

The Key to IELTS

Writing Task 1

Academic

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Key to IELTS



Bands 7, 8, 9

INTRODUCTION

How will this course help?

This course teaches the skills needed to write a formal discursive essay that will meet the criteria of the IELTS writing test. The course is divided into two sections. The first teaches the skills needed to write a clear, logical analysis, and the second section features guided test practice with model answers. Rather than simply presenting these as a finished product, I will take you through the writing process step by step, and show the type of thinking and planning you need to do in the test. I have also included samples of bands 6 and 6.5 writing that candidates have sent to me over the years. I will help you identify the main problems at this level, show you how to address them, and how to increase the band score from 6.5 to band 8.

Why focus on band 7?

A band 7 certificate is an important qualification that can open doors towards immigration and university study. With the right resources, and after working hard to develop the appropriate skills, many candidates manage to attain this level in every other skill except writing, where the vast majority remain stuck at band 6.5, no matter how hard they try. Understandably, when these people first contact me, their most common feelings about IELTS writing are confusion, frustration, and anger. I hope this course will put an end to these feelings. In writing it, I had one clear aim: to help candidates make genuine progress in writing so that they can get the band 7+ score they need, and finally leave IELTS behind.

Problems and solutions

We cannot solve a problem unless we first try to understand what causes it. When I began working on this project, I had been helping people reach band 7 and above in the writing test for 8 years, and I thought I knew what was causing so many candidates to be stuck at band 6.5. However, as I looked deeper into the problem, I gradually refined my approach and what began as a book, evolved into a course that was double the size that I originally planned on writing. I realised that it is not enough to tell people what to do in an abstract way – we have to show it, step by step. I was also very aware that a great deal of writing feedback focuses on language problems, and it is very easy for grammar and vocabulary to dominate, yet many educated native speakers also struggle to reach band 7 in writing. This shows that the Task response and Cohesion and coherence criteria deserve greater attention, and these are a major focus in this course.

Why is writing so difficult?

When speaking, we can keep talking until the person listening understands what we are saying; if they are confused by an explanation, we can simply repeat or rephrase it. In the speaking test, the examiner can help out by asking a new question, but in writing, there is no one else to keep us going, or to keep us on topic. The truth is that all of us struggle when it comes to writing about complex ideas, even in our first language.

People also tend to see writing as the physical act of putting pen to paper or typing on a keyboard, yet a large part of the writing process is mental. When I am writing a book or preparing a talk, a surprising amount of the work is done away from my desk. I may look as though I am taking a break, walking the dog, or staring into the distance, but inside my head, I am actually 'writing'. This invisible stage of the writing process is a crucial one. It is a time when I can reject ideas, organise my thoughts, and identify my main points, but the fact that we cannot see it means it is often ignored. In fact, many videos give the impression that it's possible to reach a level where you can simply sit down at a desk and write fluently and coherently.

The reality is that all good writing involves thinking, planning, cutting, and rewriting. What you are reading here is the 5th or 6th draft of these materials. It may surprise you to know that my first rough drafts are often far too long, with ideas that are often repetitive and unclear – all common problems at bands 6 and 6.5. Any attempts you make to simply sit and write will also result in first-draft, band 6 writing.

Sample answers and Model answers

I am often asked for sample answers, and many seem to believe these will provide a quick fix to their writing problems, but I have mixed feelings about answers like this. While I can see merit in providing them, I have always been concerned that they encourage people to learn answers to use in the test. I am also worried about providing just one answer when there are multiple possible ways to approach any task. This is why it is important to see the answers supplied in textbooks as a 'sample' rather than a 'model'. The distinction is an important one: a 'model' sets a standard that students can learn from, while a sample answer often does not.

Sample answers produced by professional writers also tend to result in a level of English that goes beyond the scope of the test, a level I think of as the 'invisible band 10.' These answers are written in the comfort of the writer's home, perhaps in several drafts. If an answer is too long, the writer has time to edit and cut. Before publication, the finished product may also be checked and edited by more professionals, all of which can result in a rather nuanced and subtle response to the task that is closer to a reading passage. Understandably, this process does not produce the same results as an individual candidate writing in a timed test situation. Because of this, in my view, the test book sample answers often don't serve as useful models for candidates or for the classroom. Furthermore, although there are many sample answers online that claim to be band 9, the majority of those I have seen actually show band 6 skills in some criteria. Looking at typical sample answers made me realise that the answers provided as a solution are causing a great deal of the current problems, and that while there are 'sample answers,' good 'model answers' are scarce.

How is this course different?

To address these problems, I set out to produce model answers that set the right standard for the test. These models have been produced using a 40-minute time limit so that they reflect what a band 9 candidate can realistically produce in IELTS. It was a revelation to me that I had to change the way I normally plan in order to achieve band 9 Task response and Coherence and cohesion within the time limit. Whether working on a computer or on paper, without the right planning, my efforts were problematic in terms of these criteria. The truth is that teachers and professional writers seldom practise what we preach. As a result, we don't always appreciate the problems associated with successfully completing the task in exam conditions, and so our advice may not always be practical or effective. This is something I have tried to address throughout this course. The same advice applies whether you are taking the computer or paper version of the test.

A note for native speakers

Native speakers of English also take the IELTS test, sometimes as part of a visa or job application, or perhaps to help in their teaching. Many are disappointed to find that they can score band 9 in almost every paper except writing, where they often receive a score of band 6.5. Some see this as proof that the test is flawed, and even conclude that it is subjective. However, seeing the test this way means that they fail to address the problems in their writing that keep them below band 7.

In many English-speaking countries, discursive essay writing skills are generally not taught at a high level within a standard high-school curriculum. In an exam-driven education system, such skills are often only taught in courses where they will be assessed – if something isn't going to be tested then teachers are not motivated to spend valuable time on it in their lessons. Furthermore, while native speakers practise listening and speaking on a daily basis, the same cannot be said of reading and writing. Thus, in tests of written skills, band 9 does not automatically mean 'native-speaker level,' and a native speaker is just as capable of receiving a lower band in IELTS as a non-native speaker.

Speaking is as different to writing as walking is to dancing. While we walk on a daily basis, we dance far less often; while some enjoy dancing, others avoid it as much as possible. Like dancing, writing is connected to style, and your every-day dancing style is more likely to resemble a relaxed shuffle than a classical waltz. Thus, even if you are writing every day, for example, at work, it is unlikely that the style of writing you are doing is the same as that required to present a formal written argument. As with ballroom dancing, there are steps involved in this style of writing that need to be learned and practised until they become natural to you, and this course will show you how to perform those steps.

How to use this course

To improve your score, you must learn to apply the skills the examiner is looking for in your writing. Lessons 1 – 10 will help with this, so be sure to complete this section first, before moving on to the guided test practice section. Don't rush through the lessons – read, re-read, think, absorb, and be sure to complete the interactive practice exercises. Work at your own pace. Practising little and often is generally the best approach to take, and I've included ideas to help with this.

Throughout the lessons, you will be encouraged to review your writing. If you have done previous essays, have copies of these nearby. Reflect on your own writing problems and try to be systematic in the way that you work on fixing these. On my website, you will find a link to printable worksheets to guide you through any activities and help you organise your own notes. Print these out and have them next to you as you work through the lessons.

All of our language skills are linked in some way, and I have tried to make use of this by incorporating listening exercises as well as writing ones. These add variety, but I hope you will also find that they have a positive effect on your writing. During the thinking stage of writing, we hear our inner voice. Lower levels tend to think of ideas in their own language and then attempt to translate these word for word. At the higher levels, students can think in the language they will use to write, but it is more than likely that your inner voice makes the same mistakes as when you are speaking in English, and these mistakes will be reflected in your writing. The listening exercises not only offer variety but should also help improve your written accuracy.

NOTE:

The writing models in this course are in response to the Academic writing task 1 questions in the Cambridge IELTS 9 test practice book, as well as extra test questions I have written. In addition to my own model answers, there are some essays submitted to me by candidates who were continually scoring band 6.5 in writing, shared here with their permission. I will guide you through the problems in these essays and show you how to fix them to produce essays at band 8+.

To ensure that the scores in this course are accurate, it was edited by two wonderful colleagues with extensive experience in IELTS assessment and IELTS test writing, Sophie Walker and Megan Yucel. Their feedback and comments have been invaluable, and I am indebted to them both. Look out for a separate workbook for GT Task 1, which I plan to produce in the near future.

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SECTION ONE

**DEVELOPING
TASK 1 ACADEMIC WRITING
SKILLS**

LESSON 1 - Task achievement

In this lesson, you will learn about:

- 1.1 Common problems in Task 1
- 1.2 How and why you may be practising Band 3-5
- 1.3 Writing a conclusion in Task 1

1.1 Common problems in writing Task 1

In lessons 1 and 2 we will explore the most common problems in writing task 1. These problems have been selected because each of them will keep your Task 1 score at band 6 or even lower.

Using the wrong materials

As with other parts of the test, many of the misunderstandings about Task 1 come from using the wrong materials for your practice. Some people try to justify this, telling me:

'Task 1 in IELTS is a graph of some kind so we can practice even using a random infographic.'

If you are using materials you find online, or that have been shared following a test, then you are not preparing for the real test. Materials used in the real test are carefully written and edited so that

- they are not confusing
- they don't require specialist or technical knowledge
- they force you to use (and therefore practise) the skills you need to show in the test

You will not find this in 'random infographics' you find online.

