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How to Describe Any Graph in 4 Sentences: Task 1 Made Simple

Four moves turn any chart, graph or table into a plan in three minutes and a 150-word report in twenty: what it is, the overview, and the two features that matter.

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How to Describe Any Graph in 4 Sentences: Task 1 Made Simple

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What this book is

You have a chart in front of you, twenty minutes on the clock, and a habit. You start at the first number and write until the numbers stop. What you get is a list of figures with a few words around them. This book is for that habit.

It teaches one method for Academic Task 1, the task that asks you to describe a graph, a chart or a table. The method is four moves. You learn them on one line graph, then use them on a bar chart, a table, two pie charts, and a report that covers two charts at once. Then comes the language that numbers need, and the twenty minutes, minute by minute.

The title says "4 sentences". The exam asks for at least 150 words, and four sentences cannot reach that. So here the four sentences are your plan. You write them in the first three minutes, one for each move. The report is those four sentences, each one extended with a sentence or two of comparison and detail, to between 150 and 180 words.

What this book is not

It is not a Task 2 book. *Band 7 Writing Task 2* covers the essay.

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It is not a General Training book. General Training Task 1 is a letter, and the four moves do not fit a letter. Section 4.3 of *Why You Keep Getting 6.5 in Writing — and the 3 Fixes That Move You to 7.0* covers letters.

It does not teach processes or maps. Section 4.2 of *The Band 7.0 Blueprint* covers Task 1 in outline, and Part 4 here says why processes and maps need a different method.

It is not a vocabulary list. *Vocabulary & Phrasing for Band 7* teaches word pairs in general. Part 5 here covers only the words that numbers need.

Two books touch this ground, and this one builds on them without repeating them. Section 4.2 of *Why You Keep Getting 6.5* is half a page on writing the overview first. Section 3.1 of *Writing 7.0: The Four Criteria, Decoded Sentence by Sentence* takes one overview sentence apart. This book is the method that comes before both: how to find the overview, and what to do with the rest of the chart.

The one promise this book makes

Give this method any graph, chart or table and three minutes, and you will have a plan that sorts what the picture says from what it contains — and a report that fits in the twenty minutes the exam gives you.

No band is promised. A Writing band is decided by a trained examiner reading your whole response, and only an official result tells you where you stand.

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One thing to know before you start

Every chart, table, figure and report in this book was invented for it. None is a real IELTS question or a copy of one.

The task format, the word and time limits and the marking words come from ielts.org and its public Writing band descriptors. They were checked when this edition was written. Rules like these get adjusted over time, so check ielts.org for the current ones before you rely on them.

When an example is labelled "At band 6", it shows features that the band 6 wording describes. It is not a mark that an examiner gave.

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Part 1 — What Task 1 marks



1.0 2026 — what changed?

The Band 7.0 Blueprint (also free on this site) covers the move from paper to computer delivery in full; this book does not repeat it. For Task 1, nothing about the chart changes — the graph, bar chart or table you are shown is the same whether it sits on paper or on a screen, and the 20 minutes and the "at least 150 words" stay what they were.

What changes is how you write the report. Most candidates now type it rather than handwrite it (in selected markets you can still choose **Writing on Paper** — check what applies at your own test centre). Typing makes fixing the report after you have written it cheap: a wrong number, a feature that turns out to matter less than you thought, a comparison worth adding — each is a quick edit, not a recopy. That matters here specifically, because the method in Part 2 has you write four short sentences first and extend them into a report second. Typing means that second pass can actually change what the first pass produced; handwriting makes the same fix costlier, so budget a little more of that

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revising to happen in your head, before a sentence goes on the page, if you are handwriting.

