Brainstorm useful phrases for IELTS Writing Task 1

With a partner, brainstorm at least two phrases into each of the categories below.

Explaining what the task shows (in the first sentence of the essay)

Explaining the paragraph structure

Selecting the most important information/ Giving overall information

Mentioning parts of what the page shows (= Giving details about the graph etc)

Upward trends

Downward trends

Going up and down
Not changing

Big changes

Small changes

Comparing

Contrasting

Sequencing

Starting the second main paragraph (= the second paragraph of the body of the text)

*Compare with the suggested answers, brainstorm more, then compare your extra ideas as a class.*
Suggested answers

Ones with NOT… X are not correct

Explaining what the task shows
- The table/ pie chart/ bar chart/ line graph/ map/ flow chart/ diagram/ illustration/ figures/ information/ data… – NOT The figure… X
- … shows/ represents/ gives data on/ presents (statistics on)/ compares…
- The vertical axis/ y axis/ horizontal axis/ x axis/ the symbol… represents…

Explaining the paragraph structure
- These two sources of information will be examined in turn.
- I will start by explaining…/ First, I will look at…/ First of all, I will focus on…/ Firstly, I will describe…/ In the paragraph below – NOT At first,… X NOT In the first paragraph,…
- In the next paragraph I will…/ and the following paragraph will…/ and then I will…/ … and after that I will…/ … and the final paragraph will be on…
- The information will be divided into… and… and looked at in that order.

Selecting the most important information/ Giving overall information
- … stands out (because…)
- The first thing you notice looking at the… is…
- The biggest/ largest/ most + noticeable/ important/ obvious + difference/ similarity/ trend is…
- Overall,…
- The main trend…
- Over the entire period shown,…

Mentioning parts of what the page shows
- The left-hand column/ first column/ middle column/ second column/ last column/ right-hand column
- The top row/ first row/ second row/ last row/ bottom row
- The first/ second/ third/ last stage of the process…
- in the North/ Northwest/ Southeast
- in the top right part/ bottom left section/ middle/ centre
- (right) at the middle/ centre of…
- segment
- line
- bar
- symbol
- axis/ axes

Upward trends
- rise/ go up/ increase/ escalate/ climb/ grow/ expand/ soar/ take off…
- … by…/ (from…) to…
- (nearly/ almost) double/ triple/ quadruple
- reach a new high/ peak
- plateau

Downward trends
- drop/ fall/ dive/ plunge/ crash/ decline/ decrease/ deteriorate/ plummet/ shrink…
- bottom out
- (nearly) halve

Going up and down

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● fluctuate/ be unstable
● reach a peak/ peak
● recover/ bounce back/ pick up/ rebound

Not changing
● remain stable/ stay at the same level/ not vary
● flatten out/ level off

Big changes
● significant(ly)/ substantial(ly)/ dramatic(ally)/ considerable(/bly)/ sharp(ly)
● dive/ plunge/ crash/ plummet
● rocket/ shoot up/ soar/ take off

Small changes
● slight(ly)/ gradual(ly)
● creep up
● dip
● blip

Comparing
● (far/ much/ substantially/ significantly/ slightly) …er/ more/ less…
● (not) (nearly) as…as…
● (very) similar/ almost the same/ almost identical
● in some ways similar to…
● Comparing … and..., ...
● Compared to..., ....

Contrasting
● While……
● .... In contrast,…
● … shows a rather/ very different pattern/ trend.
● We can contrast this with…
● … is (almost) the exact opposite.
● … is (a/ the) (major) exception...

Sequencing
● Some time later…
● After that…
● The next/ following stage is…
● This is followed by…
● This reoccurs…
● In the following hours/ days/ weeks/ months/ years,…
● Subsequently,…
● …. after which…
● As soon as...,....

Starting the second main paragraph (= the second paragraph of the body of the text)
● Looking at…
● Moving on to…
● Turning our attention to…
● In contrast to the… above,…