

Unit 1

IELTS Academic/General Writing Task 2 Basic *Paragraph Structure*

In an academic paragraph, writers use a common style of organization. They write a general statement to express their main idea about a topic. They follow their topic sentence with supporting information. Then they conclude their paragraph with another general statement.

Part I: Organization

A paragraph is like a sandwich. The topic sentence and concluding sentence are the two pieces of "bread" enclosing the "meat"- the supporting sentences.

The topic sentence presents the main idea of the paragraph. The supporting sentences give information to explain or prove the main idea. The concluding sentence summarizes the main idea or restates the topic sentence in different words.

THE TOPIC SENTENCE

The topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It has two parts: a topic and a controlling idea. The topic names the subject of the paragraph. In the writing model on page 52, the topic is *leisure time*. The controlling idea tells the main idea about the topic. It is called the controlling idea because it controls, or limits, the topic to a very specific idea. In the model, the controlling idea is that leisure time is beneficial.

Here are examples of topic sentences with the same topic but different controlling ideas:

Some hobbies are relaxing.

Topic

Controlling idea

Some hobbies are too expensive.

Topic

Controlling idea

Some jobs are dangerous.

Topic

Controlling idea

Some jobs are repetitive and boring.

Topic

Controlling idea

Some jobs are perfect for students.

Topic

Controlling idea

Practice 1: Predicting Content from the Controlling Idea

Work with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. For each topic sentence, discuss the type of supporting information a paragraph on the topic might contain.

1. Some jobs are dangerous.
2. Some jobs are repetitive and boring.
3. Some jobs are perfect for students.

Position of the Topic Sentence

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph. Experienced writers sometimes put topic sentences at the end, but the best place is usually at the beginning. A topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph gives readers an idea of what they will be reading. This helps them understand the paragraph more easily.

Not Too General, Not Too Specific

A topic sentence is neither too general nor too specific.

TOO GENERAL: A job is part of life.

This is too general because there is no specific controlling idea. The reader has no idea what the paragraph will say about jobs except that people have them.

TOO SPECIFIC: An increasing number of people in the United States work 50 hours a week.

This is too specific. It gives a detail that should come later in the paragraph.

GOOD: The number of hours that Americans work each week has changed In the past 30 years.

This is a good topic sentence because it gives the reader a hint that the paragraph will discuss changes to the number of hours that Americans work. A good topic sentence tells something about the contents of the paragraph but does not give the details.

Practice 2: Identifying Good Topic Sentences

Check (✓) the good topic sentences. What is wrong with the others?

Write *Too specific* or *Too general*.

Too specific 1. It is estimated that leisure travelers spend more than \$500 billion in the United States.

✓ 2. Research shows that there are three main purposes for leisure travel.

_____ 3. Digital cameras have several advantages over film cameras.

_____ 4. Digital cameras *are* a common form of technology these days.

- _____5. Digital photos are composed of small squares, just like a tiled kitchen floor or bathroom wall.
- _____6. Learning the meanings of the abbreviations used in text messaging is like learning a new language.
- _____7. BRB, BTW, CU, and "F2F are abbreviations.
- _____8. Smart phones can perform a variety of useful functions.
- _____9. Consider these four factors when buying your next phone.
- _____10. Cats have certain characteristics that make them good family animals.
- _____11. Animal shelters take care of homeless dogs and cats.
- _____12. It is a good idea to volunteer at an animal shelter.

Practice 3: Identifying Good Topic Sentences

Read each paragraph. Circle the best topic sentence in the list. Then write it on the line.

Paragraph 1

Mountain Climbing

There are three main types of mountain climbing.

Trail climbing is the easiest. Climbers just walk along trails to the top of a mountain. The trails are not very steep, and the mountains are small. The second *type*, rock climbing, takes place on steeper slopes and bigger mountains. Climbers generally have to use special equipment such as climbing shoes, ropes, and metal nails called pitons. The third type is ice climbing. Ice climbing takes place only on very high mountains and requires a lot of special equipment. Equipment used in ice climbing includes ice axes and crampons, which are spikes attached to a climber's boots for walking on ice and hard snow. In short, mountain climbing can range from an easy walk to a challenging trek.

- a. There are three main types of mountain climbing.
- b. Mountain climbing requires special skills and equipment.
- c. The sport of mountain climbing is practiced worldwide.
- d. Mountain climbing is one of the most difficult sports.

Paragraph 2

Regional Foods in the United States

For example, Kansas City, in the very center of the United States, is known for its beef, and Kansas City barbecue is everyone's favorite way to enjoy it. In Boston, people love baked beans. In the Southwest, chili, a stew made of meat, beans, tomatoes, and hot peppers, is the regional dish. Wisconsin, a state with many dairy farms, is famous for its cheese. Go to Maryland and Virginia for egg cakes, which are fried egg and breadcrumb patties. In the Northeast, try fish chowder, a rich fish, potato, and onion soup. Indeed, many U.S. cities and regions have a special food for everyone to enjoy.

- a. There is a variety of food in the United States.
- b. Food in the United States varies from sweet desserts to spicy stews.
- c. Different regions of the United States have their own traditional foods.
- d. Food in the United States is quite delicious.

Paragraph 3**Why Everyone Should Try Yoga**

First, it is easy to get started. Unlike other forms of exercise, yoga does not require a lot of special equipment or clothing, and it can be done almost anywhere. Next, yoga is a good form of exercise regardless of people's age or physical condition when they start out. However, most important are the benefits of yoga. It improves body strength and flexibility and is an excellent way to relieve stress. It is clear that yoga is an easy-to-do and beneficial way to get exercise.

- a. Yoga is a way to strengthen the body and the mind.
- b. Yoga is becoming popular with people of all ages.
- c. Yoga is an excellent form of exercise for several reasons.
- d. Yoga is an example of how getting exercise reduces stress.

Homework

Read each paragraph. Identify the topic and the controlling idea. Then write an appropriate topic sentence on the line.

Paragraph 1

A World of flavors

-----*Foods from all over the world are popular in the United States.*-----

Even small towns in the United States have at least one pizzeria and one Chinese restaurant. Every midsize town has at least one taqueria, where you can get a delicious Mexican taco or burrito. French food has always been popular, and hot dogs and hamburgers, German in origin, are found everywhere. More recently, Middle Eastern shish kebab, Japanese sushi, and English fish and chips are increasingly available in the United States. These examples show that American cuisine is actually quite international.

Paragraph 2

Skiping Breakfast

Some people say that they skip breakfast because they think it will help them lose weight. Another reason people give is that they simply don't like breakfast. Others say that the reason is cultural. People in their home culture usually consume only two meals a day, and breakfast isn't traditionally one of them. The most common reason people give is lack of time. They like to stay in bed until the last minute, and then they have to rush to get to work or to school on time. To sum up, there are a variety of explanations for not eating breakfast.

Paragraph 3

Grand Canyon, Grand Vacation

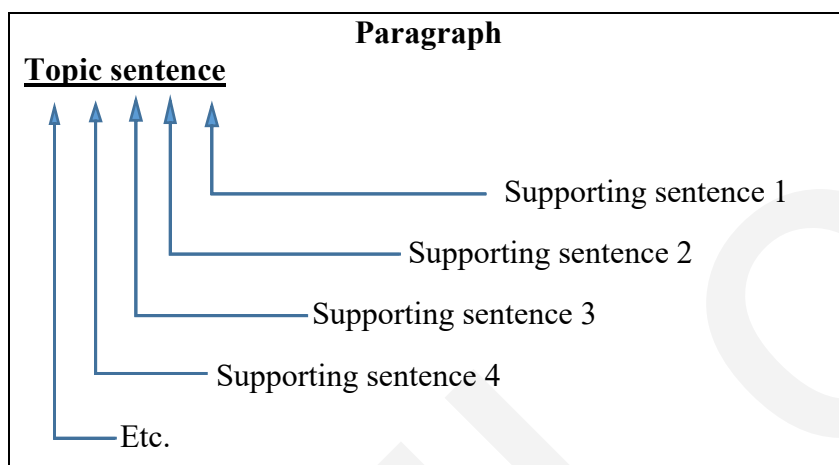
First of all, travelers should decide what time of year they would like to visit the Grand Canyon. It can be very cold in winter, and it sometimes snows throughout the month of May. However, summers are hot, and because the Grand Canyon is a popular tourist destination for families on vacation, it can be very crowded during the summer months. Another thing to think about is where to stay. There are hotels in and near the Grand Canyon, but they are not cheap. Some travelers prefer camping as a way of enjoying nature and saving money. Finally, visitors should consider the various ways to see the canyon. Possibilities include the lookout points along the South Rim, the Skywalk on the West Rim, or a helicopter ride. In conclusion, any trip to the Grand Canyon is sure to be fantastic, and with a little planning it can be even better.

