

IELTS Writing: Part 1

Graphs

If the topic is about an uncountable noun, like *money*, you should use *how much* or *the amount of*.

*The graph shows information about **how much money** was earned by three bakeries in London, over a decade between 2000 and 2010.*

*The graph highlights data about **the amount of money** which was earned by three bakeries in London, over a ten-year period between 2000 and 2010.*

In paragraph 2 of your Task 1 answer, you need to write a general overview of the main trends and most important information in the graph. Don't write any numbers or percentages in this paragraph.

To take your Task 1 essay to the next level, try to comment on the data, rather than just give a list of numbers. Add one or two comments to show that you understand and can interpret the graph. Here are some ways you can do this.

- Compare the different parts of the graph, using a relative clause:

*The income of Lovely Loaves fell significantly to around £40,000 in 2008, **which meant that it earned far less than the other bakeries.***

- Comment on the peak:

*There was a considerable rise in the takings of Robbie's Bakery in the last two years to £105,000, **this figure being the peak level of income during the whole period.***

- Add an extra verb to give emphasis:

*The income of Robbie's Bakery rose sharply in 2008, **rocketing to just under £100,000.***

- Add a superlative:

*Lovely Loaves earned just over £80,000 in 2000. **This meant that it had the highest income of the three bakeries in that year.***

- Group data into a period of time:

*There was a significant fluctuation in the income of Lovely Loaves **in the first half of the decade.***

- 1 Put the past simple of these verbs in the correct column of the table below. Use a dictionary to help you if necessary.

~~decline~~ decrease double drop fall go down go up grow halve improve
increase jump plummet plunge rise rocket shoot up soar surge

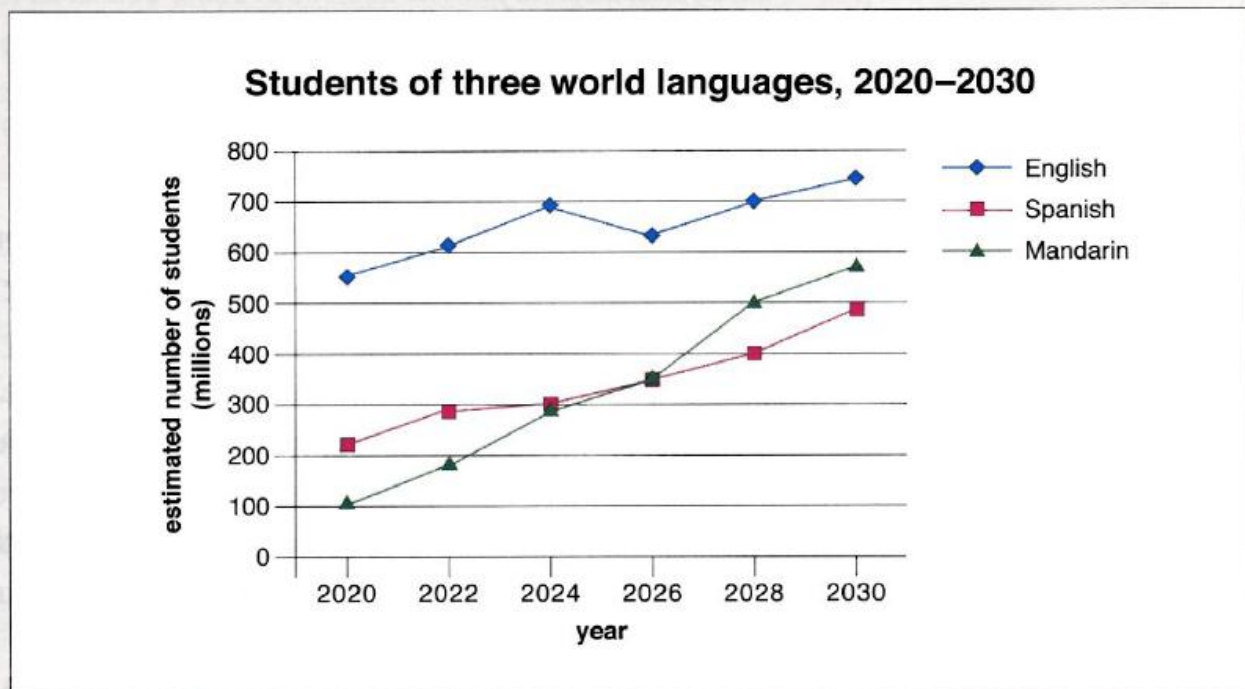
verbs to describe increases	verbs to describe decreases	verbs to describe big increases	verbs to describe big decreases
	declined		

Sometimes in the exam you can be asked to write about a graph with a future trend. You should write your answer in the same way as before, but instead of using the past simple, change the grammar and use future tenses.

- 1 Look at this essay question and discuss how to write an answer to it.

The graph below shows predictions about the number of people who will study three major world languages between 2020 and 2030.

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



Often in Task 1 you will be asked to write about the results of a survey or questionnaire.

Listed below are some useful ways to write about the results of a survey.
Rewrite the phrases in *italic* in the correct order.

