

Mastering Academic Writing Task

A Guide to Charts, Graphs, and Diagrams

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What is IELTS Writing Task 1?

- You have **20 minutes**.
- You must write **at least 150 words**.
- You will be presented with visual information:
 - ▶ Line Graph
 - ▶ Bar Chart
 - ▶ Pie Chart
 - ▶ Table
 - ▶ Process Diagram
 - ▶ Map
 - ▶ (Or a combination of two)
- Your task: **Summarize** the information, **select** the main features, and **make comparisons** where relevant.
- **Do NOT** give your opinion.

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How You Are Scored

Your essay is marked on four criteria:

- **Task Achievement (25%):**

- ▶ Did you answer all parts of the question?
- ▶ Did you write 150+ words?
- ▶ Did you present a clear overview, main features, and comparisons?

- **Coherence and Cohesion (25%):**

- ▶ Is your writing logical and easy to follow?
- ▶ Did you use paragraphs effectively?
- ▶ Did you use linking words (e.g., *however*, *furthermore*, *in contrast*)?

- **Lexical Resource (25%):**

- ▶ Did you use a good range of vocabulary?
- ▶ Did you use words accurately?
- ▶ Is your spelling correct?

- **Grammatical Range and Accuracy (25%):**

- ▶ Did you use a mix of simple and complex sentences?
- ▶ Is your grammar and punctuation correct?

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The 4-Paragraph Structure

A safe and effective structure for all Task 1 reports:

Paragraph 1: Introduction (1-2 sentences)

Paraphrase the question. What does the chart show?

Paragraph 2: Overview (2-3 sentences)

State the main trends or key features. This is the "big picture." Do NOT use specific numbers here. Start with "Overall," or "In general,".

Paragraph 3: Body Paragraph A (3-5 sentences)

Describe specific features in detail. Select 2-3 key points and support them with data (numbers, percentages) from the chart.

Paragraph 4: Body Paragraph B (3-5 sentences)

Describe other specific features in detail. Select another 2-3 key points and support them with data.

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Writing the Introduction

Goal: Paraphrase the prompt. Do not copy it.

Example Prompt

"The graph below shows the consumption of fish and different kinds of meat in a European country between 1979 and 2004."

Example Paraphrase

"The line graph *illustrates* the *intake* of fish and three types of meat *over a 25-year period* in a *particular* European nation."

Useful Verbs: shows, illustrates, presents, compares, gives data on, provides information about.

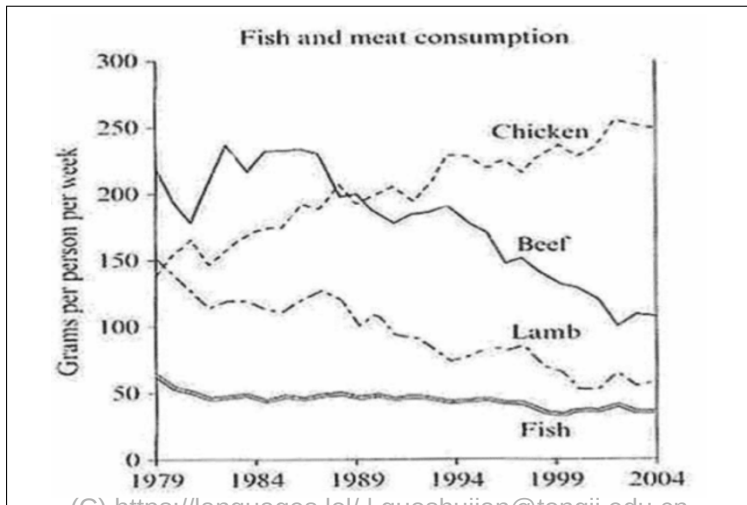
Writing the Overview

This is the **most important** paragraph.

- Ask yourself: "What is the most noticeable thing about this chart?"
- Look for:
 - ▶ The main trend (e.g., overall increase? decrease?)
 - ▶ The highest and lowest items.
 - ▶ The biggest changes or differences.
- Start with: *Overall, ... / In general, ... / It is clear that ...*
- **Example (for the meat graph):** "Overall, the consumption of chicken rose significantly, while beef consumption fell sharply. In contrast, the intake of lamb and fish remained relatively low and stable throughout the period."

Type 1: Line Graphs (Dynamic Data)

Use: Shows changes over time. **Language Focus:** Verbs of movement (trends) and adverbs/adjectives to describe the change.



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Language for Trends: Verbs

Upward ↑

- rose
- increased
- grew
- climbed
- rocketed (dramatic)
- surged (dramatic)

Downward ↓

- fell
- decreased
- dropped
- declined
- plummeted (dramatic)
- plunged (dramatic)

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Language for Trends: Nouns

You can also use: "There was a..."

Upward ↑

- a rise
- an increase
- growth
- a climb
- a surge

Downward ↓

- a fall
- a decrease
- a drop
- a decline
- a plunge

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Language: Degree of Change

Describe *how* the trend happened.

