

E205F  
Preparing for IELTS  
Unit 5 (Task 1)  
[Student Version]

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# Task 1: Describing graphical information (p.2)

In **Task 1**, you will look at a **graph, chart or table** and **summarize** the information **selecting and reporting** the **main features**, and making **comparisons** where relevant.

You are allocated ***20 minutes*** for this task and told to ***write at least 150 words.***

Maximum: ~180 words!

# Analysing information presented graphically (p.2)

What sort of information it contains > what the graph is about

What is its *purpose*?

We need to talk about *overall trends* and *illustrate these trends by giving some specific data*.

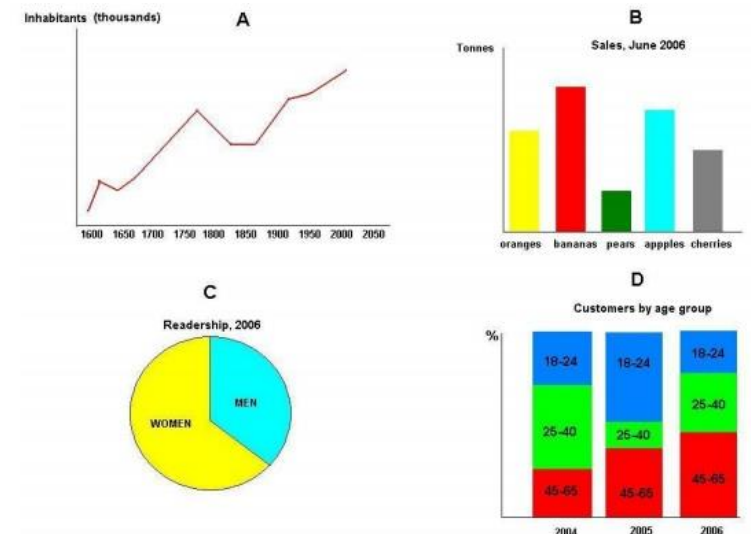
1st paragraph:

Introduction + overall trend of the graph (no more than 3 key features)

## Some key points to note first

In interpreting graphical information, we should start by:

- reading any headings;
- checking what the vertical and horizontal axes, columns or rows represent;
- looking at the key; and
- noting the units or time periods.





1 What is it about, *in general*?

(That is, try to complete the sentence 'This graph/table/chart represents/shows/illustrates ...'.)

2 What *main trend*(s) does it show?

3 Are there any *exceptions* to this trend (these trends)?

4 Are any *comparisons* made?

5 What *time period*(s) does it cover? Tense

## Activity 5.1 (p.3)

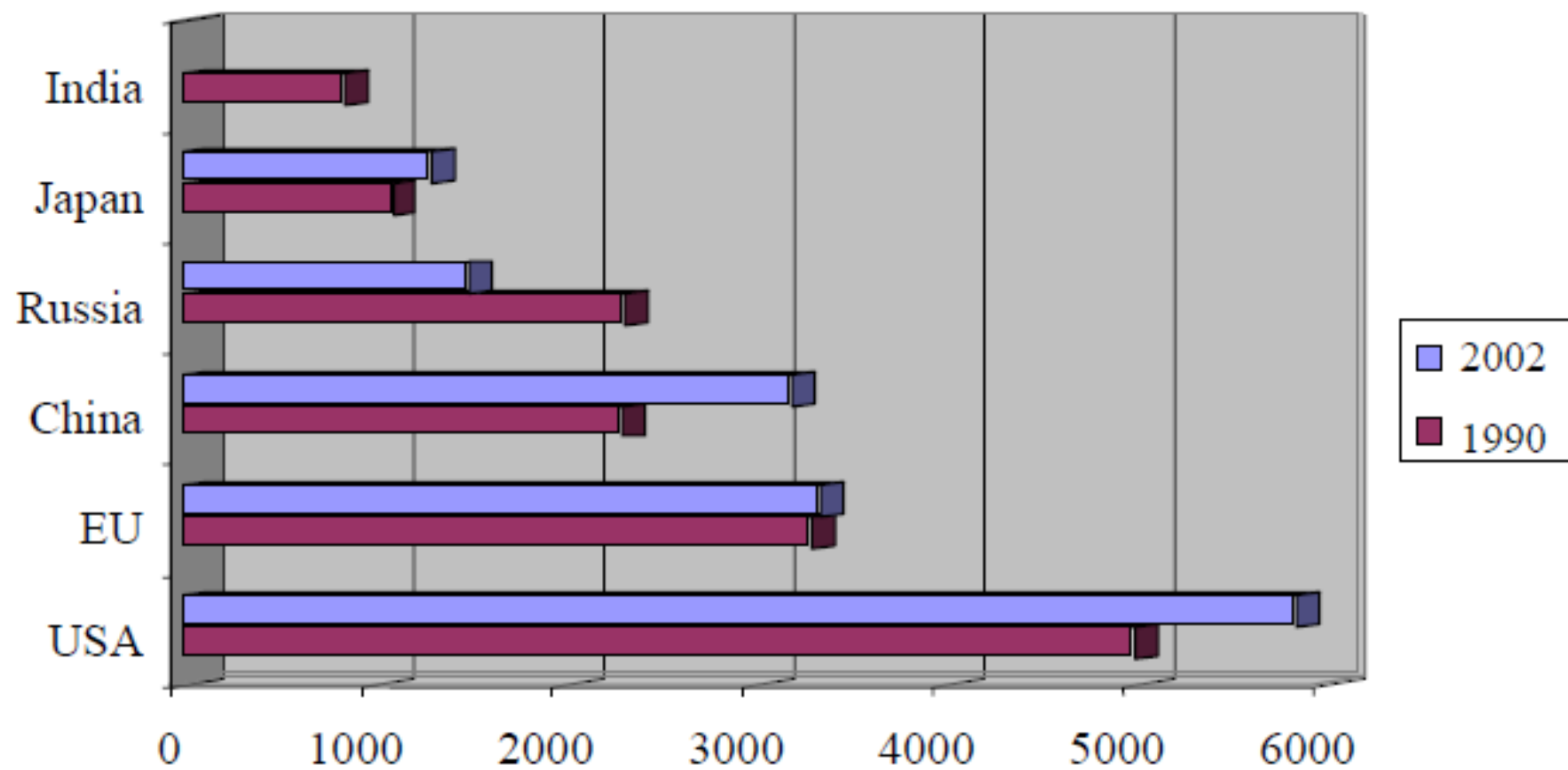
Think about **how to interpret the bar chart** below by answering the five questions above in writing.

Write in **complete formal sentences**.

Use the **present tense in an introductory overview** when describing the graph itself, then **revert to the past or past perfect** when discussing past events and trends.

Time limit: 20 minutes

**CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (1,000 million tonnes)**



# Activity 5.1 (Suggested Key)

This chart illustrates changes in the carbon dioxide emissions of the world's major industrialized nations between 1990 and 2002.

There had been a general increase in emissions among the nations represented, although there was one major exception to this trend and comparative data were not available for India.

