

The Writing module

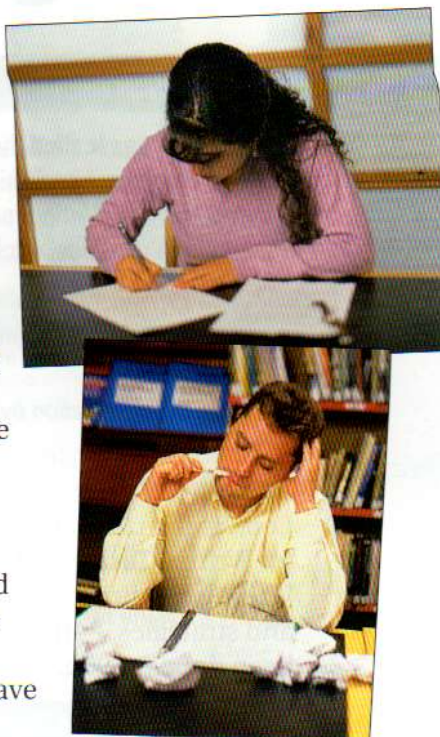
As a student at college or university, you will have to produce a lot of written material. As someone who may soon be living or working in a country where English is widely used, an ability to communicate effectively in writing will also be essential. Some writing may be in the form of letters, emails, short essays or reports. Other pieces of writing will be longer and will require considerable planning and attention to detail.

It will therefore be important for you to be able to express yourself clearly, write in a variety of styles and organise your ideas carefully. You will also need to be fairly accurate in your writing, so that your message is not obscured by grammatical errors.

The IELTS Writing modules test your ability to produce two quite different pieces of writing in a fairly short period of time. Before applying to sit the test, you need to decide whether to take the Academic or the General Training module. Each module is divided into two parts and you have only one hour to complete both pieces of writing.

In both Academic and General Training modules, Task 2 is longer than Task 1, and worth more marks. You are therefore advised to spend approximately 40 minutes on Task 2 and 20 minutes on Task 1.

The Writing examiners mark your work on a scale of 1–9 in four areas: content, organisation, vocabulary and grammar (see pages 92 and 93). This book explains what these terms mean and how they are applied in the Writing test.



Academic Writing Task 1

In the first part, you are given a task based on some graphic or pictorial information. You are expected to write a summary of the information provided, in at least 150 words.

Academic Writing Task 2

The second task is more demanding. You are expected to produce a written argument on a given topic and to organise your answer clearly, giving some examples to support your points. You have to write at least 250 words.

General Training Writing Task 1

In the first part, you always have to write a letter based on a situation described to you in the task. You are expected to write a letter of at least 150 words in an appropriate style.

General Training Writing Task 2

Task 2 is an essay based on a given topic. You should organise your answer clearly, giving some examples to support your points. You have to write at least 250 words.

If you are studying for the General Training module, you should begin with Writing Units 5 and 6. Then go on to Units 7–10 for Task 2.

Writing

IELTS Writing Task 1

Assessment criteria

There are four areas (called the *assessment criteria*) which the examiner will focus on when marking **Task 1** of the Academic Writing test. These same four areas are also used to assess the General Training Writing module, even though **Task 1** in General Training and Academic are different. In both modules, each of the four areas is worth a quarter of the total marks for **Task 1**.

In Academic Writing **Task 1**, the diagrams, charts, graphs or tables are always introduced on the question paper. You are then instructed to:

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

- 1 Look at the table and the box below. The table shows the four assessment criteria for Writing **Task 1** and the box shows a list of skills and strategies Academic Writing candidates must use in order to get a good mark. Match each of the skills and strategies, **A–R**, to one of the four assessment criteria. The first two have been done for you.

Assessment criteria	Skills and strategies
Content	
Organisation	A
Vocabulary	B
Grammar	

Skills and strategies

- A Use linkers appropriately
- B Choose the right words
- C Use the correct punctuation
- D Choose words that go well together
- E Include data to support points
- F Use the right tense and voice
- G Use paragraphs appropriately
- H Provide an overview of the information
- I Use words in the correct form
- J Use complex sentences
- K Use reference words to avoid repetition
- L Use the right prepositions
- M Spell words correctly
- N Select the most important information
- O Use comparative structures correctly
- P Use precise words and expressions
- Q Write at least 150 words
- R Present information in a logical order

- 2 Work with a partner. Together, discuss these questions.
- a What do you think are the most important skills for a good writer to have?
 - b Which of the four criteria do you find most difficult when writing in English?
- General Training Writing Task 1 is dealt with in Writing Units 5 and 6.
- Exercises to help you improve your writing in these areas can also be found in the Workbook.

IELTS Writing Task 2

Assessment criteria

The instructions for Academic and General Training **Task 2** are the same. You have to write a discursive essay of at least 250 words. There may be more than one part to the task. As in **Task 1**, there are four equally weighted criteria and each one has up to nine bands. However, the skills and strategies for *content* are different in **Task 2**.

Assessment criteria	Skills and strategies	What you must not do
Content	Show a clear position or clear, balanced views	Write less than 250 words
	Present sufficient main ideas	Use bullet points or note form
	Add support to main ideas	Only address half the task
	Introduce and conclude the topic	Give irrelevant answers

- Under *Organisation*, more emphasis is placed on paragraphing in **Task 2** than in **Task 1**.

You cannot score above Band 5 if you do not use any paragraphs.

You cannot score above Band 6 if your paragraphs do not have a clear central topic.

Otherwise, the criteria for *Organisation*, *Grammar* and *Vocabulary* are the same as **Task 1**.

- 3 Work with a partner. Together, see which of the skills and strategies (A–R on page 92) you can add to the table below from your work on **Task 1**.

Assessment criteria	Skills and strategies
Organisation	Link main and supporting points well
Vocabulary	Use less common vocabulary
Grammar	Use a range of sentence types

- 4 Why do you think the marking criteria for content are different in **Task 2**?

Writing

1

Interpreting charts, tables, graphs and diagrams

- Why do I have to interpret graphic information in **Task 1**?

Being able to understand and describe graphic information is an important academic skill. You need to show that you can interpret this type of factual information clearly and accurately.

- What do I need to know?

You need to develop a good understanding of different types of visual data. Collect some examples of graphs, charts and diagrams to help you do this.

Interpreting visual information

Here are some examples of the main types of charts, tables, graphs and diagrams that you may get in IELTS Writing **Task 1**. Make sure you know how to interpret them.

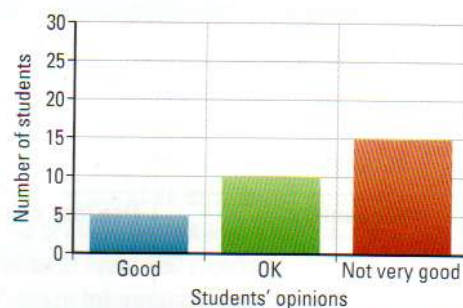
Bar charts

In a bar chart, the values are given along one axis and each bar represents what is being measured along the other axis. The bars can then be compared.

Test tip

You need to be able to describe the information accurately, using a range of different structures.

- Charts, tables and graphs present facts, which are objective and often involve measurement. For example, the bar chart on the right shows what a group of students think about a film they have just seen. We can interpret the information by saying that *half the students did not like the film* or by saying that *fifty per cent of the students did not like the film*. We can be even more specific and state that *fifteen out of thirty students did not like the film*.



- 1 Find out some factual information about your class members or your friends and family. How many of them enjoy taking part in the activities shown in the table on the right? Put a tick (✓) against each activity the people like doing and then write the total in the *Total* column.

Activity	Total
Skiing	
Cooking	
Playing badminton	
Shopping	
Painting	
Listening to music	

- 2 Use the information in the table to make a bar chart.
- 3 Make some factual statements about the data. Try to use the following structures.

NUMBER *Five out of ten*

PER CENT *Fifty per cent of* people enjoy ...

FRACTIONS *A third of the*

- 4 Now make some general observations using the same data. For example:

The most

The second most popular activity is ...

The third most

The least

The majority of

A large number of

Most people enjoy ...

Very few

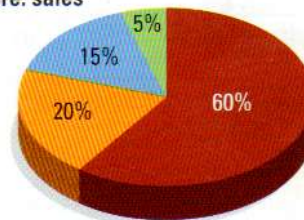
Hardly any

Pie charts

A pie chart is another way of presenting information but the segments are always percentages of a whole. Together they represent 100%.

- 5 Draw the bar chart on the previous page as a pie chart.
- 6 Read the *Test tip* and the *Improve your writing box*. Use the information in the pie chart of sales opposite to complete sentences 1–4 below.

Bob's Music Store: sales



Improve your writing

Make sure you know how to use *per cent* and *percentage*.

- *per cent* comes after a number.
- *percentage* comes after words like *the*, *a*, *this*, *that*, etc. and is often preceded by an adjective, e.g. *A high percentage of customers* ...
- Both go with the preposition *of*.

Common error!

Nearly 30 percentage of the books were new. **X**

When writing numbers or percentages, use words up to the number ten, e.g. *eight per cent*, and then figures, e.g. *12 per cent*. However, always write a number at the beginning of a sentence in words, e.g. *Twelve per cent* ...

Test tip

You must get the facts right or you will lose marks.

- 1 According to the chart, _____ of the shop's sales are DVDs.
- 2 CDs account for a much smaller _____ of sales.
- 3 While PC games account for _____ of the store's sales, the _____ of CDs sold is only 15.
- 4 Posters represent the _____ of goods sold.

Writing 1

Test tip

Some charts have an 'other' category. 'Other' means 'other similar items' not mentioned on the chart.

- 7 Draw a pie chart to show roughly what percentage of time you spend on the following activities in an average week: *watching TV, working, studying, sleeping, using the Internet, doing sport, doing 'other' activities.*
- 8 Swap charts with a partner and look at what he or she does in an average week. Write some sentences that describe your partner's chart.

Tables

Tables present information about different categories. Sometimes tables can be turned into charts but sometimes the categories are too different to do this.

- 9 A number of secondary schools in three countries conducted a survey about how their students travel to school. Here are the results.

Method of travel by %				
		Britain	Australia	Singapore
	Walking	19	15	25
	Car	65	65	10
	Public transport	16	20	65

Work with a partner. Together, discuss the similarities and differences in the table and then say whether you could turn this table into a chart.

- 10 The sentences below describe the facts in the table in exercise 9. Complete the sentences using the information in the table and the words in the box.

per cent on foot percentage figures most/least common popular

Test tip

The word *figure(s)* can be used as a substitute for numbers and percentages and so it is a useful reference word for avoiding repetition.

- 1 The car is the means of transport for British and Australian schoolchildren, with of students in both countries getting to school in this way.
- 2 In contrast, only of Singaporean students use cars, and this is the method of transport there.
- 3 There are considerable differences in the for public transport.
- 4 A large of students in Singapore use public transport.
- 5 In Britain and Australia figures for public transport are lower, being and respectively.
- 6 Less than of students walk to school in Britain and Australia.
- 7 For Singaporeans, walking is the second option, with a quarter of the students travelling to school
- 11 Guess what the figures might be for your own country and add them to the table in exercise 9. Write some sentences comparing the figures with another country.

