

# IELTS Writing

## How long is the Writing paper?

The Writing paper lasts one hour. Within that time, you must complete two writing tasks. Writing Task 2 carries more marks than Writing Task 1.

## What will I need to write about?

There are two separate writing tests, one for Academic candidates and one for General Training candidates. Before enrolling, you need to decide which test is best for you. See the website [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org) for advice on this. You will be given two specific writing tasks as follows.

Task		Timing	What do I have to do?
<b>Academic Writing</b>	<b>1</b>	20 minutes	Describe visual information (e.g. a diagram, chart, graph or table).
	<b>2</b>	40 minutes	Write an essay. You may be asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide a solution</li><li>• evaluate a problem</li><li>• compare and contrast different ideas or opinions</li><li>• challenge an argument or idea.</li></ul>
<b>General Training Writing</b>	<b>1</b>	20 minutes	Respond to a given situation (e.g. by writing a letter). You may be asked to request information or explain a situation.
	<b>2</b>	40 minutes	Write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem.

## How is the Writing paper assessed?

A trained assessor will read your answers and award a mark based on the following criteria.

Task	Criteria	What do these criteria mean?
<b>Writing Task 1</b>	<b>Task Achievement</b>	Did you answer the question fully and write 150 words?
<b>Writing Task 2</b>	<b>Task Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did your answer address all of the points in the question?</li> <li>• Did you provide a balanced argument and support your ideas with evidence and examples?</li> <li>• Were all of your ideas relevant to the question?</li> <li>• Did you write 250 words?</li> </ul>
<b>Both tasks</b>	<b>Coherence and Cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your writing easy to understand?</li> <li>• Are your ideas well organised and clearly linked?</li> </ul>
	<b>Lexical Resource</b>	Did you use a wide range of vocabulary accurately and effectively?
	<b>Grammatical Range and Accuracy</b>	Did you use a wide range of grammatical structures accurately and effectively?

Writing Task 2 is worth more marks than Writing Task 1. The assessor will combine your two scores to obtain one final score.

## How can I improve my Writing paper score?

You can improve your score by making sure you answer each question fully and remembering the test tips in this unit. This unit will also tell you the writing skills you need to practise in order to achieve your best score. Before the test, practise writing quickly and neatly and make sure you **do not** use bullet points, notes or abbreviations or prepared answers. Studying all aspects of English, including vocabulary and grammar, will also help improve your score.



# Writing skills

## 1 Academic Writing Task 1 – Describing a chart, table or graph

### In this unit you will practise:

- understanding Academic Writing Task 1
- understanding charts, tables and graphs
- identifying relevant information
- improving your Task Achievement score

## 1 Understanding graphs, tables and charts

IELTS Writing Task 1 presents you with visual information that you need to describe.

### 1.1 Label examples of visual information 1–6 with words A–F.

**A** diagram

**B** map

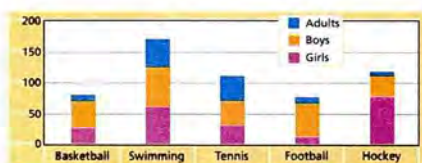
**C** pie chart

**D** table

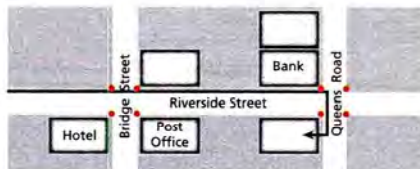
**E** bar chart

**F** graph

**1**



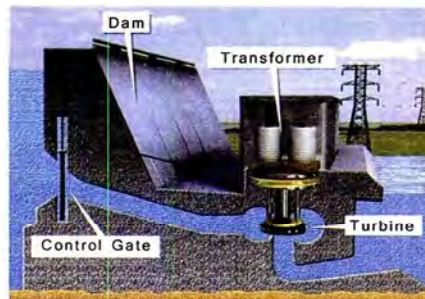
**4**



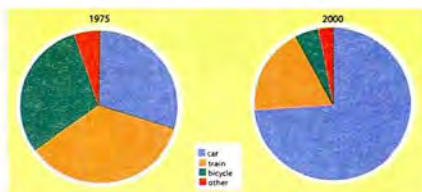
**2**

WINNING TEAMS	GOLD	SILVER
USA	929	729
Soviet Union	395	319
UK	207	255
France	191	212
Germany	163	163
Italy	190	157
Sweden	142	160

