IELTS WRITING 9.0 PROFICIENCY TASK 1

IELTS Academic + IELTS General Writing Task 1

MARC ROCHE

IELTS Writing 9.0 Proficiency Task 1©

IELTS Academic + IELTS General Writing Task 1.

Includes IELTS Writing Samples for Task 1 in IELTS Academic Training & IELTS General Training.

IELTS Writing Book 1 ©

By

Marc Roche

&

IELTS Writing Consultants

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Contents

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ABOUT THIS BOOK

IELTS WRITING BAND 9 PREMIUM VIDEO COURSE BY MARC ROCHE

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OTHER BOOKS BY MARC ROCHE AVAILABLE ON AMAZON!

1. INTRODUCTION TO IELTS ACADEMIC & IELTS GENERAL WRITING TASK 1

IELTS Academic Writing & IELTS General Writing Task 1 Overview
How Many Words Should I Write in My IELTS Task 1?
Introduction to IELTS Academic Writing
Analyze The Question
Introduction to IELTS General Writing

2. HOW TO DESCRIBE LINE GRAPHS IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING

Plan your report
How to Write a Good Introduction
How To Write An Overview
How To Write The Main Body Paragraphs
Full Sample Response 1
IELTS Graph Exercise 1
IELTS Graph Exercise 2
Full Sample Response 2
USEFUL EXPRESSIONS FOR DESCRIBING GRAPHS
Structures for Summarising Change
Verb-Adverb Combination Examples

3. BAR CHARTS IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING

Analyze The Question
Plan Your Report
Introduction
How To Write An Overview
How To Write The Main Body Paragraphs
Full Sample Response 1

Adding Transitions into Your Sentences
While/Whereas/Although/Though
Comparing and Contrasting Similar Data
IELTS Bar Chart Exercise 1
IELTS Bar Chart Exercise 2
Full Sample Response 2

4. PIE CHART DESCRIPTIONS IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING

How To Write an IELTS Pie Chart Description.
What Is A Pie Chart?
Writing Your Report
Step One- Analyze The Question.
Step Two – Write An Introduction
Step Three – Write An Overview Paragraph
Step Four – Write The Main Body Paragraphs
IELTS Pie Chart Exercise 2
Full Sample Response 2

5. TABLE DESCRIPTIONS IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING

How to Write a Band 9 IELTS Table Description
Important Principles
What should we write about in an IELTS Table Description?
The Basic Structure of a Band 9 Table Description
IELTS Table Exercise 1
Paragraph 1 - Introduction
Paragraph 2 – Overview
Paragraph 3 - Data highlight 1
Paragraph 4 - Data highlight 2
IELTS Table Exercise 2
Full Sample Response 1
Full Sample Response 2

6. MIXED CHART DESCRIPTIONS IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING

How to Write An IELTS Two Graph Description
Writing Your Report
Step 1 – Analyze
Step 2 – Write an Introduction
Step 3 – Write an Overview Paragraph
Step 4 – Write the Main Body Paragraphs
Full Sample Response 1
IELTS Mixed Chart Exercise 2

Full Sample Response 2

7. PROCESS DESCRIPTIONS IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING

How to Write a Band 9 IELTS Process Description
Step 1- Understand the Process
Step 2- Plan Your Answer
Step 3- Describe
Exercise 1: Writing an Introduction
Exercise 2: Writing an Overview
Exercise 3: Writing Body Paragraph 1
Exercise 4: Writing Body Paragraph 2
Exercise 5: Grammar & Vocabulary
Full Sample Response Version 1
Full Sample Response Version 2
Full Sample Response Version 3
Extra Language for Process Descriptions

8. MAP DESCRIPTIONS IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING

How To Write A Description For A Map
Writing Your Report
Step 1- Analyze The Question.
Step 2 – Write An Introduction
Step 3 – Write An Overview Paragraph
Step 4 – Write The Main Body Paragraphs
Full Sample Response 1
Exercise
Full Sample Response Version 2: Suggested Answer to Exercise
Map Vocabulary
Full Sample Response Version 3

9. FORMAL LETTERS & EMAILS FOR IELTS WRITING GENERAL TRAINING EXAM

Letter of Reference
Example Question
Expressing Ideas
Exercise
Letter of Application
Sample Task
Full Sample Response (Letter of Application)
Organization & Essential Language: Formal Letter of Complaint
Exercise: Formal Letter of Complaint

Essential Language for a Letter of Complaint
Paraphrasing Exercise
Topic-Specific Phrases
Full Sample Response (Letter of Complaint)
Structure Rules for Formal Letters & Emails in IELTS General Training
Formal Letter IELTS General Exam Checklist.
Language Practice: Formal Letters & Emails
Exercise: Sentence Transformations
Exercise: Key Words
The Passive Voice
6 Quick Rules of Formal VS Informal

10. INFORMAL LETTERS & EMAILS IN IELTS GENERAL TRAINING

Example Task
Tone
Contractions
Slang & idioms
Explain WHY You're Writing
How to Say 'Sorry'
How to Ask for Help
Expressing Happiness
How to Deliver Negative News
Ending an Email or Letter
Organization & Focus
Language

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About the Author

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Marc is a British teacher, trainer, writer, and entrepreneur. He has collaborated with organizations such as the British Council, IDP, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), and the University of Technology Sydney, among others. Marc has also worked as a corporate trainer with multinationals such as Nike and GlaxoSmithKline. When he is not taking care of his son, writing books, or working on his businesses, Marc likes to practice martial arts, socialize, spend time with friends and family, and watch football.

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About This Book

"The secret road to Band 9 in IELTS Writing Task 1 Academic and General."

The IELTS writing questions for Tasks 1 and 2 cover a wide variety of topics, and both tasks require unique approaches, each with its methods and principles. This book will dissect the approach to achieving a Band 9 for Task 1 of both the IELTS Academic Writing test and the IELTS General Writing test.

IELTS Academic Writing Section

Students are guided step-by-step through the process of writing for the IELTS Academic test with exercises, tricks, explanations, and examples for:

Graph descriptions

Pie chart descriptions

Map descriptions

Bar chart descriptions

Table descriptions

Process descriptions

IELTS General Training Writing Section

The book takes candidates through the steps they need to take in order to write outstanding:

Emails

Letters

IELTS Writing Proficiency 9.0 Task 1 shows candidates how to structure and organise their responses to all types of IELTS Academic and General writing task 1 questions. Candidates quickly develop fluency and confidence in producing proficient writing under exam conditions. It contains specialised IELTS writing vocabulary and grammar sections, with exercises and exam tricks, and shows students how to apply a wide range of tools in their responses.

ABOUT THE TASK 1 BOOK + FREE COURSE

IELTS Writing 9.0 Proficiency Task 1

IELTS Writing Task 1 is crucial!

★★★★★ "The secret road to Band 9 in IELTS Writing Task 1 Academic and General."

WHAT YOU WILL GET FROM THIS BOOK:

The chapters, expert tricks, and exercises inside this book, if followed correctly, will help you reach a Band 9.0 in Task 1 of the IELTS Writing exam.

- Learn how to structure and organize all types of IELTS Academic and General Task 1 questions.
- Quickly develop fluency and confidence in producing proficient IELTS Band 9 Task 1 responses under exam conditions!
- Get specialized IELTS writing skills with exercises and exam secrets.
- Learn how to apply a wide range of tools in your Task 1 responses.

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IELTS Writing 9.0 Proficiency Task 2

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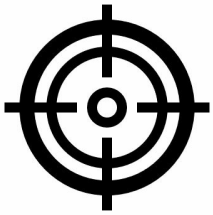
1. Introduction to IELTS Academic & IELTS General Writing Task 1



"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

Ludwig Wittgenstein

IELTS Academic Writing & IELTS General Writing Task 1 Overview

IELTS Academic Writing

Task	Word count	Advised Timing	Task description
1	150	20 mins	Describe visual information such as bar tables, charts, graphs, maps, or diagrams.

Source: IELTS.org

IELTS General Training Writing

Task	Word count	Advised Timing	Task description
1	150	20 mins	Write and email or letter. The style required can be formal, semi-formal, or informal.

TIP: The exam says to write a 'minimum of 150 words but don't write much more. Aim for 150-180 words.

How Many Words Should I Write in My IELTS Task 1?

- In task 1, you should write **at least** 150 words (no more than 180 words).
- You should spend 20 minutes on it

<u>Two Common Problems in the Exam…</u>

Problem 1- NOT ENOUGH Words:

- Less than 150 words MIGHT lower your score (you might not explain your ideas very well).

Problem 2- TOO MANY Words:

- More than 180 words might be too much.
- You might be using too many words to explain the information.
- You might be trying to express too much without choosing the most important information.

<u>This means:</u>

- You might run out of time during the exam.
- The longer your response is, the more probability you have of making grammar and vocabulary mistakes.
- If you write too many words in Task 1, you will have less time to complete Task 2.

Introduction to IELTS Academic Writing

The IELTS Academic Writing test requires us to write a formal report of 150 words based on some form of visual information.

We have around 20 minutes to complete this task, and it's worth one-third of our overall IELTS Writing test score.

To write a report, you must do three things:

1. Select the main features.
2. Write about the main features.
3. Compare the main features.

Analyze The Question

Before we start writing, we need to read the question and figure out the type of graphic we have been given and what the most important information is.

Every question consists of two sentences and a graphic.

The first sentence gives us a brief description of the graph. We must read this part carefully before analyzing the data in the graph, as it will save us time by giving us a good idea about the type of data presented.

The second sentence tells us what we need to do. It tells us how to answer and what information we need to write about.

The graphic can be:

- a line graph
- a bar chart
- a pie chart
- a table
- a process
- or a map

- In some cases, we might be asked to describe two graphics simultaneously.

We will look at all of these possibilities in this book to prepare for everything.

Introduction to IELTS General Writing

Length: 60 minutes

General Writing Test

Task	Word count	Advised Timing	Task description
1	150	20 mins	The candidate is presented with a situation and is asked to write a letter requesting information, or explaining an issue. The letter may be personal, semi-formal or formal in style.
2	250	40 mins	Presenting arguments and opinions in a discursive essay about a topical issue.

Source: IELTS.org

TIP: The exam says to write a 'minimum of 150/250 words but don't write much more. Aim for 10 or 20 words more at the most.

The Writing component of the IELTS General includes two tasks. Topics are of general interest to and suitable for candidates entering work and postgraduate studies or seeking professional registration.

Task 1

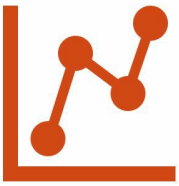
You will be presented with a problem or an issue and asked to describe, summarize, or explain the information in your own words. You may be asked to write a letter of application, a letter of recommendation, a letter concerning accommodation, or a letter of complaint, among other possibilities.

Task 2

You will be asked to write an essay in response to a point of view,

argument, or problem. Responses to both tasks must be in a formal style.

2. How to Describe Line Graphs in IELTS Academic Writing



The most common type of Task 1 question is the line graph. A line graph consists of data presented along an x and a y-axis and compares how certain numerical variables change over time.

There are several crucial steps to producing a high-scoring IELTS Graph Description. In this section, we will look at how to follow these steps using the following sample question:

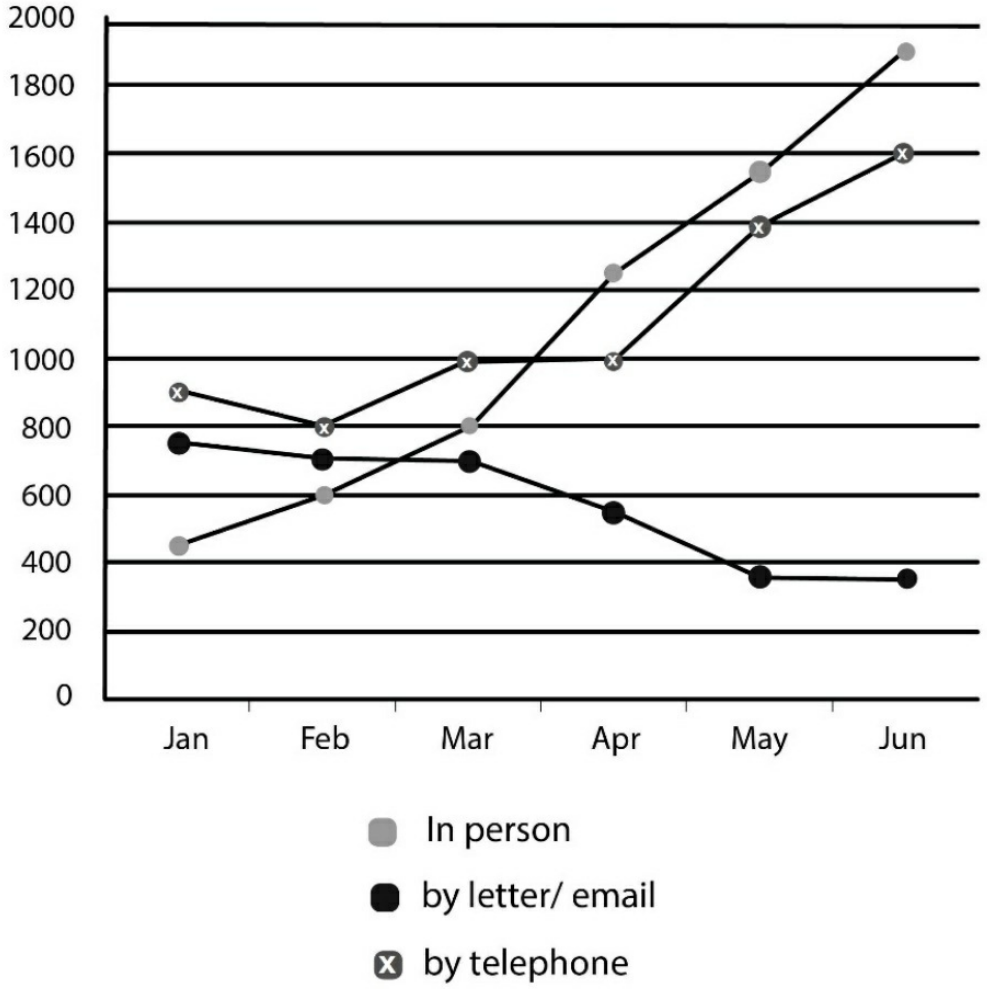
WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The graph below shows the number of enquiries received by a University Admissions Office over a six-month period in 2021.

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

You should write at least 150 words.



The first step, is to analyze the question carefully.

Read the question to understand the type of graph given and what you need to do.

Read the first sentence of the instructions carefully before analyzing the data in the graph, as it will tell you about the type of data presented.

The second sentence tells you what you need to do. It gives you clear instructions on how to answer and what information you need to write about.

The next step is to take a detailed look at the line graph.

Does the data we have represent something from the past or future?

The time period will give you a good idea about the verb tense you need to use in your graph.

Next, you will have to identify what the two axes represent and the units of measurement. Each axis gives a different type of information. These could be many different things, for example, amount, time, age, or percentage.

Examine how the data changes and keep an eye out for notable similarities between data sets. Once you do this, you need to search for the most obvious trends and identify:

sudden changes

and areas of stability (where the graph doesn't change).

These pieces of information are the main features that we need to summarize in our report, but how can we describe these features and trends in a concise yet comprehensive manner?

Plan your report

Once our question analysis is complete, we can present the most useful pieces of information in our description.

The typical structure of a graph description is as follows:

Paragraph 1 – Introduce the graph

Paragraph 2 – Give an overview

Paragraph 3 – Present 1st Main Feature

Paragraph 4 – Present 2nd Main Feature

How to Write a Good Introduction

The introduction paragraph of a formal IELTS report is probably one of the easiest parts as long as you practice because it involves simply rephrasing the first line of the question statement.

Take a look at the following example:

Question*: The graph below shows the number of enquiries received by the University Admissions Office over a six-month period in 2021.*

Paraphrased Sample Introduction: *This line chart represents the number of enquiries made to the University Admissions Office from January to June 2021.*

How To Write An Overview

The overview paragraph for any graph description should briefly outline the main trends and features of the graph without going into too many specific details. Use these ideas to form two or three sentences. State the information by simply using synonyms wherever possible.

Sample Overview: *It is clear from the graph that the enquiries made*

in person and by telephone increased during this time, while the number of enquiries made by email decreased.

How To Write The Main Body Paragraphs

In the Main Body Paragraphs, you will give details about the main events mentioned in paragraph 2. When giving specific details, you have to write exact numbers/percentages and include as much information as possible.

Remember to compare and contrast data as well.

If the exact numbers are hard to read because the graph doesn't clearly provide them, you can use words like *around*, *about*, *just over*, *just under*, and *approximately*.

Try not to use overly complicated vocabulary or grammar structures as this can increase the chance of errors.

Use the appropriate words and correct verb tenses.

Sample Main Body Paragraphs:

According to what is shown in the graph, in-person enquiries rose sharply from around 400 to 1900, while enquiries made by telephone showed a more gradual increase. Initially, telephone enquiries declined slightly from 900 to 800 enquiries, before increasing to 1000 in the third month. The ratio remained at this level for the month of April and then increased substantially in May and June to reach 1600 enquiries by the end of the period.

In contrast, enquiries by email showed an opposite trend, steadily declining from around 800 to around 400 enquiries over the 6-month period.

