Think about the direction of trends.

TASK 1 Line Graphs

A About the task

1 Read the information about the task.

Task 1 tests your ability to look at visual information in a graph, chart, table or diagram, and identify and report the most important information in your own words.

One common way to present visual information is in the form of a line graph. On the question paper, you see a line graph with a title. The instructions for writing your response appear in a box above the graph. There is also a brief description of the information in the line graph in the box. There is usually a key (legend) which helps you to distinguish the lines on the graph and tells you what each line represents. Your job is to look at the graph and select, summarise and describe the most important information.

Line graphs typically show *trends*. A trend is a movement of data in a general direction over time. On a line graph, trends are represented by the direction of the lines. Trends can be upward or downward or they can remain at the same level. An important part of your response is to describe trends and to compare them.

The horizontal axis usually involves units of time: days, months, years, and so on. Usually the time represented in the task is in the past, but some graphs include projections about the future. The vertical axis can show almost any kind of data: costs, temperatures, rainfall, amounts of some commodity, population figures, and so on.

It's important to examine the graph before you write your answer, and to think about what the graph is telling you. You have to look and think carefully and choose what information to include so that your response reports only the key information.

Here are the basic rules for writing about a line graph:

- Look at the graph carefully and decide what the most important information and striking features are.
- Write a well-organised overview.
- Include data to support the key points.
- Use an academic register or style.
- Write at least 150 words.
- Complete the task in about 20 minutes.
- Include only the key points. Minor details or irrelevant data can be left out.
- Don't do any calculations or give your opinion about the information.

2 **Work in pairs. Complete the sentences (1–9) with the correct ending (A–I).**

1 Your overall task is to identify and write about
2 You should write
3 You aren't required to write
4 The graph usually has
5 The text box above the graph includes
6 The numbers on the horizontal axis usually represent
7 The key on a line graph provides
8 The direction of the lines on a line graph shows
9 You have about

A information about what each line represents.
B units of time.
C over 150 words.
D trends, which can be rising, falling, or level.
E an explanation or analysis of the information on the graph.
F the most important information shown in the line graph.
G 20 minutes to complete the task.
H a title above it.
**I** instructions and some information about the graph.

B Sample question

3 **Read the instructions and answer the question. Use the rules about the task from Section A to help you. Then look at the sample answer on page 334. Which aspects of the task did you find difficult?**

IELTS PRACTICE TASK

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The graph below gives information about the technology that households in one US city used for watching television between 2004 and 2014.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.
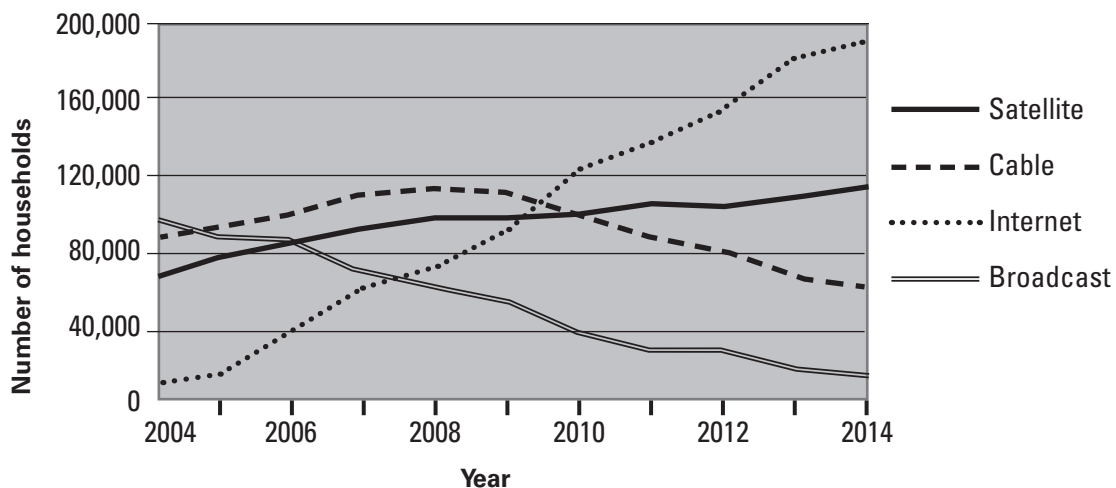
C Tips and tactics