Adjectives (a ... increase)

- dramatic
- sharp
- significant
- steady
- gradual
- slight
- minimal

Adverbs (increased ...-ly)

- dramatically
- sharply
- significantly
- steadily
- gradually
- slightly
- minimally

Examples:

- "Sales increased *sharply*."
- "There was a *sharp increase* in sales."

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Language: Stability & Fluctuation

What if there is no clear trend?

Verbs

- **remained stable / stayed the same** (at...)
- **levelled off** (at...) (stopped rising/falling)
- **fluctuated** (around...) (went up and down)
- **peaked** (at...) (reached its highest point)
- **bottomed out** (at...) (reached its lowest point)

Examples:

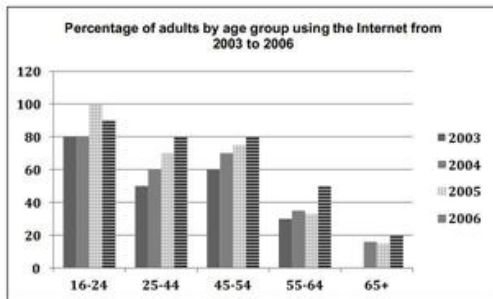
- "The price of fish *remained stable* at around \$50."
- "Sales *fluctuated* wildly between 200 and 250 units."
- "Chicken consumption *peaked* in 2004."

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Type 2: Bar Charts (Static/Dynamic)

Use: Comparing different categories or groups. Can also show change over time (grouped bar chart). **Language Focus:** Comparatives and Superlatives.

1. The chart below shows the percentage of adults of different age groups in the UK who used the Internet everyday from 2003-2006. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant.



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Language: Comparison

Superlatives (The most / least)

- "The **highest** percentage of users was in the 16-24 age group."
- "The **lowest** figure was for the 65+ category."
- "The **most popular** mode of transport was the car."
- "The **least common** was the bicycle."

Comparatives (...than / as...as)

- "Group A was **higher than** Group B."
- "More men **than** women attended."
- "This figure was **twice as high as** the figure for..."
- "This was **three times lower than**..."

Useful Phrases: ...followed by..., ...respectively.

- "Cars were the most popular (45%), **followed by** buses (30%)."
- "The figures for A and B were 20% and 25%, **respectively**."

Type 3: Pie Charts (Static)

Use: Showing proportions, percentages, or parts of a whole (*must* add up to 100%). Often come in pairs to compare two times/groups. **Language**

Focus: Percentages, fractions, and proportions.

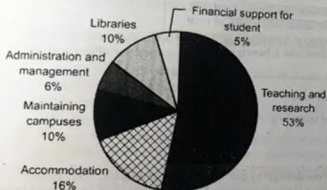
Writing Task 1

You should spend 20 minutes on this task.

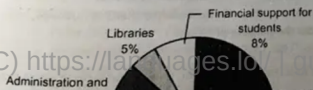
The charts below show the proportion of income spent on different areas by one university, in 2005 and 2015. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

Proportion of income spent - 2005



Proportion of income spent - 2015



Language: Proportions

Percentages & Fractions

- 75% = three-quarters / three-fourths
- 50% = half 66% = two-thirds
- 25% = a quarter 33% = one-third / a third
- 10% = a tenth 20% = a fifth
- ~48% = just under half / nearly half
- ~30% = approximately a third

Useful Verbs

- "... **accounted for** 40%."
- "... **made up** 30%."
- "... **constituted** the largest proportion."
- "The smallest **segment** / **slice** / **portion** was..."

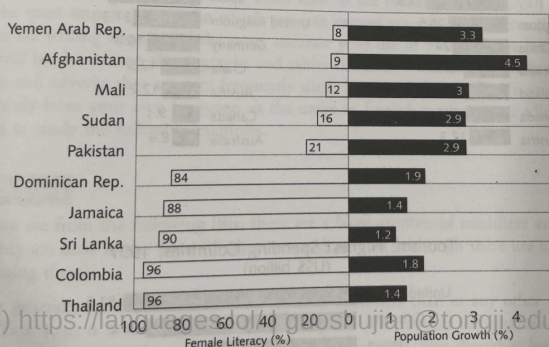
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Type 4: Tables (Static)

Use: Presenting a lot of data in categories (rows and columns). **Task:** Find the key information! Do **not** report every number. Look for the highest, lowest, and main comparisons. **Language Focus:** Comparison language (like bar charts).

The graph below shows the rate of women's literacy and population growth in selected countries from 1998 to 2000.

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



Language: Tables

Use the same language as Bar Charts (Comparatives/Superlatives).

