

## IELTS Academic Writing Part One tips and useful phrases Extended version

Look at the IELTS Writing Part One task(s) your teacher gives you and try to think of tips for doing well in this part of the exam.

Cross out or change any of the tips below which you don't agree with.

### **Planning/ Content**

- 1 Underline important words in the question.
- 2 Very quickly split the information into two to make your two main paragraphs, for example by drawing a line across the graph.
- 3 It's important to think of a clever and original way of splitting the information into two paragraphs.
- 4 The two main paragraphs need to be the same length.
- 5 Brainstorm before writing.
- 6 Spend about 5 minutes planning.
- 7 Describe all of the information given.
- 8 Select and summarise.
- 9 Select information at random.
- 10 Select the most important information, maybe thinking about the (probable) use of the data.
- 11 *You should almost always compare and contrast.*
- 12 It might be difficult or impossible to usefully compare and contrast with flow charts.
- 13 Mention data which you already know about the topic.
- 14 Speculate on the reasons for changes.
- 15 Speculate on the cause and effect relationships between different data.

### **Starting**

- 16 *Start your introduction with a very general description of the graph, table, flow chart, etc, for example by rephrasing the question.*
- 17 *Explain how you've split the information into two.*

### **Language**

- 18 Try to avoid using words and phrases from the question.
- 19 If you can't think of words which aren't in the question, just change the parts of speech of the words that are there.
- 20 *Describe the most important information first.*
- 21 Only use Present Simple if you have to describe regularly repeated data such as daily cycles, yearly cycles and processes.
- 22 Although it's always correct to use Present Simple to describe a visual source such as a graph (and it is common in presentations), in the exam use the actual time to make for higher level and more varied language.
- 23 *Most data in the exam is only about the past, in which case you should use past tenses to describe it.*
- 24 Limit Past Perfect to one or two sentences.
- 25 Use a range of future tenses (will, shall, might, Present Continuous, going to, etc) to

describe future data.

- 26 *Use mainly “will” to describe future data, with maybe Future Perfect and possibly Future Continuous.*
- 27 *Always start the main paragraphs with expressions meaning “First” and “Second”.*
- 28 *Avoid starting sentences with “and” and “but”.*
- 29 *Try to add more complex time clauses than “in 1998” and “at seven o’clock”.*
- 30 *Try to use more complex language than “go up”, “go down” and “stay flat”, preferably using phrases which give more information about the changes.*
- 31 *Use reference phrases to avoid repeating words when referring to the data.*

### **Length/ Timing/ Finishing**

- 32 Write approximately 150 words.
- 33 Write exactly 150 words.
- 34 You will lose marks if you write under 150 words.
- 35 Write as many words as you can.
- 36 Count every word to make sure you have reached 150 words.
- 37 If you are short of 150 words, add a summary or conclusion.
- 38 If you are a few words short of 150 words, add extra words such as adverbs to the sentences which you have already written, using a little upside down “v” to show where the words should go and writing above the line.
- 39 If you are more than about 6 or 7 words short of 150 words, write an extra phrase or sentence to go inside the text somewhere, draw a box around it, and draw a big arrow to the place where it should go.
- 40 Leave two or three minutes for editing.
- 41 When editing, you can add better language as well as getting rid of mistakes.
- 42 You will lose marks for untidiness.
- 43 You will start to lose marks if the examiner has to read twice to understand.
- 44 If you have finished the task, reached 150 words and edited but are still under 20 minutes, go straight onto Writing Part Two.
- 45 If you go over 25 minutes, just stop, even mid-sentence, and go onto Part Two.
- 46 Lots of eraser on your desk is a sign of wasting time.