4 **Work in pairs. Read the tips and tactics and discuss these questions.**

    a **Which tips and tactics do you think are the most useful?**
    b **Did you use any of these tips and tactics when you answered the sample question in Section B?**
    c **Which tips will you use in the future?**

1 The first step is to look carefully at the information in the line graph. Don't rush through this step. Make sure you understand the graph before you start to write.
2 Underline important words in the question and circle important points on the graph.
3 Identify what key information is being presented in the graph and which important dates, figures or striking features you'll need to write about.
4 Plan your writing. You can usually divide it into three paragraphs: introduction, first main paragraph and second main paragraph.
5 If the line graph has more than two lines, try to arrange the data into two or three groups. For example, you could divide the data into rising trends and falling trends.
6 Look carefully at the timeframe that the graph covers and work out what tenses you need to use (past, present, present perfect or future).
7 Begin with an introductory sentence that describes the graph in general terms, but don't repeat the exact wording of the question.
8 Then describe one or two general trends shown in the graph. Don't go into detail; just report the most important trends you see when you look at the graph.
9 In the first main paragraph, select and write about the features that are most important and interesting, for example, rising or falling trends, or where lines intersect, and include relevant data to support the points you make.
10 Focus on the general direction of a trend; don't write about each change in direction of a line.
11 Don't try to write about all the data in the line graph and don't include details that are irrelevant to the main trends.
12 Remember, don't try to analyse or explain the information in the graph, or do any calculations; just describe and report it.
13 Keep track of the time. Don't spend more than 20 minutes on Task 1.
14 Make sure your handwriting is clear and legible.
15 Keep in mind the criteria that the examiners use to mark your response. (For marking criteria, see About the Academic Writing Test, page 180.)

D Skills-building exercises

INTRODUCTORY VERBS

indicate *The graph **indicates** the growth in the service sector and the decline in the manufacturing sector.*

show *This graph **shows** how two programs performed over a ten-year period.*

compare *The graph **compares** changes in the annual rainfall in four cities.*

provide/give information *Information is provided/is given in this graph about the gradual growth of productivity for several firms.*

provide data *This graph **provides data** about three trends: … , … , and … .*

Q FOCUS

Writing introductory sentences to describe the graph in general terms

5 **Look at the title and the graph about average temperatures in Paris, Dubai and Melbourne. Write four introductory sentences about the graph using introductory verbs from the box on page 186. Try to use different sentence structures and vocabulary in each sentence.**

1 This graph shows the average temperatures in three cities over a two-month period.

Average temperatures – Paris, Dubai and Melbourne
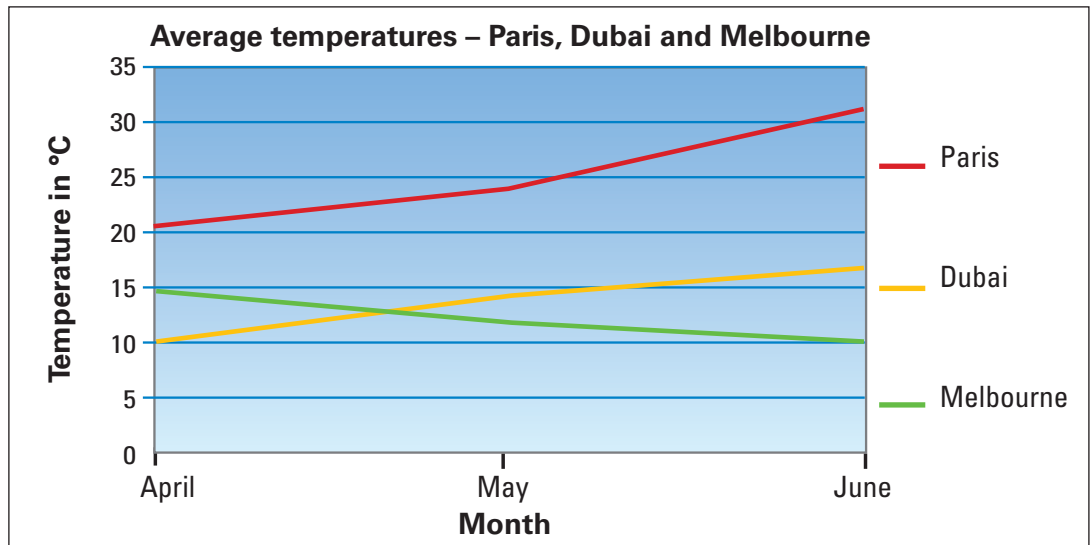
DESCRIBING TRENDS

