

IELTS Writing Task 1: table

Several people have asked me for help with the following task from Cambridge IELTS book 10.

The tables below give information about sales of Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas in 1999 and 2004 in five European countries.*

Sales of Fairtrade-labelled coffee and bananas (1999 & 2004)

Coffee	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	1.5	20
Switzerland	3	6
Denmark	1.8	2
Belgium	1	1.7
Sweden	0.8	1

Bananas	1999 (millions of euros)	2004 (millions of euros)
UK	15	47
Switzerland	1	5.5
Denmark	0.6	4
Belgium	1.8	1
Sweden	2	0.9

The tables show the amount of money spent on Fairtrade coffee and bananas in two separate years in the UK, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium and Sweden.

It is clear that sales of Fairtrade coffee rose in all five European countries from 1999 to 2004, but sales of Fairtrade bananas only went up in three out of the five countries. Overall, the UK saw by far the highest levels of spending on the two products.

In 1999, Switzerland had the highest sales of Fairtrade coffee, at €3 million, while revenue from Fairtrade bananas was highest in the UK, at €15 million. By 2004, however, sales of Fairtrade coffee in the UK had risen to €20 million, and this was over three times higher than Switzerland's sales figure for Fairtrade coffee in that year. The year 2004 also saw dramatic increases in the money spent on Fairtrade bananas in the UK and Switzerland, with revenues rising by €32 million and €4.5 million respectively.

Sales of the two Fairtrade products were far lower in Denmark, Belgium and Sweden. Small increases in sales of Fairtrade coffee can be seen, but revenue remained at €2 million or below in all three countries in both years. Finally, it is noticeable that the money spent on Fairtrade bananas actually fell in Belgium and Sweden.

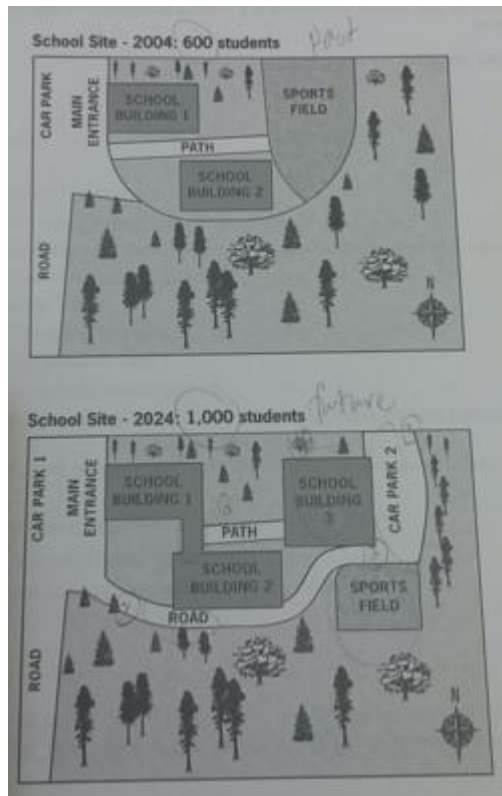
Note:

This report is a bit longer (216 words) than necessary, but I think it's a useful model answer in terms of its structure and the language used.

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'school buildings' answer

Here's my full answer for the task below.

The diagrams below show the site of a school in 2004 and the plan for changes to the school site in 2024.



(Source: Official IELTS Practice Materials 2)

The two pictures compare the layout of a school as it was in the year 2004 with a proposed site design for the year 2024.

It is clear that the main change for 2024 involves the addition of a new school building. The school will then be able to accommodate a considerably larger number of students.

In 2004, there were 600 pupils attending the school, and the two school buildings were separated by a path running from the main entrance to the sports field. By 2024, it is expected that there will be 1000 pupils, and a third building will have been constructed. Furthermore, the plan is to join the two original buildings together, creating a shorter path that links the buildings only.

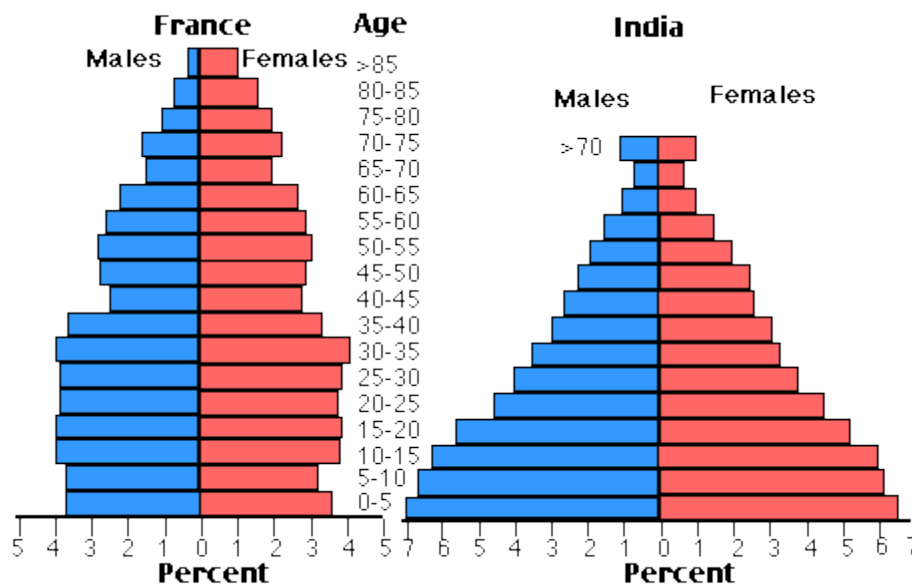
As the third building and a second car park will be built on the site of the original sports field, a new, smaller sports field will need to be laid. A new road will also be built from the main entrance to the second car park. Finally, no changes will be made to the main entrance and original car park.

(183 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'age distribution' answer

Here's my full report for the question below. I found this one difficult, so don't worry if you did too!

The charts below compare the age structure of the populations of France and India in 1984.



The two charts compare the populations of France and India in terms of age distribution by gender in the year 1984.

It is clear that the population of India was younger than that of France in 1984, with a noticeably larger proportion of people aged under 20. France, on the other hand, had a significantly larger percentage of elderly inhabitants.

In India, close to 14% of people were aged 5 or under, and each five-year age bracket above this contained an increasingly smaller proportion of the population. France's population, by contrast, was more evenly distributed across the age ranges, with similar figures (around 7% to 8% of all people) for each five-year cohort between the ages of 0 and 40. Somewhere between 10% and 15% of all French people were aged 70 or older, but the equivalent figure for India was only 2%.

Looking more closely at gender, there was a noticeably higher proportion of French women than men in every cohort from age 50 upwards. For example, almost 3% of French 70- to 75-year-olds were women, while just under 2% were men. No significant gender differences can be seen on the Indian population chart.

(199 words, band 9)

Note:

Can you see how I grouped the information in paragraphs 3 and 4?

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart answer

A few people asked me to put the 'waste' pie chart paragraphs together in one place. So here's the full report that my students and I wrote. You can see the pie charts by clicking [here](#).

The pie charts below show how dangerous waste products are dealt with in three countries.

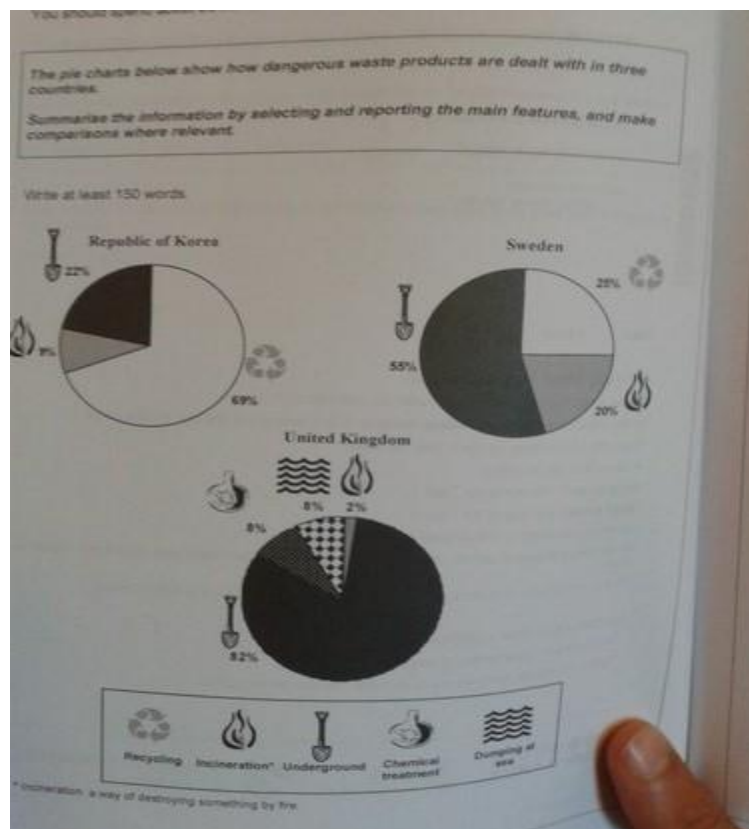
The charts compare Korea, Sweden and the UK in terms of the methods used in each country to dispose of harmful waste.

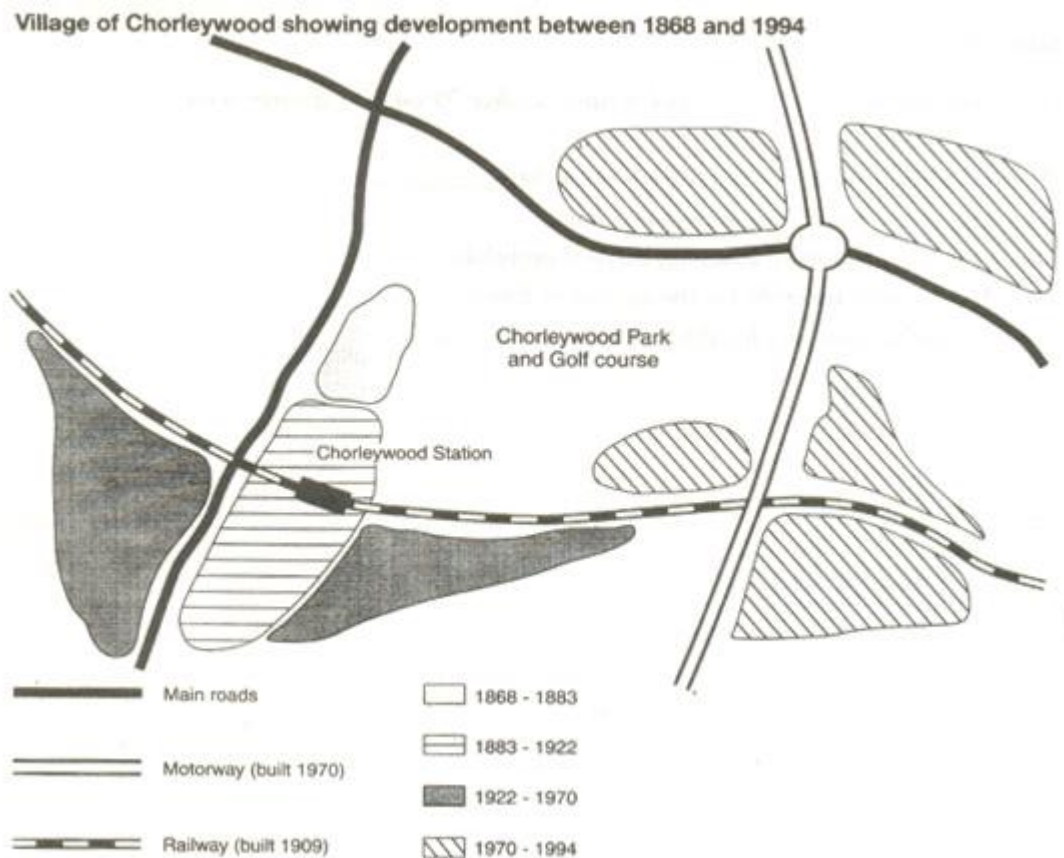
It is clear that in both the UK and Sweden, the majority of dangerous waste products are buried underground. By contrast, most hazardous materials in the Republic of Korea are recycled.

Looking at the information in more detail, we can see that 82% of the UK's dangerous waste is put into landfill sites. This disposal technique is used for 55% of the harmful waste in Sweden and only 22% of similar waste in Korea. The latter country recycles 69% of hazardous materials, which is far more than the other two nations.

While 25% of Sweden's dangerous waste is recycled, the UK does not recycle at all. Instead, it dumps waste at sea or treats it chemically. These two methods are not employed in Korea or Sweden, which favour incineration for 9% and 20% of dangerous waste respectively.

(159 words, band 9)





The map shows the growth of a village called Chorleywood between 1868 and 1994.

It is clear that the village grew as the transport infrastructure was improved. Four periods of development are shown on the map, and each of the populated areas is near to the main roads, the railway or the motorway.

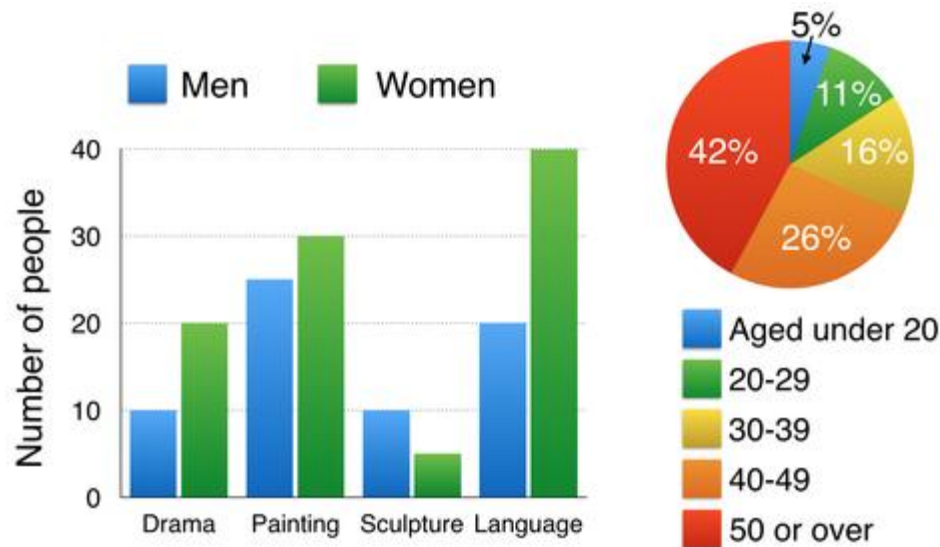
From 1868 to 1883, Chorleywood covered a small area next to one of the main roads. Chorleywood Park and Golf Course is now located next to this original village area. The village grew along the main road to the south between 1883 and 1922, and in 1909 a railway line was built crossing this area from west to east. Chorleywood station is in this part of the village.