- 1 Forty-five people *prefer / said / they ...* *said they prefer*
- 2 Just 10% of the *said / people / asked / who / were ...*
- 3 More than 30% of the people *completed / said / the / survey / who ...*
- 4 Over half of the *said / respondents ...*
- 5 Around a third of the *the / in / participants / said / questionnaire ...*

1 This newspaper article contains useful vocabulary for giving your writing more range and variety, particularly in Task 1. Read it and pick out some useful language.

Fears increase among environmentalists as car travel experiences another boom

Latest transport statistics reveal Europeans are using their cars more than ever – despite growing economic pressures and the increasing threat of global warming. Journeys by car now make up more than 40% of all travel within the European Union, making this the highest rate on record by some distance.

The Transport Agency's annual report, which includes data on a range of transport issues, shows that the percentage of trips made by car has now exceeded the previous high of 37% in 2005. While the overall frequency of car travel has shown a marginal decline, from an average of 6.4 trips per week down to 6.2, environmentalists are sure to be paying close attention to how the government reacts to the report.

The increased proportion of travel by Europe's car users is even more concerning, given the fact that public-transport use has dropped off substantially in the last five years.

A glance at bus travel, for instance, shows that use of this mode of transport has almost halved over the same period, dropping from 28% of the overall share in 2005 to just 15% today.



Meanwhile, the use of the underground has remained fairly constant over the last five years, fluctuating between 20% and 23% of the overall share of travel in Europe.

Similarly, train travel has also shown no major changes, and took up 18% of the share in 2010 as opposed to 17% the previous year, a slight increase.

Representatives of the European Union's own transport committee are expected to meet later this month in Stuttgart to discuss the findings of the report.

Processes

The majority of Task 1 questions in the IELTS exam are either a graph with trends or a graph with comparatives. However, there are two other possible types of questions:

- describing a process (for example, how to produce chocolate)
- describing two maps (often of a city in two time periods)

When you write about processes, use an active verb for:

- natural processes: *The sun **shines**, and the plants **grow**.*

Use a passive for:

- processes where who does the action is not important: *The tea leaves **are picked**.*
- the stages of producing something: *The tea **is dried**, and then **packed** into boxes.*

When you write about a process, you need to join the stages together in different ways, to make your answer more interesting.

1 Write these linking words and phrases in the correct column of the table below according to their meaning.

~~Then~~ First of all Subsequently The first step is that Finally After that
At this point The next step is that Following this To begin with
The following step is that Initially The last step is and then after which

Next ...	The first stage is ...	The last stage is ...
Then		

Maps

This type of question often shows you **a plan of a city in two time periods**, and you have to describe the main changes between the two periods. The most common time periods are between:

- a time in the past (e.g. 2000) and now;
- two times in the past (e.g. 2000 and 2010).

verb	noun	verb	noun
demolish	1 <i>demolition</i>	cut down	11
construct	2 <i>construction</i>	transform	12
build	3	industrialize	13
open	4	erect	14
knock down	5	modernize	15
expand	6	urbanize	16
convert	7	redevelop	17
introduce	8	pedestrianize	18
replace	9	enlarge	19
extend	10	disappear	20

Useful language

Starting your answer / Introducing a key point

The graph/chart/table/diagram gives/provides/highlights information about / on / regarding / with regard to ...

The graph/chart/table/diagram indicates that / provides a breakdown of ...

The diagram illustrates ...

According to the graph/chart/table/diagram, ...

A closer / more detailed look at X reveals ...

Comparing and contrasting

while / on the other hand / however

although

similarly / in contrast / in comparison / unlike ...

the next most significant/important/marked

twice/three times as many

double / three times the number

Describing trends

(to experience) a(n) increase/decrease/rise/fall/drop in/o

to increase/decrease/rise/fall/drop by/from ... to

to fluctuate

to undergo a change

to remain stable/steady

to stagnate

to dip

to peak

to increase twofold/threefold

to surge

a less/more marked increase/decrease, etc. (occurred / took place)

less/more significant / steady / especially strong growth

a parallel rise/fall

to expect/ predict / forecast

Describing figures

just over/under

a little below/above

slightly more/less than

approximately

not nearly as high/low as

to widen/narrow (e.g. a gap/difference)

Describing amount/extent/categories

a high/low level/incidence of

a large/small quantity of

one aspect/type of

a great/small proportion of

a slow/fast rate (of growth)

to a large/great extent

Summarising the stages in a diagram

after that / following that

before / prior to

once

as

meanwhile

over time / gradually

finally/lastly/eventually

Introducing the overview

Overall / Thus / Clearly / In summary / To summarise

Line graphs

The verbs in the box on the right can all be used to describe changes commonly represented on line graphs. Use your dictionary to look up the meanings of the verbs and then answer the following questions:

plummet	increase
peak	soar
rocket	fluctuate
level out	drop
decrease	decline
rise	fall

- Which 5 verbs mean go up?
- Of these, which 3 mean go up suddenly/a lot?
- Which 5 verbs mean go down?
- Which verb means reach its highest level?
- Which verb means stay the same?
- Which verb means go up and down?