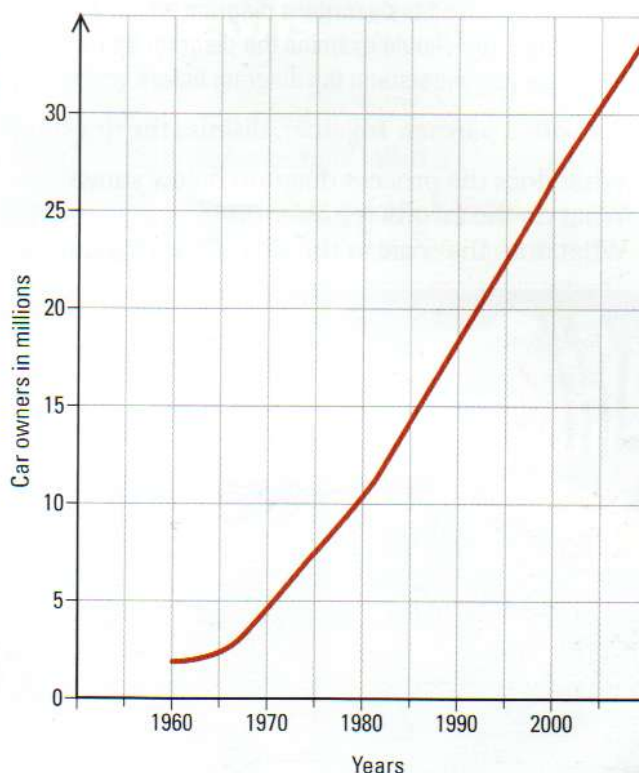
Line graphs

Line graphs show how information or data change over time. They highlight trends.

- The line graph on the right shows the changing trend in the level of car ownership in Britain. It looks very simple but it may not be.

12 Work with a partner. Together, discuss the questions.

- a** Is the graph about people or vehicles?
- b** What do the numbers along the horizontal axis represent?
- c** What do the numbers on the vertical axis represent?



Test tip

You must make sure you understand what the two axes represent before you start writing. However, you do not need to describe the axes in your answer.

Test tip

Statements like: The number of cars has increased or Car ownership has increased from 2 to 20 are incomplete because they do not provide accurate descriptions of the data. Your description should tell the reader the exact figures, so that he or she can visualise the graph line.

Improve your writing

Use the present perfect tense when you are describing a trend that began in the past and is still continuing. Sentences like this may include *since*. For example:

Temperatures have risen worldwide since 2000.

Remember how to form the present perfect:

SUBJECT + *has/have* + PAST PARTICIPLE

- 13** Write a short, overall statement about car ownership in Britain.
- 14** Re-write your statement in two new sentences which include these words and phrases:
 - a** *since*
 - b** *over a ... period between 1960 and 2005*
- 15** Now re-write your two sentences, **a** and **b**, to include the number of car owners. You will have to re-organise your sentences to do this.

Diagrams

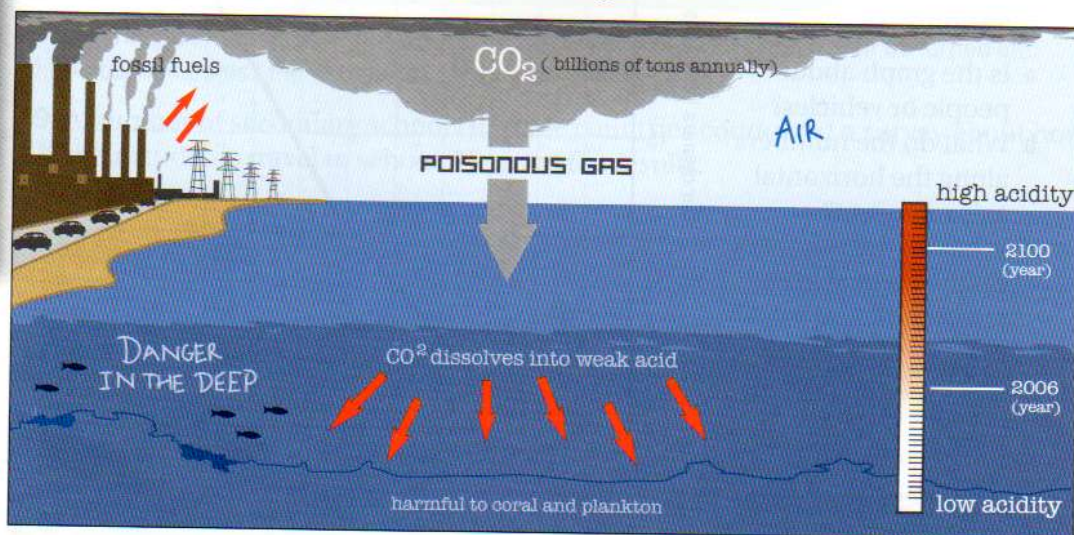
In **Task 1**, you will not always be asked to interpret factual information from a chart, table or graph. You may be asked to describe a diagram which illustrates a process or which shows how something works. You should examine the diagram and any information you can see carefully. You must make sure you understand the diagram before you write your answer.

16 Work with a partner. Together, discuss the questions.

- What does the process diagram below show?
- What do the arrows represent?
- What does the scale at the side of the diagram describe?

Test tip

The diagram labels often give you names and other words but you need to produce your own words, such as verbs, in the right tense and voice (active or passive).



17 Complete this short description of the diagram by first choosing the most suitable verb from the box for each gap and then putting it in the correct form.

reduce	pass	happen	rise	develop	burn	destroy
pollute	become	release	give	allow	attack	

This diagram shows how carbon dioxide 1 the world's oceans. Billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other toxic substances 2 into the air every year from the fossil fuels that 3 in our factories, homes and cars. These gases eventually 4 into the oceans and form a weak acid, which 5 plankton and the shells of marine creatures, causing serious damage.

Experts predict that the acid levels of the oceans 6 considerably between now and 2100. If this happens and the Earth's seas 7 too acidic, much of the coral and plankton that live there could 8 within a few decades.

Writing

2 Describing trends

- What should I think about before I start writing?
- What should I do first?
- What is a trend?

You need to ask yourself *What is the main purpose of this chart/table/graph? What is the overall trend?*

State what the chart, table or graph shows in your own words. Then consider how to organise the rest of your answer, which should include the most important features and the overall trend(s).

Trends are noticeable changes in a situation or in the way something usually behaves, e.g. downloading music from the Internet is now much more common than buying CDs.

Writing an overview

An overview is an overall summary of the information and is different from an introduction, which simply states what the diagram or chart shows. The examiner will expect to find an overview as part of your answer to **Task 1**.

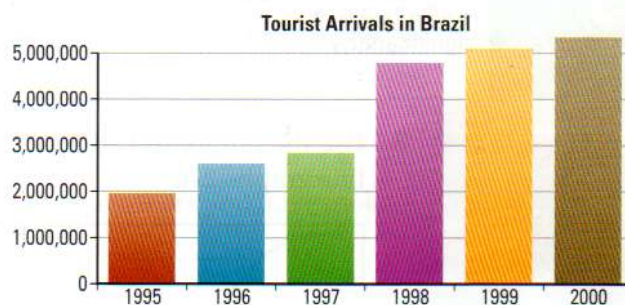
- 1 Look at the bar chart and say what information is being shown.

Here are two descriptions of the overall trend shown in the bar chart.

The number of tourists visiting Brazil rose.

The chart shows an increase in the number of tourists visiting Brazil.

- 2 Add *considerably* to the first sentence and *considerable* to the second sentence. What effect do these words have?
- 3 Re-write the two sentences about tourism in Brazil to include a reference to time and to the number of tourists in figures.
- 4 Look at the table below and say what information is being shown. Write two sentences which describe the information and provide an overview.



Total Number of Japanese Tourists Travelling Overseas						
2005	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of tourists	1,422,200	1,634,000	1,634,400	1,502,700	1,500,700	1,401,800
2006	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	
Number of tourists	1,343,600	1,398,700	1,577,400	1,280,000	1,385,000	

Test tip

When you write your introduction, avoid copying whole phrases from the question. The examiner may not include these words in the final word count. This means you may lose marks if your answer is less than 150 words.

Using appropriate vocabulary

The examiner will want to see that you know a range of words to describe and interpret visual information and that you can make precise statements in your answer using adjectives, adverbs and phrases.

5 Look at these words and phrases which will help you describe trends.

						
Nouns	a rise an increase a surge a growth	a fall a drop a decline a dip	a peak	a fluctuation a variation	a period of stability	a plateau plateaux
Verbs	to rise to increase to surge to grow	to fall to drop to decline to dip	to peak	to fluctuate to vary	to stabilise	to plateau
Phrases	to show an upward trend	to show a downward trend to hit the lowest point to hit a trough	to reach a peak	to show some fluctuation/ variation	to remain stable/ constant	to reach a plateau to level off to flatten out

Adjectives and adverbs	sharp(ly) dramatic(ally) significant(ly)	steady(ily)	relative(ly)	considerable(ably)	the second highest the third lowest	slight(ly) gentle(ly) a little	gradual(ly)
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Test tip

Practise using different verb and noun phrases to describe trends. Your ability to write a good Task 1 summary will improve as a result.

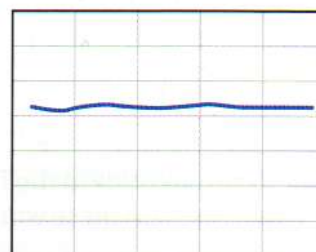
6 Use the nouns and adjectives from the table to help you describe the trends in line graphs 2-6.



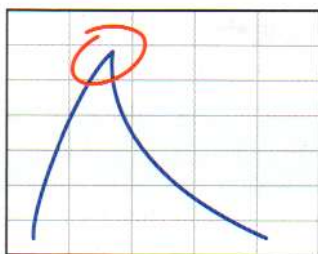
1 a sharp fall



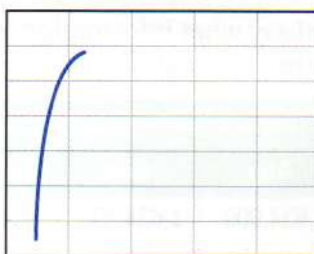
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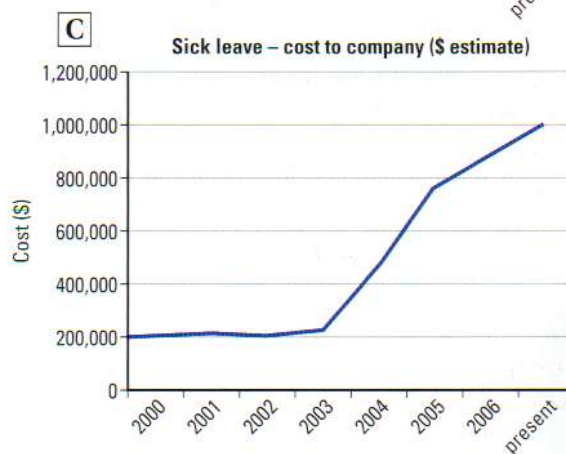
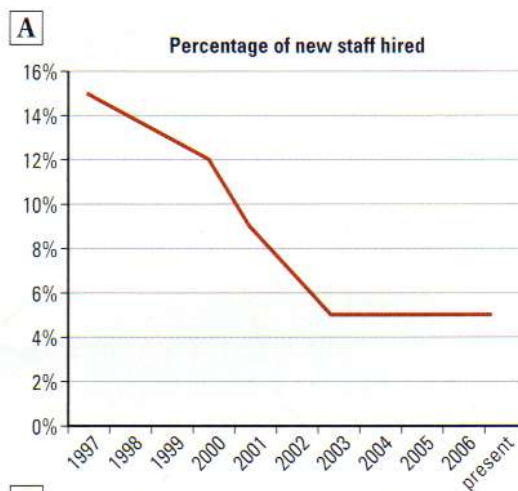
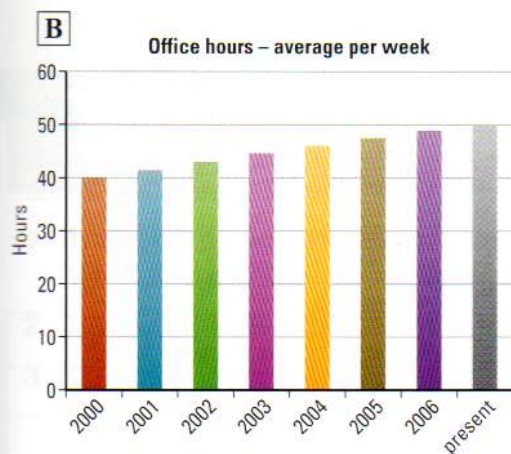
5



6

7 Describe each trend again, this time using the verbs and adverbs from exercise 5, e.g. 1 It falls sharply.

- 8 Look at A–C, which present different kinds of information about a large multinational company. Write three short paragraphs about the information. For each graph or chart, first write a sentence which describes what it shows. Then write another sentence which describes the overall trend you can see. Finally, write a sentence which includes some specific data.



