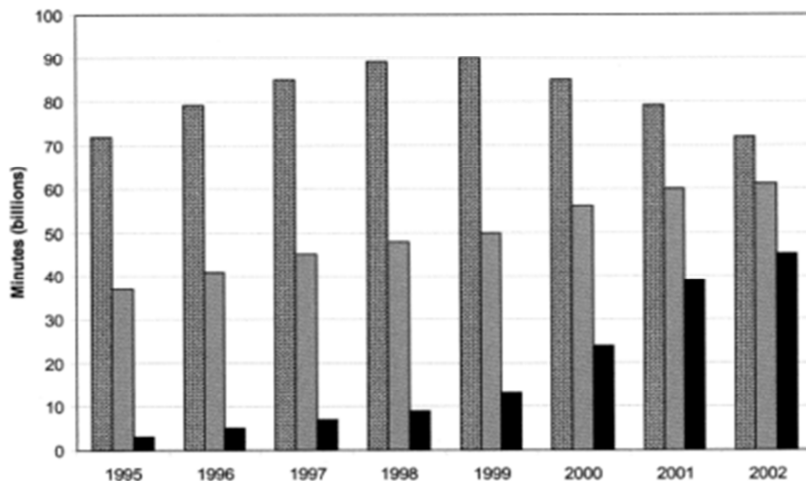
IELTS Writing Task 1: 'phone calls' bar chart

Several people have asked me for help with the following question, from Cambridge IELTS book 9:

The chart below shows the total number of minutes (in billions) of telephone calls in the UK, divided into three categories, from 1995-2002.

UK telephone calls, by category, 1995–2002

Call type:
■ Local – fixed line
■ National and international – fixed line
■ Mobiles (all calls)



Here's my suggested outline for a 4-paragraph report:

1. **Introduction:** rewrite the question statement in your own words.
2. **Overview:** point out which category was highest in each year, which was lowest, and which saw the biggest changes.
3. **Details:** compare the 3 categories in 1995, then say what happened up until 1999.
4. **Details:** notice what happened to local calls from 1999 onwards, and contrast this with the other 2 categories. Finish with a comparison of the figures in 2002.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(51\)](#)

Thursday, January 28, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'phone calls' introduction and overview

Here's the first half of my report about the chart in last week's [lesson](#). I'll finish paragraphs 3 and 4 next Thursday.

The bar chart compares the amount of time spent by people in the UK on three different types of phone call between 1995 and 2002.

It is clear that calls made via local, fixed lines were the most popular type, in terms of overall usage, throughout the period shown. The lowest figures on the chart are for mobile calls, but this category also saw the most dramatic increase in user minutes.

Note:

Can you see the paraphrasing that I used in the introduction, and the main points that I chose for the overview? Did I use any good words or phrases?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)




Thursday, February 04, 2016

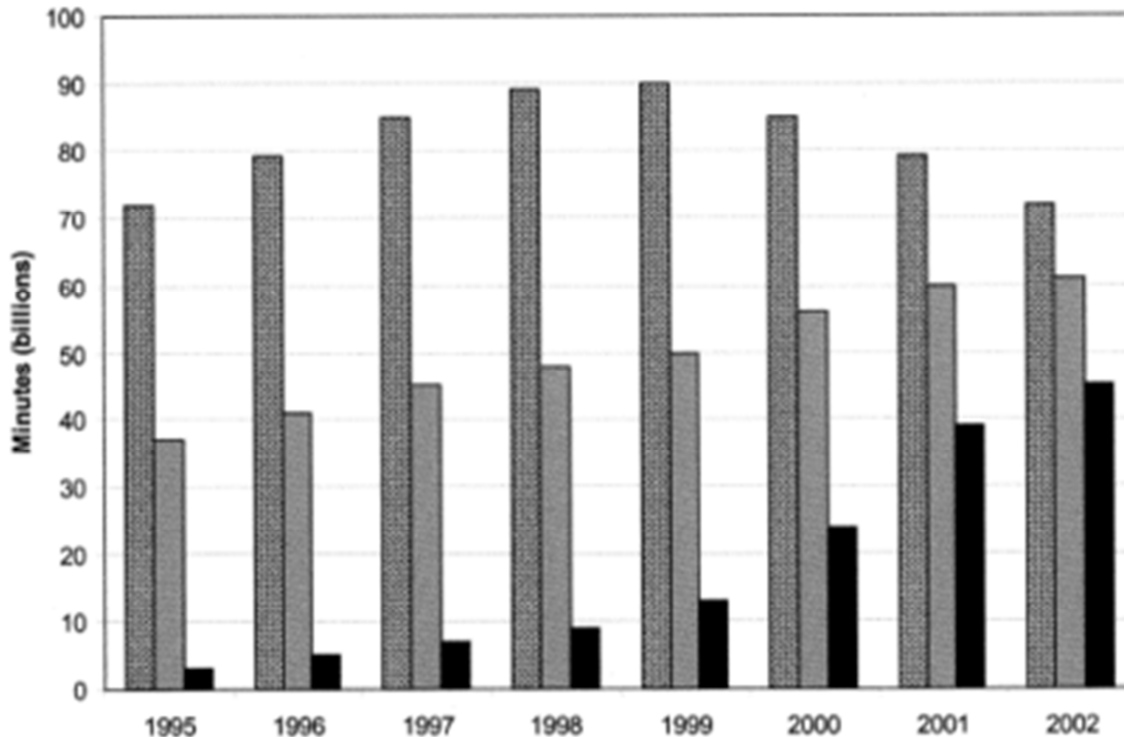
IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart sample answer

Here's my full answer for the 'phone calls' bar chart in [this lesson](#):

The chart below shows the total number of minutes (in billions) of telephone calls in the UK, divided into three categories, from 1995-2002.

UK telephone calls, by category, 1995–2002

Call type:  Local – fixed line
 National and international – fixed line
 Mobiles (all calls)



The bar chart compares the amount of time spent by people in the UK on three different types of phone call between 1995 and 2002.

It is clear that calls made via local, fixed lines were the most popular type, in terms of overall usage, throughout the period shown. The lowest figures on the chart are for mobile calls, but this category also saw the most dramatic increase in user minutes.

In 1995, people in the UK used fixed lines for a total of just over 70 billion minutes for local calls, and about half of that amount of time for national or international calls. By contrast, mobile phones were only used for around 4 billion minutes. Over the following four years, the figures for all three types of phone call increased steadily.

By 1999, the amount of time spent on local calls using landlines had reached a peak at 90 billion minutes. Subsequently, the figure for this category fell, but the rise in the other two types of phone call continued. In 2002, the number of minutes of national / international landline calls passed 60 billion, while the figure for mobiles rose to around 45 billion minutes.

(197 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, February 11, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: important little words

The following phrases are taken from the sample [answer](#) that I wrote last week. Can you fill the gaps without checking my answer?

Use these words: **at, in, on, to, for, by**

1. the amount of time spent _____ people in the UK _____ three different types of phone call
2. calls made via local, fixed lines were the most popular type, _____ terms of overall usage
3. the figures _____ all three types of phone call increased
4. the amount of time spent _____ local calls using landlines had reached a peak _____ 90 billion minutes
5. the rise _____ the other two types of phone call continued
6. the figure _____ mobiles rose _____ around 45 billion minutes

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. by, on
2. in
3. for
4. on, at
5. in
6. for, to

Thursday, February 18, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: mistakes in the introduction

Can you find and correct the mistakes in each of the introductions below? Why do you think people make mistakes in their introductions?

1. The bar chart illustrates that the trend of call types in the united kingdom for 8 years from 1995 to 2002.
2. The bar chart compares the figures in terms of minutes spent on telephone calls, splitted into three types.
3. The bar chart gives information about telephone calls. It is in three types Local, National & International and Mobile call minutes from year 1995 to 2002 in UK.
4. The graph compares the total using time of 3 call types in the UK over a 7-year period from 1995.
5. The bar chart presents the amount of phone calls in billion of minutes make in the UK over a period of seven years into the categories of local, national/international and mobile phone calls.

To avoid mistakes, keep your introduction simple, like mine:

The bar chart compares the amount of time spent by people in the UK on three different types of phone call between 1995 and 2002.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: collocations

Collocations are groups of words that often go together. For example, I'm sure you've use the collocation "increase significantly".

Here are some collocations from my most recent [sample answer](#).

Typical writing task 1 collocations:

- amount of time
- the time spent on
- in terms of
- throughout the period
- the period shown
- a dramatic increase in
- increased steadily
- reached a peak
- the figure for
- the rise in

Collocations related to the 'phone calls' topic:

- local calls
- national calls
- international calls
- fixed line / landline calls
- mobile calls
- overall usage
- user minutes

Tip: try using the online [Oxford Collocations Dictionary](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Thursday, March 03, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'overview' not conclusion

You should **not** write a conclusion for IELTS writing task 1. You should write an "overview" of the information.

But why shouldn't you write a conclusion? What's the difference between a conclusion and an overview?

First, a conclusion is a final judgement, decision or opinion. This is perfect for the task 2 essay, but task 1 asks you to write a description without analysis or opinions. On the other hand, an "overview"

is a simple description of the main points. It is a summary of the information shown on the graph or chart.

Second, a conclusion should be at the end of a piece of writing. An overview or general summary could go either at the end or near the beginning. Personally, I think it's a good idea to describe the main features of the graph or chart near the beginning of your report.

So, my suggested structure for task 1 looks like this:

1. Introduction: what does the chart show?
2. Overview / summary: what are the most noticeable features?
3. Specific details: try to write 2 paragraphs.

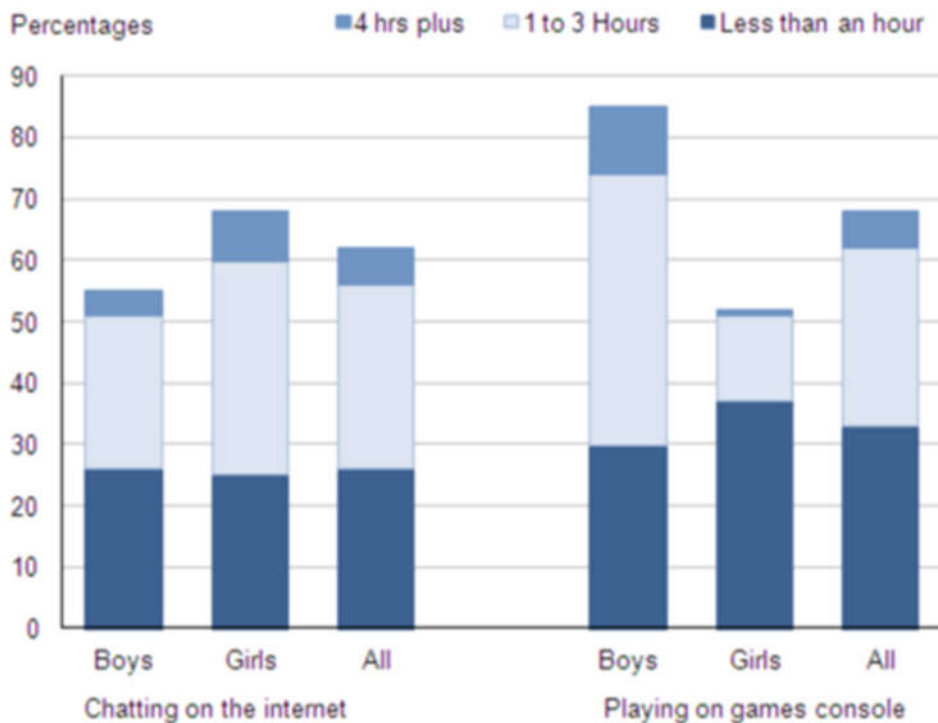
[Click here](#) to see an example of the report structure above.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Thursday, March 10, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: stacked bar chart

The chart below shows the amount of time that 10 to 15-year-olds spend chatting on the Internet and playing on games consoles on an average school day in the UK.



Before we write a description of this chart, here are a few quick questions:

1. Which activity is most popular overall?
2. What differences can you see between boys' and girls' habits?

3. What is the total figure for boys who play on games consoles?

4. What proportion of girls chat on the Internet for 4 hours or more?

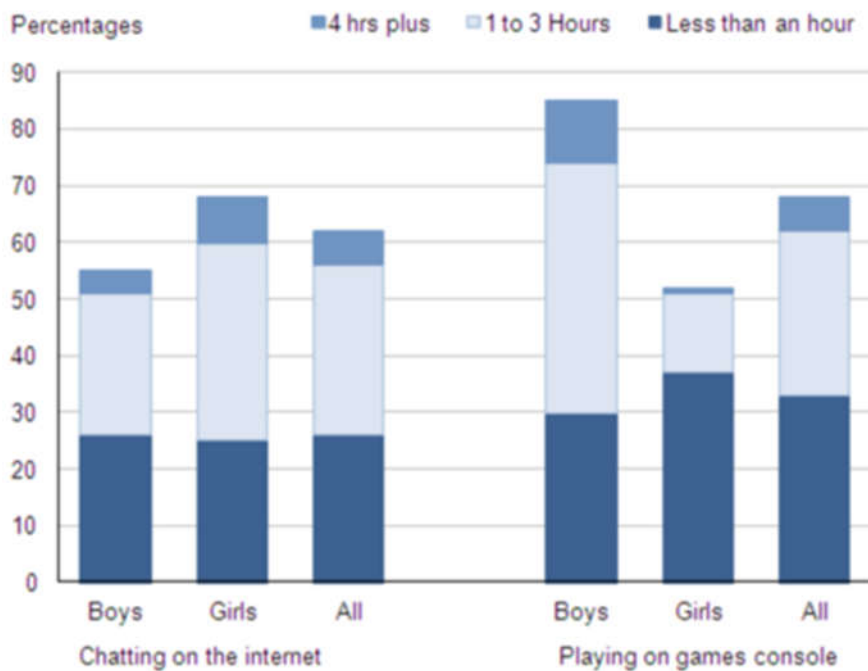
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(29\)](#)

Thursday, March 17, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: stacked bar chart

In this lesson I'll show you an example introduction and overview for the bar chart below. Next week I'll write the 'details' paragraphs.

The chart below shows the amount of time that 10 to 15-year-olds spend chatting on the Internet and playing on games consoles on an average school day in the UK.



Introduction

The bar chart compares the time spent by 10 to 15-year-olds in the UK on two activities, namely chatting online and playing computer games.

Overview

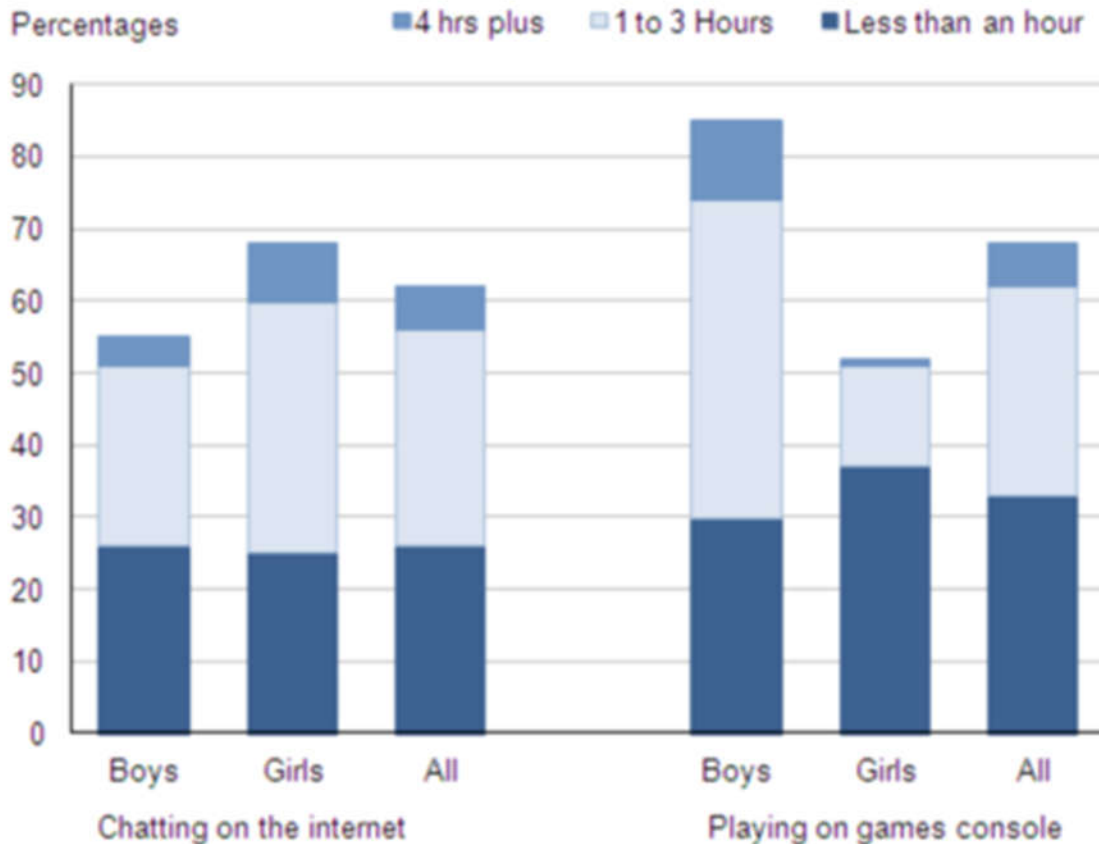
Overall, we can see that playing computer games is marginally more popular than chatting on the Internet. However, completely different trends can be seen if we look at the specific figures for boys and girls.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'details' paragraphs

In last week's [lesson](#) I wrote an introduction and an overview for the bar chart question below. Today I'll show you paragraphs 3 and 4, the 'details' paragraphs.

The chart below shows the amount of time that 10 to 15-year-olds spend chatting on the Internet and playing on games consoles on an average school day in the UK.



Boys aged between 10 and 15 clearly favour playing on games consoles over chatting online. According to the chart, while 85% of boys play computer games every day, only 55% chat online daily. Furthermore, the majority of boys play on their consoles for more than one hour each day, and 10% do this activity for four hours or more.

By contrast, girls prefer chatting online. Close to 70% of 10 to 15-year-old girls engage in online conversation each day, compared to about 50% of this cohort who play computer games. Of the girls who do play on consoles, most of them play for less than an hour, whereas most girls who chat online do so for more than one hour, and nearly 10% chat for four hours or more.

Note:

I decided to write about boys in one paragraph and girls in the other. However, it would also be fine to write paragraphs about chatting on the Internet and playing on consoles.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Sunday, March 27, 2016

IELTS Vocabulary: paraphrasing and comparisons

Did you notice the paraphrasing that I used in Thursday's lesson?

- the amount of time = the time spent
- 10 to 15-year-olds = aged between 10 and 15
- chatting on the Internet = chatting online = chat online = engage in online conversation
- playing on games consoles = playing computer games = play on their consoles
- more popular = boys favour = girls prefer
- the majority of = most of them = most girls

and the comparisons that I made?

- ...is more popular than...
- Boys favour... / By contrast, girls prefer...
- while 85% of boys..., only 55%...
- close to 70% of girls..., compared to about 50% of this cohort who...
- most of them..., whereas most...

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1, Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Thursday, March 31, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction problems

Look at the following statement from a question in Cambridge IELTS book 10.

The charts below show what UK graduate and postgraduate students who did not go into full-time work did after leaving college in 2008.

Now read an introduction written by a student (below). There are several problems in this introduction sentence - not only grammatical problems. Can you see them?

Introduction sentence:

The bar graphs give information and compare between the kinds of jobs opted by UK's undergraduate and postgraduate students who did not go for a full time job after completing their degrees in 2008.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) |

Thursday, April 07, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: simplified introduction

Last week I asked you to look for problems in this introduction:

The bar graphs give information and compare between the kinds of jobs opted by UK's undergraduate and postgraduate students who did not go for a full time job after completing their degrees in 2008.

Here are some things that you might have noticed:

- **give information and compare between:** We don't need two verbs at the beginning of the introduction, and "between" doesn't work with either of them. Either write "give information about" or "compare" (without the word "between").
- **kinds of jobs:** The charts show activities like "further study", so we can't write about "jobs" here.
- **opted by:** We say "opt for" in English, so we would need to write "opted for by" in this case, which seems awkward to me. It would be easier to use "chosen by". However, as one of the categories on the chart is "unemployment", maybe it isn't accurate to write about this as a choice.
- **UK's:** using a possessive with the country seems strange in this situation. Instead, we can use "UK" as an adjective (e.g. UK graduates), or simply write "in the UK".
- **go for a job** seems a bit informal in this situation.

Here's a simplified and corrected version of the introduction:

The bar charts give information about the career paths of UK undergraduate and postgraduate students who were not in full-time employment after completing their degrees in 2008.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, April 14, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: where to put the figure

Let's compare some sentences with figures in different positions.

1) Figures at the beginning of sentences:

- 10 million people voted in the election.
- A quarter of the population voted.
- 25% of people voted in the election.

2) Figures at the end of sentences:

- The number of people who voted in the election was 10 million.
- The proportion of the population that voted was a quarter.
- The figure for people who voted in the election was 25%.

For me, the sentences in the first group (with figures at the beginning) seem clearer and more natural. While it's good to vary your sentence structure, it's probably best to have the "figure at the beginning" structure as your first choice.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, April 21, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: charts showing countries

A few things to remember when the graph or chart shows countries:

1. If the question doesn't name the countries (e.g. "in three countries"), you could name them in your introduction (e.g. "in Britain, France and Germany"). You could even write "in three countries, namely Britain, France and Germany".
2. Don't forget the word "the" when writing about "the USA" and "the UK".
3. Always compare the countries; never describe the figures for each country in separate paragraphs.

Finally, try to vary the way you write about countries. For example:

- The number of elderly people in the USA rose.
- The USA saw a rise in the number of elderly people.
- The figure for the USA rose.