UP ↗

rise (v) *Production costs* **rose** *to their highest level of the year in July.*

rise (n) *There was a* **rise** *in production costs to the highest level of the year in July.*

go up (v) *Between 1900 and 2000, the population* **went up** *by over a million people.*

grow (grew, grown) (v) *The number of first-time users* **grew** *rapidly in 2015.*

growth (n) *There was a rapid* **growth** *in the number of first-time users in 2015.*

increase (v) *The numbers of cyclists* **increased** *between 2005 and 2010.*

increase (n) *There was an* **increase** *in the number of cyclists between 2005 and 2010.*

DOWN ↘

decline (v) *The construction of new homes* **declined** *for ten years in succession.*

decline (n) *There was a* **decline** *in the number of new homes for ten years in succession.*

go down (v) *After a brief rise, imports* **went down** *again.*

decrease (v) *Average test scores* **decreased** *at three of the schools.*

decrease (n) *There was a* **decrease** *in test scores at three of the schools.*

drop (v) *In 2008, foreign investment* **dropped** *by over 20%.*

drop (n) *In 2008, there was a* **drop** *in foreign investment of over 20%.*

fall (fell, fallen) (v) *The number of overseas students* **fell** *in 2013.*

fall (n) *There was a* **fall** *in the number of international students in 2013.*

SAME →

stay the same *The company's market share* **stayed the same***.*

remain constant *For three months, the percentage* **remained constant***.*

UP AND DOWN ↘↗↘

fluctuate (v) *The number of seasonal workers employed by the company* **fluctuates** *each year.*

fluctuation (n) *There have been* **fluctuations** *in the number of seasonal workers employed by the company.*

go up and down (v) *Fares* **have gone up and down** *over the last few months.*

PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

at (+ time of day) *at noon; at 8 a.m.*

on (+ date/day of the week) *on 1st October; on Mondays*

in (+ month/season/year/decade/century) *in June; in the summer; in 2014; in the 1990s; in the 21st century*

for (a period of time) *for ten years; for the next several months*

by (before or at a specific point in time) *by 10th April; by the end of 2016*

until (up to a certain point) *until December 31; until 2020; until the beginning of 2014*

from … to/between … and (starting points and ending points) *from 2001 to 2015; between 1st January and 31st June*