Task Achievement V Task Response

In writing task 2, you are assessed on how you **respond** to the task, while in writing task 1, the extent to which you **achieve** the task is being measured. This means that it is very important to follow the instructions you are given. These tell us that you need to:

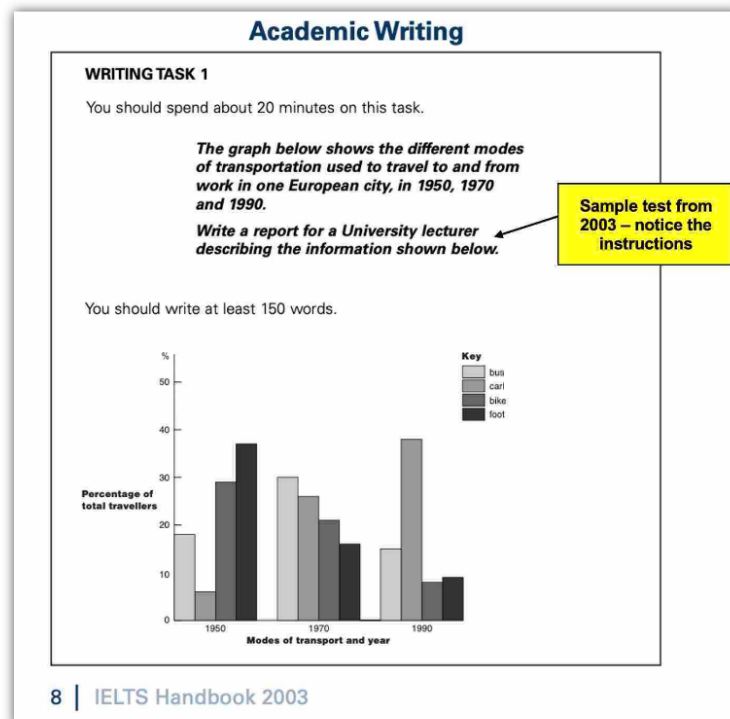
Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

In spite of this, most of the band 6 answers I see are written as though the instructions tell you to:

List all of the information you can see.

This problem may stem from using practice materials that don't reflect the real test. It is worth noting here that writing task 1 was changed in 2007. This is a sample task taken from the 2003 IELTS Handbook and shows what the task used to look like:



As you can see, the instructions are different: before 2007 you were asked to **'Write a report describing** the information shown.' If you are using materials that are outdated, or tasks that only show a limited amount of data, then you are likely to practise describing, or listing, everything you see. This means you are not **'selecting'** or **'summarising'**, which are two of the main **requirements** of this task.

Selecting information

'Selecting the main features' is clearly important if you want to 'achieve' this task. However, for many people this is easier said than done. It is particularly difficult if your education has focused on rote learning, copying texts, or writing according to a fixed formula.

A follower of my Facebook page made this comment:

Let me explain this from (my country's) perspective: here logical, analytical aspects in writing are mostly ignored. We never learned to look at a graph and write reports about it even in our native language. I think we not only lack the language competence, but we also lack the ability to analyse! I just figured it out in early adulthood: I wrote like a robot when I was in high school and such a mindset follows us well into IELTS when template-learning is the norm.

If this also applies to you, then you are probably making mistakes that will lower your Task achievement score. Looking at the band descriptors for Task achievement helps to see the impact of this:

Band	Task Achievement
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully satisfies all the requirements of the task Clearly presents a fully developed response
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers all requirements of the task sufficiently Presents, highlights, and illustrates key features clearly and appropriately
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers the requirements of the task Presents a clear overview of main trends, differences or stages Clearly presents and highlights key features but could be more fully extended
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses the requirements of the task Presents an overview with information appropriately selected Presents and adequately highlights key features but details may be irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate

As we can see, you will only reach band 7 in Task achievement if you *cover **the requirements** of the task, namely **summarising** the information by **selecting** and reporting **the main features, and making comparisons** where relevant. To reach band 6, each of these needs to be *addressed.

***Vocabulary note:** The verbs 'to cover' and 'to address' can both be used to mean 'to deal with'. However, 'covering the requirements' suggests they are being done in a more complete way than 'addressing' them.

The band descriptors give us more information about what we need to do in task 1:

Band	Task Achievement
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully satisfies all the requirements of the task Clearly presents a fully developed response
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers all requirements of the task sufficiently Presents, highlights, and illustrates key features clearly and appropriately
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers the requirements of the task Presents a clear overview of main trends, differences or stages Clearly presents and highlights key features but could be more fully extended
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses the requirements of the task Presents an overview with information appropriately selected Presents and adequately highlights key features but details may be irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate

This tells us that, when writing a summary, there are some important do's and don'ts:

Do:

- select the main features
- present and highlight the key features (Band 7)
- make comparisons (where relevant)
- present a clear overview of main trends, differences, or stages (band 7)

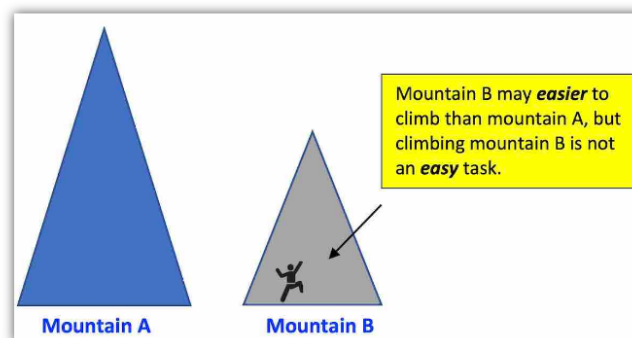
Don't

- give details that are irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate (Band 6)

The Band 6 answers I see struggle with each of the 4 elements in the 'Do' list above, which tells me that people often do not know how to select and highlight features, or present a clear overview.

Underestimating the task: 'I'm not worried about Task 1, it's easy.'

Conversely, people also tell me that they are not worried about Writing Task 1 because it's 'easy.' Admittedly, it could be argued that Task 1 is 'easier' than writing Task 2 because you are given all of the information you need, and it is relatively short at only 150+ words. However, 'easier' is a relative term and is not the same as 'easy'.



IELTS aims to be a 'valid' test of your language skills. This means that the tasks used to assess your level are similar to those you might expect to carry out in a real-world situation. In a professional setting, Task 1 can be compared to writing about a new manufacturing process; the results section of a company's annual report; or the results of a survey conducted by local government:

 **Walking More, Driving Less** 

 83% of Millennials like walking, but only 71% like driving. This 12 point gap is a wider margin than any other generation. The gap for Baby Boomers is 2 points.

Extract from Community & Transportation Preferences Survey U.S. Metro Areas, 2015 July 23, 2015

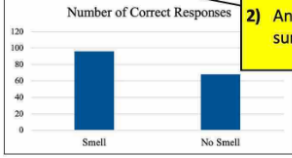
In an academic context, this task is closest to the results section in a scientific paper or university assignment. The following image is an extract from one of my daughter's papers from her first year at university. I have added notes showing the main features:

1) An introductory sentence telling readers what they are looking at

Results:

The data collected was analysed by comparing the number of correct responses in each condition for each drink tested. A paired sample one-tailed t-test was carried out for the drinks in both conditions to test for significance.

As illustrated by figure 1, overall participants accurately guessed more drinks in the condition in which they were able to smell than the condition in which they could not smell. In the 'smell' condition there was a total of 96 correct responses in comparison to 68 correct responses in the 'no smell' condition.



Condition	Number of Correct Responses
Smell	96
No Smell	68

2) An overview statement that sums up the main features

Figure 1
Total Number of Correct Answers for all Drinks and all Participants in Each Condition, ('Smell' and 'No Smell'), N = 100

3) Two or more paragraphs giving a more detailed summary of the main features

Table 1 highlights the variability of accuracy between the two conditions for each drink. In the 'smell' condition, each drink had the same level of accuracy (96%), showing that out of the 25 participants, for each drink, one respondent incorrectly identified it. In terms of the 'no smell' condition, water showed the highest proportion of accuracy at 84%. A paired t-test determined that taste perception accuracy was not significantly different for water when participants had their sense of smell (M=0.96, SD=0.2) and when they did not (M=0.84, SD=0.374), $t(24)=1.365, p=0.182$. For orange juice, accuracy for the 'no smell' condition at 68%. A paired t-test showed that taste perception significantly declined from having a sense of smell (M=0.96, SD=0.2) to having no sense of smell (M=0.68, SD=0.2), $t(24)=2.585, p=0.008$ (one-tailed).

Although you are not being asked to produce an academic piece of writing, the elements you need to include are very similar to those listed above. The lessons in this book will show you how you achieve these in your own writing. What I hope this sample shows you is that, although Task 1 is a short task, it should definitely not be dismissed as an easy one. In fact, in my view, it may be easier to get a low score in Task 1 than in Task 2.

1.2 How and Why you may be practising Bands 3 to 5 Task Achievement

Many people fail to show some of the key aspects of Task achievement in their Task 1 answers. This may occur because they want to spend as much time as possible on their task 2 answer, effectively 'stealing' time from writing task 1.

Looking at the lower bands, you can begin to see that writing too quickly could easily lower your score:

Band	Task Achievement
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally addresses the task, the format may be inappropriate in places Recounts detail mechanically, with no clear overview; there may be no data to support the description Presents but inadequately covers key features, there may be a tendency to focus on details
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to address the task but does not cover all key features; the format may be inappropriate May confuse key features with detail; parts may be unclear, irrelevant, repetitive or inaccurate
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fails to understand the task, which may have been completely misunderstood Presents limited ideas, which may be largely irrelevant/ inaccurate or repetitive

I have seen examples of each of these problems in the sample answers sent to me – even those written by people who are currently scoring band 7 overall and hoping to reach band 8. This tells me that writing task 1 may be holding people back from their goal far more than they realise, as the following table shows:

Task 1 Score	Task 2 Score	Overall score
7	9	8.5
7	8	8
6	8	7.5
5	8	7
5	7	6.5

If you don't take the time to select key features then you are more likely to 'recount details mechanically'. Similarly, if you don't then analyse these key features to identify the main trends, patterns, or stages, you will not be able to present a clear overview. Thus, Task achievement is linked to both time management and thinking before writing.