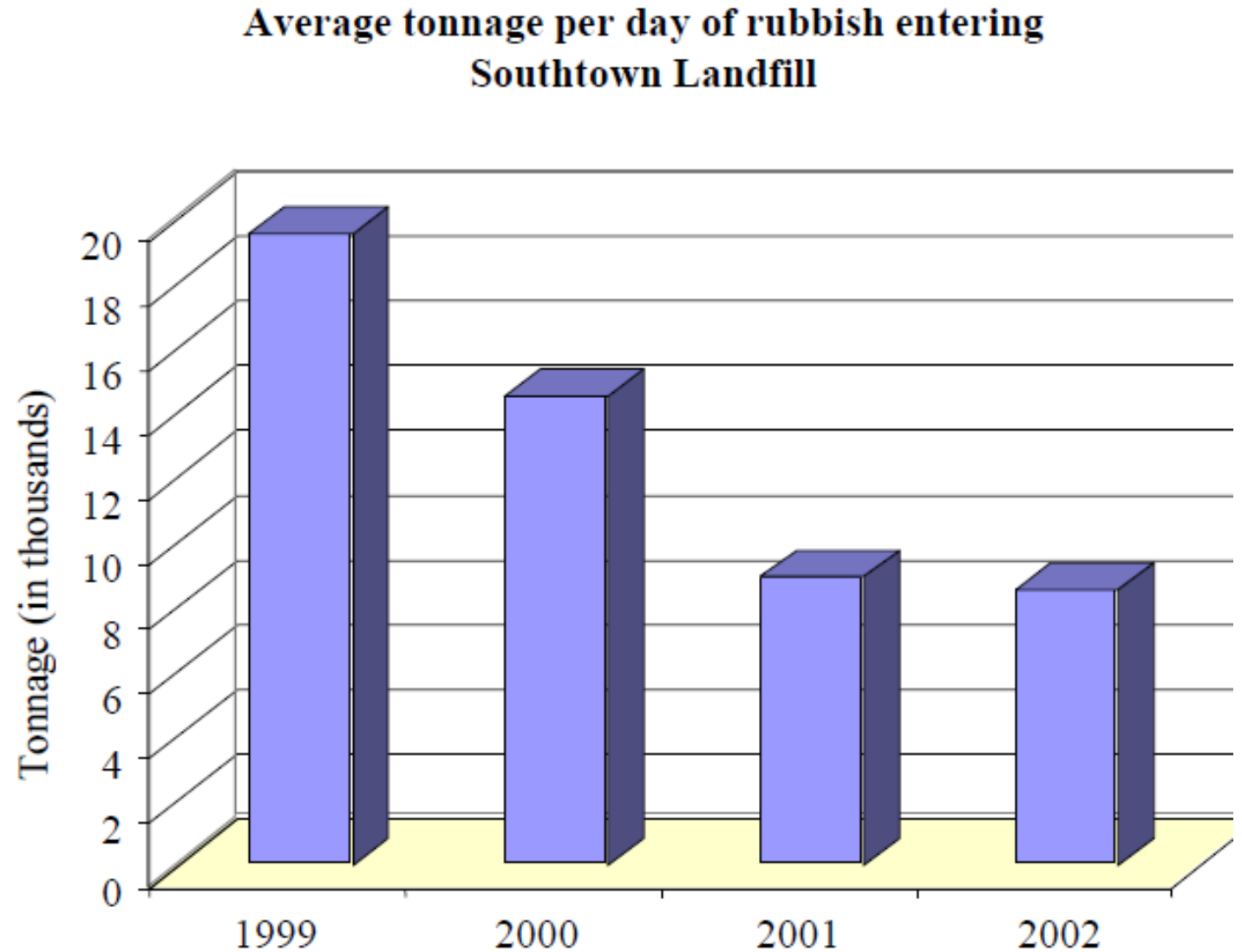
The exceptional case was Russia which showed a dramatic 25% decline in emissions. For other nations, the trend is in the opposite direction with China and the United States increasing emissions by around 30% and 20% respectively. The world's largest producer of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions throughout the period was the United States. The United States also had the second largest increase in emissions in the period.



## Another example (p.3)

Let's look at another example.

The graph is not complex, but one can imagine careless readers misinterpreting it.



## Analysis:

A casual glance might suggest that, since each column is above a year, the columns represent the amount of landfill in that year – but, of course, the caption tells us that the columns represent *daily tonnage*.

This, then, is presumably an average figure. The vertical axis represents weight and the actual numbers represent thousands.

The graph shows that between 1999 and 2000 there was a drop in the daily tonnage of approximately 5,000 tonnes or around 25%, which is obviously a very significant drop.

One can imagine careless people talking of a 5% drop, thinking the figures are percentages, or saying there was a drop of 5 tonnes, forgetting the thousands.

# Language hint (p.4)

## Useful:

'represent', 'drop', 'approximately', 'significant', 'further reduction',  
'situation stabilized', 'appreciable'

## Less likely:

'column' and 'vertical axis'

(as they describe the graph rather than the information contained in it)

# Establishing the topic and giving a clear overview (p.4)

An **overview** is a statement *summarising the main trends shown in the figure*.

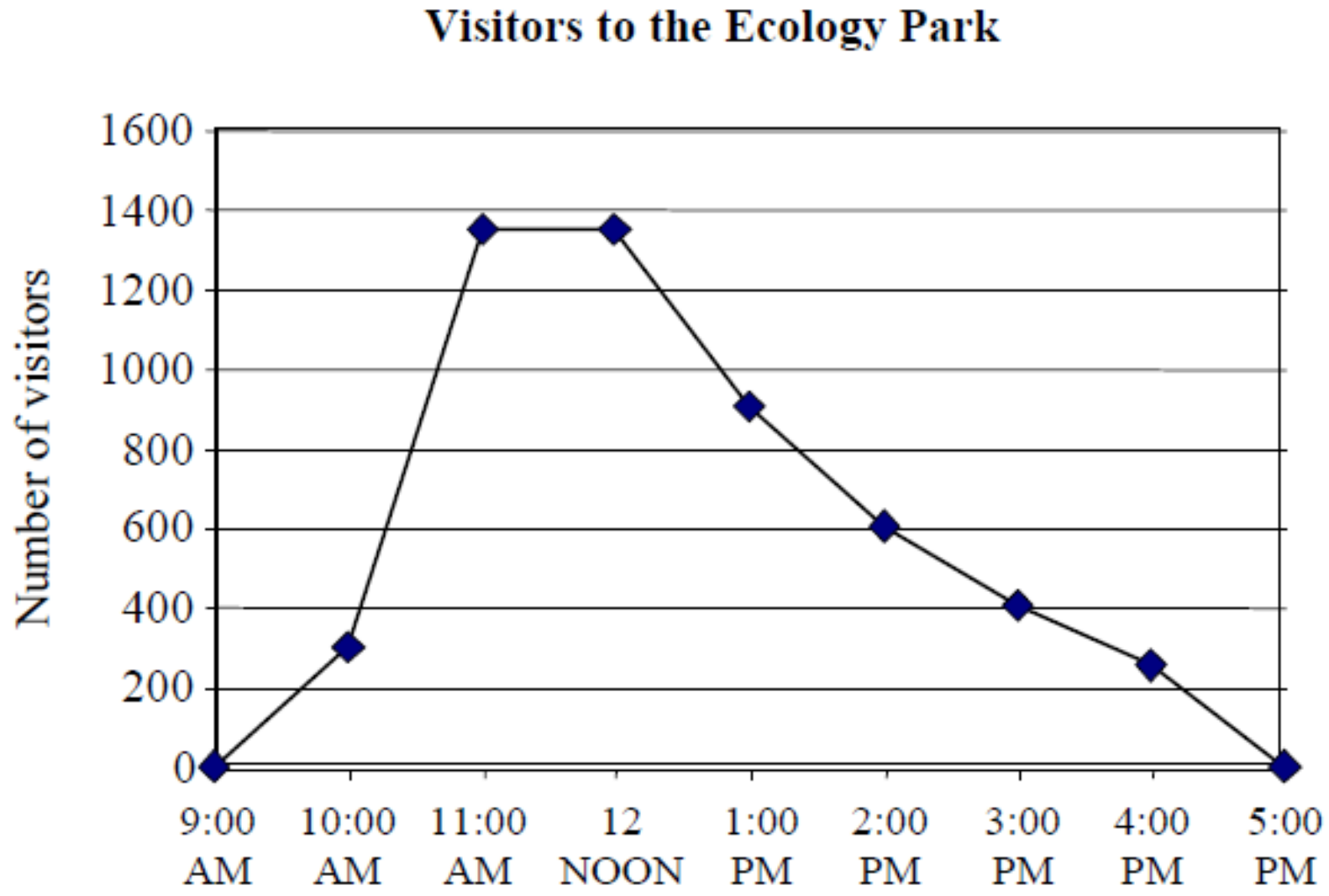
It should give the reader information about **the graph's main topic**, and refer to **key places, dates or quantities**.