Unit 2

IELTS Academic/General Writing Task 2 *Paragraph Development*

PARAGRAPH UNITY

Remember that besides the topic sentence, a paragraph includes several other sentences which in some way contribute to or *support* the idea in the topic sentence. In other words, all these sentences must be *related to* the topic and must therefore refer back to the topic sentence. Notice the arrows in the following diagram:



If a paragraph does all this—that is, 1) if it announces its main idea in the topic sentence, and 2) if all the supporting sentences contribute to the reader's understanding of the main idea—we say that a paragraph is *unified*, or that it has *unity*. If the paragraph fails to do this, we say that it lacks unity. Study the following paragraph. It *lacks* unity. Before reading the explanation which follows, can you figure out why it is not unified? (The sentences have been numbered only to make the discussion easier.

1 There are two main reasons why I have decided to attend Bingson University next year.
 2 Applying to a college is a terribly complicated process. 3 Some of my friends chose colleges for very bad reasons. 4 John has never been to college. 5 I've met his grandfather, and he still has an incredibly sharp mind for a man of his age. 6 Susan chose a university because the food in the region was said to be quite good. 7 Susan is really not too clever, I suppose, so I shouldn't criticize her. 8 Actually, I think it was her father who made the choice for her.

Did you notice that *none* of the above sentences actually discusses the topic which was announced in the topic sentence? The paragraph was supposed to be about the writer's *two main reasons* for choosing Bingson University. However, he never actually tells us. He writes about many unrelated things his friend John, John's grandfather, his friend Susan, Susan's stupidity, etc., but *not* his two reasons for choosing Bingson University!

If we wanted to keep the same topic sentence and rewrite the paragraph in a more unified fashion, we might end up with something like this:

1There are two main reasons why I have decided to attend Bingston University next year. 1First of all, there is the question of money; Bingston's tuition is reasonable, and I don't even have to pay it all at once. 3This is very important, since my father is not a rich man. 4With Bingston's "deferred payment plan," my father will be able to pay my tuition without too much difficulty. 5The second reason is the fine education which I feel I will receive there in agriculture, my chosen field. 6It is a well-known fact that Bingston hires only the finest professors in its Agriculture Department. 7Moreover, the university requires all agricultural students to gain practical experience by working on farms in the area while they are still going to school.

Notice that in the rewritten paragraph, the writer gives us *both* his reasons and comments on both of them. Nothing is extra. Nothing is irrelevant to the topic announced in the topic sentence. *The paragraph is unified.* This means that the reader will have no trouble quickly understanding what the writer is trying to say.

EXERCISE 1-5

Identifying Irrelevant Sentences

Directions: The following paragraphs contain sentences which are not directly related to the main ideas of those paragraphs. Draw a line through the irrelevant sentence(s) of each paragraph. Then circle the *key words* or *phrases* in the topic sentence. Be prepared to explain why you think the sentences are irrelevant.

Paragraph1

1Ever since the time of the Greeks, drama has played an important role in men's lives. 2The Greek tragedies and comedies were a central part of the life of the citizens of ancient Greece. 3During the Middle Ages, Bible stories were acted out in churches and wandering companies of players performed in the streets. 4William Shakespeare lived during the Elizabethan period. 5The English language has changed somewhat since Shakespeare's time. 6In modern times, drama is brought directly into people's homes through the magic of television. 7Television also offers people such things as quiz and variety shows.

Paragraph2

1Innovations, whether practical or aesthetic, are often resisted by the general population. 2When the early experimenters in the field of aviation began their work, there were many who said, "If God had wanted man to fly, He would have given him wings". 3The Wright brothers made the first powered flights in a heavier-than-air craft in 1903 at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. 4Even today there are many who strongly object to modern art and music as being nothing more than "splashes of paint and honking horns". 5The painter Picasso's well-known masterpiece "The Three Musicians" is done primarily in blues and browns.

Paragraph3

1Zoos are popular with all children. 2They are able to see examples of wildlife from all continents. 3 In wildlife preserves in Africa, the animals wander about freely without fear of being captured. 4Perhaps the favorite spot in a zoo is the elephant cage. 5There the elephants entertain the children by spraying themselves with their trunks and doing various tricks. 6The children are especially delighted when an elephant takes peanuts from them with his trunk.

Paragraph 4

1 Editorials differ from other kinds of news stories. 2 In most regular news stories, it is assumed that no personal opinions are being represented. 3 Newspaper writers are supposed to present the facts of each story in a straightforward, unbiased fashion. 4 Statistics reveal that over sixty-one million newspapers are sold every day in this country. 5 The purpose of the editorial page, of course, is to allow the editors to give their personal opinions. 6 Here is where they tell readers what they think about an issue—who is at fault, who has done a good job, or how a situation could be improved. 7 It is no wonder, then, that Thomas Jefferson was once led to remark that he could more easily accept newspapers without government than government without newspapers.

Paragraph 5

1 In order to find a suitable apartment, you must follow a very systematic approach. 2 First, you must decide which neighborhood would be most convenient for you. 3 Then you must determine how much rent your budget will allow. 4 Utility bills for houses average between \$100 and \$150 per month. 5 Your next step is to check the classified ads in the newspapers. 6 If you do not plan to buy furniture, you should check under "Apartments for rent-furnished." 7 Otherwise, check under "Apartments for rent-unfurnished." 8 In either case, however, be sure to check these ads regularly, since new listings appear each day. 9 After you have telephoned the apartments which seem likely choices, you must begin your long journey to inspect each one of them.

Supporting Sentences: Main Points

Practice

Read each topic sentence and the main point provided. Then add as many main points as you can.

1. Travel by plane has several disadvantages.

- a. Airplane *travel* is generally expensive.
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

2. Reading helps English language learners improve their English.

- a. Reading English texts helps learners expand their vocabulary.
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

3. A good friend must have two/three/four important qualities.

- a. He or she must be able to keep secrets.
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

4. Avoid stress when studying for a big test by taking the following actions.

- a. Begin studying days ahead of time.
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

SUPPORTING DETAILS: EXAMPLES

Examples and the explanations that accompany them are one of the easiest and most effective types of supporting details. You can use examples from your own knowledge and experience to illustrate a topic or main point. Examples are effective because they are specific and easy for readers to "see" (or visualize). They make your meaning clear and memorable.

Notice the example signals that are often used to introduce examples. At the beginning of a sentence, use *For example* or *For instance*, followed by a comma. In front of an example that is just a word or phrase (not an entire sentence), use the prepositional phrase *such as*.

Example words	Sample sentences
Followed by a Comma	
<i>For example,</i>	For example, planting a community garden is a great way to meet people and relieve stress.
<i>For instance,</i>	For instance, when volunteers help children learn to read, they feel wonderful about what they have achieved.
Not Followed by a Comma	
<i>Such as</i>	Individuals with hobbies, such as photography, travel, and music, develop new talents.

Practice: Putting Sentences in the Correct Order

Read the sentences from a paragraph about games. Follow the instructions:

- Find the topic sentence that has been identified with the number 1.
- Locate the concluding sentence, and write 10 next it.
- Locate three key points about the topic, and put them in order. Look for the signal words *first*, *next*, and *finally*.
- Decide which examples support which main points.
- Based on the order of the main points and examples, number the sentences 2 through 9 to show their logical order.

Games People Play

- _____ a. Finally, there are games for people who like the idea of being on a team and enjoy physical activity.
- _____ b. For example, sudoku mentally challenges players to look for patterns with numbers.
- _____ c. Indeed, the wide variety of games offers something to just about everyone.
- _____ d. The most obvious examples are sports such as basketball, baseball, and soccer, but party games such as charades can get quite physical as well.
- _____ e. The first type of game will allow you to relax quietly but will also keep your brain active.
- _____ f. For instance, when you, play checkers or chess or when you, play cards with a group of friends, you are also developing personal relationships.
- _____ g. Next, if you prefer spending time with others, there are games with a social element
- _____ h. Other brain games such as crossword puzzles, word search puzzles, and word jumbles require language skills.
- _____ **1** _____ i. Playing games is a perfect leisure time activity because games meet many different needs.
- _____ j. The same is true of board games such as Monopoly and chess, which have been bringing people together for friendly competition for decades.