before/after (+ point in time) *before 5:00 p.m.; after the 19th century*

around (+ period of time or point in time) *around 1997; for around six months*

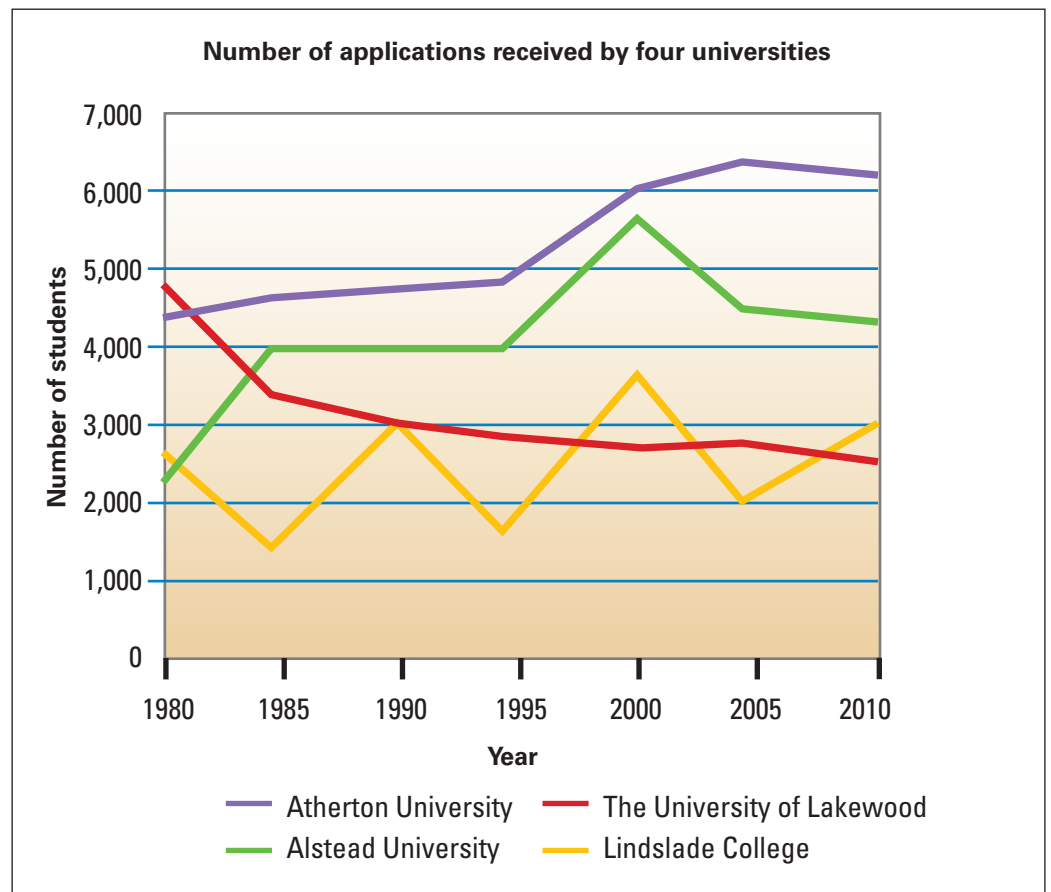**during** (for the duration of a period of time) *during the 1980s; during the winter; during April*

▶▶ **For more information and practice of prepositions, see Grammar Resource Bank page 327.**

Q FOCUS

Describing general trends and main features

6 **Look at the graph about the number of university applications. Write sentences with the words in brackets. Write about main trends or important points.**

1 (rise / from … to)
  The number of applications received by Atherton University rose from 1980 to 2005.
2 (climb to / by)
3 (fall to / in)
4 (a decline in / during)
5 (fluctuate / between ... and)
6 (level off / around)
7 (reach a peak / around)
8 (drop / after)
9 (stay the same / from … to)

Number of applications received by four universities

Legend: Atherton University — The University of Lakewood — Alstead University — Lindslade College

ADVERBS AND ADJECTIVES

UP OR DOWN QUICKLY ↑↓

rapidly (adv) *The number of smartphones in use has risen **rapidly** over the last ten years.*

rapid (adj) *In this decade, there was a **rapid** increase in smartphone use.*

suddenly (adv) *Employment figures dropped **suddenly** during the following ten years.*

sudden (adj) *The next decade saw a **sudden** decrease in employment figures.*

sharply (adv) *The price of textbooks rose **sharply**.*

sharp (adj) *There was a **sharp** rise in the price of textbooks.*

dramatically (adv) *Exports fell **dramatically** last year.*

dramatic (adj) *There was a **dramatic** fall in exports last year.*

significantly (adv) *Property taxes rose **significantly** in 2014.*

significant (adj) *There was a **significant** rise in property taxes in 2014.*

steeply (adv) *The number of people attending the event increased **steeply** in 2013.*

steep (adj) *The year 2013 saw a **steep** increase in the number of people attending the event.*

major (adj) *A **major** expansion of the company's marketing department is expected in the next few years.*

UP OR DOWN MORE SLOWLY ↗↘

steadily (adv) *The number of tourists visiting the park rose **steadily**.*

steady (adj) *The park experienced a **steady** increase in the number of tourists.*

gradually (adv) *The population of the province **gradually** declined.*

gradual (adj) *There was a **gradual** decline in the population of the province.*

slightly (adv) *Bus fares may go up **slightly**.*

**slight (adj)** *A **slight** increase in bus fares is expected.*

minor (adj) *There were **minor** fluctuations in the value of raw materials.*

▶▶ **For more information and practice of adjectives and adverbs, see Grammar Resource Bank pages 313–315.**

