

Supplementary Sheet

Vocabulary to Describe Charts

Here is some vocabulary when you need to describe a graph or chart.

Verbs

These verbs are alternatives to the basic rise and fall vocabulary. One benefit of using them is that sometimes they help you avoid repeating too many numbers. If you have a strong verb, you don't always have to give the exact figure.

Verbs to describe upward trend:

verbs	example
soar	the price soared in November
rocket	it then rocketed to a high of 75%
leap	this figure leapt to 80,000 by the end of the period
climb	the number of televisions sold in 2010 climbed
surge	it then surged to a high of 75,000 units

Notes:

- “Soar” and “rocket” are both very strong words that describe large rises. “Rocket” is more sudden. You probably do not need to qualify these verbs with adverbs.
- “Leap” shows a large and sudden rise. Again, you probably do not need to qualify it with an adverb.
- “Climb” is a relatively neutral verb that can be used with the adverbs below.

Verbs to describe downward trend

verbs	example
plummet	it then plummeted to a low of 20%
sink	after that it sank to 75
drop	this amount dropped by 30% in the third quarter of the year
slip back	only to slip back to 900 in May
dip	the number of female doctors dipped in the last decade.

Notes:

- “Plummet” is the strongest word here. It means to fall very quickly and a long way.
- “Drop” and “drop” are normally used for fairly small decreases
- “Slip back” is used for falls that come after rises
- “Drop” and “Dip” are also frequently used as nouns: eg “a slight dip” “a sudden drop”

Adjectives and adverbs:

This is a selection of some of the most common adjectives and adverbs used for trend language. Make sure that you use adjectives with nouns and adverbs with verbs:

- a significant rise – correct (adjective/noun)
- rose significantly – correct (adverb/verb)
- a significantly rise – wrong

Please also note the spelling of the adverbs. There is a particular problem with the word “dramatically:

- dramatically – correct
- dramaticly – wrong
- dramatically – wrong

Adjectives to describe degree

adjective	example	adverb	example
spectacular	a spectacular fall	spectacularly	fell spectacularly
dramatic	a dramatic rise	dramatically	rose dramatically
substantial	a substantial rise	substantially	rose substantially
significant	a significant fall	significantly	fell significantly
sudden	a sudden fall	suddenly	fell suddenly
sharp	a sharp decrease	sharply	sharply decreased

Notes

- “sudden” and “sharp” can be used of relatively minor changes that happen quickly
- “spectacular” and “dramatic” are very strong words only to used to big, big, big changes

Adjectives to describe steady trends

adjective	example	adverb	example
steady	a steady increase	steadily	increased steadily
consistent	a consistent decrease	consistently	decreased consistently
gradual	a gradual increase	gradually	increased gradually

Adjectives to describe small increase in trends

adjective	example	adverb	example
modest	a modest increase	modestly	increased modestly
slight	a slight rise	slightly	rose slightly
marginal	a marginal fall	marginally	fell marginally

Notes

- “marginal” is a particularly useful word for describing very small changes

Other useful adjectives

These adjectives can be used to describes more general trends.

adjective	example
overall	It is evident that the overall trend was consistently upwards
downward	showed a downward trend throughout the period
upward	this upward trend finished in 1998