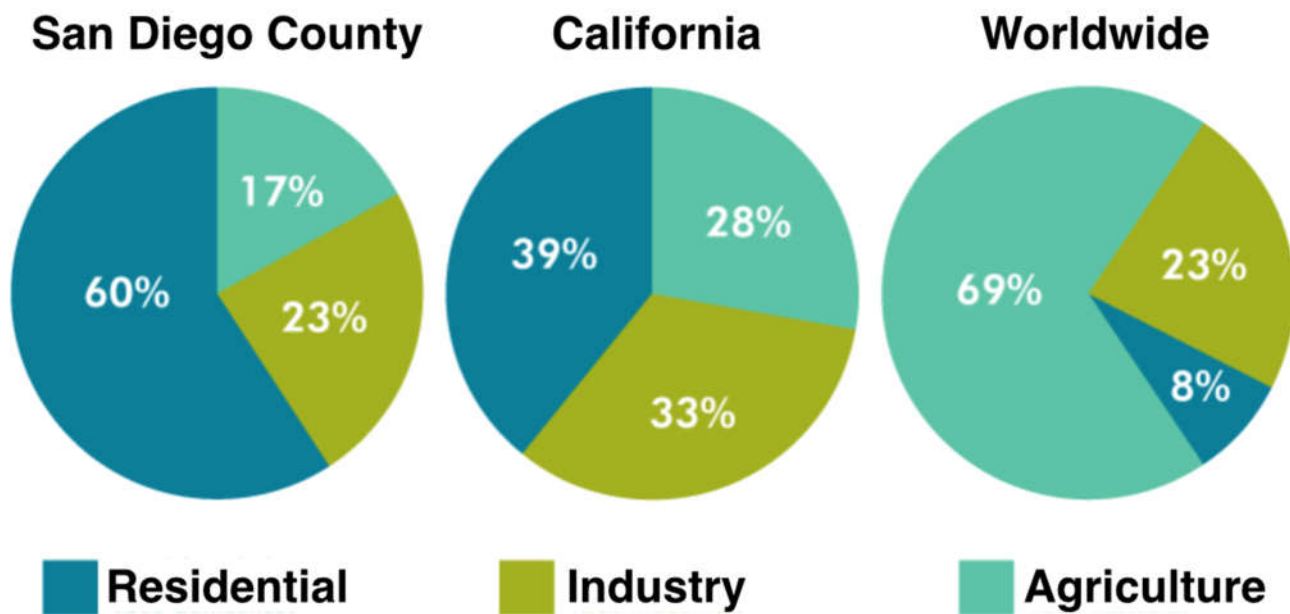
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, April 28, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts about water use

Water usage seems to be a common topic in writing task 1. Have a look at the following pie chart question:

The pie charts below compare water usage in San Diego, California and the rest of the world.



Source: www.wrsc.org

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

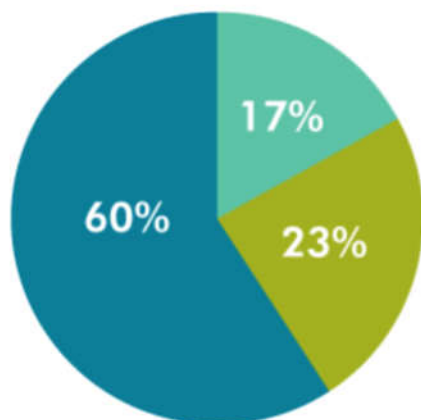
Thursday, May 05, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'water use' pie charts

Today I'll show you the first half of my answer for the pie chart question below.

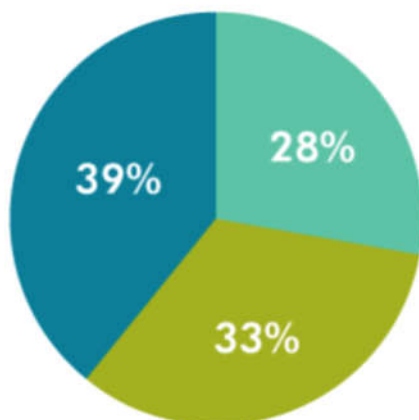
The pie charts below compare water usage in San Diego, California and the rest of the world.

San Diego County



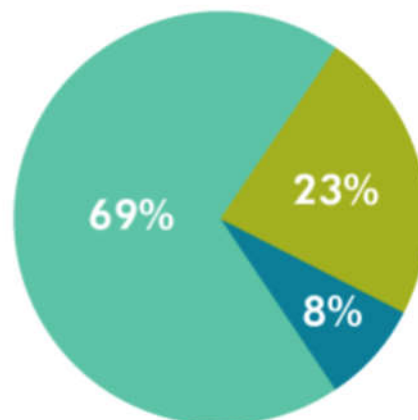
■ Residential

California



■ Industry

Worldwide



■ Agriculture

Introduction (just paraphrase the question):

The pie charts give information about the water used for residential, industrial and agricultural purposes in San Diego County, California, and the world as a whole.

Overview (describe two main, general features):

It is noticeable that more water is consumed by homes than by industry or agriculture in the two American regions. By contrast, agriculture accounts for the vast majority of water used worldwide.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, May 12, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: correct the mistakes

The following sentences relate to the pie charts in last week's [lesson](#). Can you correct the mistakes in each sentence?

1. Worldwide had spend water for agriculture almost 69%.
2. The world's proportion of water consumption go to agriculture by 69%.
3. There are same percentage in water usage in industry between San Diego and worldwide by 23%.
4. San Diego and worldwide consumptions had had same percentage which reached 23%.

Note:

Each of the sentences above is trying to describe **one** number. This is the most basic skill that you need when describing graphs and charts. If you want a good score in task 1, you **must** be able to describe one number clearly and correctly.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(44\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

First, I'll explain some of the problems:

Sentence 1

- We need to use the present simple, not the past perfect.
- The past perfect is also used wrongly. It would be "had spent".
- We don't "spend" water.

Sentence 2

- "go to agriculture" is wrong.
- We can't use "by 69%" in this case. Only use "by + %" when you are describing a change e.g. "prices increased by 10%".

Sentence 3

- "There are same percentage" is wrong.
- We can't use "by" with the percentage.

Sentence 4

- "consumptions" of what?
- Don't try to use the past perfect "had had" - this seems very strange here. We just need the present simple.
- "reached" implies that this percentage was lower in the past and has now increased. There is no information about past years, so we can't use "reached".

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, May 13, 2016 at 09:22](#)

FROM SIMON (continued)

Here are my suggestions:

1. Agriculture accounts for 69% of the world's water consumption.
2. The proportion of water used for agricultural purposes globally is 69%.
3. Worldwide and in San Diego County, industry accounts for 23% of water consumption.
4. The figure for water use by industry (23%) is the same for both San Diego County and the world as a whole.

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, May 13, 2016 at 09:40](#)

Thursday, May 19, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart vocabulary

Here are a few sentences that describe the pie charts in [this lesson](#). Can you guess which words I used in the spaces shown?

1. In San Diego County and California State, residential water consumption _____ for 60% and 39% of total water usage _____.
2. In both US regions, the _____ for agricultural water use is significantly _____, at 17% and 28%.
3. By contrast, a _____ 8% of the water used globally goes to homes, and a massive 69% is required for agriculture.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(42\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

Here are the words that I used:

1. accounts, respectively
2. figure, lower
3. mere

Posted by: Simon | [Friday, May 20, 2016 at 13:07](#)

Thursday, June 02, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: using a model sentence

The sentence below comes from a UK government [website](#). It's a good example of how statistics are described by native speakers in the 'real world'.

The number of live births in the UK in 2014 was 776,352, a decrease of 0.3% since 2013, when there were 778,803 live births.

Let's try to use this sentence as a model. Can you write a similar sentence with the following information?

- In 2014, 80,000 UK students chose to study history
- In 2013, 100,000 UK students chose to study history

Make sure that you use the same sentence order, the same tense, and the same punctuation. Try to include the percentage decrease too.

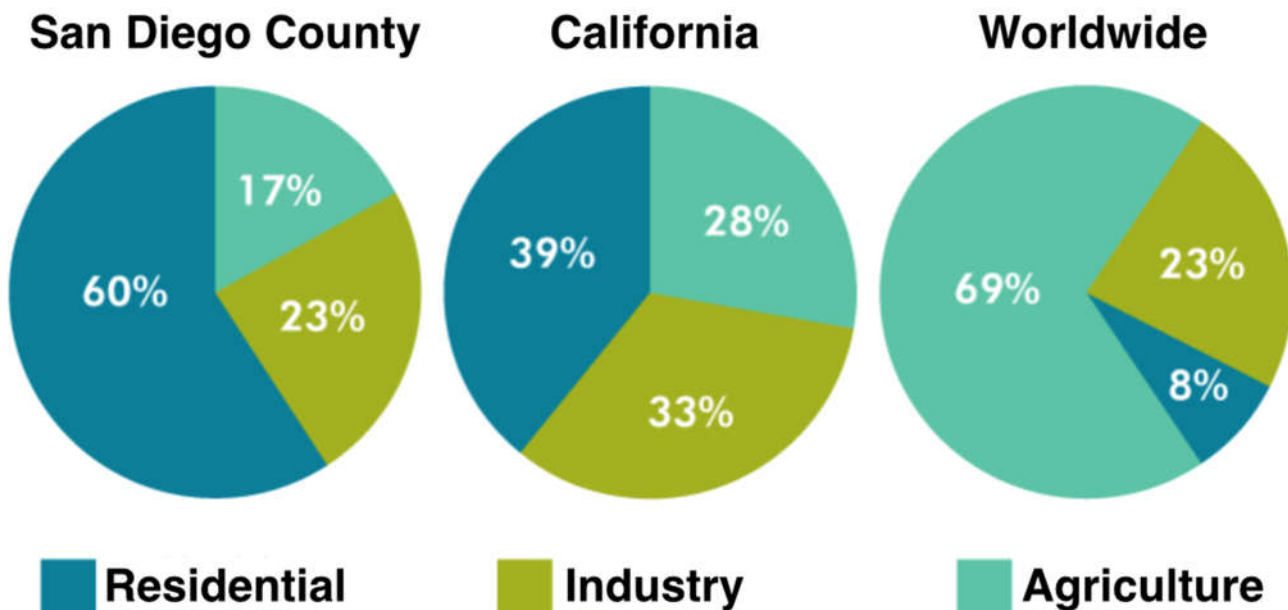
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(71\)](#)

Thursday, June 09, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts answer

Have a look at my full answer for the question below.

The pie charts below compare water usage in San Diego, California and the rest of the world.



The pie charts give information about the water used for residential, industrial and agricultural purposes in San Diego County, California, and the world as a whole.

It is noticeable that more water is consumed by homes than by industry or agriculture in the two American regions. By contrast, agriculture accounts for the vast majority of water used worldwide.

In San Diego County and California State, residential water consumption accounts for 60% and 39% of total water usage. By contrast, a mere 8% of the water used globally goes to homes. The opposite trend can be seen when we look at water consumption for agriculture. This accounts for a massive 69% of global water use, but only 17% and 28% of water usage in San Diego and California respectively.

Such dramatic differences are not seen when we compare the figures for industrial water use. The same proportion of water (23%) is used by industry in San Diego and worldwide, while the figure for California is 10% higher, at 33%.

(168 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Thursday, June 16, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: forget about 'grammatical range'

When I'm writing a task 1 report, either for this blog or with my students, I never worry about 'grammatical range'. Here's why:

- First, how many different 'grammatical structures' can we really use in the space of only 8 or 9 sentences?
- Second, do we have time to think about including an example of a passive, a conditional, various types of clause etc.?
- Third, will these different structures be relevant? Will they work in the context of the description?

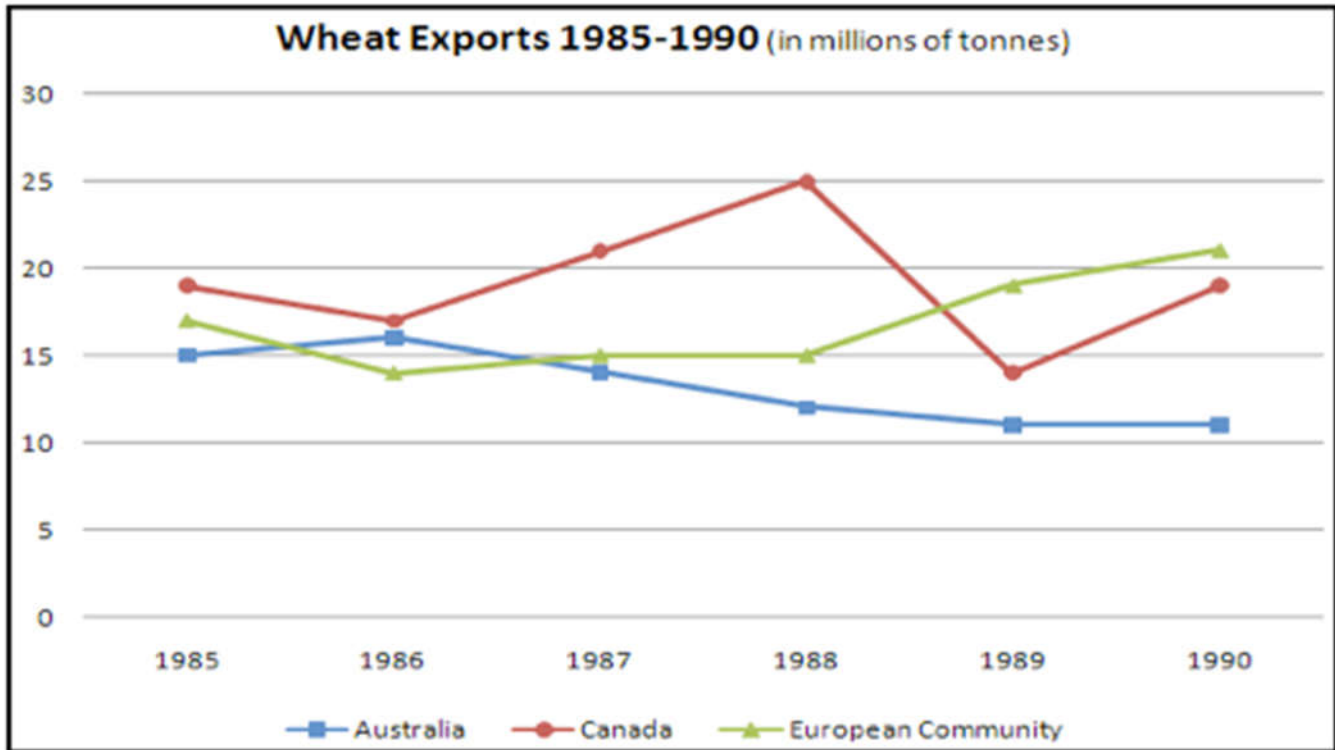
I think it's much more important to spend the 20 minutes thinking about how best to describe the information on the chart in a clear and logical way. In other words, I suggest that you focus on task response, coherence and accuracy. This is what examiners are really looking for in task 1.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Thursday, June 23, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: a big mistake

Many students make a big mistake when describing numbers. For example, look at the graph below.



Now look at these four sentences:

1. In 1985, Canada was about 19 million tonnes.
2. Australia was lower, at 15 million tonnes of wheat exports.
3. In 1988, Canada increased by about 5 million tonnes of wheat exports.
4. Australia exported about 11 million tonnes of wheat in 1990.

Only one of these sentences is written correctly. Can you say which one is correct, and explain the big mistake in the other three?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(38\)](#)

Thursday, June 30, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: look at the chart first

It should be possible to understand any chart, graph or diagram without reading the question. So today's tip is: look at the chart (graph, diagram etc.) first. Make sure you understand what it shows, and put a circle around some of the key things that you can see.

I tried this with my students, and we found it very easy to understand the chart. Also, as we already knew what the chart was about, it was easier to understand the question statement.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#)

Thursday, July 07, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'list' sentences

One easy way to describe the information on a graph or chart is by writing a sentence that lists **three** related figures. For example:

- In school A, 30% of students chose to study languages, 40% selected an art or music course, and 50% chose a science option.
- In the year 2010, over 5 million people bought product A, around 7 million bought product B, and nearly 10 million consumers purchased product C.

Notice that I tried to vary the vocabulary in each list:

chose = selected, course = option, people = consumers, bought = purchased

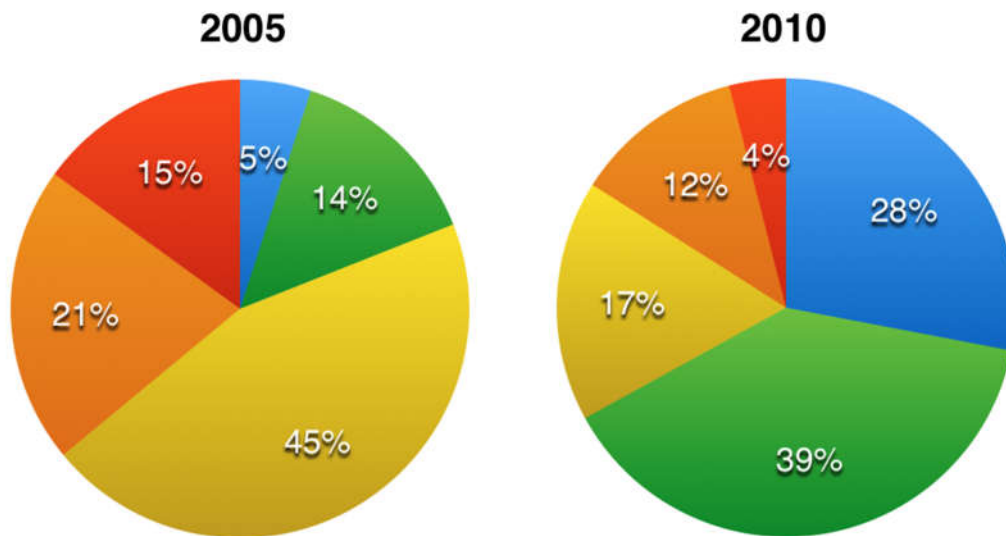
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Thursday, July 14, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'customer service' pie charts

Try writing a report for about the following information. Next week I'll give you some tips and show you part of my answer.

The charts below show the results of a questionnaire that asked visitors to the Parkway Hotel how they rated the hotel's customer service. The same questionnaire was given to 100 guests in the years 2005 and 2010.



Customer service was:

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Poor
- Very poor

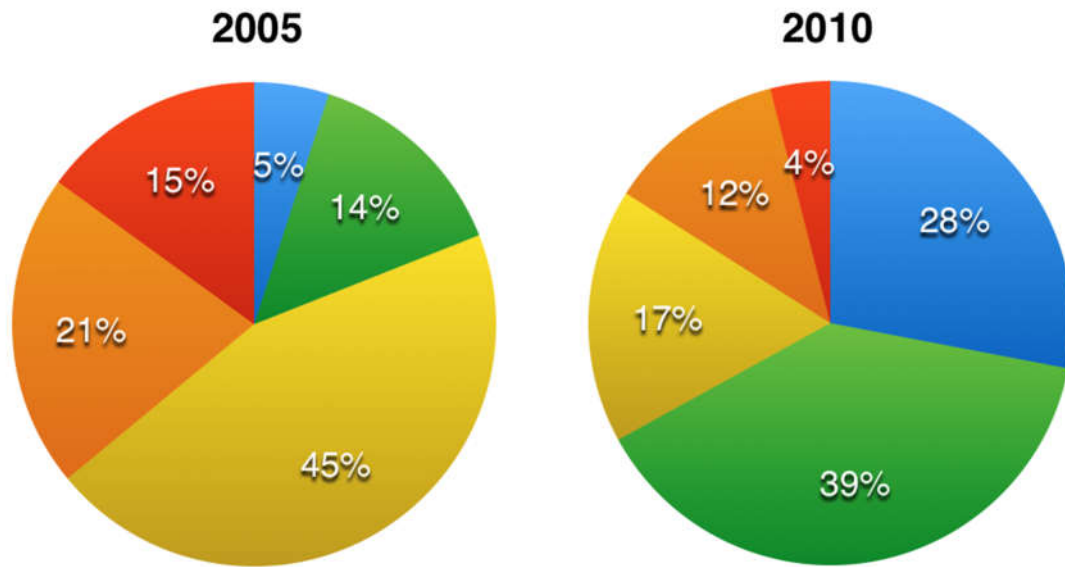
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Thursday, July 21, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'customer service' pie charts

Let's look at the first half of my report about the charts below.

The charts below show the results of a questionnaire that asked visitors to the Parkway Hotel how they rated the hotel's customer service. The same questionnaire was given to 100 guests in the years 2005 and 2010.



Customer service was:

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Poor
- Very poor

Introduction and overview / summary:

The pie charts compare visitors' responses to a survey about customer service at the Parkway Hotel in 2005 and in 2010.

It is clear that overall customer satisfaction increased considerably from 2005 to 2010. While more than half of the hotel guests surveyed rated customer service as satisfactory or poor in 2005, a clear majority described the hotel's service as good or excellent in 2010.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, July 28, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'customer service' sentences

The following sentences describe the pie charts in last week's [lesson](#). Which verbs would you use to fill the gaps?

- In 2005, only 5% of the hotel visitors _____ the customer service as excellent, but this figure _____ to 28% in 2010.
- The proportion of guests who _____ the hotel's customer service to be poor _____ from 21% in 2005 to only 12% in 2010.
- While only 14% of guests _____ customer service in the hotel as good in 2005, almost three times as many people _____ this rating five years later.

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

Here are the words that I would use:

1. **rated, rose**

(we need a verb that is followed by "as", so "rated as" is my choice)

2. **considered, fell**

(we need to choose "considered" because it is followed by "to be" e.g. it is considered to be...)

3. **described / rated, gave**

(we can say "described as" or "rated as", and we need to write "gave this rating" - in English you can "give" a rating)

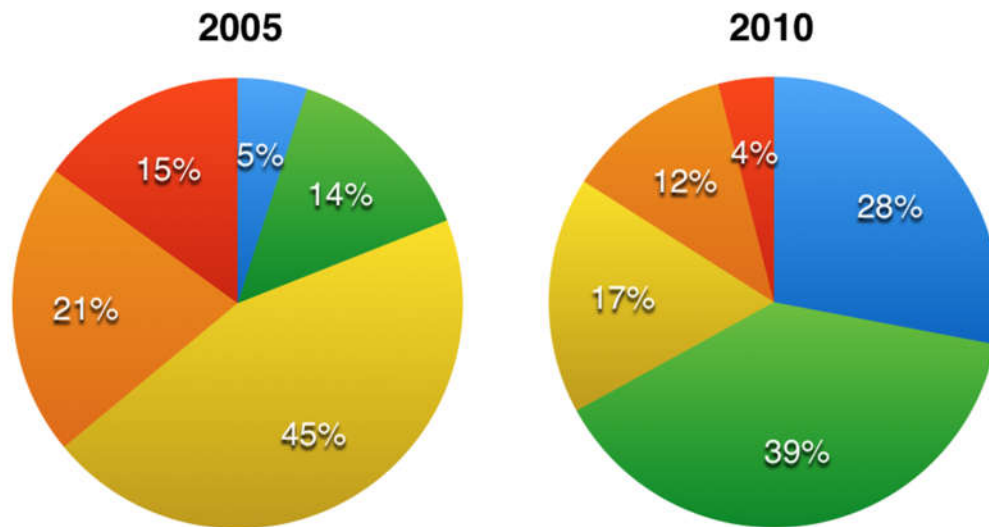
Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, July 29, 2016 at 16:01](#)

Thursday, August 04, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts report

Here's my full answer for the pie charts task below.