- 9 Look at the graph below and answer the questions.
- What does the graph show?
 - How is the overall trend in this graph different from the others you have looked at in this unit?
 - What tense will you use to describe it?



- 10 Write four or five sentences about the trends you can see in the graph of HARRY'S annual sales of hamburgers. Try to include the words *stable*, *fewer*, *rise*, *sales*, *peak* and *drop*.
- 11 Write a general observation about the popularity of hamburgers over the year.

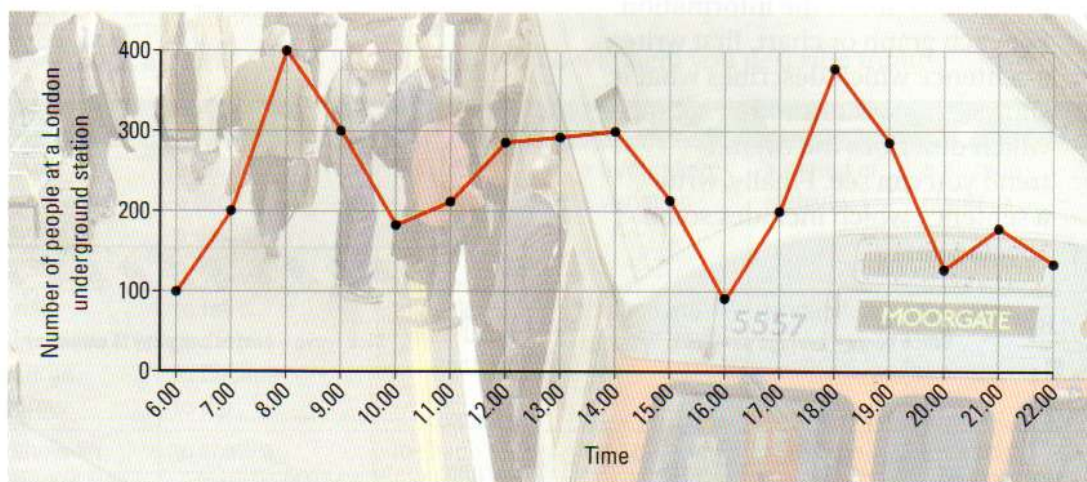
Test tip

The examiner will be checking to see whether you can describe the important features of the graph. You should not try to describe every detail of a graph. For example, if you write twelve sentences about annual sales of HARRY'S hamburgers – one for each month – your answer will be repetitive and more importantly it will NOT be describing the main trends.

IELTS Writing test practice

Picking out significant trends

- 12** State what is being shown in the graph below in your own words. Circle the most important trends.



- 13** Read a student's description of the graph and the advice on how to approach **Task 1**.

Test tip

There are no links between the points in this student's answer. If you do not link your sentences and ideas, you will lose marks.

At 6am the station had 100 people. At 8am there was a big increase to 400 people. Not many people went there at 10am. The same thing happened after 8pm. It declined a lot to 120 and 180 people at 9pm and 10pm respectively. Between 12 noon and 2pm the number of people was stabilised at 300.

How to approach the task

- State the purpose of the graph or chart.
- Provide an overview.
- Select the key trends or features.
- Illustrate these with figures.
- Make a simple, relevant rounding-off point – if appropriate.

- 14** Work with a partner. Together, discuss the description of the graph above. How successfully has the writer used the advice on how to approach **Task 1**?
- 15** ⌚ Take 20 minutes to write a better description of the graph in exercise 12, using the advice to help you. Then compare your answer with the model answer in the key.
- 16** Work with a partner and discuss which of the numbered and underlined parts of the model answer provide:
- a an introduction to the chart
 - b the key trends
 - c an overview of the trends
- 17** Look at the model answer in the key again and circle the words and phrases the writer uses to link the different points.

Writing

3 Summarising information

- What does *summarising* involve?
- How do I do this?

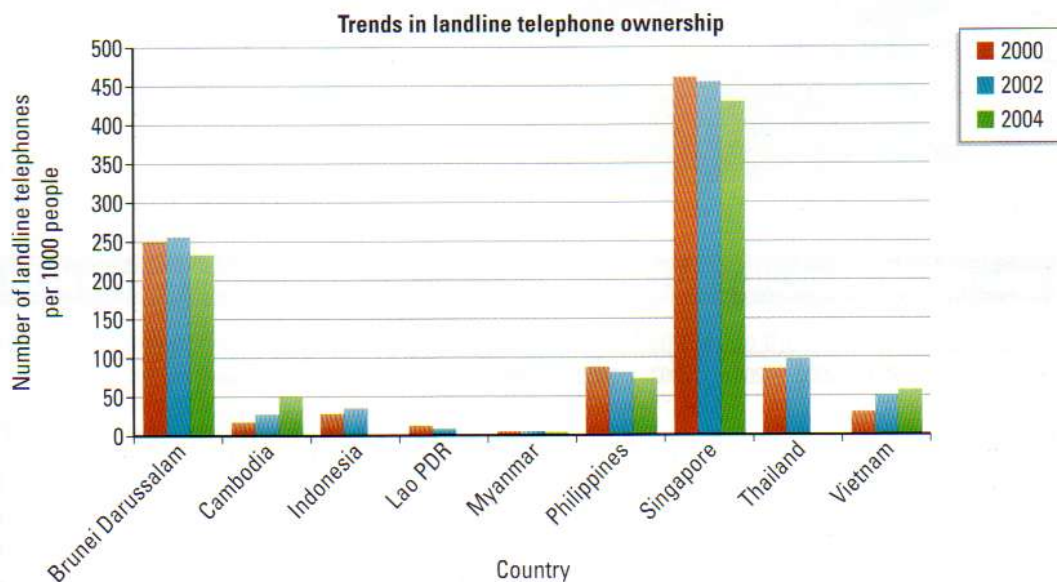
You need to show the examiner that you can select the main points and illustrate these with relevant details or data.

This means giving more attention to some parts of the graph, table, chart or diagram than to others.

Selecting main points

In **Task 1**, there may be a lot of information to describe in a limited number of words, so you cannot include every feature and all the data.

- 1 Work with a partner. Together, take two minutes to examine the chart below. What does the vertical axis represent?
- 2 Discuss what the chart shows and identify some important points.
- 3 Consider which tense you will use most for your answer.



Test tip

This chart does not provide information about population size. If you choose to include information in your answer that is not given in the task, you will not get extra marks. In fact, it may be considered irrelevant and you may be penalised if you make detailed comments about information that is not provided in the chart.

- 4 Follow the instructions **1–6** to write a description of the chart.
 - 1 Write one sentence which states what the chart shows.
 - 2 Write two sentences which give an overview of the chart.
 - 3 Write two sentences about Singapore.
 - 4 Write one sentence about Brunei Darussalam.
 - 5 Write one sentence about Cambodia and Vietnam.
 - 6 Conclude with a final sentence about the remaining countries.
- 5 Swap answers with a partner. Read your partner's description of the chart and compare it with the model answer in the key.

6 Now look at your partner's description and the model answer again and answer questions 1–6 for both. Did your partner

- 1 give the overall time period in the first sentence?
- 2 use a suitable verb and adverb to describe the trend in the second and third sentences?
- 3 provide some figures for Singapore?
- 4 use *fluctuate* with an appropriate figure for Brunei Darussalam?
- 5 note a contrast in the trends?
- 6 get the figures correct overall?

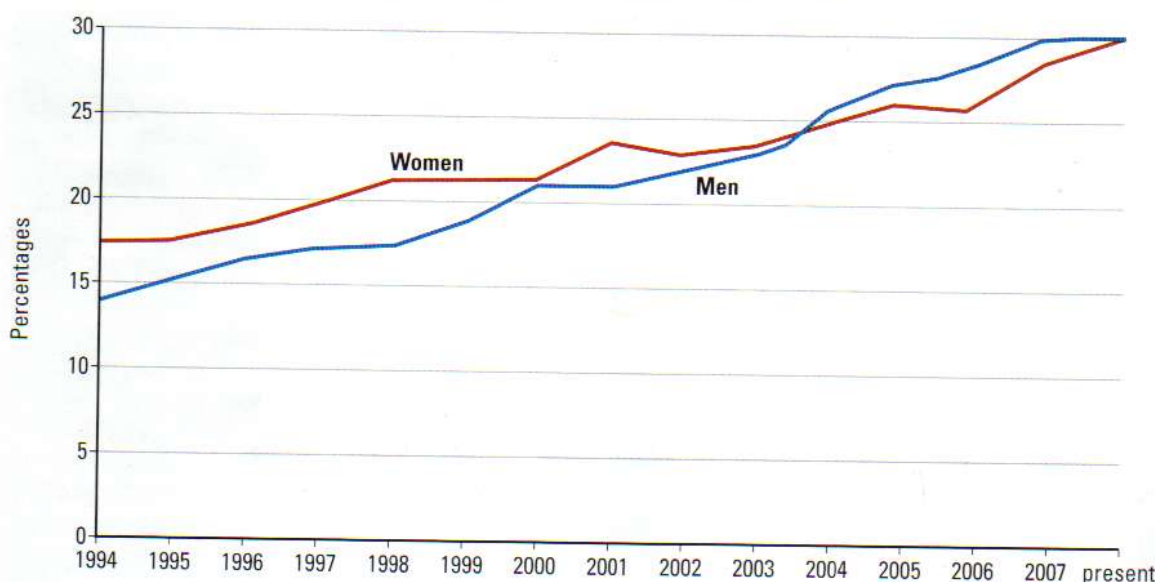
IELTS Writing test practice

Illustrating main points

You need to add some data to support the main points in your summary, otherwise you will lose marks.

7 Underline the data in the first paragraph of this summary, which introduces the graph and provides an overview.

Obesity prevalence among adults: by sex, England



The graph shows how obesity levels have increased in England since 1994. Clearly, figures have doubled over this period, reaching a current high of around 30 per cent for both male and female adults.
(34 words)

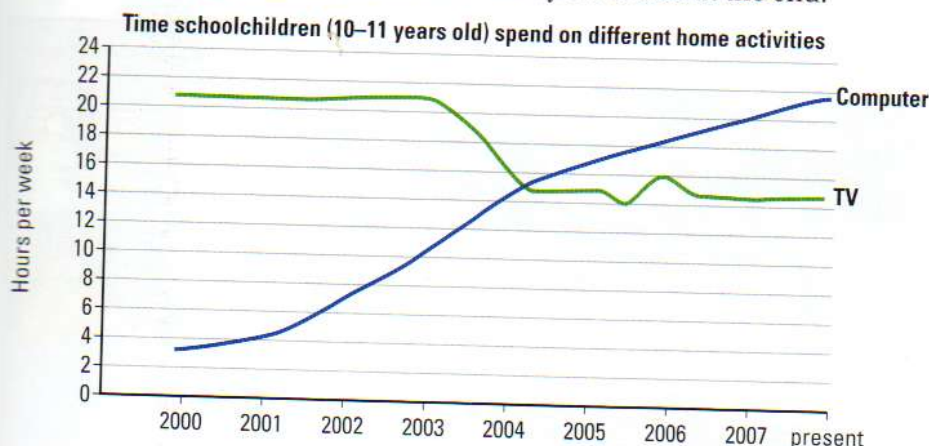
8 Use the information in the graph to complete this description of the trend for women.

