

TASK 1 Line Graphs

LESSON OVERVIEW

The first task of the IELTS Academic Writing Test requires students to describe some visual information, such as a graph or a diagram, in their own words. Students are required to write at least 150 words and they must write in full sentences, not bullet points. It's important that candidates cover all the main features of the visual information in their answer. This lesson looks at the writing task which includes a description of line graphs.

- **Part A** of the lesson checks understanding of key points about describing line graphs.
- **Part B** gives learners a short IELTS practice task and they can assess how they did.
- **Part C** gives useful tips and tactics for the task.
- **Part D** focuses on the specific skills students need to describe line graphs and finishes with a realistic IELTS practice task.

A About the task

- 1 You can ask students to read this section for homework before the class or ask them to read it in class.
With books closed, ask students to think of what they already know about line graphs and brainstorm some questions that they would like to ask about it. On the board, write:
What do you know about line graphs?
What features of a line graph do you need to describe?
Tell students to work in small groups and discuss the questions. Elicit one or two examples from students. For example, they may be aware that line graphs feature trends over time.
Then tell students to read Section A carefully. Answer any queries they may have about the task type and about line graphs.
- 2 Ask students to read the information about the task type (if they haven't already) and complete the sentences (1–5) with the correct ending (A–E). Ask them to work in pairs and check their answers. Conduct feedback with the whole class.
Then tell students to read Section A carefully. Answer any queries they may have about the task type and about line graphs.

Answers

1	F	2	C	3	E	4	H	5	I
6	B	7	A	8	D	9	G		

B Sample question

- 3 Tell students that they are going to practise answering a Task 1 question featuring a line graph. Remind them to use the rules about the task from Section A. Tell them to read the question carefully and underline the key words in the instructions in the box. Ask them to look at the graph and circle the key features, such as the labels on the axes and the significant trends. Then ask students to complete the IELTS Practice Task allowing them 20 minutes to write their answers.

When they have finished, ask students to work in pairs and read each other's answers. Tell them to discuss which aspects of the task they found difficult and look at any differences in the way they answered the question.

Ask students to look at the Sample Answer in the Student's Book on page 334 and read through the Band Score marks and comments. Ask them to work in pairs and find weaknesses listed in the Band Score comments, for example repetition of connectors, spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes.

▷ Extra help

For lower level students, point out the key features of the graph. Make sure they can see that the x axis refers to years and the y axis refers to the number of households. The different lines refer to the different types of technology used.

Sample answer

The information illustrated in the graph indicates how the use of technology for watching TV changed in recent years in one city in the United States. Essentially, use of the internet rose dramatically, satellite rose slightly, whereas broadcast and cable both fell.

In 2004 cable and broadcast were the principal methods for watching TV in this city between about 70 and 100,000 households. The internet however was little utilised. In next ten years great changes occurred.

Use of broadcast fell from being the most widespread way of watching TV to the least common, with very few households watching broadcast TV in 2014. Use of cable had been popular with over 80,000 households, but only 60,000 households used it by 2014.

Satellite viewing showed a gradual rise in the number of households using it from approximately 70,000 to 110,000. Use of the internet rose significantly from almost nil to virtually 200,000 households using it in 2014.

Band Score: 8

Task Achievement: 8 There is a clear overview and all the main features are covered accurately and sufficiently. There is scope for more development, as it is only just long enough at 157 words.

Coherence and Cohesion: 8 Information is arranged clearly and logically. Paragraphs are used appropriately, and ideas and information are linked. There is some repetition that could have been avoided.

Lexical Resource: 8 There is a good range of vocabulary, used flexibly, with some less common words and phrases, but there could be more variety in choice of words to describe rises and falls. There are two spelling mistakes.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy: 8

A wide range of structures are used, and most sentences are accurate. There are a few minor punctuation errors and inconsistencies.

C Tips and tactics

- 4** You can ask students to read this section for homework before the class or ask them to read it in class.