The charts below show the results of a questionnaire that asked visitors to the Parkway Hotel how they rated the hotel's customer service. The same questionnaire was given to 100 guests in the years 2005 and 2010.



Customer service was:

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Poor
- Very poor

The pie charts compare visitors' responses to a survey about customer service at the Parkway Hotel in 2005 and in 2010.

It is clear that overall customer satisfaction increased considerably from 2005 to 2010. While most hotel guests rated customer service as satisfactory or poor in 2005, a clear majority described the hotel's service as good or excellent in 2010.

Looking at the positive responses first, in 2005 only 5% of the hotel's visitors rated its customer service as excellent, but this figure rose to 28% in 2010. Furthermore, while only 14% of guests described customer service in the hotel as good in 2005, almost three times as many people gave this rating five years later.

With regard to negative feedback, the proportion of guests who considered the hotel's customer service to be poor fell from 21% in 2005 to only 12% in 2010. Similarly, the proportion of people who thought customer service was very poor dropped from 15% to only 4% over the 5-year period. Finally, a fall in the number of 'satisfactory' ratings in 2010 reflects the fact that more people gave positive responses to the survey in that year.

(193 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Thursday, August 11, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: little things to notice

In the task 1 [answer](#) that I wrote last week, there are some small details that an examiner or teacher might notice:

- **visitors' responses** (correct use of apostrophe for possessive plural)
- **hotel guests** (compound noun)
- **hotel's visitors** (first noun with possessive)
- **rated... as...** (correct use of verb 'rate' with 'as')
- **gave this rating** (noun 'rating' used with correct verb 'give')
- **a clear majority** (good collocation)
- **Looking at the positive responses first,...** (grouping information)
- **With regard to negative feedback,...** (new paragraph and grouping)
- **considered... to be...** (correct use of verb 'consider' with 'to be')
- **reflects the fact that** (good phrase used in correct context)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, August 18, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: checklist

Here's my preparation checklist for writing task 1. Can you put a tick next to each point on the list?

1. Know what the six types of question are (e.g. line graph...).
2. Try several real test examples of each type.
3. Know the 4-paragraph method suggested in lessons on this site.
4. Practise paraphrasing the question to write introductions.
5. Understand why we don't write a conclusion for task 1.
6. Know how to write an 'overview', and what to include in this paragraph.
7. Practise selecting key information, rather than describing everything.

8. Be able to write good 'comparing' sentences.
9. Be able to describe changes and trends (e.g. increase, decrease).
10. Be able to use the passive to describe steps in a process.

Note: I shared this checklist a couple of years ago, but I think it's worth looking at again (if you've seen it before).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

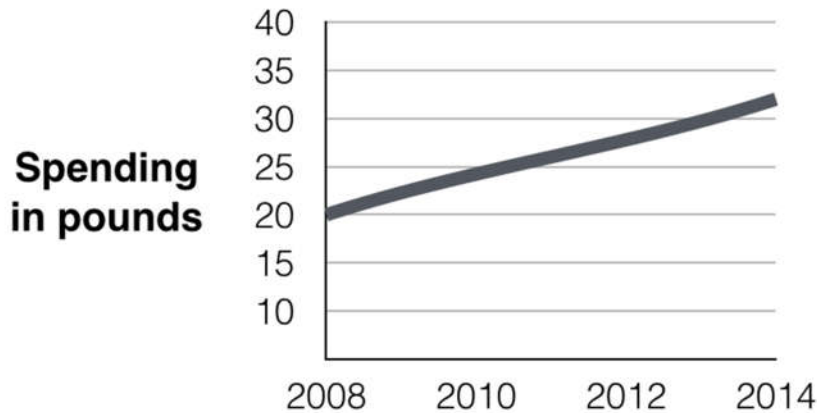
Thursday, August 25, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: comparing line graphs?

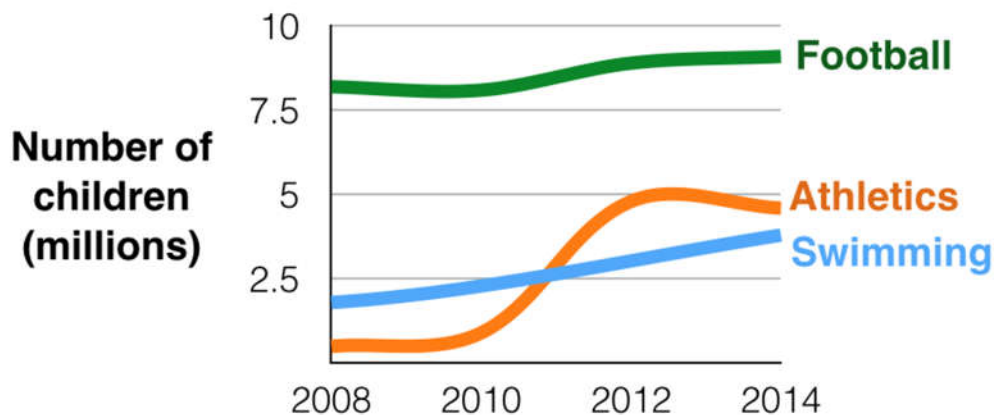
We'll look at the following line graphs in more detail next week, but today I'd like to ask you just one question:

Can we compare the two graphs, or should we describe them separately?

Average monthly spend on children's sports



Participation in three different sports



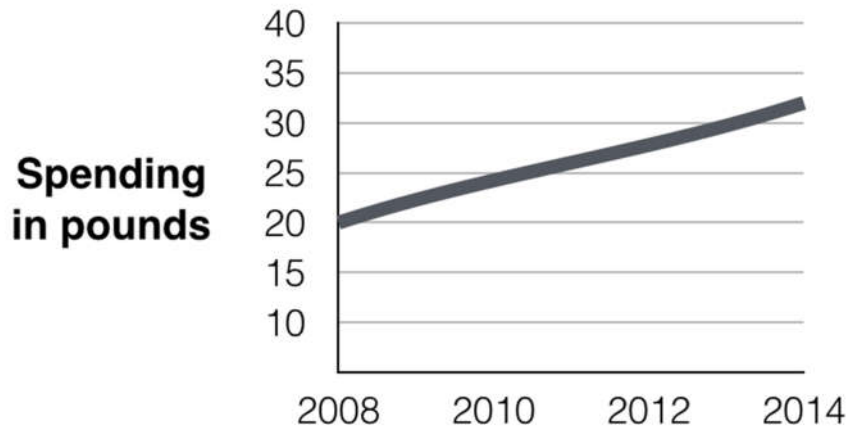
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(42\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction and overview

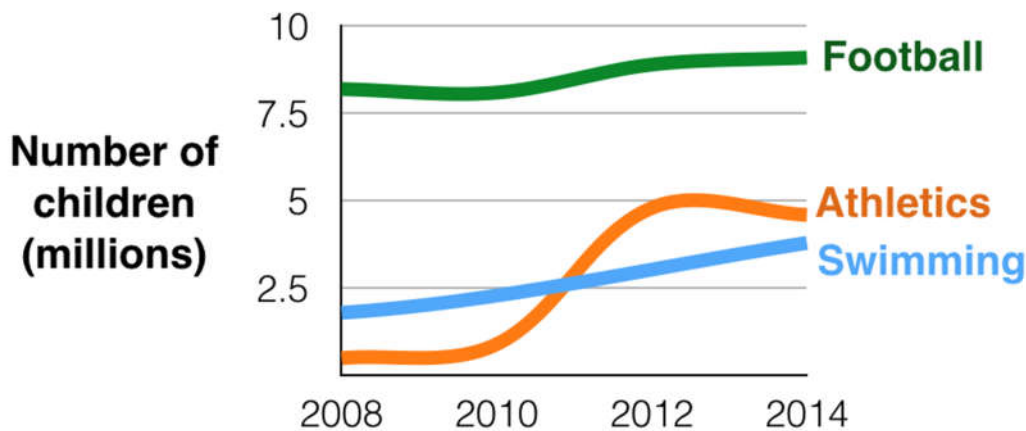
Let's look at the first two paragraphs for the question below.

The first chart below gives information about the money spent by British parents on their children's sports between 2008 and 2014. The second chart shows the number of children who participated in three sports in Britain over the same time period.

Average monthly spend on children's sports



Participation in three different sports



Introduction and overview:

The line graphs show the average monthly amount that parents in Britain spent on their children's sporting activities and the number of British children who took part in three different sports from 2008 to 2014.

It is clear that parents spent more money each year on their children's participation in sports over the 6-year period. In terms of the number of children taking part, football was significantly more popular than athletics and swimming.

Remember:

You just need one sentence for the introduction, and you can write it by paraphrasing the question statement (rewrite it in your own words). Try to write two sentences for your overview paragraph; in this case we can describe one main feature of each graph.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, September 15, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: two mistakes

The following sentences describe the graphs in last week's [lesson](#). Two of the sentences contain a small mistake. Can you find the two mistakes?

1. In 2008, British parents spent an average of around £20 per month on their children's sporting activities.
2. Parents' spending on children's sports was increased gradually over the following six years, and by 2014 the average monthly amount had risen to just over £30.
3. The number of British children who played football remained relatively stable over the six-year period, at around 8 to 9 million.
4. Swimming rose from approximately 2 million children in 2008 to around 4 million in 2014.
5. There was a slight fall in participation in athletics between 2012 and 2014.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(25\)](#)

CORRECT ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. The first mistake is in sentence 2.

"was increased" is wrong. This should not be a passive. We need to write "spending on children's sports increased".

2. The second mistake is in sentence 4.

"Swimming rose" is wrong.

Swimming itself didn't rise - it's the number of children that rose. We could write "The figure for participation in swimming rose..."

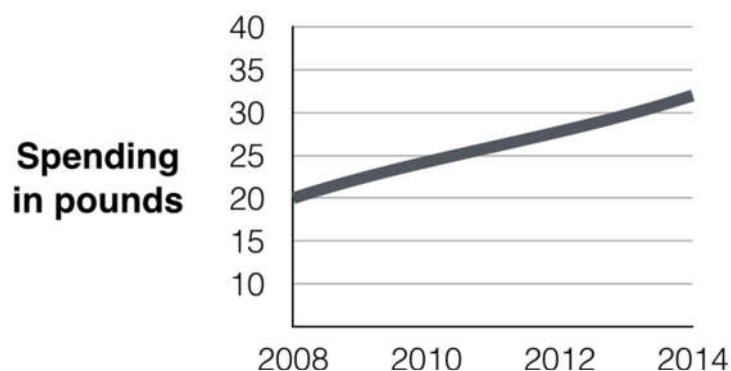
Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, September 16, 2016 at 15:30](#)

Thursday, September 22, 2016

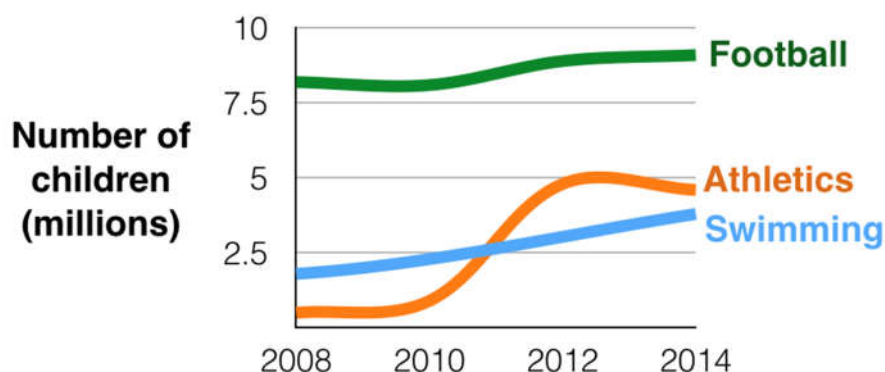
IELTS Writing Task 1: separate line graphs answer

The first chart below gives information about the money spent by British parents on their children's sports between 2008 and 2014. The second chart shows the number of children who participated in three sports in Britain over the same time period.

Average monthly spend on children's sports



Participation in three different sports



Here's my full answer:

The line graphs show the average monthly amount that parents in Britain spent on their children's sporting activities and the number of British children who took part in three different sports from 2008 to 2014.

It is clear that parents spent more money each year on their children's participation in sports over the six-year period. In terms of the number of children taking part, football was significantly more popular than athletics and swimming.

In 2008, British parents spent an average of around £20 per month on their children's sporting activities. Parents' spending on children's sports increased gradually over the following six years, and by 2014 the average monthly amount had risen to just over £30.

Looking at participation numbers, in 2008 approximately 8 million British children played football, while only 2 million children were enrolled in swimming clubs and less than 1 million practised athletics. The figures for football participation remained relatively stable over the following 6 years. By contrast, participation in swimming almost doubled, to nearly 4 million children, and there was a near fivefold increase in the number of children doing athletics.

(185 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Thursday, September 29, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: variety and repetition

In writing task 1, there will probably be one or two key words or phrases that you find yourself repeating in almost every sentence. For example, last week's [graphs](#) were about **spending** on sport and **participation** in sport, so it was necessary to mention these two ideas several times in the answer.

Add variety where you can

In my answer, I did try to add some variety where I felt that an alternative word or phrase worked well. For example, instead of "participation in" I also wrote:

- took part in
- taking part
- played
- were enrolled in
- practised
- doing

But repetition can also be positive

I wasn't too worried about repeating the key ideas (spending and participation) a few times. I wrote "parents spent" three times and I used the word "participation" four times. It can help the coherence of your writing if a key word or phrase is repeated, because this helps the reader to make connections between ideas in different sentences. Too much variety can confuse the reader. For example, it will seem very strange if you use 10 different synonyms for a word like "spending".

Remember: variety is good, but repetition is also normal.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#)

Thursday, October 06, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: statistical terms?

Here's a useful question that someone asked me:

*Is it a good idea to use statistical terms such as **linear** / **exponential growth** instead of more general phrases like **gradual** / **significant increase**?*

My answer is no. I don't advise you to write about linear or exponential growth in writing task 1. You are not expected to have any technical knowledge of statistics in this task, and so this kind of "statistics language" seems a little forced and inappropriate to me.

Just use the 'normal' phrases that I use in my example answers here on the blog. Don't try to write like a professional statistician, and don't use the exaggerated language that I mentioned in [this lesson](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Thursday, October 13, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: ways to prepare

Here are some study ideas for task 1:

1) Print a collection of questions

Before you start writing any task 1 reports, it's a good idea to have an overview of the different types of questions that you might face. Try to get paper copies (printed) of around 10 different questions - it's useful to be able to see them all in one place. Your 'pack' of questions should include: a line graph, bar chart, pie chart, table, 2 different charts, 3 or more similar charts, process diagram, comparison diagram, life cycle, map.

2) Practise parts of reports

Instead of writing a full report, try writing 10 [introductions](#) - one for each of the questions in your 'pack' (see point 1 above). The next time you are studying, just focus on writing [overviews](#). On a different day, practise describing percentages, or comparing numbers etc...

3) Use model answers

If you look through my task 1 lessons on this site, you'll find examples of the 10 question types mentioned in point 1. Use my answers as models, and try to copy my way of writing as closely as you can.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Thursday, October 20, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: did you notice the 80%?

In my experience, not many people are able to write a good overview / summary paragraph under exam conditions. They can see specific information, but they find it difficult to see the "big picture".

Let's try looking for the "big picture" in some data. We can then write a good overview or summary.

Percentage of students able to speak languages other than English:

- 30% - Spanish
- 15% - French
- 10% - German
- 15% - another language (not Spanish, French or German)
- 10% - two other languages
- 20% - no other language

(adapted from Cambridge IELTS book 11)

Writing your overview / summary paragraph:

I'm sure you noticed the biggest number straight away (30% - Spanish), and we could certainly mention this in our overview. Many people then look for the smallest number, but I wouldn't do that in this case. I think there is something better that we can mention: the 80% of students who are able to speak at least one foreign language. Did you notice the 80%?

Here's my 2-sentence overview / summary:

It is noticeable that the vast majority of students are able to speak at least one foreign language, as well as English. We can also see that Spanish is the most widely spoken second language among the surveyed group of students.

PS. I don't usually include numbers in my summary, so I wrote 'vast majority' instead of 80%, and 'most widely spoken second language' instead of 30%. We can add the figures in our "details" paragraphs.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Thursday, October 27, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: the overview

I've given the following advice several times before on this blog, but I think it's worth repeating in connection with [last week's lesson](#).

A current examiner recently told me that the most common mistake in students' task 1 answers is that there is no overview. This was also true when I was an examiner.

So what makes a good overview? Here are a few tips:

- An overview is simply a summary of the main things you can see.
- Because the overview is so important, I recommend putting it at the beginning of your report, just after the introduction sentence.
- I write two overview sentences. A one-sentence overview isn't really enough.
- Try not to include specific numbers in the overview. Save the specifics for later paragraphs.
- Look at the 'big picture' e.g. the overall change from the first year to the last year (if years are shown on the chart), the differences between whole categories rather than single numbers, or the total number of stages in a process.

Have another look at the overview paragraphs (paragraph 2) in the task 1 answers that I've written here on the site. Analyse them carefully, and practise writing your own overviews in the same way.

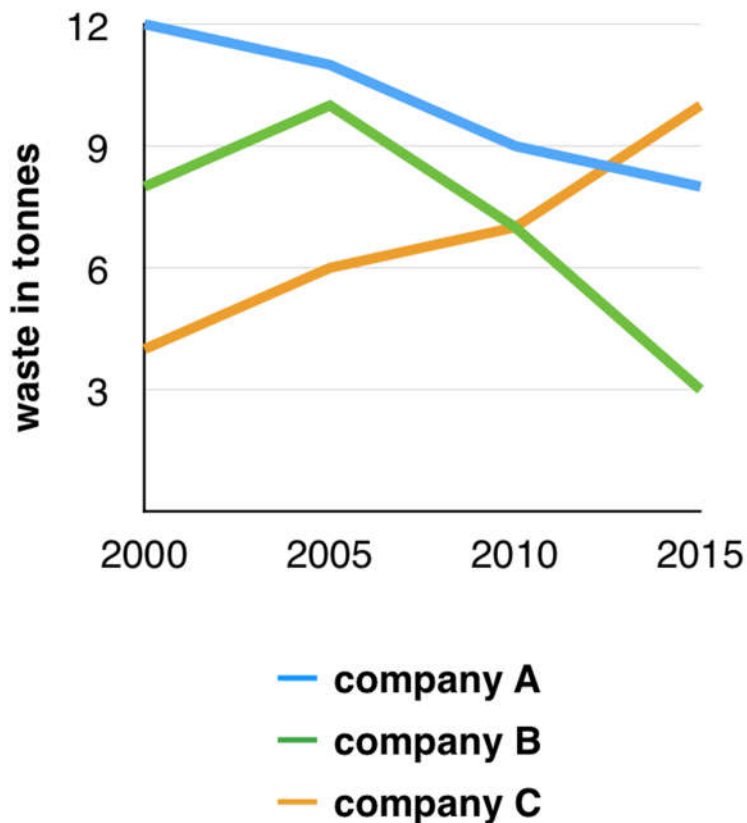
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Thursday, November 03, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: more 'overview' practice

Several people asked me for some more practice seeing the "big picture" when writing the overview paragraph. First, read [this lesson](#) and [this lesson](#). Then try to write a two-sentence overview about the line graph below.

The graph below shows the amounts of waste produced by three companies over a period of 15 years.



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(54\)](#)

Thursday, November 10, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: overview points

Here are some main points that most people noticed about the graph in last week's [lesson](#):

- There were significant changes in the amounts of waste produced by all three companies.
- Waste produced by companies A and B decreased, but waste produced by company C increased.
- Company A was the biggest waste producer at the beginning of the period, but C was the biggest producer by the end of the period.
- Company A produced the largest amount of waste in total.

I recommend choosing just **two** of these main points for a two-sentence overview paragraph. For example:

It is clear that there were significant changes in the amounts of waste produced by all three companies shown on the graph. While companies A and B saw waste output fall over the 15-year period, the amount of waste produced by company C increased considerably.

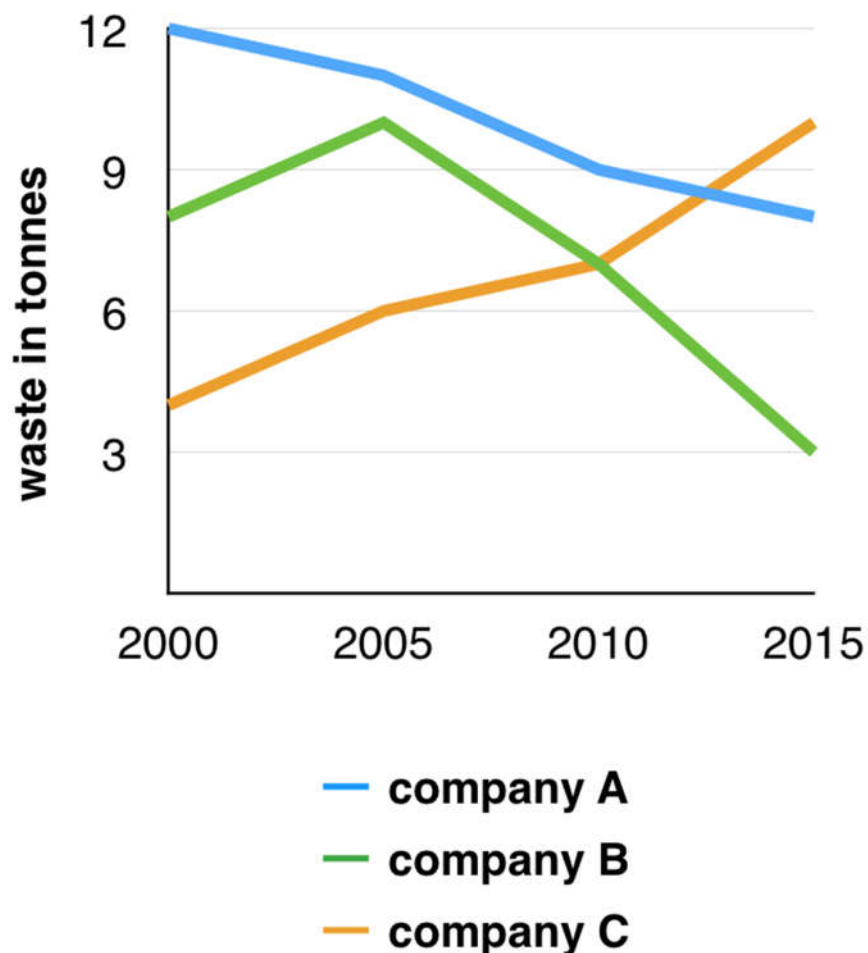
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Thursday, November 17, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction and overview

Let's look at the first two paragraphs of my sample answer for the question below.

The graph below shows the amounts of waste produced by three companies over a period of 15 years.