7 **Look at the graph about students studying languages at university. Write two sentences about each language. Use vocabulary from any of the language boxes on pages 186–189 to help you. Try to write about main trends or significant features.**

French

1 <u>The number of students studying French increased somewhat from 1990 to 1995.</u>

Number of students studying languages at one university in the UK
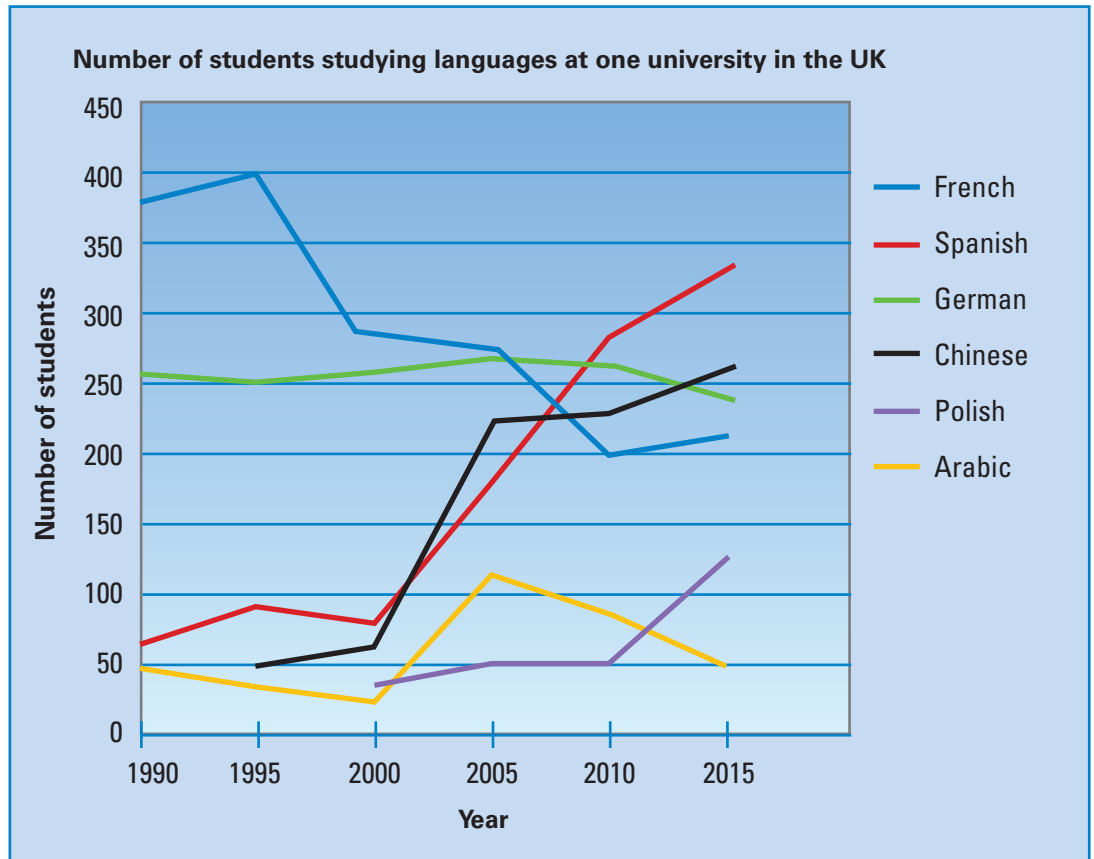
DESCRIBING PROJECTIONS

Some line graphs make predictions about the future. When you are describing a projection, you should use language that indicates that these activities take place in the future and that the data is uncertain.

might **+ infinitive** *The costs of doing business in Country B **might rise** next year.*

may **+ infinitive** *Government revenues **may go down** again during the next quarter.*

will **+ probably + infinitive** *According to the graph, the number of websites **will probably double** over the next few years.*

is **+ probably + going to + infinitive** *There **is probably going to be** an increase in the number of television dramas this autumn.*

noun + *is predicted*   *A sudden **increase in tourism is predicted.***

is predicted + to **+ infinitive** *The number of tourists **is predicted to rise**.*

noun + *is expected* *A decline in the **average age is expected**.*

noun + *is expected + to* **+ infinitive** *The **average age is expected to go** down.*

*It is expected that* **+ clause** *It is expected that the average age will decrease.*