Full Sample Response 1

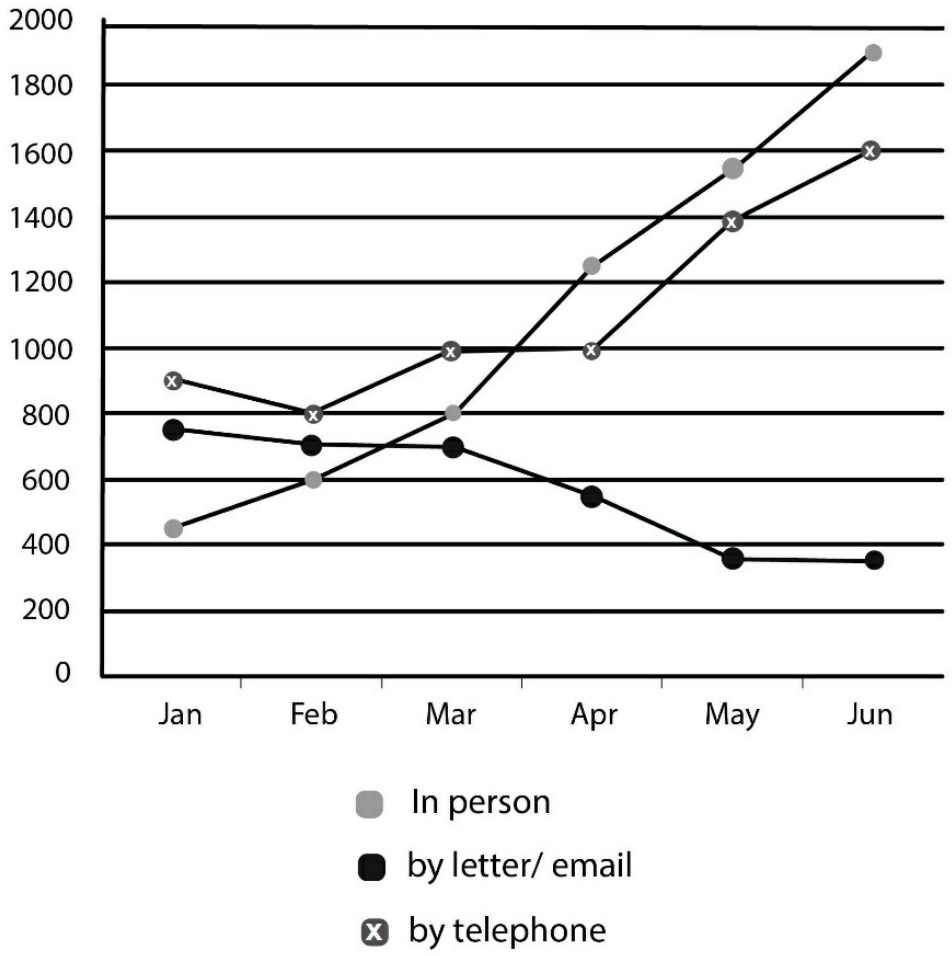
WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The graph below shows the number of enquiries received by a University Admissions Office over a six-month period in 2021.

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

You should write at least 150 words.



The line graph represents the number of enquiries made to a University Admissions Office from January to June 2021.

It is clear from the graph that the enquiries made in person and by telephone increased during this time, while the number of enquiries made by email decreased.

According to what is shown in the graph, in-person enquiries rose sharply from around 400 to 1900, while enquiries made by telephone showed a more gradual increase. Initially, telephone enquiries declined slightly from 900 to 800 enquiries, before increasing to 1000 in the third month. The ratio remained at this level for the month of April and then increased substantially in May and June to reach 1600 enquiries by the end of the period.

In contrast, enquiries by email showed an opposite trend, steadily declining from around 800 to around 400 enquiries over the 6-month period.

IELTS Graph Exercise 1

Let's focus on expanding your range of vocabulary and grammar structures for summarising changes which can take place within a graph.

Match the words with their corresponding images below. More than one option is possible.

A. **Rose steadily/increased steadily/grew steadily**

B. **Rose dramatically/increased dramatically/grew dramatically**

C. **Plummeted to/Plunged to …**

D. **Hit a peak of, peaked at, or reached a high of …**

E. **Fluctuated, varied, or oscillated/Became erratic. Was erratic/inconsistent**

F. **Dropped/Shrank/Fell drastically/ sharply dramatically**

G. **Remained flat/unchanged/stable / constant at**

H. **Dropped and then stabilised/evened out at**

I. **Hit a low of …/ bottomed out at**

J. **Dropped and then quickly recovered**

K. **Dipped/ Declined slightly before quickly recovering**

L. **Rocketed / Soared**

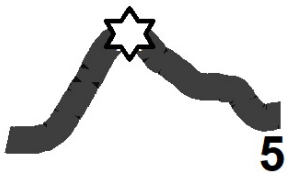
M. **Fell slowly/ gradually / steadily**

1 ……..

2. ……..

3. ……..

4. ……..



5. ……..

6. ……..

7. ……..

8. ……..

9. ……..

10. ……..

Answers

1 *Fell and then quickly recovered / Dipped/ fell slightly*

2 *Fell/dropped/shrank drastically/ dramatically / sharply/ Plummeted to/Plunged to*

3 *Dropped and then levelled off/evened out at*

4 *Rose/increased dramatically/Soared/ Rocketed*

5 *Hit a peak / Peaked at/reached a high of*

6 *Fluctuated/ was erratic*

7 *Hit a low of …*

8 *Rose/increased steadily/ Rose/increased gradually*

9 *Remained flat/constant/unchanged/stable at*

10 *Fell gradually / steadily*

Please note that these are only some of the options from the table.

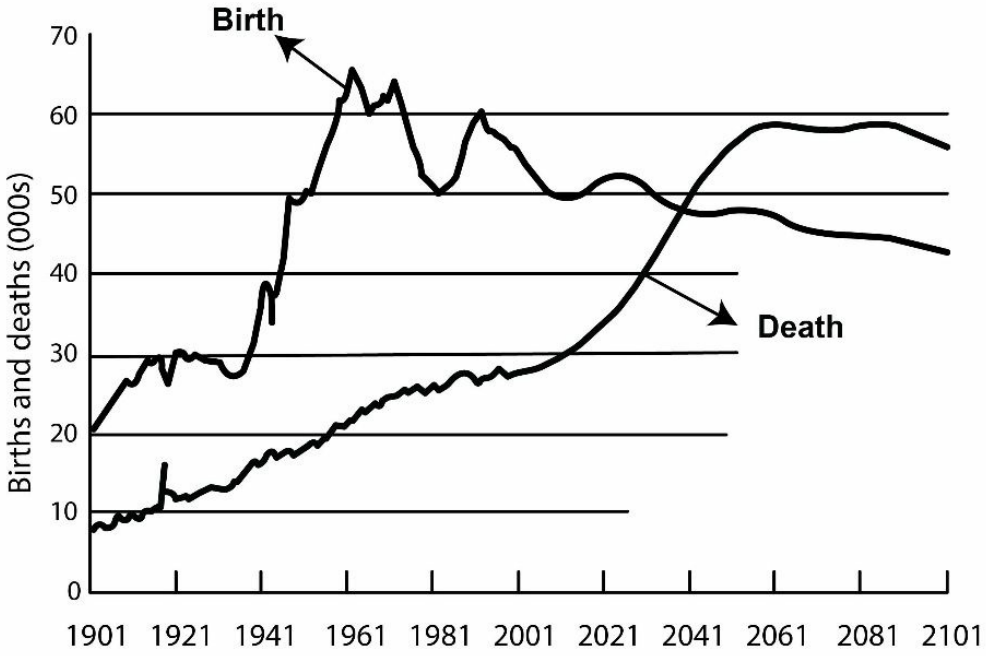
Definitions for some difficult words

Word	Explanation
Dipped	Fell slightly but recovered quickly
Bottomed out / ***Hit a low of***	The lowest point on the graph
Plummeted to…/ Plunged to	Suffered a quick and drastic or shocking decrease. Fell extremely quickly. A drastic fall or reduction
Fluctuated/ ***was erratic***	Increases and decreases randomly, irregularly or unpredictably
Rose/increased dramatically/ ***Soared/ Rocketed***	Increased very quickly and drastically
Peaked at / reached a high of	The highest point on the graph
Remained constant/unchanged/stable at …./ ***Levelled off/evened out at …***	a part of the graph where there is no change

IELTS Graph Exercise 2

The graph below gives information about changes in the birth and death rates in New Zealand between 1901 and 2101.

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



Source:

http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/changing-face-of-nzs-population.aspx

Exercise instructions: Write your response and compare it to *Full Sample Response 2* on the next page.

Write 150-180 words below:

Full Sample Response 2

The line graph shows the historical and predicted trends for the rate of birth and mortality in New Zealand for the period from 1901 through to 2101.

At the start of the review period, the birth rate surpasses the mortality rate. The forecasted data shows that the mortality rate is likely to exceed the birth rate by 2041, at which point, the large gap between the two will level off.

At the beginning of the period, the birth rate started at 20,000, peaking at around 66,000 in 1961, before fluctuating between 50,000 and 65,000 until 2021. It is anticipated to decline to around 45,000 births by 2101 slowly.

In contrast, the mortality rate started at just below 10,000 in 1901 and steadily rose throughout, reaching around 30,000 in 2021. This increase is expected to accelerate between 2021 and 2041 when the number of deaths will surpass the number of births. By 2051 the death rate will stabilize at around 60,000 and decline marginally until the end of the period.

USEFUL EXPRESSIONS FOR

DESCRIBING GRAPHS

- *…significantly declined…*
- *…remained the same...*
- *…reached a plateau…*
- *…rose dramatically…*
- *…fell slightly…*
- *…fluctuated…*
- *…increased steadily…*
- *…fell gradually…*
- *…decreased steadily…*
- *…remained stable…*
- *…recovered…*
- *…fluctuated dramatically…*
- *…rocketed…*
- *…plunged…*
- *…a dramatic fall…*
- *…a period of stability…*
- *…a slight dip…*
- *…it doubled…*
- *…it halved…*
- *…increased sevenfold (7 times)*
- *…increased fourfold (4 times)*
- *…proved to be the most popular…*
- *…began the year higher, however by the end of the year*

…

- *…followed the same sales trend...*
- *…were consistently the lowest…*
- *…A similar pattern is also noted on…*
- *…With regards to…*
- *…is similar/ dissimilar…*

Structures for Summarising Change

If you want to achieve great results, you need to learn more than just one structure for summarizing change. You must add an element of variety to your writing when you are describing shifts in data. This will not only keep your reader engaged, but it will also help to demonstrate a higher level of knowledge. It will give a better impression of your abilities as a communicator.

Be mindful of using the correct word forms when you are building your sentences. Lapses in concentration can cause some writers to confuse adjectives such as progressive with their adverb form progressively.

The following resource tables contain the language to describe pretty much any graph which involves changes over time.

There + be + adjective + noun + in + noun
There was a slow rise in the number of kilograms consumed.
There was a dramatic rise in the amount of oil

produced.
There was a sharp jump in ice-cream sales
There has been a considerable increase in the number of languages spoken within the region since 1980.
There was a slight increase in the number of cars sold.
There was a sharp fall in the number of loans offered.
There was a dramatic fluctuation in the amount of rice consumed.

Noun + verb + adverb
Fast food consumption rose steadily.
The number of people claiming unemployment benefits rose considerably between 2008 and 2011.
The value of gold decreased slightly during the period.

The figures declined slightly, dropping to 44,000 in 2012.

Time + saw/ experienced/ witnessed + adjective + noun + in + noun *there is no preposition before time words in this structure (Never: *In* + time + *saw…*)
2003 saw a gradual increase in oil consumption.
2009 saw a sudden plunge in ice-cream sales to 20,000.
The end of the period saw a gradual decline in the figures, dropping to 44,000 in 2012.
The decade ended pretty much the same as it began, with an average consumption of just over 20lb per household.

Verb-Adverb Combination Examples

Verb	Adverb
fell	*minimally/ gradually/ rapidly/ dramatically/ slowly/ markedly/ sharply*
declined	*minimally/ gradually/ rapidly/ dramatically/ slowly/ markedly/ sharply*
shrank	*minimally/ gradually/ rapidly/ dramatically/ slowly/ markedly/ sharply*
dropped	*minimally/ gradually/ rapidly/ dramatically/ slowly/ markedly/ sharply*
rose	*rapidly/ gradually/ rapidly/ dramatically / slowly*
increased	*rapidly/ dramatically/ slowly/ gradually*
grew	*slightly/ steadily/ suddenly/ gradually*
fluctuated	*wildly/ slightly/ suddenly*
jumped	*erratically/ slightly/ dramatically*
plunged	*suddenly/ unexpectedly*
soared	*suddenly/ unexpectedly*

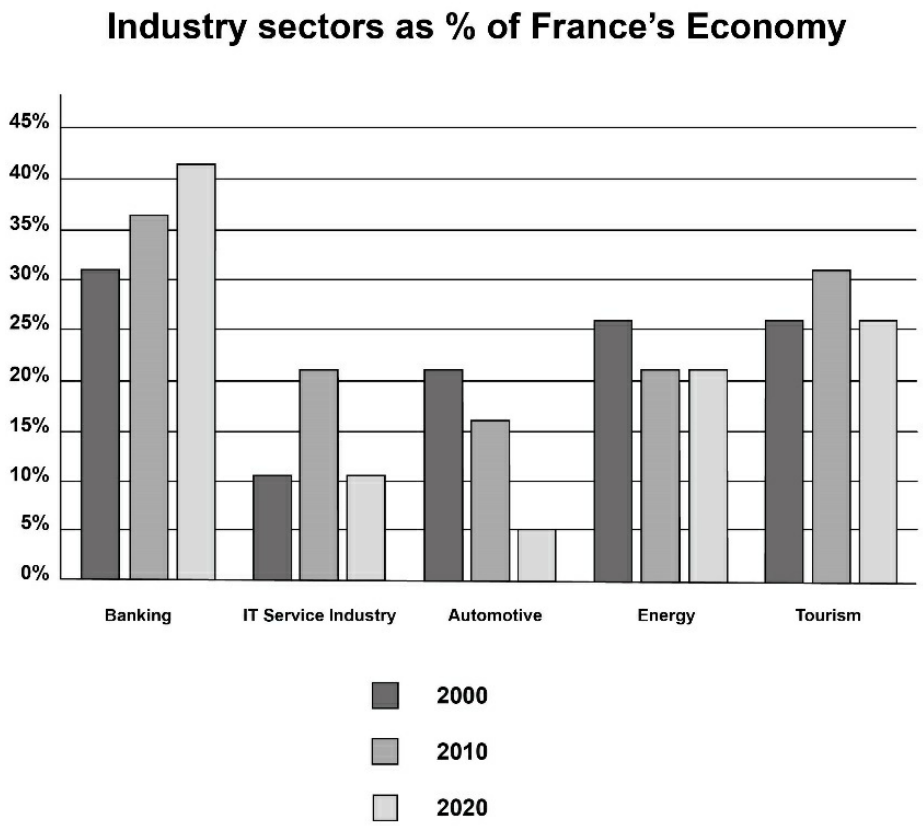
3. Bar Charts in IELTS

Academic Writing

Bar graphs are another of the most common types of questions asked during the IELTS Academic Writing test. For this type of question, you will be presented with an image of a bar chart and asked to describe the main features of this graph within a formal report of at least 150 words.

As with any other IELTS Writing Task One, you have around 20 minutes for this task and it's worth **one third** of your IELTS Writing test score.

The bars are colored or symbol-marked rectangular blocks representing certain variables that can be compared, like in the following example:



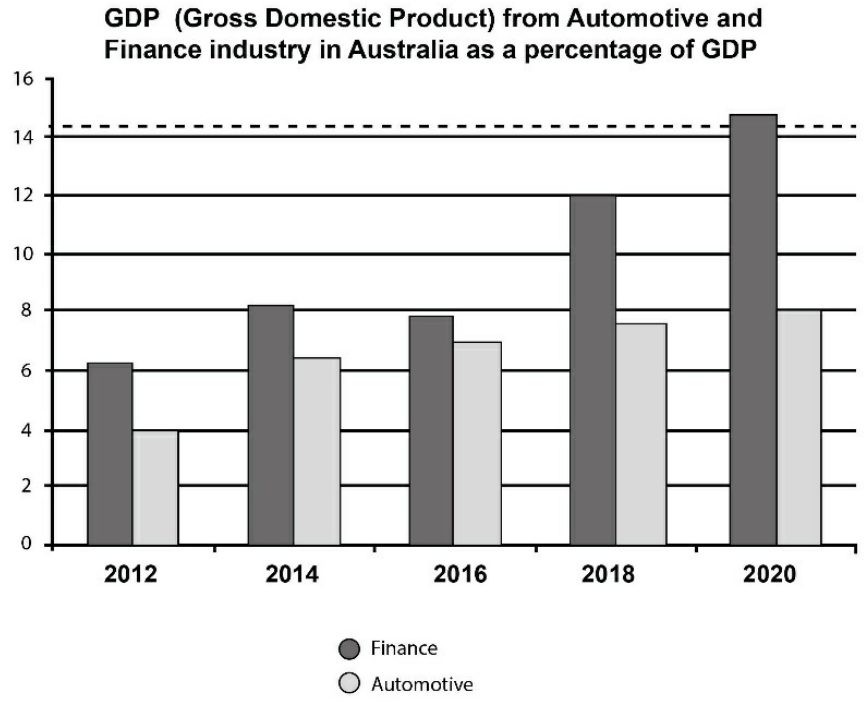
- They can be placed in a horizontal or vertical position.
- These types of graphs usually represent the rate of change of certain variables concerning time.
- The information presented in bar charts is not necessarily dependent on any other variables and the data on the x-axis can be grouped by category. For example: *Spending Type, Disease Type* etc.
- So it's important to use effective vocabulary to express these trends in words. You might have to describe periods of sudden changes (both upwards and downwards) or periods of stability.

This section reveals the steps you need to follow to write a high-scoring IELTS bar chart report. These steps will be demonstrated using the following sample question.

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The chart shows components of GDP in Australia from 2012 to 2020. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



Analyze The Question

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is important to read the question carefully before analyzing the data.

- Doing this ensures that you answer the question fully, which is an integral part of your Task Achievement score.
- Every bar graph question consists of a brief description of the graphic, and the instructions that tell you what you have to do, along with the bar chart. This gives us a great idea about the kind of data we will see.
- Make sure you understand what each bar and axis represent.
- The question statement also gives us exactly how to answer and what information we need to give the examiner within our description.
- You need to note down the main features of the graph, and you should also take note of any comparisons that can be made between the bars.