Looking more closely at the trend for women, it can be seen that a steady increase took place between 1994 and 1998, with obesity levels rising by 1 to 21 per cent. This was followed by a 2 period of stability. Then, after the year 2000, levels rose again, reaching a peak of 3 in 2001. Since then, apart from a slight fluctuation, the percentage of obese women in England has increased significantly.
(77 words)

9 Draw two vertical lines on the graph to show how the writer divided up the overall trend for women.

10 Divide the male trend into three parts by drawing two more vertical lines on the graph. Then write a paragraph about the male pattern and provide an overview summarising the trends. Count the number of words in your paragraph.

- 11** Look at the graph below and then write a summary of the main trends, using some of the structures from the answers to exercise 10. Remember to say what it shows and include an overview. Count your words at the end.



IELTS Writing test practice

Highlighting the main stages of a process

Just as you select the main points of a chart, you need to summarise the main stages of a process, as they are shown in the diagram.

How to approach the task

- Look at the start and end of the process and consider what it shows overall.
- Divide the process into a number of logical stages.
- Think about how you could rephrase some of the labels.
- Decide on some verbs and tenses to use.
- Consider how you could round off your answer.

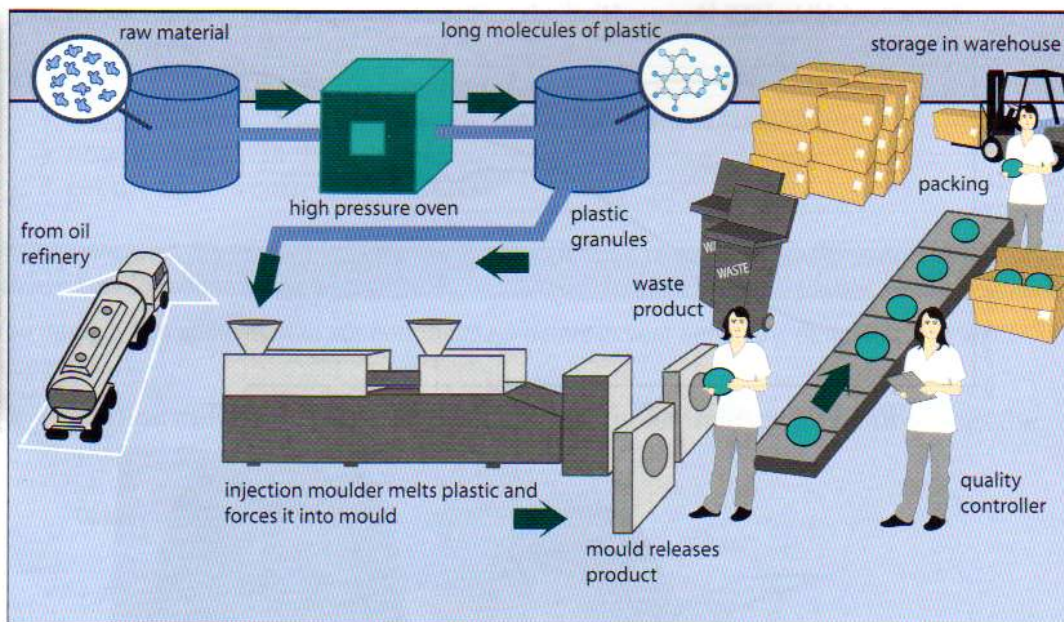
- 12** Work with a partner. Together, look at the task on the next page and then discuss these questions.

- a Can you rephrase the task introduction in your own words?
- b Which key words in the labels do you not need to rephrase?
- c Which words could you try to rephrase?
- d What other vocabulary do you know that would be useful to describe the equipment or process?
- e What linking words might you use?

The diagram below shows how raw materials are used to make plastic products.

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

Test tip
You will need to use the key words in the labels on the diagram to support the main points. However, you should use your own words and sentences whenever you can.



13 Complete this plan and then write a summary of the process shown in the diagram.

Test tip
Design your paragraph breaks around the main stages.

		Notes
Para 1	Introduction and overview of diagram	complex process / number of steps / equipment / people
Para 2	How process begins up to production of long molecules	
Para 3	From molecules to mould	
Para 4	What happens to finished product	

14 Swap your plan and your summary of the process with a partner. Read your partner's answers and then compare them with the model answer in the key. Does the model answer include any of your vocabulary or linking words from your answers to exercise 12?

Writing

4 Comparing and grouping information

- Why is it important to group and compare information?

Summarising charts always involves making comparisons. Some diagrams also require comparisons, particularly if you have to describe stages or have more than one piece of visual material. Part of the task of organising your answer involves deciding how to categorise or group the information you need to compare.

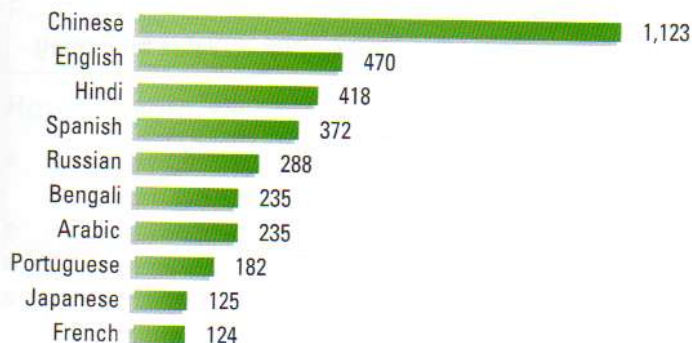
Comparing information

You need to make sure that you can form comparative and superlative adjectives and use expressions such as *more/less ... than; the same as ... ; as ... as; the second/third most; twice, three times*, etc. You may need to use these expressions in some long noun phrases, for example:

the most
the second/third most *popular tourist destination*
the least

- 1 Fill in the gaps 1–9 in the summary of the chart below and on the next page. For some of the gaps, there is a word in brackets to help you.

World languages with the highest numbers of first-language speakers
(millions of speakers)



According to the chart, Chinese is by far the 1 widely spoken first language, with 1,123 million speakers. This is more than 2 the number of speakers of any other language. English has the 3 (*high*) number of speakers, with a total of 4 , closely followed by Hindi, which is spoken by the 5 (*large*) number of people.

Further down the list, it is interesting that Bengali has 6
number of speakers 7 Arabic: 235 million.

Of the top ten languages in the chart, the 8 widely spoken is
French, with 124 million speakers, which is only slightly 9 than
Japanese, which has 125 million.

2 Change the noun phrases into comparative phrases, as in the example.

Example	fertility of land areas	the most fertile area	the second most fertile area	the least fertile area
1	frequency of grammatical errors			
2	height of smog levels			
3	density of populated areas			
4	significance of reasons for disease			
5	length of study periods			

- There are linkers that signal a comparison or contrast. The most useful ones are *while*, *whereas*, *although*, *however*, *similar(ly)*, *unlike*, *equally*, *both/neither*, *compared to*, *in contrast with*, *different (from)*, *the same (as)*.

3 Complete sentences 1–6, which are based on the table below, by using a comparative or superlative adjective, a comparative expression, or a linker in each gap.

	Rooms	Star rating	Distance from city centre	Value for money
Kendal Hotel	225	★★	1 km	✓
Premda Hotel	225	★★★★	2 km	✓✓
Cord Hotel	156	★★★★★	5 km	✓✓

Test tip
Using appropriate linkers is important, but don't start every sentence with one – exercise 3 is just for practice. Remember that words like *this*, *the*, *which* and *it* and comparative/superlative structures also link ideas.

- Compared to the Kendal Hotel, the Premda is value for money.
- Both the Premda and the Cord Hotel are good value for money.
- While the Cord Hotel has star rating, it is from the city centre.
- the Cord Hotel, the Kendal is close to the city centre. However, it has a star rating.
- Although the Kendal Hotel and the Premda Hotel have number of rooms, their star ratings are
- The Cord looks like hotel, even though it has rooms than the others.

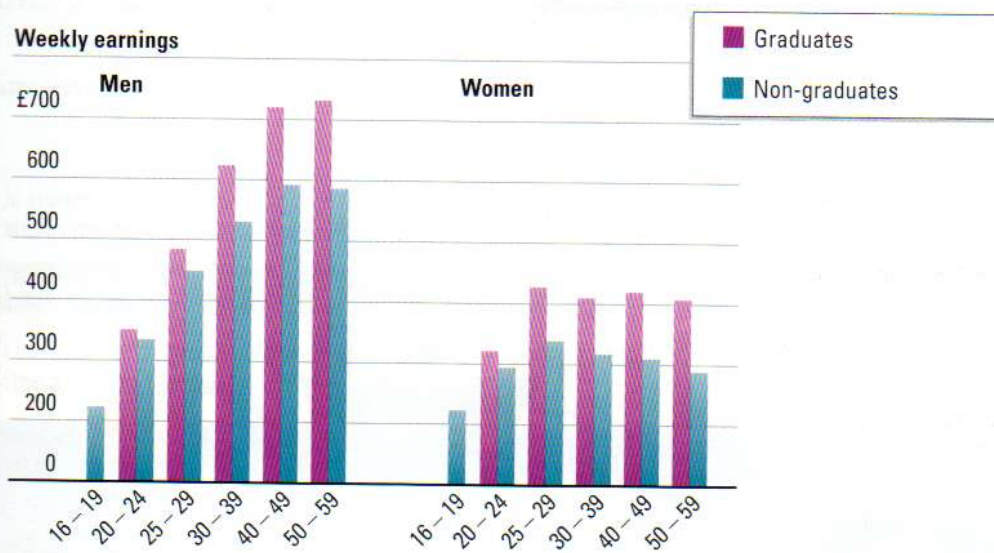
IELTS Writing test practice

Grouping information

When organising your answer, it may be necessary to group some of the information, particularly when there is a lot of data.

- 4 Work with a partner. Together, discuss what difficulties you may have in answering this **Task 1**.

The graphs below compare the average weekly earnings of male and female graduates and non-graduates.



- There are too many age groups for you to include all of the information from both charts in your answer. You will therefore have to group some of the information to make your answer easier to read and understand.
- 5 With your partner, work through the advice on how to approach the **Task 1** in exercise 4 and make some notes.

How to approach the task

- Consider what the graphs show and think about the vocabulary and tenses you will use to summarise them.
 - Decide on an overview.
 - Select three significant features of the graphs to write about.
 - Note some points about the earning power of male graduates by grouping the ages; for example, grouping 40-49 with 50-59.
 - Note some points about the female graduates by grouping the ages.
 - Think about a general observation summarising the main comparison(s).
- 6 ⌚ Take about 15 minutes to write about the information above. When you have finished, count the number of words you have used (there must be at least 150) and allow three minutes to correct any mistakes. Check that you have used all the data correctly.
- 7 Look at the model answer in the key and underline:
- the comparisons
 - any linkers that signal a comparison or contrast.

IELTS Writing test practice

Describing how something works

Take the same approach as you would with a process diagram and decide where to begin your description. Provide an opening sentence that summarises the overall function of the diagram.