The expansion of Chorleywood continued to the east and west alongside the railway line until 1970. At that time, a motorway was built to the east of the village, and from 1970 to 1994, further development of the village took place around motorway intersections with the railway and one of the main roads.

IELTS Writing Task 1: two different charts

I'm in the process of making a video lesson about the question below. It should be ready today or tomorrow.

The bar chart below shows the numbers of men and women attending various evening courses at an adult education centre in the year 2009. The pie chart gives information about the ages of these course participants.



Task:

Last week I recommended that you aim to write [9 sentences](#) for your task 1 report. Think about the 9-sentence structure for the question above.

IELTS Writing Task 1: the 'selecting' skill

One of the key skills when describing a graph, chart or table is *selecting*.

In the table below, for example, which 2 main points would you select for your summary? And how many of the 20 numbers would you manage to include in your 'details' paragraphs?

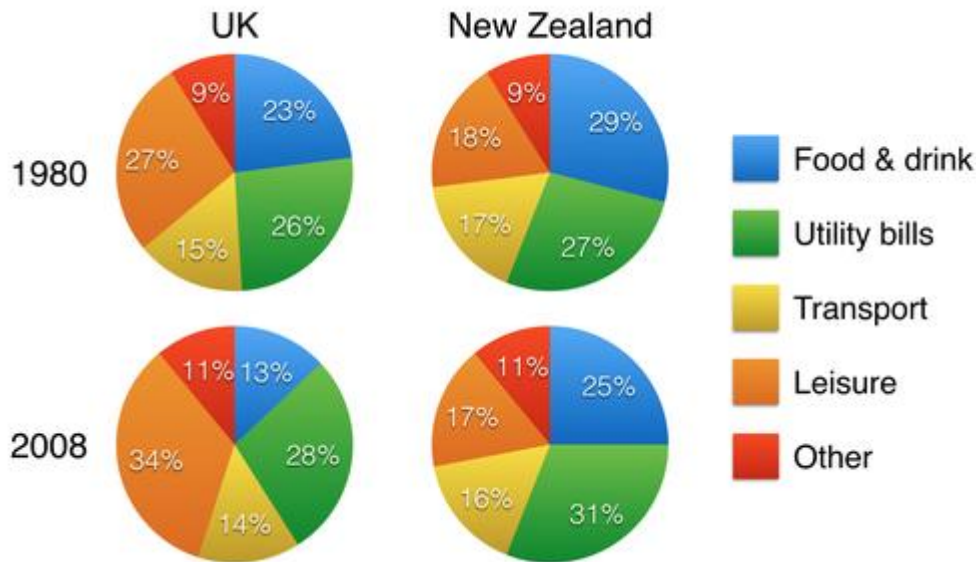
Country	Number of tourists, 2012 (millions)	Number of tourists, 2013 (millions)	Tourist spending, 2012	Tourist spending, 2013
France	83.0	84.7	\$53.6 billion	\$56.1 billion
USA	66.7	69.8	\$126.2 billion	\$139.6 billion
Spain	57.5	60.7	\$56.3 billion	\$60.4 billion
China	57.7	55.7	\$50.0 billion	\$51.7 billion
Italy	46.4	47.7	\$41.2 billion	\$43.9 billion

Note: I'm making a video lesson about the table above. It will be ready tomorrow.

IELTS Writing Task 1: pie chart video

I've just published my latest video lesson at the bottom of [this page](#). In the lesson, I explain my approach to describing pie charts, and I work through this question:

The charts below show household spending patterns in two countries between 1980 and 2008.



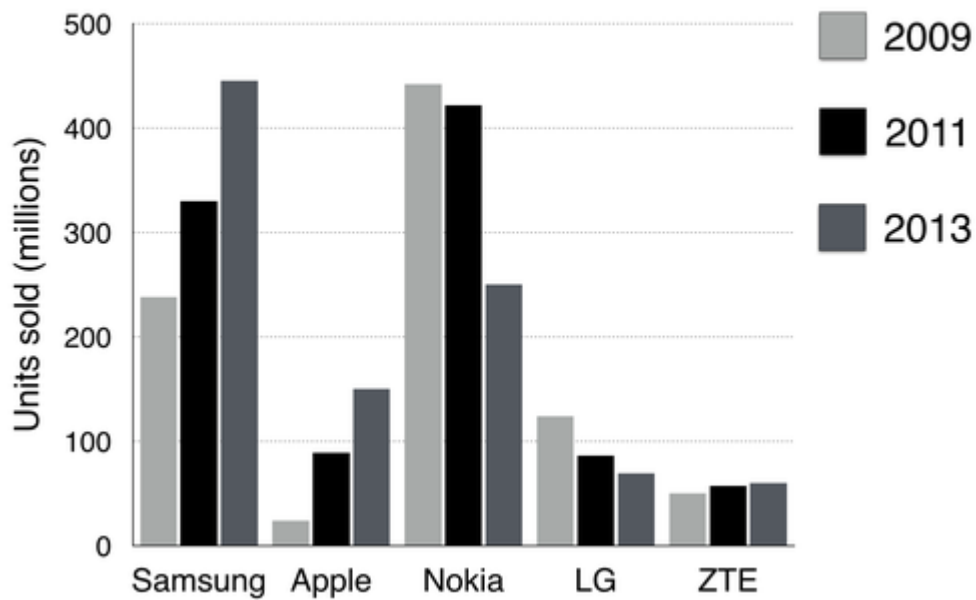
For this question, a key decision to make is how to divide the information into two 'details' paragraphs. You have three choices:

1. Write one paragraph about each year
2. Write one paragraph about each country
3. Group the information according to category (e.g. food and drink with utility bills in paragraph 3, and the other categories in paragraph 4)

Which way would you do it?

The chart below shows global sales of the top five mobile phone brands between 2009 and 2013.

Global mobile phone sales by brand



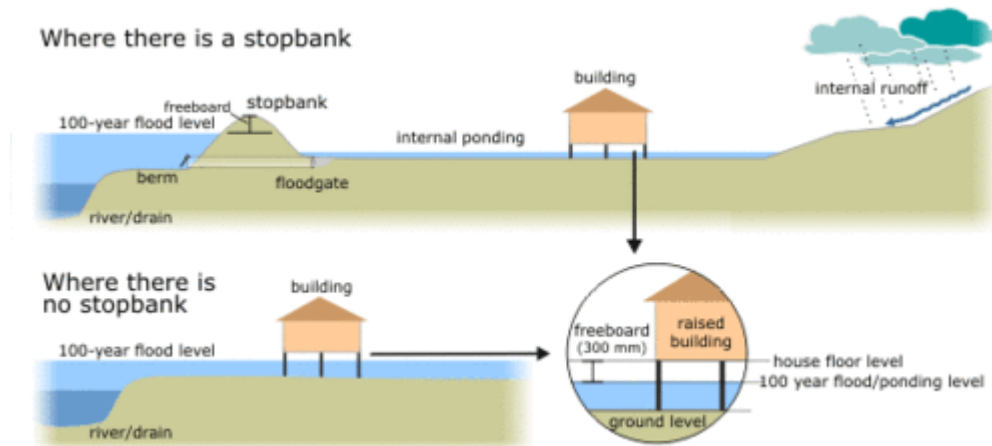
A few things to consider if you try writing a report for this question:

1. What alternative words could you use instead of *global sales*, *mobile phones*, and *brands*?
2. What do you think is the most noticeable feature on the chart?
3. How would you group the information into two 'details' paragraphs?

You can see how I deal with these issues in the video lesson, or you could share your own ideas in the 'comments' area below.

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'flood diagram' answer

The diagrams below show how houses can be protected in areas which are prone to flooding.



Here's my full band 9 report:

The diagrams compare two different methods of defence for homes which are at risk of being flooded.

The key difference between the diagrams is that they show flood protection with and without a stopbank. In either case, the at-risk home is raised on stilts above ground level.

The first diagram shows how a stopbank acts as a flood barrier to stop river water from flooding homes. The stopbank is a small mound of land next to the river that is higher than the 100-year flood level, and prevents the river from bursting its banks. Nearby houses can be built on stilts to prevent flooding from rainwater, and a floodgate beneath the stopbank can be opened to allow this 'ponding' to drain off into the river.

When there is no stopbank, as shown in the second diagram, there will be nothing to stop the river from flooding. In this case, the solution is to put buildings on stilts. The height of the stilts is measured so that the floor of the house is 300mm above the 100-year flood level. This measurement is called the 'freeboard'.

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'waste table' essay

The table below shows the amount of waste production (in millions of tonnes) in six different countries over a twenty-year period.

	1980	1990	2000
Ireland	0.6	*	5
Japan	28	32	53
Korea	*	31	19
Poland	4	5	6.6
Portugal	2	3	5
US	131	151	192

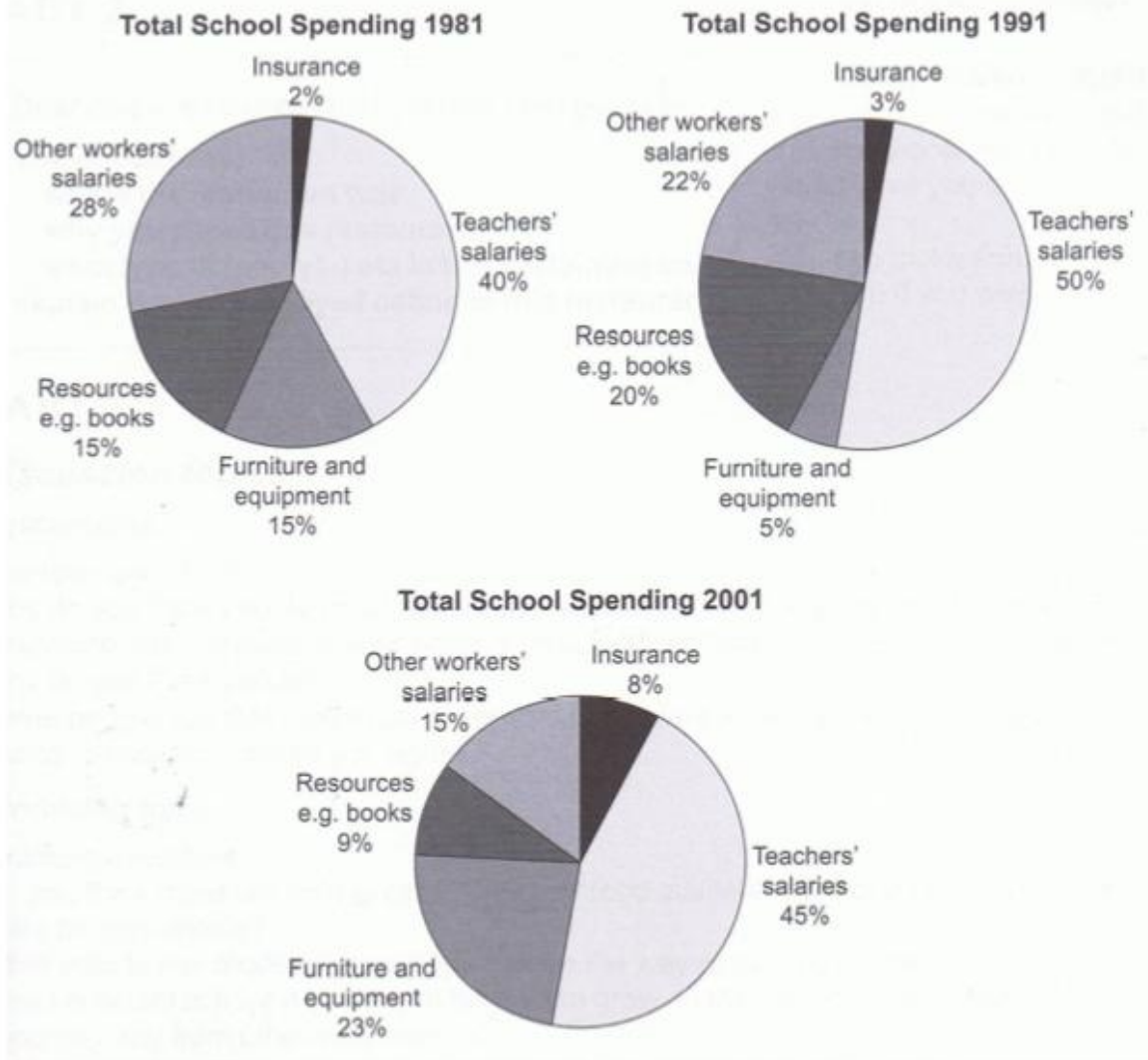
***Figure not available**

The chart compares the amounts of waste that were produced in six countries in the years 1980, 1990 and 2000.

In each of these years, the US produced more waste than Ireland, Japan, Korea, Poland and Portugal combined. It is also noticeable that Korea was the only country that managed to reduce its waste output by the year 2000.

Between 1980 and 2000, waste production in the US rose from 131 to 192 million tonnes, and rising trends were also seen in Japan, Poland and Portugal. Japan's waste output increased from 28 to 53 million tonnes, while Poland and Portugal saw waste totals increase from 4 to 6.6 and from 2 to 5 million tonnes respectively.

The trends for Ireland and Korea were noticeably different from those described above. In Ireland, waste production increased more than eightfold, from only 0.6 million tonnes in 1980 to 5 million tonnes in 2000. Korea, by contrast, cut its waste output by 12 million tonnes between 1990 and 2000.



IELTS Writing Task 1: pie charts essay

Here's my full essay for the [3 pie charts](#) question that we've been looking at over the last two weeks:

The pie charts compare the expenditure of a school in the UK in three different years over a 20-year period.

It is clear that teachers' salaries made up the largest proportion of the school's spending in all three years (1981, 1991 and 2001). By contrast, insurance was the smallest cost in each year.

In 1981, 40% of the school's budget went on teachers' salaries. This figure rose to 50% in 1991, but fell again by 5% in 2001. The proportion of spending on other workers' wages fell steadily over the 20-year period, from 28% of the budget in 1981 to only 15% in 2001.

Expenditure on insurance stood at only 2% of the total in 1981, but reached 8% in 2001. Finally, the percentages for resources and furniture/equipment fluctuated. The figure for resources was highest in 1991, at 20%, and the proportion of spending on furniture and equipment reached its peak in 2001, at 23%.

(158 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: table essay

Here's my full essay, which follows the plan in [last week's lesson](#).

The table below shows changes in the numbers of residents cycling to work in different areas of the UK between 2001 and 2011.