▶▶ **For more information and practice of future tenses, see Grammar Resource Bank pages 304–306.**

8 Look at the graph showing worldwide rice consumption. Write sentences about the four projections. Remember to use language from the box on page 190 to indicate that the data is uncertain.
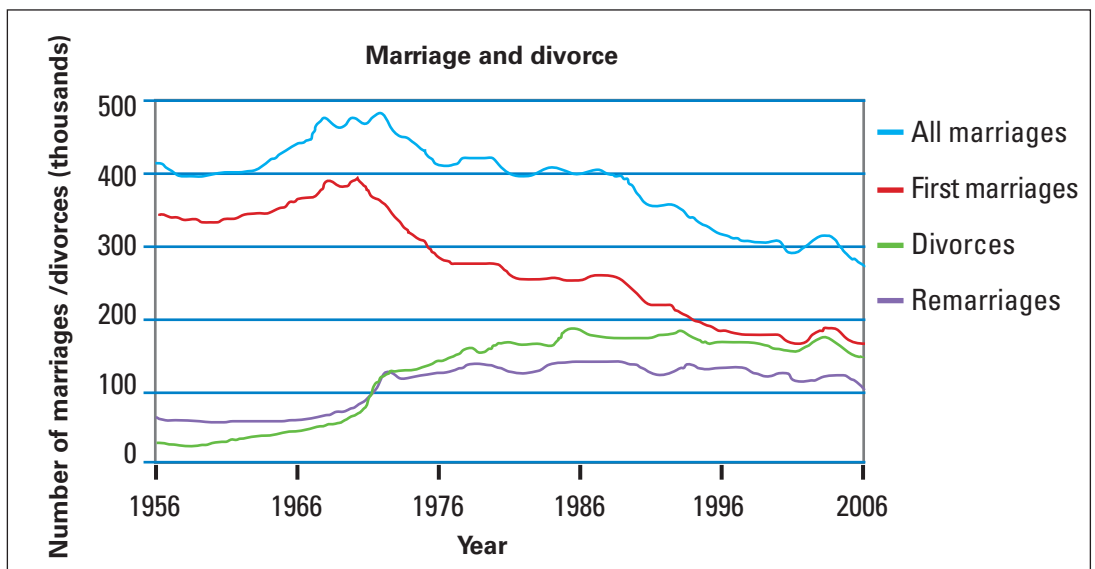
1 *According to Projection 1, rice consumption around the world is expected to grow to over 520 metric tonnes.*

Four estimates of worldwide rice consumption
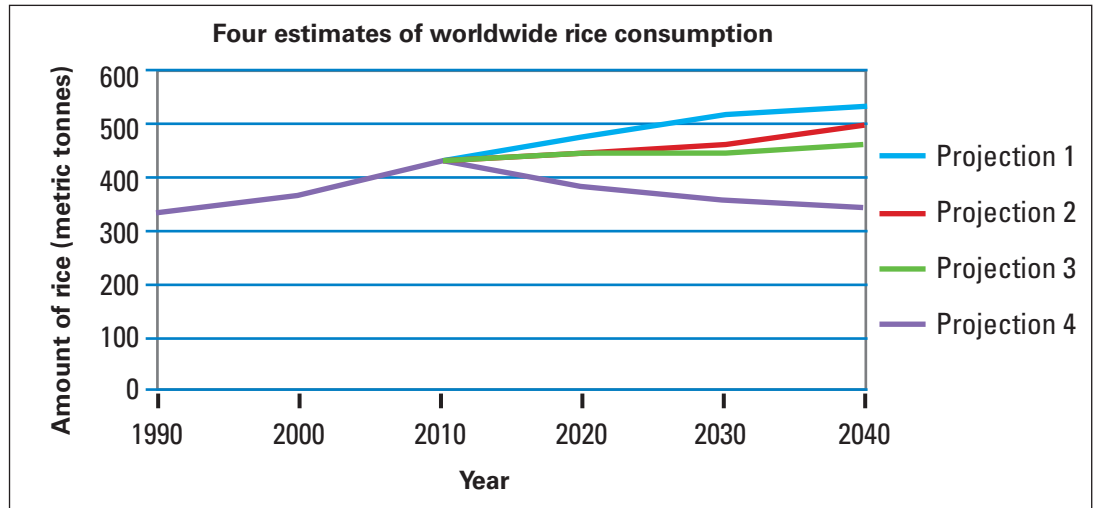
9 Work in pairs. Look at the line graph below and answer the questions.