💣 It should not include **specific details**, and you **should not copy long phrases or sentences from the question**.

p.5

2-3 key trends

What tense?



The graph provides information on the times of arrival of visitors to the Ecology Park.

Overall, The number of visitors \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the day. It first increases, reaching a \_\_\_\_\_ in the late morning, then \_\_\_\_\_ to the end of the day. From 9:00 a.m. people start \_\_\_\_\_ the park. The numbers arriving \_\_\_\_\_ very steeply between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. From about 300 people at 10:00 a.m., they \_\_\_\_\_ a peak at 11.00 a.m. with almost 1,400 people an hour entering the park.

This peak number of visitors \_\_\_\_\_ until around noon when it starts \_\_\_\_\_ fairly \_\_\_\_\_. At about 1:30 p.m., it is only half of what it was at its peak. After 2:00 p.m., the \_\_\_\_\_ continues, though at a slightly \_\_\_\_\_. So, for example, at just before 4:00 p.m. there are about 300 visitors an hour arriving. The decline \_\_\_\_\_ until 5:00 p.m. when there are no further arrivals in the park.

In conclusion, the graph tells us that the number of visitors to the park peaks between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon and drops off steadily in the afternoon until 5:00 p.m.

## Activity 5.2 (p.6)

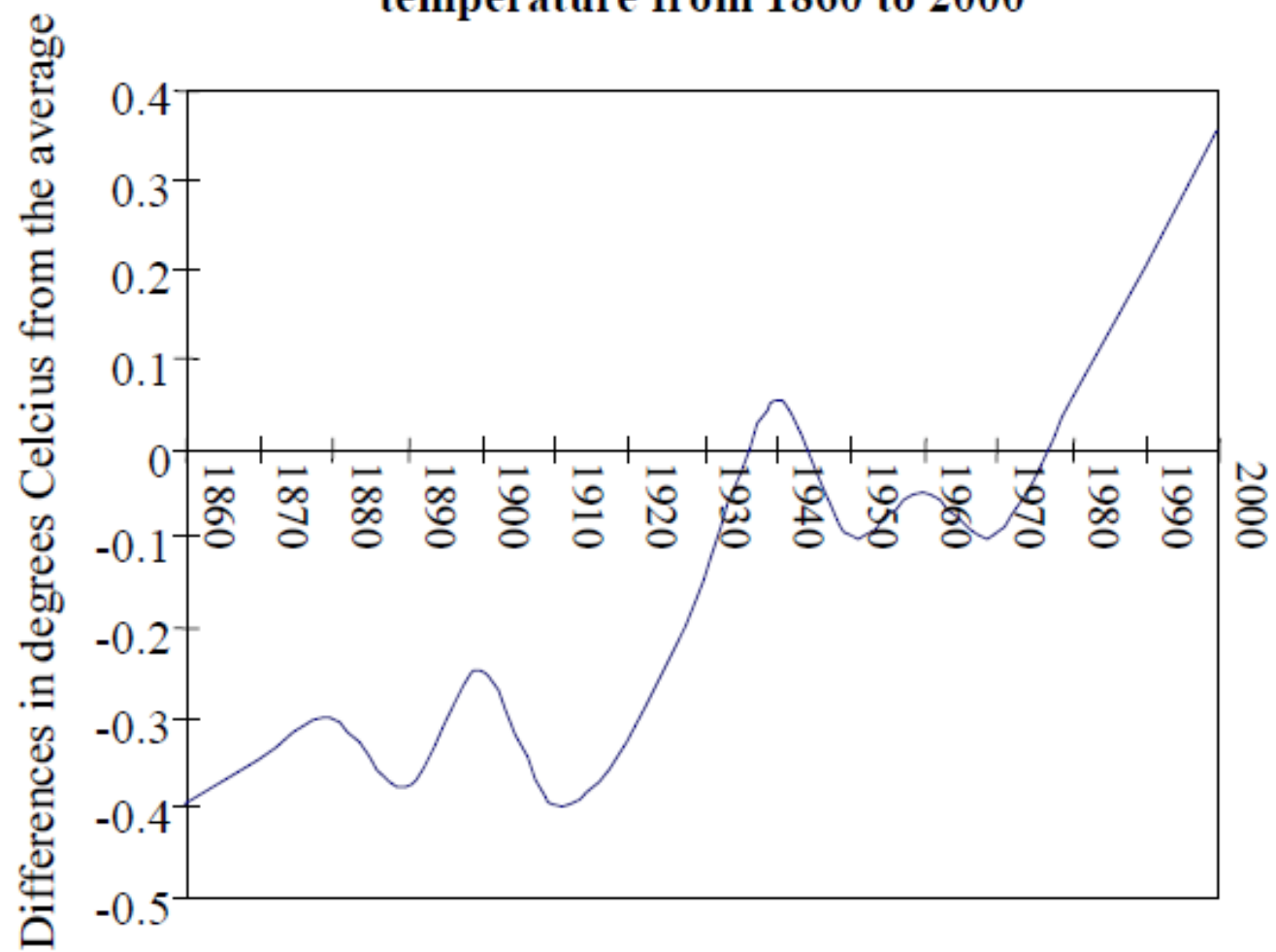
Write a short piece on this graph, and don't forget to include an overview that tells the reader what it is about.

Be careful to interpret the data correctly, stating clearly what the graph shows, using an impersonal style with appropriate vocabulary, and noting the general trend and then supplying some data.

Time limit: 20 minutes

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**Measurements of the Earth's surface  
temperature from 1860 to 2000**





## Activity 5.2 (Suggested key)

The graph shows variations in the surface temperature of the Earth from 1860 to 2000, shown as deviations from the average.

Considering the data in detail, there were fluctuations with many small increases and decreases in temperature over the course of the period.

However, if a larger view is taken, and the curve smoothed out a little, definite trends can be seen. Throughout the early decades of the 20th century, there was a steady rise in temperatures, reaching a peak around 1940. After a modest cooling thereafter until around 1970, temperatures rose sharply in the closing 20 years of the century, showing no signs of falling back as it ended. Between 1860 and 2000, a rise of on average 0.75 of a degree centigrade had been observed.

# Useful words relating to graphs (p.6-10)

Nouns	Examples
boom	There was a sudden boom in sales the following year.
*data	
*decade	
*decline	
decrease	A sharp decrease in the numbers of applicants can be observed in the mid-1990s.
*drop	
fall	The fall has been slow but steady and shows no sign of reversing itself.
fluctuation	Despite small fluctuations, the overall trend has been one of increasing interest in this topic.
growth	There was a dramatic growth in the numbers of arrests in the late 1980s.
*increase	
level	Numbers did not reach that level again until two decades later.
*pace	

pattern	A similar pattern was seen for the United States.
*peak	
*reduction	
*rise	
*situation	
slope	After that, the predicted slope upwards continues.
stability	The overall picture is one of considerable stability.
surge	A sudden surge in the numbers of tourists follows the introduction of cheaper fares.
*trend	
variation	The situation has remained much the same recently with only minor variation.