Area	2001	2011	Percentage Change (%)
Inner London	43,494	106,219	144
Brighton and Hove	3,168	6,635	109
Bristol, City of	8,108	15,768	94
Manchester	4,610	8,426	83
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,781	3,223	81
Sheffield	2,365	4,267	80
Cardiff	3,514	5,791	65
Gateshead	816	1,314	61
Exeter	2,304	3,542	54
Leeds	4,189	6,237	49
Liverpool	2,686	3,970	48
Outer London	33,836	49,070	45

The table compares the numbers of people who cycled to work in twelve areas of the UK in the years 2001 and 2011.

Overall, the number of UK commuters who travelled to work by bicycle rose considerably over the 10-year period. Inner London had by far the highest number of cycling commuters in both years.

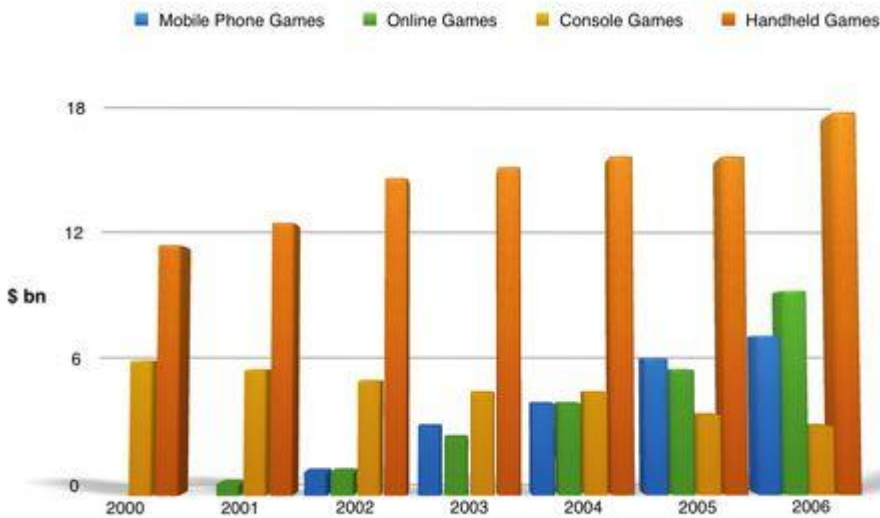
In 2001, well over 43 thousand residents of inner London commuted by bicycle, and this figure rose to more than 106 thousand in 2011, an increase of 144%. By contrast, although outer London had the second highest number of cycling commuters in each year, the percentage change, at only 45%, was the lowest of the twelve areas shown in the table.

Brighton and Hove saw the second biggest increase (109%) in the number of residents cycling to work, but Bristol was the UK's second city in terms of total numbers of cycling commuters, with 8,108 in 2001 and 15,768 in 2011. Figures for the other eight areas were below the 10 thousand mark in both years.

(172 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart

The bar graph shows the global sales (in billions of dollars) of different types of digital games between 2000 and 2006.



Here's the first half of my model answer, the introduction and overview:

The bar chart compares the turnover in dollars from sales of video games for four different platforms, namely mobile phones, online, consoles and handheld devices, from 2000 to 2006.

It is clear that sales of games for three out of the four platforms rose each year, leading to a significant rise in total global turnover over the 7-year period. Sales figures for handheld games were at least twice as high as those for any other platform in almost every year.

Here

The bar chart compares the turnover in dollars from sales of video games for four different platforms, namely mobile phones, online, consoles and handheld devices, from 2000 to 2006.

It is clear that sales of games for three out of the four platforms rose each year, leading to a significant rise in total global turnover over the 7-year period. Sales figures for handheld games were at least twice as high as those for any other platform in almost every year.

In 2000, worldwide sales of handheld games stood at around \$11 billion, while console games earned just under \$6 billion. No figures are given for mobile or online games in that year. Over the next 3 years, sales of handheld video games rose by about \$4 billion, but the figure for consoles decreased by \$2 billion. Mobile phone and online games started to become popular, with sales reaching around \$3 billion in 2003.

In 2006, sales of handheld, online and mobile games reached peaks of 17, 9 and 7 billion dollars respectively. By contrast, turnover from console games dropped to its lowest point, at around \$2.5 billion.

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'hot dog' bar chart

I enjoyed writing today's report about the chart below!

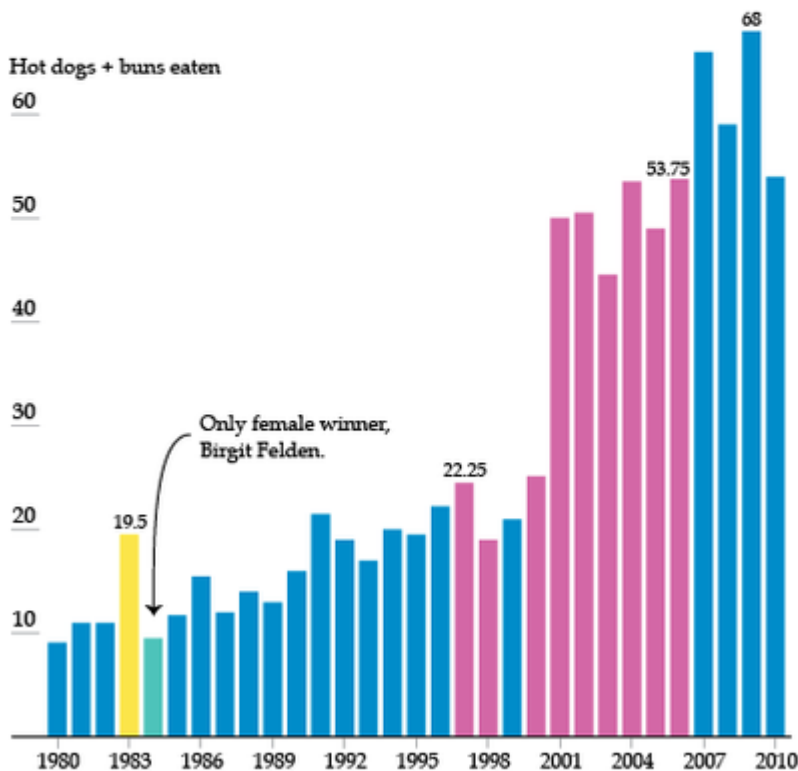
Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest

Nathan's hot dog eating contest is held in Brooklyn's Coney Island every 4th of July. The current record of 68 hot dogs and buns consumed in 15 minutes is held by American Joey Chestnut. Prior to Chestnut's reign, Takeru Kobayashi of Japan won six years in a row.

Winners from:

- US
- Japan
- Mexico
- Germany

Source: Wikipedia | Nathan Yau



Note: I've underlined some good phrases.

The bar chart shows the number of hot dogs and buns eaten in 15 minutes by the winners of 'Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest' in Brooklyn, USA between 1980 and 2010.

It is noticeable that the number of hot dogs and buns eaten by winners of the contest increased dramatically over the period shown. The majority of winners were American or Japanese, and only one woman had ever won the contest.

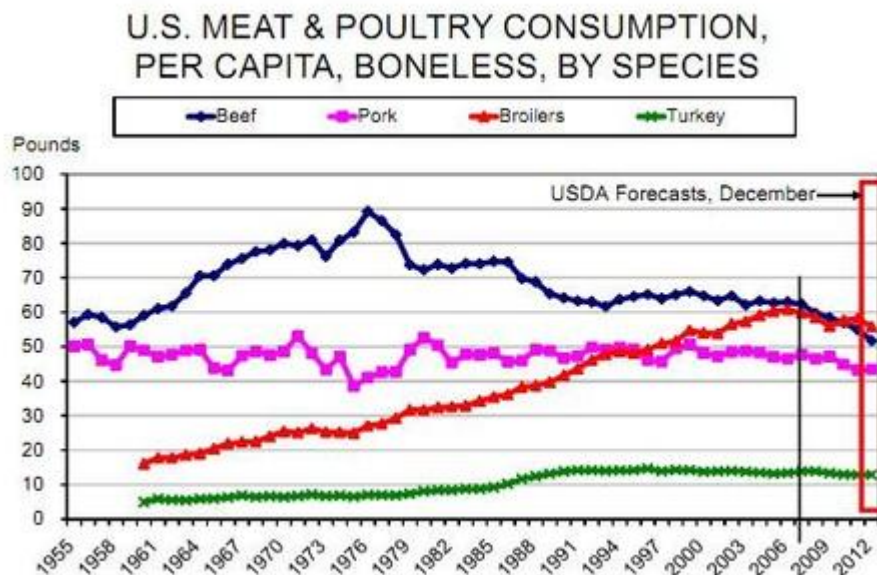
Americans dominated the contest from 1980 to 1996, and the winning number of hot dogs and buns consumed rose from only 8 to around 21 during that time. 1983 and 1984 were notable exceptions to the trend for American winners. In 1983 a Mexican won the contest after eating 19.5 hot dogs, almost double the amount that any previous winner had eaten, and 1984 saw the only female winner, Birgit Felden from Germany.

A Japanese contestant, Takeru Kobayashi, reigned as hot dog eating champion for six years from 2001 to 2006. Kobayashi's winning totals of around 50 hot dogs were roughly double the amount that any previous winner had managed. However, the current champion, American Joey Chestnut, took hot dog eating to new heights in 2009 when he consumed an incredible 68 hot dogs and buns in the allotted 15 minutes.

IELTS Writing Task 1: specific details

Last week I wrote an introduction and an overview for the graph below. Today I'm going to describe specific details.

The graph below shows trends in US meat and poultry consumption.



(Note: I'm ignoring the forecast and treating 2012 as a past year)

Between 1955 and 1976, US beef consumption rose from around 60 to a peak of 90 pounds per person per year. During the same period, consumption of broilers also rose, to nearly 30 pounds per person, while the figures for pork fluctuated between 50 and 40 pounds per person. Turkey was by far the least popular meat, with figures below 10 pounds per capita each year.

By 2012, the amount of beef consumed by the average American had plummeted to around 50 pounds, but the consumption of broilers had doubled since the 1970s, to approximately 55 pounds per capita. By contrast, there were no significant changes in the trends for pork and turkey consumption over the period as a whole.

Task:

Analyse the above paragraphs carefully. Look at which figures I decided to include, the language used for comparisons, and the way I divided the description into two separate paragraphs.

IELTS Writing Task 1: bar chart essay

Here's my full band 9 essay for [last week's question](#):

The bar chart compares consumer spending on six different items in Germany, Italy, France and Britain.

It is clear that British people spent significantly more money than people in the other three countries on all six goods. Of the six items, consumers spent the most money on photographic film.

People in Britain spent just over £170,000 on photographic film, which is the highest figure shown on the chart. By contrast, Germans were the lowest overall spenders, with roughly the same figures (just under £150,000) for each of the six products.

The figures for spending on toys were the same in both France and Italy, at nearly £160,000. However, while French people spent more than Italians on photographic film and CDs, Italians paid out more for personal stereos, tennis racquets and perfumes. The amount spent by French people on tennis racquets, around £145,000, is the lowest figure shown on the chart.

Note:

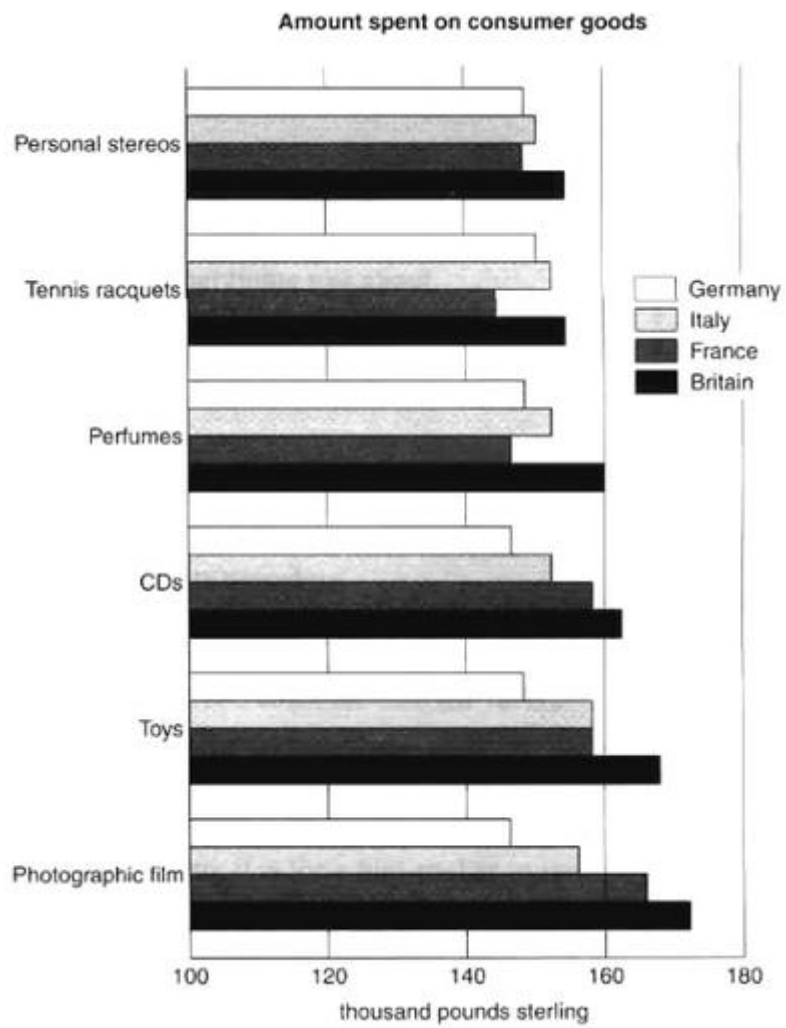
- I tried to keep the essay short (154 words) by selecting carefully.
- It's difficult to change *spend*, but I used *spending*, *spenders* and *paid out*.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Writing Task 1](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(40\)](#)

Thursday, June 09, 2011

IELTS Writing Task 1: selecting

The following bar chart has a total of 24 bars. It's impossible to describe 24 pieces of information in only 20 minutes, so you need to *select*.