Introduction (paraphrase the question):

The line graph compares three companies in terms of their waste output between the year 2000 and the year 2015.

Overview (two main / general points):

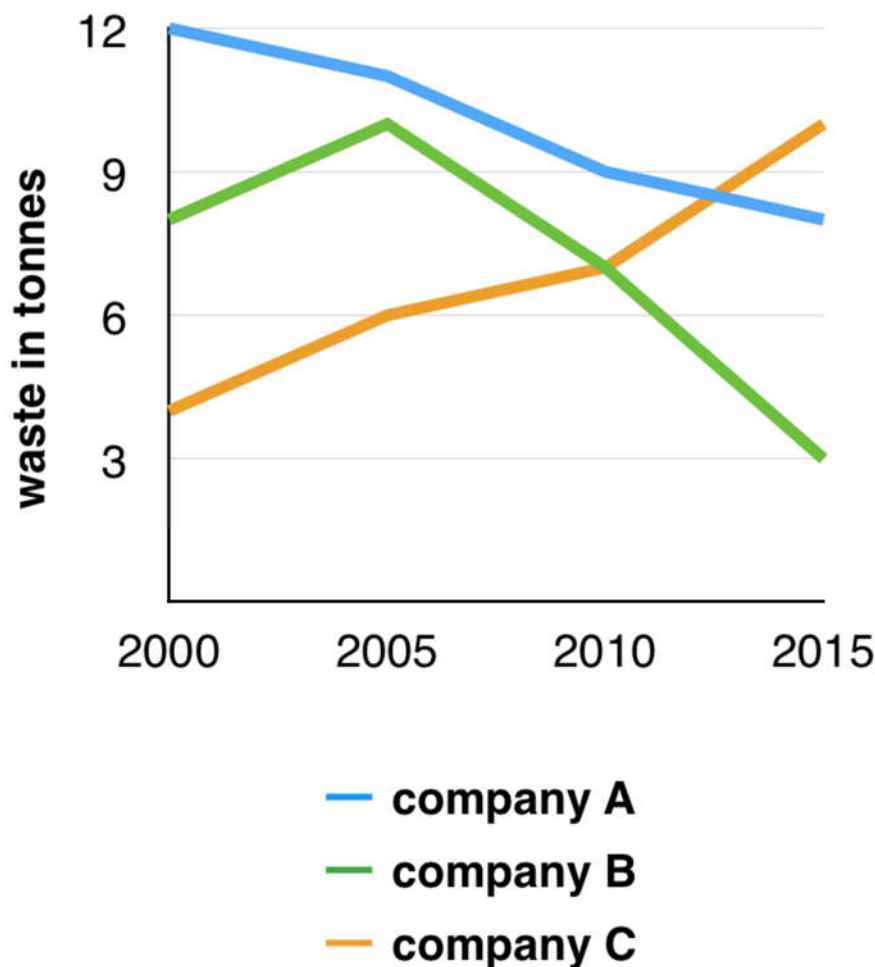
It is clear that there were significant changes in the amounts of waste produced by all three companies shown on the graph. While companies A and B saw waste output fall over the 15-year period, the amount of waste produced by company C increased considerably.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Thursday, November 24, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'waste graph' answer

The graph below shows the amounts of waste produced by three companies over a period of 15 years.



The line graph compares three companies in terms of their waste output between the years 2000 and 2015.

It is clear that there were significant changes in the amounts of waste produced by all three companies shown on the graph. While companies A and B saw waste output fall over the 15-year period, the amount of waste produced by company C increased considerably.

In 2000, company A produced 12 tonnes of waste, while companies B and C produced around 8 tonnes and 4 tonnes of waste material respectively. Over the following 5 years, the waste output of companies B and C rose by around 2 tonnes, but the figure for company A fell by approximately 1 tonne.

From 2005 to 2015, company A cut waste production by roughly 3 tonnes, and company B reduced its waste by around 7 tonnes. By contrast, company C saw an increase in waste production of approximately 4 tonnes over the same 10-year period. By 2015, company C's waste output had risen to 10 tonnes, while the respective amounts of waste from companies A and B had dropped to 8 tonnes and only 3 tonnes.

(192 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Thursday, December 01, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: good vocabulary

Here are some good words and phrases that I used in last week's [answer](#):

- The line graph compares..... in terms of.....
- waste output / waste produced / amount of waste / waste material / waste production
- there were significant changes in
- company A produced....., while companies B and C produced..... and..... respectively
- the respective amounts of waste from companies A and B
- around / approximately / roughly
- saw + noun + noun: saw an increase in waste production
- saw + noun + verb: saw waste output fall
- past perfect after "by": By 2015..... had risen / had dropped
- cut waste production
- reduced its waste production
- over the following 5 years
- over the same 10-year period

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, December 08, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: question types

I received a message from a student who said that she had been surprised to see a diagram question in writing task 1. She had done lots of preparation for graphs and charts, but was unprepared for diagram questions.

So, make sure you have prepared for all of the following question types:

1. Line graph
2. Bar chart
3. Pie chart
4. Table
5. Comparison diagram (a diagram or map that compares things)
6. Process diagram (a diagram or map that shows steps in a process)

If you look through the lessons on this blog, you'll find advice and examples for all six question types. I've also covered each one in detail on my [video course](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

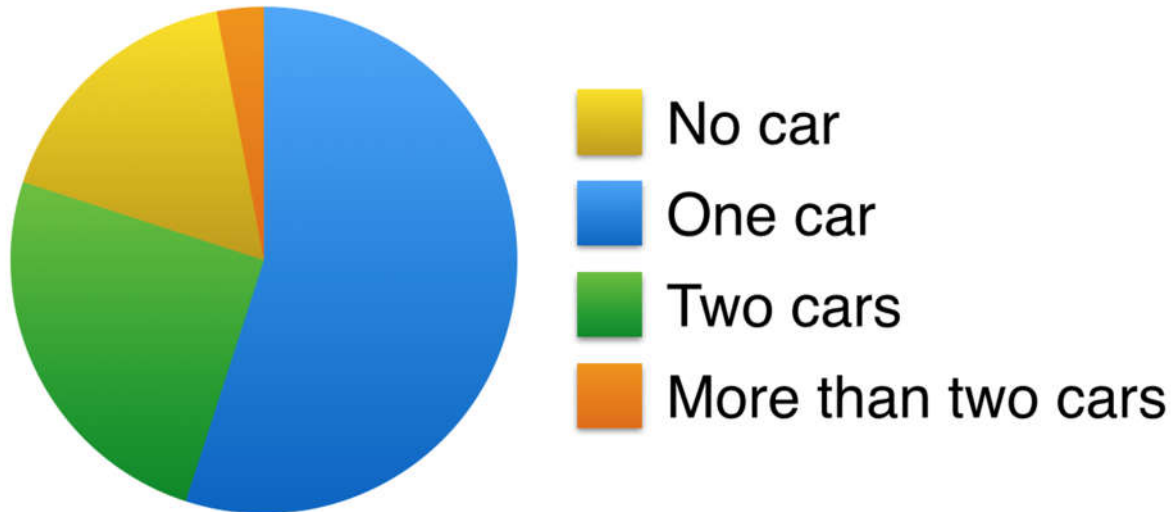
Thursday, December 15, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart without numbers

Somebody asked me: What should I do if the question contains a pie chart without numbers on it? Well, let's look at a simple example.

The chart below shows the proportions of adults in Canada who own one car, two cars, more than two cars, or who do not own a car.

Car ownership in Canada



Would it still be possible to describe the pie chart above, even though the figures are missing? (Note: this is just a quick example, not a real question)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

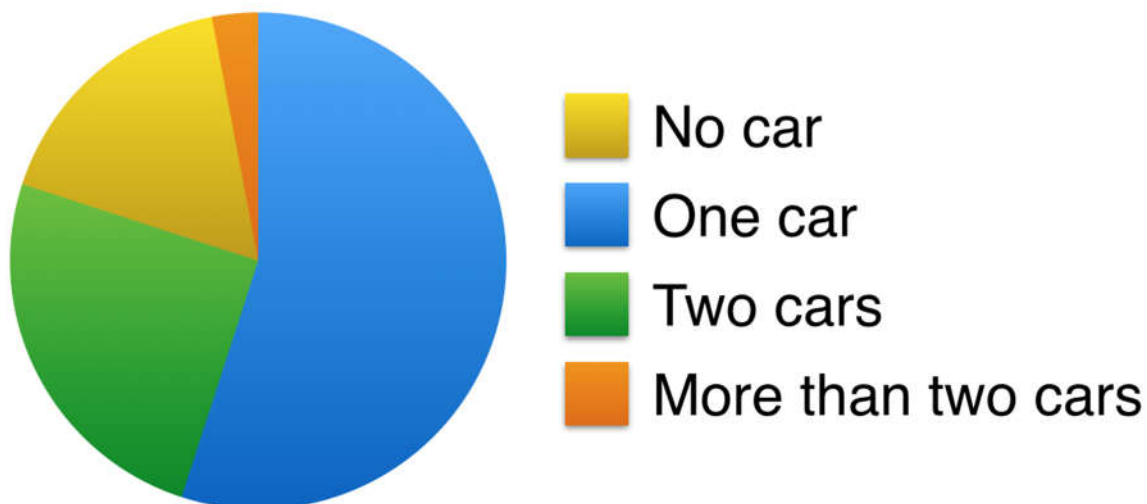
Thursday, December 22, 2016

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart without numbers

Last week I showed you the chart below.

The chart below shows the proportions of adults in Canada who own one car, two cars, more than two cars, or who do not own a car.

Car ownership in Canada



As several people commented below last week's lesson, we can describe a pie chart even if the numbers are not shown. Here are some example sentences:

- Just over half of all adults in Canada own one car.
- Roughly 50% of Canadian adults own one car, while approximately 25% of adults in Canada own two cars.
- Less than a quarter of Canadians do not own a car.
- Only a very small percentage (under 5%) of Canadian adults own more than two cars.

Remember: the full pie is always 100%, so it's easy for us to guess approximate proportions.

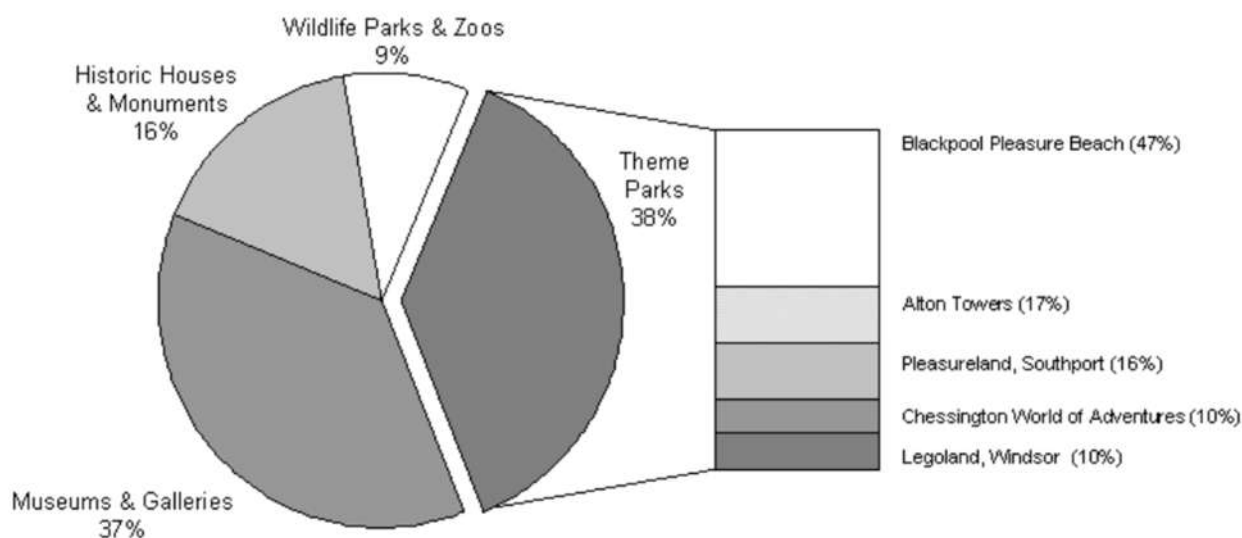
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Thursday, January 05, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart with extra detail

Let's try to write a report about the pie chart below. First, can you write an introduction without having a question statement to help you?

Distribution of visitors to different types of tourist attractions in Britain, 1999



Click on the image if you need to enlarge it.

Source: [University of Leicester](#)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(44\)](#)

Thursday, January 12, 2017

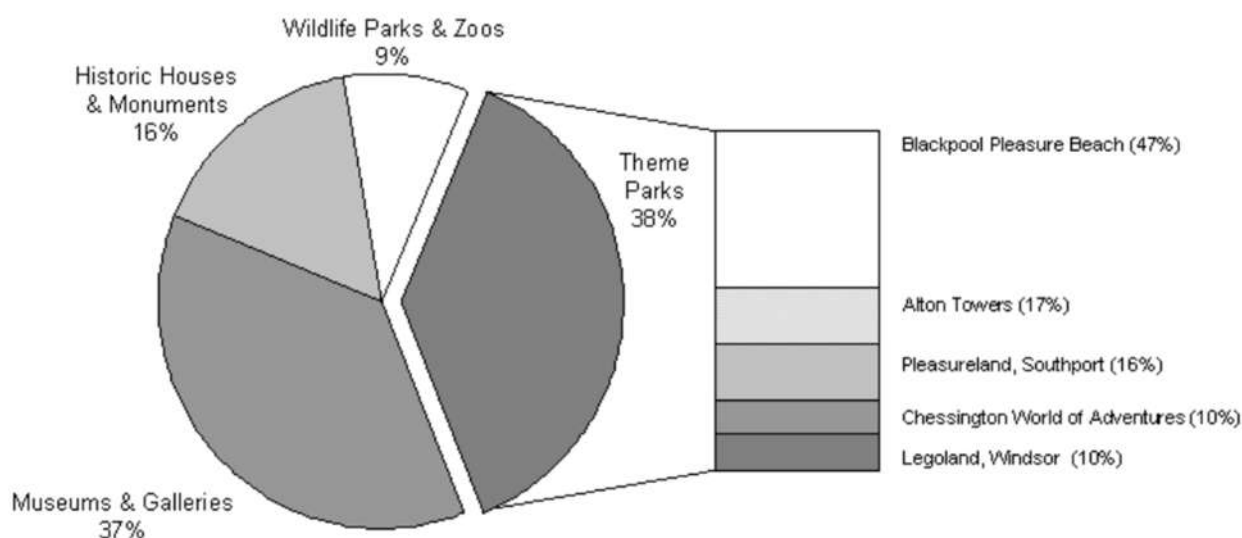
IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart with extra detail

Here are my first two paragraphs (introduction and overview) for the chart below:

The pie chart compares figures for visitors to four categories of tourist attraction and to five different theme parks in Britain in 1999.

It is clear that theme parks and museums / galleries were the two most popular types of tourist attraction in that year. Blackpool Pleasure Beach received by far the highest proportion of visitors in the theme park sector.

Distribution of visitors to different types of tourist attractions in Britain, 1999



Click on the image if you need to enlarge it.
Source: University of Leicester

Task:

Can you write the two main body paragraphs? Just describe the four pie chart categories in the first paragraph, and the 'theme park' figures in the second.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Saturday, January 14, 2017

IELTS Advice: stop using 'given'

I've noticed that a lot of people use the word "given" in their writing task 1 introductions. For example:

- Given is a chart showing...
- The given chart shows...
- The chart given shows...

Although it isn't grammatically wrong, I don't like this use of "given". It's completely unnecessary, and it seems forced (like you're trying too hard).

Don't try to do anything 'less common' in the first few words of your task 1 introduction. Just keep it simple and clear: The chart shows... (or compares or illustrates).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

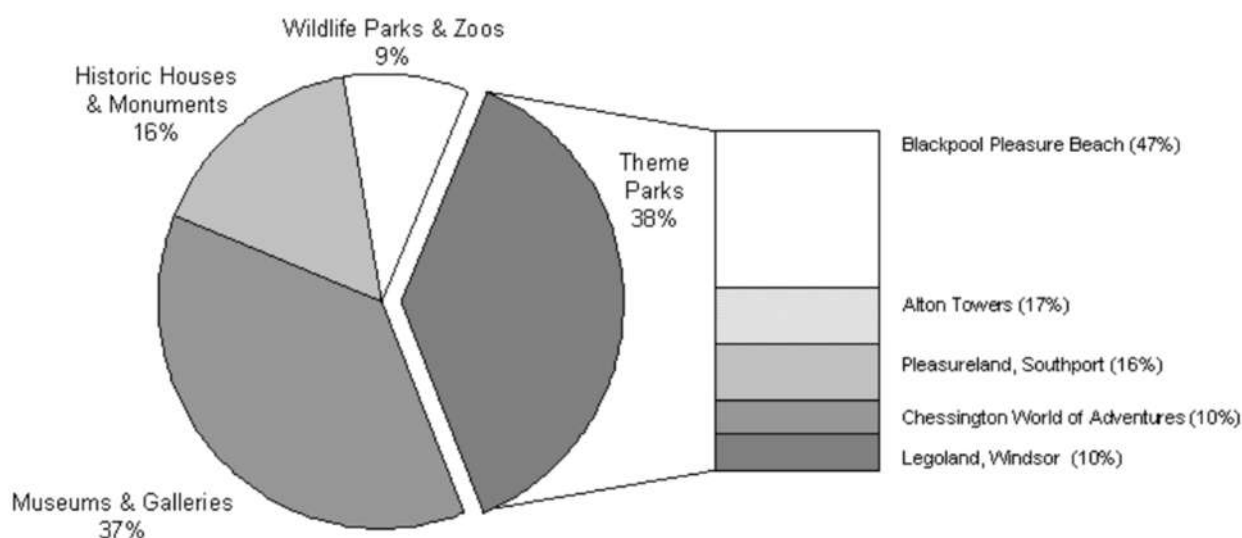
Thursday, January 19, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart answer

Here's my full answer to the pie chart question that we've been looking at recently.

The chart below shows the results of a survey of people who visited four types of tourist attraction in Britain in the year 1999.

Distribution of visitors to different types of tourist attractions in Britain, 1999



The pie chart compares figures for visitors to four categories of tourist attraction and to five different theme parks in Britain in 1999.

It is clear that theme parks and museums / galleries were the two most popular types of tourist attraction in that year. Blackpool Pleasure Beach received by far the highest proportion of visitors in the theme park sector.

Looking at the information in more detail, we can see that 38% of the surveyed visitors went to a theme park, and 37% of them went to a museum or gallery. By contrast, historic houses and monuments were visited by only 16% of the sample, while wildlife parks and zoos were the least popular of the four types of tourist attraction, with only 9% of visitors.

In the theme park sector, almost half of the people surveyed (47%) had been to Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Alton Towers was the second most popular amusement park, with 17% of the sample, followed by Pleasureland in Southport, with 16%. Finally, Chessington World of Adventures and Legoland Windsor had each welcomed 10% of the surveyed visitors.

(181 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, January 26, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: first, came first, first place

Don't describe items on a graph or chart in terms of coming first, second or last. This makes it seem like you're describing a competition!

For example, don't write:

- Theme parks were first.
- Theme parks came first, and museums were in second place.
- In last place were wildlife parks and zoos.

Instead, you should write:

- Theme parks were the most popular type of tourist attraction.
- Theme parks attracted the highest proportion of visitors, and museums were the second most visited attraction.
- Wildlife parks and zoos were the least popular of the four types of tourist attraction.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#)

Thursday, February 02, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: don't neglect task 1

Last week a student wrote to me saying that he didn't understand why his most recent writing test score was so low. He wanted my advice on how to improve his writing **task 2** essays.

Before giving any advice, I asked the student whether he thought he had done well or badly in writing **task 1**. His answer surprised me: he hadn't written anything at all for task 1; he had spent the whole hour in the test doing task 2.

Hopefully you can guess what my advice was! I think students often worry so much about task 2 that they really neglect task 1. If you're not getting the score you need, it might be that task 1 is the problem.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Thursday, February 09, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'to' or 'by'

In IELTS writing task 1, you might need to use verbs like increase, decrease, rise and fall. These verbs can be followed by the words 'to' and 'by', but what's the difference?

Let's use these figures:

- Company profit in 2005 = £20,000
- Company profit in 2010 = £25,000

Now compare these sentences:

- Company profit rose **to** £25,000 in 2010.
- Company profit rose **by** £5,000 between 2005 and 2010.

It's easy: 'to' is used before the new figure, and 'by' is used to show the change. It's the same when you are talking about a fall.

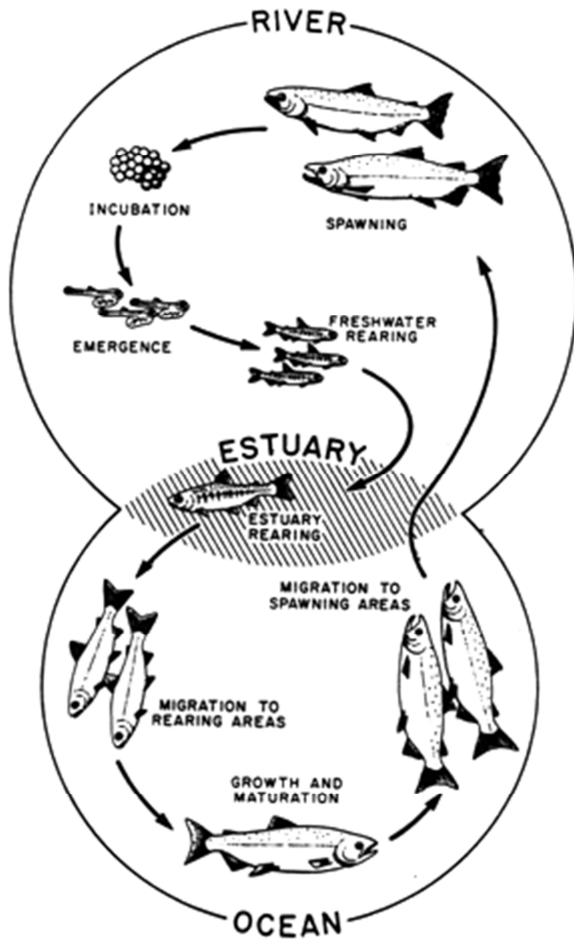
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, February 16, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: life cycle of a salmon

The following diagram is similar to one that you might have seen in one of the Cambridge books, but with a couple of extra details. Can you describe it in our normal "IELTS style"?

The diagram below shows the life cycle of a salmon, from egg to adult fish.