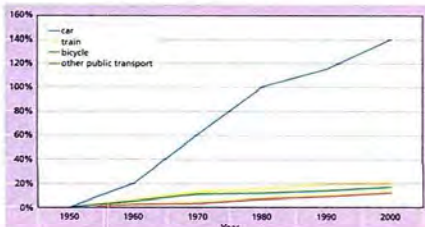
**5**



**3**



**6**



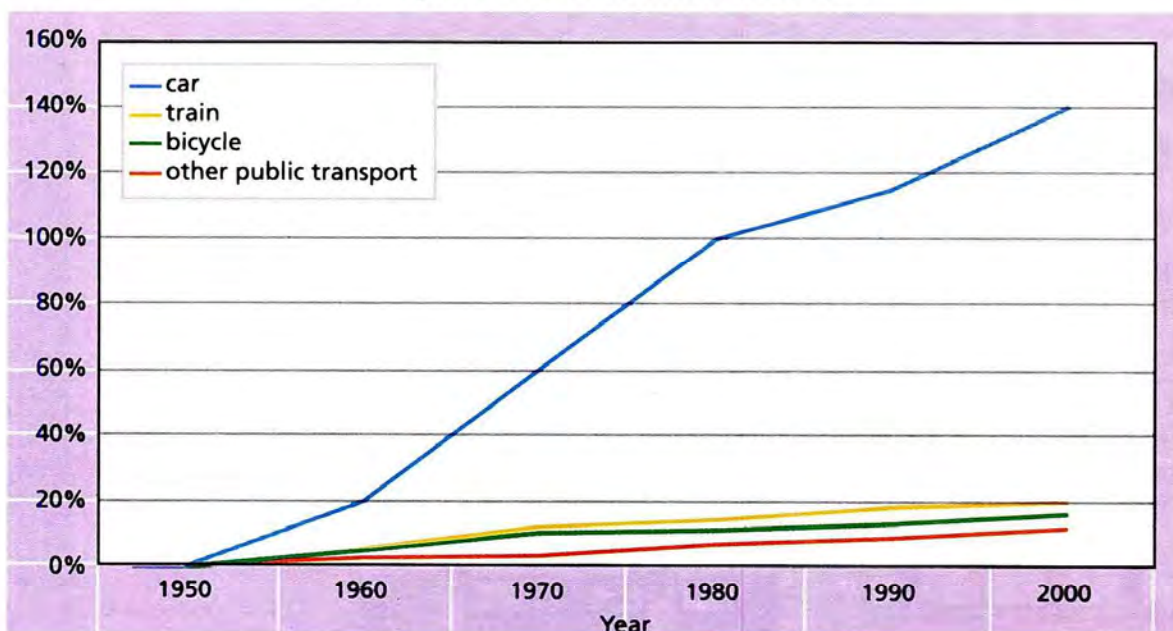
You only have 20 minutes to complete this task, so practise reading and understanding this type of information quite quickly.

**1.2** Spend a minute looking at the graph below. Mark any information you think is important with a highlighter or pencil.

**1.3** Answer these questions.

- 1 What is being measured and how? (e.g. is the information in millions or as a percentage?)
- 2 Is there a time element to the information? (If yes, what is the gap between each year shown?)
- 3 Are two or more things being compared? (What are they?)

**Traffic growth in the Netherlands since 1950**



**1.4** This description of the graph in 1.3 contains seven mistakes. Find the mistakes and correct them.

*The graph shows the increases in traffic in England from 1960 to 2010. During this time, car traffic increased by just over 150%, while train traffic increased by 40 percent, bicycle traffic increased by approximately 20%, and other public transport traffic actually decreased by about 20%.*