1.1 The numbers

ielts.org says Academic Task 1 asks for "at least 150 words" in "no more than 20 minutes". The task is to describe "one or more graphs, charts or tables". (It can also be a diagram. This book is about graphs, charts and tables.)

ielts.org also says that Task 2 contributes twice as much as Task 1 to the Writing score. So Task 1 is one part in three. Each task is assessed on its own, against four criteria that count equally: Task Achievement (in Task 1), Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. This book works mostly on the first: did you say what the chart says?

One part in three is worth twenty minutes, not thirty. A Task 1 that runs to thirty minutes takes ten from Task 2, which counts twice as much.

1.2 What band 7 asks for, in its own words

The public Writing band descriptors, marked "Updated May 2023", have a Task Achievement column for Academic Task 1. These are the words that matter here, copied exactly.

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Band	What the public descriptor says
7	"Key features which are selected are covered and clearly highlighted but could be more fully or more appropriately illustrated or extended. It presents a clear overview, the data are appropriately categorised, and main trends or differences are identified."
6	"Key features which are selected are covered and adequately highlighted. A relevant overview is attempted. Information is appropriately selected and supported using figures/data."
5	"The recounting of detail is mainly mechanical." "There may be a tendency to focus on details (without referring to the bigger picture)."

At band 7, the overview is "clear". At band 6 it is "attempted". At band 5 the bigger picture may be missing. The band 7 words also ask for data that are "appropriately categorised", which this book calls grouping, and for "main trends or differences".

These words are not a checklist that adds up to a mark, and this book does not turn them into a formula. Use them to decide what a plan must contain.

1.3 The four moves

The method is four moves. You make them in the first three minutes, before you write the report. Each move is one sentence, and rough is fine. The examples are from Figure 2.1 in Part 2, a line graph about bicycle trips in one city. Part 2 shows where each one comes from.

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1. **What it is.** *The graph shows how many bicycle trips people in one city made on an average weekday, for three purposes, between 2005 and 2025.*
2. **The overview.** *Overall, commuting trips rose steeply and overtook leisure trips, which fell steadily, while study trips stayed almost level.*
3. **Feature one.** *Commuting trips more than tripled, from 30 thousand to 96 thousand, and passed leisure trips.*
4. **Feature two.** *Leisure trips roughly halved, from 45 thousand to 22 thousand, while study trips hardly changed.*

The trap. The usual way to write Task 1 is in the order the chart is printed. You start at the first number and work to the last. It feels safe, because nothing is left out. It ends as a list with sentences around it, and the writer may run out of time before the picture has been described. The band 5 words above are about the same danger: detail without the bigger picture. Section 4.2 of *Why You Keep Getting 6.5 in Writing — and the 3 Fixes That Move You to 7.0* shows what it looks like. The four moves are built to prevent it. You decide what the picture says before you write one detail.

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Part 2 — The four moves

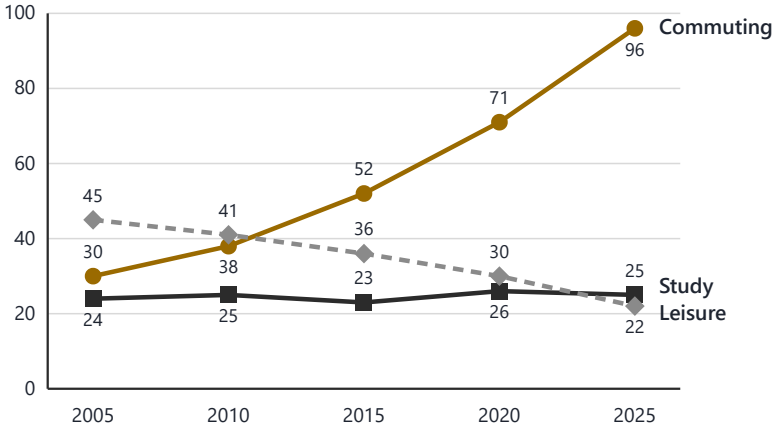


Figure 2.1. Bicycle trips on an average weekday in one city, by purpose (thousands of trips)

Figure 2.1 is a line graph of bicycle trips in one city, with one line for each purpose and five points on each line. It is the one example for all of Part 2, so look at it for a minute before you read on.