(Source: <http://www.5counties.org/salmoncycle.htm>)

spawning = laying eggs

estuary = the mouth of a river, where it meets the sea / ocean

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Thursday, February 23, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: life cycle overview

How do you write an overview or summary about a 'life cycle' diagram? Here are two things that I always do:

1. Count the number of stages in the life cycle.
2. Decide on a beginning and an end point in the cycle.

Last week's [diagram](#) has another general feature: where the cycle takes place.

So here's a possible overview paragraph for last week's task:

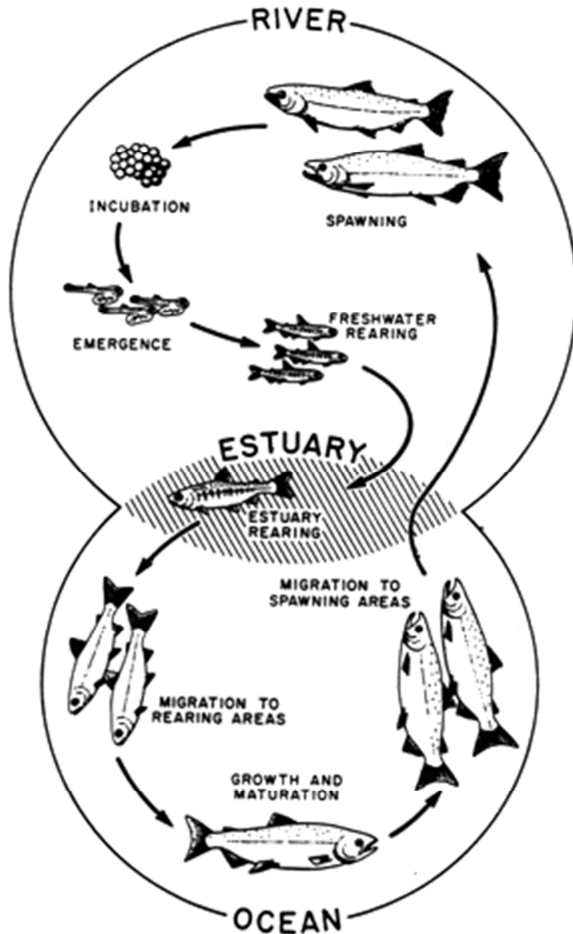
According to the diagram, there are eight main stages as the salmon develops from egg to mature adult. Salmon travel to three different places during the cycle, moving from river to estuary to ocean and back.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: description using questions

Let's try a new technique: to describe the life cycle below, simply answer the six questions written below it. Don't worry about the introduction or overview; we can add those later.

The diagram below shows the life cycle of a salmon, from egg to adult fish.



Write your description of the diagram by answering the following questions:

1. Where and in what form do salmon begin their lives?
2. When the young salmon emerge from eggs, where are they reared?
3. Before swimming to the ocean, where do the young fish migrate to?
4. What happens to salmon during their time in the ocean?
5. Where do the adult fish then travel to, and why?
6. What happens that completes the cycle?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: life cycle mistakes

Can you correct the mistakes in the following six sentences?

1. Salmon begin their lives from eggs that laid in a river.

2. After emerged from eggs they reared to freshwater.
3. Before they merge to sea they stay in estuary, where sea and river meet.
4. During their time in the ocean, young salmon develop gradually into mature salmon.
5. The adult fishes travel to spawning areas where the salmon incubation can be done.
6. Their cycle completes when the spawning process starts and as some research, adult salmon die right after that due to exhaustion.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

First I'll try to explain the problems.

1. The main problem is "that laid". We need to write "that ARE laid". I would also change "from eggs" to "as eggs" or "when they hatch from eggs".
2. Remember to use "after + ing" - "after emerging". There is also another passive problem: we need to write "ARE reared" and we should write "IN freshwater areas".
3. "merge" is the wrong word here. Also, we need the article "the" with "sea" and "estuary".
4. The plural of "salmon" is "salmon", not "salmons".
5. The normal plural of "fish" is "fish". I would also change "incubation can be done" - get rid of the verb "done" and use "they incubate their eggs".
6. This was a trick question because the main problem is not a grammar problem. You should never add ideas that are not shown on the graph, chart or diagram, so we can't use the part about salmon dying due to exhaustion.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, March 10, 2017 at 19:23](#)

FROM SIMON (continued):

Now here are my correct sentences:

1. Salmon begin their lives when they hatch from eggs that are laid in rivers.
2. After emerging from (their) eggs they are reared in freshwater areas.
3. Before they migrate to the sea, they travel to estuaries, where river and sea meet.
4. During their time in the ocean, young salmon develop gradually into mature salmon.
5. The adult fish travel to spawning areas where they incubate their eggs.
6. The cycle is completed when the next generation of salmon hatch from their eggs.

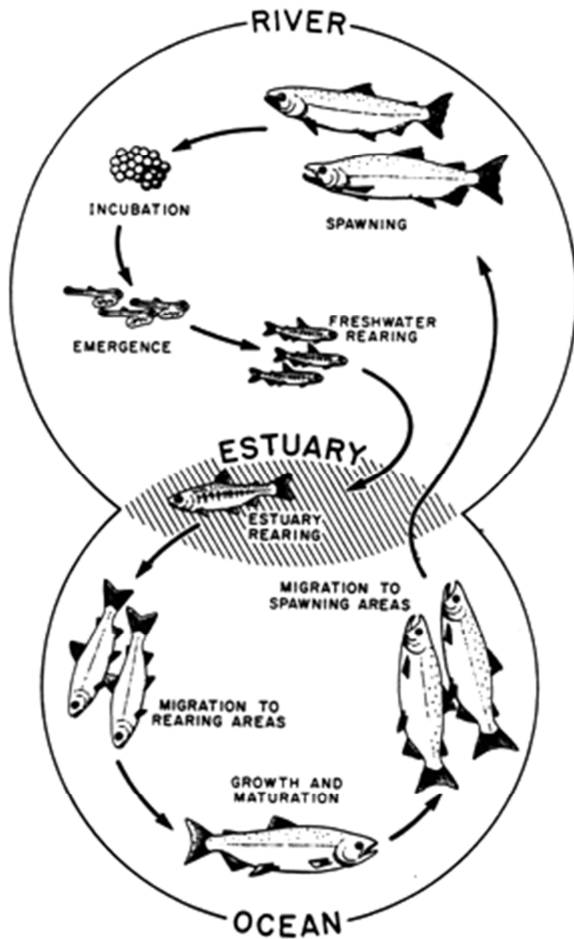
Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Friday, March 10, 2017 at 19:33](#)

Thursday, March 16, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: life cycle answer

I've just written my full answer for the task below.

The diagram below shows the life cycle of a salmon, from egg to adult fish.



The diagram illustrates the stages in the life of the salmon, from birth to maturity.

It is clear that there are six* main stages as the salmon develops from egg to mature adult. We can also see that salmon spend time in three distinct locations during the cycle, moving from river to estuary to ocean and then back upstream.

Salmon begin their lives in rivers where the adult fish lay and incubate their eggs. After emerging from eggs, the young salmon spend the next stage of their lives being reared in freshwater areas. Then, at some point in their development, the fish swim downstream to river estuaries where rearing continues.

Following the estuary rearing period, the maturing salmon migrate to the ocean, where they eventually become fully grown adults. Finally, the adult fish travel back upstream to spawning areas of rivers; here they reproduce and lay their eggs, and the life cycle begins anew.

(154 words, band 9)

* I wrote "six" main stages because these are the stages that I describe in paragraphs 3 and 4.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Thursday, March 23, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: hyphen and no 's' before noun

Look at the following (correct) phrases:

- over the 10-year period
- the charts show three 10-year periods

Now compare those phrases with two more:

- over the period of 10 years
- the charts show three periods of 10 years

Can you see the difference? Can you explain the grammar rule here, and can you think of any other examples?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1, Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Thursday, March 30, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: where to put the 'overview'

People often ask me why I put the overview (summary) after the introduction instead of at the end of my task 1 reports.

I tell my students that they can choose where to put the overview. It's fine to put it after the introduction, and it's fine to put it at the end - your score will be the same either way.

However, there are 2 reasons why I personally prefer to put the overview after the introduction, rather than at the end:

1. I find it easier and more logical to begin with the general information and main features before I describe specific details.
2. The overview is very important, so I think we should prioritise it. If you want a high score, your overview / summary needs to be good, not something that you write in a hurry when your time is running out.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, April 06, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: how to write the 'overview'

The overview / summary is a very important part of your task 1 report. Many people have no trouble describing specific details, but they find it difficult to describe the **general features** of a graph, chart or diagram. So here are my tips on how to write a good overview:

1. Always try to write two sentences. This forces you to describe **two** main or general features of the graph, chart or diagram.
2. Don't put any numbers in your overview. Save specific numbers for the 'details' paragraphs.
3. If the graph or chart shows a time period (e.g. years), look for the overall change from the beginning to the end of the period (e.g. from the first year to the last year).
4. Look for overall trends, and ignore individual figures that don't fit the trend. For example, if a graph shows a rising trend overall, you can ignore a specific year when the figures decreased - save that year for your 'details' paragraphs.

5. If no time period is shown, you can't look for trends. Instead, look for **differences and similarities** between items.
6. Don't look for individual 'highest' or 'lowest' figures such as a 'peak' on a line graph. Instead, describe the highest and lowest items overall (e.g. which line on the graph was the highest for the **whole** or most of the period?).
7. Start your overview with a simple phrase that clearly shows the examiner that this is your summary paragraph e.g. It is clear that... , It is noticeable that... , Overall we can see that...
8. If there are two **different** charts, write one overview sentence about each chart.
9. If there are more than two charts, they must be connected in some way, so look for two main features overall.
10. If the task is to describe a diagram or map that compares things, you can mention the main differences and maybe the number of differences and / or similarities between the two diagrams.
11. If the task is to describe a process diagram, you can mention the total number of stages in the process and say where or how the process begins and ends.

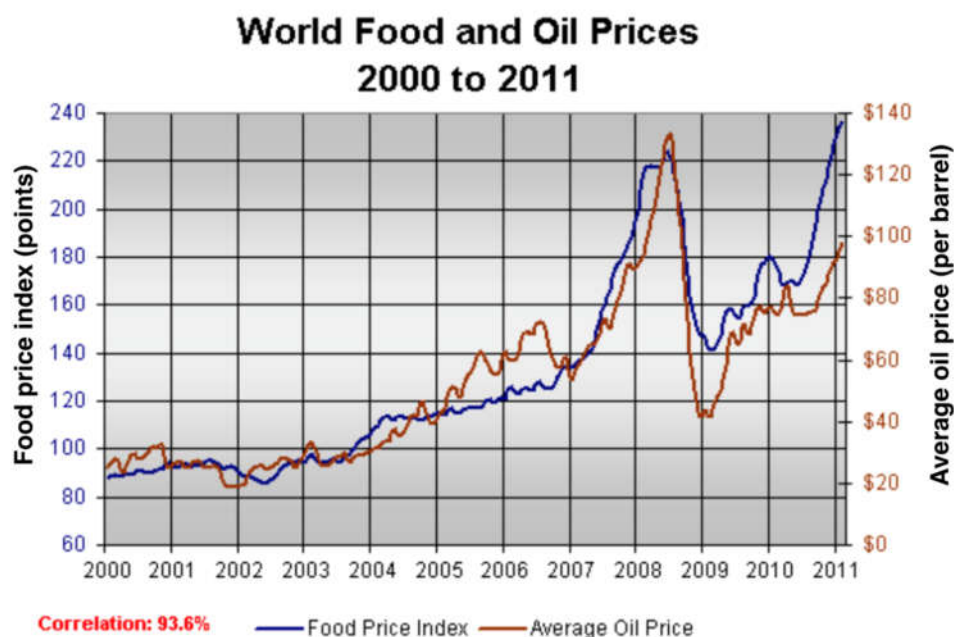
To get a much better understanding of this advice, go through my task 1 lessons here on the blog and analyse the second paragraph of any full answer that you find. Alternatively, watch my task 1 video lessons on [this website](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, April 13, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: overview practice

The graph below shows changes in global food and oil prices between 2000 and 2011.



(Source: http://www.paulchefurka.ca/Food_Energy.html)

Task:

Using the advice in last week's [lesson](#), how would you write an overview / summary of the information shown on the graph?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(55\)](#)

Saturday, April 15, 2017

IELTS Grammar: 'overview' mistakes

Here are some sentences that people wrote below Thursday's writing task 1 lesson. Can you find and correct the mistakes?

1. There are a lot of fluctuations in cost these years.
2. Prices of both food and oil have a significant increase in eleven years.
3. The trends show almost similar figures throughout the period.
4. Oil and food prices follow nearly same trends within period.
5. Both goods increased theirs prices throughout the period shown.
6. Both goods had their prices increased throughout the period shown.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. I would prefer to use "prices" instead of "cost" and the verb "fluctuate" instead of the noun "fluctuations". We also need to change the words "these years". For example:

The prices of food and oil fluctuated considerably over the period shown.

2. We need to change the phrase "have a significant increase in eleven years".

The prices of both food and oil **increased significantly over the 11-year period.**

3. It's strange to use the phrase "almost similar". Either write "similar" or "almost the same". Also, I would either write about the trend OR about the figures, not both. For example:

- The figures for food and oil prices were similar throughout the period shown.

OR:

- Food and oil prices followed similar trends throughout the period shown.

4. "nearly same trends within period" is wrong. Use one of the sentences that I wrote for number 3 above.

5. "goods increased theirs prices" is wrong. Here's my corrected version:

The price of both goods increased over the period shown.

6. "had their prices increased" is wrong. Use my answer to number 5 above.

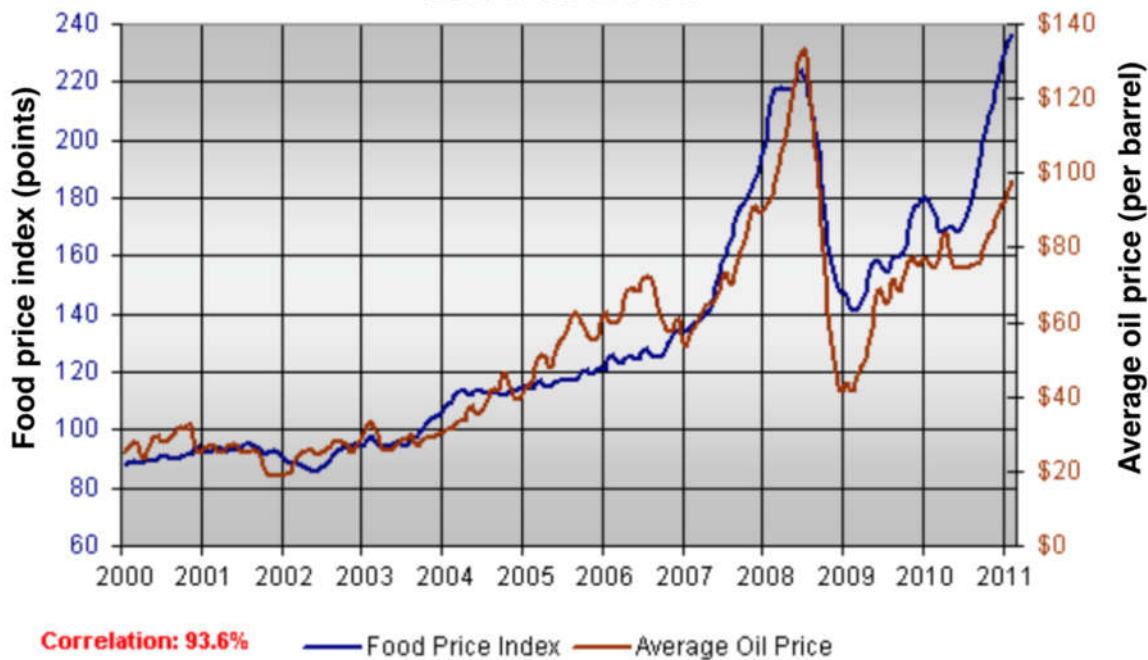
Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Sunday, April 16, 2017 at 18:20](#)

Thursday, April 20, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: graph introduction and overview

The graph below shows changes in global food and oil prices between 2000 and 2011.

World Food and Oil Prices 2000 to 2011



Here are my first two paragraphs, the introduction and overview:

The line graph compares the average price of a barrel of oil with the food price index over a period of 11 years.

It is clear that average global prices of both food and oil rose considerably between 2000 and 2011, although many price fluctuations can be seen during those 11 years. Furthermore, the trends for both commodities are very similar, and so a strong correlation is suggested.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Thursday, April 27, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph 'details' tips

After writing your introduction and overview paragraphs, you need to describe the information in detail. Here are my tips for describing line graph details:

1. Try to write two paragraphs. This isn't a 'rule', but it's a good idea because it forces you to group the information, and this should improve the organisation and coherence of your report. One big paragraph full of numbers can look messy, whereas two separate paragraphs will look neater and be easier to read.
2. Aim for just two or three sentences in each 'details' paragraph. Some of your sentences will be quite long, because you'll be comparing several numbers, so two sentences can sometimes be enough.
3. Always compare the lines; never describe each line separately.
4. Select key numbers only. You won't have time to describe every number in every year.
5. Start at the beginning, with the first year on the left of the x axis. Compare the numbers (i.e. all lines) in that year.

6. Then choose an interesting point towards the middle of the graph, and compare the figures at that point.
7. OR: Summarise the line trends over the first half of the period (to somewhere around the middle of the graph).
8. Then start a new paragraph for the second half of the time period.
9. Compare the figures for all of the lines at any key points. Or summarise the line trends over the second half of the period.
10. Finish at the end, with the last year shown. Compare the numbers (i.e. all lines) in that year.

Here's a short version of the advice above:

Paragraph 3

Compare the lines (giving numbers) in the first year shown, then describe any significant numbers or overall trends in the first half of the time period.

Paragraph 4

Describe any significant numbers or overall trends in the second half of the time period, then compare the lines (giving numbers) in the last year shown.

Task:

See if you can follow this advice to write two 'details' paragraphs about the line graph in last week's [lesson](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Thursday, May 04, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph 'details' mistakes

Here are some sentences that people wrote below last week's [lesson](#). Can you correct the mistake(s) in each sentence?

1. In 2000, oil price was slightly higher than food price.
2. Over 6-years later, there was a dramatic increase of oil price.
3. The index of price rose by 36 points at the same period.
4. After the trough in 2009, food price indicate an abrupt increase in 2011.
5. The average oil price came to about \$72 in the middle of 2006.
6. The food price index arrived at approximately 240 points.
7. This is the lowest figures throughout the period as a whole.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

ANSWERS FROM SIMON:

1. In 2000, THE oil price was slightly higher than THE food price.

(I think there is also a problem with the comparison between oil and food prices. The price units are completely different, so I don't think we can really say that one price is higher than the other).

2. Over THE FOLLOWING 6 years, there was a dramatic increase IN THE oil price.
3. The FOOD PRICE index rose by 36 points DURING the same period.
4. After FALLING in 2009, food PRICES INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY in 2011.
5. The average oil price in the middle of 2006 WAS ABOUT \$72 PER BARREL.

6. The food price index REACHED approximately 240 points.
7. THESE WERE the lowest figures SHOWN ON THE GRAPH.

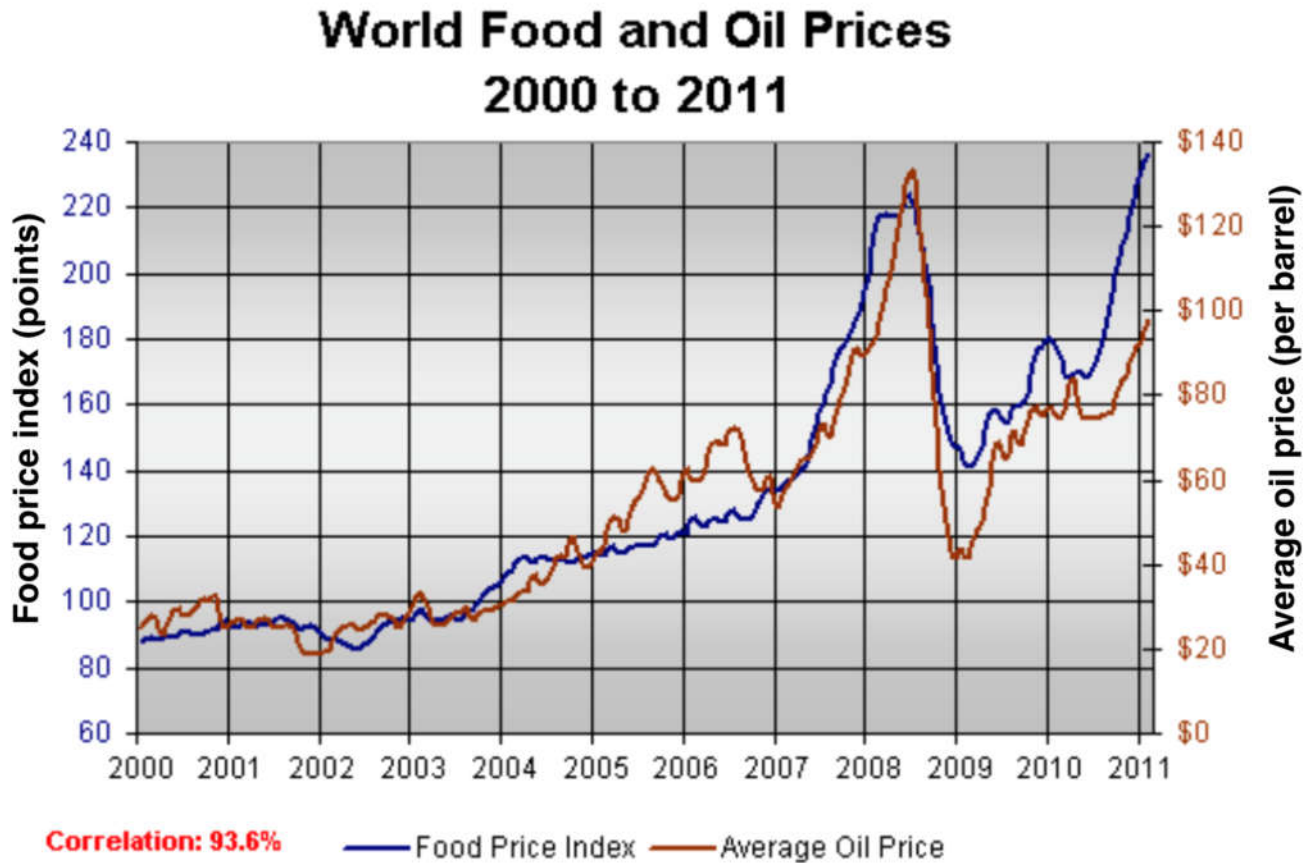
Posted by: Simon | [Friday, May 05, 2017 at 22:50](#)

Thursday, May 11, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph 'details' sentences

Let's look at some sentences that you could use to describe the graph below.