Ask students to work in pairs and choose the three most useful tips in their opinion and compare their answers. Alternatively, ask them to divide the tips into three categories: *I already knew this*, *I didn't know this*, *I want more information about this*, and then compare their categories with their partner. Ask students to work in pairs and discuss questions **a**, **b** and **c**. Get a few students to give their answers in open class briefly. If you set Part C as homework, you can briefly review the tips and tactics at the beginning of the next class. Clarify any questions they may have. For example, Tip 12 applies to all IELTS Academic Writing Test Task 1 topics. Candidates are not required to interpret the data; they should just describe it.

▷ Extra idea

Refer students back to the Sample answer in B to see examples of some of the tips.

Tip 4: Dividing your answer into paragraphs: The sample answer has three paragraphs.

Tips 7 and 8: Writing an introduction and an overview:

Paragraph 1 in the sample answer contains two sentences. The first sentence is an introductory sentence, describing the graph in general terms.

The second sentence is an overview statement with the most important trend in the graph.

D Skills-building exercises

The tables in this section focus on the language that can be used to describe line graphs. For example, the first table verbs shows verbs that can be used in the introduction to describe a line graph. Give students a chance to study each of the tables and check they know the meanings of the words in bold as well as their grammatical patterns and typical collocations.

- 5** This task asks students to practise writing introductory sentences using the verbs in the tables about describing trends. This encourages students to learn how to use a range of vocabulary so that they can use the information in the instructions box to introduce the graph but also understand how to paraphrase it. Remind students they must not copy the words directly from the box. If the sentence is copied it will not be counted by the examiner. Tell students to read the instructions carefully and write their answers using the introductory verbs in the table on page 186. Encourage them to use different sentence structures and vocabulary in each sentence.

Example answers

- 1** This graph **shows** the average temperatures in three cities over a two-month period.
- 2** This line graph **compares** the temperatures of three different cities over a period of two months.
- 3** Information in this graph **is provided** about temperatures in Paris, Dubai and Melbourne over a period of two months.
- 4** The graph **provides** data about temperatures in degrees Celsius in three cities over a period of two months.

20 Q FOCUS ON PRESENT SIMPLE

► There is a photocopiable worksheet of this activity on page 244.

Remind students that the introduction of an IELTS Task 1 answer often features the Present Simple tense.

- 1 Write the example answers provided for Exercise 5 on the board or hand out Worksheet 20 and ask students to underline the verbs.
 - 1 This graph shows the average temperatures in three cities over a two-month period.
 - 2 This line graph compares the temperatures of three different cities over a period of two months.
 - 3 Information in this graph is provided about temperatures in Paris, Dubai and Melbourne over a period of two months.
 - 4 The graph provides data about temperatures in degrees Celsius in three cities over a period of two months.
- 2 Elicit whether the sentences are in the active or passive voice.
- 3 Write the following sentences about the present simple on the board. Ask students to choose the correct way to complete them. Correct answers are underlined here.
 - 1 A common mistake is to leave off the third person s / to infinitive in active present simple sentences when the subject is he, she or it.
 - 2 In the passive voice, the auxiliary / main verb is be / do. It changes according to the subject / object.
 - 3 The subject in sentence 3 is *information*, an uncountable noun, so the auxiliary verb should be *are* / is.

Answers

- 1 Active (Sentences 1, 2, 4)
Passive (Sentence 3).

Worksheet Exercise 4

- 1 The average temperatures in the three cities over a period of two months are shown in this graph.
- 2 The temperatures of three different cities over a period of two months are compared in this line graph.
- 3 This graph provides information about temperatures in Paris, Dubai and Melbourne over a period of two months.
- 4 Data about temperatures in degrees Celsius in the three cities over a period of two months is provided in this graph.

- 6 This task helps students to practise the language featured in the tables. Tell them to read the instructions carefully and look at the tables of verbs and prepositions describing trends. They need to write sentences about the graph using the prompts

provided. Answers may vary so encourage them to compare answers when they have finished. Then conduct whole-class feedback and provide these example answers.