2.1 Move 1 — say what it is

Move 1 is one sentence that says what the chart shows. It holds four things: the subject, the measure, the place and the time. For Figure 2.1 they are:

- **Subject:** bicycle trips, split into three purposes.
- **Measure:** how many trips, on an average weekday.
- **Place:** one city.
- **Time:** 2005 to 2025, every five years.

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Put them in a sentence of your own.

> The graph shows how many bicycle trips people in one city made on an average weekday, for three purposes, between 2005 and 2025.

Keep the words that name what is counted, here *bicycle trips* and *average weekday*. Change the words around them.

You could copy the title instead: *The graph shows bicycle trips on an average weekday in one city, by purpose*. That is correct. But the words are not language you chose, so the sentence shows nothing of your own English. Writing your own costs a few seconds.

The opposite risk is a paraphrase that is too clever. Here is one.

The graph shows how many cyclists there were in one city between 2005 and 2025.

It sounds fluent, but it changes what is measured. Figure 2.1 counts trips, in thousands. A cyclist is a person, and one person can make two trips in a day. The chart does not say how many people cycled. A sentence about people promises figures for people, and the chart has none. Before you use a new word, ask: does it name the same thing that the axis counts? If not, keep the title's word.

2.2 Move 2 — find the overview in a minute

Move 2 is the sentence a stranger would remember. It has no numbers. You find it with three questions, asked in this order. Give them about a minute.

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Question	Answer for Figure 2.1
1. What is highest, and what is lowest?	In 2005 leisure was highest (45) and study lowest (24). In 2025 commuting was highest (96) and leisure lowest (22).
2. Which way did each line move?	Commuting went up. Leisure went down. Study stayed level, between 23 and 26 throughout.
3. What is the one comparison a stranger would remember?	Commuting started below leisure and finished far above it.

Read the three answers together. Answer 1 says the top and the bottom changed places. Answer 2 gives the direction of each line. Answer 3 says which two lines to put side by side. Now join them into one sentence. Start with the line that moved most, because answers 2 and 3 are both about it.

> Overall, commuting trips rose steeply and overtook leisure trips, which fell steadily, while study trips stayed almost level.

There is no figure in it. It names all three lines. A stranger could sketch the graph from it: one line climbing and crossing a falling line, and one line flat.

If the sentence grows past two lines, you may be listing, not summarising. Section 3.1 of *Writing 7.0: The Four Criteria, Decoded Sentence by Sentence* takes an overview sentence apart word by word. This section is only about how to find one.

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2.3 Moves 3 and 4 — choose and group

The overview now tells you what to write about. Move 3 is feature one, the biggest thing in the data. Move 4 is feature two, the next. Everything else is grouped with one of them, or left out.

One question decides every number: **does this number prove a line of my overview?** If it does, it goes in. If you cannot say which line it proves, it stays out.

Numbers	In or out	Why
Commuting 30 (2005) and 96 (2025)	In	They prove "rose steeply". 96 is 3.2 times 30, so "more than tripled" is honest.
Commuting and leisure in 2010 (38, 41) and 2015 (52, 36)	In	They prove "overtook": commuting was lower in 2010 and higher in 2015.
Leisure 45 (2005) and 22 (2025)	In	They prove "fell". 22 is just under half of 45, so "roughly halved" is honest.
Study 24 (2005) and 25 (2025), and its range, 23 to 26	In	They prove "level", and they give feature two its comparison with leisure.
Commuting 71 and leisure 30 (2020)	Out	The first and last figures already show the direction. A middle figure goes in only when it changes the story, as 2010 and 2015 do.
Study in 2010, 2015 and 2020, one by one	Out	The range, 23 to 26, already says it. Three more figures would be a list.