Adjectives	Examples
apparent	This was most apparent in the case of Far Eastern tourists.
*appreciable	
*approximate	
*average	
considerable	The changes recorded over the years have been considerable.
consistent	The decline is consistent with patterns seen in a recession.
constant	Since then, the levels of gas have been constant.
continuous	The continuous increase indicates a sales boom.
*dramatic	
gradual	At first the rise was a gradual one, but recently the pace of change has increased rapidly.
marked	There has been a marked increase in the popularity of language courses recently.
moderate	A moderate annual increase in numbers has been taking place for the last 20 years.

*overall	
rapid	Thereafter, there was a rapid collapse until extinction took place.
serious	A serious decline in numbers has been recorded over the last five years.
*sharp	
short-term	This appears to be a short-term phenomenon.
*significant	
slight	Slight fluctuations do not obscure a gradual movement towards new energy sources.
slow	Change has been a slow long-term process.
stable	Sales figures have remained remarkably stable despite the competition.
steady	There has been a steady increase in the temperature of the Earth.
steep	There was a steep increase in public utility charges over the same period.

substantial	The following year there was a substantial changeover from electricity to gas.
sudden	There was a remarkable degree of stability until 1985 when there was a sudden dramatic change in tastes.
temporary	Temporary fluctuations are seen in the figures for the last decade.
trivial	Apart from some trivial variation, the trend has been for increasing longevity throughout the region.

(Most of the adjectives above can be transformed into adverbs by adding -ly. But be careful, as there are exceptions, e.g. 'average', 'long-term', 'overall', 'short-term', 'stable'.)

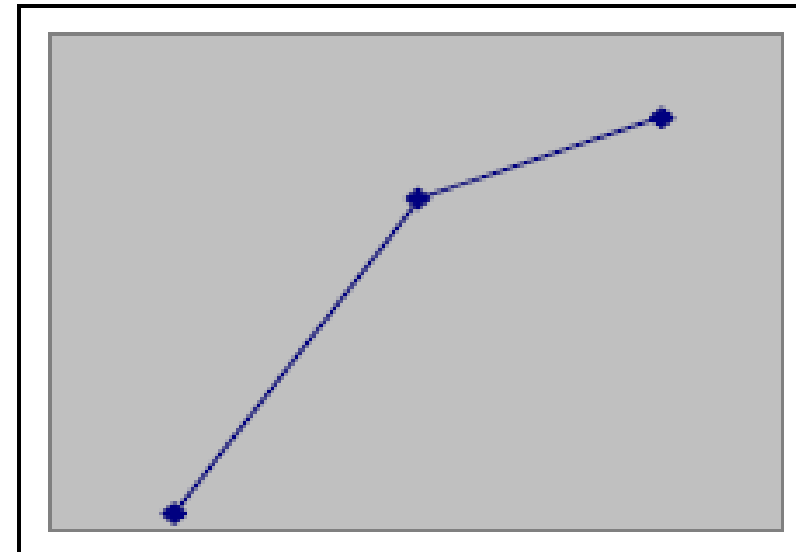
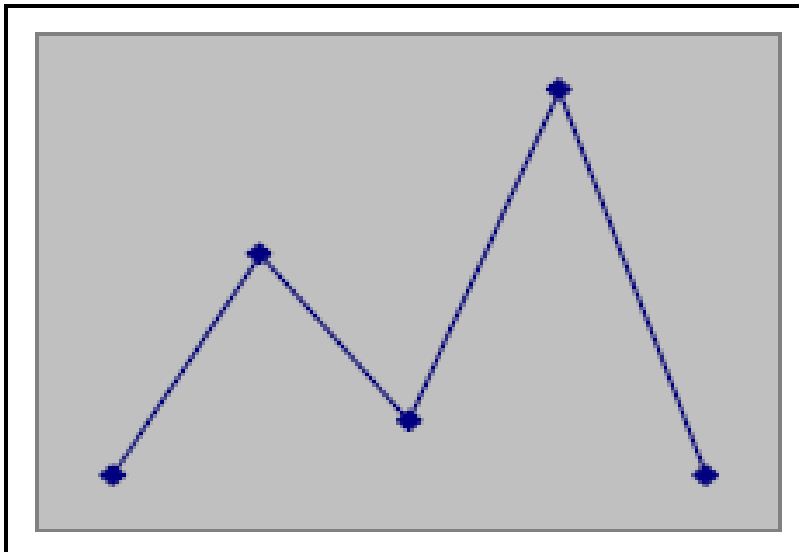
Adverbs	Examples
*approximately	
dramatically	The rate of growth has fallen dramatically.
modestly	Tiger numbers increased modestly over the next decade.
rapidly	The figures for China are increasing rapidly.
robustly	Consumption doubled from 1978 to 1988 and continued to grow robustly during the 1990s.
*sharply	
*slightly	
*steadily	
*steeply	

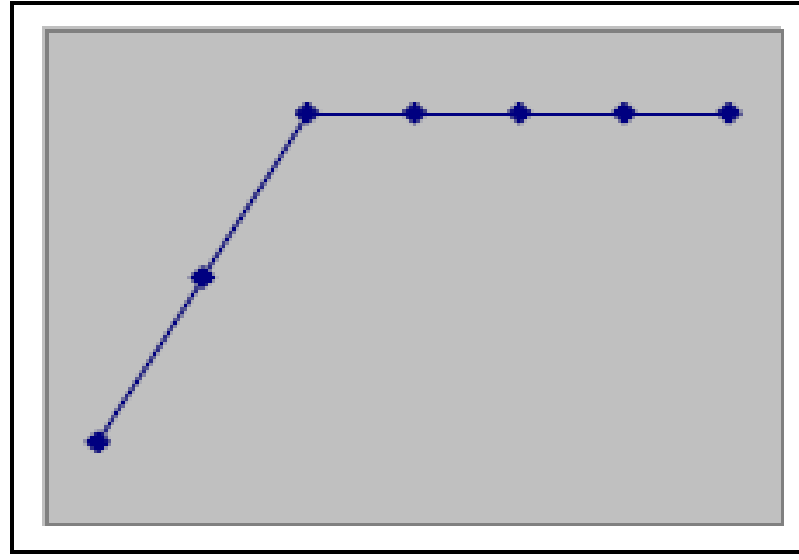
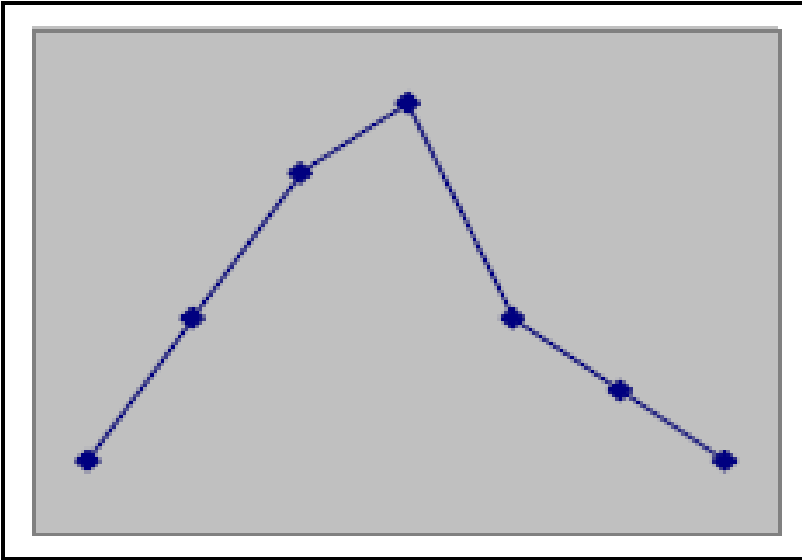
Verbs	Examples
*contain	
*continue	
decline	People's interest continued to decline as computer sales rose.
depict	The diagram depicts the process of turning waste paper into animal feed.
decrease	Numbers continued to decrease throughout the century.
dip	Sales dipped for the next two years before recovering strongly in 1998.