Plan Your Report

Next, we need to organize the information we've gathered during our question analysis and decide on how to lay out the most useful parts with our report.

The typical structure for a formal bar graph report is:

Paragraph 1 – Paraphrase the question

Paragraph 2 – Give an Overview

Paragraph 3 – Describe Main Feature 1

Paragraph 4 – Describe Main Feature 2

Introduction

Paraphrase the first sentence of the question. Try to reorder the words and use synonyms wherever appropriate. For example:

Question words: *The chart shows components of GDP in Australia from 2012 to 2020.*

Our introduction is as follows:

The bar chart depicts the percentage of Gross Domestic Product from the Automotive and Finance industries in Australia between 2012 and 2020.

How To Write An Overview

An overview is a statement of the general trends found within a graph. You do not need to mention specific numbers or details in an overview, and it is usually just one or two sentences long. It would be sufficient to mention the overall trends, such as a *downward* or *upward* trend or an *overall period of stability*.

For example:

Overall, it can be seen that although both categories increased as a percentage of GDP, Finance had much more significant growth in ratio during the given time period.

How To Write The Main Body Paragraphs

For the 3rd and 4th paragraphs, you will extend the main ideas mentioned in paragraph 2. You need to add more details in the form of exact figures and information to support the main ideas and trends mentioned in your overview. Remember to compare and contrast as well. When giving specific data, you have to include exact numbers/percentages and include as many details as possible. Since the exact numbers might be difficult to read in some cases, you can use words like *around*, *about*, and *approximately*.

Take a look at the following sample main body paragraphs. Pay attention to how we've used the language in bold:

To begin*, in 2012, the Finance industry started at 6%,* ***whereas*** *the Automotive Industry* ***accounted for*** *4% of the total GDP. During the next four years, the* ***levels*** *for both categories* ***remained relatively stable*** *at* ***around*** *6% and 8%, with the Finance sector* ***remaining slightly higher overall****, despite a small decrease between 2014 and 2016.*

However*, a considerable change can be seen between the two categories in the next four years of the given period. The income generated from the Finance sector increased dramatically to 12% in 2018 and then nearly 15% in 2020,* ***while*** *the Automotive Industry* ***saw little change****, increasing to only 8 %.* ***By the end of the period****, the GDP percentage from the Finance sector* ***was nearly double that of the*** *Automotive industry at 15% and 8%* ***respectively****.*

Full Sample Response 1

The bar chart depicts the percentage of Gross Domestic Product from the Automotive and Finance industries in Australia between 2012 and 2020.

Overall, it can be seen that although both categories increased as a percentage of GDP, Finance had much more significant growth in ratio during the given time period.

To begin, in 2012, the Finance industry started at 6%, whereas the Automotive Industry accounted for 4% of the total GDP. During the next four years, the levels for both categories remained relatively stable at around 6% and 8%, with the Finance sector remaining slightly higher overall, despite a small decrease between 2014 and 2016.

However, a considerable change can be seen between the two categories in the next four years of the given period. The income generated from the Finance sector increased dramatically to 12% in 2018 and then nearly 15% in 2020, while the Automotive Industry saw little change, increasing to only 8 %. By the end of the period, the GDP percentage from the Finance sector was nearly double that of the Automotive industry at 15% and 8% respectively.

Adding Transitions into Your Sentences

The U.S. produces over 2.2 billion tons of wheat every year. ***In contrast****, Russia produces just over half a billion per year.*

Italy produced large amounts of dairy products. ***In comparison****, Thailand produced very little.*

Finland imports some 10 million tons of flour per year, ***but*** *produces none.*

Note: remember the word *some* can be used to mean *about/ around*, so you can use it to add some variety into your writing.

While/Whereas/Although/Though

These words are great for adding transitions within sentences without having to add a full stop and write a new sentence. They allow you to compare and contrast while keeping your text fluid and readable.

Although *Italy produces over 6 million tons of olives, Spain produces almost double that amount.*

Spain produces high levels of solar power, ***whereas/while*** *Japan produces almost none.*

While *Germany consumes nearly 80 million tons of rice per year, it produces none.*

Comparing and Contrasting Similar Data

Austria produced ***the same*** *amount of butter as Switzerland.*

Like *Thailand, Malaysia produces 30,000 bottles.*

India consumes over 100 million tons of rice per year; ***Likewise,/ Similarly****, China consumes 118.8 million.*

Both *India and China consume over 100 million tons of rice per year.*

Both *the UK and Spain produce medium levels of carbon emissions.*

IELTS Bar Chart Exercise 1

Put the terms in **bold** in the right gap. Then, check your answers on the next page.

remained relatively stable

To begin*,*

levels

will see little change

Whereas

while

However

Around

remaining slightly higher overall

accounted for

……..., in 2010, the Online Retail industry started at 11%, …….. the Highstreet Retail industry …….. 7% of total investment.

During the next decade, the ……. for both industries

…….. at ……15% and 8%, with the Online Retail sector ……, despite a small decrease between 2019 and 2020.

……., a considerable change is expected between the two categories in the next ten years. Investment in the Online Retail sector will increase dramatically to 33% by 2025 and then nearly 45% in 2030, ……. the Highstreet Retail sector ……..., increasing to only 10%.

Answers

***To begin**, in 2010, the Online Retail industry started at 11%, **whereas** the Highstreet Retail industry **accounted for** 7% of total investment.*

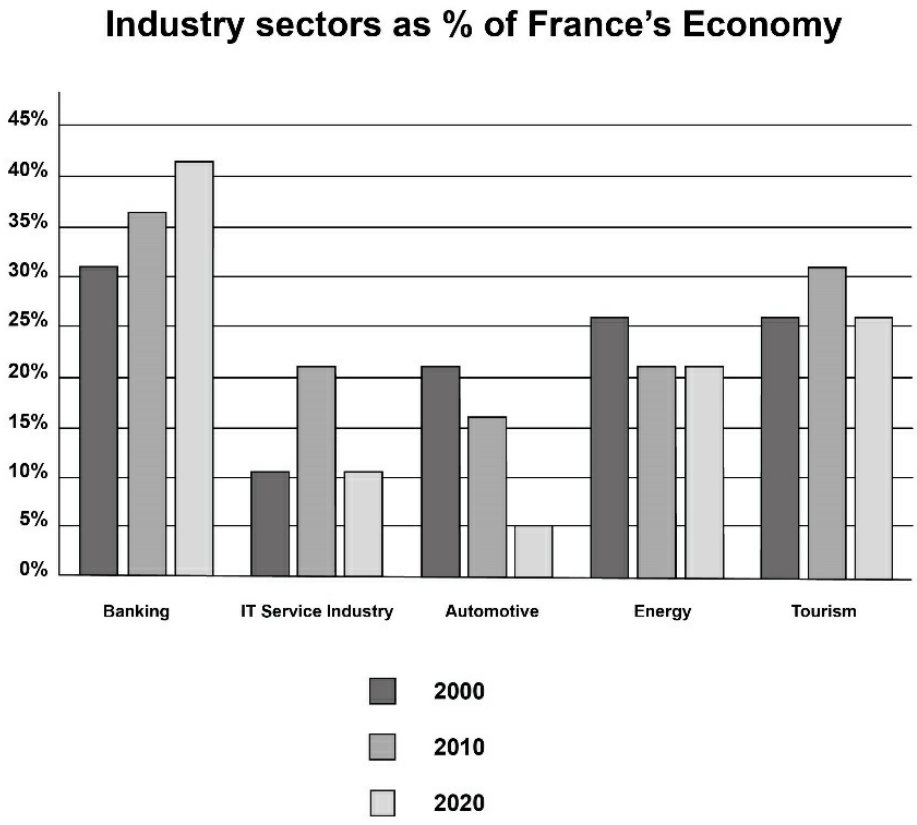
*During the next decade, the **levels** for both industries **remained relatively stable** at **around** 15% and 8%, with the Online Retail sector **remaining slightly higher overall**, despite a small decrease between 2019 and 2020.*

***However**, a considerable change is expected between the two categories in the next ten years. Investment in the Online Retail sector will increase dramatically to 33% by 2025 and then nearly 45% in 2030, **while** the Highstreet Retail sector **will see little change**, increasing to only 10%.*

IELTS Bar Chart Exercise 2

The following chart shows five different industries' percentage share of France's economy in 2000, 2010, and 2020.

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



Exercise instructions: Write your response and compare it to *Full Sample Response 2* on the next page.

Write 150-180 words below:

Full Sample Response 2

The bar graph depicts the actual shares of the French economy held by five major business sectors in 2000, 2010, and 2020.

Of the five sectors, banking had the most growth, with a 30% market share in 2000, 35% in 2010, and just over 40% in 2020. In contrast, the automotive sector's contribution decreased over the years, from 20% in 2000 to 5% in 2020.

The IT Service Industry, which accounted for about 10% of the economy in 2000, grew in 2010 but declined back to its original level in 2020 at 10%. Similarly, tourism grew by 5% between 2000 and 2010 but then shrank to its original 25% by 2020. The Energy sector, which was booming in 2000 with a share of around 25%, dropped slightly by 5% and remained at the same level in the last decade.

In summary, for the period, banking accounted for the biggest share of France's economy, with steady growth from 2000 to 2020, while the automotive industry accounted for the smallest share of the economy, experiencing a steady decline throughout the period.

4. Pie Chart Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing

How To Write an IELTS Pie Chart Description.

As we've seen in previous chapters, you will be asked to write a formal report of about 150 words during the Academic IELTS writing exam. This report will usually be based on information derived from some form of a graph, including line or bar graphs and pie charts.

This chapter will take an in-depth look at how to write a high-scoring report on a pie chart and offer some valuable tips and insights into exactly what the IELTS examiners look for in a well-written pie chart description.

What Is A Pie Chart?

A pie chart is a circle divided into various sectors, where each sector represents a part of a whole. It depicts several percentages and proportions, there are no x and y axes, but there is usually a color-coded, or a symbol-coded key for each sector.

A pie chart displays information in an easy-to-understand way and makes it easy to compare data from multiple categories.

In most IELTS Task 1 questions, you will get pie charts representing different categories or the changes in certain sectors between two or more years.

Writing Your Report

Writing a pie chart description is very similar to the methods used for a bar chart report.

You need to

- Analyze the question
- Plan out your report structure
- Write a good introduction
- Write an overview paragraph
- Write the main body paragraphs

Step One- Analyze The Question.

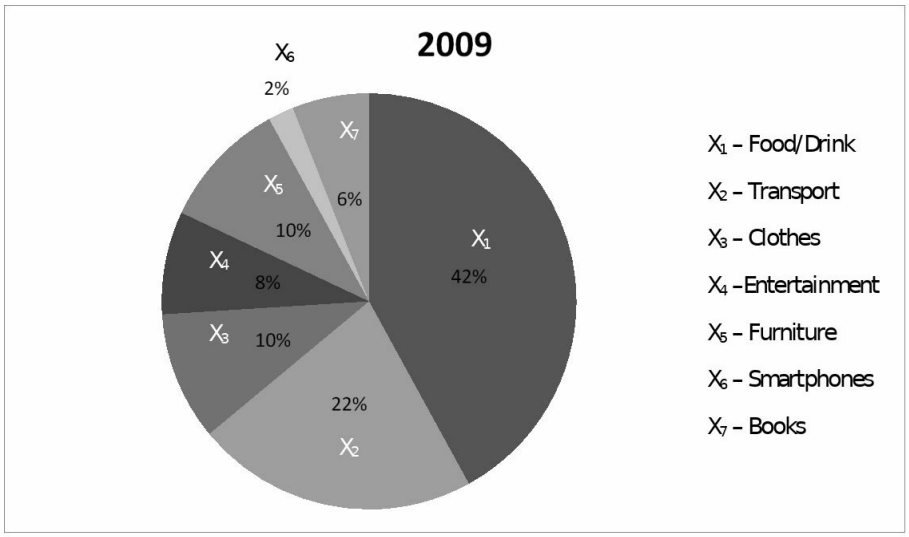
- Before you rush into writing your report, it is important to read the question carefully and inspect the pie charts.
- You need to extract and interpret as much information as you can from the question statement, titles, and labels, as well as the units of measurement.
- Many candidates assume that the figures represent percentages, but this is not always the case.
- You should also take note of major differences and similarities between different sectors since pie charts require a significant amount of comparison instead of just listing the figures for each sector.

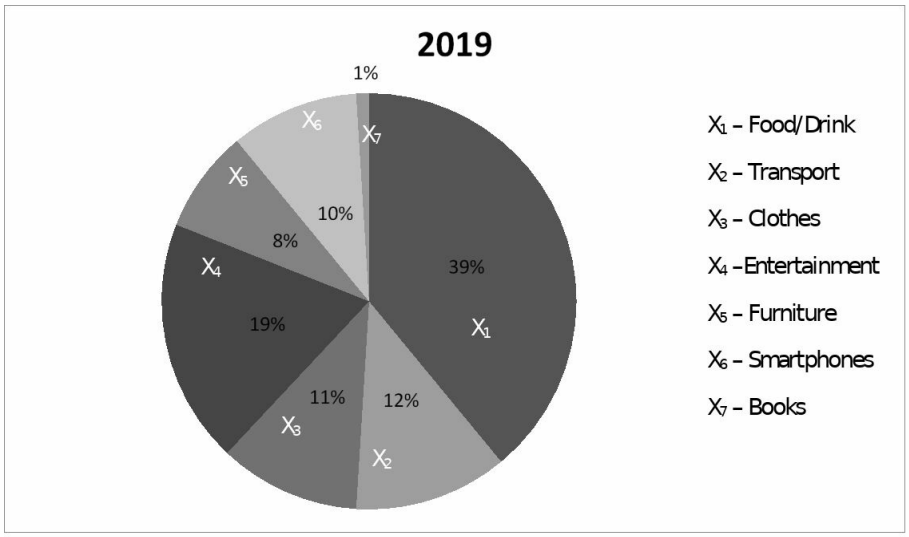
We will use the following sample question to illustrate these points. This is the same example we use in the IELTS Writing Band 9 Video Course on our website.

<u>Sample Instructions:</u>

The charts below show the proportions of consumer expenditure by sector.

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





By looking at the graphics as well as the headings, we can see that:

- These charts show data about consumer spending

- There are seven different categories
- The figures are measured in percentages
- There are two time periods shown, which are both in the past.

Now we need to look for some main features :

- The category of Food/Drink represented the main expense for people in both years
- In 2009 people spent a lot on transport but this figure decreased a lot by 2019
- Entertainment more than doubled to become the second-highest expense by 2019.
- People spent the least on books in both periods, but the figure was significantly lower in 2019

Step Two – Write An Introduction

A writing task 1 introduction paragraph is probably one of the easiest paragraphs to write during the IELTS test because it involves simply paraphrasing the first line of the question statement. However, as in all the other types of task 1, copying the question word for word will give the examiner the impression that you do not have a wide enough vocabulary. So make sure to use appropriate synonyms instead.

Question Statement: *The charts below show the proportions of consumer expenditure by sector.*

Sample Introduction: *The pie charts depict consumer spending habits for seven categories in 2009 and 2019.*

Step Three – Write An Overview Paragraph

In your overview paragraph, you need to mention, in 1 or 2 lines, the main trends and features that you noted down during your question analysis. Remember that you do not need to go into too much detail in this paragraph.

Sample Overview*: It is clear from the charts that people spent the most on food and drink, and the least on books in both years, and that people spent a significantly higher amount on entertainment in 2019 than they did in 2009.*

Step Four – Write The Main Body Paragraphs

In these paragraphs, you need to describe the information mentioned in your overview paragraph in greater detail, using facts, figures, and periods if relevant.

When you get two pie charts like this, you can use a separate paragraph for each one, or directly compare, using language like *whereas, while*, etc. For the sake of this explanation, we will use separate paragraphs, as it helps organize the report and avoid confusion. A good way of approaching this task is to write your report as if the reader has not seen the pie chart and is using only your report to understand the information in the graph.

It is also important to note that you cannot use phrases like *decrease gradually* or *increase sharply* for pie charts since the values are usually fixed and not measured over long periods. Many students make this error, and it just gives the impression that the candidate used words and phrases without fully understanding their meaning and usage. Remember, you should not use complicated words that you do not understand. This will not help you score higher; it will almost guarantee a lower score in the IELTS exam. Your report must be easy to follow and understand, and you have to use natural-sounding phrases that a native speaker would use and understand.

Sample Main Body Paragraphs:

According to what is shown, the category of Food/Drink was the main expense for people in both years at 42% and 39% respectively. In 2009 transport was the second-highest expense at 22%. Clothes and furniture had the same ratio of 10%, and people spent the smallest amount of their income on books at 6 percent.

In 2019 there were a few changes in consumer spending patterns. People spent the most on food and drink, but at a value of 3% lower than in 2009, while entertainment became the second-highest expense in 2019, with a substantial increase from 8% in 2009 to 19% in 2009. The books category witnessed a significant decrease to just 1% of the total consumer expenditure.