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Now group. Feature one is commuting. Feature two is leisure and study together, because they have one thing in common: neither rose. One paragraph for the two lines that did not rise, instead of a paragraph for each line, is how this book reads the band 7 words "appropriately categorised".

Notice what the overview did. It chose two features, and it gave every number a test to pass. Without it, you would be deciding about fifteen numbers one at a time.

2.4 From four sentences to a report

After three minutes you have four sentences. This is the plan.

1. *The graph shows how many bicycle trips people in one city made on an average weekday, for three purposes, between 2005 and 2025.*
2. *Overall, commuting trips rose steeply and overtook leisure trips, which fell steadily, while study trips stayed almost level.*
3. *Commuting trips more than tripled, from 30 thousand to 96 thousand, and passed leisure trips.*
4. *Leisure trips roughly halved, from 45 thousand to 22 thousand, while study trips hardly changed.*

It is rough, and it is enough to write from. Now extend it. Each plan sentence stays. The two features get more sentences, and each added sentence does one job. The three paragraphs are this book's choice, not a rule: one for moves 1 and 2, and one for each feature.

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> The graph shows how many bicycle trips people in one city made on an average weekday, for three purposes, between 2005 and 2025. Overall, commuting trips rose steeply and overtook leisure trips, which fell steadily, while study trips stayed almost level.
>
> Commuting trips more than tripled, from 30 thousand in 2005 to 96 thousand in 2025, and passed leisure trips. In 2010 they were still below leisure trips, at 38 thousand against 41 thousand, but by 2015 they were ahead, at 52 thousand against 36 thousand. By 2025 there were more than four times as many commuting trips as leisure trips.
>
> Leisure trips roughly halved, from 45 thousand in 2005 to 22 thousand in 2025, while study trips hardly changed. Leisure fell in every five-year period, by between 4 and 8 thousand trips each time. Study trips stayed between 23 and 26 thousand throughout. In 2005 leisure had been well above study, at 45 thousand against 24 thousand, but by 2025 study was just ahead, at 25 thousand against 22 thousand.

That is nine sentences and 171 words. The exam asks for at least 150.

Three tools do most of the work. A figure pair puts two figures side by side, with *against*, so the reader sees the comparison at once. A size comparison says how much bigger one thing is, as in *more than four times as many*. And *while* or *but* joins two things in one sentence so the contrast shows. The other two added sentences put numbers behind a word from the plan: "steadily" becomes "by between 4 and 8 thousand trips each time", and "hardly changed" becomes "between 23 and 26

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thousand". Part 5 teaches the wording of each tool. Here, test the report with one rule: if you delete a sentence and nothing is lost, the sentence had no job.

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Part 3 — One chart at a time



Each section below uses the same five steps: the chart, the four moves as a plan, the report, one paragraph at band 6, and the one thing that chart type changes. The plan is what you have after three minutes, and the report is that plan extended, as in Part 2. The reports use words for comparing and for movement without teaching them; Part 5 does that.

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3.1 Line graph

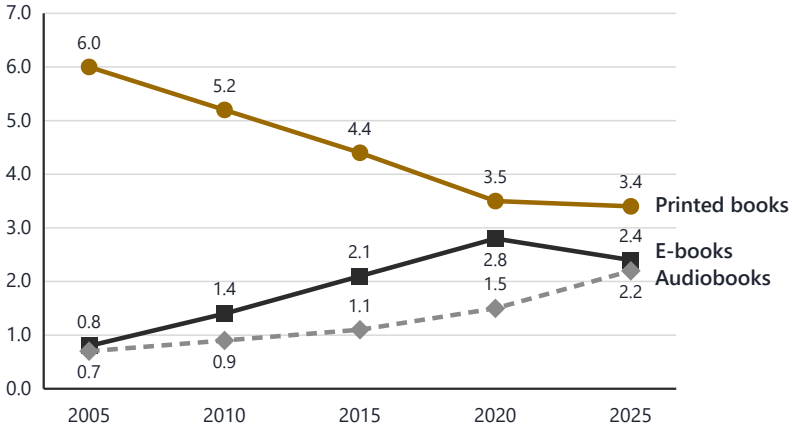


Figure 3.1. Average hours a week that adults in one country spent reading, by format