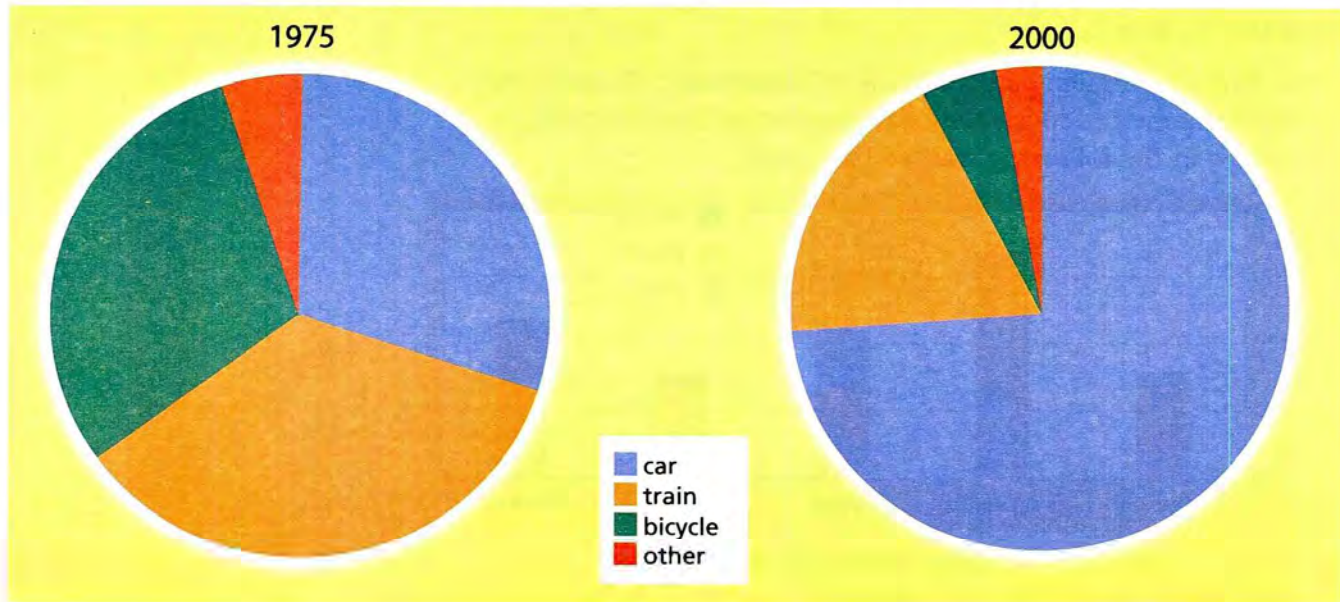
**Test Tip** You will be assessed on the type of information you write about, as well as the language that you use. If you give information that is incorrect or inaccurate, then you will receive a lower score.



The visual information may also be presented in a bar chart, table or a pie chart. You must limit your description to the information presented to you.

**1.5** Study the information presented in these pie charts carefully, then complete the task.

Proportion of journeys made in the Netherlands according to transport type



Look at statements 1–6 and say whether the information

**A** is **true** according to the data

**B** is **incorrect** according to the data

**C** **cannot be verified** from the data

- 1 The two pie charts tell us the number of vehicles being used in the Netherlands in 1975 and 2000.
- 2 As many people travelled by train as by car in the Netherlands in 1975.
- 3 Fewer people travelled by train than by bicycle in the Netherlands in 2000.
- 4 In 2000, people in the Netherlands were making most of their journeys by car.
- 5 A larger percentage of people bought new cars in 2000 than in 1975.
- 6 We can see from this information that travelling by train and by bicycle was far less common in 2000 than in 1975.

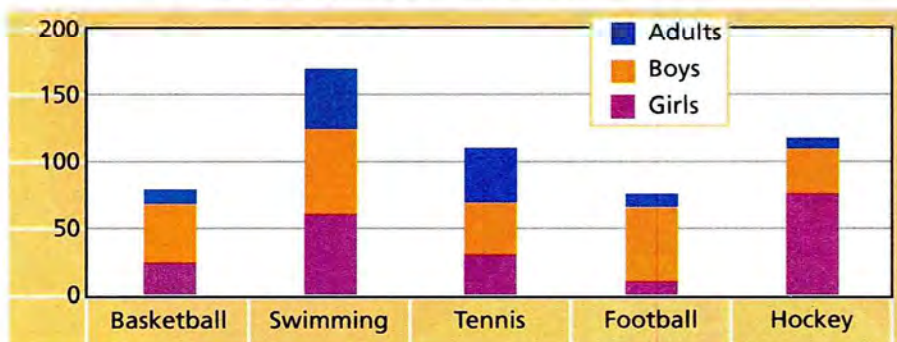
**Test Tip** Your answer must **accurately** describe the information presented in the visual. Don't draw conclusions that are not supported by the information you are given.

## 2 More complex charts

The visual information you are given in Writing Task 1 often asks you to compare or contrast different information. One way of allowing you to compare information is through a bar chart.