Homework

Read the following writing prompt carefully and Write your paragraph. Be sure that it has a topic sentence, supporting sentences. It must also have transition signals.

Prompt: What do you do when you want to relax?

State what your favorite leisure time activity is. Why do you prefer this type of activity when you want to relax? Present main points and give details (such as examples) to explain your choice.

Unit 3

IELTS Academic/General Writing Task 2 *From Paragraph to Essay*

What is an essay?

An essay is a piece of writing several paragraphs long. It is about one topic, just as a paragraph is. However, because the topic of an essay is too complex to discuss in one paragraph, you need to divide it into several paragraphs, one for each major point. Then you need to tie the paragraphs together by adding an introduction and a conclusion.

The Three Parts of an Essay

An essay has three main parts: an **introduction** (introductory paragraph), a **body** (at least one, but usually two or more paragraphs), and a **conclusion** (concluding paragraph).

The following chart shows you how the parts of a paragraph correspond to the parts of an essay.

1. Introduction	
General statements	
Thesis statement	
2. Body Paragraphs	
A. Topic sentence	
1. Support	
2. Support	
3. Support	
(Concluding sentence)	
B. Topic sentence	
1. Support	
2. Support	
3. Support	
(Concluding sentence)	
C. Topic sentence	
1. Support	
2. Support	
3. Support	
(Concluding sentence)	
3. Conclusion	
Restatement or summary	
of the main points; final comment	

An essay introduction consists of two parts: a few general statements to attract your reader's attention and a thesis statement to state the main idea of the essay. A thesis statement for an essay is like a topic sentence for a paragraph: It names the specific topic and gives the reader a general idea of the contents of the essay.

The body consists of one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic, so the number of paragraphs in the body will vary with the number of subdivisions or subtopics.

The conclusion, like the concluding sentence in a paragraph, is a summary or review of the main points discussed in the body.

The introductory Paragraph

An introductory paragraph has two parts, general statements and the thesis statement.

General statements

- introduce the general topic of the essay.
- capture the reader's interest.

The thesis statement

- states the specific topic.
- may list subtopics or subdivisions of the main topic or subtopics.
- may indicate the pattern of organization of the essay.
- is normally the last sentence in the introductory paragraph.

Writing a strong thesis statement

- A thesis statement gives the author's opinion or states an important idea about the topic. It should give an idea that can be discussed and explained with supporting ideas:

The qualifications for getting into university in my country are unreasonable.

When studying a foreign language, there are several ways to improve your use of the language.

These are strong thesis statements. They can be discussed or explained.

- A thesis statement should not be a sentence that only gives a fact about the topic:

In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer months are warmer than the winter months.

This is not a strong thesis statement. It cannot be discussed or argued about.

- A thesis statement should not state two sides of an argument equally:

There are advantages and disadvantages to using nuclear power.

This could be a topic sentence, but it is not a thesis statement. It gives two sides of an argument without giving a clear opinion of support or disagreement. It could be revised like this:

Although there are some advantages, using nuclear power has many disadvantages and should not be a part of our country's energy plan.

This is a strong thesis statement. It clearly gives the writer's opinion about nuclear power.

Read these thesis statements below. Write "S" (strong thesis statement), F (fact only-a weak thesis statement), or N (no clear opinion-a weak thesis statement).

- a. ----- The top government official in my country is the prime minister.
- b. ----- Some people prefer digital cameras, while others like traditional cameras.
- c. ----- India became an independent country in 1947.
- d. ----- To be a successful student, good study habits are more important than intelligence.
- e. ----- There are several advantages of owning a car, but there are also many disadvantages.
- f. ----- Half of the families in my country own a house.
- g. ----- Using public transport would be one of the best ways to solve the traffic and pollution problems in cities around the world.
- h. ----- While travelling, staying in a hotel offers more comfort, but sleeping in a tent is less expensive.
- i. ----- Classical music concerts are very popular in my country.
- j. ----- In order to create a successful advertisement, it is necessary to consider three issues: who should be targeted, where the advert should be placed, and what type of advert should be made.

How to connect the thesis statement and the essay

The paragraphs in the main body of an essay should always explain the thesis statement.

In addition, each paragraph in the main body should discuss *one* part of the thesis. Look at the following thesis statement. The topics to be discussed are underlined:

To create a successful advertisement, it is necessary for advertisers to answer three questions: What are we selling? Who are we selling it to?, and How can we make people want to buy it?

Possible topic sentences for each paragraph in the main body:

1. *The first step in creating a successful advertisement is to completely understand the product that is being sold and how it can be used.*
2. *A second important part of creating an advertisement is deciding who is expected to buy the product.*
3. *Finally, a way must be found to create an ad that will make people want to buy the product.*

Practice

For each of these topics, write two or three opinions you have.

a. exercise

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b. university study

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c. the Internet

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d. music

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Outlining an Essay

What is an outline?

An outline is a list of the information you will put in your essay.

An outline ...

- begins with the essay's thesis statement.
- shows the organisation of the essay.
- tells what ideas you will discuss and shows which ideas will come first, second, and so on.
- ends with the essay's conclusion.

Writing an outline before you write an essay will ...

- show you what to write before you actually begin writing.
- help make your essay well organised and clearly focused.
- keep you from forgetting any important points.

To show how the ideas work together, number them. To avoid confusion, use several different types of numbers and letters to show the organisation of the ideas. Use Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, VI, etc.) for your essay's main ideas: your introduction and thesis statement, your main body paragraphs, and your conclusion. Write all of these first, before going into more detail anywhere.

- I.** Introduction
- II.** First main idea
- III.** Second main idea
- IV.** Third main idea
- V.** Conclusion

Next, fill in more information for the paragraphs in the main body by using capital Roman letters (A, B, C, etc.). Use one letter for each supporting idea in your main body paragraph. Complete this information for each paragraph in the main body before going into more detail.

- I.** Introduction
- II.** First main idea
 - A.** First supporting point
 - B.** Second supporting point
 - ... and so on.

Finally, use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) to give details for your supporting points. Not every supporting point will have details, and some points will have several. It is not important to have the same number of details for every supporting point.

- I.** Introduction
- II.** First main idea
 - A.** First supporting point
 - 1.** First detail
 - 2.** Second detail
 - B.** Second supporting point
 - 1.** First detail
 - 2.** Second detail
 - ... and so on.

Look at the following sample outline

Don't Support Nuclear Energy!

- I. Nuclear power is not a good energy source for the world.
- II. Very expensive
 - A. Nuclear fuel is expensive
 - B. Nuclear power stations are expensive to build and operate
 - 1. Cost of construction
 - 2. Cost of training workers
 - 3. Cost of safety features
- III Nuclear materials are not safe
 - A. Nuclear fuels are dangerous
 - 1. Mining fuels produces radioactive gas
 - 2. Working with radioactive fuels can harm workers
 - B. Nuclear waste products are dangerous
 - 1. Very radioactive
 - 2. Difficult to dispose of or store safely
- IV. There is a great possibility of accidents
 - A. Nuclear power stations can fail
 - 1. Three Mile Island, USA (1979)
 - 2. Tarapur, India (1992)
 - 3. Darlington, Canada (1992)
 - B. Workers can make mistakes
 - 1. Chernobyl, USSR (1986)
 - 2. Kola, Russia (1991)
 - 3. Tokaimura, Japan (1999)
 - C. Natural disasters can occur
 - 1. Earthquake: Kozloduy, Bulgaria (1977)
 - 2. Tornado: Moruroa, the Pacific (1981)
- V. Because of the cost and the danger, the world should develop different types of energy to replace nuclear power.