Figure 3.1 is a line graph with two things that Figure 2.1 did not have. One line turns round: e-books go up and then come down. And the total hardly moves, though the chart never prints it. Add the three lines for the first year and for the last to see it: 6.0 + 0.8 + 0.7 = 7.5 hours in 2005, and 3.4 + 2.4 + 2.2 = 8.0 hours in 2025. In Figure 2.1 every line kept one direction or stayed level, and the news was a crossing. Here the news is a mix that changes inside a total that does not.

The four moves, as a plan

1. **What it is.** The graph compares the hours adults spent each week reading printed books, e-books and audiobooks, from 2005 to 2025.
2. **The overview.** Total reading time hardly changed, but printed books lost time, audiobooks gained it, and e-books rose and then fell back.

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3. **Feature one.** Printed books fell from 6.0 hours a week to 3.4, the biggest change of the three.
4. **Feature two.** Audiobooks rose from 0.7 hours to 2.2, and e-books peaked at 2.8 in 2020 before falling to 2.4.

The report

> The graph compares the hours adults in one country spent each week reading printed books, e-books and audiobooks, from 2005 to 2025. Total reading time hardly changed, but printed books lost time, audiobooks gained it, and e-books rose and then fell back.
>
> Printed books fell from 6.0 hours a week in 2005 to 3.4 hours in 2025, the biggest change of the three formats. Almost all of that fall came by 2020, when they stood at 3.5 hours. In 2005 they were far ahead of e-books (0.8) and audiobooks (0.7), whereas by 2025 the three formats were much closer, at 3.4, 2.4 and 2.2 hours.
>
> Audiobooks rose in every period, from 0.7 hours in 2005 to 2.2 hours in 2025. E-books climbed from 0.8 hours to a peak of 2.8 in 2020. They then fell to 2.4, only 0.2 hours ahead of audiobooks. In total, the three formats took 7.5 hours a week in 2005 and 8.0 hours in 2025, a rise of only 0.5 hours.

At band 6: "Overall, printed books decreased and e-books and audiobooks increased. Printed books were 6.0 hours in 2005, 5.2 hours in 2010, 4.4 hours in 2015, 3.5 hours in 2020 and 3.4 hours in 2025. E-books were 0.8 hours in 2005 and 1.4 hours in 2010. They went up to 2.1 hours in 2015 and 2.8 hours in 2020, then down to 2.4 hours in 2025."

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Every figure is right, and the first sentence is a real overview. But it says that e-books increased, when the line turns down after 2020, and it leaves out the total. After that the paragraph goes through the printed order, one figure for each year, and never compares one format with another. The peak is in there, but only as one more number in a list.

What a line graph changes. The overview of a line graph is mostly direction, but check two more things before you write it. First, does any line turn round? A turn belongs in the overview, or the overview is not true of the whole graph. Second, add the lines for the first and last years: when the total is level, that is part of the overview too.