KEY IDEA:

You are likely to list or 'recount details mechanically' and lower your TA score if you begin writing as quickly as possible, and/or you are unsure about:

- the difference between details and key features
- how to clearly present and highlight key features
- how to give a clear overview
- how to select information.

Language issues - giving details that are inappropriate or inaccurate

As we saw earlier, a feature of Band 6 writing is that candidates may

give details that are irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate (Band 6)

Although presenting inaccurate details can come from writing the wrong information down (for example, writing 15% instead of 35%), at band 6 it is often the result of using words without an **awareness of style**, or it may even be the result of using the wrong tense or preposition. Because of this, accurate use of language will be a particular focus throughout the lessons in this book.

Flexibility and precision

To reach Band 7 in Lexical resource, you need to:

- use a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some **flexibility and precision**
- use less common lexical items **with some awareness of style and collocation**

Flexibility refers to your ability to explain something clearly even when you don't know exactly the right word to use. Nevertheless, the information and facts you give must be *accurate*, so even if you do not know exactly the right word, you still need to be precise.

To demonstrate this, look at the following sentences describing changes to a hospital that include adding a footpath so that people can reach a new cafe:

1. A new **pedestrian way** will be added so that visitors can get to the cafe.
2. A new **mall** will be added so that visitors can go to the cafe.

Although both candidates use the wrong words, the first candidate shows band 7 skills because they used the words they know with flexibility and enough precision for the reader to clearly understand what is being added. The second candidate had a similar issue but the result is an inaccurate detail because a mall is a large shopping centre, and is not the same as a footpath.

If we think back to the real-world applications of this type of writing (writing up the results of research, summarising sales in an annual report, explaining how a new system works), we can see just how important this *precision* is. This is another important distinction between Task 1 and Task 2 – the facts you present **have to be correct** according to the data you are given.

Learning 'high-level' words

Problems often occur when people try to use vocabulary to impress rather than to accurately convey meaning.

"My teacher taught me this noun phrase "wild fluctuation". Is it wrong?" (see vocabulary note)

"I write 100-150 new words every day but don't manage to learn all of them."

As these comments show, a great deal of emphasis is put on teaching and learning 'less common' vocabulary to prepare for IELTS. This may be because it is easier to focus on this than on developing writing skills, which are difficult to explain and to measure. There is also a psychological element: learning long lists of words makes people feel as though they are working hard: 'Look how many words I learned this week!' But this way of thinking gives a false sense of achievement and progress.

Previously I have compared this behaviour to a peacock, walking in a circle and proudly showing off your feathers. Another bird also comes to mind here: the magpie who likes to collect objects because they are shiny or colourful, without knowing the difference between a diamond ring or a piece of plastic. So, when learning vocabulary, don't be a magpie, collecting words without understanding their value. Instead, the best approach is to focus on fully understanding the words you already know – learning how and when to use them effectively – while also occasionally adding more to your vocabulary bank. The vocabulary chapter of my free book (*The Key to IELTS Success*) explains how to do this.

***Vocabulary note:** To fluctuate means to frequently or continuously change levels or move up and down. Wild (adj.) = uncontrolled, violent, or extreme.

N.B. Although it is quite possible that the data you are given in a graph will fluctuate, it is highly unlikely that it will do so in a 'wild way'.

KEY IDEA: Learning words and phrases without thinking of their meaning or learning how and when it is appropriate to use them will keep you below band 7.

Synonyms and avoiding repetition

A second cause of using words inaccurately in task 1 is trying to avoid repetition. Attempting to use as many synonyms as possible creates problems in this task because of the need to be accurate. If you are given statistics related to a specific group (e.g. teenagers), then you cannot use a more general synonym (e.g. young people). Similarly, a tiger is a type of cat, but if we are given data for 'tigers' we cannot apply this to 'cats' in general. Remember, there are often times when the simplest word is the most accurate – don't worry too much about using it several times in your answer.

Practice

In the following exercise, you will practise finding and correcting vocabulary errors to make the language more accurate.

Click Here
to Practise

QUESTION 1

Complete Task A below. When you have finished, think about the questions in Task B, then click on 'show answers' to see my comments.

Task A)

Click on the problem word/s in sentences 1 - 5 and replace them with the more accurate word or phrase in the list below.

More accurate words:

slight fluctuations

rose

reached

fell

increased by

dropped

falling

- 1) The figure for motorcycles registered 50 thousand and underwent an increase of 20% over the next five years.
- 2) In contrast, despite tiny ebbs and flows, the consumption of fish remained relatively stable.
- 3) These two figures commenced at similar levels at around 150 grams but then chicken consumption fluctuated to 190 grams in 1989 and lamb consumption oscillated to 105 grams.
- 4) In spite of the slight declivitous trend in the first decade, calls generally increased over the period shown.
- 5) The figure plummeted from 6 percent to 5.6 percent between 1995 and 2000.

Task B)

- 1) Which of these problems could affect the Task achievement score because the details are inaccurate?
- 2) Which sentence is presenting a minor detail and not a key feature and so should be rewritten or deleted from the answer?

Show answers

QUESTION 1

Complete Task A below. When you have finished, think about the questions in Task B, then click on 'show answers' to see my comments.

Task A)

Click on the problem word/s in sentences 1 - 5 and replace them with the more accurate word or phrase in the list below.

More accurate words:

slight fluctuations

rose

reached

fell

increased by

dropped

falling

- 1) The figure for motorcycles registered **X** 50 thousand and **underwent an increase of X** 20% over the next five years.
- 2) In contrast, despite **tiny ebbs and flows X**, the consumption of fish remained relatively stable.
- 3) These two figures commenced at similar levels at around 150 grams but then chicken consumption **fluctuated X** to 190 grams in 1989 and lamb consumption **oscillated X** to 105 grams.
- 4) In spite of the slight **declivitous X** trend in the first decade, calls generally increased over the period shown.
- 5) The figure **plummeted X** from 6 percent to 5.8 percent between 1995 and 2000.

Task B)

- 1) Which of these problems could affect the Task achievement score because the details are inaccurate?
- 2) Which sentence is presenting a minor detail and not a key feature and so should be rewritten or deleted from the answer?

The answer:

1) The figure for motorcycles *reached* 50 thousand and *increased by* 20% over the next five years. 2) In contrast, despite *slight fluctuations*, the consumption of fish remained relatively stable. 3) These two figures commenced at similar levels at around 150 grams but then chicken consumption *rose* to 190 grams in 1989 and lamb consumption *fell* to 105 grams. 4) In spite of the slight *falling* trend in the first decade, calls generally increased over the period shown. 5) The figure *dropped* from 6 percent to 5.8 percent between 1995 and 2000. Task B) 1) Which of these problems could affect the Task achievement score because the details are inaccurate? 2) Which sentence is presenting a minor detail and not a key feature and so should be rewritten or deleted from the answer?

Task A

Vocabulary notes

- 1) a machine or measuring instrument can 'register' a number (show this number) but a 'figure' cannot do very much; we use 'undergo' with a negative experience - it is not appropriate for talking about a rise or fall in numbers
- 2) we only refer to 'ebbs and flows' when talking about a tide or perhaps when writing literature or poetry
- 3) to fluctuate means to go up and down repeatedly; to oscillate means to move or change repeatedly and is used with a needle on a dial (e.g. a speedometer)
- 4) a declivity is a trough and is a very technical word possibly only used in geography - declivitous does not exist
- 5) to plummet means to fall very steeply and sharply - this is inaccurate here as the figure only fell very slightly.

Task B

- 1) Numbers 3 and 5 are most likely to affect the TA score as these give inaccurate details.
- 2) Sentence 5 is a minor detail and so should be deleted or rewritten.

All done !

1.3 Writing a conclusion in Task 1

Having looked at why you may be giving details that are 'inaccurate' we also need to understand how or why you may be giving details that are **irrelevant or inappropriate** (Band 6)

Irrelevant or inappropriate details

In my view, the meaning of the term 'irrelevant details' is not as clear as it could be. In fact, I did not fully understand the implications of the term myself until a few years ago. The best way to understand it is in the context of the real-world examples I gave earlier. When writing the 'Results' section of a document, the information is presented as objectively as possible – without personal opinions. Any discussion of what the results **mean** is presented in another part of the paper – the Discussion section – and so is **irrelevant** here. This means that you should **not** give any personal conclusions about the information in the task, for example:

The bar chart and the table show that when people eat more they have a higher risk of developing diabetes. This suggests that people should eat less to avoid diabetes.

We can find evidence for this in examiner comments in the more up-to-date Cambridge test books (books 9 onwards). Look at the following example from page 134 of Cambridge IELTS 11:

Candidate sample (band 6):

The charts show the percentage of the British students, who are able to speak languages other than English, in 2000 and in 2010. In 2000, 20% of the British students were not able to speak another language. But in 2010 the number has decreased to 10%, which is good because it shows that more people have learned other languages well.

The examiner makes the following comment:

There is some repetition of information and some irrelevant commentary

and then tells us which part this refers to:

(which is good because it shows that more people have learned other languages well).

Again, older materials might cause a problem here. In the early practice test books, even model answers produced by examiners contained comments that would be seen as irrelevant or inappropriate in the present exam, and they also lack a clear overview. This is because these were not assessed in the first version of the test.

KEY IDEA: Be sure to use the most up-to-date materials for your test practice. Use Cambridge IELTS books 9 onwards and look for updated or second editions of any course books.

Practice

In this exercise, you will practice identifying **irrelevant details**.



'I saw a video that said in Task 1 you need to give a conclusion to get a high score.'

I am often told about this advice, which I believe can cause problems if it is misunderstood. Many people understand the word conclusion to mean 'a final paragraph that sums up your ideas and makes your own position clear.' As we saw above, writing a conclusion like this can lower your TA score as your position or personal views are 'irrelevant' here. Task 1 is a brief summary and is quite different to the essay you will produce in Task 2. If your Task 1 answers look similar to your Task 2 essays then it is likely that you are not **'covering the requirements of the task'** (band 7).