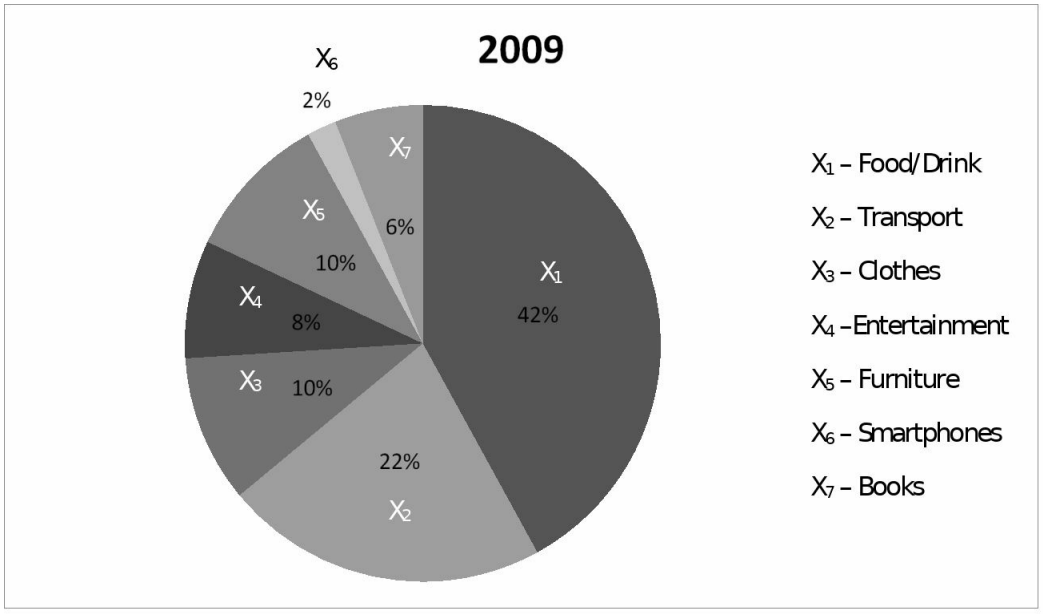
Once you have written your main body paragraphs, make sure to thoroughly recheck your work for spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. Careless mistakes can cause a lack of clarity in your report and lower your score.

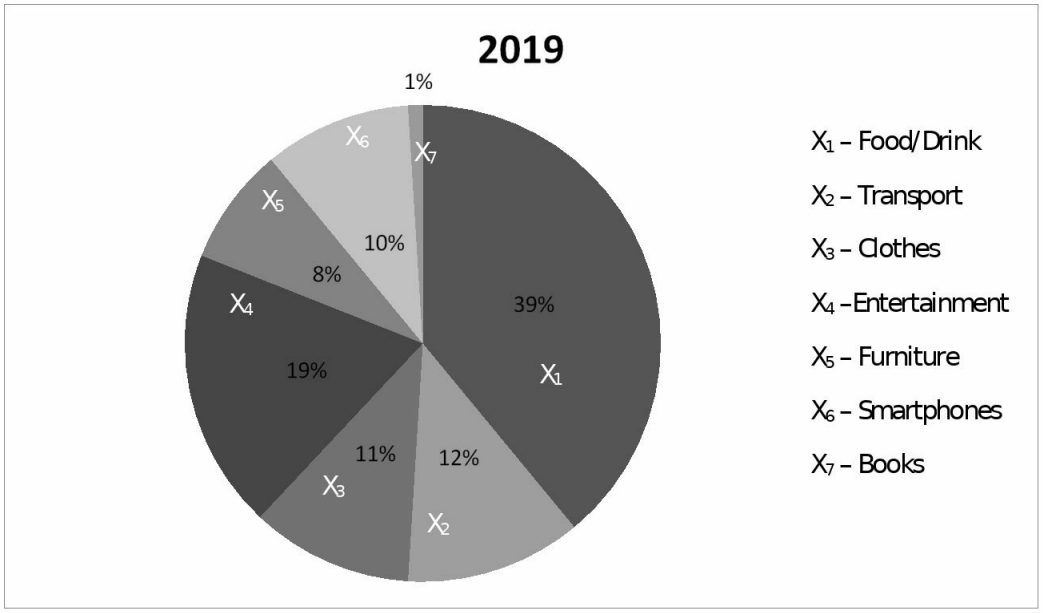
You can start practicing now that you have a solid strategy to answer pie chart descriptions. Remember, practice makes perfect!

IELTS Pie Chart Exercise 2

The charts below show the proportions of consumer expenditure by sector.

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





Exercise instructions: Write your response and compare it to *Full Sample Response 2* on the next page.

Write 150-180 words below:

Full Sample Response 2

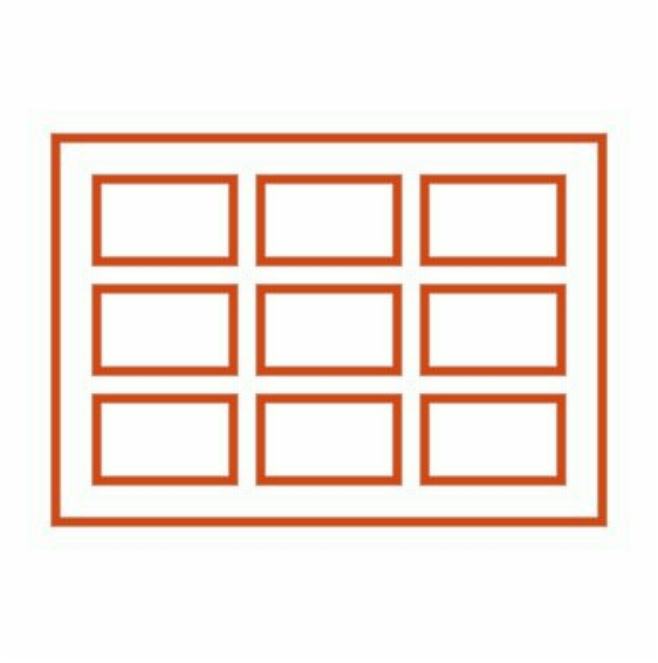
The pie charts depict consumer spending changes in seven different categories in 2009 and 2019.

Overall, the highest proportions were spent on Food and Drink in both years. Entertainment and Smart Phones showed sharp increases in popularity too.

Firstly, consumers spent the most on Food and Drink (42%) and Transport (22%) in 2009. Ten years later, the figures for Food/Drink stayed almost the same at 39%, but Transport plunged sharply to 12%. Meanwhile, spending on Clothes and Furniture did not vary much hovering between 10-11% and 10-8% respectively in both years.

Some of the biggest changes were seen in Entertainment, Smartphones, and Books. Money spent on Entertainment more than doubled from 8% to 19%, while smartphones showed a similar trend increasing five-fold over the 10-year period. Finally, books appeared to have lost their appeal comprising just 1% of the total spending in 2019 compared to 6% ten years earlier.

5. Table Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing



How to Write a Band 9 IELTS Table Description

This section will dissect the approach to achieving a Band 9 for Task 1 Table Descriptions.

- First and foremost, it is important to remember that Task 1 is a summary question, not an opinion piece or analysis.
- Your 150 word-piece should only consist of information directly visible from the table given to you, so no assumptions of any kind.
- Your answer will be graded based on your capability to write about the data in a fluent, structured way and compare information where possible.
- Focus purely on the main features of the data and any necessary and appropriate details.
- Spend only 20 minutes maximum on it; going over will put you at a great disadvantage for task 2.

Important Principles

You will also need to keep in mind certain principles that you'll have to follow to achieve a maximum band score:

- Avoid repetition. Whether it is same-structured sentences or word-choice, you need to avoid repetition unless there is no other reasonable option, especially in the same paragraph.
- Use specific vocabulary. IELTS is an English test, so your vocabulary capability will inevitably be gauged. It would be best to utilize vocabulary with a narrow definition and avoid words like *'good*' or '*bad*' at all costs, particularly in Task 1.
- Use transitional language such as *'in addition, furthermore, on the other hand*.' This will allow your writing to flow from one sentence to another, making it comfortable to read.
- Use Passive and Active effectively; incorrectly using either will negatively impact your writing.

What should we write about in an IELTS Table Description?

Now you have understood the principles, let's talk about preparation. Before you begin your report, you must plan out your content. Start by highlighting the information and comparisons of data shown on the table; here are some general types of trends that you can focus on:

- The highest and lowest numbers
- The overall trend (is it generally ascending or descending)
- The anomaly (the one with the inconsistent trend or showing the most significant change)

The Basic Structure of a Band 9 Table Description

After noting down the important data, you are now ready to plan your response.

Generally, writing task 1 will only need 3 or 4 paragraphs:

Paragraph 1 - Introduction

Paragraph 2 – Overview

Paragraph 3 – 1st highlight and/or comparison

Paragraph 4 – 2nd highlight and/or comparison

Notice again how there is no conclusion above. Since this is a summary of data, no conclusion should be made.

It would be best if you wrote in the Present Simple tense or the Past

Simple tense unless the table contains a prediction or forecast, in which case you would use the Future. When choosing either the Past Simple or the Present Simple to describe your table, the important thing is to keep it consistent. If you choose to use the Past Simple, you can’t switch to the Present Simple unless you have a good reason. This also applies to any other type of Task 1 in the IELTS Writing exam. Remember that when we respond to the question, we are describing a set of facts rather than telling a creative story.

IELTS Table Exercise 1

Read the following example task.

1. Analyze the question
2. Plan your response.

The table below shows the results of a survey carried out with visitors to the London Natural History Museum.

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

Write at least 150 words.

Reasons for Visiting the London Natural History Museum (in number of people interviewed).

Reason Given	**2000**	**2010**	**2020**
'I came to see specific displays'	52	48	54
Tourism	7	13	22
School Trip	15	22	20
Work	10	11	10

Analysis & Plan

Paragraph 1 - Introduction

All you have to do is paraphrase as we've seen in previous chapters, a technique we use to rewrite certain sentences differently without changing the meaning. In Task 1, it is always the introduction sentence to the question combined with the title of the table.

For example, the question above states: "*The table below shows the results of a survey carried out with visitors to the London Natural History Museum*." The title of the table is: "*Reasons for visiting the London Natural History Museum (in number of people interviewed).*"

Now rewrite this in your own words;

……

For instance, we can write:

The table illustrates the outcome of a survey conducted with London Natural History Museum visitors to learn the reasons for their visit.

Paragraph 2 – Overview

Jump straight into the obvious information; in this case, the table compares four reasons with the years the survey was taken in. Now highlight the most significant numbers. Look for:

- The highest and lowest numbers
- The overall trend
- The anomaly (the one with the inconsistent trend or showing the most significant change)
- Remember to be general in your overview, don't give specific data.

Now write your overview in your own words;

……

Here is how you could write your overview for this table:

It *(The graphic) compares four reasons for touring the museum in 2000, 2010, and 2020, with the desire 'to see specific displays' proving to be the most popular reason for visiting in all three years.* ***Meanwhile,*** *'Tourism' saw the most significant growth, followed by 'School Trips,' while 'Work' remained relatively unchanged throughout.*

Paragraph 3 - Data highlight 1

The next part should elaborate on the data further; for instance, we can summarize the reason with the most consistent increase across the data or the reason with a near-constant number:

Now write paragraph 3 in your own words;

……

Here is how you could write paragraph 3 for this table:

‘Wanting to witness specific displays' presented a slight decrease between 2000 and 2010, going from 52 to 48 as the rest rose, but it grew again in the third interview, ending with 54 people. From 2010 to 2020, 'Work' and 'School trip' dropped by 1 and 2, respectively.

Paragraph 4 - Data highlight 2

Last but not least you can point out the increases and decreases. Make sure not to mention all of them individually, but rather in a trend.

Write paragraph 4 in your own words;

……

Here is how you could write paragraph 4 for this table:

Out of the four reasons, 'Work' was the least popular, with minor fluctuations between 10 and 11 across the three interviews, while 'Tourism' showed the most dramatic climb, from 7 in 2000 to 15 in 2010, and ending with 22 in 2020.

IELTS Table Exercise 2

Read the question again and then analyze Sample Response 1 below. What mistakes can you see? How would you improve it? Correct as many things as you can and then check the Suggested Answers on the next page, and Sample Response 2.

The table below shows the results of a survey carried out with visitors to the London Natural History Museum. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

Reasons for Visiting the London Natural History Museum (in number of people interviewed).

Reason Given	2000	2010	2020
'I came to see specific displays'	52	48	54
Tourism	7	13	22
School Trip	15	22	20
Work	10	11	10

Full Sample Response 1

The table shows information about the number of visitors to the London Natural History Museum between 2000 to 2020.

Overall, what stands out from the table is that there was a considerable upward trend of people who visited the museum for tourism.

Looking at the details, 52 visitors chose wanting to see specific displays as their reason in 2000, then the figure went down slightly to around 48 people in 2010. In 2020, the number of visitors wanting to see specific displays rose to 54. By contrast, around 7 visitors chose tourism for visiting the museum in 2000. Next, the figure almost doubled with 13 people in 2010 and then levelled off at 22 visitors in 2020.

Regarding school trip, 15 people chose it as their reason in 2000. There was a significant increase to 22 visitors in 2010 and then levelled off at 20 people in 2020. Looking at work, the figure started at 10 people in 2000, then marginally increased to 11 people in 2020. Lastly, it fell slightly again to 10 visitors in 2020.

Suggested Answers

The table shows information about the number of visitors to the London Natural History Museum between 2000 to 2020. –(“**between** X **and** Y” or “**from** X **to** Y”)

Overall, what stands out from the table is that - **(this is a waste of words and it makes the report look less professional. It also repeats the word table unnecessarily)** there was a considerable upward trend of people who visited the museum for tourism.

Looking at the details, 52 visitors chose wanting to see specific displays as their reason in 2000, then the figure **- (should be plural)** went down slightly to around 48 people in 2010. In 2020, the number of visitors wanting to see specific displays rose to 54. By contrast, around 7 visitors chose tourism for visiting the museum in 2000. Next, the figure almost doubled with 13 people in 2010 and then levelled off – **(Wrong use of “levelled off”. *Levelled off* means it reached a steady rate without change. In this case there was change, since it increased to 22)** at 22 visitors in 2020.

Regarding school trip,- **(grammatically incorrect. “School Trip” is a reason given in the questionnaire. It can’t be introduced by saying “Regarding”, since it is not a topic we are going to discuss, it’s a response given by people in a questionnaire.)** 15 people chose it as their reason in 2000. There was a significant increase to 22 visitors in

2010 and then levelled off at 20 people in 2020. Looking at work, the figure started at 10 people in 2000, then marginally increased to 11 people in 2020. Lastly, it fell slightly again to 10 visitors in 2020.

Full Sample Response 2

Here is what the sample answer looks like together:

The table illustrates *the outcome of a survey conducted with London Natural History Museum visitors to learn the reasons for their visit.*

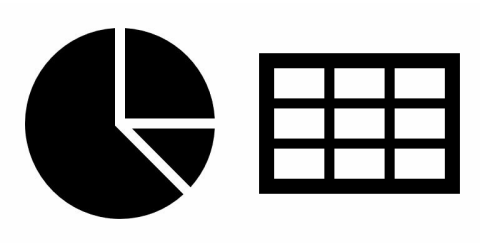
The graphic/table compares *four reasons for touring the museum in 2000, 2010, and 2020, with the desire 'to see specific displays' proving to be the most popular reason for visiting in all three years. 'Tourism' saw the most significant growth, followed by 'School Trips,' while 'Work' remained relatively unchanged throughout.*

'Wanting to witness specific displays' ***presented a slight decrease between*** *2000* ***and*** *2010,* ***going from*** *52* ***to*** *48* ***as the rest rose****, but it grew again in the third interview, ending with 54 people. From 2010 to 2020, 'Work' and 'School trip' dropped by 1 and 2, respectively.*

Out of the four reasons, 'Work' was the least popular, with ***minor fluctuations*** *between 10 and 11 across the three interviews, while 'Tourism'* ***showed the most dramatic climb, from*** *7 in 2000* ***to*** *15 in 2010, and ending with 22 in 2020.*

As long as you follow the principles and structure of task 1, your piece should sound cohesive, easy to follow, and easy to understand.

6. Mixed Chart Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing



How to Write An IELTS Two Graph Description

One of the toughest IELTS writing task 1 questions is the mixed or combined chart question. Most IELTS candidates dread this question because they have no idea how to answer it. This is because most people don't prepare for this type of question well enough.

In a mixed chart question, you will be given two different graphs or images that contain data related to the same main topic.

In this chapter, we will look at a step-by-step strategy to tackle mixed graph IELTS writing questions, and we will use a sample question and a high-scoring model answer to help illustrate these methods.

Writing Your Report

To write an IELTS task 1 report, a few basic steps need to be followed.

You need to:

Analyze the question

Plan out your report structure

Write a good introduction

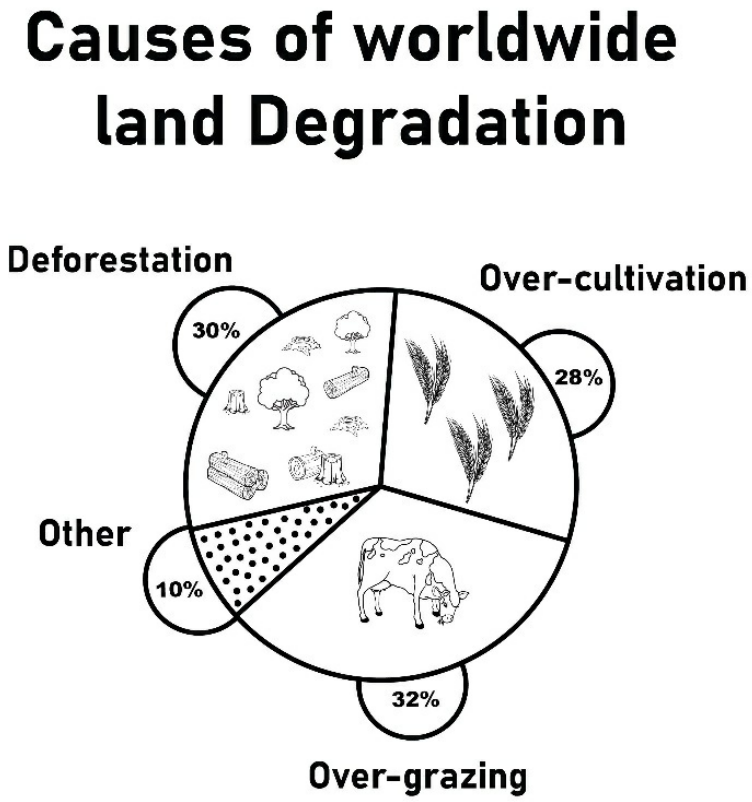
Write an overview paragraph

Write the main body paragraphs

To show these steps, we will use the following sample question:

The pie chart illustrates the main reason why agricultural land tends to become less productive. The table illustrates the effect of these causes in three European countries between 2002 and 2012.