Example answers

- 1 The number of applications received by Atherton University **rose from** 1980 **to** 2005.
- 2 The number of applications received by Atherton University **climbed to** its highest figure (over 6,000) **by** about 2005.
- 3 Applications to The University of Lakewood **fell to** their lowest numbers **in** 2010.
- 4 There was **a decline in** applications **during** the 1980s at The University of Lakewood.
- 5 Applications to Linslade College **fluctuated between** 1980 **and** 2010.
- 6 Student applications to Alstead University started to **level off around** 1985.
- 7 Applications to Alstead University **reached a peak around** 2000.
- 8 Application numbers to Alstead University **dropped after** 2000.
- 9 The number of applications to Alstead University **stayed the same** for ten years **from** 1985 **to** 1995.

The next table focuses on useful adverbs and adjectives that can be used to show trends in a line graph. They can be used to describe rapid changes or slow changes in those trends.

- 7 This task helps students to build up their Task 1 answer and write sentences about the key trends that they identify in the line graph. Encourage students to look back at the table and at the Example answers in Exercise 6 to get ideas about how to describe the trends they identify in the graph. At this stage they don't need to go into too much detail (with numbers); that will come later. They just need to describe the overall trend first.

Example answers

French

- 1 Interest in studying French reached a peak in 1995.
- 2 There was a steady decline in the number of students studying French from 1995 to 2010.

Spanish

- 3 During the early 1990s, interest in studying Spanish went up slightly, then declined somewhat.
- 4 A dramatic increase in the number of students taking Spanish classes took place from 2000 to 2015.

German

- 5 During this entire period, the number of students learning German remained about the same.
- 6 There was a slight dip in this number after 2010.

Chinese

- 7 Between 2000 and 2005, the number of students enrolled in Chinese classes soared.
- 8 After 2005, it increased more gradually.

Polish

9 The number of students learning Polish went up slowly from 2000 to 2005.

10 The numbers rose suddenly beginning in 2010.

Arabic

11 Interest in taking Arabic reached its lowest point in 2000.

12 It grew sharply between 2000 and 2005.

- 8** This task provides useful practice in using the language in the box on page 190 to describe the projection of future trends. Describing this part of a line graph requires future forms and some hedging language to show that there is a degree of uncertainty about what will happen in the future. Point out that the table shows that there are many different ways of talking about the future apart from simply using the 'will' future form. Ask students to look carefully at the graph about rice consumption and read the example for number 1, then write sentences about the three other projections. Tell them to use language from the box on page 190 to talk about uncertainty. Ask students to read the instructions and answer the questions. Answers may vary so encourage them to compare answers when they have finished. Then conduct whole-class feedback and provide these example answers.

Example answers

- 2** Projection 2 shows there is probably going to be a slow increase in rice consumption in the next 25 years.
- 3** Projection 3 shows that there will probably be a very slight increase in rice consumption from 2020 to 2040.
- 4** According to Projection 4, rice consumption is predicted to fall steadily over the next 30 years.

- 9** This task changes the focus now from writing about line graphs to understanding and analysing them. Showing that you understand the visual information provided is a very important aspect of IELTS Academic Writing Task 1. As a lead-in to this task, ask students to think about the topic of this graph. Ask them: *How common is divorce in this country?* (monolingual classes) or *How common is divorce in your country?* (multilingual classes). Then tell students to look at the graph and answer questions. When they have finished ask them to work in pairs and compare their answers.

Example answers

- 1** It provides figures about marriage and divorce in the UK over a fifty-year period.
- 2** They indicate the four areas measured: all marriages, first marriages, divorces and remarriages.
- 3** The number of marriages and divorces, measured in thousands.
- 4** The time period covered.

- 5** Overall since 1956, marriages have gone down, divorces and remarriages have gone up; the number of total marriages is higher than the number of divorces and remarriages.
- 6** The time between 1966 and 1976 when marriages went up and then started their decline; at about the same time, the number of divorces and remarriages increased noticeably; around 1970, there were more divorces than remarriages; by 2006, the number of first marriages and divorces were approximately the same.
- 7** No, you don't need to detail each and every figure and each and every change.

- 10** This task gives students some useful practice in writing the introductory sentence and overview for a Task 1 line graph. Question 1 highlights a very important point which students may not be aware of. The information about the graph provided in the instructions box should not be copied word-for-word by the candidate. Words that are copied from the rubric will not be counted. Ask students to choose the best introductory sentence and say why. Question 2 emphasises that an overview statement should not contain too much detail. Ask students to read the statements and choose which one best describes the main trends of the graph. Then get them to work in pairs and discuss their answers. Finally, conduct whole-class feedback.