*For the ones in italics above, brainstorm suitable language to do that thing or suitable language for avoiding that mistake.*

## Suggested answers

**Bold = Not a good idea**

### Planning/ Content

- 1 Underline important words in the question
- 2 Very quickly split the information into two to make your two main paragraphs, for example by drawing a line across the graph.
- 3 **It's important to think of a clever and original way of splitting the information into two paragraphs**
- 4 **The two main paragraphs need to be the same length**
- 5 **Brainstorm before writing**
- 6 **Spend about 5 minutes planning**
- 7 **Describe all of the information given**
- 8 Select and summarise
- 9 **Select information at random**
- 10 Select the most important information, maybe thinking about the (probable) use of the data.
- 11 *You should almost always compare and contrast - "Comparing the...", "(far/ much) ... er/ more/ less...", "(not) as...as...", "similar/ almost the same", "...,whereas...", "In contrast,...", "(almost) the opposite" "While...,..." , "... shows a rather/ very different pattern/ trend.", "We can contrast this with...", "... is (a/ the) (major) exception..."*
- 12 It might be difficult or impossible to usefully compare and contrast with flow charts.
- 13 **Mention data which you already know about the topic**
- 14 **Speculate on the reasons for changes**
- 15 **Speculate on the cause and effect relationships between different data.**

### Starting

- 16 *Start your introduction with a very general description of the graph, table, flow chart, etc, for example by rephrasing the question. - "The (line) graph/ bar chart (= bar graph)/ pie chart/ chart/ map/ table/ diagram/ flow chart...", "... shows/ represents/ compares/ illustrates...", "information/ data/ figures"*
- 17 *Explain how you've split the information into two. - "I will describe... and then..."/ "First, I will .. and after that I will...", In the first paragraph I will... and in the following paragraph I will..."*

### Language

- 18 Try to avoid using words and phrases from the question.
- 19 If you can't think of words which aren't in the question, just change the parts of speech of the words that are there.
- 20 *Describe the most important information first. - "The first thing you notice...", "The most noticeable... is...", "The biggest/ most noticeable/ most important difference/ similarity between the lines/ graphs is...", "Overall,...", "The main trend...", "In general,*

...”, “The thing that stands out (most) is...”

- 21 Only use Present Simple if you have to describe regularly repeated data such as daily cycles, yearly cycles and processes.
- 22 Although it's always correct to use Present Simple to describe a visual source such as a graph (and it is common in presentations), in the exam use the actual time to make for higher level and more varied language.
- 23 *Most data in the exam is only about the past, in which you case you should past tenses to describe it. – Mainly Past Simple, plus Past Perfect, Past Perfect Continuous, maybe Past Continuous. NOT Present Perfect X*
- 24 Limit Past Perfect to one or two sentences
- 25 **Use a range of future tenses (will, shall, might, Present Continuous, going to, etc) to describe future data.**
- 26 Use mainly “will” to describe future data, with maybe Future Perfect and possibly Future Continuous. – “will have overtaken”, “will be flattening out”
- 27 **Always start the main paragraphs with expressions meaning “First” and “Second” – “Looking at...”, “Moving onto...”, “Turning to...”**
- 28 Avoid starting sentences with “and” and “but” – “... also...”, “... as well”, “In addition”, “However”, “..., whereas...”, “In contrast, ...”, NOT “On the other hand”, “On the contrary” PROBABLY NOT “Furthermore”/ “Moreover”
- 29 Try to add more complex time clauses than “in 1998” and “at seven o’clock” – “in the last two years of the 1990s”, “early in the morning”
- 30 Try to use more complex language than “go up”, “go down” and “stay flat”, preferably using phrases which give more information about the changes - “significant(ly)”, “huge(ly)”, “dramatic(ally)”, “considerable(bly)”, “gradual(ly)”, “slight(ly)”, “steady(ly)”, “sharp(ly)”, “shoot up”, “crash”, “bottom out”, “bounce back”
- 31 Use reference phrases to avoid repeating words when referring to the data. - “The former”, “The latter”, “This (line/ segment/ figure)”, “Both (of them)”, “Only the first of these...”, “respectively”, “in that order”

### **Length/ Timing/ Finishing**

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