

**IELTS™**

# **IELTS Teacher Training Workshop**

## **IELTS Writing**



[www.takeielts.org/teachielts](http://www.takeielts.org/teachielts)

## Programme

Introduction to the Writing component

### Task 1

- Criteria (what is being assessed)
- Main problems
- Common errors

### Task 2

- Criteria
- Main problems

## IELTS Writing

The test takes 60 minutes

There are two tasks:

**Task 1:** a description of information usually in the form of a diagram  
(an object, a process or a set of data)

minimum 150 words

recommended time c. 20 minutes

**Task 2:** an essay in the form of an argument or discussion on a given  
topic

minimum 250 words

recommended time c. 40 minutes

## Task 1

This task demands that students describe clearly the main trends, parts of a process, and/or important events that can be extrapolated from the data given.

- They should not interpret the data.
- They should not give a personal opinion.



## Task 1: Writing Assessment Criteria

**Task achievement** - how effectively the test taker has identified, illustrated and reported the key features of the information in the task

**Cohesion and coherence** - how well the information and ideas are organised, and how well the information is linked

**Grammar range and accuracy** - the range of structures, e.g. verb tenses used, how accurately they are used, and how appropriate they are for the task

**Lexical resource** - the range of vocabulary used, how accurately it is used e.g. collocations, and how appropriate it is for the task.

## Problems with Task 1

1. Understanding the task (task achievement)
2. Lexis for describing data (lexical resource)

# Understanding the task

## A model

Introduction – state what the graphic is, and the main/overall points/trends/events

Description – expand on the points in the introduction, giving specific data and examples

Conclusion – restatement of main points/trends/events

This can be written as one paragraph or more.

## The introduction

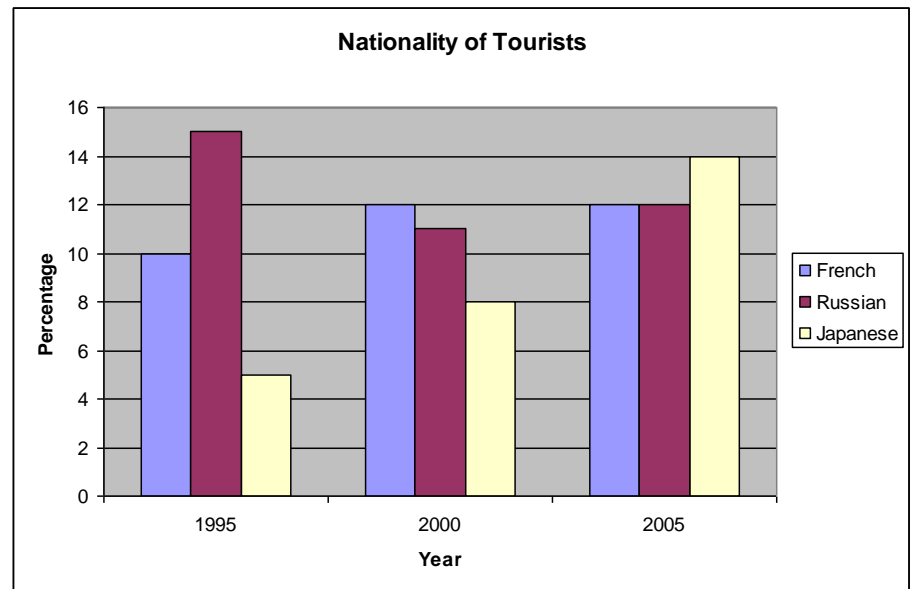
- Look at the information on the diagram itself (title, headings, labels, axis information, etc.)
- Use synonyms and grammar transformation to re-write this information into introductory sentences.
- Analyse the question to find out what type of information is required



## Writing Task 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.

The bar chart below compares tourists of different nationalities to Corfu in 1995, 2000 and 2005.



## Task 1 Rubric

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

## Time and tenses

Look at the information and check what period of time (if any) the data relates to.