Example answers

- 1** Statement B is better because it doesn't simply repeat the information that is already given in the instructions.
- 2** Statement A is better because it describes the main trends; Statement B goes into too much detail.

- 11** This task allows students to practise writing about the details of the graph, which comes in the main body section. It is worth pointing out that they don't have to list each and every detail that they can find in the graph, but they should select and cover the key points. This task will also help them to get ready to write a full response to this graph in the next task. Ask students to look carefully at the graph and spend up to five minutes writing their answers. Conduct whole-class feedback to check their answers and make sure they have understood the correctly.

Example answers

- 1** The overall idea is about changes in population in these three countries, both historical and in the future.
- 2** a The United States: had the highest population in 1950 of the three countries; steady increase from 1950 to the present, which is projected to continue.

b Nigeria: had the lowest population in 1950; steady rise from 1950 to 2000, where it reached the same population as Japan; more rapid increases are projected in the future; it is expected to rise quite sharply after 2025; it may well have a greater population than the United States by 2050.

c Japan: Neither significant increase or decrease/remained the same over the 100-year period; slight rise in population after 1950; same population as Nigeria in 2000; by 2050, the population is expected to decrease to the same numbers as in 1950.

- 3** The United States had the highest population in 1950, Nigeria had the lowest; in 2050, Nigeria is projected to have the highest population and Japan the lowest; Nigeria will have the greatest increase overall, Japan will increase the least; Nigeria and Japan reached the same population in 2000.

- 12** This task helps students to write a guided response to the task, based on the groundwork in Exercise 11 and the guiding questions in Exercise 12. Tell them to spend 15 minutes on this task.

Example answers

- 1** The line graph shows changes in population numbers in three countries, both historically and changes projected for the future. It shows that the population of the United States and Nigeria has risen over the last 60 years, and will continue to rise, while the population of Japan will remain about the same over the 100-year period.
- 2** The United States had the highest population of the three countries in 1950 (just under 200 million), whilst Nigeria had the lowest (around 50 million). From 1950 to the present day, there has been a steady increase in the population in the United States and Nigeria. A significant point was in the year 2000, where the population of Nigeria was greater than that of Japan. On the other hand, the population of Japan rose slightly to 2000, but then started to fall.
- 3** The rising trends in the population numbers in the United States and Nigeria are projected to continue to 2050. In the US, it will reach over 400 million. It is predicted that the number of people in Nigeria will increase rapidly after 2025; by around 2040 it will be the same as the US, and by 2050, the population will reach around 600 million and have the highest population of the three countries. Finally, the projection for Japan is that the population will decrease, so by 2050, the population will be almost the same as in 1950 (approximately 100 million).

- 13** In this task, students are encouraged to check and edit their work before handing it in. This is an important strategy that applies to both IELTS Academic Writing Tasks 1 and 2. Give students three to five minutes to read over what they have written and check for any careless mistakes such as spelling and punctuation errors, make sure they have used the correct tenses and used a variety of different vocabulary and structures for describing graphs.
- 14** This task follows on from the previous one. Now that students have checked their own work you can ask them to exchange their work with a partner and do some peer-editing. Students should use the model answer provided in the Answer Key on the DVD-ROM to assess their partner's work.

Model answer

The line graph shows changes in population numbers in three countries, both historically and changes projected for the future. It shows that the population of the United States and Nigeria has risen over the last 60 years, and will continue to rise, while the population of Japan will remain about the same over the 100-year period.

The United States had the highest population of the three countries in 1950 (just under 200 million), whilst Nigeria had the lowest (around 50 million). From 1950 to the present day, there has been a steady increase in the population in the United States and Nigeria. A significant point was in the year 2000, where the population of Nigeria was greater than that of Japan. On the other hand, the population of Japan rose slightly to 2000, but then started to fall.