EXERCISE 2

Changes can also be described in more detail by modifying a verb with an adverb. Using a verb from the box on the left, and an adverb from the box on the right, make sentences describing the changes represented on the line graphs on page S26 for the years or months shown. The first one has been done for you as an example.

increase	fall
decrease	rise
decline	drop

slightly	slowly	sharply
rapidly	steadily	gradually
moderately	dramatically	

- 1990 – 1992
Sales increased/rose dramatically/sharply.
- 1992 – 1994
- 1994 – 1997
- 1997 – 1999
- July – August 2000
- November – December 2000

Now put the expressions from the box on the left into the table on the right, from the greatest amount to the smallest. The first one has been done for you as an example.

Look at the two tables below for other ways to express amounts:

well over
just under
almost/nearly
well under
exactly
just over

well over	<div> <div></div> <div>10 000</div> <div>half</div> </div>

APPROXIMATIONS	
approximately	:
around	10 000
about	half
roughly	3 times
more or less	:

COMPARISONS	
a little/slightly	:
far	more than
a lot	less than [+ uncountable noun]
much	fewer than [+ countable noun]
considerably	:
significantly	:

IELTS Writing: Part 2

Useful language

Giving your opinions / expressing attitude

In my view/opinion, ...

From my point of view, ...

(Personally,) I tend to think/believe/feel that ...

I would argue that / I tend to think that ...

I am not sure I agree with/that ...

I tend not to believe that ...

As far as I'm concerned, ...

Arguably / As a matter of fact / Interestingly /

Clearly / To a certain extent, ...

Introducing arguments

The main argument in favour of / against ...

It is (certainly) true that ...

It is (generally) believed/felt that ...

The general view is / has been that ...

Experts/Professionals would argue/say that ...

Presenting reasons/examples

One of the main reasons why ...

The main reason why ...

There are a number of reasons why/for ...

For this reason, ...

Presenting a counter argument

Having said that / made this point / these points, ...

Despite / In spite of this, ...

Expressing purpose

with the aim of / in order to / so as to

Expressing cause and effect

due to / otherwise

as a result/consequence / with the result that / resulting in

Emphasising

What we/people/governments need to / should do is ...

All that X needs to / should do is ...

It is X that ...

Drawing a conclusion

Overall, ... / All in all, ...

Ultimately, ... / In the end, ...

It is very important to make a good start to your essay. Writing a clear introduction gives you confidence in the exam and helps to make a good impression on the examiner. Many IELTS candidates panic because they do not know how to begin their essay. In this section, there is a formula which you can follow to help you respond to any advantages and disadvantages essay question quickly and clearly.

A good conclusion generally consists of:

- 1 a general, one-sentence summary
- 2 a focused summary of the main points – avoiding repetition of vocabulary
- 3 something new/your opinion

Good academic writers are careful that they don't make statements which are too general. This is important in a piece of academic writing.

We also use certain expressions to avoid making generalizations.

In many cases / the majority of cases, it is extremely difficult at first to integrate in a new society.

Generally speaking, moving abroad is a very difficult thing to do.

For many, the language barrier is a major problem. (= for a lot of people but not everyone)

In the examples above, has the writer used modal verbs to avoid generalizations?

Why? / Why not?

Before you write any IELTS essay, choose four or five common nouns connected with the topic. Look in a good dictionary and write down some useful collocations for each noun.

If you are writing about teaching, for example, you could look up *education, teaching, school, student* and *learning* and write down in your notebook:

secondary education, go into teaching, do well at school, a diligent student, learning by heart

Grammar for conclusions: *unless/otherwise*

These grammar structures are used to show what will happen if we do not start to solve the problem. Look at these examples:

Unless we can attract more talented young people into this kind of teaching, our children's education will start to suffer.

Action must be taken urgently, otherwise our societies will face even greater health problems in the future.

A good Task 2 essay has well-organized and well-developed paragraphs. Make sure that you support your main ideas, give examples and explain your points as much as you can.

Personally, I think ...	I am in favour of the idea of ...
In my view, ...	I am completely against the idea of (+ verb + <i>-ing</i>)
In my opinion, ...	I don't think that prison is a particularly good way to ...

Very often in IELTS essays, it is useful to explain *why* something is done.

- *Many people move from the countryside to big cities **in order to** find a better job.*
- *Instead of going to supermarkets for their food, a lot of people have their shopping delivered to their house, **so as to** save time.*
- *Many people prefer to work from home, **so that** they can avoid commuting to work every day.*

Opinion essays

Set yourself a strict 40-minute time limit. Stop when the time is up. If you haven't finished, think about what you could do to improve your timing. Consider these points:

- Have you spent too much time on the introduction, and not enough time on the body of the essay?
- Are the three paragraphs in the body of the essay more or less the same length?
- Did you spend too much time planning your essay before you started?
- Are you worrying too much about making small mistakes when you write?

Many IELTS candidates often lose marks in the exam because they don't check their writing after they finish. Make sure you take two or three minutes to read through each essay, and check it for errors. Remember the examiner is looking at four things: **grammar, vocabulary, organization and structure** and **ideas**.