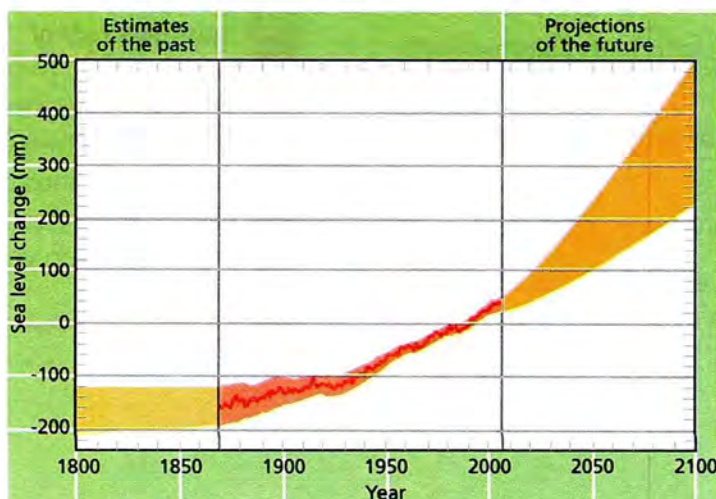
**2.1** Study the bar chart below. Notice that you have to estimate some of the numbers. Answer the questions by choosing the best answer, A, B or C.

One hundred adults, boys and girls in Manchester, England were asked to name the sports they participated in. The results were recorded in the following stacked bar chart.



- Approximately how many adults play basketball?  
A 80                                      B 25                                      C 10
- How many boys enjoy swimming?  
A about 40                                B about 60                            C about 170
- Which sport is enjoyed by the same number of adults as girls?  
A basketball                                B tennis                                C football
- Which group seems to participate in the most sport overall?  
A adults                                      B boys                                      C girls

**2.2** Some charts are used to show predictions of the future. Study the graph below and decide what the information is telling you.





Using the passive voice helps to show you are **describing** the visual information, rather than giving your own ideas. To describe future predictions, we often use the passive form of the verbs *estimate*, *predict*, and *forecast*. These sentences often start with *It*.

### 2.3 Rewrite these sentences, describing the graph in 2.2.

- 1 I predict that sea levels will continue to rise.  
It is predicted that \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 I estimate that sea levels will have increased by 200mm by the year 2050.  
It \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 I forecast that sea levels will rise more rapidly between 2050 and 2100.  
Sea levels \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 I estimate that by 2100, sea levels will be 500 mm higher than they are at present.  
By 2100, sea levels \_\_\_\_\_



**Test Tip** Each time you come across any form of graph, chart or table, study it carefully and practise picking out the major changes that the figure shows. Imagine that you are explaining to someone else what you have noticed from the graph.

## 3 Improving your Task Achievement score

When the examiner assesses your writing, one of the criteria they will use is called **Task Achievement**. Look at the wording of this Writing Task 1 question.

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

*Write at least 150 words.*

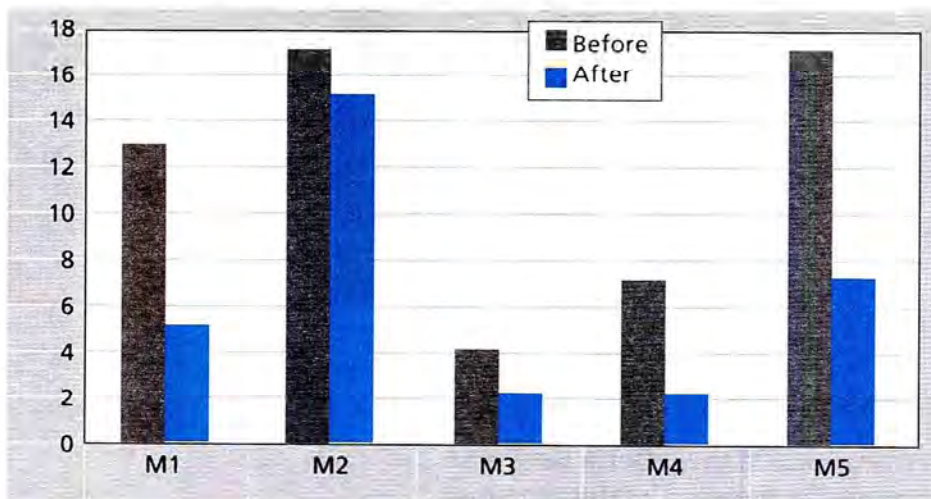
This means that, to achieve a good score for Task Achievement, you need to

- 1 give an overview of the main information in the graph (summarise the information).
- 2 describe **all** the most relevant and significant information (select and report the main features).
- 3 point out the key differences and similarities in the data (make comparisons where relevant).
- 4 only include information that is represented in the data.
- 5 produce an answer that is at least 150 words.