Select and report the main features, making comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words.



Causes of land degradation by country (2002-2012)

Country	% land degraded by ...			
	deforestaion	over cultivation	Over grazing	Total land degraded
Germany	0.2	3.3	1.5	5%
Italy	9.8	7.7	5.5	23%
Russia	1.7	0	11.3	13%

Step 1 – Analyze

Many students make the mistake of thinking that since they only have 20 minutes for this type of question, they should start writing as soon as possible. However, this is often a costly mistake, because you need to do some groundwork to produce a high-scoring report.

The first thing you need to do is extract as much information from the titles of both graphs as possible. Make sure that you note down the different quantities that are being measured and their units of measurement.

It's important to note down the time periods mentioned in both graphs as this will tell you which tense to use when describing the data. You should also be careful because the time periods for each graph may not always be the same.

For example, in our sample question, the pie chart does not relate to any specific time period, meaning that when we describe this data, we will do so using the present tense. However, the data mentioned in the table is for 2002-2012, meaning that we have to use the past tense when we discuss this data in our report.

A Common Problem with Mixed Graph Questions

A common problem with this type of question is that students often write too much. They try to include as much information as possible for both graphs because they can't decide what to focus on.

Remember in your report you only have to discuss the main trends and features of the graph; writing about every detail and change in both graphs will give the examiner the impression that you could not analyze

and understand the data and that you have no idea about the main trends and features presented in any of the graphical information. This will negatively affect your Task Achievement score, since Task Achievement is related to how well you answered all parts of the question. All writing task 1 report questions ask you to "summarize and report the main features." Therefore, you should not mention minute (unimportant) details in your report.

You should pick about 2 to 3 main features. This will make it easier to develop your main body paragraphs.

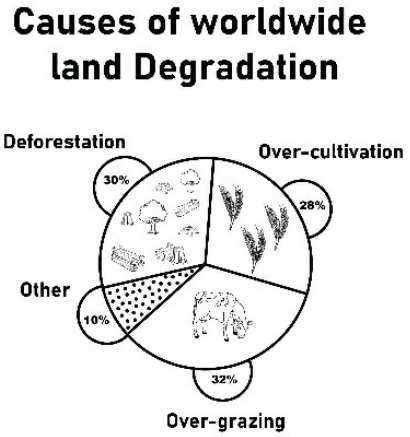
You can decide what these main features are by looking at the graph.

Note the extreme data points, like the highest or lowest values.

Comparing and contrasting is one of the important skills that the examiner will be looking out for, so keep an eye out for trends that are either very similar or trends that show contradictory (or inverse) behavior.

You should have a maximum of three main features for each graph; any more would be too confusing and too difficult to explain in only 20 minutes.

By looking at the pie chart in the example, we can see that:



- The pie chart is about the different reasons for the loss of

land productivity.

- The quantities are measured in percentages.
- Overgrazing has the highest amount at 32%.
- The other two categories have similar values with deforestation at 30% and over-cultivation at 28%.
- The category for 'Other' is the lowest at 10%.
- No time periods are mentioned for this pie chart.

By looking at the table, we can see that:

Causes of land degradation by country (2002-2012)

Country	% land degraded by ...			
	deforestaion	over cultivation	Over grazing	Total land degraded
Germany	0.2	3.3	1.5	5%
Italy	9.8	7.7	5.5	23%
Russia	1.7	0	11.3	13%

- The table shows the percentage of agricultural land degraded and the main reasons for this.
- The quantities are measured in percentages.
- Italy had the greatest percentage of land degradation at 23 percent, and the main cause of this was deforestation at 9.8 percent followed closely by over-cultivation at 7.7 percent.
- Russia had a total of 13 percent of its agricultural land rendered unusable, and the main reason for this was over-grazing at 11.3 percent.

- Germany had the lowest figure at 5 percent, and this was mostly caused by over-cultivation at 3.3 percent.
- The table displays data for the period 2002-2012.

Step 2 – Write an Introduction

- You should include a well-thought-out introduction about the type of information present in the report.
- You need to mention the type of quantities being described and their units of measurement.
- You should also make sure that you include information about both types of graphs so that it is clear to the reader that this report is based on more than one piece of graphical information.
- To write an introduction paragraph, you need to paraphrase the information mentioned in the first sentence of the question statement using appropriate synonyms, and this sentence should be about 40 to 50 words long.

Question Statement: *The pie chart illustrates the main reason why agricultural land tends to become less productive. The table illustrates the effect of these causes in three European countries between 2002 and 2012.*

Now rewrite this in your own words;

……

Sample Introduction: *The given graphs provide information about the loss of productivity in agricultural lands. To be more specific the pie chart lists the main reasons for the loss of productivity in agricultural*

areas, while the table presents the impact in three major countries affected from 2002 to 2012.

Step 3 – Write an Overview Paragraph

In an overview paragraph, you need to mention the most obvious features and trends that can be seen in both graphs. This paragraph should be about two to three sentences at most. Do not let the fact that there are two graphs trick you into adding extra details here.

Now write your overview in your own words;

……

***Sample Overview**:*

Overall, the pie chart clearly shows that the greatest cause of land degradation is usually over-grazing. The table identifies that the country with the most severe loss of agricultural productivity was Italy, with significantly higher degradation than Russia. The least affected country was Germany, which experienced relatively low degradation.

Step 4 – Write the Main Body Paragraphs

- In our main body paragraphs, we will support the information given in our overview with more detail.
- As always, we should write as if the reader has not seen the graphical information and is relying only on our report to understand the trends.
- Therefore, we should use separate paragraphs to describe the data from each graph.

- This will make it easier for the reader to understand the information presented in our report.

Now write paragraph 3 in your own words;

……

Sample Main Body Paragraph 3:

According to what is shown, overgrazing is the most significant reason for agricultural land degradation with a value of 32%. The other two categories have similar values with 30% for deforestation and 28% for over-cultivation. The category for other causes is the lowest at 10%.

Now write paragraph 4 in your own words;

……

Sample Main Body Paragraph 4:

In 2002-2012, Italy had by far the greatest percentage of land degradation at 23%, and the main cause for this was deforestation at 9.8% followed closely by over-cultivation at 7.7%. Additionally, Russia had a total of 13% of its agricultural land rendered unusable, and the main reason for this was over-grazing at 11.3%. In comparison, Germany had the lowest levels of degradation at 5%, mostly caused by over-cultivation (3.3%).

Full Sample Response 1

The given graphs provide information about the loss of productivity in agricultural lands. To be more specific the pie chart lists the main reasons for the loss of productivity in agricultural areas, while the table presents the impact in three major countries affected from 2002 to 2012.

Overall, the pie chart clearly shows that the greatest cause of land degradation is usually over-grazing. The table identifies that the country with the most severe loss of agricultural productivity was Italy, with significantly higher degradation than Russia. The least affected country was Germany, which experienced relatively low degradation.

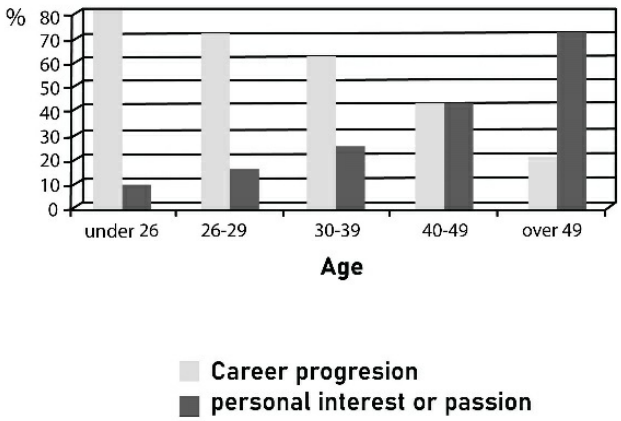
According to what is shown, overgrazing is the most significant reason for agricultural land degradation with a value of 32%. The other two categories have similar values with 30% for deforestation and 28% for over-cultivation. The category for other causes is the lowest at 10%.

In 2002-2012, Italy had by far the greatest percentage of land degradation at 23%, and the main cause for this was deforestation at 9.8% followed closely by over-cultivation at 7.7%. Additionally, Russia had a total of 13% of its agricultural land rendered unusable, and the main reason for this was over-grazing at 11.3%. In comparison, Germany had the lowest levels of degradation at 5%, mostly caused by over-cultivation (3.3%).

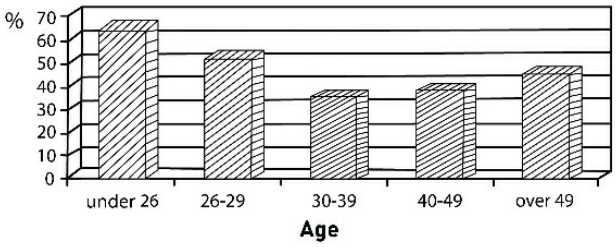
IELTS Mixed Chart Exercise 2

The charts below show the main reasons for study among art students of different ages and the level of satisfaction they reported after they began their new course.

Reasons for study according of student



Percentage of students by age who declared themselves to be 'very satisfied' with their choice of course



Exercise instructions: Write your response and compare it to *Full Sample Response 2* on the next page.

Write 150-180 words below:

Full Sample Response 2

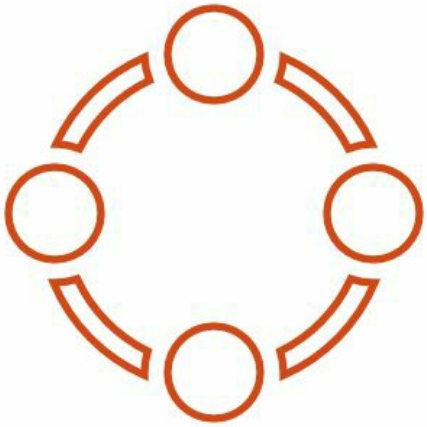
*The first chart **shows** the factors that motivated each student age group to study art, **while** the second one **represents** the percentage of those same groups that were 'very satisfied with their choice.*

*Overall, **most** younger art students chose this course of study to further their careers, **while** the older students mainly chose art to pursue their personal interests. **Interestingly**, the number of students in the three youngest groups who were very satisfied with the decision **declined** as the age ranges **increased**.*

*The highest figures for the category of career progression can be seen in the younger age groups, starting at 80% for the under 26-year-olds. **However**, the values **declined gradually** for every age level, with the lowest numbers recorded in the over 49 age group at **roughly** 20%.*

*The percentage of students who declared themselves 'very satisfied' was also highest in the under 26 age group at **around** 60%. This number **declined steadily** for the other two youngest groups. The least satisfied group overall was the age group between 30 and 39 with **just over** 30%. In **contrast**, satisfaction **increased gradually** for the 40 to 49 and over 49 groups at **around** 30 and 40%, **respectively**.*

7. Process Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing



How to Write a Band 9 IELTS Process Description

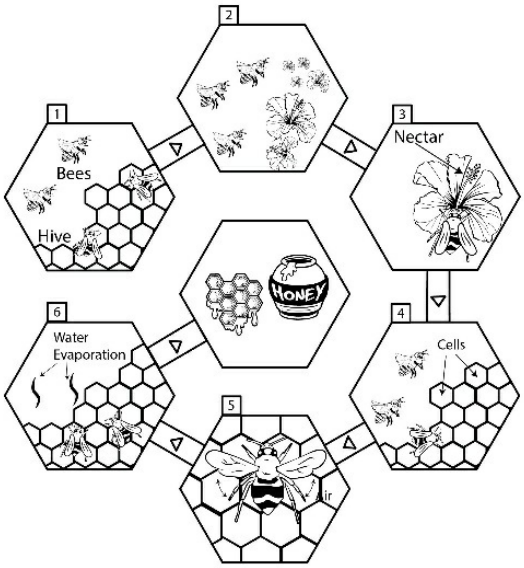
This chapter outlines the thought processes and structure needed to answer an IELTS Process Description question, and the elements that need to be included to achieve the best possible band score for your writing.

Example Question:

The diagram illustrates how bees produce honey.

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

Write at least 150 words.



Nectar: A sugary fluid produced by flowers to encourage pollination.
Hive: A dome-shaped or boxlike structure where bees live.
Evaporation: The process of turning from water into vapour.

Step 1- Understand the Process

The first sentence tells us what is shown in the diagram, but we must take time to look at the diagram itself to fully understand what happens in the process.

REMEMBER: we cannot describe something if we do not understand it!

THOUGHT PROCESS FOR THE EXAMPLE:

- The diagram *tells us (**illustrates**)* how bees *make (**produce**)* honey
- The diagram has numbers and arrows, so it is easy to see the beginning and end of the process
- There are not many words on the diagram, so we must use the pictures to help
- There are some words explained underneath the diagram, so they must be important!

Basic Process Outline:

Picture 1 – bees live in a hive

Picture 2 – bees fly around and visit flowers

Picture 3 – bees collect nectar from each flower

Picture 4 – the nectar is left/deposited/transferred into cells inside the hive

Picture 5 – bees flap their wings which causes/creates movement of air/ air movement

Picture 6 – water evaporates from the nectar

Picture 7 – honey is left behind

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- Read the question and study the diagram so we know what is happening in the process
- Make a note of the words on the diagram
- Think about our own words that we can use and synonyms.

Step 2- Plan Your Answer

It is important to plan the structure of our writing so that we have included all the elements needed for a Band 9 answer.

REMEMBER: we must structure our writing so that the reader can understand and learn from what we are describing. Imagine the examiner can’t see the process diagram and needs your help to understand it.

THOUGHT PROCESS:

We need an introduction that tells the reader what we are writing about – We can do this by rewriting and paraphrasing the first sentence of the question using synonyms.

ORIGINAL WORD/PHRASE	POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE PHRASES/SYNONYMS
The diagram	*The picture, illustration, image, graphic*
illustrates	*shows, explains, demonstrates*
how	*the way in which, the process of*
produce	*make*

- We need to give an overview of the whole process without giving specific details
- We need to write two paragraphs that **select and report** (describe) the main features of the process – We need to decide what the main features are.

Main feature no. 1	**Pictures 1, 2 & 3**	Bees are outside collecting nectar
Main feature no. 2	**Pictures 4, 5, 6 & 7**	What happens when the bees return to the hive

BASIC STRUCTURE

- Think about possible alternative phrases and synonyms to rewrite the first sentence of the question
- Think about how I will describe the whole process
- Identify the main features of the process
- Plan what information my paragraphs will include.

Paragraph 1	Introduction	Rewrite the first sentence of the question
Paragraph 2	Overview	Describe the whole process
Paragraph 3	First main feature	Bees are outside collecting nectar
Paragraph 4	Second main feature	What happens when the bees return to the hive

Step 3- Describe

It is important to follow your plan (**introduction, overview, main features**) to stay focused on the question.

REMEMBER: you only have 20 minutes, so stay focused and stick to your plan.

THOUGHT PROCESS:

There are certain things that we must include in our writing to make sure that we get the best mark that we can.

HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR OWN PROCESS DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTORS	CONTENT	EXAMPLES/ACTION
Task Response	I have fully addressed all the parts of the task and done everything I have been asked to do.	Read the question carefully. Check that you have done everything that you were asked to do.
Coherence and Cohesion	I have used cohesion so that my description reads **smoothly** and is sequenced effectively. I have used **paragraphing** effectively.	Use sequencing vocabulary, e.g., *first, next, after that, finally, etc.* Use linking words/phrases, e.g., *because, in order to, whenever, as a result, etc.* Check that you have used these.
Lexical Resource	I have used a wide range of vocabulary and made very few, minor errors in spelling and language.	Include the important vocabulary from the diagram. Use interesting synonyms and alternative phrases. Check your spelling.
Grammatical	I have accurately used a	Correct use of the present

Range and Accuracy	wide range of grammatical structures and made none or very few minor errors.	simple tense. Appropriate and relevant use of both active and passive voices. Interesting and varied use of simple and complex sentences. Check your use of grammar and punctuation.

We must leave time to check our writing thoroughly – We can do this by reading/planning for 2-3 minutes, writing for about 15 minutes, and checking for 2-3 minutes at the end.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- Identify/remember all the elements that make good writing
- Remember to leave enough time to check our writing to ensure that we have included everything and made as few mistakes as possible.

Exercise 1: Writing an Introduction

Write ONE SENTENCE to introduce the process description using the exam question below. Remember to paraphrase as much as possible, and remember to check your paragraph for grammar and vocabulary mistakes at the end.

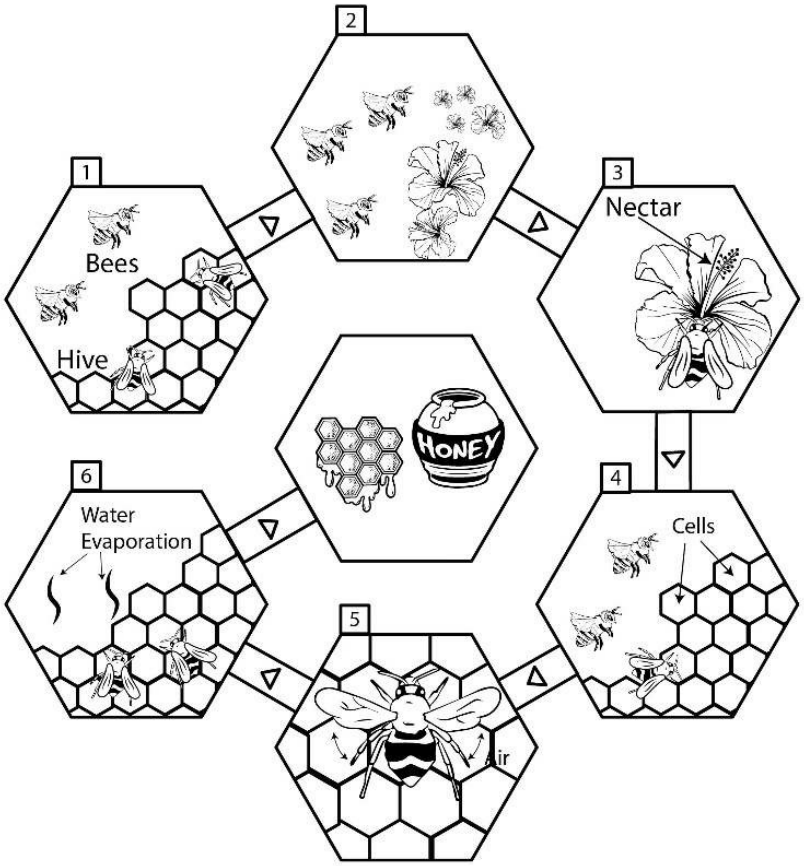
When you have finished, and you have checked for mistakes, look at the *Answers* section at the end of this chapter.