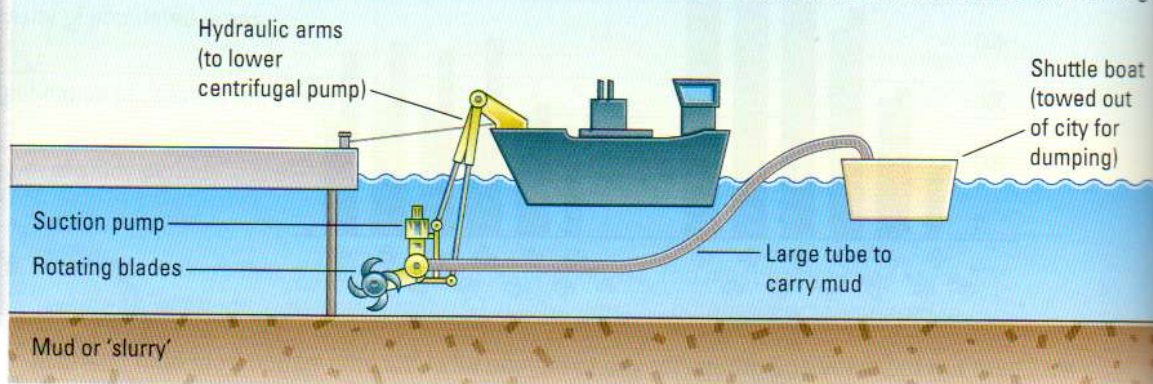
- 8 Work with a partner. Take turns to describe how the dredger works and discuss the table and how the information could be combined. What is the best way to begin writing this task? What information should your overview include?

The diagram below shows how a dredger can remove mud from the bottom of canals. The table compares features of the canal dredger with those of a coastal dredger.

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

Test tip

Never write your Task 1 answer in bullet points. You will lose marks if you do this. Always use continuous text and always use paragraphs to organise your points.

New technology plans to save Venice

	Canal dredger	Coastal dredger
Hull length	22 m	85 m
Hull breadth	6.69 m	14 m
Depth	1.87 m	35 m
Area of operation	Canal/lagoon	North Sea

How to approach the task

- List some of the verbs that you can use in your answer.
- Suggest some suitable linkers.
- Decide what tenses you will use.
- Consider how to group some of the information in the table.
- List some of the comparatives you could use.
- Consider how you could round off your answer.

- 9 ⌚ Take about 15 minutes to write an answer to this task. When you have finished, count the number of words you have used and allow three minutes to correct any mistakes.

- 10 Work with a partner. Together, compare your descriptions. Look particularly at the comparatives and linkers used in each answer. Then look at the model answer in the key and discuss how it has been organised and what each paragraph contains.

- What kind of writing will I have to do for **GT Task 1**?
- How will I know what to write about and how to organise my answer?

The instructions in the task will describe a situation and tell you exactly who to write to. This is followed by three clearly bulleted key points which help you organise the content of your letter. You need to write a total of 150 words.

1 Read this typical **GT Task 1** and answer the questions. Who is the letter to? What is the purpose of the letter? Parts of the task have been underlined to help you.

Write a letter to the Council. In your letter

-
- A cartoon illustration of a car accident scene. A silver car is shown with significant damage to its front end, including a crumpled hood and a shattered windshield. The car is positioned on a road, with a street lamp standing nearby. The scene is set against a blue, cloud-like background. The car is surrounded by a yellow glow, suggesting a bright light source or a fire. The overall style is that of a children's book illustration.

2 Which beginning and ending should you use in the letter to the Council?

Yours faithfully,

The purpose of the letter

When you are deciding what to include in your letter, you should keep the purpose of the letter in mind. You will lose marks if you do not make the purpose clear. In formal letters the purpose is usually stated in the opening sentence.

- 3 Underline the key words and phrases in this task and then say what the main purpose of the letter is.

You are applying for a job and need a letter of reference from someone who knew you when you were at school.

Write a letter to one of your old teachers asking for a reference. In your letter

- *say what job you have applied for*
- *explain why you want this job*
- *suggest what information the teacher should include*

Test tip

You should use your imagination to build on the situation outlined in the task. Try to make the best use of all the information provided.

- 4 Complete these notes to help you write the letter.

Decide on a 1 for the teacher.

Mention 2 since leaving school.

Describe the 3 and what it involves.

Give reasons for 4

Suggest some 5 to mention.

- 5 Work with a partner to complete the table below. Together, brainstorm ideas for three different sets of information you could use to answer this **GT Task 1**.

Since leaving school	Job applied for	Why I applied	What to mention

Test tip

If you fail to cover any of the three key points in the task, you will not score more than Band 4 for content.

- 6 Compare your ideas in groups.

- 7 Make a similar table of ideas for the letter to the local Council in exercise 1 on page 111.

Beginning your letter

You need to start your letter with something that is appropriate for the situation and that will capture the reader's attention. If it is a formal letter, you should mention the purpose in the opening paragraph. If it is an informal letter, you should start with a more general opening paragraph; for example *I hope you're well and ...* or *Sorry for not writing sooner but ...*

- 8 Look at these different ways of beginning a letter and say which of them are suitable for a formal letter and which for an informal one.
- 1 I am writing with regard to / in connection with ...
 - 2 I am writing in the hope that ...
 - 3 It was lovely to see you and your family last month ...
 - 4 I would like to express my concern about ...
 - 5 Apologies for not writing for so long, but I've been really busy ...
 - 6 I am a resident of ... and I would like to draw your attention to ...
 - 7 It was great to get your postcard ... and I'm thrilled to hear you are ...
 - 8 It's been a long time since we saw each other.
- 9 Write an opening paragraph for the letter in exercise 3 to one of your old teachers. Use your own words and remember to state the purpose of your letter clearly. Compare your finished paragraph with the model answer in the key.

Organising your points logically and clearly

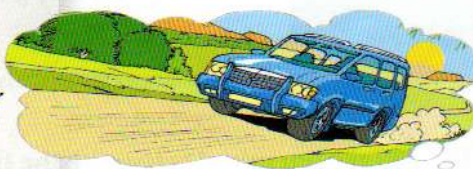
You can use the three key points to create the main part of your letter and each one can form the basis of a paragraph. Then you need to work out how to organise each paragraph.

- 10 Read this example of a **GT Task 1** and the notes which follow. Put the remaining points (1–9) in the order you think they should be mentioned in the letter (a–i).

Last year you went on a camping tour with your family. A friend has contacted you about the tour and asked you whether you would recommend it.

Write a letter to your friend about the trip. In your letter

- say where you went and how you travelled
- describe the place and the accommodation
- suggest why he/she should go on this holiday



Test tip

Although you must cover all three key points, you do not have to put them in the same order as they appear in the task instructions. The important thing is to cover all the points in a logical order.

1	flight to Darwin
2	amazing bird life
3	prices going up next season
4	Kakadu National Park
5	wilderness may change
6	by four-wheel drive vehicle
7	crocodiles in river
8	cabins with bunk beds
9	great fun

a	Kakadu National Park, Australia
b	flight to Darwin
c	by four-wheel drive vehicle
d	
e	
f	
g	
h	
i	

- 11 Work with a partner to create a table similar to the one in exercise 5. Together, brainstorm ideas for the camping tour task above, using your own experience or imagination.
- 12 ⌚ Take seven minutes to write the opening paragraph and then the second paragraph of your letter.

Explaining the situation

The introduction to the **GT Task 1** and the first one or two key points which follow always present you with a situation. Creating a bubble diagram can help you develop ideas so that you can set the scene clearly for your reader at the start of your letter.

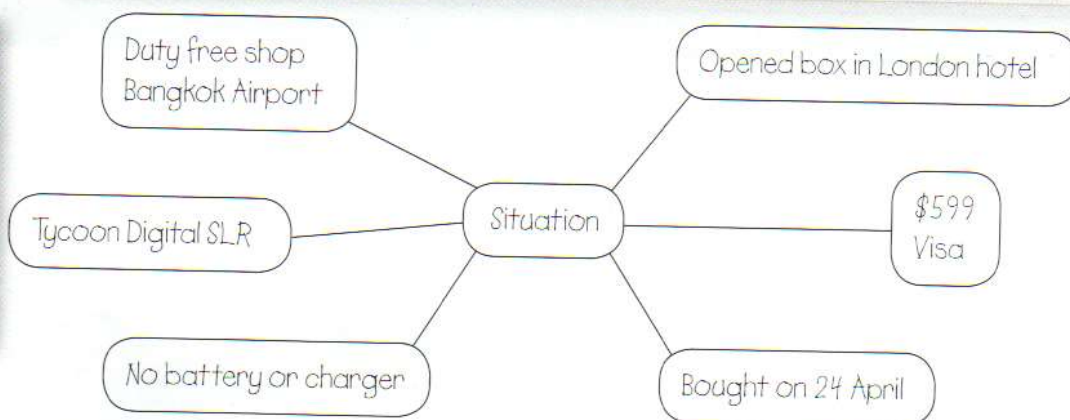
13 Read this task and look at the bubble diagram of the situation it describes.

You recently bought a camera while travelling overseas. When you got to your destination you discovered that some important items were missing from the box.

Write a letter to the local representative of the company. In your letter

- *give details of the camera and where you bought it*
- *explain what has happened*
- *say what you want him/her to do about it*

Test tip
Remember to divide your letter into paragraphs. You cannot get a high mark for organisation if you write just one paragraph.



14 ⌚ Take ten minutes to write the first two or three paragraphs of this letter, explaining the situation (i.e., cover your purpose and the first two bullets). When you have finished, compare your letter with the model answer in the key.

Concluding your letter

You need to conclude your letter with something brief and appropriate to the overall tone.

15 Look at these different ways of concluding a letter and say which of them are suitable for a formal letter and which for an informal one.

- 1 Thank you very much for your attention.
- 2 I'm really looking forward to ...
- 3 I hope the situation will be resolved soon.
- 4 Bye for now.
- 5 See you at the weekend.
- 6 Hope to hear from you very soon.
- 7 Take care!
- 8 I look forward to hearing from you.

16 ⌚ Take ten minutes to write the last paragraph of the missing camera parts task. Base this paragraph on the third key point and decide which of the endings from exercise 15 is most appropriate to the overall tone of the letter.

- You will find more help on how and where to use formal and informal language in the next unit.

Writing

6 Communicating your message

- What is *tone*?

The tone and level of formality that you use in your **GT Task 1** letter will affect how successful you are at communicating your message.

The tone of your letter depends on who you are writing to. If you are writing a formal letter, your language should be clear and polite, while a letter to a friend may contain less formal expressions and be more direct.

- How can I make sure that my meaning is clear?

You need to use the right expressions to convey your message, and your vocabulary should be appropriate and varied.

Using the right tone

You need to use appropriate language in your letter to give it the right tone – formal, neutral or informal.

- 1 Read the list of sentences below in the *Requests and suggestions* box. What do you notice about them?
- 2 Work with a partner. Together, discuss how a reader would react if they received these statements in a letter.

Requests and suggestions

Send me a brochure.
I want a ticket for tonight's show.
I think you should employ more staff.
You should give up smoking.
I want to get a place at your school.
You always park too close to me!
I need to use you as a referee.

Polite expressions

I would like to
I am interested in ... -ing
Could I suggest that ...
I would be grateful if ...
Perhaps it would be better if you ...
I would recommend that you ...
I would appreciate it if ...
You could consider ... -ing
I was wondering if ...



- 3 Improve the tone of each request and suggestion by rewriting it using a structure from the *Polite expressions* box.

Choosing the right language and expressions

Informal letters are often quite personal, while formal letters need to be more distant, but there are many feelings that you may wish to convey in both types of letter and often it is best to be neutral (neither too formal or informal).

- 4 Read expressions 1–15 and match them to the uses described in A–G.

Test tip

When you are considering the purpose of your letter, you also need to think about what you have to do in the letter, e.g. complain, advise, etc. This will affect the language and expressions that you choose.