The graph below gives information about marriage and divorce in the United Kingdom from 1956 to 2006.

Marriage and divorce

1 What basic information does the graph provide?
2 What do the four lines on the graph indicate?
3 What is measured on the vertical axis? What unit of measurement is used?
4 What is measured on the horizontal axis?
5 What trends do you see in the graph?
6 What are some of the most important features of this graph?
7 Should you try to report on all the changes in direction that you see in the graph? Why?/Why not?

10 **Look at the graph about marriage and divorce on page 191 again. Answer the questions.**

1 Which of these statements about the graph (A or B) do you think is the best introductory sentence? Why is it better?

A This graph provides information about marriage and divorce in the United Kingdom from 1956 to 2006.

B This graph indicates the changing nature of marriage, divorce and remarriage over a period of five decades.

2 Which of these statements best describes the main trends of the graph? Why is it better?

A In general, we see that the number of marriages declined dramatically over this period, while the number of divorces and remarriages slightly increased.

B Overall, the marriage rate went from about 405,000 per year to less than 300,000 a year, while the number of divorces went from about 30,000 a year to about 150,000.

11 **Look carefully at the graph below and answer the questions. (3–5 minutes)**

1 What is the overall purpose of the graph?

2 What are one or two important points about the population in:
a the United States? b Nigeria? c Japan?

3 What points of comparison can you make about changes in population in these three countries?

> *The graph below gives historical information and projections about changes in population in the United States, Nigeria and Japan.*

Population changes in three countries
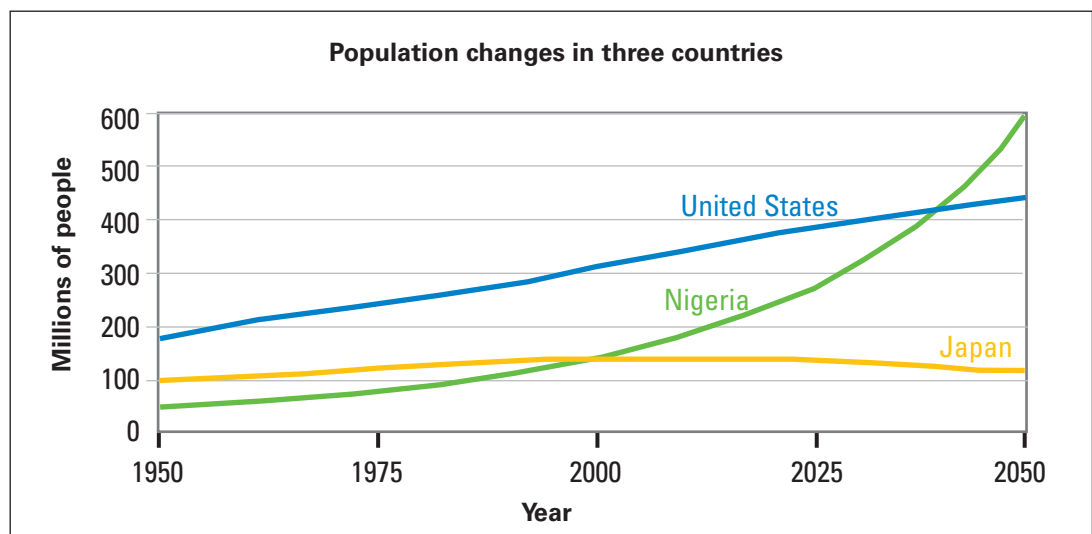
12 **Now write your answer. (10–15 minutes)**

1 Write an introductory statement (based on the information in the text box above the graph) and describe the main trends shown in the graph in paragraph 1.

2 Give details about changes in population in the three countries in the next paragraph. Remember to use the appropriate tenses (past and future for predictions).