A summary is a piece of text that would normally be one part of a much longer document. As such, it does not need a conclusion. Some writers do prefer to 'conclude' their summary with an overview – this means that the overview statement comes at the end of their answer. However, this is not a 'conclusion' in the sense of a Task 2 essay – it is simply one way to 'conclude' or 'finish' the summary. You can see examples of this in sample answers produced by examiners in the most up-to-date Cambridge test books. For example:

Cambridge IELTS 9, page 164:

To sum up, although local fixed line calls were still the most popular in 2002, the gap between the three categories had narrowed considerably over the second half of the period in question.

You can find a similar example in Practice book 10 (page 167). In each case, what may look like a 'conclusion' is actually the overview. I only found one example where the overview is given twice – once at the beginning and again at the end, again, to act as a 'conclusion'. This is not at all necessary and attempting to do this will **create more work** for you as you need to paraphrase your own overview to avoid any repetition. More importantly, **I do not believe this can be done well under test conditions**, even by expert writers, especially if you hope to produce a good writing Task 2 answer.

Many people contact me after their writing test and tell me that they ran out of time and didn't complete Task 1. As we have seen, this can have a big impact on your overall score. Writing a clear overview is important to reach band 6 or 7 in Task 1, and this is why I advise you to prioritise it and write it early in your answer. In my own models, you will see that I always write the overview statement immediately after the introduction. This is my personal preference and feels right to me. Furthermore, it is the convention in many academic papers to give a general overview before going into the details (see the sample at the start of this lesson).

It is very important to remember that you are preparing to take a test – a test where we know what the examiner is looking for. Your job, and the aim of this book, is to practise producing an answer that will meet the criteria for band 7 and above. We are not taking our time to produce clever answers to put in a book. This is why you will not find any 'conclusions' in my models, which have all been assessed as being Band 9 answers.

KEY IDEA: Remember, you are preparing for a test – a test where we know what the examiner is looking for. Your job is to practise producing answers that will meet the criteria for band 7 and above. We are not trying to write clever answers, or show off special language we have learned.

Extra practice

- Look through your previous task 1 answers and use the following checklist to help you decide how well you 'achieved' the task. N.B. It is very important to only look at your answers based on the Cambridge IELTS books 9 onwards.

Look through your previous task 1 writing. To check if you 'achieved' the task, see how many of these boxes can you tick - NB only tick the box if you are sure, leave it blank if the answer is 'No', or 'I'm not sure'.

- Did you select information before you began writing?
- Did you make comparisons? (NB this does not apply to most process tasks)
- Were the details you gave always accurate?
- Were the details you gave 'relevant' to the task (i.e. not a personal conclusion).
- Did you highlight the key information? (can you point to where you did this in your answer?)
- Did you give a clear overview of the main patterns or trends?
- Did you use accurate synonyms of the words on the question paper?
- Are you confident that the words you used help to present the information accurately or did you use them to show off some high-level words and phrases?

- How many boxes could you tick? If your answers are mostly **No** or **I am not sure**, then your Task achievement score in these tasks is probably band 6 or lower. The boxes that are still clear show the skills you still need to develop.

QUESTION 1

Look carefully at the language used in the following sentences and decide the sentences contain irrelevant details that should be deleted. To help, think about whether it is possible to show these details in visual information.

When you have finished, click on 'show answers' to see my comments.

	OK to include	Contains irrelevant details
1. In terms of the size of the railways system, London, for certain, has the largest underground railway system.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The amount of energy used started to decrease in 2014, which is good because it shows that people were trying to save electricity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The changes in emissions are probably connected to changes in economic development and better technology being available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The size of the town centre will increase and therefore the countryside will disappear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The use of sustainable energy sources is expected to remain relatively insignificant in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The increase in fridge and washing machine ownership is evidence of a rise in living standards and a trend to lifestyles based on comfort and convenience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The first step in this process is the most difficult because the animal skins have to be cut very carefully.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Show answers

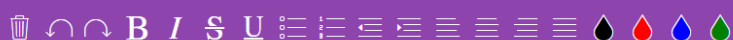
As you can see, there is a 'device' being used between each sentence, ¹which gives the **appearance of cohesion**. ²However, ³some of these words and phrases are being used rather mechanically. ⁴This is like picking up any tool you can find without thinking about how to use ⁵it. ⁶As a result, ⁷they are ⁸either inappropriate ⁹or inaccurate.

QUESTION 1

Look at the numbered words and phrases (1-9) and match them to the following types of cohesive devices.

- A) linking words or phrases used between sentences
- B) pronoun (it, this, they, these etc.)
- C) relative pronouns (which, where, that, etc.)
- D) conjunctions (and, but, or, etc.)
- E) substitution (both, some, each, neither + a synonym)

Write your answers below and click on 'show answers' when you have finished.



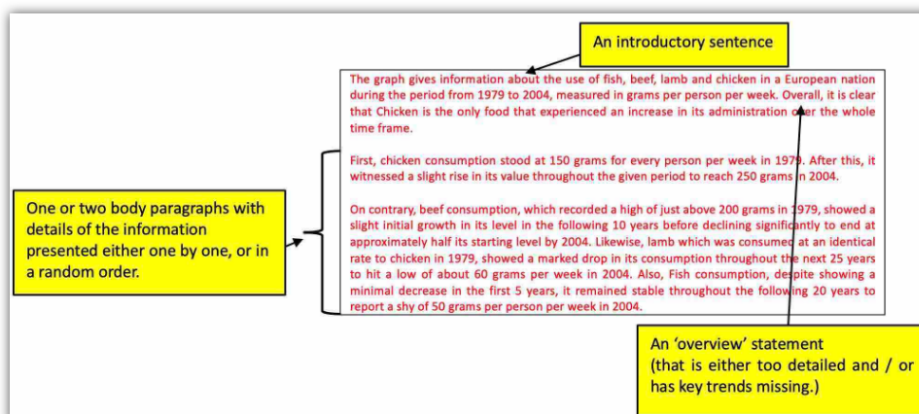
- 1 C
- 2 A
- 3 E
- 4 B
- 5 B
- 6 A
- 7 B
- 8 D
- 9 D

All done !

2.3 Lack of progression and clear organisation

At the beginning of this lesson, I made the point that paragraphing is important in Task 1. Without clear paragraphing there is often a lack of overall progression (Band 5) and a lack of clear organisation, which is needed for Band 7. The sample answer we saw earlier shows a common problem with this.

This is what the paragraphs in the complete answer looked like:



If we look at the first sentence in each body paragraph, we have no sense of the organisation here. Why has one short paragraph been devoted to chicken? What is the main idea or purpose of the final paragraph?

Another problem helps to show why we cannot easily fix the problems we saw with the inaccurate use of cohesive devices in this answer. I have removed these devices to show the individual sentences below. What do you notice about the organisation of the information?

- *Chicken consumption* stood at 150 grams for every person per week in 1979 ... it witnessed a slight rise in its value throughout the given period to reach 250 grams in 2004.
- *Beef consumption*, which recorded a high of just above 200 grams in 1979, showed a slight initial growth in its level in the following 10 years before declining significantly to end at approximately half its starting level by 2004.
- *Lamb*, which was consumed at an identical rate to chicken in 1979, showed a marked drop in its consumption throughout the next 25 years to hit a low of about 60 grams per week in 2004.
- *Fish consumption*, despite showing a minimal decrease in the first 5 years, it remained stable throughout the following 20 years to report a shy of 50 grams per person per week in 2004.

Did you notice that every sentence follows almost exactly the same pattern? The writer presents a category (chicken, beef, lamb, or fish), then gives information about 1979 and finishes with information about 2004. If we tried to use this summary to sketch or recreate the graph, it would be very difficult to do so, which shows it does not give us a clear picture of the information.

While there is some logic to the organisation (writing about each category in turn), it is repetitive and presents each piece of information one by one as though in a list. As we saw earlier, the attempts to link the sentences (using 'First, Likewise, etc.) are not successful. Because of this, there is no overall sense of progression here.

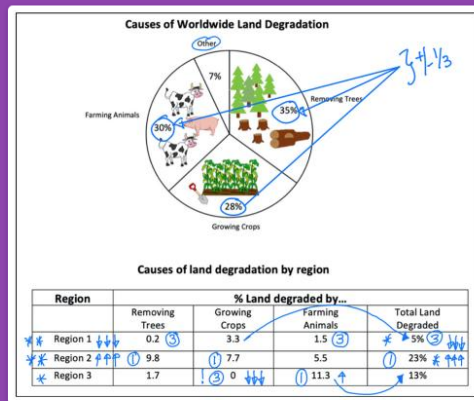
Doing this causes a bigger problem: discussing each category separately means that there is very little comparison here, which is one of the key requirements for the task. So, writing about the information in this way can create problems for both Task achievement and Coherence and cohesion. I have seen this problem repeatedly in the sample answers sent to me. We will return to this writing task in lesson 5 to address these issues.

KEY IDEA: If you organise the information in your summary in a 'list' this can lower your TA and CC score, because there is a lack of progression (CC) and you are less likely to make comparisons (TA).

Now that we have identified the most important problems in Task 1, in lessons 3 to 5 we will look at how to address these problems before going on to look at issues that arise in the different types of task you may find in the test.

Extra practice

- Look through your previous task 1 answers and use the following checklist to think about Coherence and cohesion.
 - Did you use more than one body paragraph to write about the key details?
 - Did you choose a logical organisation for the information before writing?
 - Can you point to the logical organisation of the information? (how will the examiner know what the organisation is?)
 - Look at the linking words and phrases you used between sentences. Are they used accurately?
 - Do the linking words and phrases give a clear sense of progression or are they used mechanically?
 - Can you find examples of other cohesive devices in your sentences? (look for relative clauses, pronouns etc.)
 - Did you use relative clauses accurately? (look for the word 'which' in particular).
 - Did you successfully use cohesive devices to avoid repetition?
 - Does the organisation of the information in each paragraph help you to make comparisons in your answer? (How many comparisons can you find?)