Expressions

- 1 I was (so) sorry to hear about ...
- 2 I would (very much) like to know ...
- 3 I'm sorry that I ...
- 4 I would be grateful if you could ...
- 5 I was delighted/glad to hear ...
- 6 I am writing to express my concern about ...
- 7 I'm (extremely) grateful to you for ...
- 8 I very much appreciate your ... -ing
- 9 Unfortunately/Regrettably I ...
- 10 Even though I *phoned you about* ...
- 11 Please accept my apologies (for ...)
- 12 ... was very *enjoyable*.
- 13 ... is very *disappointing*.
- 14 I regret that ...
- 15 Would it be a good idea to ...

These are used to ...

- A apologise for something
- B ask for information
- C express satisfaction
- D complain about something
- E thank somebody for something
- F express sympathy
- G make suggestions

- 5 Now say when it is appropriate to use each expression. Write **f** for formal, **i** for informal and **n** for neutral next to each expression. If you are not sure, write **n/f** for expressions which are more formal and **n/i** for expressions which are more informal.
- 6 Work in groups. Together, make a list of other feelings you might want to express in a letter.
- 7 Read the *Test tip* and then look at the extracts A–D. Decide what is wrong with the underlined words.

A

Dear Jenny,

It was absolutely fantastic to see you at the school reunion last week. You haven't changed a bit since we last met! I only have your old email address, so kindly send me your contact details so that I can forward you the photographs I mentioned.

B

Dear Mr Parsons,

How's it going? Still at the old school, I hope, because I need you to do something for me!

I've been working in hospitality for the last 5 years, as an apprentice chef, but now I've decided that I'd like to take up full-time study again, so I'd like you to be a referee for me.

Test tip

You need to use the right tone throughout your letter. You will lose marks if you use an inappropriate tone or if you use the wrong tone in parts of your letter.

C

Dear Sirs,
 I've received a reminder notice from your company, saying I have not paid my phone bill and threatening to cut off the phone.
You guys have got it wrong because I know I paid this bill.
 I enclose a copy of my credit card statement showing that the payment was made on 26 February.

D

... I'm really looking forward to our holiday together. I know we're going to have a great time.
Thank you for your kindness in doing the organising.
Yours faithfully,

- 8 Rewrite the underlined sentences using the right tone.

Using appropriate vocabulary – brainstorming

The examiner will be looking for a range of words and phrases related to the topic and purpose of the letter.

- 9 Look at this task and the notes a student has started to make. Complete the notes with other expressions and relevant vocabulary you could use. Make sure you use appropriate words to match the situation. As you do this, note the verb tenses and forms you should use.

You have a friend who lives in a city overseas. You have decided you would like to apply to do a course at one of the colleges in this city.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

- ask what the city is like
- say what work or study you are doing now
- explain why you would like to do this course in the future

Test tip

Examiners will ignore any sections of text copied directly from the question. Remember that this will reduce your total word count and may also reduce your marks.

- ask what the city is like

Can you tell me
 I'd be interested to know

weather
 transport

present tense

- say what work or study you are doing now

I am currently ... -ing
 I've just completed
 For the past 3 years, I've been ... -ing

nursing
 hospital

- explain why you would like to do this course in the future

I believe it would
 I'm keen to

improve my English
 get a good job

10 Read the four GT Writing tasks **A–D** below and decide what type of letter you will need to write (formal or informal) and what feelings you need to convey.

A

You play sport (e.g. football) for a local team. You recently heard that a player in your team is in hospital.

Write a letter to your team mate. In your letter

- say how you feel about the news
- ask about the treatment in the hospital
- suggest some ways of cheering him/her up

B

You recently stayed in a hotel in another city. When you got home you discovered that you had left something of value in the room.

Write a letter to the hotel. In your letter

- describe the item that you left behind and say where you left it
- ask the hotel to arrange to send it to you
- suggest a way to pay for the postage

C

Two days ago you had a meal at a well-known restaurant. Unfortunately, you were very ill after the meal.

Write a letter to the restaurant. In your letter

- describe what you ate
- say how you feel about the situation
- ask them what they can do about it

D

A friend recently invited you to a special party. You intended to go but at the last minute you were unable to attend.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

- apologise for not going to the party
- explain what prevented you from going
- suggest a way of making up for this

IELTS Writing test practice

General Training Task 1

How to approach the task

- You should spend 20 minutes on planning and writing Task 1.
- Decide on the important points, the level of formality and the purpose.
- Consider the information you need in order to cover the three key points.
- Decide how you will organise the paragraphs.
- Begin with an appropriate opening in the correct tone.
- Keep the tone consistent and use appropriate language for feelings, etc.
- Use an appropriate ending.
- Check for mistakes in vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.
- Count the words to make sure you have written at least 150 words.

11  Choose one of the tasks **A–D** and make detailed notes like those in exercise 9. Then take 20 minutes to write your letter. You do **NOT** need to write any addresses.

Writing

7 Approaching the task

- What am I expected to do in Writing **Task 2**?
- How can I develop good ideas?

IELTS Writing topics vary but you are always expected to produce an essay on the topic, and to cover all parts of the task.

To prepare for this Writing task, you need to analyse and brainstorm different essay topics so that you have a range of ideas on IELTS-type questions.

Analysing the task

The examiner will check the relevance of the ideas that you include in your answer. It is therefore important to read the task very carefully and make sure you understand it.

- 1 Read this example of a **Task 2** and answer the questions which follow.



These days everyone seems to have more and more possessions (e.g. computers, cars, mobile phones, etc.). Our strong desire to own these things is making us less aware of important personal qualities such as kindness and concern for others.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

- a What is the topic?
 - b Can you turn the statements in the task into one question?
 - c How useful is the information in brackets?
 - d What do the words *such as* tell you?
 - e Is there one correct answer?
- 2 Read this second example of a **Task 2** and answer the questions which follow.

Mobile phones have changed the way many people communicate. Nowadays people cannot live without them if they want to be a part of society.

To what extent do you think this is true?

Why do you think some people have not adapted to this type of communication?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Test tip

If the task instructions have two parts and you fail to write about one of them, you cannot get more than Band 5 for content.

- a What is the topic?
- b How many parts does the task have? What are they?
- c When you are asked *to what extent* you agree, which of the following can you do in your essay?
 - A completely agree with the statement (by giving reasons/ideas)
 - B completely disagree with the statement (by giving reasons/ideas)
 - C present both sides of the argument (by giving reasons/ideas)
- d If a task has two questions or parts, what proportion of your essay should you give to each part?
 - A 50–50 B 60–40 C 80–20 D it doesn't matter

3 Now read another example of a **Task 2** and answer the questions which follow.

Test tip
You cannot score more than Band 5 if some of your main ideas are not relevant to the task (even if they are about the topic).

These days Internet-based courses have become a popular alternative to university-based courses. Some students prefer this type of learning because they do not need to attend lectures. Others argue that it is important to study at university.

Discuss both these views and give your opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

- a How many parts do you need to cover?
- b How much of your essay should you give to each part?
- c Can you only agree with one of the views in your answer?

Generating ideas

Your examiner will award marks for the clear presentation of a number of relevant main ideas. You can collect ideas on a topic by brainstorming.

4 Analyse this task and decide how many parts it has.

Children over 15 should be allowed to make decisions about their lives without the interference of their parents or teachers. Society should accept that children mature at a younger age these days and should adjust the law accordingly.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

- 5 Brainstorm this task by making a bubble diagram of ideas like the one on page 114.
- 6 Work with a partner. Compare your diagrams and answer the questions.
 - a How similar or different are your ideas?
 - b Do you have more arguments for *agree* or *disagree*?
 - c Has your personal view changed after seeing your partner's arguments?

- 7 Analyse this task and then decide how many parts it has.

There are more cars on the roads these days and more accidents. As a result, some politicians have suggested that people should take regular driving tests throughout their lives, rather than one single test.

What do you think are the advantages of repeat driving tests? Do these outweigh the disadvantages?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

- 8 Work with a partner. Together, read the list of advantages for making regular driving tests compulsory and then make a list of disadvantages.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Useful in the case of older drivers • Good for people who don't drive regularly • Keeps drivers up-to-date with road rules • Raises driving standards • May prevent young men driving too fast • Reduces accidents	

- Listing the advantages and disadvantages of a task is another way of brainstorming ideas before you write.

Test tip

Make sure you know the difference between your main ideas and your supporting ideas when you write. The examiner will check that you have included both.

Main and supporting ideas

You need to group your ideas into main and supporting ideas. Main ideas act like a theme that links your supporting ideas; supporting ideas provide evidence that either justifies or proves your main idea. In other words, they are reasons for or examples of your main idea. For example:

Supporting ideas

useful in the case of older drivers
May prevent young men driving too fast
Good for people who don't drive regularly

Main idea

Certain groups of people would benefit.

- 9 Together, decide on a main idea that links the three remaining ideas from the *Advantages* list.

Raises driving standards
Keeps drivers up-to-date with road rules
Reduces accidents

- 10 Compare your main and supporting ideas with your partner's.
- 11 With your partner, decide on two main ideas and some supporting points from the list of disadvantages you made in exercise 8. You may need to add some more ideas.

Writing a coherent paragraph

Paragraphs are often built around one main idea and its supporting points.

- 12** Read this paragraph from an answer to the task in exercise 4 on page 120. Can you identify which is the main idea and which are the supporting ideas?

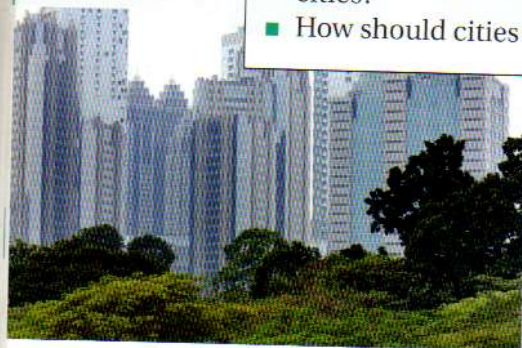
One of the reasons why the law should not be changed is that children need to be protected. Although some children go out to work at fifteen or look after the family at this age, they are really too young to be shouldering such heavy responsibilities. Some adults may think it is alright to let children work if we change the law but then this might prevent children from getting the important education and care that they need.

- 13** Write a paragraph using one of your main ideas for the task in exercise 7 on page 121.
- 14** Compare your paragraph with the model answer in the key. Underline the words that are used to introduce each of the supporting points.
- 15** Work with a partner. Together, brainstorm some ideas on one or both of the questions which follow the **Task 2** IELTS topics **A–D**, below. Divide your ideas into main and supporting ones.

A

Cities

- Why do people prefer to live in cities?
- How should cities be designed?



B

Air pollution

- What are the main causes of air pollution?
- What steps can we take to reduce it?



C

Education

- How important is a university education?
- How has education changed over the years?



D

Tourism

- What are the benefits of tourism for the individual and society?
- How does tourism affect the environment?



- 16** Use your notes to write some paragraphs. Make sure your paragraphs include one main idea and at least two supporting ideas.

Writing

8 Planning your essay

- How should I begin my essay?
- How should I organise my ideas?

You should start by introducing the topic and the points for discussion in your own words. You may also wish to state your position.

Your ideas need to be presented in a logical sequence. This is done through the use of paragraphing. The examiner will be looking for a clear, convincing argument that supports your position and leads to a logical conclusion.

Writing your opening paragraph

Your examiner will want to know what your view (or position) is on the topic. You can decide on your position at the end of your essay, after you have given all your arguments, but it is often a good idea to state your basic position as part of your introduction.

- 1 Read this opening paragraph to a task on obesity in children. The writer's position has been underlined. Can you guess what the wording of the task was?