3.2 Bar chart

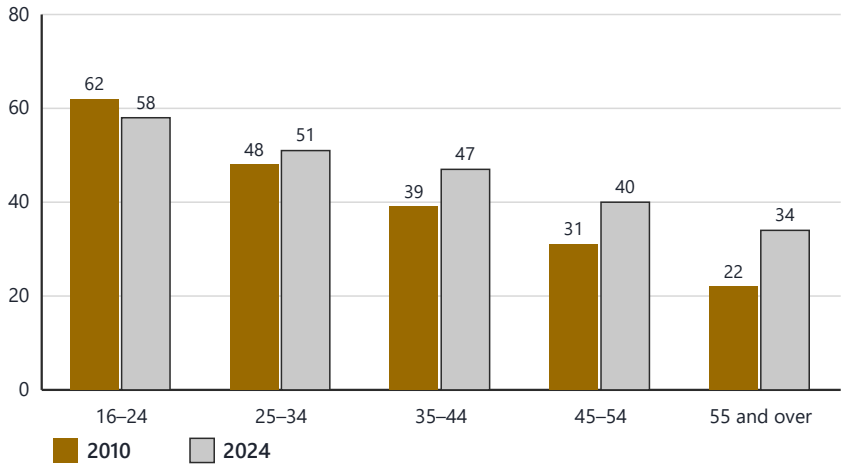


Figure 3.2. Adults who played a sport at least once a week, by age group, in one country (%)

Figure 3.2 is a bar chart that shows the same five age groups at two times. The chart prints the levels, but the story is in differences that it does not

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print: the change in each group, and the gap between the youngest group and the oldest. You have to work them out. In 2010 the gap was 62 – 22 = 40 points. In 2024 it was 58 – 34 = 24.

The four moves, as a plan

1. **What it is.** The chart compares the share of adults in five age groups who took part in sport at least once a week, in 2010 and in 2024.
2. **The overview.** Younger adults were the most active in both years, but the gap between the youngest and the oldest narrowed, as every group except the youngest rose.
3. **Feature one.** The youngest group fell from 62% to 58%, while the oldest rose from 22% to 34%, so the gap narrowed from 40 points to 24.
4. **Feature two.** The three groups in between all rose, and the older the group, the bigger the rise.

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The report

> The bar chart compares the share of adults in five age groups who took part in sport at least once a week in 2010 and in 2024. Younger adults were the most active in both years, but the gap between the youngest and the oldest narrowed, as every group except the youngest rose.
>
> The 16–24 group was the only one to fall, from 62% to 58%. The 55 and over group rose from 22% to 34%. In 2010 the youngest figure was almost three times the oldest, whereas in 2024 it was less than twice as high, so the gap narrowed from 40 percentage points to 24.
>
> The three groups in between all rose, and the older the group, the bigger the rise. The 25–34 group went up by only 3 points, from 48% to 51%. The 35–44 and 45–54 groups rose by 8 points (39% to 47%) and 9 points (31% to 40%). The order of the groups did not change: in both years, the younger the group, the more active.

At band 6: "In 2010, 62% of 16–24 year olds played sport at least once a week, compared with 48% of 25–34 year olds, 39% of 35–44 year olds, 31% of 45–54 year olds and 22% of people aged 55 and over. In 2024, the figures were 58%, 51%, 47%, 40% and 34%. Overall, sport became more popular in most age groups."

Every figure is right, and "compared with" links the groups. But the paragraph reads the bars from left to right for 2010, then again for 2024, so the reader must pair the numbers and subtract them. The last

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sentence is true, but "most" hides the one group that fell. It says nothing about the gap, which is the biggest thing on the chart.

What a bar chart changes. A bar chart prints levels, and the story is in differences. Work them out in the margin before you write: subtract for each group, then subtract the lowest bar from the highest in each year. Check each sum twice. When the same bars appear at two times, compare each group with itself first, then compare the groups with each other.

3.3 Table

Table 3.3. Where a household's energy was used, in one country (% of the household's total)

Use	2000	2010	2020
Heating	54	48	41
Hot water	21	20	19
Appliances and electronics	12	17	22
Lighting	7	6	5
Cooking	5	5	5
Cooling	1	4	8

Table 3.3 has eighteen numbers and no picture. That is deliberate: you cannot use all of them, so grouping the rows is the whole skill. Subtract the first column from the last in every row. Heating is −13, appliances and electronics +10 and cooling +7. Hot water and lighting are −2 each,

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and cooking is 0. That gives three groups: one row fell a lot, two rose, and three barely moved.