drop	The numbers of premature deaths from smoking dropped for the first time in 2005.
fall	Prices fell for the first time in 2004.
*illustrate	
*increase	
level out	Production figures levelled out over the next decade.
maintain	Growth was maintained for the next five years.
project	It is projected that by 2050 there will be only half the number of species of mammal alive that there are now.
*reach	
remain	The situation remained the same for a few years before a gradual decline set in.
*refer	
*rise	

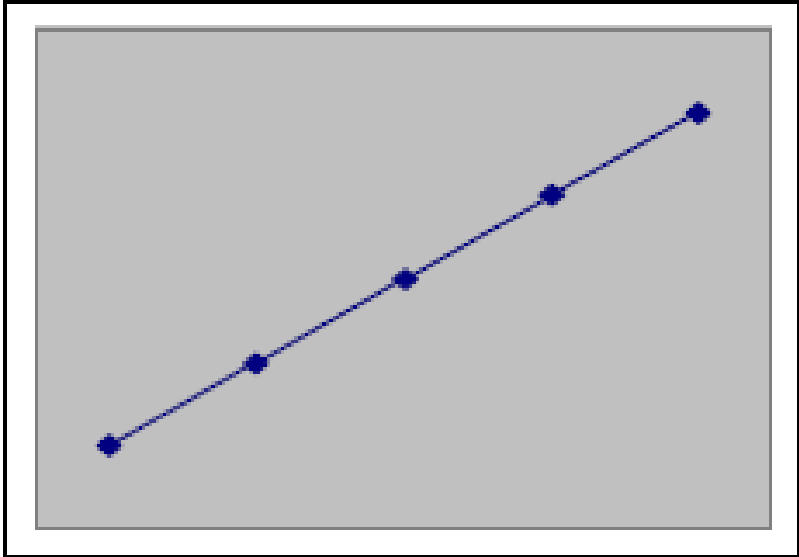
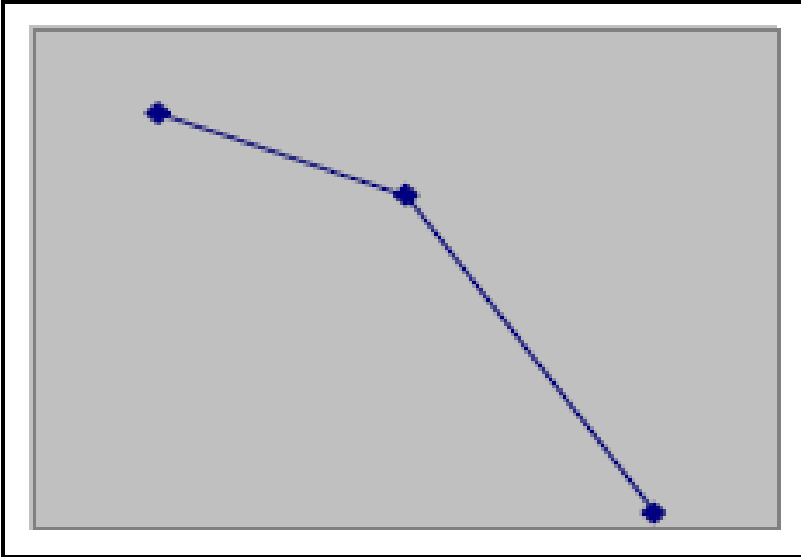
*show	
*stabilize	
stay	The situation has remained much the same over the last three years, but is projected to change in the coming decade.
surge	Property values surged in the following year.

## Activity 5.3 (p.11)









## Activity 5.4 (p.12)

1 There was a gradual increase until numbers reached a p\_\_\_\_\_ in 1967.

2 The number of applicants continued to c\_\_\_\_\_ throughout the 1980s.

3 After years of stability, there was suddenly a period of f\_\_\_\_\_ and uncertainty.

## Activity 5.4

4 In recent years, there has been a d\_\_\_\_\_ rise in the number of females entering the profession.

5 As we can o\_\_\_\_\_ from the figures, there are now more tourists coming from South East Asia than from any other region.

6 Levels of activity remained s\_\_\_\_\_ throughout 1998 and 1999.

7 The p\_\_\_\_\_ of development accelerated in the mid-20th century.

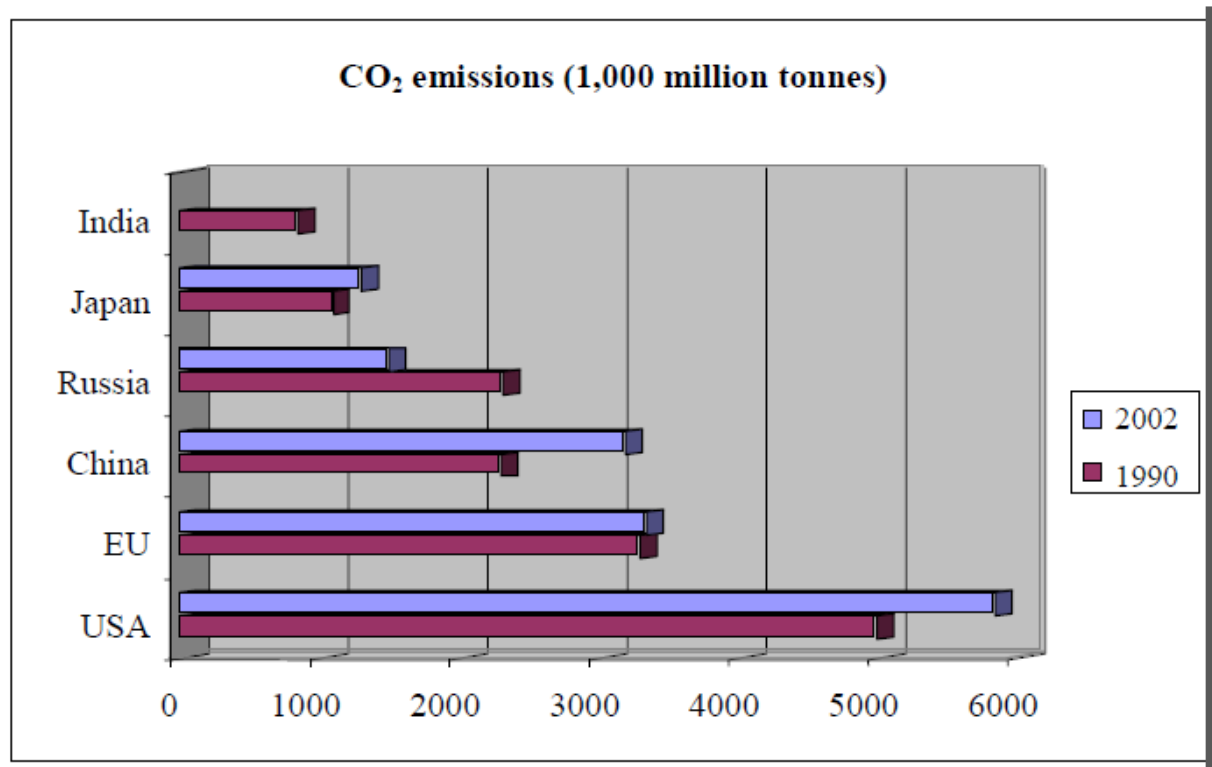
## Activity 5.4

8 Apart from some t\_\_\_\_\_ fluctuations, there have been no real changes in the situation over the last decade.

9 The data r\_\_\_\_\_ to the world's oil reserves.

10 There was a sudden s\_\_\_\_\_ in inflation in the late 1970s.

# Activity 5.5 (p.15)



Complete the description of the chart, using the words in the box.

declined	figures	increased	rate	significant
development	growing	rapidly	shows	stable

## Activity 5.5 (p.15)

The chart (1) \_\_\_\_\_ carbon dioxide emissions of five major countries and the European Union, and their (2) \_\_\_\_\_ over a recent 12-year period.