Use this to think about and decide on what tense(s) are likely to be needed

## Main trends and patterns

- Look at the diagram and decide what are the main trends/ patterns/ events e.g. overall, do things increase, decrease, stay the same?
- Consider how you might describe the information to a colleague over the phone (no Skype - very expensive)
- Write the principal points in one or two sentences in the introduction to the essay

## Body paragraph(s)

- Think of the most logical approach to describing the data (chronological, by gender, by country etc.)
- Find specific data to support the main pattern/ trend/ event described in the introduction
- Highlight the data that *must* be included
- Do not try to describe every piece of data
- Plan your essay, write it, check it

## Conclusion

- This should not be a full-blown paragraph.
- A sentence (or two) paraphrasing the main points from the introduction is enough.
- Introducing the final sentences is improved by the use of linkers e.g.

Overall, then, the diagram . . .

To conclude / In conclusion, the diagram . . .

To summarise, the diagram . . .

## Task 1: common errors with task achievement

A - False or wrong factual information has been given.

In 1990/91 there were 900 males studying part-time in further education and 200 studying full-time in further education.

B - Information from the original question has been copied without the writer using his/her own words.

The chart shows the number of men and women in further education in Britain in three periods and whether they were studying full-time or part-time

C - Personal opinions and judgements have been given.

The reason why there are more females than males studying part-time in further education is because they have families to look after and do not have enough time to study full-time.

D - Information has not been compared and contrasted instead figures have been presented about one key area without comparing and contrasting it with another key area.

In 1970/71 there were a million males studying part-time in further education and just below a 100,000 studying full-time education. In 1980/81 there were almost 800,000 males studying . . .

The figures for the number of females studying part-time in further education initially rose slowly and then there was a dramatic rise. The figures for the number of females studying full-time in further education started low then increased sharply and then increased by just a small amount.

E - There is no conclusion which highlights the overall trends shown in the chart instead a personal opinion is given as the conclusion.

The reason why there are more females than males studying part-time in further education is because they have families to look after and do not have enough time to study full-time. There are also more females than males studying full-time in further education as there are more females who wish to study and have a career so that they can be independent.



F - Too much irrelevant and insignificant data has been presented instead of highlighting the obvious and most important trends.

In 1970/71 there were a million males studying part-time in further education and just below a 100,000 studying full-time education. In 1980/81 there were almost 800,000 males studying part-time in further education and just over 100,000 studying full-time in further education. In 1990/91 there were 900 males studying part-time in further education and 200 studying full-time in further education.

G - Not enough data has been presented to support the information about the chart.

The figures for the number of females studying part-time in further education initially rose slowly and then there was a dramatic rise. The figures for the number of females studying full-time in further education started low then increased sharply and then increased by just a small amount.

## Task 1: problem areas - lexis

- a) words for describing line graphs  
e.g. a slight increase/increased slightly
- b) associated prepositions  
e.g. dropped by/fell to/ rose from ... to ....
- c) words for describing bar and pie charts  
e.g. a third/30%/ the vast majority
- d) linking devices  
e.g. in the same way/ However/ in contrast/ after that/ finally

## a) Vocabulary for describing line graphs

- Synonyms for movement
- Avoiding repetition
- Describing precisely

go up

go down

go up and down

stay the same

## b) Associated prepositions

Teach nouns and verbs with their associated prepositions

e.g. rose by/ a rise of

Look at how prepositions differ depending on use

e.g. amount of change

resulting level

time period

## c) Describing bar and pie charts

- Pie charts tend to show parts/percentages of a whole, so students need to express quantity.
- Bar charts often compare 2 or more similar data at a given time, so students need to express comparisons.
- All discussion of data requires the use of approximations.

## d) Linking words

- Process descriptions often require sequential links e.g. firstly, after that, next, subsequently etc.
- Graph descriptions often require comparative links e.g. whereas, in contrast, however, similarly, in the same way etc.

## Task 1: last reminders

- ✓ Timing is essential – do not go over 20 mins
- ✓ 150 words is the *minimum* – make sure you write at least this amount, 20 or 30 more words would be fine but don't waste time counting them!
- ✓ Do not interpret the data
- ✓ Do analyse the question – what type of description is required
- ✓ Do not add a personal opinion
- ✓ Do not use: bullet points / headings / note form

## The Writing component: Task 2

Task 2: an essay in the form of an argument or discussion on a given topic

- minimum 250 words
- recommended time c. 40 minutes

NB Task 2 carries more marks than Task 1



## Task 2

This task demands that students write an essay in a formal, academic style.