EXAM QUESTION:

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The diagram illustrates how bees produce honey.

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



Nectar: A sugary fluid produced by flowers to encourage pollination.
Hive: A dome-shaped or boxlike structure where bees live.
Evaporation: The process of turning from water into vapour.

Write here:

Exercise 2: Writing an Overview

Write a ONE SENTENCE PARAGRAPH to give an overview of the process description using the same exam question as in Exercise 1.

Remember to paraphrase as much as possible, and remember to check your paragraph for grammar and vocabulary mistakes at the end.

When you have finished, and you have checked for mistakes, look at the Answers section at the end of this chapter.

Write here:

Exercise 3: Writing Body Paragraph 1

Write the FIRST MAIN BODY PARAGRAPH to give details about the process, using the same exam question as in Exercises 1 and 2. Remember to check your paragraph for grammar and vocabulary mistakes at the end.

When you have finished, and you have checked for mistakes, look at the Answers section at the end of this chapter.

Write here:

Exercise 4: Writing Body Paragraph 2

Write the SECOND MAIN BODY PARAGRAPH to give details about the process, using the same exam question as in Exercises 1-3. Remember to check your paragraph for grammar and vocabulary mistakes at the end.

When you have finished, and you have checked for mistakes, look at the Answers section at the end of this chapter.

Write here:

Exercise 5: Grammar & Vocabulary

Read the process description below and fill in the blanks with the missing word or phrase. The sentences are worded DIFFERENTLY to the Samples given in the answers to exercises 1-4.

The illustration explains the process of …….. honey in beehives.

Overall, there are seven …….. stages in this process, …….. the honey bees …….. a hive ……. the collection and use of the honey.

Firstly, the bees build a dome-shaped or box-like ……. in which to live. The hive ……. many individually-built units, called cells. Next, the bees leave the hive …… search for flowers. Bees are attracted to flowers by their scent, and they collect nectar, a sticky, sugary substance, from each flower that they visit. This substance is …….. to the production of honey.

When the bees return to the hive, the nectar is deposited into the cells. Once this is done, the nectar is cooled down by the movement of air created by the flapping of the bees' wings, …….. also causes the nectar to lose its water content. Finally, the honey is left as the product of the whole process and can be enjoyed as a deliciously sweet treat.

Answers

Sample Introductory Sentence

The illustration explains the process of honey production in bee hives.

Sample Overview Sentence

There are seven key stages in this whole process, beginning with the honey bees building a hive and concluding with the collection and use of the honey.

Sample Main Body Paragraph 1

Firstly, the bees build a dome-shaped or box-like structure, called a hive, in which to live. It consists of many individually-built units, called cells. Then, the bees leave the hive in order to search for flowers. They are attracted to flowers by their scent and, as a result, they collect nectar, a sticky, sugary substance, from each flower that they visit. It is this substance that forms the basis of honey production.

Sample Main Body Paragraph 2

When the bees return to the hive, the nectar is deposited into the cells. Next, the nectar is cooled down by the movement of air created by the flapping of the bees' wings. This also causes the nectar to lose its water content. Finally, the honey is left as the product of the whole process and can be enjoyed as a deliciously sweet treat.

Full Sample Response Version 1

The illustration explains the process of honey production in beehives.

There are seven key stages in this whole process, beginning with the honey bees building a hive and concluding with the collection and use of the honey.

Firstly, the bees build a dome-shaped or box-like structure, called a hive, in which to live. It consists of many individually-built units, called cells. Then, the bees leave the hive in order to search for flowers. They are attracted to flowers by their scent, and, as a result, they collect nectar, a sticky, sugary substance, from each flower that they visit. It is this substance that forms the basis of honey production.

When the bees return to the hive, the nectar is deposited into the cells. Next, the nectar is cooled down by the movement of air created by the flapping of the bees' wings. This also causes the nectar to lose its water content. Finally, the honey is left as the product of the whole process and can be enjoyed as a deliciously sweet treat.

Full Sample Response Version 2

Exercise 5: Grammar & Vocabulary

The illustration explains the process of producing honey in beehives.

Overall, there are seven main stages in this process, from the honey bees building a hive to the collection and use of the honey.

Firstly, the bees build a dome-shaped or box-like hive in which to live. The hive contains many individually-built units, called cells. Next, the bees leave the hive to search for flowers. Bees are attracted to flowers by their scent, and they collect nectar, a sticky, sugary substance, from each flower that they visit. This substance is central/crucial/vital/key to the production of honey.

When the bees return to the hive, the nectar is deposited into the cells. Once this is done, the nectar is cooled down by the movement of air created by the flapping of the bees' wings, which also causes the nectar to lose its water content. Finally, the honey is left as the product of the whole process and can be enjoyed as a deliciously sweet treat.

Full Sample Response Version 3

This diagram presents the process by which bees make honey.

There are seven key stages in this process, beginning with the honey bees building a hive and concluding with the collection and use of the honey.

Firstly, the bees build a dome-shaped or box-like structure, called a hive, in which to live. It consists of many individually-built units, called cells. Then, the bees leave the hive to search for flowers. They are attracted to flowers by their scent, and, as a result, they collect nectar, a sticky, sugary substance, from each flower they visit. It is this substance that forms the basis of honey production.

When the bees return to the hive, the nectar is deposited into the cells. Next, the nectar is cooled down by the air movement created by the flapping of the bees' wings, which also causes the nectar cells to lose their water content. Finally, the honey is left as the product of the whole process and can be enjoyed as a deliciously sweet treat.

Extra Language for Process Descriptions

DESCRIBING THE PROCEDURE

The procedure for… is as follows.

In order to …the following process takes place.

First of all,…

Then…

After that…

At the next stage…

This is done by…

Finally,…

This completes the procedure.

8. Map Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing

How To Write A Description For A Map

In the IELTS exam, you might be asked to write a report based on pictorial information such as a process or a map.

A map question usually asks you to describe the changes that happened to an area over a given period of time.

Writing Task 1 Map questions are arguably among the toughest questions to tackle in the IELTS exam. This is mainly because candidates have to use a set of map-related vocabulary that they might not be used to. The main features and changes are not as clear-cut as in the typical graph and chart questions. For these reasons, it's important to go into the exam with a good strategy to help you write a high-scoring response.

Writing Your Report

Despite being slightly different from the other task 1 question types, the steps to produce a good map description remain the same.

You need to:

Analyze the question

Plan out your report structure

Write a good introduction

Write an overview paragraph

Write the main body paragraphs describing the changes which have taken place.

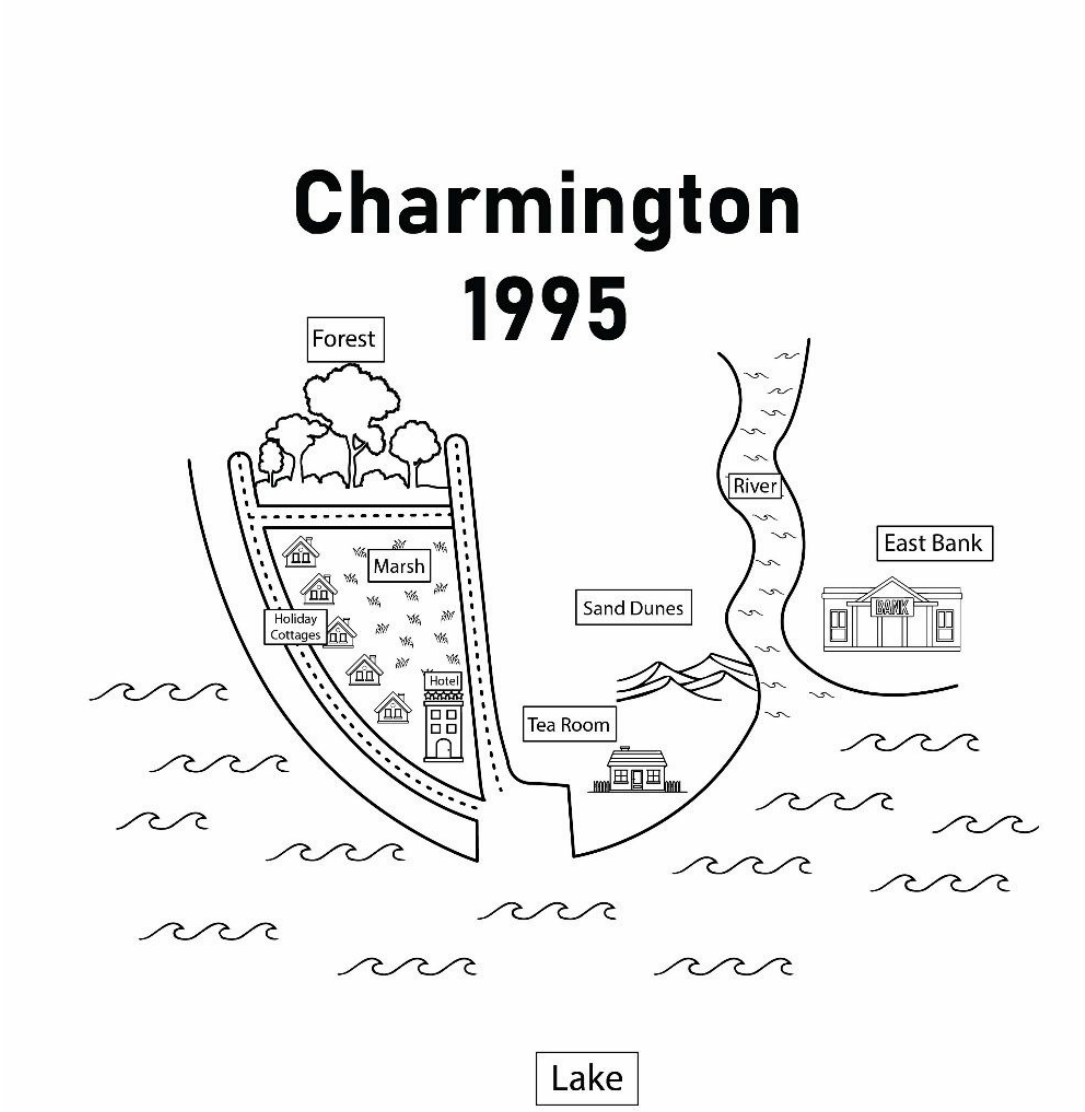
Step 1- Analyze The Question.

The question statement will provide you with several useful pieces of information, such as the name of the area that needs to be described and

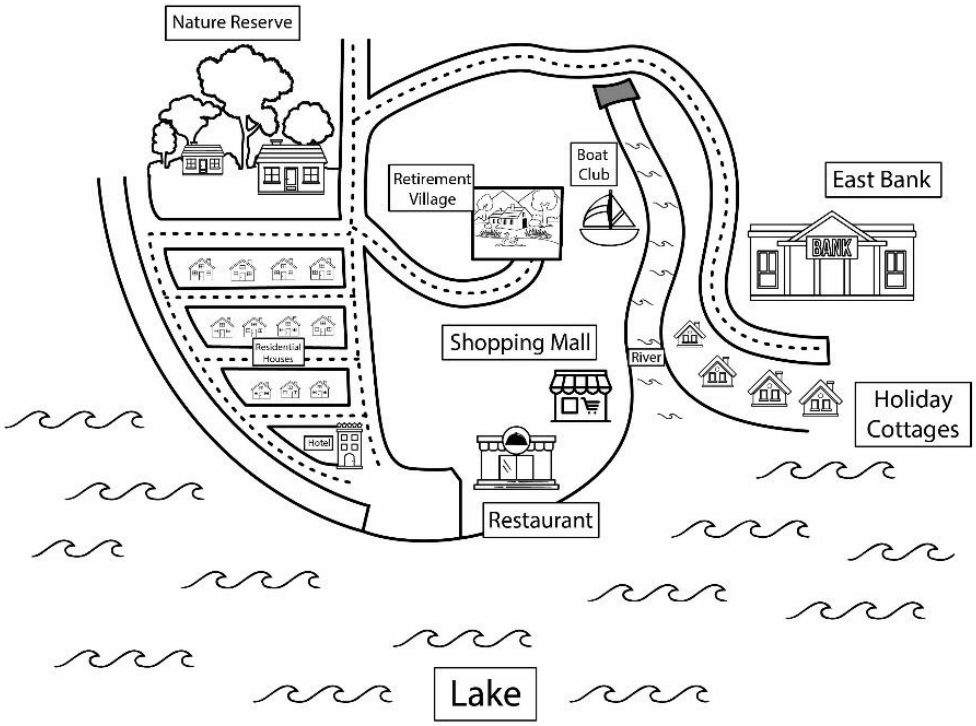
the time periods represented. This will help you decide which tense to use in your report.

You need to study the map and look for features that have disappeared, together with new features. You also need to make note of anything that hasn't changed.

We will use the sample question on the next pages to illustrate these points:



2025


Nature Reserve
Retirement Village
Boat Club
East Bank
BANK
Residential Houses
Shopping Mall
River
Holiday Cottages
Hotel
Restaurant
Lake

Notes:

- This map depicts the town of Charmington
- There are two time periods, 1995 (in the past) and 2025 (in the future)

New features in 2025:

Nature reserve

Residential Housing

A boat club

A restaurant

A retirement village

A shopping mall.

Holiday cottages (moved)

Features that remain the same:

The hotel

Step 2 – Write An Introduction

The introduction paragraph should give the reader an idea about which area is being discussed and the relevant time period. To write a good introductory paragraph, you just need to paraphrase the first statement in the question.

Question Statement: *The map below shows the town of Charmington in 1995 and 2025.*

Now rewrite this in your own words;

……

Sample Introduction: *The map represents the town of Charmington as it was in 1995 and how it is predicted to look in 2025.*

Step 3 – Write An Overview Paragraph

In this paragraph, you must discuss the overall changes in the maps without mentioning too many specific details.

Now write an overview in your own words;

……

Sample Overview*: The town used to be much less built-up, and by 2025, new developments will significantly change the landscape. The most significant changes are that the town will have ample accommodation for residents as well as a brand-new shopping mall, and there will be numerous tourist-friendly amenities.*

Step 4 – Write The Main Body Paragraphs

In the main body paragraphs, you need to provide details about the changes to the map that you noted when analyzing the question. Many students find it easier to organize map information according to time and period. You can dedicate a separate paragraph for each time period to do this. **Note: My Advanced IELTS Writing Band 9 Course shows you how to organize it differently, where you compare each feature side by side, but for this example, we will organize it by time period.**

Now write 2-3 body paragraphs in your own words;

***Sample Main Body Paragraphs**:*

In 1995 most of Charmington was undeveloped, and there were just a few holiday cottages and a hotel on the western side, as well as a small tearoom near the dunes in the south, and a bank on the riverfront.

However, the map for 2025 shows that some radical changes are planned for the town. To the northwest of Charmington, the forest will be turned into a nature reserve. Additionally, the nearby marsh area will be developed into residential housing units, and the holiday cottages will be demolished and rebuilt facing the lake next to the East Bank.

A new town center will be built to include several new facilities such as a boat club on the riverfront, a retirement village, and a shopping mall, built where the dunes used to be. Meanwhile, the small tearoom next to the dunes will be upgraded to a restaurant. The only features of the map to remain the same are the hotel in the southeast of the town and the East Bank.

Full Sample Response 1

The map represents the town of Charmington as it was in 1995 and how it is predicted to look in 2025.

The town used to be much less built-up, and by 2025, new developments will significantly change the landscape. The most significant changes are that the town will have ample accommodation for residents as well as a brand-new shopping mall, and there will be numerous tourist-friendly amenities.

In 1995 most of Charmington was undeveloped, and there were just a few holiday cottages and a hotel on the western side, as well as a small tearoom near the dunes in the south, and a bank on the riverfront.

However, the map for 2025 shows that some radical changes are planned for the town. To the northwest of Charmington, the forest will be turned into a nature reserve. Additionally, the nearby marsh area will be developed into residential housing units, and the holiday cottages will be demolished and rebuilt facing the lake next to the East Bank.

A new town center will be built to include several new facilities such as a boat club on the riverfront, a retirement village, and a shopping mall, built where the dunes used to be. Meanwhile, the small tearoom next to the dunes will be upgraded to a restaurant. The only features of the map to

remain the same are the hotel in the southeast of the town and the East Bank.

Exercise

Full Sample Response 1 above is a little bit too long. How can we make it shorter to make our writing more efficient?