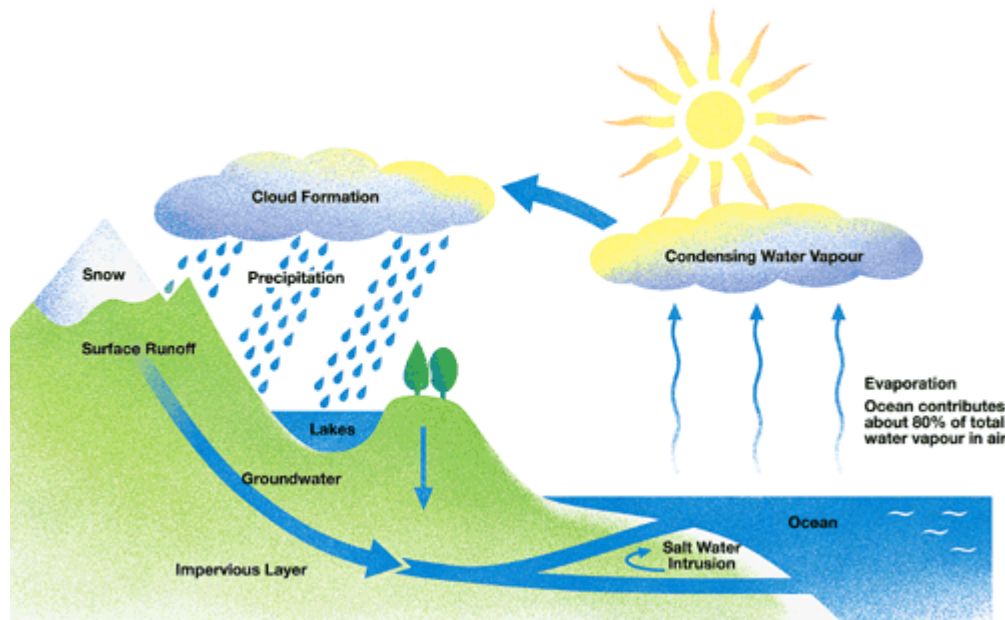


A simple rule is to select at least one key thing about each country. Here are some examples:

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'water cycle' essay

Several people have asked me for the full essay for this question, so here it is!

The diagram below shows the water cycle, which is the continuous movement of water on, above and below the surface of the Earth.



The picture illustrates the way in which water passes from ocean to air to land during the natural process known as the water cycle.

Three main stages are shown on the diagram. Ocean water evaporates, falls as rain, and eventually runs back into the oceans again.

Beginning at the evaporation stage, we can see that 80% of water vapour in the air comes from the oceans. Heat from the sun causes water to evaporate, and water vapour condenses to form clouds. At the second stage, labelled 'precipitation' on the diagram, water falls as rain or snow.

At the third stage in the cycle, rainwater may take various paths. Some of it may fall into lakes or return to the oceans via 'surface runoff'. Otherwise, rainwater may filter through the ground, reaching the impervious layer of the earth. Salt water intrusion is shown to take place just before groundwater passes into the oceans to complete the cycle.

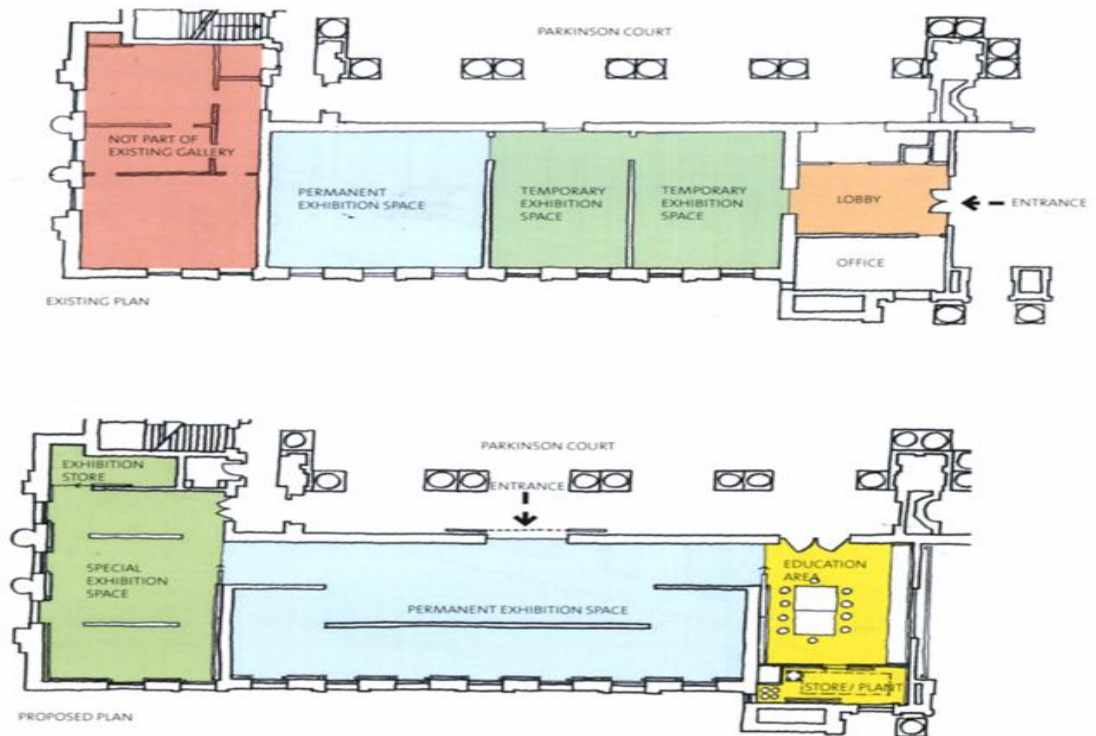
(156 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'before and after' diagram

Several students have asked for help with the following type of question.

The diagrams below are existing and proposed floor plans for the redevelopment of an art gallery.

(click on the diagram to enlarge it)



The first picture shows the layout of an art gallery, and the second shows some proposed changes to the gallery space.

It is clear that significant changes will be made in terms of the use of floor space in the gallery. There will be a completely new entrance and more space for exhibitions.

At present, visitors enter the gallery through doors which lead into a lobby. However, the plan is to move the entrance to the Parkinson Court side of the building, and visitors will walk straight into the exhibition area. In place of the lobby and office areas, which are shown on the existing plan, the new gallery plan shows an education area and a small storage area.

The permanent exhibition space in the redeveloped gallery will be about twice as large as it is now because it will occupy the area that is now used for temporary exhibitions. There will also be a new room for special exhibitions. This room is shown in red on the existing plan and is not currently part of the gallery.

(178 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: four pie charts essay

Here is my full essay for a question about 4 pie charts.

Cambridge IELTS book 7, page 101:

The pie charts compare the amount of electricity produced using five different sources of fuel in two countries over two separate years.

Total electricity production increased dramatically from 1980 to 2000 in both Australia and France. While the totals for both countries were similar, there were big differences in the fuel sources used.

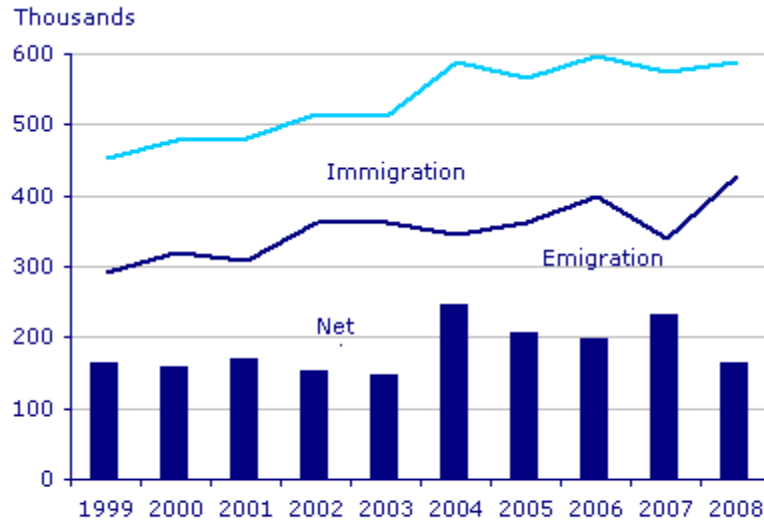
Coal was used to produce 50 of the total 100 units of electricity in Australia in 1980, rising to 130 out of 170 units in 2000. By contrast, nuclear power became the most important fuel source in France in 2000, producing almost 75% of the country's electricity.

Australia depended on hydro power for just under 25% of its electricity in both years, but the amount of electricity produced using this type of power fell from 5 to only 2 units in France. Oil, on the other hand, remained a relatively important fuel source in France, but its use declined in Australia. Both countries relied on natural gas for electricity production significantly more in 1980 than in 2000.

(170 words)

IELTS Writing Task 1: sample essay (migration)

Read my full essay for the chart below. How have I organised the information? What language have I used to explain *changes* and to make *comparisons*?



Long-Term International Migration, UK, 1999-2008

Full essay (159 words):

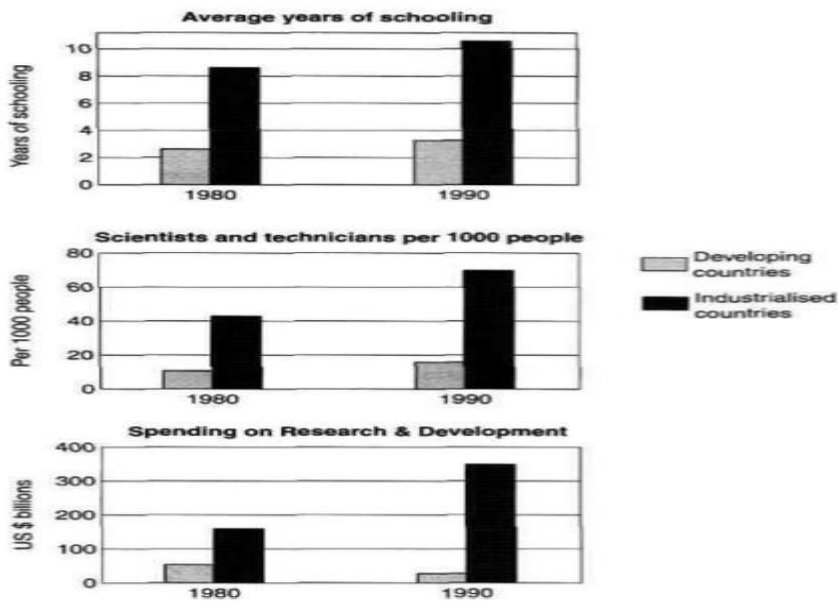
The chart gives information about UK immigration, emigration and net migration between 1999 and 2008.

Both immigration and emigration rates rose over the period shown, but the figures for immigration were significantly higher. Net migration peaked in 2004 and 2007.

In 1999, over 450,000 people came to live in the UK, while the number of people who emigrated stood at just under 300,000. The figure for net migration was around 160,000, and it remained at a similar level until 2003. From 1999 to 2004, the immigration rate rose by nearly 150,000 people, but there was a much smaller rise in emigration. Net migration peaked at almost 250,000 people in 2004.

After 2004, the rate of immigration remained high, but the number of people emigrating fluctuated. Emigration fell suddenly in 2007, before peaking at about 420,000 people in 2008. As a result, the net migration figure rose to around 240,000 in 2007, but fell back to around 160,000 in 2008.

The charts below show the levels of participation in education and science in developing and industrialised countries in 1980 and 1990.



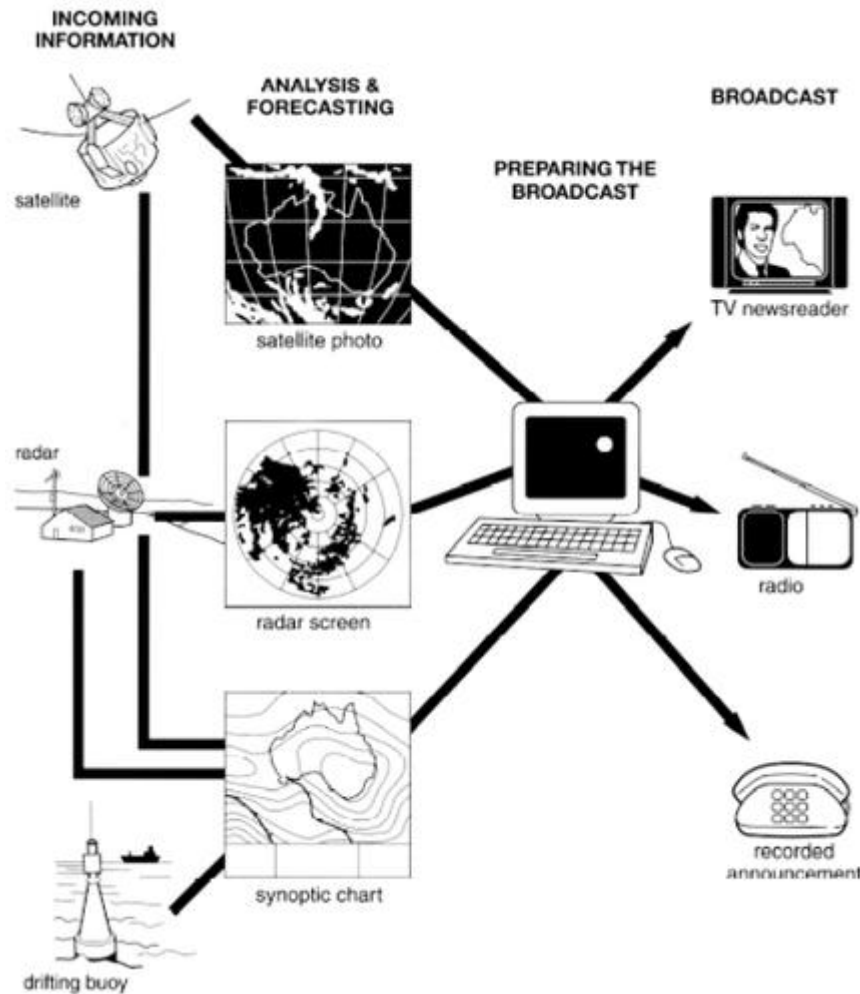
The three bar charts show average years of schooling, numbers of scientists and technicians, and research and development spending in developing and developed countries. Figures are given for 1980 and 1990.

It is clear from the charts that the figures for developed countries are much higher than those for developing nations. Also, the charts show an overall increase in participation in education and science from 1980 to 1990.

People in developing nations attended school for an average of around 3 years, with only a slight increase in years of schooling from 1980 to 1990. On the other hand, the figure for industrialised countries rose from nearly 9 years of schooling in 1980 to nearly 11 years in 1990.

From 1980 to 1990, the number of scientists and technicians in industrialised countries almost doubled to about 70 per 1000 people. Spending on research and development also saw rapid growth in these countries, reaching \$350 billion in 1990. By contrast, the number of science workers in developing countries remained below 20 per 1000 people, and research spending fell from about \$50 billion to only \$25 billion.

The diagram below shows how the Australian Bureau of Meteorology collects up-to-the-minute information on the weather in order to produce reliable forecasts.