The graph below shows changes in global food and oil prices between 2000 and 2011.



A sentence about the year 2000:

In the year 2000, the average global oil price was close to \$25 per barrel, and the food price index stood at just under 90 points.

A sentence about the years 2000 to 2007:

Over the following four years both prices remained relatively stable, in spite of frequent small fluctuations, before rising steadily between 2004 and 2007.

A sentence about the year 2007:

By 2007, the average oil price had more than doubled, to nearly \$60 per barrel, and food prices had risen by around 50 points.

A sentence about the years 2007 to 2008:

A dramatic increase in oil and food prices was seen from 2007 to 2008, with oil prices reaching a peak of approximately \$130 per barrel and the food price index rising to 220 points.

A sentence about the year 2009:

By the beginning of 2009 the price of oil had dropped by roughly \$90, and the food price index was down by about 80 points.

Task:

Can you write one correct sentence about oil and food prices in 2011?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(55\)](#)

Thursday, May 18, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: one correct sentence!

In last week's [lesson](#) I asked you to try writing one correct sentence about a graph. Are you able to write a sentence that compares two numbers without making a mistake? If not, then this is something that you must practise.

Here are some sentences that students wrote below the lesson. Can you see what is wrong with each sentence?

1. In 2011, there was a dramatic rise in both prices but as compared to oil, food index price went to 250 points.
2. In 2011 food price index raised dramatically and reached a peak almost to 240 points and there was a slight increase in oil price, it was about \$100 by that time.
3. After gradual increase in the previous year, the price of oil and food inclined to 100 dollars per barrels and 240 points respectively in 2011.

And here's a sentence that contains no mistakes:

In 2011, the average oil price rose to nearly \$100 per barrel, while the food price index reached its peak, at almost 240 points.

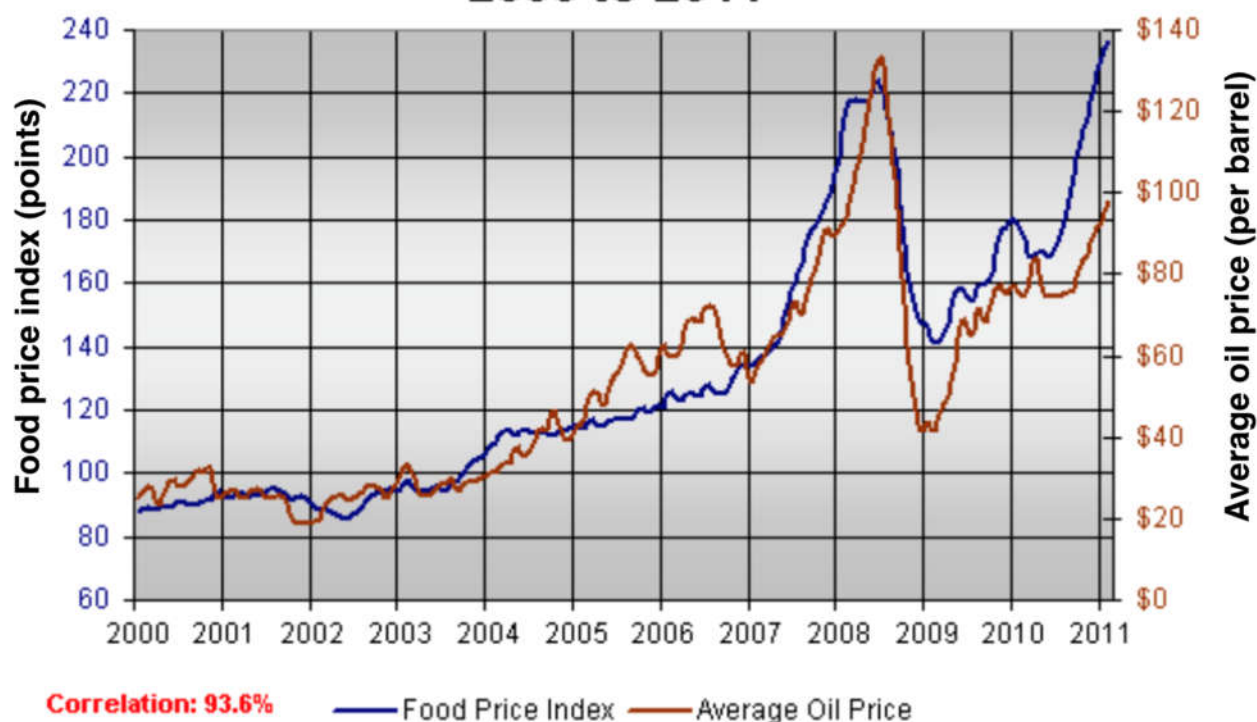
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, May 25, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph answer

The graph below shows changes in global food and oil prices between 2000 and 2011.

World Food and Oil Prices 2000 to 2011



Here's my band 9 answer:

The line graph compares the average price of a barrel of oil with the food price index over a period of 11 years.

It is clear that average global prices of both oil and food rose considerably between 2000 and 2011. Furthermore, the trends for both commodities were very similar, and so a strong correlation (93.6%) is suggested.

In the year 2000, the average global oil price was close to \$25 per barrel, and the food price index stood at just under 90 points. Over the following four years both prices remained relatively stable, before rising steadily between 2004 and 2007. By 2007, the average oil price had more than doubled, to nearly \$60 per barrel, and food prices had risen by around 50 points.

A dramatic increase in both commodity prices was seen from 2007 to 2008, with oil prices reaching a peak of approximately \$130 per barrel and the food price index rising to 220 points. However, by the beginning of 2009 the price of oil had dropped by roughly \$90, and the food price index was down by about 80 points. Finally, in 2011, the average oil price rose once again, to nearly \$100 per barrel, while the food price index reached its peak, at almost 240 points.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Thursday, June 01, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: verb tenses

Let's have a look at the different verb tenses that I used in last week's [answer](#).

Present simple - to describe what the graph shows us *now*

- the line graph compares
- a strong correlation is suggested (passive)

Past simple - to describe past years e.g. 2000 to 2011

- prices of both oil and food rose
- the trends for both commodities were very similar
- the average global oil price was close to \$25
- the food price index stood at just under 90 points
- both prices remained relatively stable
- the average oil price rose once again
- the food price index reached its peak
- a dramatic increase in both commodity prices was seen (passive)

Past perfect - to describe what happened *before and up to a past time*

- By 2007, the average oil price had more than doubled
- and (by 2007) food prices had risen by around 50 points

Past perfect and past simple in the same sentence

- By the beginning of 2009 the price of oil had dropped by roughly \$90, and the food price index was down by about 80 points.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Thursday, June 08, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'educational problems' table

Let's look at another 'table' task. There are too many figures in the table, so which ones would you select for your description?

The table below gives information about the problems faced by children in two primary schools in 2005 and 2015.

Percentage of children with different educational problems in two primary schools

Problem Areas	2005		2015	
	School A	School B	School A	School B
Reading ability	22	8	23	9
Handwriting	28	7	28	7
Spelling	30	5	25	10
Listening skills	35	11	20	12
Verbal expression of ideas	35	14	21	15
Concentration in lessons	40	15	18	15
Following instructions	42	6	18	12

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Saturday, June 10, 2017

IELTS Grammar: with + ing

Look at the following sentence from one of my task 1 answers:

A dramatic increase in both commodity prices was seen from 2007 to 2008, **with** oil prices reaching a peak of approximately \$130 per barrel and the food price index **rising** to 220 points.

Notice how this sentence is written: first I state the overall trend, then there is a comma, then I add the statistics using "with + ing".

See if you can write a similar sentence using the information below.

- The number of young people who attended UK universities rose (2006 to 2015)
- Female university entrants: an increase of 20,000 over the 9-year period
- Male university entrants: peaked at 157,000 in 2011

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(64\)](#)

FROM SIMON

Here's my sentence:

Attendance at UK universities rose between 2006 and 2015, with the number of female university entrants **increasing** by 20,000 over the 9-year period, and the number of male entrants **peaking** at 157,000 in 2011.

Note: there are several other correct ways to write this sentence, and most people who commented above seem to have the right idea.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Monday, June 12, 2017 at 18:15](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'educational problems' answer

Let's look at the first two paragraphs of my model answer for the task below.

The table below gives information about the problems faced by children in two primary schools in 2005 and 2015.

Percentage of children with different educational problems in two primary schools

Problem Areas	2005		2015	
	School A	School B	School A	School B
Reading ability	22	8	23	9
Handwriting	28	7	28	7
Spelling	30	5	25	10
Listening skills	35	11	20	12
Verbal expression of ideas	35	14	21	15
Concentration in lessons	40	15	18	15
Following instructions	42	6	18	12

Introduction: paraphrase the question statement

The table compares two primary schools in terms of the proportions of their pupils who experienced seven different educational problems in the years 2005 and 2015.

Overview: describe two main or general points

It is noticeable that school A had higher proportions of children with all seven educational difficulties in both years. However, while school A managed to reduce the incidence of most of the problems between 2005 and 2015, school B saw an overall rise in the percentage of children who were struggling.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Thursday, June 22, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: correct the mistakes

Here are some sentences that people wrote below [this lesson](#). Can you correct the mistakes and/or change and improve the sentences?

1. In 2005, School A faced major problem in Following Instructions about 42%.
2. In comparison to 2005, spelling and following instructions have doubled over 10 years.

3. For example, 6% students having troubles in spelling in 2005.
4. Handwriting accounted level off with 28% in two years, yet it was the most percentage of the problem in 2015.
5. Followed by the same number 35% of students in listening skills and verbal expression of ideas.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Thursday, June 29, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: corrected sentences

Here are my corrections for the sentences that I showed you last week.

1) Sentence containing mistakes

In 2005, School A faced major problem in Following Instructions about 42%.

Corrected version

In 2005, 42% of children in school A had difficulty following instructions.

2) Sentence containing mistakes

In comparison to 2005, spelling and following instructions have doubled over 10 years.

Corrected version

In school B, the proportion of pupils who struggled with spelling and following instructions doubled over the 10-year period.

3) Sentence containing mistakes

For example, 6% students having troubles in spelling in 2005.

Corrected version

For example, 6% of students in school B had trouble with spelling in 2005.

4) Sentence containing mistakes

Handwriting accounted level off with 28% in two years, yet it was the most percentage of the problem in 2015.

Corrected version

Handwriting became school A's most significant problem in 2015, although the percentage of children experiencing handwriting difficulties at that school was the same in both years.

5) Sentence containing mistakes

Followed by the same number 35% of students in listening skills and verbal expression of ideas.

Corrected version

In 2005, 35% of students in school A were struggling with listening skills and verbal expression of ideas.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#)

Thursday, July 06, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: main paragraph decisions

When the graph, chart or table shows a lot of information, it's difficult to decide what to put in your main 'details' paragraphs.

Here's a method that I often use to help me with this decision: ***expand on the two points that you made in your 'overview' paragraph.***

For example, look at [this lesson](#). We can use the two points in the overview paragraph to guide our decisions about what to put in paragraphs 3 and 4:

Paragraph 3

Expand on the sentence about school A having higher proportions of children with educational problems. In other words, we can make some easy comparisons between school A and B. Don't worry about changes in the figures or comparing the two years.

Paragraph 4

Now expand on the sentence about changes i.e. falling percentages in school A and rising figures in school B.

I'll use this technique to write my full answer next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Thursday, July 13, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'educational problems' full answer

Here's my full answer for the table task shown in [this lesson](#):

Percentage of children with different educational problems in two primary schools

Problem Areas	2005		2015	
	School A	School B	School A	School B
Reading ability	22	8	23	9
Handwriting	28	7	28	7
Spelling	30	5	25	10
Listening skills	35	11	20	12
Verbal expression of ideas	35	14	21	15
Concentration in lessons	40	15	18	15
Following instructions	42	6	18	12

The table compares two primary schools in terms of the proportions of their pupils who experienced seven different educational problems in the years 2005 and 2015.

It is noticeable that school A had higher proportions of children with all seven educational difficulties in both years. However, while school A managed to reduce the incidence of most of the problems between 2005 and 2015, school B saw an overall rise in the percentage of children who were struggling.

In 2005, 42% of school A's pupils found it difficult to follow instructions, whereas only 6% of pupils in school B experienced this problem. Similarly, between 30 and 40 per cent of children attending school A had problems in the areas of spelling, listening, verbal expression and concentration in lessons, while the equivalent figures for school B stood at between 5 and 15 per cent.

In 2015, the difference between the two schools was less pronounced. Notably, the proportion of children who struggled to follow instructions fell by 24% in school A, and this school also saw falls of 22%, 15%, 14% and 5% in the figures for children who had problems with concentration, listening, verbal expression and spelling. In school B, however, the proportion of children who struggled with spelling and following instructions doubled, to 10% and 12% respectively, and there was almost no change in the incidence of listening, verbal or concentration problems.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Saturday, July 15, 2017

IELTS Writing Advice: analyse my answers

There are lots of sample answers for writing task 1 and 2 in the lessons on this blog. If you analyse them carefully, you'll learn about planning or selecting ideas, paragraph building and sentence structure; you'll also find some good vocabulary ideas that you can 'steal' from me.

Another thing you'll notice is that my answers are not perfect (although they are good enough for a band 9). There is always something that could be added, or an idea that could be better developed. But this is normal when you have a time limit, and when you're only expected to write 150 or 250 words.

Next Thursday, I'll write a short analysis of the writing task 1 answer that I shared earlier this week ([here](#)). Maybe you could analyse that answer too: what can we learn from it, and were there any imperfections?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [IELTS Writing Task 2](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Thursday, July 20, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: answer analysis

On Saturday I suggested that you analyse the task 1 answer that I shared in [this lesson](#). Here's my quick analysis:

Task achievement

The answer fulfils the requirements of the task by giving a clear overview of the main trends shown in the table, and by presenting key details. Good comparisons are made between the two schools and the two years.

Coherence and cohesion

Paragraphing is clear, information is presented in a logical order, and cohesion (e.g. linking and comparing) does its job without attracting too much attention.

Lexical resource

A wide range of vocabulary is used in a natural and sophisticated way, with no mistakes. Some less common items of vocabulary are used.

Grammatical range and accuracy

Most importantly, there are no mistakes in the answer. A range of sentence structures is used with full flexibility and accuracy.

Note:

Can you find some examples of good cohesion (linking / comparing) and less common vocabulary in my answer?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

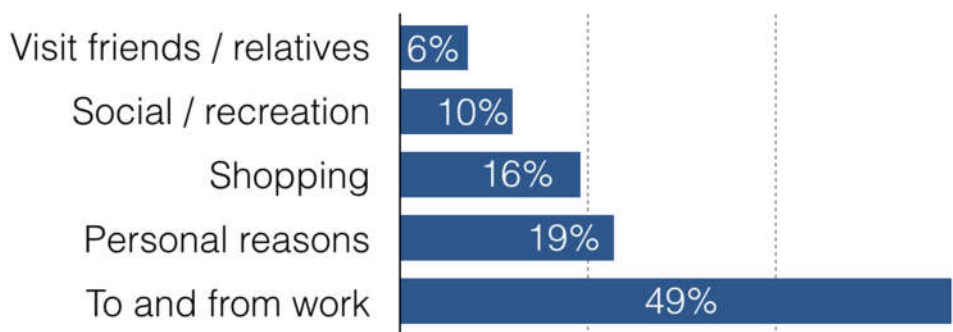
Thursday, August 03, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart and pie chart

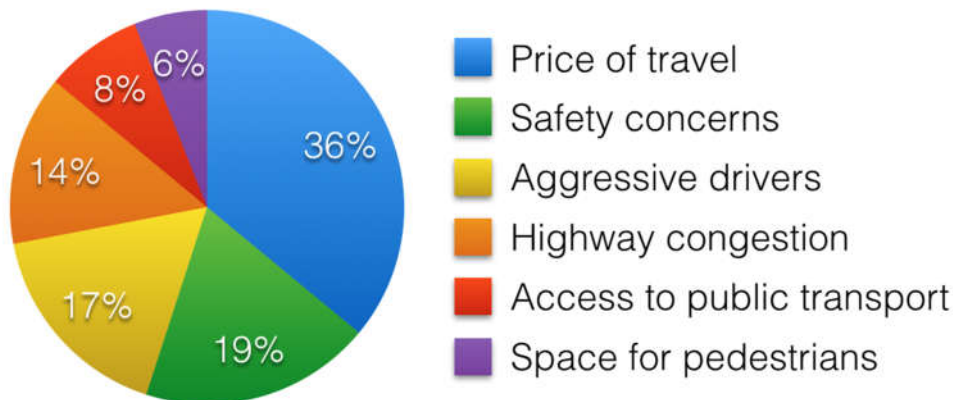
Let's have a look at a task with two different charts:

The charts below show reasons for travel and the main issues for the travelling public in the US in 2009.

Reasons for travel



Main issues for the travelling public



(Source: [U.S. Department of Transportation](#))

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(57\)](#)

Thursday, August 10, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: synonyms for 'shows'

In [this lesson](#) I explained why I only recommend using **shows**, **illustrates** and **compares** in your task 1 introduction. There are plenty of other synonyms for the word "shows", but almost all of them will look strange in the context of a description of a graph or chart.

One other possibility that I also occasionally use is the phrase "gives information about". Look at the introduction below, for example.

[Click here](#) to see the task. Here's my introduction:

*The bar chart and pie chart **give information about** why US residents travelled and what travel problems they experienced in the year 2009.*

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#)

Thursday, August 17, 2017

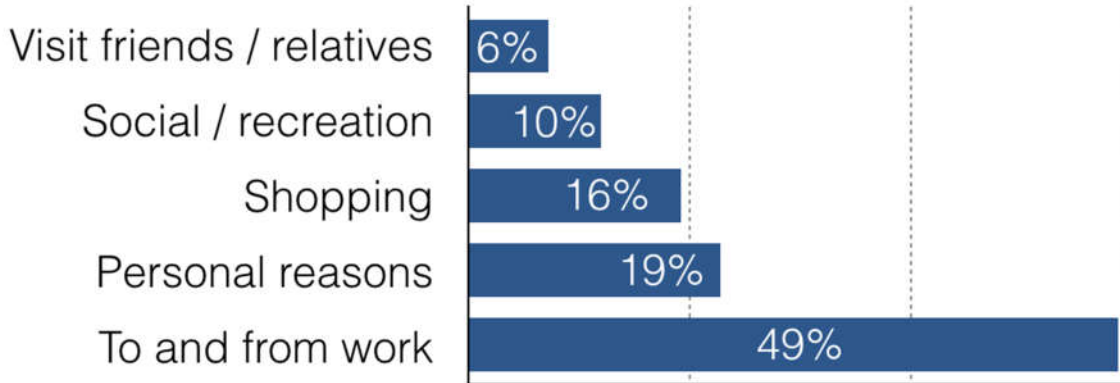
IELTS Writing Task 1: two charts overview

When you are given two different charts, the overview paragraph is quite easy: just write one sentence about each chart, describing a main feature of each.

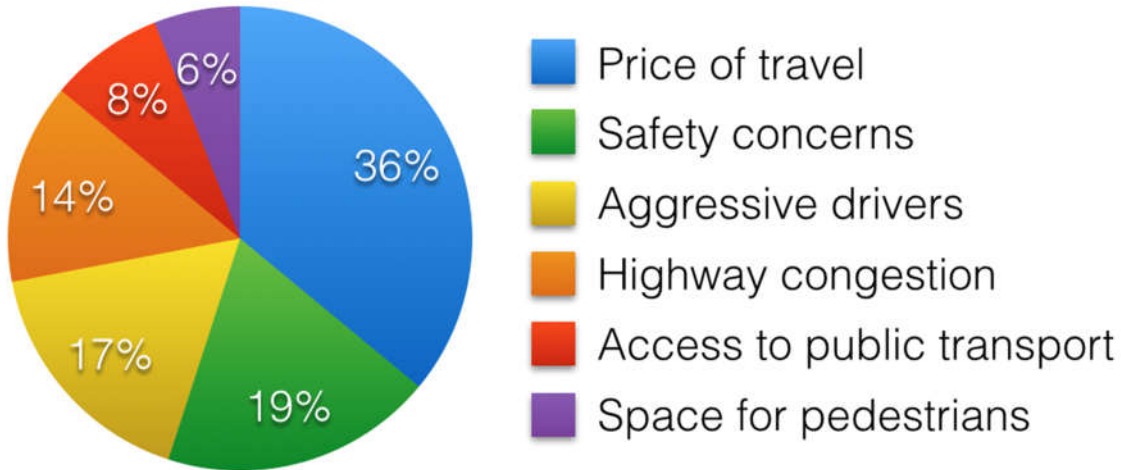
Here's the two chart task that we've been looking at in recent lessons:

The charts below show reasons for travel and the main issues for the travelling public in the US in 2009.

Reasons for travel



Main issues for the travelling public



And here's my 2-sentence overview paragraph:

It is clear that the principal reason why Americans travelled in 2009 was to commute to and from work. In the same year, the primary concern of Americans, with regard to the trips they made, was the cost of travelling.

Note:

I've used several examples of paraphrasing in the paragraph above (when you compare it to the question statement). Can you see them?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Thursday, August 24, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: repeat, but with numbers

In last week's [lesson](#) I wrote the following sentence in my overview paragraph:

It is clear that the principal reason why Americans travelled in 2009 was to commute to and from work.

Moving on to the 'details' paragraphs, it's fine to repeat this point because we're now going to include the number or statistic. For example:

In 2009, 49% of the trips made by Americans.....

Can you finish the sentence above?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

I would probably write something like this:

In 2009, 49% of the trips made by Americans WERE for the purpose of commuting.

Posted by: Simon | [Tuesday, August 29, 2017 at 13:13](#)

Thursday, August 31, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: two different charts

When the task is to describe two completely different charts, there's no need to compare them; we can simply write a separate paragraph about each one.