Points to notice

- In the pie chart, I circled 'other' to remind me to mention this very briefly in my answer. With the three main causes, my note here shows they are quite similar because they are all close to 1/3. I used + / - to show this, but you might know other symbols you can use here.
- The table compares 3 regions (the rows), and we have 4 categories of data for each region (the columns). During step 2, I looked down each column and wrote (1) or (3) next to the highest and lowest figures in each category, which helped me to see when a region was highest or lowest, and whether this happened in one region more often than the others.
- In these notes, I have used three arrows to indicate 'the highest' or 'the lowest'.
- I also used arrows to connect figures that I wanted to make a point about in my writing (e.g. I could see that, in Region 1, almost all of the 'total land degradation' was due to 'growing crops', so I connected these with an arrow).
- I used an exclamation mark to indicate an unusual figure - 0 in the 'growing crops' column for Region 3.

Show answers

4.1 The Introductory sentence

In lesson 3, we saw that it is important to work as quickly as possible in task 1 and to use the limited time you have very well. When I am writing my answers, the first sentence is the one I spend the least amount of time on. This lesson will help you to write this sentence as quickly as possible, so that you can then concentrate on the more important elements of your answer.

As we saw in Lesson 3, your test question begins with a sentence that very briefly introduces the information you are given. This sentence answers questions like this:

- **What**
- **Who**
- **Where**
- **When**

Your introductory sentence will do the same. However, it is important to note that this is **not** your overview.

KEY IDEA: The introductory sentence explains what we are looking at and answers questions such as *what, who, where, when*. However, this is **NOT** your overview.

Introductory sentences are more complex than you may realise as they force you to include several pieces of information in one sentence. To demonstrate this, look back at our previous test question:

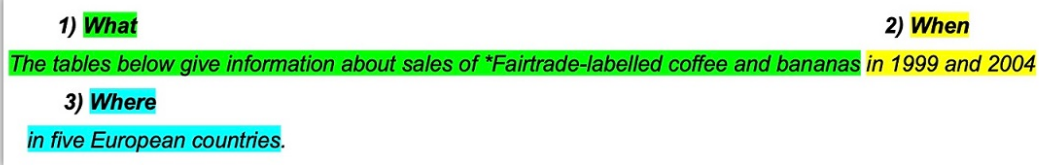
*The tables below give information about sales of *Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas in 1999 and 2004 in five European countries.*

This sentence combines all of the following information:

These are tables.

- The tables are below.
- The tables give information.
- The information is about sales of Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas.
- The Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas were sold in 1999 and 2004.
- The Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas were sold in five European countries.

We can divide this information up like this:



Points to notice:

- To answer the question 'what are we looking at?' we need to say: the type of chart or diagram we are looking at + shows + details of what is being measured or shown.
- This sentence will reflect the details you noticed in step 1 of your thinking process:

What is being measured		When	
Sales of *Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas (1999 & 2004)			
Where	Coffee	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
	UK	1.5	20
	Switzerland	3	6
	Denmark	1.8	2
	Belgium	1	1.7
	Sweden	0.8	1

- The information about 'when' and 'where' can *sometimes* be reversed:

We can write:

The tables below give information about sales of *Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas in 1999 and 2004 in five European countries.

Or

The tables below give information about sales of *Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas in five European countries in 1999 and 2004.

QUESTION 1

Complete the test questions below by dragging and dropping the correct words and phrases.

Task A

Causes of Worldwide Land Degradation

Causes of land degradation by region

Region	Removing Trees	Growing Crops	Farming Animals	Total Land Degraded
Region 1	0.2	3.3	1.5	5%
Region 2	9.8	7.7	5.5	23%
Region 3	1.7	0	11.3	13%

Task B

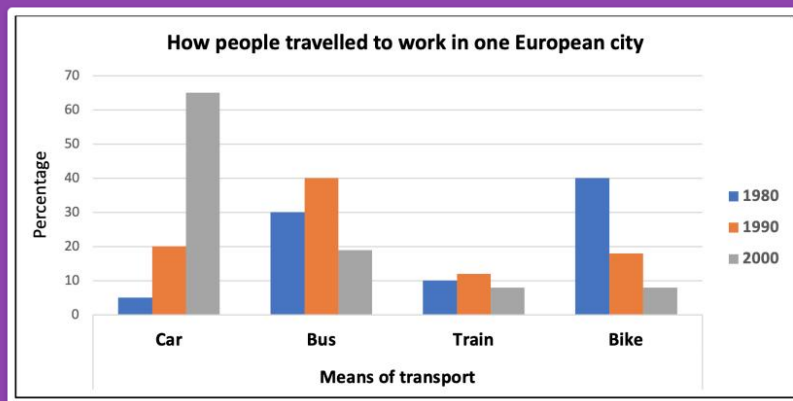
and after construction of information about in three the causes of land degradation worldwide an island some tourist facilities regions of the world charts below
 two maps before

Task A: The give and
 Task B: The show the

The answer:
 Task A: The charts below give information about the causes of land degradation worldwide and in three regions of the world.
 Task B: The two maps show an island before and after the construction of some tourist facilities.

QUESTION 2

Now do the same for this task. NB There are more words than you need.



between four to work number 1990 1980 percentage European city 2000 travelling country from of means of transport and one in

The chart below shows the people by in

The answer:
 The chart below shows the percentage of people travelling to work by four means of transport in one European city in 1980 1990 and 2000.

All done !

4.2 Paraphrasing the question

In your answer, you should paraphrase the test question. If you copy large parts of it word for word the examiner cannot reward your use of grammar and vocabulary. If this happens too often in your answer, it will significantly lower your GRA and LR scores.

However, although you need to introduce the data *in your own words*, you do not need to go too far when doing this, which is a problem I often see in band 6 and below. People may do this out of concern that you *'cannot use more than two consecutive words from the question paper without being penalised'*. This advice is not very helpful because you do not have time to count words in this way, it is more likely to lead to errors, and there may well be topics where it is necessary to use more than two consecutive words.

Instead of thinking like this, just make sure that you don't copy large chunks of language, or complete phrases from the test question. It can help to ask yourself the following questions:

- *What is being measured here?*
- *What is this showing?*
- *What is this telling us about?*

The following answers give us some ideas about how to paraphrase the information.

- *This chart is showing how much / how many....*
- *This diagram is showing the steps involved in...*
- *These maps / plans are showing changes / how (something) changed....*

KEY IDEA: You don't need to make big changes to the information in the test question – just aim present it in a slightly different way.

The chart/s below

Your test question will always begin by referring to *The charts / diagrams / maps / plans below*. With charts, an easy way to paraphrase the information is to specify the type of chart. Use this exercise to practise if you are not sure what these are.

Practice

Click Here
to Practise

Points to notice

- If you are given maps, plans, or diagrams, use the same word in your introductory sentence don't try to think of a synonym.
- Many people include the word 'below' in their introductory sentence. This word is needed in the test question to link this sentence to the visual. Your answer will appear *below* the question, and so the chart/s or diagram/s will be *above* your answer. Having said this, *you do not need to include it* in your introduction – the examiner will know which charts you are writing about.
- Some people refer to 'the *given* charts'. This may come from typical maths test questions where you are 'given' certain data and asked to use 'the given data' to calculate something else. I don't use it in my model answers as it feels unnatural to me.

Paraphrasing the verb 'show'

When it comes to the main verb in this sentence, you will see in my model answers that I **almost always* use 'show'. This is because it is often the most natural word to use, and I don't want to waste time thinking of different ways to write this when it is more important to 'achieve' the whole task and focus on other parts of my answer. If the question says, *'The charts below show'* then writing *'The two pie charts show'* is different enough – you do not need to change this further.

**If or when I use a different word in my model answers I will explain why.*

KEY IDEA: Don't make your task harder by trying to change every word in the question - this is more likely to lower your score.

QUESTION 1

Fill in the gaps with either between, during, for, from, in, or to.

the first six years, the level remained stable.

the first decade, the percentage increased several times but remained below 20%.

The line graph shows population changes a fifty-year period.

There were no changes in Switzerland this time.

The pie chart shows household expenditure one country 1992.

The line graph shows populations changes 1950 to 2000.

The line graph shows populations changes 1950 and 2000.

In the UK, sales fell from 1990 2000 then increased steadily a decade before beginning to fall again 2010.

The answer:

For the first six years, the level remained stable.

In / During the first decade, the percentage increased several times but remained below 20%.

The line graph shows population changes *during / over* a fifty-year period.

There were no changes in Switzerland *during* this time.

The pie chart shows household expenditure *in* one country *in* 1992.

The line graph shows populations changes *from* 1950 to 2000.

The line graph shows populations changes *between* 1950 and 2000.

In the UK, sales fell from 1990 *to* 2000 then increased steadily *for* a decade before beginning to fall again *in* 2010.