Here is my full essay (170 words):

The figure illustrates the process used by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology to forecast the weather.

There are four stages in the process, beginning with the collection of information about the weather. This information is then analysed, prepared for presentation, and finally broadcast to the public.

Looking at the first and second stages of the process, there are three ways of collecting weather data and three ways of analysing it. Firstly, incoming information can be received by satellite and presented for analysis as a satellite photo. The same data can also be passed to a radar station and presented on a radar screen or synoptic chart. Secondly, incoming information may be collected directly by radar and analysed on a radar screen or synoptic chart. Finally, drifting buoys also receive data which can be shown on a synoptic chart.

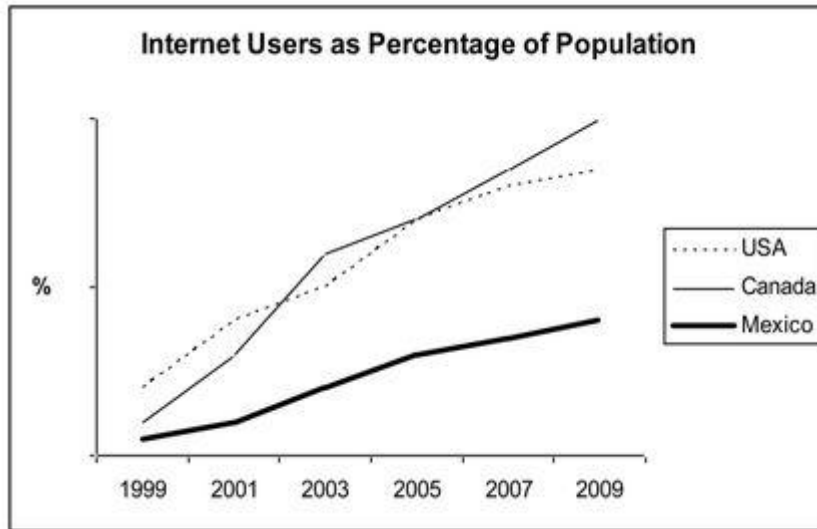
At the third stage of the process, the weather broadcast is prepared on computers. Finally, it is delivered to the public on television, on the radio, or as a recorded telephone announcement.

Note:

I've also sent a full essay version of yesterday's task 2 lesson to everyone who has bought the [ebook](#).

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay

The essay below is 151 words long. I've tried to make it as simple as possible, but it's still good enough to get a band 9.



The line graph compares the percentage of people in three countries who used the Internet between 1999 and 2009.

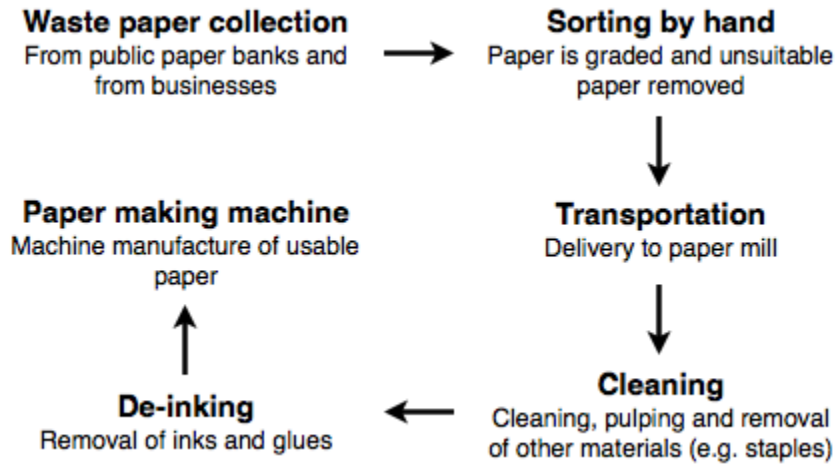
It is clear that the proportion of the population who used the Internet increased in each country over the period shown. Overall, a much larger percentage of Canadians and Americans had access to the Internet in comparison with Mexicans, and Canada experienced the fastest growth in Internet usage.

In 1999, the proportion of people using the Internet in the USA was about 20%. The figures for Canada and Mexico were lower, at about 10% and 5% respectively. In 2005, Internet usage in both the USA and Canada rose to around 70% of the population, while the figure for Mexico reached just over 25%.

By 2009, the percentage of Internet users was highest in Canada. Almost 100% of Canadians used the Internet, compared to about 80% of Americans and only 40% of Mexicans.

IELTS Writing Task 1: flow chart essay

The chart below shows the process of waste paper recycling.



The flow chart shows how waste paper is recycled. It is clear that there are six distinct stages in this process, from the initial collection of waste paper to the eventual production of usable paper.

At the first stage in the paper recycling process, waste paper is collected either from paper banks, where members of the public leave their used paper, or directly from businesses. This paper is then sorted by hand and separated according to its grade, with any paper that is not suitable for recycling being removed. Next, the graded paper is transported to a paper mill.

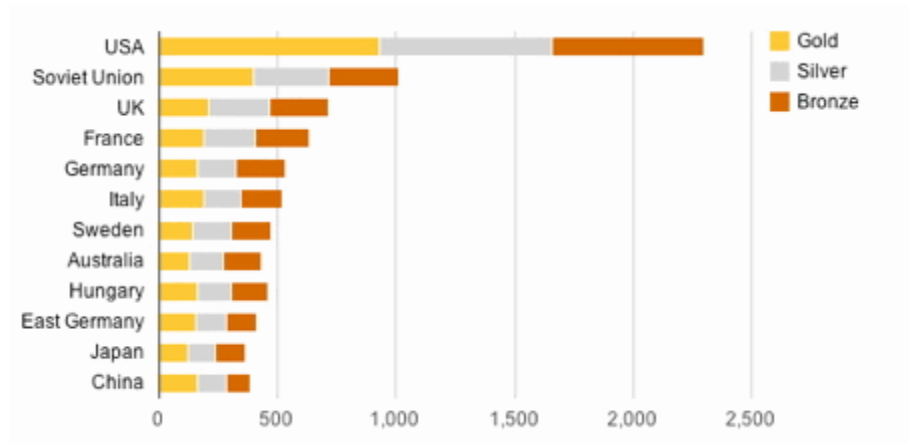
Stages four and five of the process both involve cleaning. The paper is cleaned and pulped, and foreign objects such as staples are taken out. Following this, all remnants of ink and glue are removed from the paper at the de-inking stage. Finally, the pulp can be processed in a paper making machine, which makes the end product: usable paper.

(160 words, band 9)

Note: I joined the introduction and overview together because they were both short. Try to analyse the essay - why is it worth band 9?

IELTS Writing Task 1: stacked bar chart essay

The chart below shows the total number of Olympic medals won by twelve different countries.



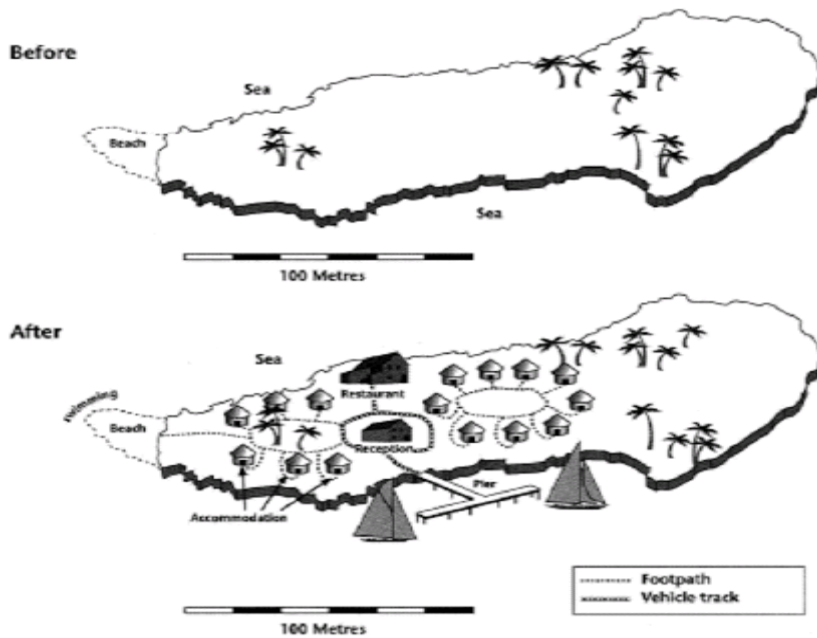
The bar chart compares twelve countries in terms of the overall number of medals that they have won at the Olympic Games.

It is clear that the USA is by far the most successful Olympic medal winning nation. It is also noticeable that the figures for gold, silver and bronze medals won by any particular country tend to be fairly similar.

The USA has won a total of around 2,300 Olympic medals, including approximately 900 gold medals, 750 silver and 650 bronze. In second place on the all-time medals chart is the Soviet Union, with just over 1,000 medals. Again, the number of gold medals won by this country is slightly higher than the number of silver or bronze medals.

Only four other countries - the UK, France, Germany and Italy - have won more than 500 Olympic medals, all with similar proportions of each medal colour. Apart from the USA and the Soviet Union, China is the only other country with a noticeably higher proportion of gold medals (about 200) compared to silver and bronze (about 100 each).

(178 words, band 9)



The diagrams illustrate some changes to a small island which has been developed for tourism.

It is clear that the island has changed considerably with the introduction of tourism, and six new features can be seen in the second diagram. The main developments are that the island is accessible and visitors have somewhere to stay.

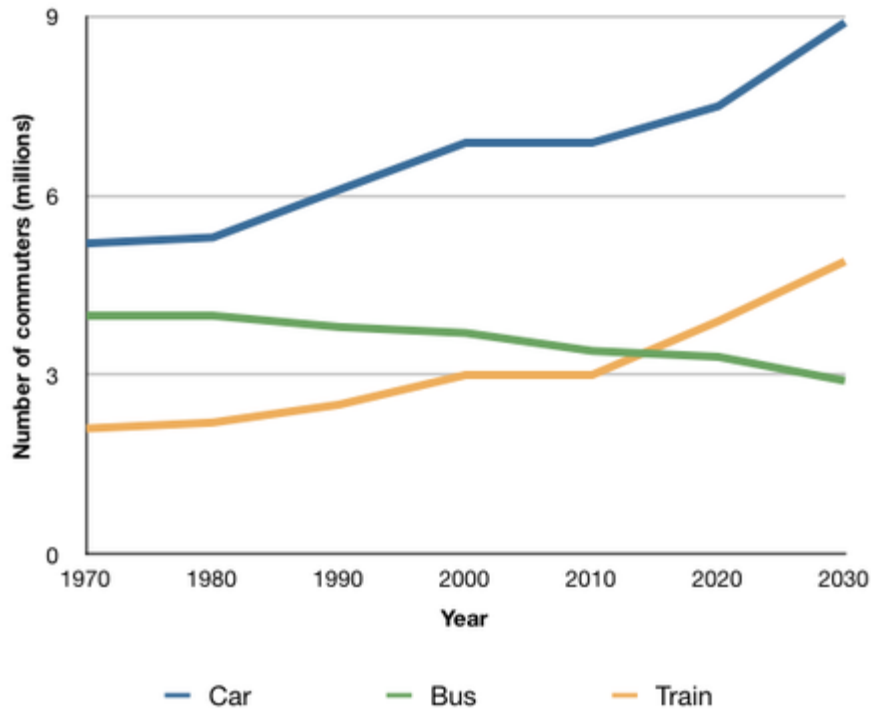
Looking at the maps in more detail, we can see that small huts have been built to accommodate visitors to the island. The other physical structures that have been added are a reception building, in the middle of the island, and a restaurant to the north of the reception. Before these developments, the island was completely bare apart from a few trees.

As well as the buildings mentioned above, the new facilities on the island include a pier, where boats can dock. There is also a short road linking the pier with the reception and restaurant, and footpaths connect the huts. Finally, there is a designated swimming area for tourists off a beach on the western tip of the island.

(175 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: full essay

The graph below shows the average number of UK commuters travelling each day by car, bus or train between 1970 and 2030.



Here's the essay I wrote with my students' help:

The line graph compares figures for daily travel by workers in the UK using three different forms of transport over a period of 60 years.

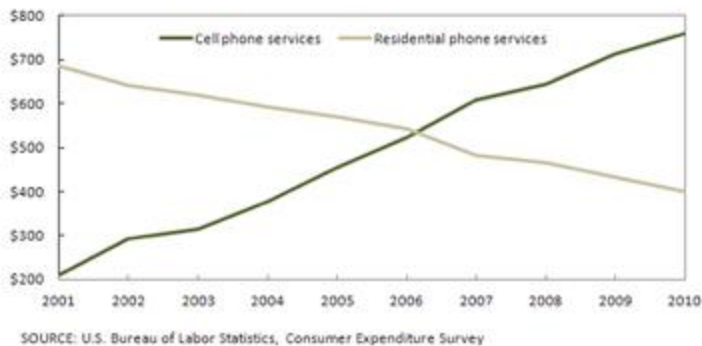
It is clear that the car is by far the most popular means of transport for UK commuters throughout the period shown. Also, while the numbers of people who use the car and train increase gradually, the number of bus users falls steadily.

In 1970, around 5 million UK commuters travelled by car on a daily basis, while the bus and train were used by about 4 million and 2 million people respectively. In the year 2000, the number of those driving to work rose to 7 million and the number of commuting rail passengers reached 3 million. However, there was a small drop of approximately 0.5 million in the number of bus users.

By 2030, the number of people who commute by car is expected to reach almost 9 million, and the number of train users is also predicted to rise, to nearly 5 million. By contrast, buses are predicted to become a less popular choice, with only 3 million daily users.

IELTS Writing Task 1: line graph essay

Chart 1. Average annual expenditures on cell phone and residential phone services, 2001–2010



Here's my full essay using last week's [ideas](#):

The line graph compares average yearly spending by Americans on mobile and landline phone services from 2001 to 2010.

It is clear that spending on landline phones fell steadily over the 10-year period, while mobile phone expenditure rose quickly. The year 2006 marks the point at which expenditure on mobile services overtook that for residential phone services.