So here's the paragraph structure that we can use for [this question](#):

1. Introduction: paraphrase the question statement (see [this lesson](#))
2. Overview: write one general sentence about each chart (like [this](#))
3. First chart: describe the details (2 to 4 sentences)
4. Second chart: describe the details (2 to 4 sentences)

I'll show you my full answer in next Thursday's lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

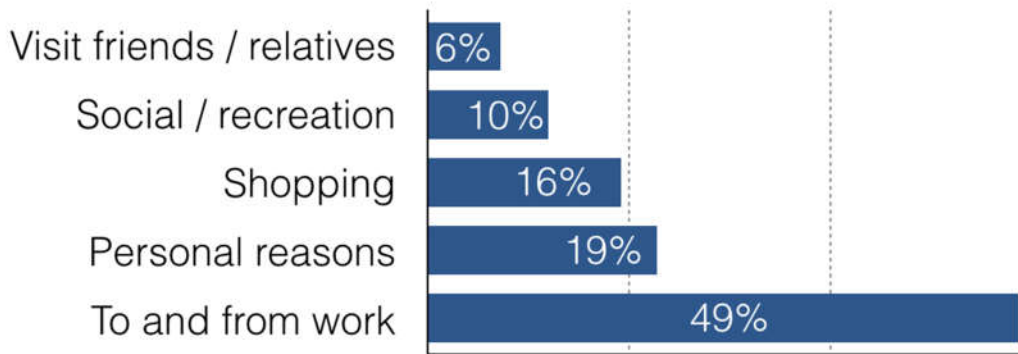
Thursday, September 07, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: two charts answer

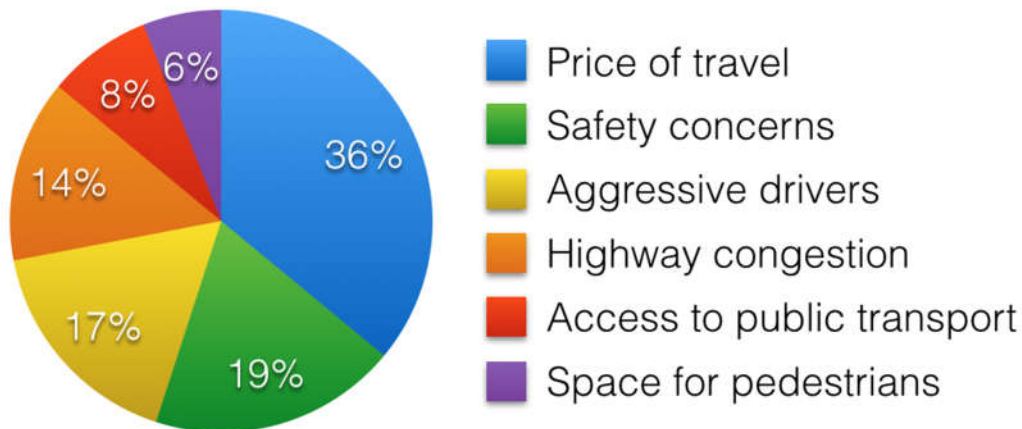
I've now written my full sample answer for the task below.

The charts below show reasons for travel and the main issues for the travelling public in the US in 2009.

Reasons for travel



Main issues for the travelling public



The bar chart and pie chart give information about why US residents travelled and what travel problems they experienced in the year 2009.

It is clear that the principal reason why Americans travelled in 2009 was to commute to and from work. In the same year, the primary concern of Americans, with regard to the trips they made, was the cost of travelling.

Looking more closely at the bar chart, we can see that 49% of the trips made by Americans in 2009 were for the purpose of commuting. By contrast, only 6% of trips were visits to friends or relatives, and one in ten trips were for social or recreation reasons. Shopping was cited as the reason for 16% of all travel, while unspecified 'personal reasons' accounted for the remaining 19%.

According to the pie chart, price was the key consideration for 36% of American travellers. Almost one in five people cited safety as their foremost travel concern, while aggressive driving and highway congestion were the main issues for 17% and 14% of the travelling public. Finally, a total of 14% of those surveyed thought that access to public transport or space for pedestrians were the most important travel issues.

(201 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Sunday, September 10, 2017

IELTS Vocabulary: paraphrasing

Did you notice the following examples of paraphrasing in the task 1 answer that I shared on Thursday?

- show = give information about
- public in the US = US residents, Americans, those surveyed
- reasons for travel = why... travelled, trips were for the purpose of, for... reasons, was cited as the reason for... , accounted for...
- travel to and from work = to commute, commuting
- price = cost
- main issue(s) = problems, primary concern, key consideration, foremost concern, most important issue

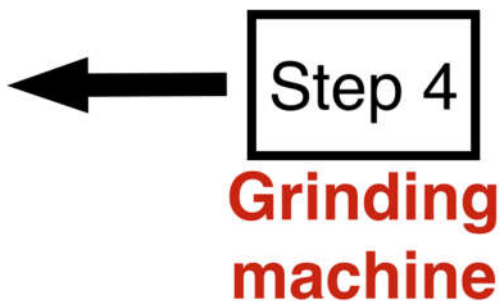
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1, Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Thursday, September 14, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: passive for processes

When describing a graph or chart, you almost never need to use the passive. However, you probably will use the passive when describing a process diagram.

Imagine we have a diagram that shows the process of recycling used glass. One step in the process is labelled "grinding machine" (*to grind* means to crush or reduce into small particles).



Do you know the past participle of the verb *grind*? If you don't, you won't be able to make a passive sentence. But don't worry; there are various ways to describe this step.

Using a different verb:

1. Next, the glass passes through a grinding machine. (active form of 'pass')
2. Next, the glass is passed through a grinding machine. (passive form of 'pass')
3. Next, a grinding machine is used to crush the glass. (passive form of 'use')

If you know the verb 'grind' and its past participle 'ground':

1. Next, a machine grinds the glass. (active)
2. Next, the glass is ground in a machine. (passive)

I would probably use the last sentence above in my report, but the others are all acceptable.

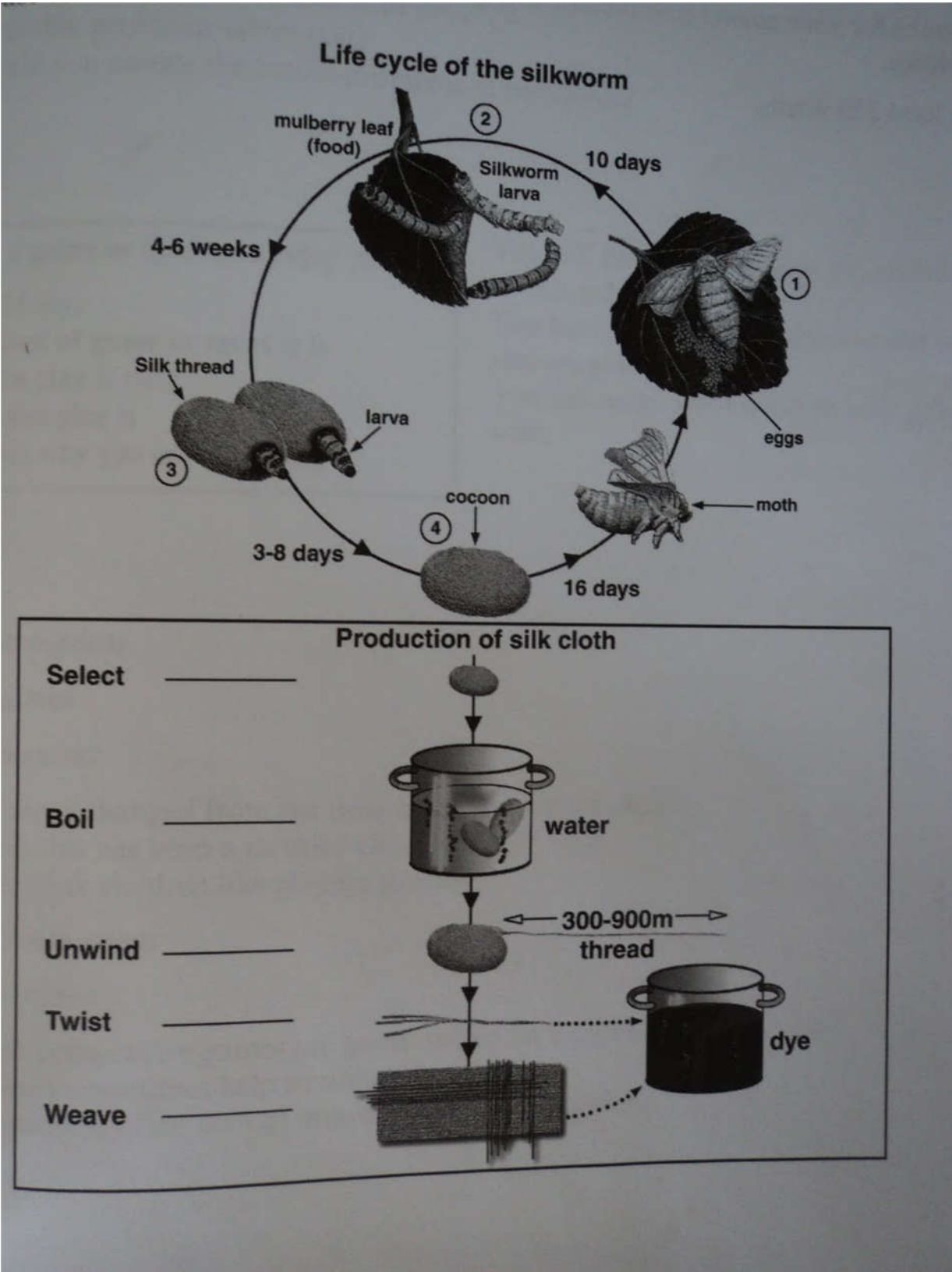
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#)

Thursday, September 21, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: silkworm life cycle

There's a nice task about the life cycle of a silkworm in Cambridge IELTS book 6 ([click here](#) to see it).

I wrote an introduction and overview for this task back in 2010 ([here](#)), but for some reason I didn't share my finished answer. I'll publish it next Thursday, but maybe you could try writing your own paragraphs before then.



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Thursday, September 28, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: silkworm life cycle answer

Here's my answer for the 'silkworm' diagram task that you can see [here](#).

The diagrams illustrate the stages in the life of a silkworm and the process of producing silk cloth.

There are four main stages in the life cycle of the silkworm, from eggs to adult moth. The process of silk cloth production involves six steps, from silkworm cocoon to silk material.

At the first stage in the life cycle of a silkworm, the moth lays its eggs. Around ten days later, silkworm larvae hatch from the eggs; these larvae feed on mulberry leaves. Then, after four to six weeks, the larvae become covered in silk thread, and it takes between three and eight days for a full cocoon to be produced.

For silk cloth production, a cocoon is first selected and then boiled in water. After boiling, the silk thread that makes up the cocoon is unwound, and then several strands of thread are twisted together. At the fifth and sixth stages in the process, the thread can either be dyed and then woven into silk fabric, or it can be woven first and then dyed subsequently.

(176 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)
Thursday, October 05, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: active and passive for processes

An interesting point about the 'silkworm' answer that I shared [last Thursday](#) is that it contains one paragraph of mostly active verbs and another paragraph in which I used the passive.

Active verbs for a natural process:

- the moth lays its eggs
- silkworm larvae hatch from the eggs
- these larvae feed on mulberry leaves

Passive verbs for a production process:

- a cocoon is selected and then boiled in water
- the silk thread is unwound
- strands of thread are twisted together
- the thread can be dyed
- it can be woven

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#)

Thursday, October 12, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: double, twice as, twofold

A few students have asked me about how to use 'double', 'twice as', 'three times', 'twofold', 'threefold' etc. Compare how each word/phrase is used in the following examples:

1. 'double' (verb)

The number of unemployed people doubled between 2005 and 2009.

2. 'twice as...as/compared to', 'three times as...as/compared to'

There were twice as many unemployed people in 2009 as in 2005.
Twice as many people were unemployed in 2009 compared to 2005.

3. 'twofold', 'threefold' (adjective or adverb)

There was a twofold increase in the number of unemployed people between 2005 and 2009.
(adjective with the noun 'increase')

The number of unemployed people increased twofold between 2005 and 2009. (adverb with the verb 'increase')

Try using these forms in your own sentences. Make sure you follow the patterns.

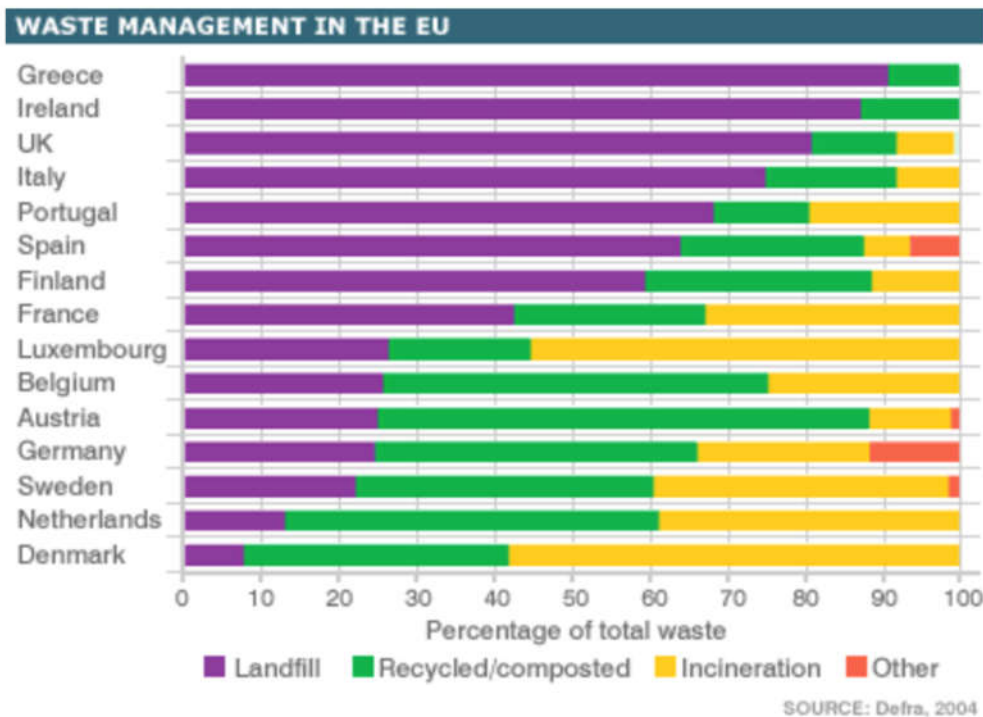
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Thursday, October 19, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: recycling chart

Following on from yesterday's task 2 topic, let's look at a task 1 bar chart about recycling and waste management.

The chart below compares levels of recycling, as well as some less environmentally friendly forms of waste management, in fifteen European countries.



Landfill: burying waste in the ground

Incineration: disposal of waste by burning

Composting: using decayed organic waste as fertiliser

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'recycling' chart introduction

Let's write an introduction for the chart in last week's [lesson](#). Here's the task description again:

The chart below compares levels of recycling, as well as some less environmentally friendly forms of waste management, in fifteen European countries.

Here are some suggestions for paraphrasing:

- The chart compares = The bar chart shows
- levels of recycling = the percentage of waste that is recycled
- less environmentally friendly forms of waste management = put into landfill, incinerated, or disposed of in other ways
- in fifteen European countries = in various EU countries

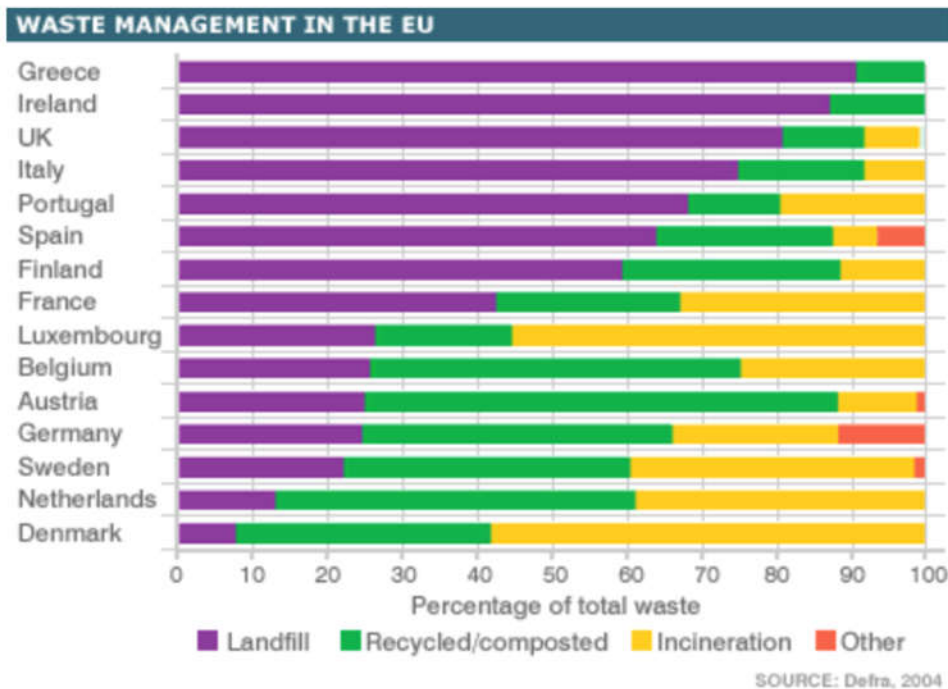
Can you use the suggestions above to make a new introduction sentence?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)

Thursday, November 02, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: overview, highest and lowest

Look again at the chart below, and think about what you would write in your 'overview' paragraph. Choose two main or general points.



Here's a tip:

I normally suggest that you look for something very general, like an overall trend, for the overview. However, if you're stuck, it's ok to choose the highest and lowest. In this case, I would choose the highest and lowest figures for recycling (i.e. Austria and Greece).

Here's a 2-sentence overview using the tip above:

It is noticeable that Austria is the most environmentally friendly country, in the sense that it recycles the largest percentage of waste. By contrast, Greece stands out as the country that recycles the least and puts the highest proportion of its waste into landfill.

Note:

I'll say a bit more about choosing the highest and lowest in Sunday's lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Sunday, November 05, 2017

IELTS Advice: more about 'highest and lowest'

In Thursday's [lesson](#) about IELTS writing task 1, I wrote that it's ok to describe the highest and lowest figures in your 'overview' paragraph. However, thanks to a comment by Erika, I've realised that I should add some extra advice or some warnings about this:

- First, it's important to remember that the best type of overview is one that describes overall trends, rather than specific details. The highest and lowest figures on a chart are normally considered to be specific details, so they shouldn't be your first choice for the overview.
- If you can't see a clear general trend, it's ok to describe the highest and lowest, but don't mention any numbers.
- Look for the highest and lowest category overall, rather than a single highest or lowest point. For example, if you're writing an overview about a line graph, it's fine to say that one of the lines was highest for most of the period, but don't describe any specific peaks (save them for the 'details' paragraphs).

The overview that I wrote on Thursday was fine because the main aim of the chart was not to show trends. Picking out the most and least environmentally friendly country made sense in this particular case, and I didn't mention specific numbers.

However, I want to make it clear that **describing the highest and lowest should not be your first choice method for writing the overview**. Look for overall trends first.

Task:

Next Thursday I'll show you an alternative overview paragraph for the "waste chart" question. Can you suggest which "main or general points" about the chart I could include, instead of describing the highest and lowest?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

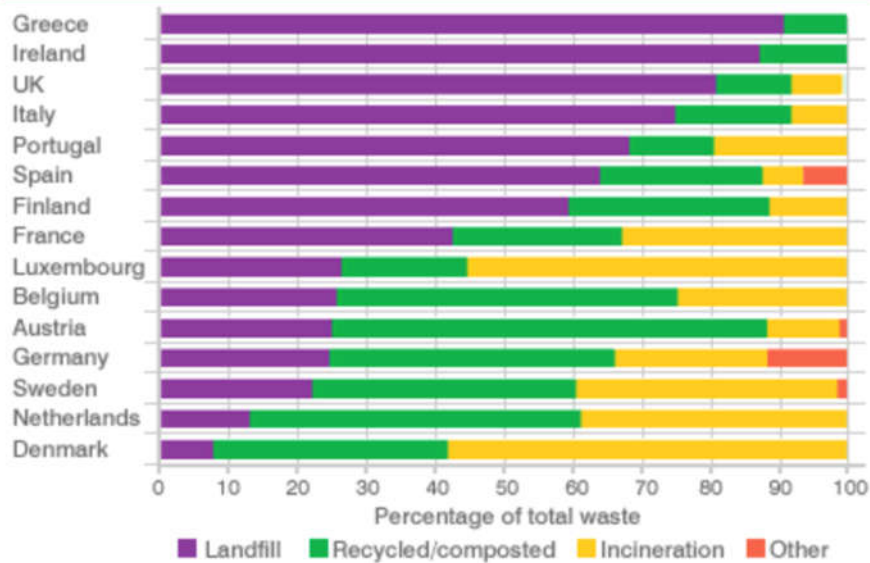
Thursday, November 09, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: a more general overview

Last week I showed you a "highest and lowest" overview, but I also said that a more general overview would have been better.

Let's look at the chart again:

WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE EU



Instead of writing about the "highest and lowest" figures, let's describe something more general. For example, landfill seems to be the most popular form of waste management overall, and only two countries (Austria and Belgium) recycle at least 50% of their waste.

So, here's an overview using the observations above:

If we look at the fifteen EU countries as a whole, it is clear that more waste goes to landfill sites than to any other refuse management facility. In fact, while around half of the countries put the majority of their waste into landfill sites, only two countries recycle at least half of the waste that they produce.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

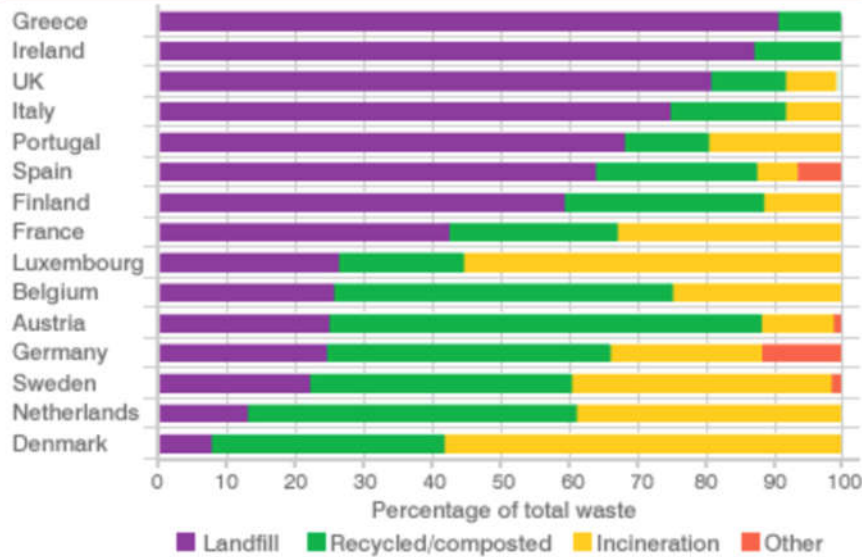
Thursday, November 16, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: describing numbers correctly

The key skill in writing task 1 is to be able to describe numbers correctly. If you can't write a correct sentence that describes a number, you're unlikely to get a good score in this part of the test.

Look again at the following chart, and try the exercise below it.

WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE EU



SOURCE: Defra, 2004

Can you describe the information below, using one full sentence for each point?

