

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

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

Try it first!

Processes

If you have a 'describing a process' task in the exam, you will be given a diagram with a series of pictures. The diagram shows the stages of **how something is made** or **how something works**. Typical diagrams are:

- how chocolate is produced
- how coffee is grown and produced
- the life-cycle of an animal or insect (e.g. a butterfly)

1 Try writing an answer for the Task 1 question below. You will need to:

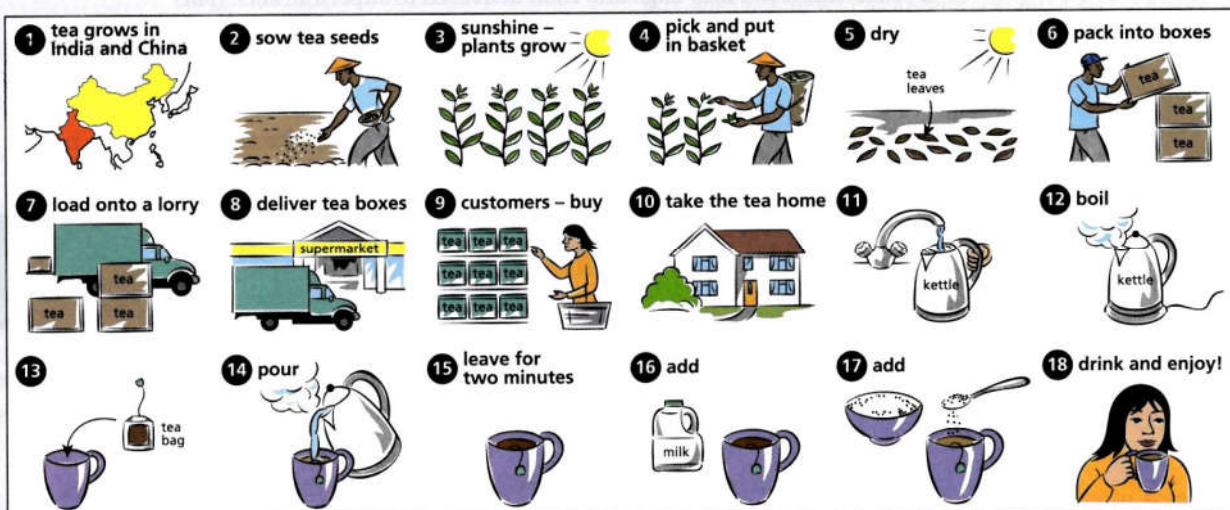
- write an introduction which describes the process in your own words and mentions how many stages there are;
- write two paragraphs in the main body, dividing the process into two clear parts;
- use mostly present simple and present simple passive;
- use a range of linking words to join the stages together;
- write a minimum of 150 words.

In the exam, you will have 20 minutes for this.

2 Discuss these questions with a partner.

- 1 Do you like tea? What kind of tea do you like?
- 2 Do you make your tea in the same way as in stages 11–18?

The pictures below show how tea is produced. They also illustrate the process of making a cup of tea. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features.



Spotlight 1

Using the present simple passive to describe a process

When you write about a process, one of the main tenses you need is the **present simple passive**. You make it with: object + *to be* + past participle of the verb

Example: *The tea leaves **are put** into boxes, then the boxes **are delivered** to supermarkets.*

1 Read these pairs of sentences. Which in each pair sounds more natural? Why?

- 1 a A lorry driver delivers boxes of tea to supermarkets
b Boxes of tea are delivered to supermarkets by lorry.
- 2 a The tea leaves are picked and put into boxes.
b A farm worker picks the tea leaves and puts them in boxes.

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

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

Use a passive for:

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

2 Complete this table of common irregular past participles.

verb	past participle	verb	past participle
grow	1 <u>grown</u>	hold	6
sow	2	grind	7
sell	3	put	8
take	4	cut	9
wrap	5	weave	10

3 Complete these sentences with the passive form of the verb in brackets.

- 1 Oranges are exported from Spain, to colder countries in Europe. (*export*)
- 2 Coffee beans in a machine, in order to make coffee powder. (*grind*)
- 3 Rice into bags and then delivered to supermarkets. (*put*)
- 4 Coconuts from the trees, and then exported to other countries. (*cut*)
- 5 The bars of chocolate in silver paper and put into boxes. (*wrap*)

4 Use the correct form of the verbs in the box to complete the paragraph below about the first half of the process on page 103.

deliver ~~grow~~ grow load pack
pick put put shine sow

Tea 1 is grown in India and China. In the first stage, the tea seeds 2 by the farmer, and then the sun 3 , and the seeds 4 into large tea plants. At this point, the tea leaves 5 and 6 in a basket, and then they 7 on a tray in the sun to dry. The next step is that the dried tea leaves 8 into boxes, and then the boxes 9 onto a lorry, and then 10 to supermarkets, where customers buy them.