Full Sample Response Version 2: Suggested Answer to Exercise

*The map represents the town of Charmington as it was in 1995 and how it is predicted to look in 2025***.**

The town used to be much less built-up, and by 2025, new developments will significantly change the landscape. ~~The most significant changes are that~~ ***Charmington*** *will have ample accommodation for residents***,** *~~as well as~~ a brand-new shopping mall, and ~~there will be~~ numerous tourist-friendly amenities.*

In 1995 most of Charmington was undeveloped, ~~and there were~~ ***with*** *just a few holiday cottages and a hotel on the western side, ~~as well as~~ a small tearoom near the dunes in the south, and a bank on the riverfront.*

However, the map for 2025 shows ~~that~~ some radical changes ~~are planned for the town~~. To the northwest of Charmington, the forest will be turned into a nature reserve. Additionally, the nearby marsh area will ~~be developed into~~ ***become*** *residential housing units, and the holiday cottages will be ~~demolished and rebuilt facing~~* ***moved near*** *the lake next to the East Bank.*

A new town center will be built to include ~~several new facilities such as~~ a boat club on the riverfront, a retirement village, and a shopping mall~~, built~~ where the dunes used to be.

Meanwhile, the small tearoom next to the dunes will be upgraded to a restaurant. ~~The only features of the map to remain the same are the hotel in the southeast of the town and the East Bank~~. ***The hotel in the southeast and the East Bank will remain untouched.***

Map Vocabulary

One of the main problems that students face when writing a description for a map is that they do not use the proper vocabulary related to maps and directions. You must familiarize yourself with these types of words and their usage.

Here are some words and phrases that are useful for a map description:

north

south

east

west

north-east

northwest

southeast

south-west

to the left

to the right

seafront

lakefront

riverfront

nearby

adjacent

besides

between

in front of

behind

radical changes

minor changes

Remember, the best way to familiarize yourself with these new words is to practice using them!

Full Sample Response Version 3

The given maps illustrate the town of Charmington as it was in 1995 and proposed changes for the year 2025. Overall, it appears that by 2025, the town will become more residential with leisure facilities such as a boat club and shopping mall planned at the expense of natural features.

In 1995, the northwestern part of the town was dominated by forest and marshlands, with holiday cottages built along a small street. A hotel was also situated at the southern intersection of two streets. In 2025 however, the forest will be replaced by a natural reserve, and several rows of residential housing will take the place of the marshland and holiday cottages. There are no proposed changes to the hotel.

Meanwhile, the eastern part of Charmington will change considerably too. A retirement village will be constructed by the side of a new boat club located along the river. To the south, the tea room and sand dunes will be replaced by a restaurant and shopping center, respectively. Finally, the East Bank will experience development in the form of lake-facing holiday cottages.

9. Formal Letters & Emails for IELTS Writing General Training Exam

We will examine the formal letter tasks in the IELTS General Training exam in this section.

Firstly, we will practice identifying key information in the question. Next, we will suggest ways to organise formal letters, and then we will look at the kind of language you should be using. Finally, we practice functional language, grammar, and vocabulary, which are essential and will help you gain lots of marks in the exam.

We will examine two formal letter and email types: the letter of reference and the application letter. These aren't the only types of standard letter or email you might be asked to write about in the exam, but they will serve as perfect examples here.

Letter of Reference

In this type of formal letter, you're asked to provide a reference for a colleague or friend to a prospective employer or educational institution.

You may find it helpful to note down useful expressions which you can include,

Some Useful Language for this type of letter or email

I have known X for ….

I am confident that ….

I have no hesitation in recommending him ….

X is sociable, reliable, self-confident, outgoing

X possesses a thorough grounding in …

stand him in good stead

as is shown by the fact that …

As you may know, your writing will be assessed in terms of:

Task Achievement

Coherence and Cohesion

Lexical Resource

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Including all the relevant content in your letter and presenting it clearly will contribute hugely towards you scoring well as the target reader will be fully informed.

Candidates often lose marks in the exam, either because they have included irrelevant information, they've forgotten to include something important, or misinterpreted the question.

Here is a typical example of a formal letter question. We will practice identifying key content to avoid losing marks. We'll work through the task chronologically.

Read the example and answer the following question.

1. What is the first key piece of information you need to refer to in your answer?

A friend of yours is applying for a job in a popular shop as a retail shop assistant for English speaking tourists visiting your city. The shop has asked you to provide a character reference for your friend.

The reference should indicate

how long you have known each other.

It must include a detailed description of the person's character

the reason why he or she would be suitable for the job.

Write at least 150 words

This seems like an obvious question, but it's vital to understand that <u>they ask you to write a reference</u>. Firstly, this indicates that we need to be thinking about a formal register, and it also helps us start the letter.

For example:

"To whom it may concern,

Mary and I have been working together at J&J Retail for ten years.

……..”

2. What is the next vital information?

We need to pay attention to the type of job we are writing the reference for. The job, in this case, is a retail assistant for a popular shop. It is important to remember that the information we provide must be relevant to this position.

3. What qualities or skills does a suitable candidate for almost any job need to have?

You can use the following ideas for any job reference.

i. Personal and social skills (people skills/inter-personal abilities): The successful candidate will need to have good personal and social skills, so we must emphasise the person's personal and social skills in the context of their application.

ii. English language skills: we must emphasise his or her English language skills, as all jobs that you will be asked to write references for in this exam will require the candidate to speak good English to communicate with customers, clients, tourists, guests, etc.…

iii. Time-management ability is another skill that every person needs for a job, so regardless of the job they present you with, you can talk about this.

4. So what's next?

Previous experience. We need to mention any relevant work the person has done in the past that will support their application. Again, we could link this with the earlier part about their people skills or their time-management skills.

We need to show the person is suitable for the post, but this doesn't necessarily need to be in a separate paragraph. You can write about their experience in the same section while you describe their character and skills.

Alternatively, it could be something you include at the end of the letter, but either way, you always need to emphasise the person's suitability for the post.

Organisation (Reference and Application):

Reread the example and answer the following questions.

1. How many paragraphs would you have?

2. Which sections would deal with which issues?

Example Question

A friend of yours is applying for a job in a popular shop as a retail shop assistant for English speaking tourists visiting your city. The shop has asked you to provide a character reference for your friend.

The reference should indicate

•how long you have known each other.

•It must include a detailed description of the person’s character

•the reason why he or she would be suitable for the job.

Write at least 150 words

One idea is to organise this around two or three content paragraphs along with an opening and closing paragraph, so four or five paragraphs in total.

Paragraph 1

The first paragraph is going to deal with our reason for writing. In this case, our motivation is to write a reference for a friend (or in the letter of application to apply for something). In a letter of reference or a letter of application, the first main content paragraph usually outlines the person's skills and experience, perhaps including any relevant qualifications they might have.

Paragraph 2

Then, we could move on to look at the person's character and their personal qualities.

We could deal with our friend’s suitability for the post in these two paragraphs if we wanted to, or we could choose to have a third content paragraph where we emphasise the person's strengths once again.

Finally, we would end the letter with a closing remark such as: *“Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. “*

Organising your paragraphs logically like this would make the letter coherent overall. It would give the reader a visual guide to your organisation, especially if you leave a line of space between each paragraph. It would also help you deal with the main sections of the letter in a logical order.

Expressing Ideas

But what about how you express ideas within paragraphs? How can you link ideas in and between sentences? Let's look at some of the ways you can do this.

Linking Words:

The first method is linking words that you've probably used in your writing for a while. Words or expressions like *firstly* or *in addition*, or *for instance*, enable you to link ideas simply and effectively.

Discourse Markers:

The assessment criteria often refer to discourse markers. These are just slightly higher-level linking words or expressions such as *moreover, furthermore,* or *by way of example.*

Exercise

Look at the gaps in the sample answer below:

Where could you use these linking words and discourse markers to complete the text? You will not need to sue all of them.

Firstly, in addition, for instance, moreover, furthermore, or by way of example.

To whom it may concern,

Mary and I worked together at J&J Retail for ten years.

It is my pleasure to recommend her for the position of Shop Assistant.

1…….., Mary is a self-confident and outgoing person who finds it easy to relate to people from all kinds of backgrounds.

During her time at J&J Retail, Mary proved to be friendly, communicative, hard-working, and excellent at managing her time. 2…….., Mary is the kind of person who works well with others, as she displays

excellent sensitivity and sympathy. She was always willing to contribute and help her colleagues. 3……. at J&J Retail, she was popular and fully committed to the organisation's objectives.

4…….. at J&J Retail, Mary demonstrated excellent English language skills dealing with English-speaking customers daily. She passed her English exams around six months ago and has a keen interest in fashion, which I am sure will stand her in good stead when she is helping customers in English.

I recommend Mary without reservation — she would be an excellent asset to your company.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Joe Bloggs

Sample Answer (Letter of Reference):

To whom it may concern,

Mary and I worked together at J&J Retail for ten years.

It is my pleasure to recommend her for the position of Shop Assistant.

Firstly, Mary is a self-confident and outgoing person who finds it easy to relate to people from all kinds of backgrounds.

During her time at J&J Retail, Mary proved to be friendly, communicative, hard-working, and excellent at managing her time. In addition, Mary is the kind of person who works well with others, as she displays excellent sensitivity and sympathy. She was always willing to contribute and help her colleagues. Moreover, (Furthermore) at J&J Retail, she was popular and fully committed to the organisation's objectives.

By way of example, (For instance) at J&J Retail, Mary demonstrated excellent English language skills dealing with English-speaking customers daily. She passed her English exams around six months ago and has a keen interest in fashion, which I am sure will stand her in good stead when she is helping customers in

English.

I recommend Mary without reservation — she would be an excellent asset to your company.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Your Name and Surname

(Word count: 197)

Notes: Well done if you answered correctly, but be careful when you write, as there is always the danger that you can overuse devices like these. This makes your writing seem unnatural and demonstrates to the examiner that you do not understand how to use them.

To avoid this issue, let's look at some other cohesive devices you can use to help you organise your ideas.

Reference pronouns: Reference pronouns like *this, that, they,* or *it* are commonly used to refer back to something or someone recently mentioned.

Relative clauses: Relative clauses can be used to give added information to a statement, and they allow you to link ideas together in well-formed sentences.

Substitution:

Other forms of cohesive devices include things like substitution. This is where you use a synonym, for example, to refer backwards or forwards to a connecting point in the text.

E.g., Replacing a verb phrase:

The management team at J & J Retail were delighted with Mary, and so were the rest of the staff (and the rest of the staff were also very happy with her).

Using paragraphs and a variety of cohesive devices effectively will help you score well in the “Coherence and Cohesion” and “Task achievement” parts of the assessment criteria. **Tip:** When you're reading, make a point of looking out for cohesive devices like those we've looked at in this section.

Letter of Application

In this type of formal letter, you're asked to write a formal letter or email applying for a job, accommodation, or place on a course. Again, the recipient of this letter is a prospective employer or educational institution.

Cover letters, sometimes called letters of application, are crucial parts of your application, whether you're a university student or a candidate looking for a job. While there are virtually no limits to the different designs you can use for your letter of application, there are some general guidelines you will want to apply to make sure it is appropriate for the exam. It is first essential to make sure your cover letter has an excellent appearance regarding both structure and language.

Ensure you learn the name of the person or organisation you're writing if they appear in the instructions. The name must always be spelled correctly.

The next thing you want to do is to demonstrate your qualifications for the job. It is best to write two powerful sentences explaining why you have the necessary skills to perform the job you are interested in. After this, you will want to let the potential employer know that your resume is enclosed. It is also essential to make sure you don't end the letter incorrectly.

Sample Task

You see this advertisement in an international student magazine.

<u>Write an application to become a volunteer.</u>

Volunteers needed

We are looking for volunteers to help out at a famous international sporting event. We're looking for friendly, respectful people with good language skills, good team skills, and a 'can-do' attitude. We need people to welcome delegates, provide customer service, and solve problems.

If you think you have what it takes, apply now.

You should write at least 150 words.

Spend around 20 minutes on this part.

The first key piece of information in a letter of application is the fact you've seen the advertisement and where you saw it. This will be the perfect way to start the letter.

Remember that you also need to confirm which position it is you're applying for. This exam is designed to be as realistic as possible, but there may be more than one position in real life. If you didn't mention the specific job, the reader would not be fully informed.

For example:

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to apply for the Volunteer position advertised in the International Student Magazine.

Language Skills

In this example, the international sporting event will give you the chance to emphasise your language skills, such as your ability to speak English fluently.

As with the letter of reference, language skills are something you

can and should always mention in a letter of application in the IELTS General exam. All positions advertised will require the candidate to speak or write in English.

Suitability for the job

You need to explain your suitability for the job. The question will sometimes state what the required skills or knowledge are, but typically you'll have to include your experience, your qualifications, if any, and personal qualities.

Finally, it would be a good idea to point out that you're available for an interview and perhaps to state any times when you're not available. If you cover all these points in your answer, logically, persuasively, and in an appropriate format, you should score well in terms of content and communicative achievement.

Full Sample Response (Letter of Application)

Dear Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. [Hiring managers name – "Dear Sir or Madam" if name or gender are unknown]

I wish to apply for the role of [Volunteer] advertised in the [International Student Magazine]. Please find enclosed my CV for your consideration.

As you can see from my attached CV, I have over [time period, e.g., five years] experience in [e.g., volunteering or customer service], and I believe the knowledge and skills built up during this time make me

the perfect candidate for this position. I am also keen to keep improving my English, as this is not only a hobby but also a real need.

In my current role as a [job title] at [employer name], I have been responsible for [e.g., a 5% increase in revenue], which when coupled with my enthusiasm and dedication [insert skills relevant to the role – usually found in the job description], has helped the business to [measure of success].

I am confident that I can bring this level of success to your organisation and help [company name] build upon its reputation as an outstanding company. With my previous experience and expertise, I believe my contribution will have an immediate impact on the business.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss my application further.

Yours sincerely/Yours faithfully,

[Your name]

(Word Count 222)

Organization & Essential Language: Formal Letter of Complaint

As the title suggests, in this section, we will focus on the features of organisation.

In the last section, we looked at two common types of formal letter, which often appear in the exam: the letter of reference and the letter of application. As previously mentioned, both of these tasks are very similar in structure and ideas. In this section, we will use a different example to see the slightly different tone and style required in each type of letter.

Up until now, we have concentrated on spotting the critical content. The essential content is the information we need to respond to in our letter. If you haven't done this yet, stop for a second and note the key points in the letter of reference and the letter of application.

As we saw in the previous section, we need to respond to all of these critical points in our letter to score well in the exam.

Your overall organisation of the piece of writing is vital. This includes using logical paragraphs, for example, and the precise organisation of ideas within paragraphs. You do this by using linking words, discourse markers, and other devices. The examples in the previous section show you exactly how to organise your letter of reference and letter of application. Still, they do not show you how to organise other types of letter.

This section will look at paragraphing a letter of complaint and at these additional organisational features.

Read the letter of complaint task below and answer the following question:

How would you organise the paragraphs in your letter if you were answering this question? Think about how you might organise

the underlined points into logical, coherent paragraphs.

Exercise: Formal Letter of Complaint

Read this extract from a letter you have recently sent to a friend:

“.... I forgot to say, don't go to Dino's Bar for your birthday. We went there last night - the service was awful; the food was cold, and it was so expensive for such a bad meal! I complained to a member of staff, but he asked me to put it in writing ...”

Write your letter of complaint to the manager of Dino´s bar

In your letter:

- Introduce yourself
- Explain the situation
- Say what action you would like the company to take

Write at least 150 words

Question to think about:

How many paragraphs would you have, and which power graphs would deal with which issues?

There are several ways to approach this letter, but one suggestion is to organise this around four content paragraphs, one for each problem and one at the end for suggestions.

The answer to this question can be planned and organised as follows:

<u>The letter can be divided into 4 paragraphs:</u>

1. Formal “hello” and state general problem, saying why you went to Dino´s in this case and that you are dissatisfied. State problem 1 (the service was awful)

2. Detailed explanation of problem 2 (the food was cold)

3. Problem 3: the price was high

4. Conclusion, what you want Dino´s to do- offer some suggestions for improvement here.

A bit more on each paragraph:

OK, so the first paragraph is going to deal with your reason for writing. In a letter of complaint, the first main content paragraph is used to outline the problem, say why you went to the business you are complaining about, and make sure you say that you are dissatisfied.

Then, we could look at the specific details of the problem, using appropriate adjectives.

Finally, in the last paragraph, we could offer some suggestions or recommendations to improve the business. You can use language such as:

I must insist that you…

I must urge you to…

Essential Language for a Letter of Complaint

LETTER OF COMPLAINT

I am writing to complain about…

I would like to express my dissatisfaction with …

I am writing to express my concern about the.…

I must complain in writing about…

I feel I must complain to you about…

I wish to complain in the strongest terms about…

I am writing to inform you of an apparent error in your records…

Paraphrasing Exercise

Example:

0) Basic Problem: “I want to complain about the lousy service in the restaurant. “

ii. Key Language: I would like to express my dissatisfaction with …

iii, Key Word you must use: POOR (Bad is too informal, so we can use poor instead)

iv. Final Product: “I would like to express my dissatisfaction with the poor standard of service in the restaurant. “

Now try to complete the process using the following language:

1)

i. Basic problem: “The cinema is far away from everything.”

ii. Key Phrase: I wish to complain in the strongest terms about…

iii. Key Word: ACCESSIBILITY

……

2)

i. Basic problem: “During my course, there were too many students in the class.”

ii. Key Phrase: I am writing to express my concern about the.…

iii. Key Word: NUMBER

……

Answers:

1) I wish to complain in the strongest terms about the accessibility of the cinema.