1. Recycling percentages for Austria and Belgium, mentioning that they are the most environmentally friendly countries.
2. Figures for landfill and recycling in Greece, mentioning that it is the country that puts the highest proportion of waste into landfill.
3. Figures for incineration of waste in Denmark and Luxembourg, mentioning that only these two countries incinerate over half of their waste.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)
Thursday, November 23, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: describing details

Here are my answers to the task that I gave you in last week's [lesson](#):

1) Figures for the two countries that recycle the most

Austria and Belgium are the most environmentally friendly of the fifteen countries, recycling around 60% and 50% of their waste.

2) Figures for recycling and landfill in Greece

By contrast, Greece only recycles 10% of its waste and is the country that puts the highest proportion of refuse (90%)* into landfill.

3) Figures for incineration in Denmark and Luxembourg

Only two countries, Denmark and Luxembourg, incinerate over half of the waste that they produce; more precisely, figures for incineration are almost 60% and roughly 55% in the two countries respectively.

*It's ok to put numbers in brackets, but don't do this more than once or twice in your answer.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

IELTS Writing Task 1: task 1 writing in 'real life'

I'll finish the [waste chart](#) question next Thursday, but today I want to show you a 'real' example of some writing in the **style** of writing task 1.

Here are some sentences from a BBC article about the UK population:

- The UK population **was estimated to stand at** 65.6 million in 2016.
- 2016 **saw** the biggest UK population rise for 70 years.
- **Over the decade from** mid-2016, projected growth in England's population is put at 5.9%, **for** Northern Ireland **the figure is** 4.2%, **while** for Scotland and Wales the percentages are 3.2% and 3.1% **respectively**.
- The study puts projected UK population growth between 2015 and 2040 at 16%, **compared with** 10% growth **for** France and 4% for Germany.
- The study also says that the number of people aged 85 and over **will have doubled from** 1.6m in 2016 **to** 3.2m in 2041.

The reason why I wanted to share these sentences is that they are written in a very similar style to the style that I use in my model answers here on the blog. You'll see that I've highlighted some typical task 1 vocabulary.

If you'd like to read the full article, [click here](#). You might even notice a few mistakes in the original article - it was probably written too quickly!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

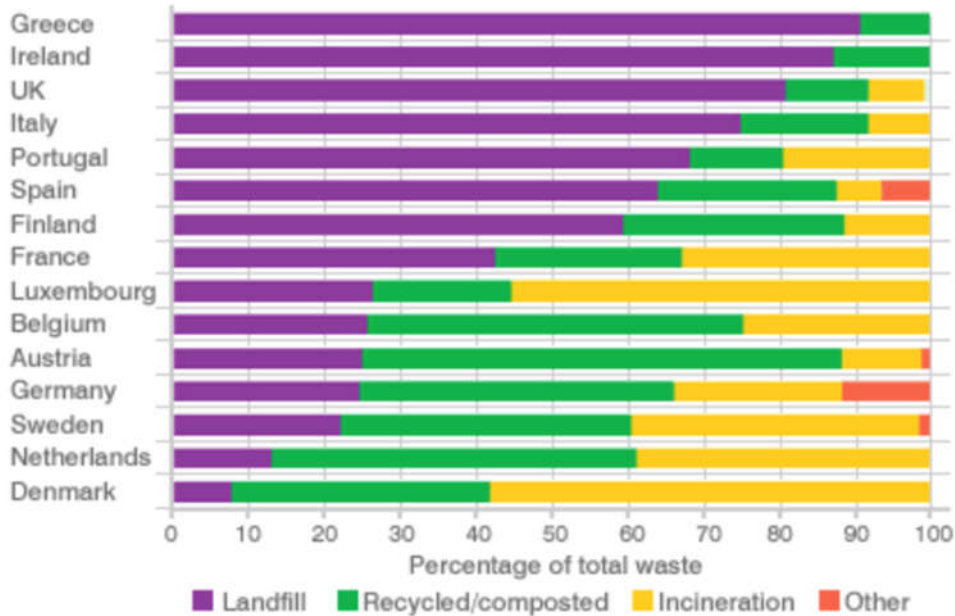
Thursday, December 07, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'waste chart' answer

Today I'm sharing my full sample answer for the task below.

The chart below compares levels of recycling, as well as some less environmentally friendly forms of waste management, in fifteen European countries.

WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE EU



SOURCE: Defra, 2004

The bar chart shows the percentage of waste that is recycled, put into landfill or incinerated in various EU countries.

If we look at the fifteen EU countries as a whole, it is clear that more waste goes to landfill sites than to any other refuse management facility. In fact, while around half of the countries put the majority of their waste into landfill sites, only two countries recycle at least 50% of the waste that they produce.

Austria and Belgium are the most environmentally friendly of the fifteen countries, recycling around 60% and 50% of their waste respectively. Germany, Sweden and Belgium also appear to have effective recycling programmes, resulting in roughly 40% of waste being processed in this way in each country.

Other EU countries recycle far less. Greece, Ireland and the UK, for example, only recycle around 10% of refuse, and put between 80 and 90 per cent of their waste into landfill. Finally, while most non-recycled waste in the EU area goes to landfill, four countries, namely Luxembourg, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark, incinerate more waste than they bury.

(184 words, band 9)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Thursday, December 14, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: using model sentences

Here's a nice exercise that you could try: Take a good sentence from one of my lessons, and rewrite it using the exact same structure but different information. Here are two examples:

1) More waste goes to landfill sites than to any other refuse management facility.

Now I'm going to use the same structure, but invent some new information:

More British people go on holiday to Spain than to any other country.

2) Austria and Belgium are the most environmentally friendly of the fifteen countries, recycling around 60% and 50% of their waste respectively.

Again, I'll invent my own sentence using the same structure:

Apple and Google are the most successful of the five tech companies, recording profits of \$45 billion and \$20 billion respectively.

Task:

Can you create your own invented sentences using the two models above, or by choosing a different model sentence from one of my lessons?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(36\)](#)

Thursday, December 21, 2017

IELTS Writing Task 1: the most important skill

Probably the most important skill for writing task 1 is being able to describe numbers correctly. IELTS candidates make a lot of basic mistakes in this area.

Take the simple table below for example. It shows the percentages of people who used two different forms of communication in the year 2012.

Form of communication	2012
Text message	95%
Email	52%

Can you write one correct sentence to describe the numbers in the table? Here is the big mistake that examiners see all the time:

In 2012, text message was 95%, while email was only 52%. (don't write this)

Can you see what the problem is here? Try translating the sentence into your language exactly as it is. Does it make sense?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(94\)](#)

FROM SIMON:

I'm glad it's clear that you can't say "text message was 95%". Of course, 95% refers to the proportion of PEOPLE who communicated by text message. So, we could write something easy like:

In 2012, 95% of people communicated by text message, while only 52% used email.

Posted by: [Simon](#) | [Tuesday, December 26, 2017 at 12:57](#)

Thursday, January 04, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: paraphrasing practice

A good way to practise your task 1 writing skills is to take a sentence and try to rewrite it in several different ways.

Take this sentence for example:

Projected growth in England's population is put at 5.9%, while the predicted figures for Northern Ireland and Scotland are 4.2% and 3.2%.

Can you rewrite this sentence in two or three different ways? Feel free to experiment with two sentences instead of one, as well as different sentence orders and structures.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(38\)](#)

Thursday, January 11, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: easy paraphrasing

Here's the sentence that I asked you to paraphrase in last Thursday's lesson:

Projected growth in England's population is put at 5.9%, while the predicted figures for Northern Ireland and Scotland are 4.2% and 3.2%.

And here are two easy ways to paraphrase it:

1) Put all three figures together and use 'respectively':

The populations of England, Northern Ireland and Scotland are expected to grow by 5.9%, 4.2% and 3.2% respectively.

2) Divide the information between two sentences:

It is predicted that England will see a 5.9% increase in its population. By contrast, lower population growth rates are projected for Northern Ireland, at 4.2%, and Scotland, at only 3.2%.

Note: I've underlined a few other interesting features of sentence 2 above.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Thursday, January 18, 2018

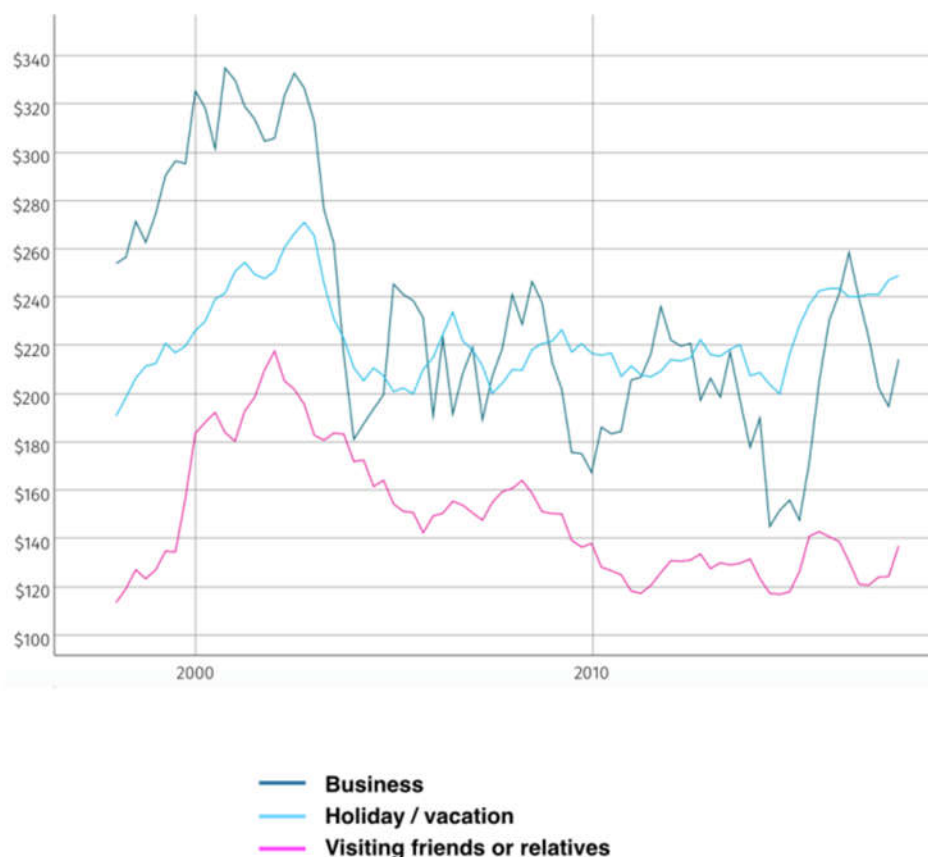
IELTS Writing Task 1: 'daily spending' line graph

Over the next few weeks I'll show you how I would describe the line graph below. Feel free to try it yourself, or to share your ideas in the "comments" area.

Tip: Ignore the fluctuations. Focus on overall trends and a few key figures.

The graph below shows the average daily spend of three categories of international visitor to New Zealand from 1997 to 2017.

Average daily spending by visitors to New Zealand, 1997 - 2017



(Source: <http://www.mbie.govt.nz>)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(71\)](#)

Thursday, January 25, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction paraphrasing

Here's the question statement from last week's [lesson](#):

The graph below shows the average daily spend of three categories of international visitor to New Zealand from 1997 to 2017.

An easy way to paraphrase this sentence (for our introduction) is to change its order. I'll try to put the part about "visitors to New Zealand from 1997 to 2017" before the part about "the average daily spend".

Here's my introduction:

The line graph compares three types of traveller visiting New Zealand between 1997 and 2017 in terms of the average amount of money that they spent each day during their trips.

Question:

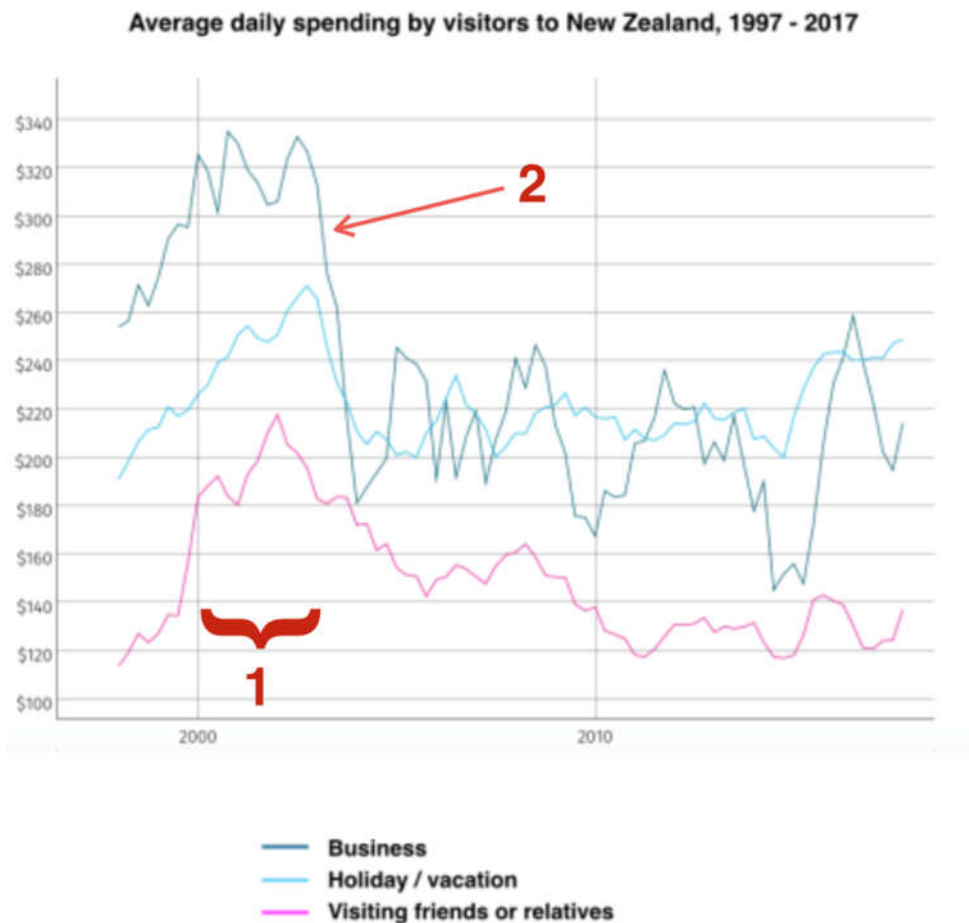
What was the key phrase that helped me to change the order of the sentence?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Thursday, February 01, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'daily spending' overview

On the line graph below, I've labelled the two *main points* or *general trends* that I'll describe in my overview. Look at the big red numbers 1 and 2.



Point 1 refers to the years when all three lines were at their highest points. Point 2 refers to the line for "business visitors", who appear to have spent the most overall.

So here's my overview paragraph:

It is noticeable that overall spending by international visitors to New Zealand was at its highest between the years 2000 and 2003. Also, over the 20-year period shown, business travellers spent the most per day, on average, while people visiting friends or relatives spent the least.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Thursday, February 08, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: two things about the overview

Here are two useful questions that people have asked me about the overview paragraph that I shared in last week's [lesson](#), with my answers below.

1) Are two points always enough for the overview? Can we add a third point?

I believe that it's best to stick to just two main or general points, even if you can see other general trends that could be mentioned. Here are four reasons: First, I would rather describe two things **well** and then move on to the details. Second, I think the overview loses its impact if it becomes too long - it stops being a summary. Third, one of the requirements of task 1 is that you "select" information; you are not expected to describe everything. Finally, I like to have a method and stick to it, so I know what to do without having to think too much.

2) Is it better to put the overview after the introduction or at the end of the report?

Both positions are fine. However, I prefer to write the overview straight after the introduction for two reasons: First, I find it easier to describe general information before looking at specific details. Second, I know that the overview is very important. If you want a good score, you need to take the time to write a good overview; when people write the overview at the end, they often find themselves rushing and they do a bad job!

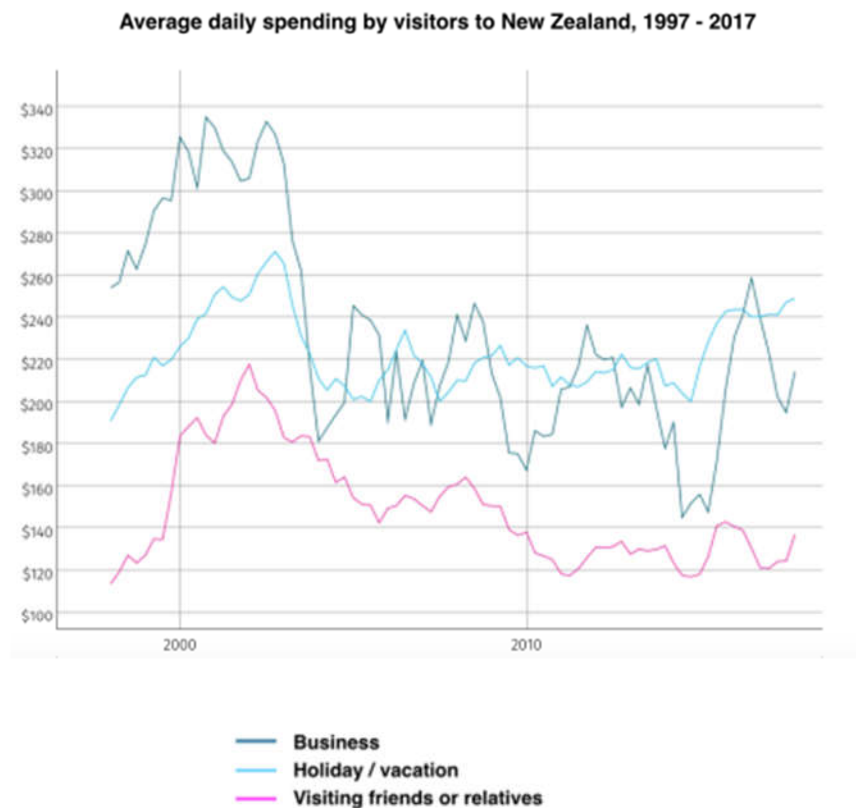
Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#)

Thursday, February 15, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: only 6 sentences!

After you've written the introduction and overview, you should aim to write just 6 sentences describing specific information. For example, here's the graph task that we've been looking at:

The graph below shows the average daily spend of three categories of international visitor to New Zealand from 1997 to 2017.



We've already written the introduction and overview in previous lessons. Now follow the instructions below to write 6 sentences to describe details.

Paragraph 3

- 1) Compare all three lines in 1997.
- 2) Compare the trends between 1997 and 2002/3.
- 3) Say what happened in 2003 - 2005.

Paragraph 4

- 4) Compare the figures for 'business' and 'holiday' visitors from 2005 to 2015.
- 5) Contrast the above with the figures for 'visiting friends or relatives'.
- 6) Compare all three lines in 2017.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Thursday, February 22, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: too long!

The report below describes the line graph in [this lesson](#). It's a really good answer (band 9), but the problem is that it contains 240 words.

I don't think many people would have time to write such a long answer in only 20 minutes, so let's try the following exercise.

Task: Edit the following report, reducing it to between 150 and 180 words.

The line graph compares three types of traveller visiting New Zealand between 1997 and 2017 in terms of the average amount of money that they spent each day during their trips.

It is noticeable that overall spending by international visitors to New Zealand was at its highest between the years 2000 and 2003. Also, over the 20-year period shown, business travellers spent the most per day, on average, while people visiting friends or relatives spent the least.

In 1997, business visitors to New Zealand spent an average of just under \$260 per day, while holidaymakers spent around \$190 and people visiting friends or relatives spent less than \$120. Over the following five or six years, spending by all three types of traveller increased dramatically, to peaks of around \$330, \$270 and \$220 for the three respective categories. However, visitor spending suddenly fell again between 2003 and 2005.

Over the 10 years from 2005 to 2015, similar daily travel expenditure levels can be seen for both business visitors and tourists, with figures fluctuating around the \$200 mark. By contrast, people who were in New Zealand to see friends or family spent roughly 60 to 80 dollars per day less than the other visitors over this time period. In the final year shown on the graph, 2017, the figures for average daily spending stood at approximately \$250, \$210 and \$140 respectively for vacationers, business people and those visiting family or friends.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Thursday, March 01, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: shorter version



Here's a shorter version of the answer that I shared in last week's [lesson](#):

The line graph compares three types of traveller to New Zealand between 1997 and 2017 in terms of their average daily expenditure.

It is noticeable that spending by these international visitors was at its highest between the years 2000 and 2003. Overall, business travellers spent the most per day, while people visiting friends or relatives spent the least.

In 1997, business visitors to New Zealand spent an average of almost \$260 per day, while holidaymakers spent around \$190 and people visiting friends or relatives spent less than \$120. Over the following five years, spending by all three types of traveller increased dramatically, to peaks of around \$330, \$270 and \$220. However, visitor spending suddenly fell again between 2003 and 2005.

From 2005 to 2015, the daily expenditure of business travellers and tourists fluctuated around the \$200 mark, whereas people visiting relations or friends spent roughly 60 to 80 dollars less per day. By 2017, daily spending had risen to approximately \$250, \$210 and \$140 respectively for vacationers, business people and those visiting loved ones.

(174 words)

Task:

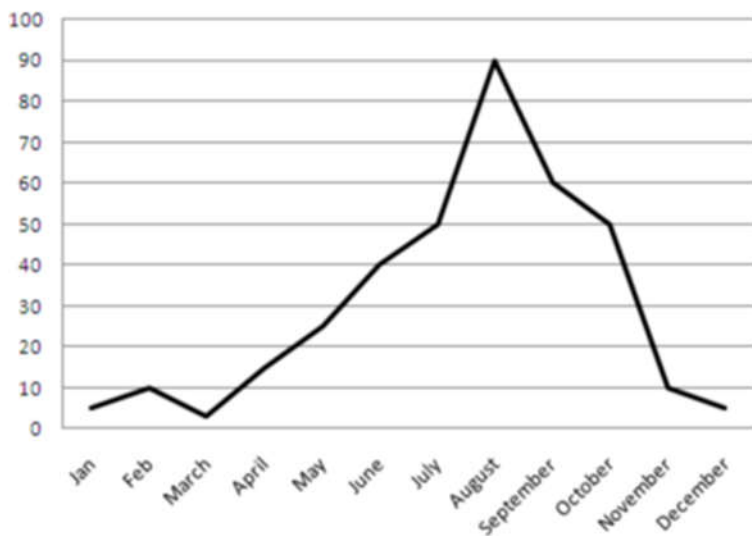
Compare the answer above with the longer report that I shared last week. How did I manage to reduce my answer from 240 words to 174 words? What can we learn from the differences between the two answers?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#)

Thursday, March 08, 2018

IELTS Writing Task 1: don't practise this!

I **don't** recommend that you practise describing graphs like the one below. Can you explain why I'm giving this advice?



Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