It is assessed on the basis of:

- the ability to clearly present an argument with supporting evidence/examples
- the ability to select relevant arguments and to organise these logically

## Task 2: Writing Assessment Criteria

**Task response**— how fully and appropriately the test taker has answered all parts of the task; the extent to which the test taker’s ideas are relevant, developed and supported; the extent to which the test taker’s position is clear and effective

**Cohesion and coherence** – how well the information and ideas are organised and presented, including paragraphing, and how well the information is linked

**Grammar range and accuracy** – the range of structures, e.g. verb tenses used, how accurately they are used, and how appropriate they are for the task

**Lexical resource** – the range of vocabulary used, how accurately it is used e.g. collocations, and how appropriate it is for the task.

## Problems with Task 2

1. Understanding what the question requires
2. Generation, selection and organisation of ideas
3. Linking ideas
4. Accuracy of writing
5. Style and register
6. Balance

## Understanding the question

- It is essential that the task is analysed carefully as the question itself is not always clear.
- Very often the title consists of 2 statements: one factual and one subjective.

*Modern high-technology is transforming the way we work and is of benefit to all of society. To what extent do you agree or disagree?*

- The first part is factual, the second part an opinion.

## Understanding the question

### Strategy

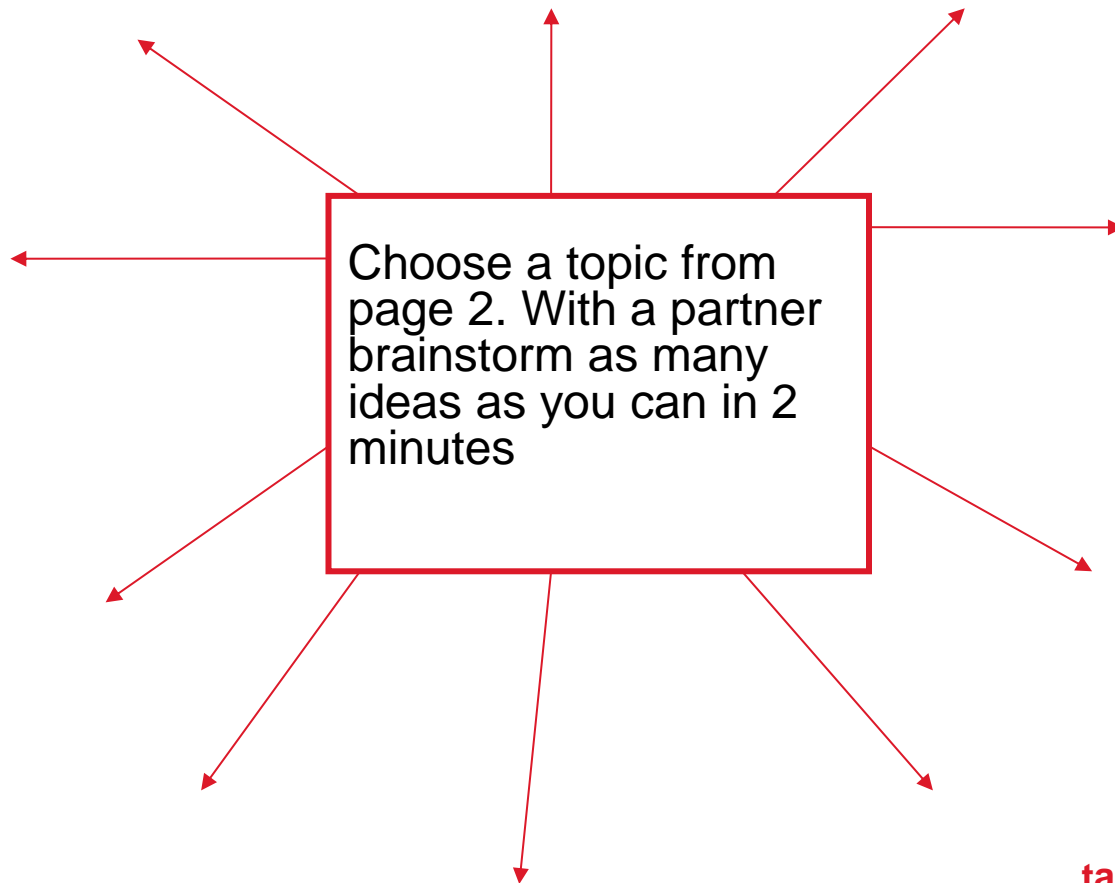
1. Analyse the question to check how many different parts there are. (It is important to answer all parts of the question otherwise points will be lost.)
2. Underline key words.
3. Decide which part of the title is fact and which opinion.
4. Turn the opinion statement into a question