It is certainly true that some children these days eat too much fat and that this may have a negative effect on their health when they become adults. However, I don't agree that it is always the fault of the parents. Many adults have busy lifestyles and do not have time to prepare a proper meal when they get home, so they are forced to turn to convenience food.

- 2 Work with a partner. Read the task and opening paragraphs A–C. Underline each writer's position and then explain it in your own words.

Although many countries are becoming richer, these societies still have members who are poor and struggle each day to survive.

Why do you think this happens and what can wealthy societies do to help their poorer citizens?

A

It's easy to see that poor people are everywhere. Even developed countries like the USA have citizens who cannot afford to buy clothes or food, so I agree with the statement in the task. I think that many societies already have systems to help poor people but perhaps they do not run these well enough.

B

It is true that some people are comparatively poor, even though they live in a rich country, but I think it may be their own fault. Developed countries already do a lot to help poor people, so I think the problem cannot be solved by giving them more state benefits.

Test tip

Your position is important to the content of your answer. If the examiner cannot find a clear position in your answer, you will lose marks.

Test tip

Remember there is no correct answer, so there will be different ways that you can answer the question(s).

C

Why are there so many poor people in the world? This is a very good question and I think the problem has many different root causes. People have to take some responsibility for their own welfare but, at the same time, some people cannot work for good reasons, so they need some support.

- 3 With your partner, discuss what you would expect the main argument to be about in each of the three essays, A–C.

- When writing your essay, it is important not to copy from the question paper. Your examiner will ignore any sections of copied material and will not include these words in the total word count.

- 4 How many of the words in paragraph D, below, will the examiner not count as part of the student's answer to the task in exercise 2?

D

There are a lot of rich countries in the world whose members are poor and struggle to survive each day. It is hard for them to survive. They have to look for food and sometimes they can't find anywhere to sleep. I think it is hard for them and sometimes nothing is done to help them.

- 5 Read paragraph D again and see if you can identify the student's position.

Test tip

Your examiner will expect to be able to identify your main ideas easily. Paragraphs help do this.

Organising ideas

Do not start the second paragraph until you know which main ideas you are going to use in each paragraph to develop your position.

How to approach the task

- Select two to four main ideas to form the paragraphs that come between your introduction and your conclusion.
 - Think of some supporting points for each main idea.
 - Decide which order the ideas should go in.
 - Consider whether you can add any examples from your own experience of the topic.
- 6 Work with a partner. Together, discuss the task below. Think of some different positions you could take when answering this task.

Many childhood diseases can now be prevented through the use of vaccines.

Should parents be made by law to immunise their children against common diseases or should individuals have the right to choose not to immunise their children?

- 7 Read the introduction and paragraphs on the next page which form part of an answer to the task in exercise 6. As you read, complete the table by making notes on:
- the writer's position on the immunisation of children
 - the writer's main ideas
 - the writer's supporting points and examples.



Position	1st main idea	Supporting points
	Preventative medicine most effective	
	2nd main idea	Supporting points

Some people argue that the state should not make parents immunise their children. However, I feel that without vaccinations all these diseases could return and, therefore, laws should be made forcing parents to use them.

Preventative medicine has proved to be the most effective way of reducing the number of fatal childhood diseases. As a result of the widespread practice of immunising young children, many lives have been saved and some diseases, such as polio, have been almost wiped out.

Medical practices like immunisation are part of human progress. In previous centuries some diseases were the result of poor hygiene but nowadays water is cleaner and sanitation is better. Nobody would suggest that we should reverse this good practice, so why would we stop immunising children?

- 8 ⌚ Think of another main idea for the fourth paragraph of this essay. Take ten minutes to write the paragraph.
- 9 Read the alternative answer to the task in exercise 6 in the key. This answer presents the opposite point of view to the essay above. Underline the main ideas and supporting points and make notes, as you did for exercise 7.

Balancing views

Many tasks invite you to produce a balanced argument showing that you are aware of both sides of an issue.

- 10 Work with a partner. Together, discuss the task below. What does *this view* refer back to?

Many people decide on a career path early in their lives and keep to it. This, they argue, leads to a more satisfying working life.

To what extent do you agree with this view?

What other things can people do to try and have a satisfying working life?

- 11 Read the notes below, which show the position and a main idea of a student.

My position:

The view applies to some people but not others - doesn't affect job satisfaction

Paragraph 1

Main idea/argument

Influenced by experiences

Support / examples

people they meet

may want to be an engineer until visit a hospital / go on a school trip

- You can use a counter-argument to present an opposing view. In this way, you can show that you see both sides of the argument. If you choose to write a counter-argument, it is a good idea to use concessional language (see page 128).

Counter-argument
Some people do not
change their minds

Support / example
Famous actors and singers
often say this

- 12 Use the student's notes in exercise 11, to fill in the gaps in the essay below.

Young children are often asked what they want to be when they grow up and most of them have an answer. However, while some people do not change their minds about this over the course of their lives, many others do. Yet this does not mean that their jobs are not 1

The main reason why people's ambitions change is that, as they grow up, they are affected by their 2 For example, a child may want to be an engineer until he goes on a school trip to a hospital and then decides he would rather be a doctor. Similarly the people we meet as children can have a big impact on our goals and ambitions.

Having said that, there are some people who ...

- *Having said that, ...* is a useful linking phrase to introduce a counter-argument.
- 13 Use the student's notes above to complete the counter-argument in the third paragraph of the essay.
- 14 ⌚ Take ten minutes to think of a main idea that relates to the second question in the task in exercise 10 and then write the fourth paragraph. Compare your finished paragraph with the model answer in the key.

Writing a conclusion

Test tip

Your essay is incomplete without a conclusion because it does not reach a logical ending.

Your conclusion should summarise your position for the reader and, if appropriate to the task instructions, present your final decision on a question. You can also be impartial, i.e. take no side, or state that you have no conclusion to draw.

- Phrases like those in the box below can be useful in a conclusion.

To sum up, *people are all different*.
Overall / All in all
In the final analysis
Clearly

In conclusion / To conclude
Ultimately
In the end
Taking everything into consideration

- 15 Write a conclusion to the student's essay that began in exercise 12. Compare your finished conclusion with the model answer in the key.

9 Turning your ideas into written arguments

- How can I turn my ideas into arguments?

Once you have got your ideas and decided how to organise them, you need to think about how to turn them into arguments.

There is a range of expressions that you can use to express arguments. It is a good idea to use some of these expressions because they act as signposts and help the examiner follow the development of your essay. They also help you write fuller, more varied sentences in an appropriate essay style.

Presenting ideas

Your ideas will form the basis of your argument and they need to be expressed clearly and appropriately.

- You may need to give your personal opinion.
- You may want to give other people's opinions, e.g. when you are asked to consider an argument from both sides.
- Sometimes a more general statement is needed.
- To support your argument, you will often need to state facts.

In my view, school uniforms ...

Some people argue that school uniforms ...

It is generally believed that school uniforms ...

In my country most people have to wear school uniform ...

Here are some expressions to help you present ideas.

I would argue/say that ...

In my view ...

It seems (to me) that ...

I tend to think that / I feel that ...

As far as I am concerned ...

Some/Most people argue/think/say that ...

It is understood that ...

It is generally accepted that ...

There is a tendency to believe that ...

One of the main arguments in favour of / against ...

Test tip

Words like *tend*, *seem* and *feel* are often used to soften the tone of the writer's argument.

- 1 Work with a partner. Together, use the expressions in the box to present some ideas on the topics A–D, below.

A Having large or small families

B The growing popularity of football

C Travelling to new countries

D Using a mobile phone in a public place

- 2 Write some of your sentences down and discuss them in class. Did the writers use appropriate expressions? If not, why not?

Making concessions

Test tip

These expressions also act as linkers because they connect different arguments.

Good writers often consider other arguments that are different, before presenting their own views. For example:

Although some people would like to have a lot of children (concession), the cost of raising them has to be considered first (writer's view).

The following expressions are useful when making concessions.

While/Although ...
Despite the fact that ...
Even though ...

It could be argued that ...
Admittedly / Certainly ... but / However ...
It may be true that ...

3 For each statement A–C, write a short paragraph arguing against the ideas.

Statement	For	Against
A Television is beneficial for children.	Educational programmes	Adverts – brands / expensive consumer goods
B There is too much packaging in supermarkets.	Shoppers want it	Creates waste
C We need to build more roads around cities to reduce traffic problems.	Less traffic in cities	More cars and lorries will use them

4 Now rewrite your paragraphs to include a concession. Begin with a sentence containing your main idea and then express your argument with a concession. For example:

A It seems to me that television has few benefits for children. *while* I agree that there are some good educational programmes, far too much advertising is targeted at children. This encourages them to want expensive goods that their parents may not be able to afford to buy.

- A concession is often useful when you are writing a conclusion, because it can sum up pros and cons. For example: *All in all, despite the fact that there are some interesting programmes, much of the time children spend watching TV would be better spent on other activities.*

Refuting an argument

This is a forceful way of expressing a view. It means that you present an argument or view by first rejecting an argument that you do not agree with.

The following expressions are useful in refuting an argument.

I am unconvinced that ...
I don't believe that ...
Some people find it hard to accept that ...
It is doubtful whether ...

There is little evidence to support the view that ...
It is unjustifiable to say that ...
I disagree with the view/argument that ...
I am uncertain whether ...

- 5 Write four sentences refuting the arguments B–D in the table below. In the first part of the sentence, use one of the expressions on the previous page to refute the argument in the first column. Then complete the sentence using *when* and the counter-argument in the second column. For example:

A

I don't believe that footballers should be paid such high salaries when they are just doing a job like everyone else.



Test tip

These expressions will help you show the examiner that you can write complex sentences.

Argument	Counter-argument
A footballers – deserve high salaries	A just doing a job like everyone else
B Internet – a useful resource for children	B so much uncensored material
C running – good for you	C so many physical injuries
D gambling – legal	D so much misery and poverty

- 6 Choose one of the following topics and write two or three sentences like those in exercise 5.

Building more homes in urban centres	Buying iPods for children
Encouraging young people to go to university	Encouraging people to have credit cards
Putting money into space research	Putting a space research station on the moon

Defining and explaining

If you are using general terms that could be understood in many different ways, it is a good idea to define or explain what you understand by that term. This will form part of your supporting argument.

- 7 Underline the explanation in this example from a student's essay.

I would argue that many young people today see using a computer as a leisure activity. By this I mean that they seem to spend all their free time downloading Internet material or looking up websites when they could be doing something more active such as taking exercise.

Making concessions

Test tip

These expressions also act as linkers because they connect different arguments.

Good writers often consider other arguments that are different, before presenting their own views. For example:

Although some people would like to have a lot of children (concession), the cost of raising them has to be considered first (writer's view).

The following expressions are useful when making concessions.

While/Although ...
Despite the fact that ...
Even though ...

It could be argued that ...
Admittedly / Certainly ... but / However ...
It may be true that ...

3 For each statement A–C, write a short paragraph arguing against the ideas.

Statement	For	Against
A Television is beneficial for children.	Educational programmes	Adverts – brands / expensive consumer goods
B There is too much packaging in supermarkets.	Shoppers want it	Creates waste
C We need to build more roads around cities to reduce traffic problems.	Less traffic in cities	More cars and lorries will use them

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A It seems to me that television has few benefits for children. *while* I agree that there are some good educational programmes, far too much advertising is targeted at children. This encourages them to want expensive goods that their parents may not be able to afford to buy.

- A concession is often useful when you are writing a conclusion, because it can sum up pros and cons. For example: *All in all, despite the fact that there are some interesting programmes, much of the time children spend watching TV would be better spent on other activities.*

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I don't believe that ...	It is unjustifiable to say that ...
Some people find it hard to accept that ...	I disagree with the view/argument that ...
It is doubtful whether ...	I am uncertain whether ...