All done !

two verbs that mean 'to make a building look new again
by repairing, decorating etc.'

to change a (usually wild or untouched) place so that it becomes more advanced / habitable / useable

how frequently
people x

how often x is
done

the length of
time

a ten-year-
period

x was built

how much x is
sold

the inhabitants
of x

the
construction of
x

people living in
x

from 1995 to
2005

how much x is
used/eaten

the total
number of
minutes

the
consumption
of x

sales of x

The answer:

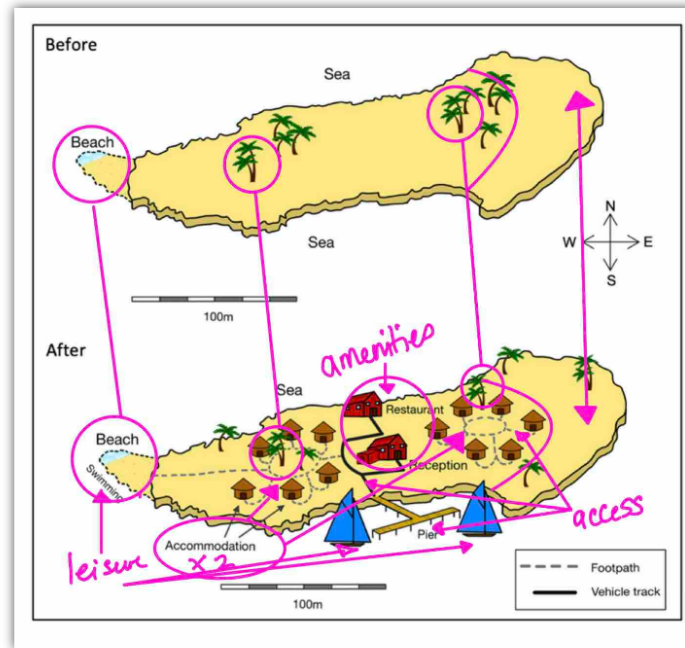
The tables compare the sales figures *for two* Fairtrade products *in the* UK, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium, and Sweden *in two* separate years. Overall, *sales of* Fairtrade coffee *increased in all five* countries, while *there was* mixed success for similarly labelled bananas, and *the leading* country *in each* table *had significantly* higher sales *than the* rest.

Sales of Fairtrade coffee *were relatively* modest in 1999, and Switzerland was *the largest* consumer with €3 million *in sales*. *Despite this* figure doubling in 2004, the UK *rose from* third place (with €1.5 million) to lead the table with €20 million *worth of* sales *in the same* year. A figure *that was* considerably *higher than* *in any other* country. Although *the three* remaining countries also saw increases, *these were* marginal with gains *of between* 0.2 and 0.7 million euros.

With Fairtrade bananas, Switzerland *was again* the leader in 1999 and dominated this table *in both* years with sales *increasing from* €15 million *to a* striking €47 million. *Although considerably* lower, the UK and Belgium *saw similar* growths *in this* category, *increasing by* just over 5 times their 1999 figures *to reach* €5.5 and €4 million respectively. *In contrast*, Sweden and Denmark experienced *a drop* in sales, with the 2004 figures (€1 million and € 0.9 million) almost *half of* those of 5 years *earlier*.

All done !

...and leisure facilities, and access:



Step 3 - Organisation

In lesson 3 we decided that the best way to organise paragraphs for a task like this is to have one paragraph about the island 'Before' and a second paragraph 'After' or following the construction work. As these images show, there is not a great deal to write about the island before construction. Because of this, in my answer, I decided to also mention what has been retained in this paragraph.

As we saw earlier, the umbrella terms above (**accommodation**, **amenities**, **leisure facilities**, and **access**) can be useful for your overview, allowing you to show the main changes without mentioning any specific details. They can also be useful for highlighting a point and when it comes to the logical organisation of the information *within* your paragraphs.

In some answers I have seen, candidates divide the map or plan into North, South, East and West and then use this for their organisation. However, this creates a list-like description of what the island looks like rather than a summary of the main features, so it is not something I recommend.

The two plans illustrate the main changes that will take place in a university sports center.

Overall, although the central area will be largely retained, the total area of the sports centre will be extended, replacing the outdoor facilities, and more indoor facilities will be added.

*In the current plan, the sports centre's facilities are quite limited. Within the building, there are two main facilities: a 25-meter pool in the center, and a gym at the back of the building. Visitors have access to a changing room and a seating area near the swimming pool and **a small reception**. In terms of the outdoor areas, there are courts on either side of the building.*

*According to the future plans, the outdoor courts will be removed and the central building will be expanded. More indoor sports facilities will be added, such as a new leisure pool on the western side of the centre, a sports hall and two dance studios on the eastern side. With the existing facilities, the gym is going to be made longer, but the swimming pool and other facilities will remain the same. **In terms of the other amenities, the reception area will be made wider, and visitors to the new centre will be able to make use of a café and a sports shop, which will be located near the entrance.***

KEY IDEA: Your body paragraphs work together to present a clear picture – don't see them as separate. This is particularly true for map and plan tasks.

QUESTION 8

Sentence 7

days. ten for The chrysalis lasts stage

QUESTION 9

Sentence 8

transforms a and butterfly of into During the this caterpillar body time, develops the wings

Show answers

QUESTION 1

Listen to the model answer and fill in the blanks. You will need to write 1-3 words in each gap.



The diagram _____ the process used _____ sugar. Overall, this is a largely mechanical process _____ two main stages: _____ of sugar cane and _____ of the crop, which _____ into a liquid and eventually into sugar.

The first stage of the process is the longest as the sugar cane _____ between 12 to 18 months _____ tall enough _____. Once _____ fully grown, the crop _____ in two ways, either mechanically using specialist machinery or by hand, a much more labour-intensive method.

The second stage is wholly mechanical and _____ five steps. First, the plants _____ to form a juice, which _____. The juice _____ by passing it through a limestone filter before _____. During this step, the liquid content of the juice _____ leaving behind a syrup. The syrup _____ in a centrifuge and spun at a high enough speed _____ the sugar crystals, which are subsequently _____ the final product.

The answer:

The diagram *shows* the process used to *make* sugar. Overall, this is a largely mechanical process *comprising* two main stages: *the farming* of sugar cane and *the processing* of the crop, which *turns it* into a liquid and eventually into sugar.

The first stage of the process is the longest as the sugar cane *takes* between 12 to 18 months *to grow* tall enough *for harvesting*. Once *it is* fully grown, the crop *can be harvested* in two ways, either mechanically using specialist machinery or by hand, a much more labour-intensive method.

The second stage is wholly mechanical and *involves* five steps. First, the plants *are crushed* to form a juice, which *is then extracted*. The juice *is purified* by passing it through a limestone filter before *being heated*. During this step, the liquid content of the juice *evaporates* leaving behind a syrup. The syrup *is then put* in a centrifuge and spun at a high enough speed *to separate out* the sugar crystals, which are subsequently *dried and cooled to produce* the final product.

QUESTION 2

Now practise different language used in this model to increase your grammatical range and accuracy and your lexical resource scores.



The diagram shows _____ used to make sugar. Overall, this is a _____ process comprising two main stages: the farming of sugar cane and the processing of _____, which turns it into _____ and _____ into sugar.

The first stage of the process is _____ as the sugar cane takes between 12 to 18 months to grow _____ for harvesting. _____ it is _____, the crop can be harvested in two ways, either _____ using _____ or _____, a much more _____.

The second stage is _____ and involves five steps. First, _____ are crushed _____ a juice, which is then extracted. The juice is purified by _____ a limestone _____ before being heated. During this step, _____ content of the juice evaporates _____ a syrup. The syrup is then put in a centrifuge and spun _____ enough speed to separate out the sugar crystals, which are _____ dried and cooled to produce _____.

The answer:

The diagram shows *the process* used to make sugar. Overall, this is a *largely mechanical* process comprising two main stages: the farming of sugar cane and the processing of *the crop*, which turns it into *a liquid* and *eventually* into sugar.

The first stage of the process is *the longest* as the sugar cane takes between 12 to 18 months to grow *tall enough* for harvesting. *Once* it is *fully grown*, the crop can be harvested in two ways, either *mechanically* using *specialist machinery* or *by hand*, a much more *labour-intensive method*.

The second stage is *wholly mechanical* and involves five steps. First, *the plants* are crushed *to form* a juice, which is then extracted. The juice is purified by *passing it through* a limestone *filter* before being heated. During this step, *the liquid* content of the juice evaporates *leaving behind* a syrup. The syrup is then put in a centrifuge and spun *at a high* enough speed to separate out the sugar crystals, which are *subsequently* dried and cooled to produce *the final product*.

All done !



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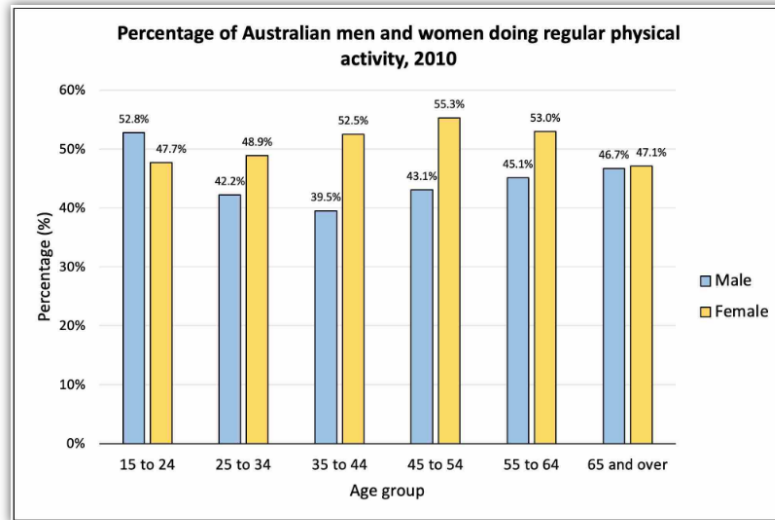
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A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

12.1 Writing about gender and age

In this lesson we complete our first timed test practice. Use this to get an idea of how long you need to spend on this task at the moment. We will also look at two more problems when talking about people: gender and age. We will be using the following task, adapted from Cambridge IELTS 12, page 27. Start by looking at the data:



In this task, you are given data about men and women, and the data is divided into different age groups. Look at the following common language problems when people write about men and women (different genders). Can you correct the problems in red?

- **male and female in Australia**
- **With respect to the male's proportion**
- **Australian males' and females' exercises**
- **the percentage of female kept going up, while male fell**

The main problem here is that **male** and **female** are adjectives (**male students, female students** etc.) but the same words are also nouns:

*The number of **females** increased while the number of **males** decreased.*

Although you might need to talk about '**the female**' and '**the male**' if you are given a life cycle of an animal, with charts and data, you are always writing about **more than one**, so you should not be using the singular form unless there is a **plural noun** next to it (in other words, when you are using these words as an adjective).