Practice

A. Label each statement T for thesis statement, M for main idea, S for supporting point, or C for conclusion.

Title: The Benefits of Yoga

- a. ----- Develops clear thinking
- b. ----- Physical benefits
- c. ----- Improves concentration
- d. ----- Reduces fear, anger, and worry
- e. ----- Mental benefits
- f. ----- Improves blood circulation
- g. ----- Improves digestion
- h. ----- Helps you feel calm and peaceful
- i. ----- Develops self-confidence
- j. ----- Doing yoga regularly can be good for your mind, your body, and your emotions.
- k. ----- Makes you strong and flexible
- l. ----- Therefore, to build mental, physical, and emotional health, consider doing yoga.
- m. ----- Emotional benefits

B. Arrange the ideas in exercise 3 above into an outline. Compare your finished outline with a partner.

I. -----

II. -----

A. -----

B. -----

III. -----

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

IV. -----

A. -----

B. -----

C. -----

V. -----

The conclusion

The importance of a conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph of the essay. A good concluding paragraph ...

- summarises the main points of the essay.
- restates the thesis (using different words).
- makes a final comment about the essay's main idea.
- may emphasise an action that you would like the reader to take.

Don't introduce new ideas in a conclusion. A conclusion only restates or gives further commentary on ideas discussed in the essay.

Practice:

Match each of these introduction thesis statements with its rewritten version for a conclusion.

a. ----- Supermarkets are the best places to buy food because of their convenience and lower prices.	1. People can learn many things by travelling to other countries.
b. ----- Travelling abroad is a valuable learning experience.	2. Despite the challenges, being an entrepreneur can offer more benefits than other types of employment.
c. ----- Learning to play a musical instrument is very beneficial for children.	3. The fact that larger supermarkets offer cheap prices and a large selection of products makes them the best place for shoppers.
d. ----- Creating and owning a business offers more advantages than working as an employee in a company.	4. The World Wide Web gives access to a huge amount of knowledge, but users shouldn't believe everything they read there.
e. ----- More houses should be adapted to use solar energy because it is clean and renewable.	5. When children are exposed to music and are taught to play instruments such as the piano or violin, there are many positive effects.
f. ----- The World Wide Web can be very useful for research, but it also contains a lot of incorrect information.	6. The sun gives a constant free supply of clean energy, which more homes should take advantage of.

Homework

Read the following writing prompt carefully and Write your essay. Be sure that it has an introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion.

Prompt: Nowadays some people prefer staying single. What is your opinion about it?

Unit 4

IELTS Academic/General Writing Task 2 *Brainstorming ideas*

Brainstorming essay ideas

1. How many ideas can you brainstorm for the following essay question?

We must limit tourism if we want to save the environment. Discuss.

Planning an essay

2. Read the essay question below. Then decide which sentence a-c is closest in meaning to the question.

Artistic activities, such as music, drama, or painting, bring a range of benefits to the individual and society and so should receive greater government investment. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

- a To what extent do artistic activities change us?
- b Are artistic activities useful for us?
- c Should artistic activities receive more public money?

3. Read the brainstorm below. Does it have points which agree and disagree with the statement in the above exercise? Why / Why not?

Artistic Activities

- improve young people's self-respect and confidence
- bring together people of different backgrounds and languages
- improve school grades
- develop understanding and tolerance of others
- provide social life for old and young people
- can be watched/ seen by everyone in society

4. Which of a-c below would make a good paragraph topic for the essay which answers the question in exercise 4. Why?

- a all the effects of artistic activities
- b the academic benefits of artistic activities
- c the positive effect of finger-painting on five-year-olds' maths results

5. Look at the essay plan. Underline the best paragraph topic in each pair.

My opinion: The government should support artistic activities.

Paragraph topic 1: Social benefits of art / Advantages for old people

Brainstorm points:

.....

.....

.....

Paragraph topic 2: Increase in self-respect / Benefits to individuals

Brainstorm points:

.....

.....

.....

Paragraph topic 3: Effects on community relations / Increase in tolerance

Brainstorm points:

.....

.....

.....

Homework

Read the following writing prompt carefully and Write your essay. Be sure that it has an introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion.

Prompt: Technology has had a positive influence on performing arts such as music and theatre
Do you agree or disagree?

Unit 5

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1

Task 1: Interpreting visual data

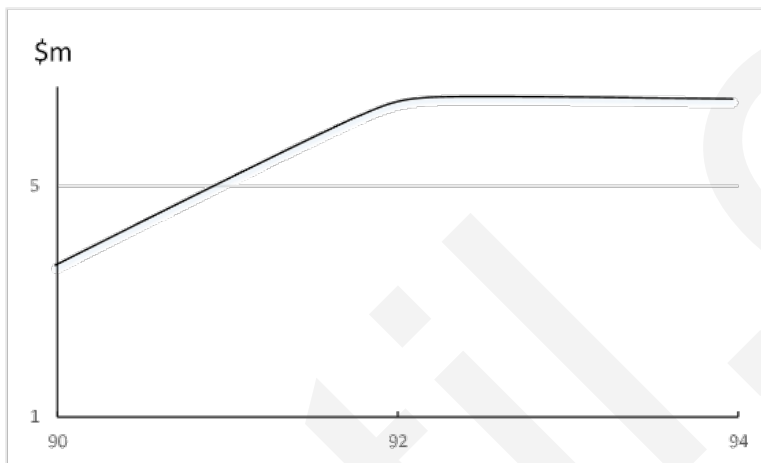
In Task 1 of the IELTS Academic Writing module you have to describe the data presented in tables, graphs, pictures or diagrams. You have to write up to 150 words for this.

The language of change

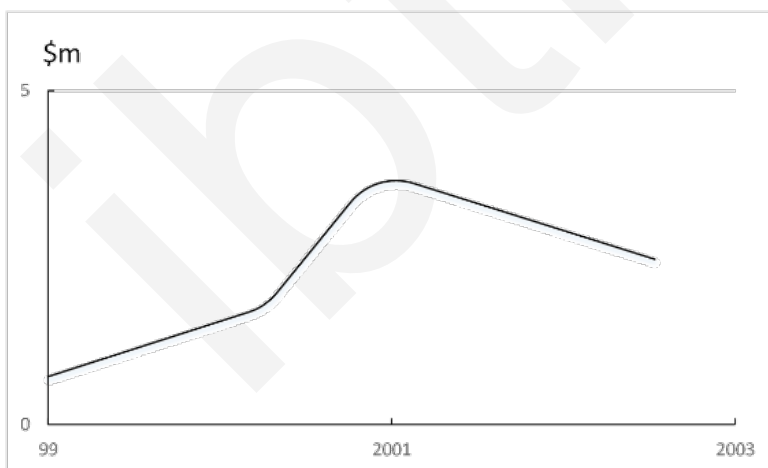
For Task 1, you may be asked to describe a graph which shows changes over a period of time. To do this you need to use language expressing change and appropriate tenses.

Practice 1:

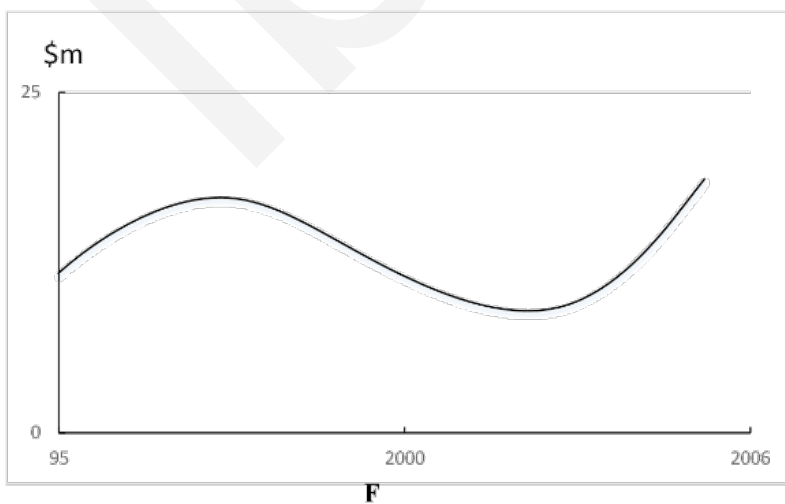
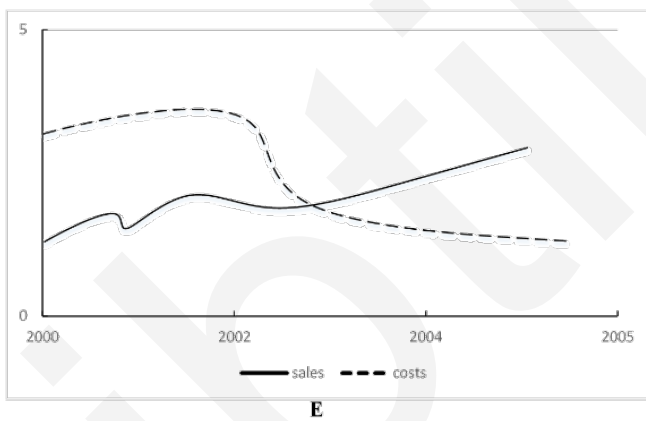
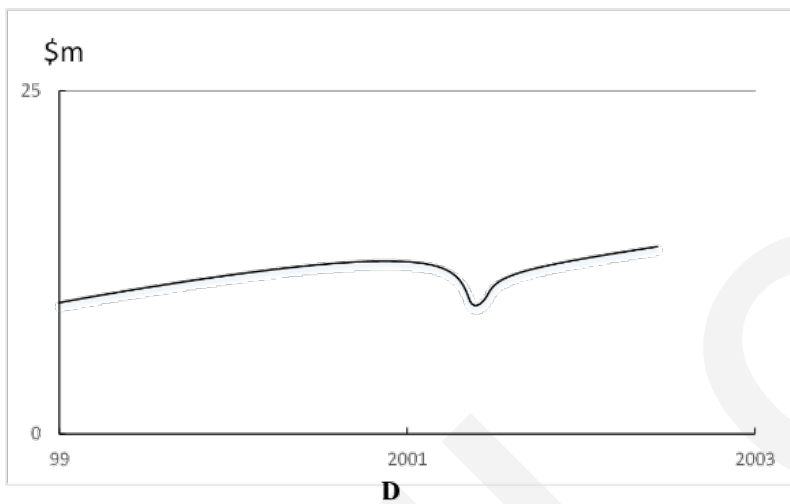
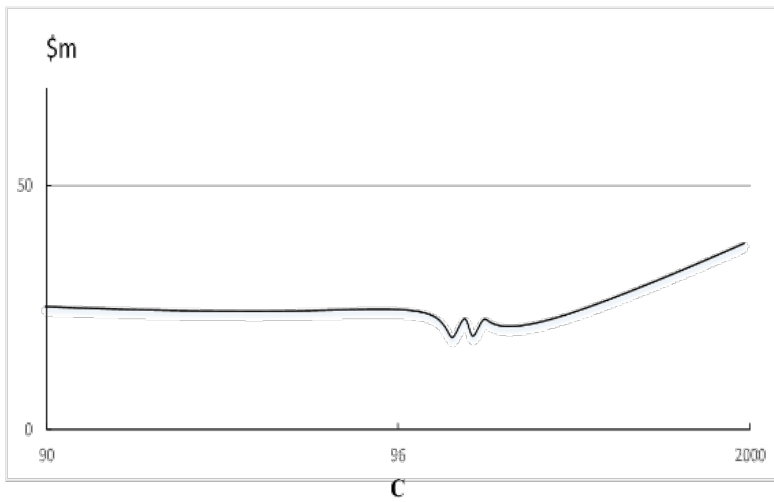
Match each sentence to a graph. You can use a graph more than once.



A



B



- 1 Sales started at \$3 million in 1990.
- 2 From 1997 to 2000, sales fluctuated.
- 3 Sales reached a peak of 3 million in 2001.
- 4 Sales increased for two years then levelled off.
- 5 Sales declined between 1999 and 2003.
- 6 Sales dipped briefly in 2002, then recovered.
- 7 In 1990, sales stood at \$25 million.
- 8 Sales overtook costs in 2003.

Practice 2: Add the verb phrases from Practice 1 to the correct category in the table below.

Movement upwards	Movement downwards	More than one Movement	No Movement
increase	decline	reach a peak	start

Practice 3: Complete these sentences with a preposition from the box. Use a dictionary to help you if necessary.

At (2 times)	between	by	of	to
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1. Profits rose from 2 billion dollars 5 billion last quarter.
2. Since 1985, the price of houses has increased 200%.
3. Road accidents reached a peak 50,000 in November.
4. Car sales remained constant around 75 per month for the rest of the period.
5. During the summer, temperatures fluctuate 20 and 30 degrees.
6. By close of business, the value of the company's shares stood \$25.

Two common patterns used when describing changes in academic English are:

- **noun + verb + adverb**
- **There + be + adjective + noun + in + noun**

Rewrite these sentences, using one of these patterns.

Example: The consumption of fruit has risen steadily.

There has been a steady rise, in the consumption of fruit.

- 1. Meat consumption has fallen sharply.**

There

- 2. There was a brief dip in share prices at the start of the year.**

Share prices

3. Her fitness level improved dramatically.

There was

4. There will be a rapid recovery in share prices next year.

Share prices

5. The use of GM foods has grown steadily in some countries.

There

Interpreting information from diagrams

To answer a Task 1 question, you need to understand and interpret the data correctly as well as using appropriate language to describe it.

Read the instructions for the Writing task below. Then look at the graph to find the answers to these questions.

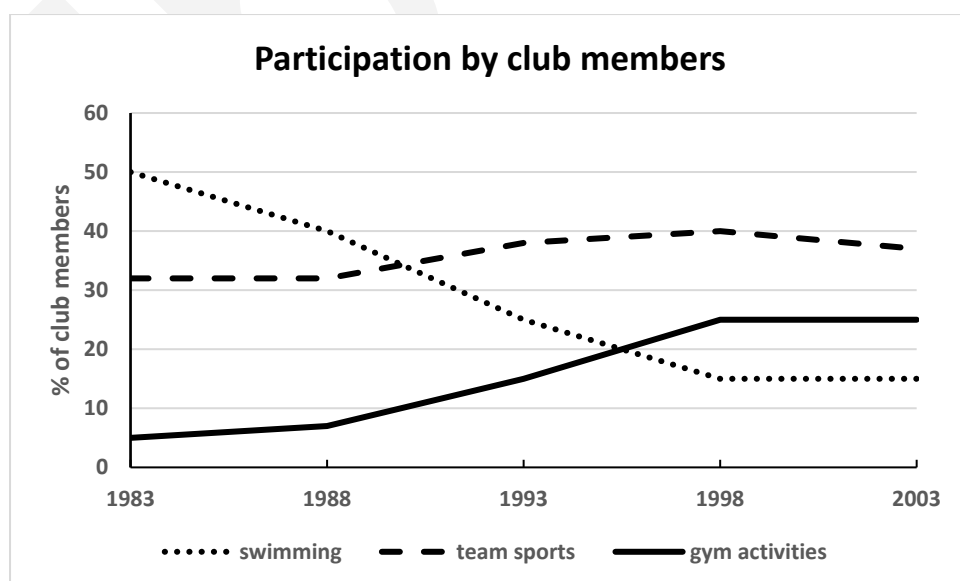
- 1 What period of time does the horizontal axis show?
- 2 What information does the vertical axis show?
- 3 What do the three lines represent? (look at the key in the box)
- 4 What tense do you need to use in order to describe this information?
- 5 What main changes does the graph illustrate?

Writing Task 1

You should spend 20 minutes on this task.

The graph below shows the rates of participation in three different activities in a UK sports club between 1983 and 2003.

Write at least 150 words.



Practice 4: Complete the sample answer below with the correct expression according to the information in following the graph.

This graph shows changes in the popularity of three different activities in a UK sports club over a period, of 20 years.

*In 1983 around 50% of club members participated in swimming so this was clearly the most popular activity. However, this figure **1** dipped/decreased steadily to 15% in 1998 and **2** remained constant/levelled off at this rate until 2003.*

*In contrast, 32% of members did team sports in 1983, and this rate **3** stood at/reached a peak of 40% in 1998 before **4** dropping/growing to its former level. Participation rates for team sports **5** increased/overtook those for swimming and became the highest for all activities from 1993 to 2003.*

*Finally, participation in gym activities **6** finished at/stood at only 5% in 1983, but this figure **7** fell/grew rapidly from 1988 to 1998, eventually **8** levelling off at/reaching a peak of around 25%, making gym the second most popular activity.*

*Overall, participation in swimming **9** fluctuated/dropped considerably during the period. Team sports, however, remained popular, while participation in gym activities **10** declined/rose significantly over the period.*

Now analyse the way the sample answer is organised by answering these questions.