It is **very important** to give a one-sentence overview or summary of the **main trends** in the chart or graph. **You will not achieve a good Task Achievement score if your answer does not include an overview sentence.**

**3.1** The bar chart below shows the reduction in traffic accidents in Bridgewater following the introduction of extra lanes on busy roads. Look at the chart and try to identify the main trend(s).

**Accident reductions per kilometre in Bridgewater following the introduction of extra lanes on busy motorways**



**3.2** Which of the following sentences is an accurate overview sentence of the bar chart?  
(You must summarise the main trend(s).)

- A** There were mixed results following the introduction of the new traffic system in Bridgewater.
- B** On some roads the extra lanes were more popular than on others.
- C** The roads with the largest amount of traffic are the M1 and M5.
- D** In every case, adding an extra lane on main roads had a positive effect on traffic incidents.
- E** All cities should incorporate this system on their main roads.



For Writing Task 1, you need to write 150 words describing and summarising the **main features**. The visual information may contain minor details that should not be included. For example:

**Main feature:** *Extra lanes were introduced to five main roads.*

**Minor detail:** *Before the new lane was introduced, almost eight cars had accidents on the M4 per kilometre per year.*

### 3.3 Look at sentences 1–6 and decide if the information is

- A a main feature (it should be included)
  - B a minor detail (it can be left out)
- 1 The M2 and the M3 showed the smallest reduction in accidents.
  - 2 Approximately four accidents per kilometre occurred on the M3 prior to the peak lane being introduced.
  - 3 About 17 accidents per kilometre occurred each year on the M2 following the introduction of extra lanes on busy roads.
  - 4 The greatest reduction in accident numbers occurred on the M1, the M4 and the M5.
  - 5 The introduction of the new system cut the number of accidents occurring on the M1 and the M5 by half.
  - 6 Each year, the greatest number of accidents occur on the M1, the M2 and the M5.

### 3.4 Look again at the bar chart in 2.1 and read the model answer below. Check the Task Achievement of the model answer.

- 1 Find a sentence that gives an overview of the main information.
- 2 Find four examples of the **main features** of the data that have been selected and reported.
- 3 Check the word count.

The chart shows the responses of a group consisting of 100 boys, 100 girls and 100 adults in Manchester, England, when asked whether they participated in four sports: basketball, swimming, tennis and football. From their responses, it is clear that swimming is the most popular sport among all groups, and that from these three groups, boys participated in the most sports. In fact, for three out of the four sports, boys were the major participants. The only sport not enjoyed by the boys surveyed was hockey, a sport that the vast majority of the girls who were interviewed participated in. Other sports enjoyed by girls were tennis and basketball. However, only a very small number, approximately 10 of the 100, participated in football. We can conclude from this that girls in Manchester enjoy hockey a lot and that they don't particularly like football.

### 3.5 Improve the Task Achievement score of the model answer.

- 1 Find one piece of information that should be deleted.
- 2 Decide what details are missing.
- 3 Complete the answer so that there are 150 words.



**Test Tip** You will **lose marks** for Task Achievement if you

- leave out data that is important.
- speculate on reasons for the data.
- add information not included in the data.
- write less than 150 words.

**Don't** do these things.



# Writing skills

## 2 Academic Writing Task 1 – Comparing and contrasting graphs and tables

### In this unit you will practise:

- avoiding repetition
- comparing and contrasting data
- describing changes in numbers
- grammatical range and accuracy
- describing numbers and figures accurately

### 1 Avoiding repetition

As well as Task Achievement, another criterion the examiner will use is called **Lexical Resource**. This assesses the accuracy and range of the vocabulary you use. To display a wide range of vocabulary, you must make sure not to simply repeat your own words or the words from the question.

**1.1** A good way to avoid repetition is to use synonyms. Which words A–F could be used to replace the underlined words in sentences 1–6?

- 1 There was a sharp decrease in sales between 2007 and 2010
- 2 The figures fell steadily over the next 10 years.
- 3 It is predicted that the numbers will begin to increase from 2025.
- 4 It is predicted that the numbers will remain the same for the next ten years.
- 5 The charts show how many people travelled by train in 1950 and 2000.
- 6 According to the data in the table, 2005 was the most successful year.

- A stay
- B indicate
- C information
- D dropped
- E rise
- F reduction