- 5 Write four sentences refuting the arguments **B–D** in the table below. In the first part of the sentence, use one of the expressions on the previous page to refute the argument in the first column. Then complete the sentence using *when* and the counter-argument in the second column. For example:

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I don't believe that footballers should be paid such high salaries when they are just doing a job like everyone else.



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These expressions will help you show the examiner that you can write complex sentences.

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Putting money into space research	Putting a space research station on the moon

Defining and explaining

If you are using general terms that could be understood in many different ways, it is a good idea to define or explain what you understand by that term. This will form part of your supporting argument.

- 7 Underline the explanation in this example from a student's essay.

I would argue that many young people today see using a computer as a leisure activity. By this I mean that they seem to spend all their free time downloading internet material or looking up websites when they could be doing something more active such as taking exercise.

The following expressions are useful in helping you be more precise.

By this I (don't) mean ...
In fact, ...
That is not to say that ...

In other words, ...
That is to say, ...

To be more precise, ...
Here I'm (not) referring to ...

- 8 Use one of the expressions above to add another sentence to the following arguments.
 - 1 In my opinion, extended families are more successful than nuclear families.
 - 2 It is often said that young people are more tolerant than older people.
 - 3 I am convinced that choice is important in the school curriculum.
 - 4 Job commitment is not always the key to success.
- 9 Discuss with your class the structure and content of some of your sentences.
- 10 Read this opening paragraph to a **Task 2** essay on whether examinations are useful or not. Underline and explain the different ways that the writer expresses his views.

I would argue that examinations have a positive influence on learning and by this I mean that they lead to a better understanding of the subject. This is essential in areas such as medicine. While I admit that they can create a lot of pressure for students and can cause stress, I am convinced that these problems can be largely avoided, if the approach to examinations is handled well by teachers and students. Overall, students are motivated by examinations and this motivation can only benefit them.

IELTS Writing test practice

Task 2

- 11  Take 40 minutes to write an essay of at least 250 words on the following task. Use some of the phrases and structures that you have practised in this unit to express your views.

Disruptive school students have a negative influence on others. Students who are noisy and disobedient should be grouped together and taught separately.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

- 12 Work with a partner. Together, read the model answer in the key and then, using the text in *italics* to help you, discuss some of the expressions the writer uses to present arguments.

Writing

10 Linking your ideas

- Why do I need to link ideas?
- What are linking words?

You need to ensure that you can get your meaning across to the reader. Good writing relies on the ability to be coherent – to use the right linking and reference words in complex sentence forms.

Linking words and phrases are used to add supporting points and examples to your main ideas. You need to signpost these clearly so that it is easy to follow your argument(s).

Making the main argument clear

- 1 Read this extract from a student's essay on *Why cars should be banned from city centres* and then answer the questions which follow.

I don't think cars should be banned from city centres because we need to travel by car. Otherwise how can we get around? Public transport is not good in my city so I need my car. In some cities, e.g. London, you must pay to enter the city centre by car. People with money can pay this anyway. There are not enough car parks so people must park their cars on the streets and this causes traffic jams.

- a Can you clearly identify the main and supporting ideas?
- b What is the problem with this paragraph?



- 2 Now read this extract from another student's essay on the same topic and then answer the questions below.

Most world cities were designed long before the motor car and so, naturally, they were not meant to handle the large volumes of traffic so common today. For instance, the streets in the centre of Tokyo, where I come from, are narrow and the traffic moves very slowly, particularly at rush hour. Cities such as Jakarta and Bangkok are famous for their traffic jams and, in fact, a 10 km journey can take up to two hours.

Understandably, governments look for ways to reduce traffic jams, and one way is to ban cars from entering city centres altogether or, alternatively, to charge them a steep fee. A good example of this is the Congestion Charge in London, which has successfully reduced the number of vehicles entering the city between 7am and 6.30pm on weekdays. Indeed, it has been so successful that the Mayor of London is planning to extend the zone to encourage people to use public transport. In my experience, this is a sensible way to tackle the problem of traffic congestion and one which other world cities could easily copy.

- a What is the writer's main point in each paragraph?
- b Underline the words which link the main points to the supporting ideas.

Using linking words and expressions

There are many ways in which you can link your main and supporting arguments. It is important to try to vary the words and structures you use. Here are some useful expressions.

For example / For instance ...

Of course ...

Firstly / For one thing ...

A good example of this is ...

In fact / Indeed ...

If this is/were the case ...

Naturally / Understandably ...

In my experience ...

- 3** Link the following arguments using an appropriate expression from the box above. Use a different expression in each gap.
- 1** It is impossible to predict what type of holidays people will be taking in 100 years' time. It is possible, **a** _____, that space travel will be a realistic option in the future. **b** _____, it would completely transform our traditional view of a holiday.
 - 2** I would argue that supermarkets are a good thing. **a** _____ in some countries they can offer so many products that it's hardly necessary to shop anywhere else. **b** _____ there are sometimes instances of local opposition, but this is usually short-lived.
 - 3** Statistics show that the worst drivers in the world are young men. _____, if you look closely at any car that is going too fast, overtaking in the wrong place or driving too close to the car in front, there will be a young man in the driver's seat.
 - 4** I strongly approve of the preservation of historic buildings.
a _____, they are a part of our heritage and secondly, they are often very beautiful. Too many have already been destroyed.
b _____ my home town, where whole streets of lovely houses were knocked down in order to build high-rise flats.
- You can also use simple reference words to link ideas together.
- 4** Fill in the gaps in paragraphs 1–5, below, *either* with a reference word from the box only *or* with one of the reference words and one of the nouns in brackets. There are more reference words than you need.

e.g. this these those others such one another who which where

- 1** Generally speaking, air travel has come down in price over the past five years.
a _____ has been the result of airlines offering a 'no-frills' service, **b** _____ passengers pay for refreshments. (*reduction*)
- 2** Just under 40% of people in the UK and 50% of Americans say that work is the most important part of their lives. **a** _____ increase further when you include retired people looking back on their working lives.
b _____ may be changing, however. (*figures, attitudes*)

- 3 When a group of schoolchildren was interviewed, the majority said they preferred their teachers to be humorous but also kind. However,
a are not as highly rated by the teachers themselves.
b suggested that commitment to their subject was more important. (*qualities*)
- 4 The cost of petrol has risen steeply in the last few years. **a** is due to a combination of things, such as shortages of oil and higher government taxes. Unfortunately, it looks unlikely that **b** will be reversed. (*rise, trend*)
- 5 People's views vary on the subject of recycling waste. **a** who live near recycling centres usually support it, while **b** who have to travel long distances to recycle their rubbish often just don't bother.
- 5 Read paragraphs 1–5 in exercise 4 again and underline any other words or expressions that help to link the ideas.
- 6 Read the following extract from an essay. Underline any *reference words* which help link ideas together. Use a different colour to underline any other linkers in the text.

There is always controversy over whether it is important to spend large sums of money on medical research or whether more of this money should be directed towards treating patients. Obviously some medical research is essential. Without it, we would have no vaccinations against diseases such as polio, no drugs such as antibiotics and no treatments like x-rays and radiotherapy. Nevertheless, the field of medical research is very competitive and this has financial disadvantages. Take, for example, the current research being conducted on the HIV virus. In this field it is arguable that money is being wasted in that scientists throughout the world are working independently towards the same ultimate goal, to find a cure for AIDS, and with the same hope of becoming famous in the process. Surely it would be more productive and less costly if these scientists joined forces and an international research team was set up with joint international funding.

Building complex sentences

You cannot produce complex sentences without linking your ideas.

- 7 Work with a partner. Together, read the sets of sentences 1–4 and see if you can link each set together into one complex sentence, as in the example. The result will probably be shorter than the set of sentences together. There are several possible ways to do this in each case.

Example

The World Cup is the largest sporting event in the world.

The World Cup is played every four years.

The event is hosted by a different country each time.

The event generates huge amounts of money.

The World Cup, which is held in a different country every four years, is the largest sporting event in the world and generates huge amounts of money.

- 1 Mobile phones used to be very expensive.
 Only wealthy people had mobile phones.
 Today mobile phones are extremely common.

Test tip

It is important to show that you can write complex sentences and link your ideas.

- 2 Many young people are overweight.
Many young people spend their evenings in front of the TV.
Advertisements for unhealthy food are shown between 5.00pm and 8.00pm.
- 3 Few people communicate by 'hard copy' mail these days.
'Hard copy' letters are used mainly in formal situations.
Emails have become the most common form of written communication.
- 4 Some people believe human beings are responsible for global warming.
Other people think global warming is caused by climatic factors.
The influence of climatic factors cannot be altered by lowering pollution levels.

IELTS Writing test practice

Task 2

- 8  Write an answer to this task in 40 minutes. When you have finished, count the number of words you have used and allow three minutes to correct any mistakes.

Write about the following topic:

Young people today are better qualified than they were in the past. Some people argue that this is because competition for jobs is greater than it used to be. Others say that people only continue their education because the opportunities exist for them to do so.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

- 9 Work with a partner. Swap answers and then use the checklist below to make some notes as you read your partner's essay. Then together, discuss your notes.

Can you follow the argument?

What is the position?
What is the main idea in each paragraph?
How are the main ideas supported?
What is the conclusion?
Can you summarise your partner's view on the topic?

How well are the views expressed?

How are the main ideas presented?
How are they linked to the supporting ideas?
Are there any examples?
Can you find some vocabulary related to the topic?
Has your partner copied too much from the task?

Approach		Reason
Spend 20 minutes on Task 1 (150 words) and 40 minutes on Task 2 (250 words).		Task 2 is longer than Task 1 and is worth twice as many marks.
Before you write	Read the task and make a mental summary of the key points and overall trends/stages.	If you misinterpret the data or diagram, you will lose a lot of marks for content.
As you write	Introduce the information, in a sentence or two, using your own words.	If you copy the question, the examiner will not count these words.
	Summarise the key points and use data to illustrate these.	You will lose marks if you miss key points or fail to illustrate them.
	Include an overview of the information – either in your introduction or conclusion.	You will lose marks if your answer does not contain an overview.
How you write	Try to show that you can use your own words (wherever possible) and a range of grammatical structures.	You will get more marks for vocabulary and grammar if you can do this.
	Divide your answer into paragraphs and use linkers to connect your ideas.	You will get more marks if you can organise your answer well and use a range of linking and reference words.
When you have finished	Count your words to make sure you have written enough.	Short answers lose marks. (There are no extra marks for long answers.)
	Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation.	Mistakes in these areas can reduce your marks.

Approach		Reason
Spend 20 minutes on Task 1 (150 words) and 40 minutes on Task 2 (250 words).		Task 2 is longer than Task 1 and is worth twice as many marks.
Before you write	Read the task carefully to decide how many parts it has and what your position is.	You will lose marks if you do not address all the parts of the question relevantly.
	Make a quick plan either mentally or on rough paper. Decide on your main ideas.	The examiner will be looking for a number of clear main ideas.
As you write	Introduce your answer in your own words and make your position clear. You may state your position here as well.	The examiner will not count copied material as part of your total word count.
	Present your main ideas clearly and use examples to support them.	You will get more marks if your ideas are clear and well supported.
	Write a conclusion and re-state your position.	Your examiner will expect to find a logical conclusion and a consistent position.
How you write	Try to show that you can use your own words (wherever possible) and a range of grammatical structures.	You will get more marks for vocabulary and grammar if you can do this.
	Divide your answer into paragraphs and use linkers to connect your ideas.	You will get more marks if you can organise your answer well and use a range of linking and reference words.
When you have finished	Count your words to make sure you have written enough.	Short answers lose marks. (There are no extra marks for long answers.)
	Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation.	Mistakes in these areas can reduce your marks.