1 How many paragraphs are used?

2 What information does each paragraph give?

Paragraph 1: Introduction

Paragraph 2:

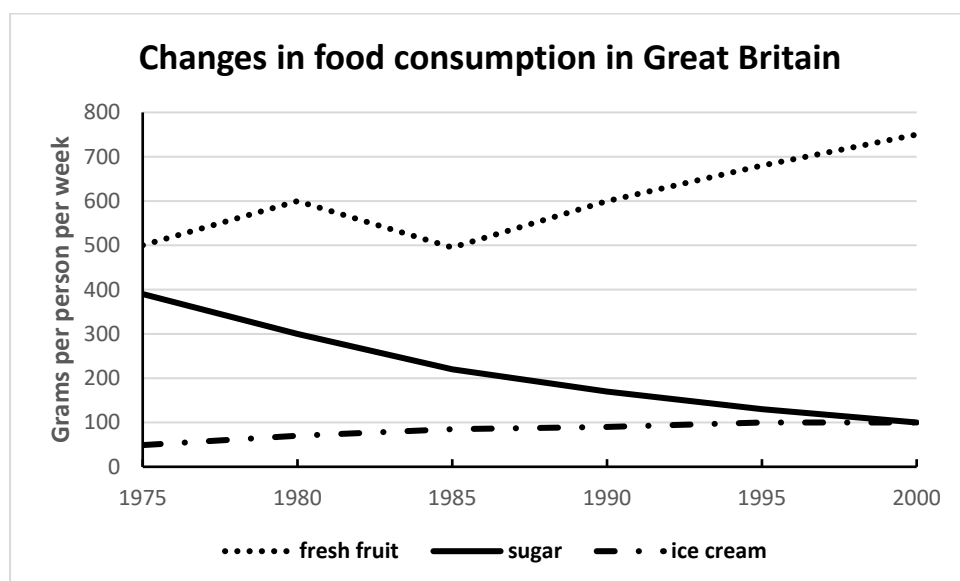
Paragraph 3:

Paragraph 4:

Paragraph 5: Summary of

3 Underline the words that are used to link the paragraphs.

Homework



A. Look at the sentences below and number them in the best order to describe this graph. The first and last ones have been done for you.

..... Although it dipped in 1985, it then rose steadily and reached 750 grams in 2000.

.....By 2000 it was at the same level as the consumption of sugar.

.....In 1975, the consumption of fresh fruit stood at 500 grams, then increased to 600 grams in 1980.

.....However, this gradually increased throughout the period.

.....1.....The graph shows changes in the amount of fresh fruit, sugar and ice-cream eaten per person per week in Britain between 1975 and 2000.

...11.....In addition, the consumption of ice cream, while at a relatively low level, rose significantly during this period.

.....In contrast, there was a consistent drop in sugar consumption.

.....From the graph we can see that overall, the consumption of fruit rose, while the consumption of sugar fell.

.....People consumed more fresh fruit than either sugar or ice-cream throughout the period.

.....The amount consumed decreased steadily from almost 400 grams per person to only 100 grams by 2000.

.....The amount of ice-cream consumed weekly started at about 50 grams.

B. Write out the sentences as a complete report, dividing them up into paragraphs.

C. Rewrite the following sentences from Exercise A as shown, using a noun form rather than a verb.

1. Although it dipped in 1985, it then rose steadily and reached 750 grams in 2000.

Although there was a, this was followed by to 750 grams in 2000.

2. However, this gradually increased ...

However, there was then

3. Overall, the consumption of fruit rose, while the consumption of sugar fell.

Overall, there was, while the consumption of sugar fell.

4. The amount consumed decreased steadily from almost 400 grams per person to only 100 grams by 2000.

There was a per person to only 100 grams by 2000.

Unit 6

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1

Task 1: Interpreting and comparing data

In Task 1 you have to think about both the meaning of the data in the task and the language you need to describe it.

Understanding the Data

Read the Writing task below and look at the bar chart. Answer these questions.

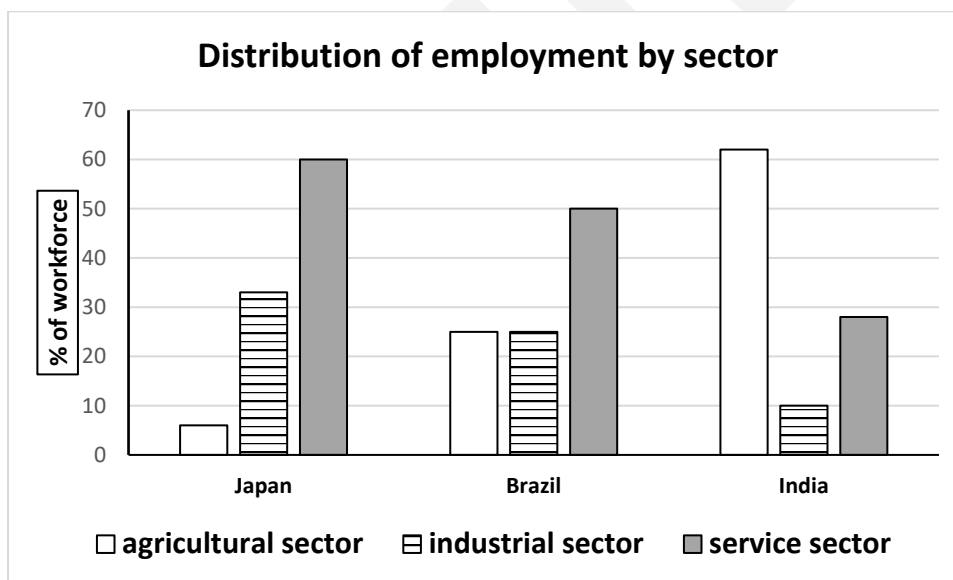
1. What information does the horizontal axis show? How many sectors are there? What does each bar represent?
2. What information does the vertical axis show?
3. Does the diagram show changes or differences?
4. Can you use language like *increase* and *decrease* when reporting the data?
5. What are the main similarities and differences between the countries?
6. What grammatical structures do you need to use in your description?

Writing Task 1

You should spend 20 minutes on this task.

The bar chart gives information about the percentage of workers in different sectors of employment in three countries at different stages of economic development.

Write at least 150 words.



Comparing Data

Use the information in the Writing task to fill the gaps with words from the box. Use each expression once only.

<i>As</i>	<i>as many</i>	<i>fewer</i>	<i>largest</i>	<i>highest</i>	<i>a larger percentage</i>
<i>lowest proportion</i>		<i>majority</i>	<i>more developed</i>	<i>most</i>	<i>more</i>

1. In Japan the proportion of the workforce is in the service sector.
2. India has many people employed in the agricultural sector than either Japan or Brazil, but it has workers in the industrial sector.
3. Brazil has workers in the agricultural sector it has in the industrial sector.
4. In India, people work in the agricultural sector.
5. The of workers in Brazil are in the service sector.
6. The of Japanese workers are employed in the agricultural sector.
7. Of the three countries, Japan has the percentage of employees in the industrial sector.
8. Countries which have economies seem to have of the workforce in the service sector.

In Writing Task 1, you need to take special care to avoid repetition of words and phrases.

Match the expressions below with parallel expressions from the box.

<i>the majority of</i>	<i>the same number of</i>	<i>the largest percentage of</i>
<i>the fewest</i>	<i>the lowest percentage of</i>	<i>the workforce</i>
<i>the working population</i>		

1. The highest proportion of
2. people employed/.....
3. an equal number of
4. the smallest proportion of/.....

Underline the most appropriate words to rewrite the introduction from the task.

The chart (1) *gives information about / compares / presents* the (2) *percentage of workers / majority of workers / proportion of the workforce* employed in (3) *different sectors of employment / agriculture, industry and service sectors / different industrial sectors* in (4) *three countries / Japan, Brazil and India / three economically different countries*.

WRITING THE DESCRIPTION

Now complete the main body of the description by filling in the gaps with appropriate expressions. Use two words for each answer.