Spotlight 2

Linking stages together

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

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

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

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

2 Put these steps in the process of making a cup of tea in order.

- a Pour the water into the cup.
- b Fill the kettle with water.
- c Add milk and sugar.
- d Leave the tea for two minutes.
- e Boil the kettle.
- f Drink the tea.
- g Take the kettle off the stove.
- h Put a tea bag or tea leaves in the cup.

3 Use the linking phrases in Exercise 1 to describe the process in Exercise 2 to a partner, or write it down.

Example: *The first step is that you fill the kettle with water, and then you ...*

Linking with the present perfect

You can use *once*, *when* and *after* + the present perfect to join two stages together:

The tea is packed into boxes, and then the boxes are loaded onto a lorry. →

Once the tea has been packed into boxes, the boxes are then loaded onto a lorry.

4 Rewrite these sentences using the words in brackets.

- The tea leaves are picked and then they are put in the sun to dry. (*once*)
- The tea leaves are picked from the tea plants and packed into boxes. (*after*)
- The boxes are loaded onto a lorry and then they are taken to supermarkets. (*when*)
- You put the tea bag in the cup and then you can pour hot water into it. (*once*)

Linking with *after* + *-ing*

Two stages can also be linked with *after* + the *-ing* form of the verb:

The boxes of tea are taken to supermarkets and then they are sold to customers. →

After being taken to supermarkets, the boxes of tea are then sold to customers.

5 Rewrite the sentences in Exercise 4 using *after* + *-ing*.

Example: 1 *After being picked, the tea leaves are then put in the sun to dry.*

6 Talk about, or write down, the stages of these topics.

- Learning to drive and getting a driving licence
- Buying your first house

7 Look again at the answer you wrote at the start of the unit, and add some linking phrases and grammar to it.

Exam skills 1: Giving extra information about a stage

To extend and improve your answer, you can describe what happens in a stage, and then add some extra details or explain why it happens.

The tea leaves are put on the ground in the sun, so that they can be dried.

1 Match the stages (1–4) to the corresponding extra details (a–d).

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 The boxes of tea are delivered to supermarkets, | a which gives them extra flavour. |
| 2 The sun shines, | b where they are put on the shelves to be sold. |
| 3 Salt and sugar are added to the tomatoes, | c in order to be made into sugar for cooking. |
| 4 The sugar cane is taken to a factory, | d which helps the plants to grow. |

2 Join each pair of sentences using the words in brackets.

- The fruit is sent to a factory. It is put into cans there. (*where*)
The fruit is sent to a factory, where it is put into cans.
- The biscuits are put in the oven. They are cooked. (*in order to be*)
- The farmer waters the plants. This makes them grow more quickly. (*which*)
- The mushrooms are stored in a dark room. This helps them to stay fresh. (*so that*)

Exam skills 2: Writing the introduction and overview

As in other types of Task 1 question, in the introduction to a process, you need to rewrite the question in your own words. There are several ways in which you can do this.

- *The pictures illustrate how tea is produced.*
- *The pictures show the steps involved in making tea.*
- *The diagram highlights the process by which tea is produced.*

1 Write an introductory sentence for these Task 1 questions.

- The diagram shows how to produce potato chips.
- The pictures show how people get a driving licence.

You can also add a 'mini-overview' sentence to the introduction to give a short summary of the process. This can mean describing the:

- number of stages, and listing the first and last stages;
- different sections of the process (e.g. producing tea/making a cup of tea).

2 Complete the mini-overview below for the tea-making process using the words in the box.

drinking from planting steps to

There are eighteen 1 in the process, 2 3 the tea seeds in the ground 4 5 a nice cup of tea.

These pictures illustrate how tea is produced, and how a cup of tea is made. There are 18 stages in the diagram, from sowing the tea seeds in India and China, to enjoying a cup of tea at home.

The first step is that the tea seeds are sown, and then the sun shines, which causes the seeds to grow into plants. Once the plants have grown sufficiently, the leaves are then picked by the farmer and put into baskets. After the picking stage, the tea leaves are spread out in the sun to be dried. The tea leaves are packed into boxes and then they are loaded onto lorries,

which take the boxes of tea to supermarkets.

In order to make a cup of tea, first of all you buy a box of tea and take it home. Next, you fill the kettle with water and put it on the stove to boil. Meanwhile, you put a tea bag in a cup, and once the kettle has boiled, the water is poured into the cup. Having been left in the cup for two minutes, the tea bag is then removed, and the tea is now ready to drink. At this point, milk and sugar can be added. The final step is that you drink a nice cup of hot tea.

(221 words)

1 Read the model answer.

- 1 Circle all the linking words in paragraphs 2 and 3.
- 2 Underline the examples of joining ideas with *once/when* + present perfect.
- 3 Find examples of extra detail about a stage. ... the sun shines, which causes ...
- 4 Highlight an example of joining two stages with *Having* + past participle.
- 5 Find a linking word which means *at the same time*.

2 Write an answer for this Task 1 process question. Compare your version with the sample student answer on page 129.

The pictures below show how tomato ketchup is made. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features.