The four moves, as a plan

1. **What it is.** The table shows how a household's energy was shared between six uses in 2000, 2010 and 2020.
2. **The overview.** Heating stayed the largest use but took a smaller share, appliances and electronics and cooling took larger shares, and the other uses hardly changed.
3. **Feature one.** Heating fell from 54% to 41%, the biggest change, but it was still 19 points ahead of the next use.
4. **Feature two.** Appliances and electronics rose from 12% to 22% and overtook hot water, and cooling rose from 1% to 8%, while hot water, lighting and cooking changed by 2 points or less.

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The report

> The table shows how a household's energy was shared between six uses in 2000, 2010 and 2020. Heating remained the largest use, but its share fell, while appliances and electronics and cooling took larger shares and the other uses hardly changed.
>
> Heating fell from 54% of the total in 2000 to 41% in 2020, the biggest change in the table over the twenty years. In 2000 it took more than half of the total. Even so, it was still the largest use at the end. It was 19 percentage points ahead of the next largest, appliances and electronics, at 22%.
>
> Appliances and electronics rose from 12% to 22%. That took them past hot water, whose share slipped from 21% to 19%. Cooling grew from 1% to 8%, a small share but a clear rise, and by 2020 it was larger than lighting or cooking. Lighting and cooking changed by 2 points or less over the period, and both ended on 5%.

At band 6: "Heating was 54% in 2000, 48% in 2010 and 41% in 2020. Hot water was 21%, 20% and 19%. Appliances and electronics went from 12% to 17% and then to 22%. Lighting went from 7% to 6% and then to 5%. Cooking stayed at 5%. Cooling went from 1% to 4% and then to 8%. Overall, some uses went up and some went down."

Every figure is right and no row is missing. It is the table read aloud, row by row, in the printed order. Nothing tells the reader that heating's fall of 13 points matters more than lighting's fall of 2, and "some uses went up and some went down" is true of almost any table. It also compares no row

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with another, so the reader is never told that appliances and electronics passed hot water.

What a table changes. A table has no shape until you make one. Subtract, sort the rows into groups by size of change, and write about the groups, not the rows. Use the first and last year columns, and mention the middle year only if it changes the story, for example if a row rises and then falls. Here no row turns round, so the report uses no 2010 figure. Each year's column adds up to 100%, which gives you a check on every figure you copy.

3.4 Pie charts

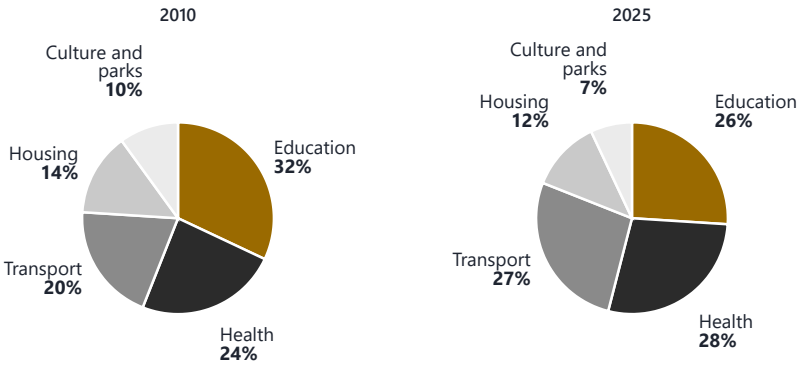


Figure 3.4. How one city council spent its yearly budget (% of the total)

Figure 3.4 is two pie charts of the same budget in two years. One pie shows the parts of a whole. Two pies show a change, and you describe the change by comparing the shares, not the pies.

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The four moves, as a plan

1. **What it is.** The two pie charts show how a city council divided its yearly budget between five areas in 2010 and in 2025.
2. **The overview.** Education lost its place as the largest area, while health and transport gained, so that by 2025 the three largest areas took very similar shares.
3. **Feature one.** Education took almost a third in 2010 (32%) but only 26% in 2025, and health moved ahead of it, at 28%.
4. **Feature two.** Transport showed the biggest rise, from 20% to 27%, while housing and culture and parks, the two smallest, each lost a little.