First of all, we can see that both Japan and Brazil have the 1 of the workforce in the service sector (61% and 50% respectively). But while Japan has 2 people employed in the agricultural sector with only 7% of the working population, an 3 of Brazilians work in the agriculture and industry sectors (25% in each). In contrast, we can see that 4 Of the Indian workforce, amounting to 61% is employed in the agricultural sector, the 5 of employees work in industry and the remaining 27% are in the service sector.

ENDING THE DESCRIPTION

In writing task 1, it is a good idea to end your answer by summarising the main information shown by the diagram. You are not required to explain this information.

Which of the two conclusions below is a better ending for the description in Exercise above?

A.

Overall, the data indicates that countries with more developed economies have higher proportion of workers in the industrial and service sectors than in the agricultural sector.

B.

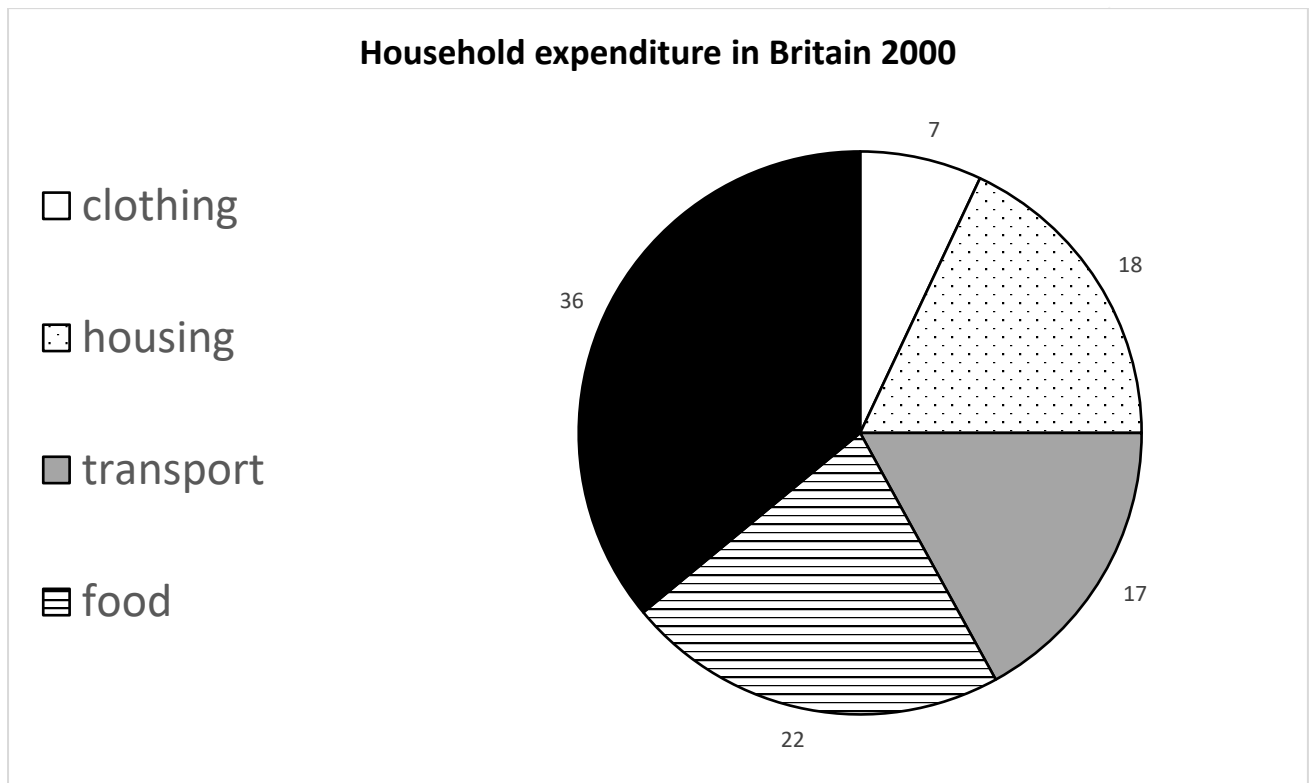
In conclusion, we can see that Japan and Brazil have more workers in the industrial and service sectors. This is because they have more industrialised economies and so the workers have more disposable incomes and require more services, which makes the service sector grow. In contrast, agriculture in these countries is more mechanized so that fewer workers are needed.

Homework

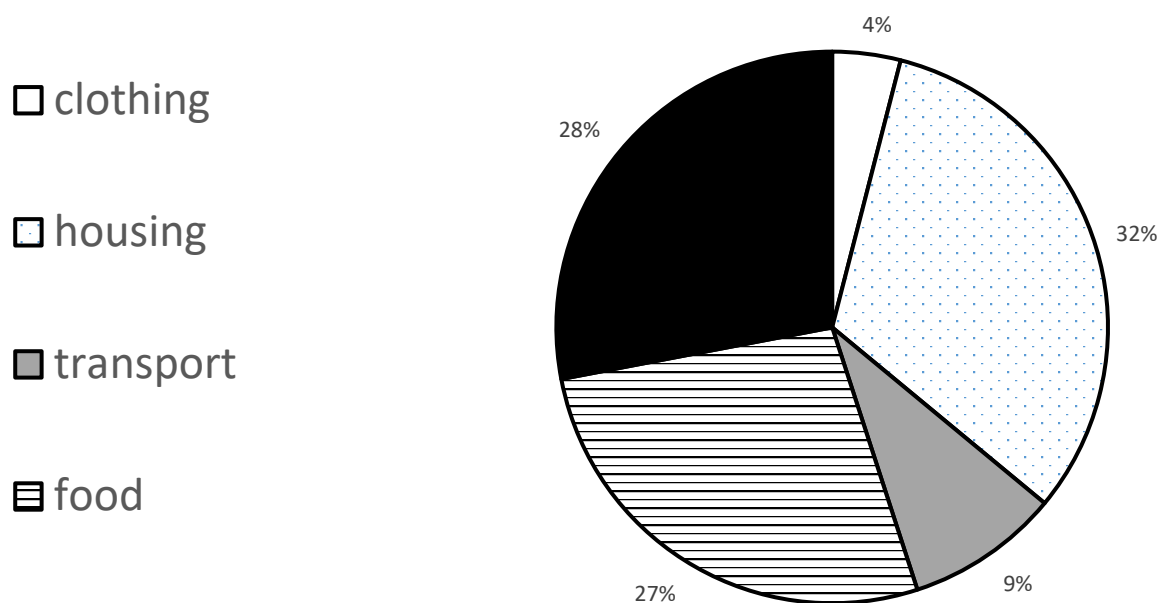
Writing Task 1

Complete the answer to the Writing task below by choosing the correct word from the box.

The pie charts below show average household expenditure in Hong Kong and Britain in the year 2000.



Household expenditure in Hong Kong 2000



The pie charts show the proportion of money spent on various household expenses in Hong Kong and Britain in 2000.

We can see that in Hong Kong the greatest proportion of expenditure (32%) was on housing, 1 in Britain housing accounted for just 17% of the total.

2 , in Britain the greatest single expense was other goods and services at 36%, 3 28% in Hong Kong. Food came in second place in Britain, at 22%, while in Hong Kong the actual proportion was 4 (27%). In Britain another major expense was transport, at 17%, but this was much 5 in Hong Kong (9%). In both countries the 6 percentage of expenditure was on clothing.

7 , the data 8 that in both cases food, housing and other goods and services were the 9 expenses, 10 that in Britain, transport and other goods and services took up a 11 proportion of total expenditure 12 in Hong Kong.

Unit 7

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1

Task 1: Describing information from tables

Tables compare data and may also show changes over time as well. They are often used when there is quite a lot of information, so it is important to select the key features to describe.

Note: The way Information is ordered in the table (i.e. left to right and top to bottom) will help you to understand it.

1. Read the Writing task below and look at the table. Answer these questions to help you understand the information given.

What two main areas does the table give figures for?

2. How is each main area subdivided?

3. What main difference do the figures show within each area?

4. How many years does the table deal with?

5. What are the main trends over time?

6. What kind of language can you use when describing the data?

Writing Task 1

You should spend 20 minutes on this task.

The table below gives figures for student applications and acceptances for UK university courses in the field of tourism, transport and travel.

Write at least 150 words.