A number of (3) \_\_\_\_\_ points can be made about the (4) \_\_\_\_\_. Firstly, the United States was the largest emitter of carbon dioxide. It emitted more or less double the amount produced by the European Union (EU). Furthermore, the United States' (5) \_\_\_\_\_ of emission was (6) \_\_\_\_\_ fast. In the 12-year period covered by the graph, it (7) \_\_\_\_\_ its emissions by nearly 20%.

## Activity 5.5 (p.15)

During this same period, the Europeans managed to hold their emissions more or less steady. The figures for China were increasing (8) \_\_\_\_\_ and China was fast drawing equal to the EU. Japan was producing about a fifth as much CO<sub>2</sub> as the USA and was keeping the figure fairly (9) \_\_\_\_\_ Russia's emissions actually (10) \_\_\_\_\_ sharply.

The information about India is limited and we cannot really draw any conclusions from it except that the country was another potential source of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

# Organization (p.16)

Begin with **an overview**.

Write in **coherent paragraphs** (do not use bullet points).

Do not use an inappropriate form of text such as a letter or a speech.

Give paragraphs **clear topic sentences**.

Organize your paragraphs according to **what is significant in the data** (do not just recount the figures; look for interesting points).

**Support** your general points with **information or data from the graph**.



# Avoiding explanation (p.16)

Your role in Task 1 is to give a **neutral interpretation of the data** and **avoid commenting** on it. (X I think/ I think/ It is believed that/ because...)

**Adverbials** such as *sadly, luckily or disgracefully* have **no** place here.

Nor do we need to **explain the data. NO NEED**

**World knowledge** also tells us that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dislocation that followed it explains the fall in CO2 emissions rather than any strong ecological effort, but it is **not necessary to mention** this in describing the graph in Activity 5.5.

## Activity 5.6 (p.17)

Look at the chart below.

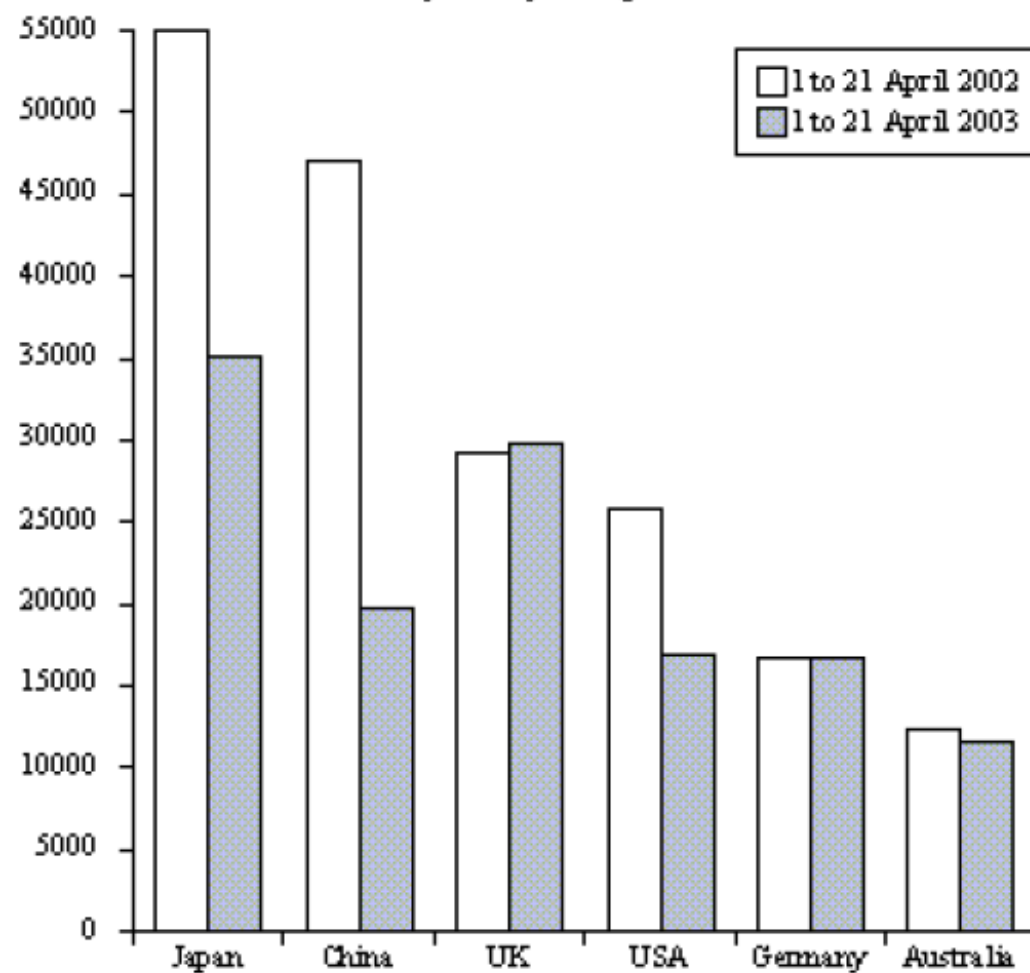
Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Use at least 150 words.

Try to note places where **different trends emerge and contrasts exist**.

20 minutes + check together

**Tourist arrivals to BKK International Airport April 1-21 year on year**  
By country of origin



Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand

## Activity 5.6 (p.17) (Suggested key)

The chart shows the numbers of tourists arriving at Bangkok International Airport according to their country of origin. The figures refer to the first three weeks in April in 2002 and 2003. ↵

The chart allows us to compare changes in the situation in the two years and to see how different sources of tourists were affected. The main trend was for the number of tourists entering Thailand to drop quite sharply in 2003, compared to the previous year. ↵

This was most apparent in the case of Far Eastern tourists, and most dramatic in the case of Chinese tourists, whose numbers declined by over 50%. The numbers of Japanese tourists, the largest group overall, also declined sharply by over 30%. A similar pattern was seen for the United States. ↵

On the other hand, the European and Australian tourist market continued to flourish with the United Kingdom actually going against the trend with a slightly higher number of tourists arriving in 2003. ↵

**For Self-revision:**

**Comparison of graphs: (p.17-20)**

**Some other types of graphical information  
(p.21-23)**

💣💣 Extra slides of Task 1 from Hazal

# Structure of Task 1 (150-180 words)

**Introduction:** (1) an opening sentence explaining what the graph is about and  
(2) one or two sentences describing the \_\_\_\_\_ trend (Overview)