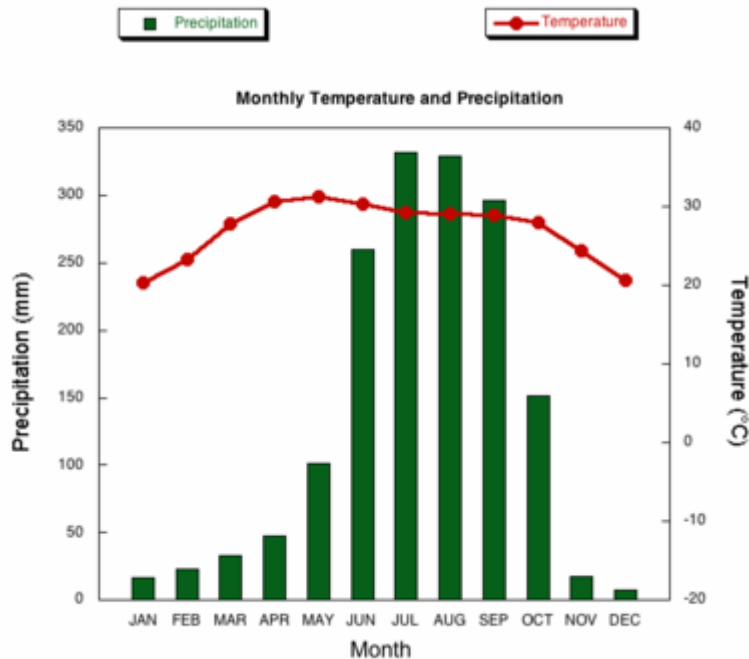
In 2001, US consumers spent an average of nearly \$700 on residential phone services, compared to only around \$200 on cell phone services. Over the following five years, average yearly spending on landlines dropped by nearly \$200. By contrast, expenditure on mobiles rose by approximately \$300.

In the year 2006, the average American paid out the same amount of money on both types of phone service, spending just over \$500 on each. By 2010, expenditure on mobile phones had reached around \$750, while the figure for spending on residential services had fallen to just over half this amount.

(162 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 1: climate essay

The climograph below shows average monthly temperatures and rainfall in the city of Kolkata.



The chart compares average figures for temperature and precipitation over the course of a calendar year in Kolkata.

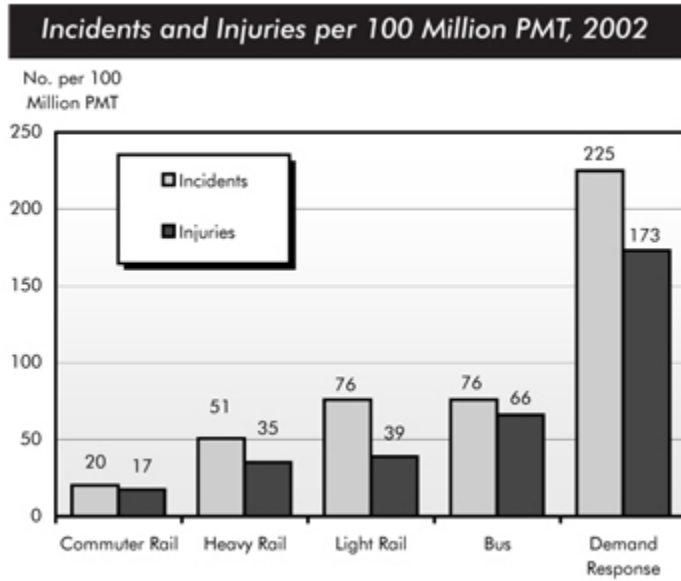
It is noticeable that monthly figures for precipitation in Kolkata vary considerably, whereas monthly temperatures remain relatively stable. Rainfall is highest from July to August, while temperatures are highest in April and May.

Between the months of January and May, average temperatures in Kolkata rise from their lowest point at around 20°C to a peak of just over 30°C. Average rainfall in the city also rises over the same period, from approximately 20mm of rain in January to 100mm in May.

While temperatures stay roughly the same for the next four months, the amount of rainfall more than doubles between May and June. Figures for precipitation remain above 250mm from June to September, peaking at around 330mm in July. The final three months of the year see a dramatic fall in precipitation, to a low of about 10mm in December, and a steady drop in temperatures back to the January average.

IELTS Writing Task 1: 'chart without years' essay

The chart below shows numbers of incidents and injuries per 100 million passenger miles travelled (PMT) by transportation type in 2002.



The bar chart compares the number of incidents and injuries for every 100 million passenger miles travelled on five different types of public transport in 2002.

It is clear that the most incidents and injuries took place on demand-response vehicles. By contrast, commuter rail services recorded by far the lowest figures.

A total of 225 incidents and 173 injuries, per 100 million passenger miles travelled, took place on demand-response transport services. These figures were nearly three times as high as those for the second highest category, bus services. There were 76 incidents and 66 people were injured on buses.

Rail services experienced fewer problems. The number of incidents on light rail trains equalled the figure recorded for buses, but there were significantly fewer injuries, at only 39. Heavy rail services saw lower numbers of such events than light rail services, but commuter rail passengers were even less likely to experience problems. In fact, only 20 incidents and 17 injuries occurred on commuter trains.

(165 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'university subjects' essay

Today I'm sharing my full essay for the question below.

Some people think that all university students should study whatever they like. Others believe that they should only be allowed to study subjects that will be useful in the future, such as those related to science and technology.

Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

People have different views about how much choice students should have with regard to what they can study at university. While some argue that it would be better for students to be forced into certain key subject areas, I believe that everyone should be able to study the course of their choice.

There are various reasons why people believe that universities should only offer subjects that will be useful in the future. They may assert that university courses like medicine, engineering and information technology are more likely to be beneficial than certain art degrees. From a personal perspective, it can be argued that these courses provide more job opportunities, career progression, better salaries, and therefore an improved quality of life for students who take them. On the societal level, by forcing people to choose particular university subjects, governments can ensure that any knowledge and skill gaps in the economy are covered. Finally, a focus on technology in higher education could lead to new inventions, economic growth, and greater future prosperity.

In spite of these arguments, I believe that university students should be free to choose their preferred areas of study. In my opinion, society will benefit more if our students are passionate about what they are learning. Besides, nobody can really predict which areas of knowledge will be most useful to society in the future, and it may be that employers begin to value creative thinking skills above practical or technical skills. If this were the case, perhaps we would need more students of art, history and philosophy than of science or technology.

In conclusion, although it might seem sensible for universities to focus only on the most useful subjects, I personally prefer the current system in which people have the right to study whatever they like.

(297 words, band 9)

Some people who have been in prison become good citizens later, and it is often argued that these are the best people to talk to teenagers about the dangers of committing a crime. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

It is true that ex-prisoners can become normal, productive members of society. I completely agree with the idea that allowing such people to speak to teenagers about their experiences is the best way to discourage them from breaking the law.

In my opinion, teenagers are more likely to accept advice from someone who can speak from experience. Reformed offenders can tell young people about how they became involved in crime, the dangers of a criminal lifestyle, and what life in prison is really like. They can also dispel any ideas that teenagers may have about criminals leading glamorous lives. While adolescents are often indifferent to the guidance given by older people, I imagine that most of them would be extremely keen to hear the stories of an ex-offender. The vivid and perhaps shocking nature of these stories is likely to have a powerful impact.

The alternatives to using reformed criminals to educate teenagers about crime would be much less effective. One option would be for police officers to visit schools and talk to young people. This could be useful in terms of informing teens about what happens to lawbreakers when they are caught, but young people are often reluctant to take advice from figures of authority. A second option would be for school teachers to speak to their students about crime, but I doubt that students would see teachers as credible sources of information about this topic. Finally, educational films might be informative, but there would be no opportunity for young people to interact and ask questions.

In conclusion, I fully support the view that people who have turned their lives around after serving a prison sentence could help to deter teenagers from committing crimes.

(287 words, band 9)

The older generations tend to have very traditional ideas about how people should live, think and behave. However, some people believe that these ideas are not helpful in preparing younger generations for modern life.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?

It is true that many older people believe in traditional values that often seem incompatible with the needs of younger people. While I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated, I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten.

On the one hand, many of the ideas that elderly people have about life are becoming less relevant for younger people. In the past, for example, people were advised to learn a profession and find a secure job for life, but today's workers expect much more variety and diversity from their careers. At the same time, the 'rules' around relationships are being eroded as young adults make their own choices about who and when to marry. But perhaps the greatest disparity between the generations can be seen in their attitudes towards gender roles. The traditional roles of men and women, as breadwinners and housewives, are no longer accepted as necessary or appropriate by most younger people.

On the other hand, some traditional views and values are certainly applicable to the modern world. For example, older generations attach great importance to working hard, doing one's best, and taking pride in one's work, and these behaviours can surely benefit young people as they enter today's competitive job market. Other characteristics that are perhaps seen as traditional are politeness and good manners. In our globalised world, young adults can expect to come into contact with people from a huge variety of backgrounds, and it is more important than ever to treat others with respect. Finally, I believe that young people would lead happier lives if they had a more 'old-fashioned' sense of community and neighbourliness.

In conclusion, although the views of older people may sometimes seem unhelpful in today's world, we should not dismiss all traditional ideas as irrelevant.

(299 words, band 9)

Many people prefer to watch foreign films rather than locally produced films. Why could this be?

Should governments give more financial support to local film industries?

It is true that foreign films are more popular in many countries than domestically produced films. There could be several reasons why this is the case, and I believe that governments should promote local film-making by subsidising the industry.

There are various reasons why many people find foreign films more enjoyable than the films produced in their own countries. Firstly, the established film industries in certain countries have huge budgets for action, special effects and to shoot scenes in spectacular locations. Hollywood blockbusters like 'Avatar' or the James Bond films are examples of such productions, and their global appeal is undeniable. Another reason why these big-budget films are so successful is that they often star the most famous actors and actresses, and they are made by the most accomplished producers and directors. The poor quality, low-budget filmmaking in many countries suffers in comparison.

In my view, governments should support local film industries financially. In every country, there may be talented amateur film-makers who just need to be given the opportunity to prove themselves. To compete with big-budget productions from overseas, these people need money to pay for film crews, actors and a host of other costs related to producing high-quality films. If governments did help with these costs, they would see an increase in employment in the film industry, income from film sales, and perhaps even a rise in tourist numbers. New Zealand, for example, has seen an increase in tourism related to the 'Lord of the Rings' films, which were partly funded by government subsidies.

In conclusion, I believe that increased financial support could help to raise the quality of locally made films and allow them to compete with the foreign productions that currently dominate the market.

(294 words, band 9)

Some people think that strict punishments for driving offences are the key to reducing traffic accidents. Others, however, believe that other measures would be more effective in improving road safety. Discuss both these views and give your own opinion.

People have differing views with regard to the question of how to make our roads safer. In my view, both punishments and a range of other measures can be used together to promote better driving habits.

On the one hand, strict punishments can certainly help to encourage people to drive more safely. Penalties for dangerous drivers can act as a deterrent, meaning that people avoid repeating the same offence. There are various types of driving penalty, such as small fines, licence suspension, driver awareness courses, and even prison sentences. The aim of these punishments is to show dangerous drivers that their actions have negative consequences. As a result, we would hope that drivers become more disciplined and alert, and that they follow the rules more carefully.

On the other hand, I believe that safe driving can be promoted in several different ways that do not punish drivers. Firstly, it is vitally important to educate people properly before they start to drive, and this could be done in schools or even as part of an extended or more difficult driving test. Secondly, more attention could be paid to safe road design. For example, signs can be used to warn people, speed bumps and road bends can be added to calm traffic, and speed cameras can help to deter people from driving too quickly. Finally, governments or local councils could reduce road accidents by investing in better public transport, which would mean that fewer people would need to travel by car.

In conclusion, while punishments can help to prevent bad driving, I believe that other road safety measures should also be introduced.

(269 words, band 9)

These days more fathers stay at home and take care of their children while mothers go out to work. What could be the reasons for this? Do you think it is a positive or a negative development?

It is true that men are increasingly likely to take on the role of househusband, while more women than ever are the breadwinners in their families. There could be several reasons for this, and I consider it to be a very positive trend.

In recent years, parents have had to adapt to various changes in our societies. Equal rights movements have made great progress, and it has become normal for women to gain qualifications and pursue a career. It has also become socially acceptable for men to stay at home and look after their children. At the same time, the rising cost of living has meant that both marriage partners usually need to work and save money before starting a family. Therefore, when couples have children, they may decide who works and who stays at home depending on the personal preference of each partner, or based on which partner earns the most money.

In my view, the changes described above should be seen as progress. We should be happy to live in a society in which men and women have equal opportunities, and in which women are not put under pressure to sacrifice their careers. Equally, it seems only fair that men should be free to leave their jobs in order to assume childcare responsibilities if this is what they wish to do. Couples should be left to make their own decisions about which parental role each partner takes, according to their particular circumstances and needs.

In conclusion, the changing roles of men and women in the family are a result of wider changes in society, and I believe that these developments are desirable.

(274 words, band 9)

Happiness is considered very important in life.

Why is it difficult to define?

What factors are important in achieving happiness?

It is no doubt true that the majority of people would like to be happy in their lives. While the personal nature of happiness makes it difficult to describe, there do seem to be some common needs that we all share with regard to experiencing or achieving happiness.

Happiness is difficult to define because it means something different to each individual person. Nobody can fully understand or experience another person's feelings, and we all have our own particular passions from which we take pleasure. Some people, for example, derive a sense of satisfaction from earning money or achieving success, whereas for others, health and family are much more important. At the same time, a range of other feelings, from excitement to peacefulness, may be associated with the idea of happiness, and the same person may therefore feel happy in a variety of different ways.

Although it seems almost impossible to give a precise definition of happiness, most people would agree that there are some basic preconditions to achieving it. Firstly, it is hard for a person to be happy if he or she does not have a safe place to live and enough food to eat. Our basic survival needs must surely be met before we can lead a pleasant life. Secondly, the greatest joy in life is usually found in shared experiences with family and friends, and it is rare to find a person who is content to live in complete isolation. Other key factors could be individual freedom and a sense of purpose in life.

In conclusion, happiness is difficult to define because it is particular to each individual, but I believe that our basic needs for shelter, food and company need to be fulfilled before we can experience it.

(292 words, band 9)

Families who send their children to private schools should not be required to pay taxes that support the state education system.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Some people believe that parents of children who attend private schools should not need to contribute to state schools through taxes. Personally, I completely disagree with this view.

For a variety of reasons, it would be wrong to reduce taxes for families who pay for private education. Firstly, it would be difficult to calculate the correct amount of tax reduction for these families, and staff would be required to manage this complex process. Secondly, we all pay a certain amount of tax for public services that we may not use. For example, most people are fortunate enough not to have to call the police or fire brigade at any time in their lives, but they would not expect a tax reduction for this. Finally, if wealthy families were given a tax discount for sending their children to private schools, we might have a situation where poorer people pay higher taxes than the rich.