In your introduction and overview, you can make a general statement about **males** and **females**, or **men** and **women**. You can also add the nationality, to describe the main trends in the behaviour of **Australian men** and **Australian women** in 2010. However, in your body paragraphs, you will mainly refer to the specific age groups. Describing ages also causes problems. Can you correct the problems below?

- **at the stage from 35 to 44,**
- **the first age period**
- **For young women with the age of 15 to 24,**
- **with the exception of 15 to 24 ages**
- **the figure for females went up at almost all the ages given**
- **males tended to be less active at the group age 35 to 44.**
- **at the age group from 25 to 34, men were ...**
- **Australian men from over 15s to 24 years old**
- **in 65 years old females and over-aged.**

We only use 'stage' or 'period' to talk about a stage or period in life. For example, **childhood, the teenage years,** and **adulthood** are all examples of **stages** or **periods** in life. However, these terms are not appropriate for our data, which is divided into specific **age groups** or **age ranges**.

Prepositions

As you can see above, there are also problems with prepositions, especially when we are referring to a range of ages. Look at the following examples then the rules below:

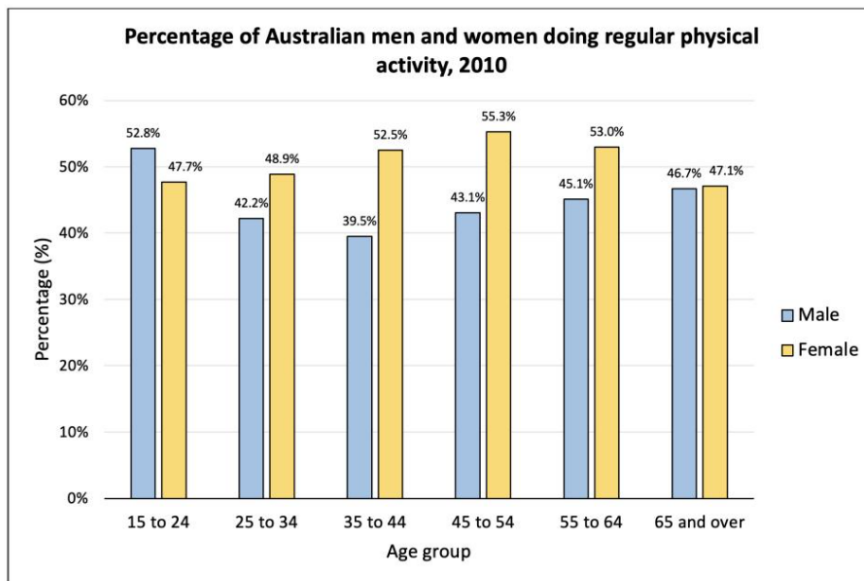
- **Women aged 25 to 34...**
- **Men aged between 35 and 44...**
- **Women who were 25 to 34 years old...**
- **Men in the 25- to 35-year-old age group...**
- **This fell from 24 years.**

QUESTION 1

The bar chart below shows the percentage of Australian men and women in different age groups who did regular physical activity in 2010.

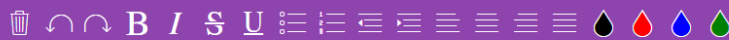
Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



QUESTION 2

Write your answer below.



Show answers

7) Change the verb 'to be' as above and make the data more accurate and precise (e.g. by adding supporting evidence for 'two thirds' - is this two thirds?); how do we refer to these age groups? (very young people is an odd way to refer to babies and small children, who are included in the 0-14 age group – it is better to just give the age range here). To avoid repeating the same structures (and verbs) throughout, change the final verb to either 'there were' or 'were aged..'



Body paragraph 1
Looking at the data for 2000 in more detail, in Yemen the youngest group accounted for half the population at 50.1%, the middle group made up another 46%, while the elderly accounted for less than 4% / for only 3.6%. In contrast, in Italy, almost two-thirds of the population were in the 15-59-year-old group (61.6%), the elderly constituted a quarter of the total (24.1%), and there were just under 15% aged 0-14 / and just under 15% were aged 0-14.

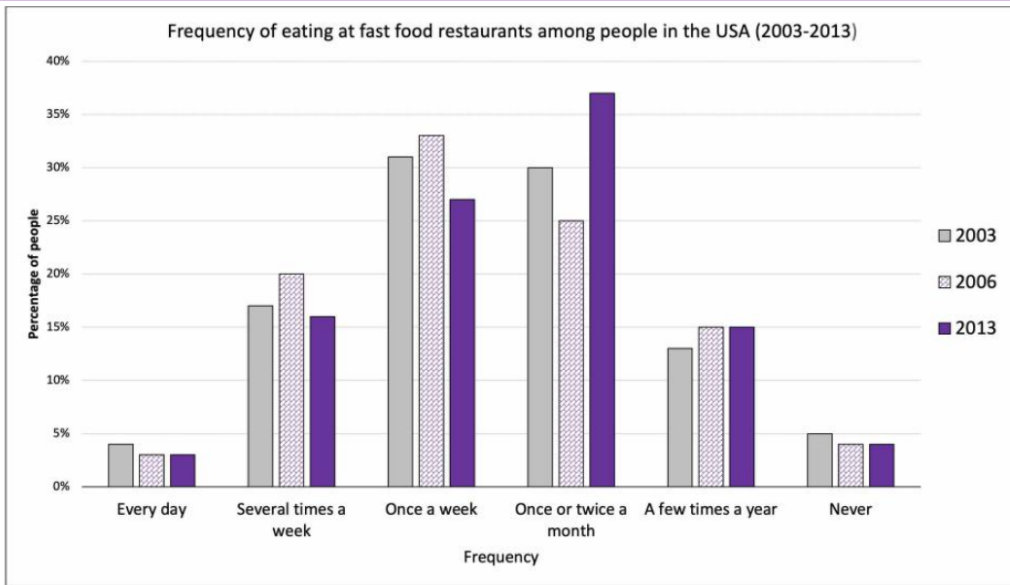
QUESTION 4

Body paragraph 2

8) Make this passive so that the language is impersonal. This sentence is not very 'interesting' – we expect the populations to be 'different' after 50 years. Describing it as 'very different' or 'completely different' would be better (though this needs to be accurate). Or, it might be better to just signal the change in topic with: "In terms of 2050," or 'In 2050,...'

QUESTION 1

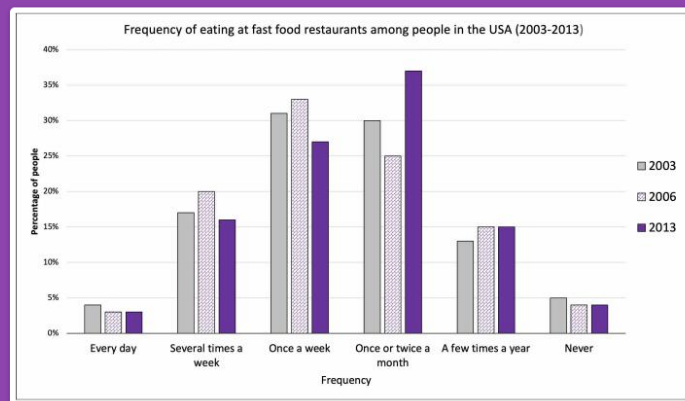
Spend a few moments studying the data and making notes on the image if you find this useful, then write your answer below.



QUESTION 2

The charts below show how frequently people in the USA ate in fast food restaurants between 2003 and 2013.

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



Blank white area for writing the answer to Question 2.

- **Energy**
- **Problems**
- **Numbers**
- **Types of charts**
- **Phrases used to move to a new topic**
- **People**

- Practise using this language as often as you can.
- Review lessons 3, 4, 5 and 6 and add more words or phrases to your lists.
- Practice the language from the last model answer in the task below:



- Make sure to go back and repeat the exercises in previous lessons often to help review the language and main points you have learned.
-
-

QUESTION 1

Complete the table by removing the suffix in each noun to create the verb form. Remember the rules about double letters and nouns ending in 'ator'.

Noun	Verb form
feeder	(/ feed / to feed)
propeller	(/ propel / to propel)
shredder	(/ shred / to shred)
divider	(/ divide / to divide)
grater	(/ grate / to grate)
grinder	(/ grind / to grind)
conveyor	(/ convey / to convey)
projector	(/ project / to project)
reflector	(/ reflect / to reflect)
accelerator	(/ accelerate / to accelerate)
calculator	(/ calculate / to calculate)
generator	(/ generate / to generate)
refrigerator	(/ refrigerate / to refrigerate)
ventilator	(/ ventilate / to ventilate)

QUESTION 2

Fill in the blanks with a suitable verb based on the nouns below. NB Be careful with verbs ending in 'y' and 'l' and be sure to use the third person singular.

- a generator _____ electricity
- a propeller _____ the plane
- a freezer _____ food
- a paper shredder _____ paper
- an air traffic controller _____ air traffic
- a room divider _____ the room
- a salt grinder _____ salt
- a condenser _____ the steam
- a water filter _____ water
- a purifier _____ the water

The answer:

- a generator *generates* electricity
- a propeller *propels* the plane
- a freezer *freezes* food
- a paper shredder *shreds* paper
- an air traffic controller *controls* air traffic
- a room divider *divides* the room
- a salt grinder *grinds* salt
- a condenser *condenses* the steam
- a water filter *filters* water
- a purifier *purifies* the water

QUESTION 3

Now fill in the blanks with the passive form of these verbs. NB remember the rules about double letters with 'ed'. One of these verbs is irregular. (Hint, think about the verb 'find').

- electricity _____
- the plane _____
- the food _____
- the paper _____
- air traffic _____
- the room _____
- the salt _____
- the steam _____
- water _____
- water _____

QUESTION 1

How much vocabulary can you remember from lessons 7 and 8? Fill in the blanks with the correct word.