**Body 1:** first main fact and \_\_\_\_\_ details relating to overall trend



**Body 2:** second main fact and \_\_\_\_\_ details relating to overall trend



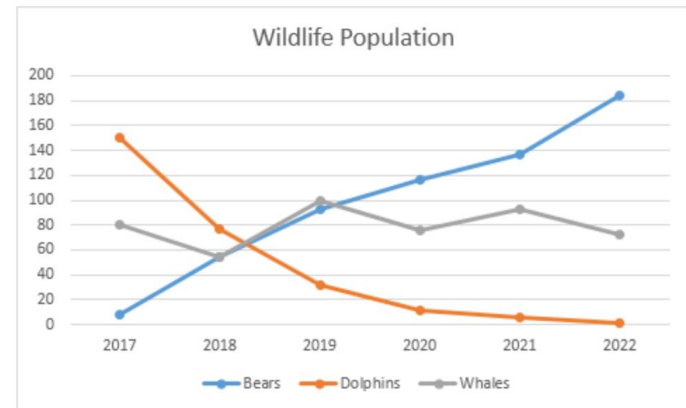
**1-line summary:** paraphrase/ echo your overview and a quick wrap-up

# Describing Trends

## Verbs and nouns

Place the verbs below in the correct boxes, according to the direction of the trend they describe.

decreased (to)	increased (to)	remained steady (at)
fell (to)	dipped (to)	climbed (to)
stayed constant (at)	went up (to)	remained stable (at)
rose (to)	dropped (to)	maintained the same level
declined (to)	did not change	reduced (to)
went down (to)		



↑ Going up

↓ Going down

~~ The same



# Language: Adjectives & Adverbs

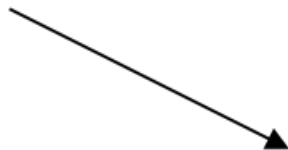
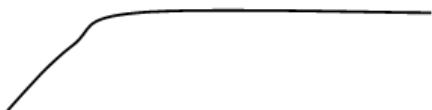
Adjectives	Adverbs	Degree
huge	(no adverb form)	Very large
enormous	-ly	Very large
dramatic	dramatically	Very large
sharp	-ly	large
steep	-ly	large
substantial	-ly	large
considerable	considerably	large
rapid	-ly	large
swift	-ly	large
sudden	-ly	large
significant	-ly	large
marked	-ly	large
moderate	-ly	medium
steady	steadily	medium
slight	-ly	Small
minimal	-ly	Very small

# Activity: Graph Description

## Practice

Use both **noun phrases (NP)** and **verb phrases (VP)** to describe the following trends for the exchange rate in 2019.





# Describing Patterns

90%

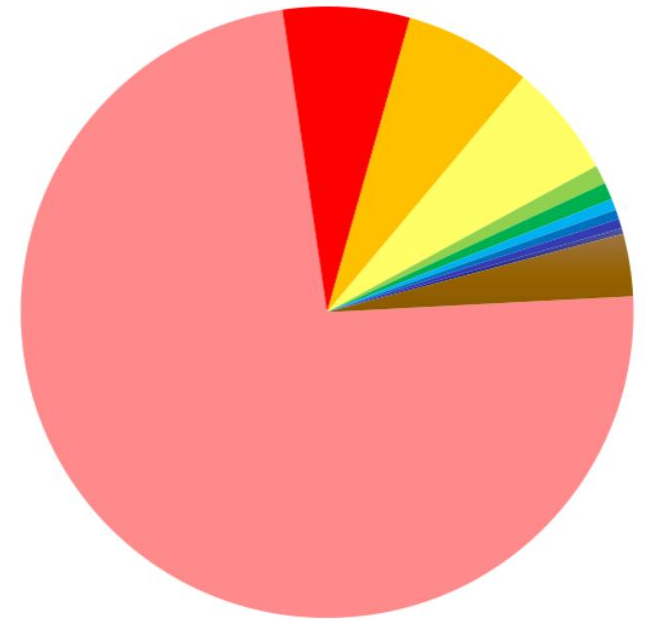
75%

33%

25%

20%

3%

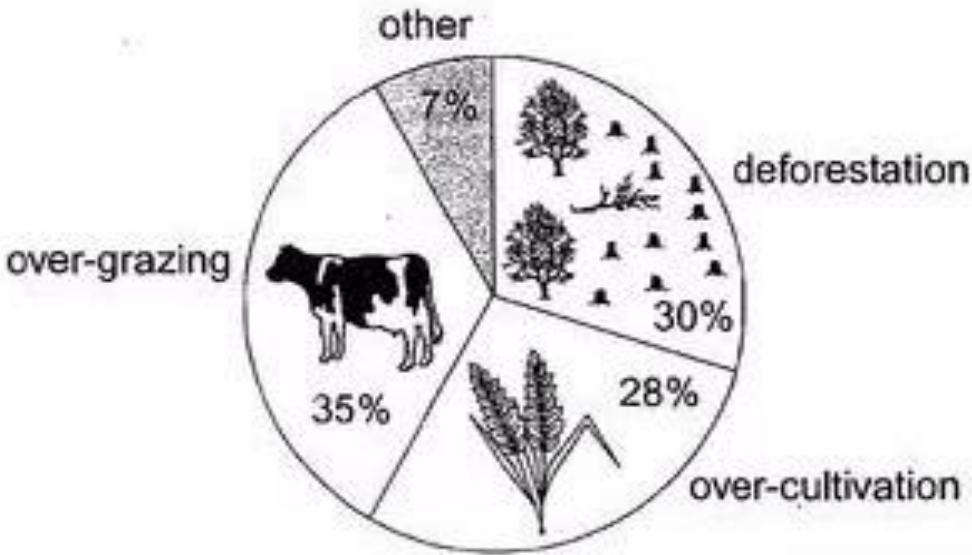


# Understanding Graphs: Pie Chart + Table

Think about:

- 1-2 key patterns from the Pie Chart;
- 1 key data in the Table;
- Which tense to use.

**Causes of worldwide land degradation**



**Causes of land degradation by region**

Region	% land degraded by...			
	deforestation	over-cultivation	over-grazing	Total land degraded
North America	0.2	3.3	1.5	5%
Europe	9.8	7.7	5.5	23%
Oceania*	1.7	0	11.3	13%

\* A large group of islands in the South Pacific including Australia and New Zealand

The pie graph displays the principal causes why farming land deteriorates while the table illustrates how three regions of the planet are affected by these factors. (introductory line)

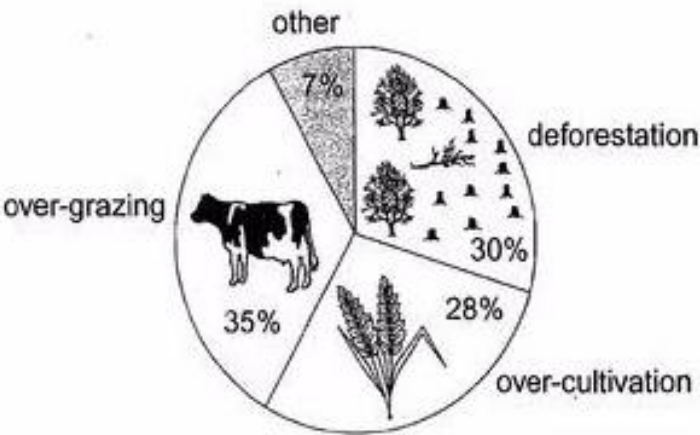
Overall, there are three primary causes of farmland degradation, and over-grazing is the major one. The table shows that Europe has a far higher percentage of unproductive land compared to the other two regions. (overview)

The pie chart represents four causes, with over-grazing representing the biggest proportion at just over a third. Widespread clearing of trees and the over-use of crops constitute nearly one third and just over a quarter respectively. (body 1)

On the other hand, The table shows that nearly one quarter of Europe's entire surface has fallen victim to degeneration. Only a small proportion of North America's total land becomes less productive at 5% and Oceania is marginally higher with a value of 13%. (body 2)

In summary...