In my opinion, we should all be happy to pay our share of the money that supports public schools. It is beneficial for all members of society to have a high quality education system with equal opportunities for all young people. This will result in a well-educated workforce, and in turn a more productive and prosperous nation. Parents of children in private schools may also see the advantages of this in their own lives. For example, a company owner will need well qualified and competent staff, and a well-funded education system can provide such employees.

In conclusion, I do not believe that any financial concessions should be made for people who choose private education.

(269 words, band 9)

Nowadays celebrities are more famous for their glamour and wealth than for their achievements, and this sets a bad example to young people.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

It is true that some celebrities are known for their glamorous lifestyles rather than for the work they do. While I agree that these celebrities set a bad example for children, I believe that other famous people act as positive role models.

On the one hand, many people do achieve fame without really working for it. They may have inherited money from parents, married a famous or wealthy person, or they may have appeared in gossip magazines or on a reality TV programme. A good example would be Paris Hilton, who is rich and famous for the wrong reasons. She spends her time attending parties and nightclubs, and her behaviour promotes the idea that appearance, glamour and media profile are more important than hard work and good character. The message to young people is that success can be achieved easily, and that school work is not necessary.

On the other hand, there are at least as many celebrities whose accomplishments make them excellent role models for young people. Actors, musicians and sports stars become famous idols because they have worked hard and applied themselves to develop real skills and abilities. They demonstrate great effort, determination and ambition, which is required for someone who wants to be truly successful in their chosen field. An example is the actor and martial artist Jackie Chan, who has become world famous through years of practice and hard work. This kind of self-made celebrity can inspire children to develop their talents through application and perseverance.

(Add your own conclusion)

When choosing a job, the salary is the most important consideration. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Many people choose their jobs based on the size of the salary offered. Personally, I disagree with the idea that money is the key consideration when deciding on a career, because I believe that other factors are equally important.

On the one hand, I agree that money is necessary in order for people to meet their basic needs. For example, we all need money to pay for housing, food, bills, health care, and education. Most people consider it a priority to at least earn a salary that allows them to cover these needs and have a reasonable quality of life. If people chose their jobs based on enjoyment or other non-financial factors, they might find it difficult to support themselves. Artists and musicians, for instance, are known for choosing a career path that they love, but that does not always provide them with enough money to live comfortably and raise a family.

Nevertheless, I believe that other considerations are just as important as what we earn in our jobs. Firstly, personal relationships and the atmosphere in a workplace are extremely important when choosing a job. Having a good manager or friendly colleagues, for example, can make a huge difference to workers' levels of happiness and general quality of life. Secondly, many people's feelings of job satisfaction come from their professional achievements, the skills they learn, and the position they reach, rather than the money they earn. Finally, some people choose a career because they want to help others and contribute something positive to society.

In conclusion, while salaries certainly affect people's choice of profession, I do not believe that money outweighs all other motivators.

(275 words, band 9)

Some people think that in the modern world we are more dependent on each other, while others think that people have become more independent. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

People have different views about whether we are more or less dependent on others nowadays. In my view, modern life forces us to be more independent than people were in the past.

There are two main reasons why it could be argued that we are more dependent on each other now. Firstly, life is more complex and difficult, especially because the cost of living has increased so dramatically. For example, young adults tend to rely on their parents for help when buying a house. Property prices are higher than ever, and without help it would be impossible for many people to pay a deposit and a mortgage. Secondly, people seem to be more ambitious nowadays, and they want a better quality of life for their families. This means that both parents usually need to work full-time, and they depend on support from grandparents and babysitters for child care.

However, I would agree with those who believe that people are more independent these days. In most countries, families are becoming smaller and more dispersed, which means that people cannot count on relatives as much as they used to. We also have more freedom to travel and live far away from our home towns. For example, many students choose to study abroad instead of going to their local university, and this experience makes them more independent as they learn to live alone. Another factor in this growing independence is technology, which allows us to work alone and from any part of the world.

In conclusion, while there are some reasons to believe that people now depend on each other more, my own view is that we are more independent than ever.

Note:

As usual, try to analyse this essay in terms of task response (does it fully answer the question?), organisation, 'band 7-9' vocabulary, and grammar.

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'foreign tourists' essay

Foreign visitors should pay more than local visitors for cultural and historical attractions. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

It is sometimes argued that tourists from overseas should be charged more than local residents to visit important sites and monuments. I completely disagree with this idea.

The argument in favour of higher prices for foreign tourists would be that cultural or historical attractions often depend on state subsidies to keep them going, which means that the resident population already pays money to these sites through the tax system. However, I believe this to be a very shortsighted view. Foreign tourists contribute to the economy of the host country with the money they spend on a wide range of goods and services, including food, souvenirs, accommodation and travel. The governments and inhabitants of every country should be happy to subsidise important tourist sites and encourage people from the rest of the world to visit them.

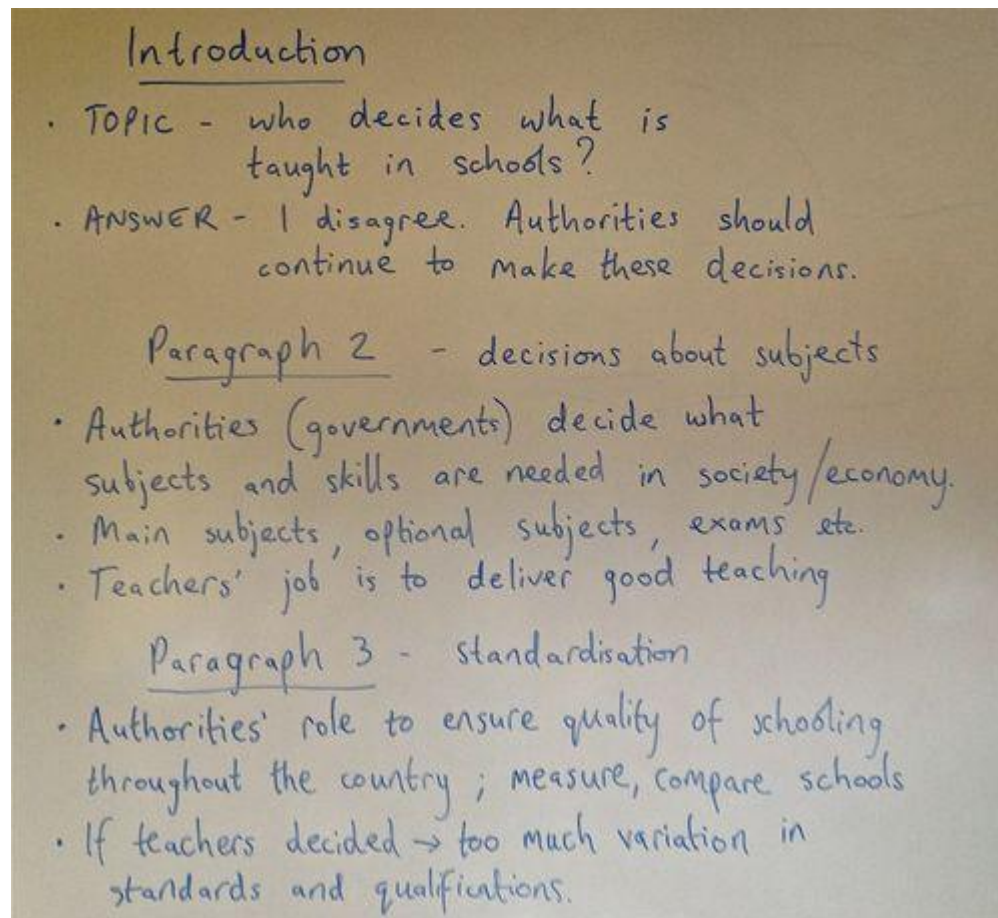
If travellers realised that they would have to pay more to visit historical and cultural attractions in a particular nation, they would perhaps decide not to go to that country on holiday. To take the UK as an example, the tourism industry and many related jobs rely on visitors coming to the country to see places like Windsor Castle or Saint Paul's Cathedral. These two sites charge the same price regardless of nationality, and this helps to promote the nation's cultural heritage. If overseas tourists stopped coming due to higher prices, there would be a risk of insufficient funding for the maintenance of these important buildings.

In conclusion, I believe that every effort should be made to attract tourists from overseas, and it would be counterproductive to make them pay more than local residents.

(269 words, band 9)

The subjects that children are taught in schools are decided by central authorities. Some people say that teachers, not politicians, should be responsible for this task. To what extent you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Here's my plan for a 'disagree' essay:



The image shows a handwritten essay plan on a piece of paper. The plan is organized into sections: Introduction, Paragraph 2, and Paragraph 3. The Introduction section includes the topic and the writer's stance. Paragraph 2 discusses the role of authorities in deciding subjects and skills. Paragraph 3 discusses standardisation and the role of authorities in ensuring quality.

Introduction

- TOPIC - who decides what is taught in schools?
- ANSWER - I disagree. Authorities should continue to make these decisions.

Paragraph 2 - decisions about subjects

- Authorities (governments) decide what subjects and skills are needed in society/economy.
- Main subjects, optional subjects, exams etc.
- Teachers' job is to deliver good teaching

Paragraph 3 - standardisation

- Authorities' role to ensure quality of schooling throughout the country ; measure, compare schools
- If teachers decided → too much variation in standards and qualifications.

Note: I don't think you need to plan your conclusion.

Some people think that governments should give financial support to creative artists such as painters and musicians. Others believe that creative artists should be funded by alternative sources. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

People have different views about the funding of creative artists. While some people disagree with the idea of government support for artists, I believe that money for art projects should come from both governments and other sources.

Some art projects definitely require help from the state. In the UK, there are many works of art in public spaces, such as streets or squares in city centres. In Liverpool, for example, there are several new statues and sculptures in the docks area of the city, which has been redeveloped recently. These artworks represent culture, heritage and history. They serve to educate people about the city, and act as landmarks or talking points for visitors and tourists. Governments and local councils should pay creative artists to produce this kind of art, because without their funding our cities would be much less interesting and attractive.

On the other hand, I can understand the arguments against government funding for art. The main reason for this view is that governments have more important concerns. For example, state budgets need to be spent on education, healthcare, infrastructure and security, among other areas. These public services are vital for a country to function properly, whereas the work of creative artists, even in public places, is a luxury. Another reason for this opinion is that artists do a job like any other professional, and they should therefore earn their own money by selling their work.

In conclusion, there are good reasons why artists should rely on alternative sources of financial support, but in my opinion government help is sometimes necessary.

Nowadays animal experiments are widely used to develop new medicines and to test the safety of other products. Some people argue that these experiments should be banned because it is morally wrong to cause animals to suffer, while others are in favour of them because of their benefits to humanity.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

It is true that medicines and other products are routinely tested on animals before they are cleared for human use. While I tend towards the viewpoint that animal testing is morally wrong, I would have to support a limited amount of animal experimentation for the development of medicines.

On the one hand, there are clear ethical arguments against animal experimentation. To use a common example of this practice, laboratory mice may be given an illness so that the effectiveness of a new drug can be measured. Opponents of such research argue that humans have no right to subject animals to this kind of trauma, and that the lives of all creatures should be respected. They believe that the benefits to humans do not justify the suffering caused, and that scientists should use alternative methods of research.

On the other hand, reliable alternatives to animal experimentation may not always be available. Supporters of the use of animals in medical research believe that a certain amount of suffering on the part of mice or rats can be justified if human lives are saved. They argue that opponents of such research might feel differently if a member of their own families needed a medical treatment that had been developed through the use of animal experimentation. Personally, I agree with the banning of animal testing for non-medical products, but I feel that it may be a necessary evil where new drugs and medical procedures are concerned.

In conclusion, it seems to me that it would be wrong to ban testing on animals for vital medical research until equally effective alternatives have been developed.

(270 words, band 9)

In the developed world, average life expectancy is increasing. What problems will this cause for individuals and society? Suggest some measures that could be taken to reduce the impact of ageing populations.

It is true that people in industrialised nations can expect to live longer than ever before. Although there will undoubtedly be some negative consequences of this trend, societies can take steps to mitigate these potential problems.

As people live longer and the populations of developed countries grow older, several related problems can be anticipated. The main issue is that there will obviously be more people of retirement age who will be eligible to receive a pension. The proportion of younger, working adults will be smaller, and governments will therefore receive less money in taxes in relation to the size of the population. In other words, an ageing population will mean a greater tax burden for working adults. Further pressures will include a rise in the demand for healthcare, and the fact young adults will increasingly have to look after their elderly relatives.

There are several actions that governments could take to solve the problems described above. Firstly, a simple solution would be to increase the retirement age for working adults, perhaps from 65 to 70. Nowadays, people of this age tend to be healthy enough to continue a productive working life. A second measure would be for governments to encourage immigration in order to increase the number of working adults who pay taxes. Finally, money from national budgets will need to be taken from other areas and spent on vital healthcare, accommodation and transport facilities for the rising numbers of older citizens.

In conclusion, various measures can be taken to tackle the problems that are certain to arise as the populations of countries grow older.

(265 words, band 9)

Some people regard video games as harmless fun, or even as a useful educational tool. Others, however, believe that videos games are having an adverse effect on the people who play them. In your opinion, do the drawbacks of video games outweigh the benefits?

Many people, and children in particular, enjoy playing computer games. While I accept that these games can sometimes have a positive effect on the user, I believe that they are more likely to have a harmful impact.

On the one hand, video games can be both entertaining and educational. Users, or gamers, are transported into virtual worlds which are often more exciting and engaging than real-life pastimes. From an educational perspective, these games encourage imagination and creativity, as well as concentration, logical thinking and problem solving, all of which are useful skills outside the gaming context. Furthermore, it has been shown that computer simulation games can improve users' motor skills and help to prepare them for real-world tasks, such as flying a plane.

However, I would argue that these benefits are outweighed by the drawbacks. Gaming can be highly addictive because users are constantly given scores, new targets and frequent rewards to keep them playing. Many children now spend hours each day trying to progress through the levels of a game or to get a higher score than their friends. This type of addiction can have effects ranging from lack of sleep to problems at school, when homework is sacrificed for a few more hours on the computer or console. The rise in obesity in recent years has also been linked in part to the sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise that often accompany gaming addiction.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the potential dangers of video games are more significant than the possible benefits.

(258 words, band 9)

There are many different types of music in the world today. Why do we need music? Is the traditional music of a country more important than the international music that is heard everywhere nowadays?

It is true that a rich variety of musical styles can be found around the world. Music is a vital part of all human cultures for a range of reasons, and I would argue that traditional music is more important than modern, international music.