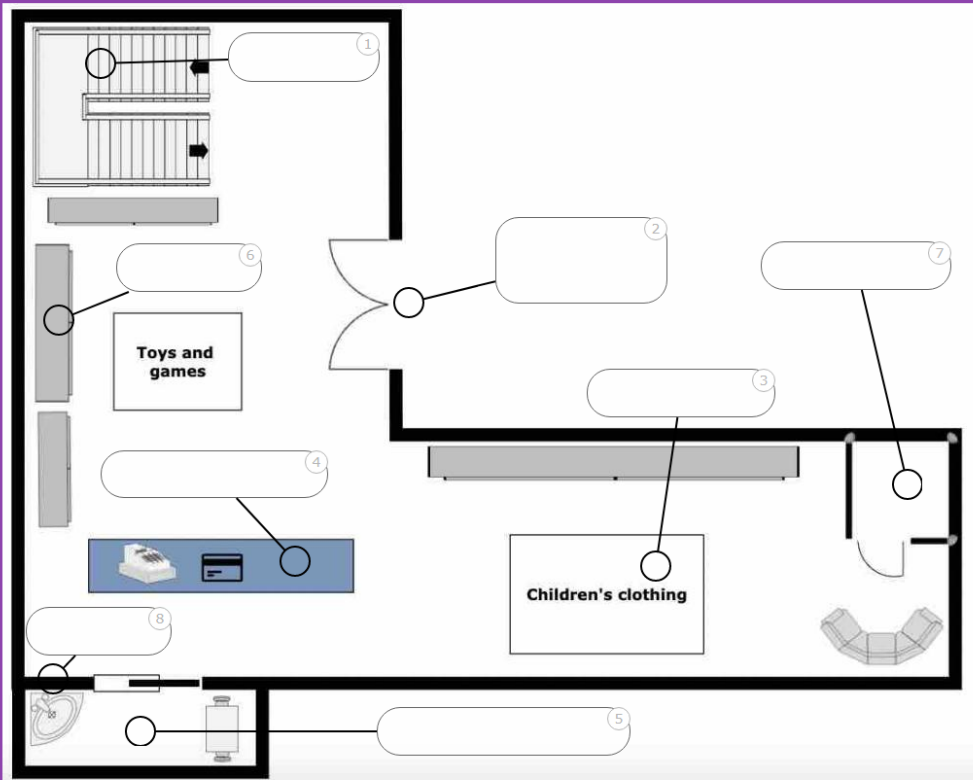
- A useful synonym for 'before' is _____
- A useful synonym for 'after' is _____
- A useful synonym for 'building' is _____
- A useful synonym for 'facilities' is _____
- The verb for 'to make longer' is _____ and a useful synonym beginning with 'e' is _____
- The verb for 'to make wider' is _____
- The verb for 'to make shorter' is _____
- The verb meaning 'to make better' is _____
- If a natural or wild area has buildings etc. added to it then it is _____
- If a large building or area is changed by replacing the old buildings then it is _____
- If a smaller building is updated to make it look 'new' again then it is _____
- If the inside of a building has new furniture and decorations then it is _____

The answer:

- A useful synonym for 'before' is *prior to*.
- A useful synonym for 'after' is *following*.
- A useful synonym for 'building' is *construction*.
- A useful synonym for 'facilities' is *amenities*.
- The verb for 'to make longer' is *lengthen / to lengthen* and a useful synonym beginning with 'e' is *extend / to extend*
- The verb for 'to make wider' is *widen / widen*.
- The verb for 'to make shorter' is *to shorten / shorten*.
- The verb meaning 'to make better' is *to improve / improve*.
- If a natural or wild area has buildings etc. added to it then it is *developed*.
- If a large building or area is changed by replacing the old buildings then it is *redeveloped*.
- If a smaller building is updated to make it look 'new' again then it is *renovated*.
- If the inside of a building has new furniture and decorations then it is *refurbished*.

QUESTION 2

Can you label the diagram?



KEY IDEA: You cannot afford to cut the following stages in Task 1:

Key features to look for and highlight in steps 2, 3 and 4:

- *big changes in the data (charts and graphs)*
- *the highest and lowest points (charts and graphs)*
- *any similarities (all tasks)*
- *anything that stayed the same (all tasks)*
- *how long something takes / lasts (process tasks)*
- *how long something takes / lasts (process tasks)*
- *physical changes / changes in form (process tasks)*
- *anything that has been made bigger / smaller (map /plan and process tasks)*
- *anything that has been removed (map and plan tasks)*

Be sure to practice your timing with Task 1 and Task 2 before your test.

Extra practice

Reviewing Task achievement

- Look back over all of the answers you have written so far in this book. Look in particular at your total word count for each answer and think about wordiness. Can you reduce any of your answers? Are there any words and phrases you use out of habit? (E.g. It is clearly demonstrated that...)
- Look back at one or two answers. Can you make the sentences more concise using, 'at', 'with' or putting data in brackets?
- Make sure you can
 - *Notice details*
 - *Identify the key features*
 - *Write a clear overview of the main changes, trends, or stages*
 - *Write concise paragraphs that highlight the key features and make comparisons where relevant.*

Reviewing Coherence and cohesion

- Look back at your previous answers and think about coherence and cohesion. Have you avoided repetition? Read your answers aloud to help you focus on this. Can you use referencing and substitution to improve your answer?
- When you write your answer, make sure you
 - *Group information together logically – both into separate paragraphs and within each paragraph.*
 - *Avoid repeating the same words (substitute it with a synonym or refer back with a pronoun).*
- Try to notice the way that I do this in my models.

Reviewing language

- Look back at the exercises in the previous lessons and repeat those that focus on vocabulary or grammar.
- Look back at the model answers in each lesson and make a note of any language you would like to learn. Think about specific topics (e.g. exercise, energy, land degradation) as well as language connected to describing data, charts, maps, and processes.
- Look back at your own answers and think about language. Can you make any changes now to practice the new language you noted?

Model answer - Practice test 3

The three pie charts show how a college budget was apportioned in 1990, 2000, and 2010. Overall, the largest expense is for staff, and insurance and technology spending has consistently increased, while spending on other resources has declined or fluctuated.

In terms of human resources, paying staff takes up the majority of the college budget, with teacher salaries dominating this category, increasing initially from 40% to 50% before declining to 45%. However, in each decade, an increasingly smaller proportion was allocated to other staff pay, which fell from 28% in 1990 to 15% in 2010.

With other expenses, in 1990, almost as much was spent on furniture and equipment as on books, at 15% and 14% respectively. However, while book spending increased to 20% in 2000, furniture and equipment fell sharply to only 2% and, in 2010, remained the lowest cost at 3%. By the same year, book spending had fallen to 9%, almost half of its initial level. In contrast, technology and insurance were the lowest costs in 1990, at only 1% and 2%, but rose in each decade, with the largest increases occurring in 2010, when insurance reached 8% and technology 20%. Notably, in the final decade, a larger proportion of the budget was spent on technology than on books.

Points to notice:

- Did you remember to look for categories you could group together using an umbrella term? In my answer, I grouped together 'teacher salaries' and 'other worker's salaries' under the umbrella term 'human resources' but you could also refer to 'staff salaries' and you could group 'books' and 'furniture and equipment' under the umbrella term 'other resources' (which I did in my overview).
- How did you organise this information? If you decided to describe each year, then you are likely to have repeated the same information (you need to repeat the information in each pie chart, and thus the names of the categories, like this:
 - 1990 – budget spending on furniture and equipment, insurance, books, technology, teacher salaries, other worker's salaries
 - 2000 – budget spending on furniture and equipment, insurance, books, technology, teacher salaries, other worker's salaries
 - 2010 – budget spending on furniture and equipment, insurance, books, technology, teacher salaries, other worker's salaries
- This is not a good idea. Notice the repetition. It is very difficult to find a way to paraphrase these words, it also means you are less likely to write about changes or make comparisons. This will lower your score by making your writing repetitive and means you will not highlight the key features (the changes).
- Instead, look for the categories you can group together so that you are only repeating the years (these are easier to refer back to without repetition – e.g. you can say 'in the first year / in the final year etc.) I organised my answer as follows:
 - BP1) Staff pay and how this changed in 1990, 2000, and 2010 (because these are the biggest percentages and both involve paying staff).
 - BP2) Other expenses and key changes in 1990, 2000, and 2010
- Notice that my organisation helps me to highlight the changes and make comparisons but also reduces repetition. Rewrite your answer in a few weeks if you chose to organise your answer according to the year. Compare your two answers to see the difference.

Language to notice:

- We refer to 'a portion' meaning a slice or part of the whole. The verb form is 'to **apportion**' and refers to how the whole is divided up. Here, the pie charts show us how the total budget was divided up or 'apportioned' in each year.
- Because this is a budget, this means we know decisions are made about where to spend money, so I used the verb 'to allocate to' ('an increasingly smaller proportion **was allocated to** other staff pay'). This means the school chose to spend that percentage of the budget on staff pay.

Key features

Check your answer has key features similar to those in the list below. **NB** you do not need to have **all** of them - these are examples of the main key features to include. Remember to provide supporting evidence.

Key features to include:

*The first three are main trends to include in your overview.

- **Staff is the largest expense**
- **Insurance and technology spending increased each year**
- **Other resources declined or varied**
 - Paying teachers makes up most of the budget - it increased at first, then fell
 - 'Other salaries' fell each year
 - Furniture and equipment dropped significantly in the first year then grew slightly.
 - Books grew initially then fell
 - The biggest fall in book spending corresponded with the biggest gain in technology spending

Extra practice

Review your answers to the three test questions from this lesson. Think about:

LESSON 20 - Timed Test Practice 3: A bar chart, a process task, and a stacked bar chart

In this lesson, you will learn about:

20.1 Test practice 7 - A Bar chart

20.2 Test practice 8 - A Process task

20.3 Test practice 9 - A stacked bar chart