Causes of worldwide land degradation



Causes of land degradation by region

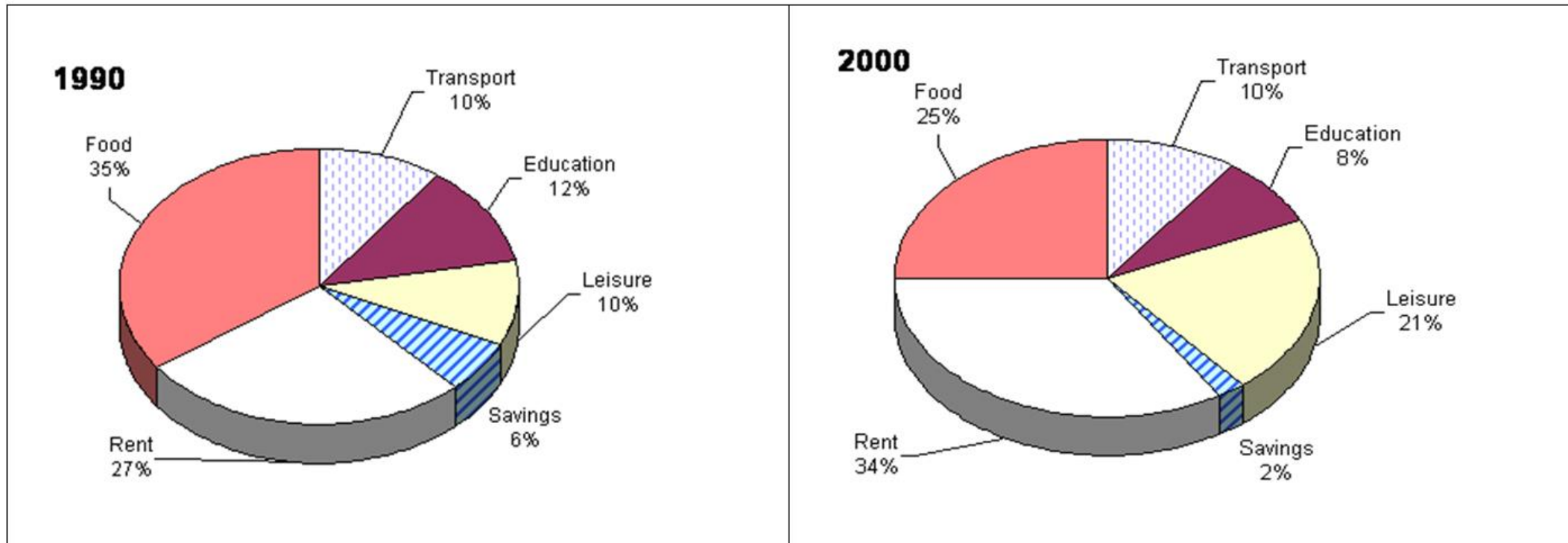
Region	% land degraded by...			
	deforestation	over-cultivation	over-grazing	Total land degraded
rth America	0.2	3.3	1.5	5%
Europe	9.8	7.7	5.5	23%
Oceania*	1.7	0	11.3	13%

large group of islands in the South Pacific including Australia and New Zealand

# Language: Verb Use in Graph Description

✎ Insert appropriate **verbs** in the following description of **UK Family Expenditure, 1990 and 2000**.

**Pie Charts: UK Family Expenditure, 1990 and 2000**

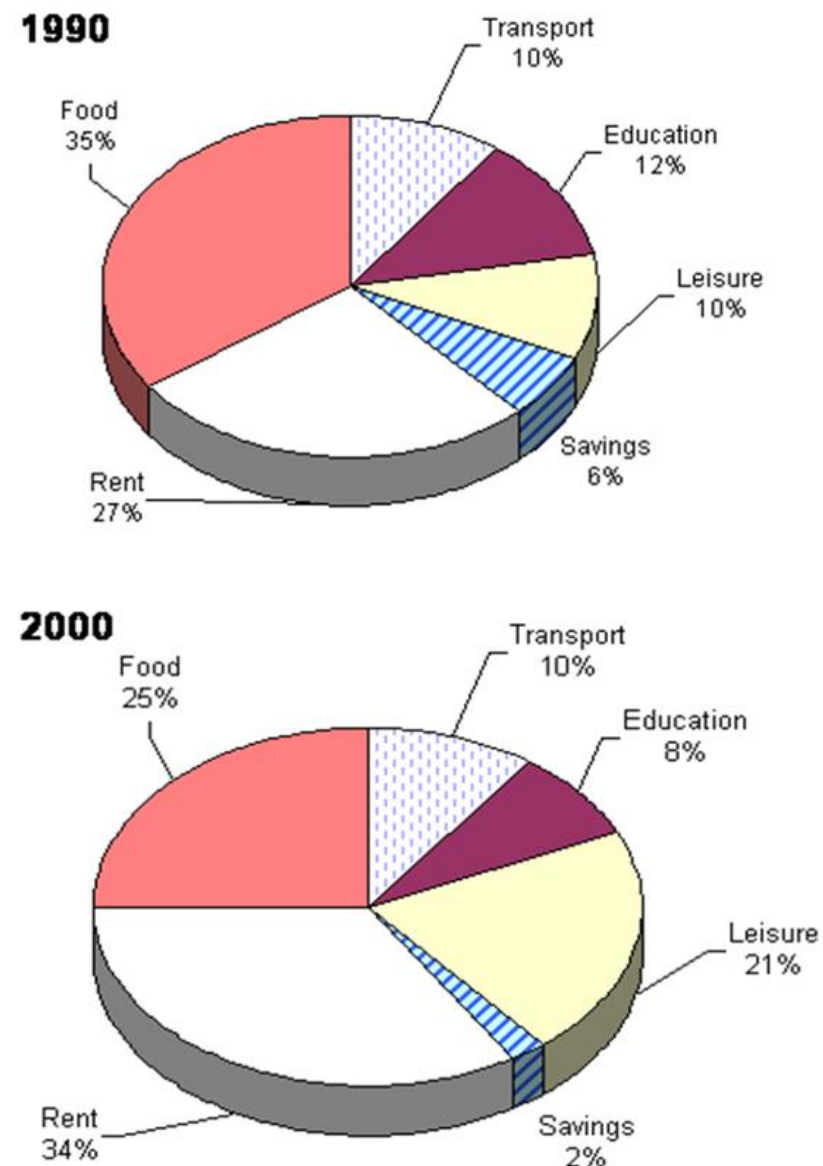


The two pie charts \_\_\_\_\_ changes in the amount of money spent by families in the UK between 1990 and 2000.

Rent \_\_\_\_\_ sharply in the ten-year period. In 1990, it \_\_\_\_\_ for 27% of family expenditure while in 2000, this figure \_\_\_\_\_ to 34%. Spending on leisure also \_\_\_\_\_ significantly from 10% in 1990 to 21% in 2000, more than \_\_\_\_\_ over the ten years.

However, the budget for other areas \_\_\_\_\_ considerably. Food \_\_\_\_\_ up 35% of household spending in 1990 but \_\_\_\_\_ to only 25% in 2000, a fall of almost one-third. Education expenses also \_\_\_\_\_. In 1990, schooling \_\_\_\_\_ 12% of spending but only 8% in 2000. The amount of money saved also \_\_\_\_\_ dramatically, from 6% in 1990 to just 2% ten years later.

Overall, variation on different expenditures was observed over the ten-year period in question.





# Graph Analysis: Line Graph

The graph shows Underground Station passenger numbers in London.

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

You should write at least 150 words. You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.



The line graph demonstrates data on



Please take some time to have **self-revision for crucial points** in the notes.

Take some time **to practise** as well. **(time + hand-write)**

You can send me **extra practice via email/in person** if you want  
**(please quote your name/ class etc.)**