The rising trends in the population numbers in the United States and Nigeria are projected to continue to 2050. In the US, it will reach over 400 million. It is predicted that the number of people in Nigeria will increase rapidly after 2025; by around 2040 it will be the same as the US, and by 2050, the population will reach around 600 million and have the highest population of the three countries. Finally, the projection for Japan is that the population will decrease, so by 2050, the population will be almost the same as in 1950 (approximately 100 million). (238 words)

IELTS PRACTICE TASK

This task is intended to give students some realistic test practice in writing a Task 1 response. It is based on a graph about teenage communication in the USA. Remind students to spend some time looking at the graph first to identify the key features and overall trends. Check that they know how many words they need to write (150 words). Remind them also to write clearly. To make the task more realistic, set a time limit of between 20 and 30 minutes. Tell students to quickly check their answer at the end. When students have finished you may wish to take the answers in and mark them or alternatively they can self or

peer check using the marking criteria provided.

Use the following questions as a guide for students to assess the two sample answers given in the Student's Book on page 334.

- 1 Now look at the sample answers provided and compare them. Which one do you think is better? Why?
- 2 Look at the score and comments about each answer. Can you see why these scores and comments were given to these responses?
- 3 Look at the Band Descriptors for IELTS Writing Task 1 on page 331 of the Student's Book and think about how the responses could be improved. Then compare these answers with the one that you wrote. How can you improve your answer?

Sample answer 1

the graph below show how teenager children aged 12-19 in America communicate each other every day use text message call on cell phone talk face to face or email to each person is november 2006 between september 2009

the first things we can see clearly in the graph is that text message most popular communicate method only 28% of all teenagers in november 2006 it is climb slightly become 52% of all teenager september 2009 then we can sees clearly in the graph is call on cell phone is almost same is 34% of all teenager november 2006 to 38% of all teenager september 2009 then we can see clearly the graph is talk face to face is go up and down dramatically is 31% of all teenager november 2006 to 38% all teenager november 2007 is 29% of all teenager february 2008 is 32% all teenager 2009 then we cans see clearly the graph is last is email is plunge immediately is 14% of all teenager november 2006 is 9% all teenager september 2009 in summary we can see clearly in the graph in that text message is most popular for teenagir communicate noveber 2006 up to septebmer 2009

Band Score: 5.5

Task Achievement: 6 The writer addresses the requirements of the task by presenting an overview with information appropriately selected.

Coherence and Cohesion: 5 Information is presented with some organisation although some cohesive devices are over-used. The answer is repetitive because of a lack of referencing and substitution.

Lexical Resource: 5 The writer uses a limited range of vocabulary, which is minimally adequate for the task. Noticeable errors in spelling and word formation cause some difficulty for the reader.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy: 7 Only a limited range of structures is used. Frequent grammatical and punctuation errors cause some difficulty for the reader.

Sample answer 2

The graph presents data concerning communication by teenagers in the USA between November 2006 and September 2009. The most striking feature is the sharp rise in text messaging, while other methods of communication for teenagers kept a fairly similar level with minor fluctuation.

The level of text messaging by teenagers approached 30% in November 2006 and rose steadily to just under 40% but then in February 2008 it climbed rapidly to become a common means of communication for over half of US teenagers. Using a cell phone to make calls, on the other hand, remained fairly flat with a negligible rise from approximately 35 to 38%. In the same area of the graph figures for talking face-to-face fluctuated between 30 and 39%, while email remains more of a minority method for teenagers, fairly level at around 15% but then there has been a drop to below 10% by September 2009.

Band Score: 8

Task Achievement: 8 The information shown in the graph is covered sufficiently with key features described and supported with figures. It could be more fully developed, as the description is just 150 words long.

Coherence and Cohesion: 8 Information is arranged clearly and logically in paragraphs and information is clearly linked. There is repetition of 'while' and 'but then' and the word 'teenagers' is used five times.

Lexical Resource: 8 There is a wide range of vocabulary, which is used flexibly, but there are three spelling mistakes.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy: 8 Tenses are used accurately, and subordinate clauses are common. A range of structures is used, but there is one error with article use, and some tense inconsistencies in the final sentence.

▷ **Self-evaluation**

Ask students how they feel about the Writing Task 1 Line Graphs. Ask them to complete the checklist once feedback has been done. Further practice is available on the DVD-ROM.