Example Sentences

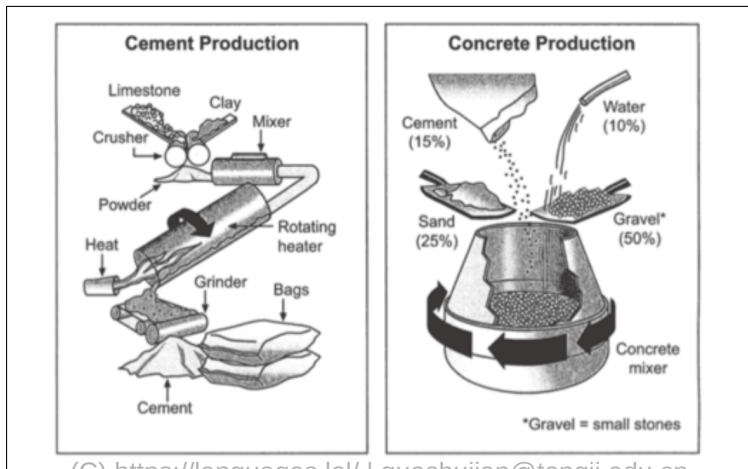
- "Regarding X, Country A had the highest figure, at 500."
- "In contrast, Country B had the lowest, with only 100."
- "The figure for Country C was significantly higher than for Country D (300 compared to 150)."
- "Looking at Y, a different pattern emerged."
- "All countries saw an increase in Z, with the most significant growth occurring in..."

Type 5: Process Diagrams

Use: Showing the stages of a process (e.g., manufacturing, life cycle).

Task: Describe each stage sequentially, from beginning to end.

Language Focus: Sequencers and the Passive Voice.



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Language: Process Diagrams

The Passive Voice (be + past participle)

The object of the action becomes the subject.

- Active: "A machine *crushes* the rocks."
- Passive: "The rocks *are crushed* by a machine."
- Active: "They *heat* the mixture."
- Passive: "The mixture *is heated*."

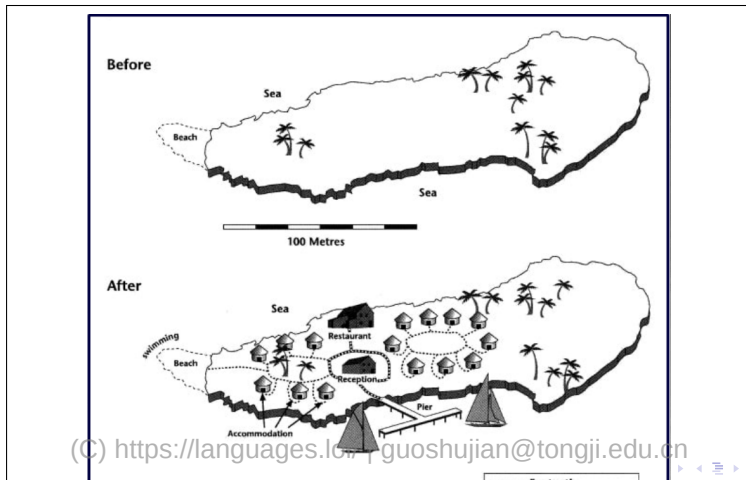
Sequencers (Linking Words)

- **First, / To begin with, / In the first stage,**
- **Next, / Then, / After that,**
- **Following this, / Subsequently,**
- **Once...** (e.g., "Once the mixture has been cooled,...")
- **Finally, / In the final stage,**

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Type 6: Maps

Use: Showing changes to a location over time (e.g., "before" and "after" a development). **Task:** Describe the main changes (new buildings, removed features, changes in land use). **Language Focus:** Location prepositions and verbs of change.



Language: Maps

Language of Location

- in the north / south / east / west
- on the north side of the river
- in the top-right corner
- to the left / to the right
- next to / beside / near / adjacent to

Verbs of Change (Often Passive)

- "The forest **was cut down**..."
- "...and **was replaced by** a shopping mall."
- "A new harbor **was constructed**."
- "The school **was expanded / enlarged**."
- "The old factory **was demolished / knocked down**."
- "The houses **were converted into** shops."

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Common Mistakes to Avoid

Do NOT do these!

- **Giving your opinion.** (e.g., "I think this is a good trend.")
- **Describing every single data point.** (Be selective!)
- **Writing less than 150 words.** (You will lose marks.)
- **Forgetting the Overview.** (This is critical for Task Achievement.)
- **Copying the prompt word-for-word.** (You must paraphrase.)
- **Using bullet points.** (Write in full sentences and paragraphs.)

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Final Tips Checklist

- **Plan (2-3 mins):** Read the chart. Paraphrase the prompt (Introduction). Find 2-3 main features (Overview).
- **Write (15 mins):** Write your 4 paragraphs. Support your Body Paragraphs with specific data.
- **Check (2-3 mins):** Check for spelling, grammar, and word count. Did you answer the question?
- **Vocabulary:** Learn the vocabulary for trends, comparisons, and processes.
- **Grammar:** Practice complex sentences (e.g., using "while", "whereas", "although") and the passive voice.
- **Practice!:** There is no substitute for practicing full timed essays.

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Questions?

Thank you

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