3 Compare the population changes in the third paragraph.

13 **Check your work. Look for mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Make sure that you have used the correct tenses, and used a good variety of language for describing graphs. (3–5 minutes)**

14 **Work in pairs. After you have finished, look at the model answer on the DVD-ROM. Compare your answers with the model answer and think about the marking criteria. (See page 180 for marking criteria.)**
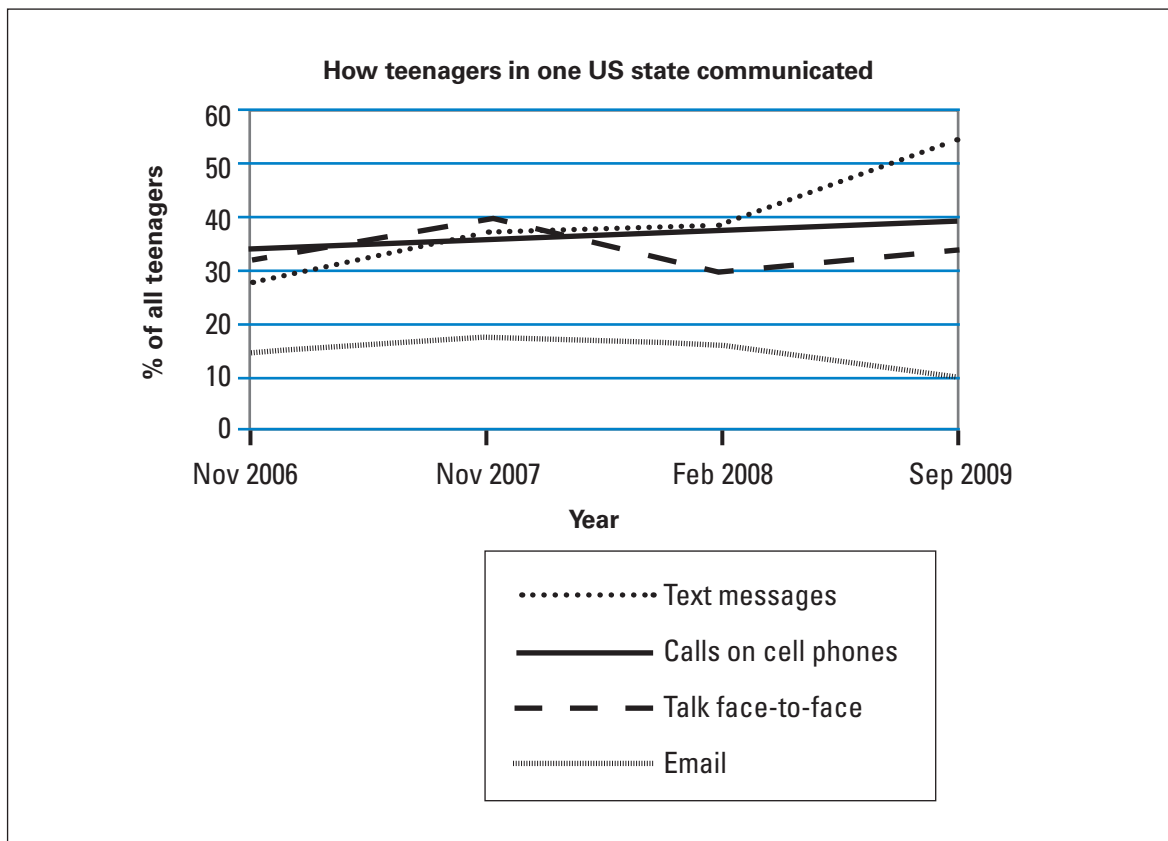
IELTS PRACTICE TASK

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

> *The graph below gives information about how teenagers (aged 12–19) in one state in the United States communicated with each other.*
>
> *Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.*

Write at least 150 words.

How teenagers in one US state communicated

% of all teenagers

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Nov 2006   Nov 2007   Feb 2008   Sep 2009

Year

············· Text messages

————— Calls on cell phones

— — — Talk face-to-face

Email

Which statement best describes how you feel about Task 1 Line Graphs tasks?

☐ I feel confident about writing responses for Task 1 Line Graphs.

☐ I did OK, but I still need to do more work on writing responses for Task 1 Line Graphs.

☐ I need more practice with writing responses for Task 1 Line Graphs. I need to focus on …

▶▶ **For further practice, see the DVD-ROM.**