Student statistics for university courses in tourism, transport and travel, 2000-2002

Applications			Acceptances		
year	men	women	men	women	% of total
2000	3,400	900	550	150	15.5%
2001	3,200	800	600	200	20%
2002	2,750	750	580	170	21.4%

ORGANISING THE DESCRIPTION

You should try to group the information rather than describing every piece of data.

Complete this paragraph outline for the Writing task 1 above.

Paragraph 1: Introduce the topic

Paragraph 2: describe figures and trends related to

Paragraph 3:

Paragraph 4:

REWORDING THE INTRODUCTION

Remember not to copy your introduction from the task: paraphrase instead.

Underline the most appropriate word(s) to complete this introduction to a sample answer.

The table concerns university courses (1) **in the field of/related to tourism**, Transport and travel in the UK. It shows (2) **decreases/changes/increases** in the (3) **numbers/proportion/percentage** of (4) **applicants/male and female students applying** for and being accepted on such courses (5) **between/from** 2000 and 2002.

DESCRIBING THE DATA

Use the information in the above table to complete these sentences with a word or number.

1. In all three years, more applied for *such* courses than, although *their numbers* considerably, from 3,400 in 2000 to in 2002.
2. Female reached little more than a quarter of the figures for in 2000 and 2001, and *they* to 750 in 2002.
3. Total applications during *the period*.
4. Many more and applied for *these courses* than were accepted throughout *the three years*.
5. However, the of applications *which* were accepted from about 15% in 2000 to over in 2002, even though the total number only slightly.
6. Many more were accepted than in *all three years*.
7. While total applications, the of *those* accepted considerably.

Now look back at your paragraph outline in Exercise 2, and group the sentences into paragraphs 2, 3 and 4.

Homework

Writing Task 1

The table below gives information about the use of different modes of transport in Shanghai in 1996, and one possible projection (high motorisation scenario) for their use in 2020.

Percentage of passenger kilometres by different modes of transport in Shanghai

Mode of Transport	1996	2020 (projection)
walking	7%	3%
bicycle	27%	3%
scooter	12%	7%
bus	39%	22%
train	-	13%
car	15%	52%

Unit 8

IELTS Academic/General Writing Task 2 *Presenting an opinion*

What is an opinion essay?

In Task 2, you may be asked to agree or disagree with a statement or opinion, rather than being required to discuss opposing views. In this case you may choose simply to give your own opinions on the topic and justify these.

ANALYSING THE QUESTION

Look at the Writing task below and answer these questions.

1. What is the main topic?
2. What aspect(s) of the topic do you have to write about?
3. What question do you have to answer in your conclusion?

WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

University education should be restricted to the very best academic students, rather than being available to a large proportion of young people.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Write at least 250 word.

GENERATING IDEAS

Look at the Writing task again.

1. What is your opinion on this topic?
Do you agree or disagree?
2. Note down some reasons you could use to justify your opinion.

Access to University should/should not be restricted

- a.
- b.
- c.

ORGANISING AND SUPPORTING YOUR IDEAS

Put the following paragraph plan in the correct order: (1) opening, (2) middle and (3) closing paragraphs.

Justify your opinion.

Introduce the topic.

Summarise your thesis/point of view.

State your thesis/point of view.

How many of the reasons you noted in Exercise 2 could you include in the middle section?

ANALYSING A SAMPLE ANSWER

Read the sample answer below and answer these questions.

1. Does the writer agree or disagree with the statement?
2. How many reasons are given? Number them.
3. What words are used to introduce these reasons?

The sample answer would score a low band. Identify and tick five problems from the list A-H.

University education should be restricted to the most academic students, rather than being available to a large proportion of young people. I disagree with this opinion for several reasons. Firstly, individuals today need much higher-level skills and technical knowledge. Furthermore, societies cannot continue to develop unless more citizens are educated. Finally, it is only fair that anyone who could benefit from a university education should have access to one. In conclusion, it is important to encourage students to get a higher level education today. (84 words)

- A Inaccurate use of language
- B Underlength answer
- C Language copied from the task
- D Poor punctuation
- E The conclusion does not answer the question
- F Ideas are not developed
- G No paragraphing
- H No signposting link words

WRITING THE INTRODUCTION

Remember not to copy language from the task in your introduction.

Choose the best alternatives to expand and reword the introduction in Exercise 4.

In the past, (1) tertiary/university education was (2) limited/restricted to a small proportion of people who were (3) the most academic/the very best academic students. Today, however, (4) a large proportion of /many more young people have the possibility of going to university, and I think that this is a much better situation for several reasons.

DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING YOUR IDEAS

Look back at the sample answer in Exercise 4. Can you think of ways to develop the reasons given for the writer's opinion?

Match the ideas and examples below with reasons 1-3 in the sample answer.

A.

In order to progress and compete in the modern world, each country needs people who can develop modern technologies further and apply them in new fields.

B.

Therefore, there should be equal opportunities for everyone to realise their full potentials. Going to university is part of this.

C.

For example, many professions require advanced computer skills and an ability to adapt to a rapidly changing workplace. Schools do not have the resources to equip students with these skills, so universities have to fulfil this role.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Remember to refer back to the original task when writing your conclusion. If the task asks you an explicit question, answer it directly.

Complete the conclusion below, using your own opinions and summarizing your reasons.

In conclusion, I partly agree/totally agree/disagree with the statement because I believe ...

Homework

Write your own response to the above writing question.

WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

University education should be restricted to the very best academic students, rather than being available to a large proportion of young people.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Write at least 250 word.

Unit 9

IELTS Academic/General Writing Task 2

Presenting arguments

Discussion questions

With some question types in Task 2, you need to discuss more than one type of evidence, argument or point of view before reaching your conclusion.

ANALYSING THE QUESTION

Look at the Writing task below and answer these questions.

1 Is the main topic a) modern lifestyles, b) positive changes in lifestyles or c) positive and negative changes in lifestyles?

2 What information do you have to give in your conclusion?

WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Modern lifestyles are completely different from the way people lived in the past. Some people think the changes have been very positive, while others believe they have been negative.

Discuss both these points of view and give your own opinion.

Write at least 250 word.

ANALYSING A SAMPLE ANSWER

Read the sample answer below and answer these questions.

1. What is the purpose of the first paragraph?
2. What is the purpose of the first sentence in paragraphs 2 and 3?
3. Which opinion does the writer agree with? Where does he state his opinion?

It is undeniable that the average person's lifestyle has changed enormously during the last few decades owing to the huge impact of modern technology and economic development.

Some people believe that modern life is much better than in the past. As evidence of this, they point to improvements in healthcare and education and the general increase in the standard of living. Furthermore, they argue that machines have changed working conditions and reduced the need for hard physical labour, and they talk about the large leisure industries that have transformed people's free time.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that some changes have had a negative impact on our lives. For example, there has been a negative impact on both the natural and human environments. In addition, stress from all the pressure in today's schools and workplaces may have reduced the quality of life in social terms. Having access to more things and more entertainment cannot compensate for the loss of social relationships. One reason for this loss is that families spend less time together and, as a result, crime rates and divorce rates have increased and people have lost any sense of community.

In conclusion, I think there is evidence to suggest that some of the changes we have experienced in the modern world have affected our lives in a negative way, especially in terms of the family and the environment. But overall, it is clear that most of these changes have been good for the majority of people. Nevertheless, I Feel we need to ensure that these positive changes can be sustained and shared more in the future.

Find examples of logical links in the sample answer and put them in the appropriate category.
Introducing examples:

Addition:

Contrast:

Giving examples:

Concession:

Summing up:

Cause and effect:

What evidence is used to support the main arguments in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the sample answer?
Complete this paragraph plan.

Paragraph 2

Argument: changes have been positive

Evidence: improvements in healthcare.....

.....

.....

Paragraph 3

Argument: changes have been negative

Evidence: impact on environment

.....

.....

EDITING FOR LANGUAGE

Add the correct prepositions to the following expressions. Then check in the sample answer above.

1. in terms something
2. the impact of something something
3. to compensate (somebody) something
4. to have access something
5. the need
6. a (positive/negative) way

Correct the mistakes with prepositions in these student responses.

A.

The impact of computers to working conditions has been good. About the environment, however, the changes have been negative.

B.

Such changes have affected our world by a negative way. And even higher salaries cannot compensate on long working hours.

C.

There is no need of physical labour any more, and people have more access different activities than before.