



IELTS Writing Tips

Task 1

Tips for the IELTS Writing Task 1:

Tip 1: Learn the English vocabulary used to describe graphs. Learn the verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs and how to appropriately use them. Your lexical (or vocabulary) score is 25% of your overall band score for the task 1 writing, so this is an important skill. Try not to use the same word over and over again, but use synonyms. You can use words like, “increase” and then later words like, “grow, rise, go up,” etc.

Tip 2: If you do not write at least 150 words it will cause your score to go down by a full band score. So, you must write at least 150, but do not write too much more. The more you write, the more likely you will make mistakes and include unnecessary information. The task asks you to summarize the graph, not explain what it shows dot-for-dot or line-for-line. If your sentences are mechanical or have incorrect spelling and grammar, this will affect your band score.

Tip 3: Do not waste time counting your words on the day of the exam. Do this when you practice. The IELTS is a paper-based test, so all of your writing will be done by hand. Do your practice by hand also. Figure out how much of a piece of paper is 150-175 words in *your handwriting*. Once you know how far down a page you need to write to hit 150 words, then you’ll know how much you should write for task 1 –*without having to count*.

Tip 4: Think about which verb tense you should use in your sentences. Remember that when we refer to graphs, such as, “the graph shows,” we always use the present. Even if the graph is talking about what happened in 1970, the graph itself will always show us what happened in 1970; it does not change. So, the graph can be referred to in the present. However, when you are talking about *the information shown in the graph*, then you’d need to use the past tense.

Graph shows	Verb tense	Example
2000-2020	If you are referring to a time in the past, then use the past tense. If you are referring to something that started in the past and continues to the present, use the present perfect tense, but if you are referring to the time in the future, use the future tense.	Profits have continued to increase for the last two years. However, from 2000-2005, the company experienced a decline. It is expected over the next six years that their yield will continue to gradually rise, until stabilizing around 75 million dollars.

Things to remember for task 1:

- DO NOT include your opinion, your ideas, or your thoughts or reasons as to why the graph says what it does. Only include information that you can see in the graph.
- Make general connections and overall trend statements. Don't get too caught up in the details. Too many details will cause you to get a lower score; they want to know how you can connect the BIG ideas.

Words commonly used to describe graphs, charts, and tables

Verbs

Increase – go up, rise, grow, expand, get bigger, get larger

Decrease – fall, decline, go down, dip, drop, reduce

Remain steady – level off, remain constant, remain the same, remain unchanged, stabilize

Fluctuate –zig-zag, oscillate, change, seesaw

Verbs in the extremes

Peak –to go up to the highest point in the graph

Plummet –to go down to the lowest point in the graph

Plateau –where there is little or no change for a period, can either be high or low

Adverbs –adverbs can usually go either before or after the verb (gradually increase or increase gradually)

Gradually –to move slowly over time in one direction. (Synonyms are steadily and slowly.)

Dramatically –to move a lot quickly. (Synonyms are sharply and drastically.)

Moderately –to move a little. (Synonyms are slightly and mildly.)

Rapidly –to move fast. (Synonyms are quickly and fast.)

Nouns

Nouns to show an increase: an increase, a rise, a growth, an expansion, a peak, an upward trend, an upward tendency

Nouns to show a decrease: a decrease, a fall, a dip, a drop, a reduction, a downward trend, a downward tendency

Nouns to show stabilization: a constant, a stabilization, a plateau

Nouns to show fluctuation: a fluctuation, an oscillation

Adjectives –adjectives must go before the noun they modify

Here is a list of adjectives that correspond to the adverbs above.

Gradual, steady, slow; dramatic, sharp, drastic; moderate, slight, mild; rapid, fast, quick.