Music is something that accompanies all of us throughout our lives. As children, we are taught songs by our parents and teachers as a means of learning language, or simply as a form of enjoyment. Children delight in singing with others, and it would appear that the act of singing in a group creates a connection between participants, regardless of their age. Later in life, people's musical preferences develop, and we come to see our favourite songs as part of our life stories. Music both expresses and arouses emotions in a way that words alone cannot. In short, it is difficult to imagine life without it.

In my opinion, traditional music should be valued over the international music that has become so popular. International pop music is often catchy and fun, but it is essentially a commercial product that is marketed and sold by business people. Traditional music, by contrast, expresses the culture, customs and history of a country. Traditional styles, such as ...(example)..., connect us to the past and form part of our cultural identity. It would be a real pity if pop music became so predominant that these national styles disappeared.

In conclusion, music is a necessary part of human existence, and I believe that traditional music should be given more importance than international music.

(261 words, band 9)

Some people think that all teenagers should be required to do unpaid work in their free time to help the local community. They believe this would benefit both the individual teenager and society as a whole.

Do you agree or disagree?

Many young people work on a volunteer basis, and this can only be beneficial for both the individual and society as a whole. However, I do not agree that we should therefore force all teenagers to do unpaid work.

Most young people are already under enough pressure with their studies, without being given the added responsibility of working in their spare time. School is just as demanding as a full-time job, and teachers expect their students to do homework and exam revision on top of attending lessons every day. When young people do have some free time, we should encourage them to enjoy it with their friends or to spend it doing sports and other leisure activities. They have many years of work ahead of them when they finish their studies.

At the same time, I do not believe that society has anything to gain from obliging young people to do unpaid work. In fact, I would argue that it goes against the values of a free and fair society to force a group of people to do something against their will. Doing this can only lead to resentment amongst young people, who would feel that they were being used, and parents, who would not want to be told how to raise their children. Currently, nobody is forced to volunteer, and this is surely the best system.

In conclusion, teenagers may choose to work for free and help others, but in my opinion we should not make this compulsory.

(250 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'hobbies' essay

I wrote the following essay with some of my students. We tried to keep it clear, concise and well-organised, but it's still good enough for a band 9.

***Some people believe that hobbies need to be difficult to be enjoyable.
To what extent do you agree or disagree?***

Some hobbies are relatively easy, while others present more of a challenge. Personally, I believe that both types of hobby can be fun, and I therefore disagree with the statement that hobbies need to be difficult in order to be enjoyable.

On the one hand, many people enjoy easy hobbies. One example of an activity that is easy for most people is swimming. This hobby requires very little equipment, it is simple to learn, and it is inexpensive. I remember learning to swim at my local swimming pool when I was a child, and it never felt like a demanding or challenging experience. Another hobby that I find easy and fun is photography. In my opinion, anyone can take interesting pictures without knowing too much about the technicalities of operating a camera. Despite being straightforward, taking photos is a satisfying activity.

On the other hand, difficult hobbies can sometimes be more exciting. If an activity is more challenging, we might feel a greater sense of satisfaction when we manage to do it successfully. For example, film editing is a hobby that requires a high level of knowledge and expertise. In my case, it took me around two years before I became competent at this activity, but now I enjoy it much more than I did when I started. I believe that many hobbies give us more pleasure when we reach a higher level of performance because the results are better and the feeling of achievement is greater.

In conclusion, simple hobbies can be fun and relaxing, but difficult hobbies can be equally pleasurable for different reasons.

Note:

Notice that we used examples as the basis of both main paragraphs.

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'technology' essay

Several people have asked me about this question from Cambridge IELTS 8. I wrote the essay below with the help of some of my students. A few simple linking features are highlighted.

Nowadays the way many people interact with each other has changed because of technology. In what ways has technology affected the types of relationships that people make? Has this been a positive or negative development?

It is true that new technologies have had an influence on communication between people. Technology has affected relationships in various ways, and in my opinion there are both positive and negative effects.

Technology has had an impact on relationships in business, education and social life. Firstly, telephones and the Internet allow business people in different countries to interact without ever meeting each other. Secondly, services like Skype create new possibilities for relationships between students and teachers. For example, a student can now take video lessons with a teacher in a different city or country. Finally, many people use social networks, like Facebook, to make new friends and find people who share common interests, and they interact through their computers rather than face to face.

On the one hand, these developments can be extremely positive. Cooperation between people in different countries was much more difficult when communication was limited to written letters or telegrams. Nowadays, interactions by email, phone or video are almost as good as face-to-face meetings, and many of us benefit from these interactions, either in work or social contexts. On the other hand, the availability of new communication technologies can also have the result of isolating people and discouraging real interaction. For example, many young people choose to make friends online rather than mixing with their peers in the real world, and these 'virtual' relationships are a poor substitute for real friendships.

In conclusion, technology has certainly revolutionised communication between people, but not all of the outcomes of this revolution have been positive.

(257 words, band 9)

We cannot help everyone in the world that needs help, so we should only be concerned with our own communities and countries.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Some people believe that we should not help people in other countries as long as there are problems in our own society. I disagree with this view because I believe that we should try to help as many people as possible.

On the one hand, I accept that it is important to help our neighbours and fellow citizens. In most communities there are people who are impoverished or disadvantaged in some way. It is possible to find homeless people, for example, in even the wealthiest of cities, and for those who are concerned about this problem, there are usually opportunities to volunteer time or give money to support these people. In the UK, people can help in a variety of ways, from donating clothing to serving free food in a soup kitchen. As the problems are on our doorstep, and there are obvious ways to help, I can understand why some people feel that we should prioritise local charity.

At the same time, I believe that we have an obligation to help those who live beyond our national borders. In some countries the problems that people face are much more serious than those in our own communities, and it is often even easier to help. For example, when children are dying from curable diseases in African countries, governments and individuals in richer countries can save lives simply by paying for vaccines that already exist. A small donation to an international charity might have a much greater impact than helping in our local area.

In conclusion, it is true that we cannot help everyone, but in my opinion national boundaries should not stop us from helping those who are in need.

(280 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'equality' topic

Here's my full (band 9) essay for last week's question.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the relationship between equality and personal achievement. Some people believe that individuals can achieve more in egalitarian societies. Others believe that high levels of personal achievement are possible only if individuals are free to succeed or fail according to their individual merits. What is your view of the relationship between equality and personal success?

In my opinion, an egalitarian society is one in which everyone has the same rights and the same opportunities. I completely agree that people can achieve more in this kind of society.

Education is an important factor with regard to personal success in life. I believe that all children should have access to free schooling, and higher education should be either free or affordable for all those who chose to pursue a university degree. In a society without free schooling or affordable higher education, only children and young adults from wealthier families would have access to the best learning opportunities, and they would therefore be better prepared for the job market. This kind of inequality would ensure the success of some but harm the prospects of others.

I would argue that equal rights and opportunities are not in conflict with people's freedom to succeed or fail. In other words, equality does not mean that people lose their motivation to succeed, or that they are not allowed to fail. On the contrary, I believe that most people would feel more motivated to work hard and reach their potential if they thought that they lived in a fair society. Those who did not make the same effort would know that they had wasted their opportunity. Inequality, on the other hand, would be more likely to demotivate people because they would know that the odds of success were stacked in favour of those from privileged backgrounds.

In conclusion, it seems to me that there is a positive relationship between equality and personal success.

(260 words)

Note:

I'm not sure that this was a 'real' IELTS question (maybe the student who sent it to me remembered it wrongly) because it is a bit confusing: it seems strange to me to imply that "egalitarian/equality" is the opposite of "free to succeed or fail". Anyway, I hope you still find the essay useful.

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'gender and university' essay

Here's my full essay using last week's plan:

Universities should accept equal numbers of male and female students in every subject. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

In my opinion, men and women should have the same educational opportunities. However, I do not agree with the idea of accepting equal proportions of each gender in every university subject.

Having the same number of men and women on all degree courses is simply unrealistic. Student numbers on any course depend on the applications that the institution receives. If a university decided to fill courses with equal numbers of males and females, it would need enough applicants of each gender. In reality, many courses are more popular with one gender than the other, and it would not be practical to aim for equal proportions. For example, nursing courses tend to attract more female applicants, and it would be difficult to fill these courses if fifty per cent of the places needed to go to males.

Apart from the practical concerns expressed above, I also believe that it would be unfair to base admission to university courses on gender. Universities should continue to select the best candidates for each course according to their qualifications. In this way, both men and women have the same opportunities, and applicants know that they will be successful if they work hard to achieve good grades at school. If a female student is the best candidate for a place on a course, it is surely wrong to reject her in favour of a male student with lower grades or fewer qualifications.

In conclusion, the selection of university students should be based on merit, and it would be both impractical and unfair to change to a selection procedure based on gender.

(265 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'museums' essay

Some people think that museums should be enjoyable places to entertain people, while others believe that the purpose of museums is to educate.

Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

People have different views about the role and function of museums. In my opinion, museums can and should be both entertaining and educational.

On the one hand, it can be argued that the main role of a museum is to entertain. Museums are tourist attractions, and their aim is to exhibit a collection of interesting objects that many people will want to see. The average visitor may become bored if he or she has to read or listen to too much educational content, so museums often put more of an emphasis on enjoyment rather than learning. This type of museum is designed to be visually spectacular, and may have interactive activities or even games as part of its exhibitions.

On the other hand, some people argue that museums should focus on education. The aim of any exhibition should be to teach visitors something that they did not previously know. Usually this means that the history behind the museum's exhibits needs to be explained, and this can be done in various ways. Some museums employ professional guides to talk to their visitors, while other museums offer headsets so that visitors can listen to detailed commentary about the exhibition. In this way, museums can play an important role in teaching people about history, culture, science and many other aspects of life.

In conclusion, it seems to me that a good museum should be able to offer an interesting, enjoyable and educational experience so that people can have fun and learn something at the same time.

(253 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 2: sample discussion essay

Here's an example of how I write a 4-paragraph essay for "discuss and give your opinion" questions. Notice that I give my opinion in 3 places (introduction, paragraph 3, conclusion).

Some people believe that studying at university or college is the best route to a successful career, while others believe that it is better to get a job straight after school. Discuss both views and give your opinion.

When they finish school, teenagers face the dilemma of whether to get a job or continue their education. While there are some benefits to getting a job straight after school, I would argue that it is better to go to college or university.

The option to start work straight after school is attractive for several reasons. Many young people want to start earning money as soon as possible. In this way, they can become independent, and they will be able to afford their own house or start a family. In terms of their career, young people who decide to find work, rather than continue their studies, may progress more quickly. They will have the chance to gain real experience and learn practical skills related to their chosen profession. This may lead to promotions and a successful career.

On the other hand, I believe that it is more beneficial for students to continue their studies. Firstly, academic qualifications are required in many professions. For example, it is impossible to become a doctor, teacher or lawyer without having the relevant degree. As a result, university graduates have access to more and better job opportunities, and they tend to earn higher salaries than those with fewer qualifications. Secondly, the job market is becoming increasingly competitive, and sometimes there are hundreds of applicants for one position in a company. Young people who do not have qualifications from a university or college will not be able to compete.

For the reasons mentioned above, it seems to me that students are more likely to be successful in their careers if they continue their studies beyond school level.

(271 words, band 9)

IELTS Writing Task 2: 'minority languages' essay

Today, I'd like to share a 'band 9' sample essay for the question below.

Several languages are in danger of extinction because they are spoken by very small numbers of people. Some people say that governments should spend public money on saving these languages, while others believe that would be a waste of money. Discuss both these views and give your opinion.

It is true that some minority languages may disappear in the near future. Although it can be argued that governments could save money by allowing this to happen, I believe that these languages should be protected and preserved.

There are several reasons why saving minority languages could be seen as a waste of money. Firstly, if a language is only spoken by a small number of people, expensive education programmes will be needed to make sure that more people learn it, and the state will have to pay for facilities, teachers and marketing. This money might be better spent on other public services. Secondly, it would be much cheaper and more efficient for countries to have just one language. Governments could cut all kinds of costs related to communicating with each minority group.

Despite the above arguments, I believe that governments should try to preserve languages that are less widely spoken. A language is much more than simply a means of communication; it has a vital connection with the cultural identity of the people who speak it. If a language disappears, a whole way of life will disappear with it, and we will lose the rich cultural diversity that makes societies more interesting. By spending money to protect minority languages, governments can also preserve traditions, customs and behaviours that are part of a country's history.

In conclusion, it may save money in the short term if we allow minority languages to disappear, but in the long term this would have an extremely negative impact on our cultural heritage.

(258 words)

"Band 7 Vocabulary"

When I say "band 7 vocabulary", I'm really talking about vocabulary that could help you to get a band 7 **or higher**. Examiners are looking for "less common" words and phrases, correct and relevant collocations, and maybe some idiomatic language.

I've written the following paragraph using some of the ideas from the lesson below. I've underlined the band 7 (or higher) vocabulary.

Advantages of studying abroad:

Many students choose to study abroad because there are greater opportunities in a particular foreign country. Foreign universities may offer better facilities or courses. They may also be more prestigious than universities in the student's own country and have teachers who are experts in their fields. Therefore, by studying abroad, students can expand their knowledge and gain qualifications that open the door to better job opportunities. A period of study abroad can also broaden students' horizons. In the new country, they will have to live and work with other students of various nationalities. Thus, overseas students are exposed to different cultures, customs and points of view.

(106 words)

Explain some of the ways in which humans are damaging the environment. What can governments do to address these problems? What can individual people do?

Humans are responsible for a variety of environmental problems, but we can also take steps to reduce the damage that we are causing to the planet. This essay will discuss environmental problems and the measures that governments and individuals can take to address these problems.

Two of the biggest threats to the environment are air pollution and waste. Gas emissions from factories and exhaust fumes from vehicles lead to global warming, which may have a devastating effect on the planet in the future. As the human population increases, we are also producing ever greater quantities of waste, which contaminates the earth and pollutes rivers and oceans.

Governments could certainly make more effort to reduce air pollution. They could introduce laws to limit emissions from factories or to force companies to use renewable energy from solar, wind or water power. They could also impose 'green taxes' on drivers and airline companies. In this way, people would be encouraged to use public transport and to take fewer flights abroad, therefore reducing emissions.

Individuals should also take responsibility for the impact they have on the environment. They can take public transport rather than driving, choose products with less packaging, and recycle as much as possible. Most supermarkets now provide reusable bags for shoppers as well as 'banks' for recycling glass, plastic and paper in their car parks. By reusing and recycling, we can help to reduce waste.

In conclusion, both national governments and individuals must play their part in looking after the environment.

Note:

This essay is exactly 250 words long. I've tried to make it as simple as possible, but it's still good enough to get a band 9.