## Generating, selecting and organising ideas

### Strategy

- Brainstorm – mind map
- Select 3 or 4 arguments
- Organise into logical order (based on strength of argument, chronology, etc.)

## Brainstorming



## Ordering and supporting

- Organise the ideas into a logical order
  - add numbers to the mind map
  - list them
- Think of examples, evidence, or personal experience to support each idea



## Summary of strategy (so far)

- Analysis of question
- Brainstorming for ideas
- Selection and ordering of ideas
- Examples and evidence

This whole process should take no longer than 5 minutes.

## Writing the essay

- Introduction – re-statement of topic and indication of writer's opinion
- Body paragraphs – each paragraph should have one main idea with supporting evidence or examples
- Conclusion – summary of main view and re-statement of opinion

## Introduction

- Rephrase the vocabulary in the question to form a thesis statement for the whole essay
  
- Express a personal opinion

## Body paragraphs

Using the first main idea write the topic sentence for the first paragraph of the body of the essay. This sentence is like an introduction to the paragraph and tells the reader what main idea is discussed in the paragraph.

Add supporting sentences to the topic sentence. These should contain the evidence/ examples to help develop and support the main idea of this paragraph.

## Conclusion

- Sum up what you have written in the main body of your essay.
- Do not add any new points.
- End with a concluding sentence which gives your opinion and links back to the introduction of the essay.
- Remember not to contradict yourself, if you have more evidence/ examples for one opinion over another then make sure your conclusion reflects this.

## Linking ideas

Course books, grammar books, writing skills books and IELTS books all give practice in linking ideas . . .

from paragraph to paragraph

from sentence to sentence

within sentences

## Accuracy of writing

### Suggestions

1. Spot the mistake (mistakes taken from Ss own work)
2. Use a correction code
3. Encourage self- and peer-correction
4. Get Ss to complete a personal mistakes profile

## Style and register

What register should be used?

- formal / academic

What does this mean in practice . . .

- in terms of grammar?
- in terms of lexis?
- in terms of layout?



## Summary

- THINK** Analyse the essay title  
What is the task?  
Brainstorm for ideas
- PLAN** Select and organise the ideas  
Use these to write the introduction
- WRITE** Body paragraphs each with a topic sentence  
Connect sentences and paragraphs with linking devices
- CHECK** Have you covered all parts of the question?  
Have you added any irrelevant points?  
Is it the right length?  
Look for your 'typical' mistakes e.g. verb tenses, use of prepositions, linking devices, incorrect use of capital letters etc.  
Have you written using the appropriate register?

## Timing

- Good timing is absolutely essential to doing this task well.
- Students need to be convinced that the time spent planning and checking is important (otherwise, they tend to rush in and start writing immediately)
- A rough guide to timing might be:

Analysing, brainstorming, selecting,  
ordering, finding examples

5 minutes

Writing essay

30 minutes

Checking essay

5 minutes

## Task 2: last reminders

- ✓ Stick to the 40 minutes
- ✓ Do not write fewer than 250 words
- ✓ Make sure all points are relevant
- ✓ Make sure there are examples/ evidence for each argument
- ✓ Remember to give a personal opinion if asked for
- ✓ Use paragraphs and make them clear