2) I am writing to express my concern about the number of students in the class during my course

Topic-Specific Phrases

• *Poor standard of service/slow service*

• *I am asking for/I would like to request a replacement*

• *No accommodation/Travel delays/Rather rude staff*

• *Badly scratched/dented wrapping/packaging*

• *To claim/demand for a refund*

• *I am returning … to you for correction of the fault/for inspection/repair/servicing*

• *Defective/faulty goods/defective item/machine*

• *The… may need replacing*

• *To restore an item to full working order…*

• *I am enclosing the broken radio in this package; please send me a replacement..*

• *You said that … I feel sure there must be some mistake as I am sure that…*

Ending the letter

• *I do not usually complain, but, as an old customer, I hope you will be interested in my comments.*

• *We look forward to dealing with this matter without delay.*

• *I feel that your company should consider an appropriate refund.*

• *I would be grateful if you would send me a complete refund as soon as possible*

•*We feel there must be some explanation for (this delay) and expect your prompt reply.*

• *Will you please look into this matter and let us know the reason*

for …

- *Thank you for your assistance.*
- *I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.*
- *I am returning the damaged goods/items… and shall be glad if you will replace them.*
- *Please look into this matter at once and let me know the delay.*
- *Please recheck your records.*
- *Thank you for your cooperation in correcting this detail…*
- *I wish to draw your attention to…*
- *I would suggest that…*
- *I suggest that immediate steps be taken.*
- *I want to complain about…*
- *I look forward to a prompt reply and hope that you will take into consideration…*
- *I am dissatisfied with…*

Look at the sample answer for the question from earlier in this section. Pay special attention to the language and structure used.

Full Sample Response (Letter of Complaint)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to express my dissatisfaction with the poor standard of service we received during our recent visit to Dino´s Bar. Firstly, the staff were generally quite rude and unhelpful, they seemed to lack basic food knowledge, and they did not seem interested in the job. For instance, none of them could offer any advice to me on choosing a dish.

A further cause for complaint was that the food was cold when it arrived at our table. I understand that it was a busy night, but we booked the table and the menus the day before, so I feel that they should have been ready.

Finally, not only did we receive substandard food and unfriendly, unhelpful service, but we were also charged full price for our meals after we complained. In my opinion, the prices seem to be very expensive for the quality of the food and the service provided.

I do not usually complain, but, as a loyal customer, I hope you will be interested in my comments. Perhaps it would be appropriate to offer some training courses to

the staff at Dino´s Bar, to avoid this from happening again. I feel that customer service was a big issue, as was the quality of the food. If these two problems were fixed, then the price might not be such an issue in the future, as customers would be happy to pay a little more for a better experience. I hope you will take these points into consideration

I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,

Name and Surname

Structure Rules for Formal Letters & Emails in IELTS General Training

Greeting

Name unknown: *Dear Sir/Madam,*

Name known: *Dear Mr.…/ Dear Mrs.… / Dear Ms..+ surname*

Reason for writing

I am writing to … I am writing concerning…

I am writing on behalf of …

Asking questions

I would be grateful if … I wonder if you could ….

Could you …?

Referring to someone else's letter /points

As you stated in your letter, …. *Regarding …/ Concerning …*

With regard to ….

Finishing the letter

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Signing

If Dear + name = Yours sincerely,

If Dear Sir/ Madam = Yours faithfully

Your first name + surname must be written clearly under your signature.

Formal Letter IELTS General Exam Checklist.

When you have written your letter, check:

1. It is a formal letter
2. It includes all the information necessary
3. You have asked all the questions you need to
4. The questions are correctly formulated indirect questions
5. The letter is divided into paragraphs
6. You have checked the letter carefully for mistakes

Language Practice: Formal Letters & Emails

Letters can be anything from very formal to very informal. The IELTS General Writing paper will never ask you to write a specialized business or legal letter requiring a professional knowledge of business words, structures, and expressions. However, they might ask you to write a formal, semi-formal, or informal email or letter.

In this section of the chapter, we will focus on your use of language and, in particular, your ability to create a formal register. This will help

you do well in two of the assessment criteria: Language, by using a range of formal vocabulary and grammatical structures and communicative achievement by creating an appropriate formal tone that has a positive effect on the reader. We will identify some of the features of formal English that we often find in formal letters.

At the end of this section, you will find a list of useful formal-informal equivalents. This list will save you a lot of time in your preparation for the exam. For example, in a letter of complaint: “I was rather disappointed” is a formal way of saying, “I was furious” or “I was furious.” See how many more formal and informal equivalent items you can learn next.

Exercise: Sentence Transformations

Transform the informal or semi-formal version of each phrase from a letter of complaint into a formal style. You can make small changes to the sentences' content if you think it´s necessary, and you can use a dictionary.

Example: ***I thought I'd write = I am writing***

a. state of the playground =

b. I have noticed loads of rubbish =

c. I reckon =

d. The teacher I'm talking about =

e. On top of this =

f. a load of problems =

g. You could =

h. stop =

i. What's more =

j. better =

k. To finish =

l. I´m looking forward to hearing from you =

Answers:

a. state of the playground = condition of the playground

b. I have noticed loads of rubbish = There is a great deal of litter

c. I reckon = It is my opinion that…

d. The teacher I'm talking about = The teacher in question OR The teacher I am referring to

e. On top of this = Furthermore

f. a load of problems = several problems

g. You could = it may be possible for you

h. stop = prevent

i. What's more = In addition,

j. better = more suitable OR more adequate

k. To finish = In conclusion,

l. I´m looking forward to hearing from you = I look forward to your reply, OR I look forward to hearing from you

Exercise: Key Words

Now here are some full sentences from formal letters.

Complete the sentences using only one word.

a. I am writing in ……. to your job advertisement in the ABC newspaper

b. I would like to ……. for the position of translator.

c. I am ……. to come for an interview at any time convenient to you.

d. I would be ……. if you could send me further information regarding the position.

e. Please find my CV …….

f. I would like to express my ……. with the poor standard of service we received during our recent visit to your cinema.

g. For ……., none of them could offer any advice to me on choosing a dish.

h. Finally, not only ……. we receive substandard food and unfriendly, unhelpful service, but we were also charged full price for our meals after we complained.

i. I look forward ……

Answers

a. I am writing in reply/response to your job advertisement in the ABC newspaper

b. I would like to apply for the position of translator.

c. I am available/ able to come for an interview at any time

convenient to you.

d. I would be grateful if you could send me further information regarding the position.

e. Please find my CV attached (email)/ enclosed (letter).

f. I would like to express my dissatisfaction with the poor standard of service we received during our recent visit to your cinema.

g. For instance, none of them could offer any advice to me on choosing a dish.

h. Finally, not only did we receive substandard food and unfriendly, unhelpful service, but we were also charged full price for our meals after we complained.

i. I look forward to your reply.

The Passive Voice

Okay, the next example is one where the passive has been used instead of an active form. This is a common feature of formal writing but should not be overused. In real life (business and university included), you should try to avoid the passive, as it needlessly complicates sentences. However, in the IELTS exam, you can use it once or twice to demonstrate versatility to the examiners.

This sentence is an example of how we might structure a sentence formally.

Informal: *"The waiter did offer us another dish, but when it arrived, it was cold again."*

Formal: *"Although we were offered an alternative dish when it was delivered to the table, it was cold again."*

Notice two clauses in the informal version are joined by *but* whereas in the formal version, the two clauses have been reversed and *but* is replaced with *although* which starts the sentence. This is a more formal way of saying the same thing.

Within the formal sentence, *"Although we were offered an alternative dish, when it was delivered to the table it was cold again,"* there are further examples of vocabulary that has been made more formal. For example, *alternative dish* is a more formal way of saying *another dish*.

As we saw above, phrasal verbs are most typical of informal letters —although there are some which have no more formal equivalents and are common in all types of letter (*look forward to*, for example). However, most phrasal verbs do have formal equivalents, and these would be preferred in most formal letters, whereas the formal equivalents would be very rarely used in an informal letter.

6 Quick Rules of Formal VS Informal

1. We tend to understate our feelings and say *I was rather disappointed*, or *I was somewhat surprised* instead of saying how we really felt.

2. For the same reason, we do not use exclamation marks.

3. We often use the passive to emphasise the action when the person is of less importance

4. We avoid contractions in formal letters.

5. We use formal equivalence of idiomatic language and phrasal verbs

6. Particular sentence structures can be used to create a formal tone. Inversion is one example of this "*Although we were offered an alternative dish when it was delivered to the table, it was cold again.*"

Exercise: Rewriting

Rewrite the following sentences using formal equivalents for the phrasal verbs. Use a dictionary if necessary. You might need to make other changes to the structures.

1) I'm so chuffed that you've been talked into coming to the meeting.

……

……

2) The football club's facilities have been done up, so this should make our performances better.

……

……

3) As our town is quite cut off, perhaps we could arrange for you to be put up in a hotel in the city for a few days.

……

……

4) We will make up for the inconvenience of having to wait for so long.

……

……

Answers:

1) I am thrilled that you have been convinced to attend the meeting.

2) The football club's facilities have been refurbished, which should improve our performances.

3) As our town is relatively isolated, we could arrange hotel accommodation in the city for a few days.

4) We will compensate you for the inconvenience of having to wait for so long.

10. Informal Letters & Emails in IELTS General Training

Example Task

An English-speaking friend is visiting your region for a couple of weeks during his holidays and has written to you to ask for several recommendations.

Write a letter to your friend.

In your letter you should:

• offer to help find accommodation

• advise about things to do

• provide information about what clothes to bring.

In this type of task, you should begin your letter as follows:

Dear … your friend's name.

A few things to keep in mind.

• You have about 20 minutes to write this.

• You should have at least 150 words. Aim for about 180 (a little bit more but don't go too long- If you're over 240 words, you've written much more than you need to.)

Let's start with the general idea of what you're trying to do, what you're trying to accomplish.

Tone

‘The tone’ of the letter means how your letter sounds, or the overall feeling it gives the reader. It should be very relaxed, very informal; this is what the examiners are looking for.

For example: if you're writing to your friend, write it as though you were speaking to your friend; very casual.

You can start with:

Dear- Hello- Hi and then the person´s first name, never their surname.

You shouldn´t use *Mr., Mrs., Dr.*

Do not put first and last name because you do not address your friend or family member by their first and last name in real life.

Contractions

Now contractions are suitable. So, in terms of how you're going to use *I've, it's, don't*, etc... In a formal letter, you say *do not,* whereas in an informal letter, you say *don't.*

Slang & idioms

Not only are slang and idioms okay now, but they're recommended because they demonstrate that you can adapt your language to different contexts. When you speak with your friends, you usually use very casual language, including slang and idioms.

Nevertheless, remember it has to be natural, so don't be too heavy on the slang or the idioms. One or two here and there are great, but it becomes unnatural if you overuse them, and the examiners may penalise you for it.

Note that you can use idioms in your formal letter as well but very carefully, very selectively, and it has to be very appropriate, so it´s generally not recommended.

Here are some examples of informal language you can use for different types of informal emails and letters in English.

Explain WHY You're Writing

Hi Bob, I just want/wanted to let you know that blah blah blah…

I-m writing because I couldn't wait to tell you about blah blah blah…

I'm just writing to tell you about blah blah blah…

How to Say 'Sorry'

I want to apologize for…..

I want to say sorry for blah blah blah…

Sorry for blah blah blah…

How to Ask for Help

I was wondering if you'd help me (out) with blah blah blah…

I'd be really grateful if you could blah blah blah…

I was just wondering if you could do me a big favour.

Expressing Happiness

I was absolutely thrilled to hear that/about blah blah blah….

I'm over the moon to hear that/about blah blah blah….

How to Deliver Negative News

I'm afraid blah blah blah….

Unfortunately, blah blah blah….

Regrettably, blah blah blah….

I've got some bad news for you.

Ending an Email or Letter

Take care.

Hope to see you soon.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Keep in touch.

Can't wait to see you soon.

I look forward to catching up.

All the best.

Don't be a stranger!

Organization & Focus

You still have to remember what you're doing and make it very clear in the letter. Are you thanking the person, are you answering a question, are you asking for something, are you offering advice? Make this clear right away in the introduction. Make sure the body follows.

Language

Again, you don't want to use very serious language in an informal letter or email; you don't want to use too many formal or complex words because that's not how we usually speak to friends and family.

With our friends, we're usually very casual and relaxed.

For example:

I just wanted to say thanks for helping me out last week.

In a formal letter, you would write

I'm writing to express my appreciation and gratitude for your assistance with last week's matter...

Notice the different feel of the two sentences. One is very casual; one is very formal.

Another example:

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me - formal.

<u>Versus</u>

Let me know if you need anything else - super casual.

To make your letter look real, the best thing you can do is ALWAYS rely on your personal experience.

You **must** distinguish between formal and informal language in English, not only for this exam but also for general

communication. Writing a letter or email to a friend is not the same as writing a letter of recommendation for a friend who has applied for a job. Here are some examples of formal and informal words with the same meaning,

VERBS:

FORMAL: INFORMAL

to depart: to go

to carry out: to do

to provide: to give

to retain: keep

to cease: stop

to seek: look for

assist, aid: to help

liberate: to free

obtain: to get

to desire: want

request: to ask for

to function: work

to demonstrate: show

to reside: live

require: need

OTHER WORDS:

FORMAL: INFORMAL

subsequently: next / later

immature, infantile: childish

sufficient: enough

further: more (information)

hence, therefore: so

deficiency, lack of: little, there is no

perspiration: sweat
inexpensive: cheap

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Table of Contents

About the Author 9
About This Book 11
IELTS WRITING BAND 9 PREMIUM VIDEO COURSE by Marc Roche 15
FREE IELTS Writing Course 16
Other Books by Marc Roche Available on Amazon! 18
1. Introduction to IELTS Academic IELTS General Writing Task 1 19
IELTS Academic Writing IELTS General Writing Task 1 Overview 20
How Many Words Should I Write in My IELTS Task 1? 21
Introduction to IELTS Academic Writing 21
Analyze The Question 22
Introduction to IELTS General Writing 24
2. How to Describe Line Graphs in IELTS Academic Writing 26
Plan your report 29
How to Write a Good Introduction 29
How To Write An Overview 29
How To Write The Main Body Paragraphs 30
Full Sample Response 1 32
IELTS Graph Exercise 1 34
IELTS Graph Exercise 2 39
Full Sample Response 2 41
USEFUL EXPRESSIONS FOR DESCRIBING GRAPHS 41
Structures for Summarising Change 43

Verb-Adverb Combination Examples 46
3. Bar Charts in IELTS Academic Writing 46
Analyze The Question 50
Plan Your Report 50
Introduction 51
How To Write An Overview 51
How To Write The Main Body Paragraphs 51
Full Sample Response 1 53
Adding Transitions into Your Sentences 54
While/Whereas/Although/Though 54
Comparing and Contrasting Similar Data 54
IELTS Bar Chart Exercise 1 55
IELTS Bar Chart Exercise 2 58
Full Sample Response 2 60
4. Pie Chart Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing 61
How To Write an IELTS Pie Chart Description. 62
What Is A Pie Chart? 62
Writing Your Report 63
Step One- Analyze The Question. 63
Step Two – Write An Introduction 66
Step Three – Write An Overview Paragraph 66
Step Four – Write The Main Body Paragraphs 67
IELTS Pie Chart Exercise 2 69
Full Sample Response 2 71
5. Table Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing 72
How to Write a Band 9 IELTS Table Description 73
Important Principles 74
What should we write about in an IELTS Table Description? 75

The Basic Structure of a Band 9 Table Description 75
IELTS Table Exercise 1 77
Paragraph 1 - Introduction 79
Paragraph 2 – Overview 80
Paragraph 3 - Data highlight 1 80
Paragraph 4 - Data highlight 2 82
IELTS Table Exercise 2 83
Full Sample Response 1 84
Full Sample Response 2 87
6. Mixed Chart Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing 89
How to Write An IELTS Two Graph Description 90
Writing Your Report 90
Step 1 – Analyze 92
Step 2 – Write an Introduction 95
Step 3 – Write an Overview Paragraph 96
Step 4 – Write the Main Body Paragraphs 96
Full Sample Response 1 98
IELTS Mixed Chart Exercise 2 99
Full Sample Response 2 101
7. Process Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing 102
How to Write a Band 9 IELTS Process Description 103
Step 1- Understand the Process 104
Step 2- Plan Your Answer 105
Step 3- Describe 108
Exercise 1: Writing an Introduction 110
Exercise 2: Writing an Overview 112
Exercise 3: Writing Body Paragraph 1 113
Exercise 4: Writing Body Paragraph 2 114
Exercise 5: Grammar Vocabulary 115

Full Sample Response Version 1 117
Full Sample Response Version 2 119
Full Sample Response Version 3 120
Extra Language for Process Descriptions 121
8. Map Descriptions in IELTS Academic Writing 122
How To Write A Description For A Map 123
Writing Your Report 123
Step 1- Analyze The Question. 123
Step 2 – Write An Introduction 126
Step 3 – Write An Overview Paragraph 127
Step 4 – Write The Main Body Paragraphs 127
Full Sample Response 1 130
Exercise 131
Full Sample Response Version 2: Suggested Answer to Exercise 132
Map Vocabulary 134
Full Sample Response Version 3 136
9. Formal Letters Emails for IELTS Writing General Training Exam 137
Letter of Reference 138
Example Question 141
Expressing Ideas 144
Exercise 145
Letter of Application 150
Sample Task 150
Full Sample Response (Letter of Application) 152
Organization Essential Language: Formal Letter of Complaint 155
Exercise: Formal Letter of Complaint 156

Essential Language for a Letter of Complaint 159
Paraphrasing Exercise 159
Topic-Specific Phrases 162
Full Sample Response (Letter of Complaint) 164
Structure Rules for Formal Letters Emails in IELTS General Training 166
Formal Letter IELTS General Exam Checklist. 167
Language Practice: Formal Letters Emails 167
Exercise: Sentence Transformations 169
Exercise: Key Words 172
The Passive Voice 174
6 Quick Rules of Formal VS Informal 175
10. Informal Letters Emails in IELTS General Training 178
Example Task 179
Tone 180
Contractions 180
Slang idioms 180
Explain WHY You're Writing 181
How to Say 'Sorry' 181
How to Ask for Help 181
Expressing Happiness 182
How to Deliver Negative News 182
Ending an Email or Letter 182
Organization Focus 182
Language 183
YouTube Resources 185
Private IELTS Writing Advanced BAND 9 Course 186
FREE IELTS Writing Course: Advanced Writing (Foundation Level for IELTS) 186