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The report

> The two pie charts show how a city council divided its yearly budget between five areas in 2010 and 2025. Education lost its place as the largest area, while health and transport gained, so that by 2025 the three largest areas took very similar shares.
>
> In 2010, education took almost a third of the budget (32%), well ahead of health at 24% and transport at 20%. By 2025 its share had fallen to 26%, just over a quarter, and health had moved ahead of it, at 28%. This 6-point fall was the largest of any area.
>
> Transport showed the biggest rise, from 20% to 27%, which left it only one point behind health. Health itself rose by 4 points. The three largest areas were therefore within 2 points of each other, at 26%, 27% and 28%. Housing and culture and parks were the two smallest areas in both years, and each lost a little, falling from 14% to 12% and from 10% to 7%.

At band 6: "The first pie chart shows the council's budget in 2010. Education was the biggest area with 32%, followed by health with 24%, transport with 20%, housing with 14% and culture and parks with 10%. The second pie chart shows 2025. Education fell to 26% and health rose to 28%. Transport rose to 27%, housing fell to 12% and culture and parks fell to 7%. Overall, the council spent less on education and more on transport and health in 2025."

Every figure is right, and the last sentence is a real attempt at an overview. But it comes after every figure, and "spent less" claims something the pies do not show. A pie shows an area's share of that year's

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budget, not the money, and a share can fall while the money rises. The paragraph also describes one pie and then the other, so the reader must do the comparing.

What pie charts change. Write "share" or "% of the budget", never "spent less" or "spent more". Use a fraction word only when the figure is within about 2 points of the fraction, and give the figure the first time you use one. A third is 33.3%, so "almost a third" is right for 32%, which is a little under it. It is wrong for 26%, which is just over a quarter. For 28% no simple fraction is close enough, so give the figure alone.

If there is only one pie. Take the 2010 pie alone. There is no change, so there are no movement words, and the overview is the balance between the slices. Start with the largest slice, then look for slices that add up to a fraction you can name. Education is the largest, at almost a third. The three largest slices add up to 32 + 24 + 20 = 76%, which is just over three quarters, and the other two add up to 14 + 10 = 24%, just under a quarter.

Written: "In 2010, education took almost a third of the budget, and the three largest areas together took just over three quarters."

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3.5 Two charts, one report

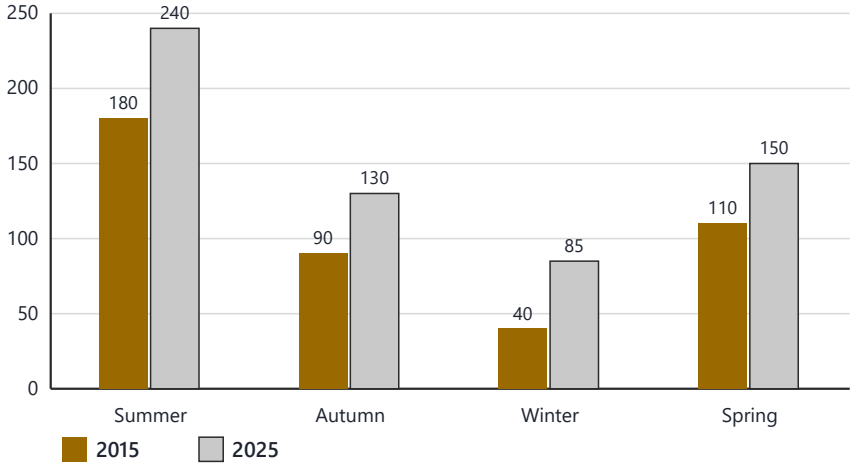


Figure 3.5a. Visitors to one island, by season (thousands)

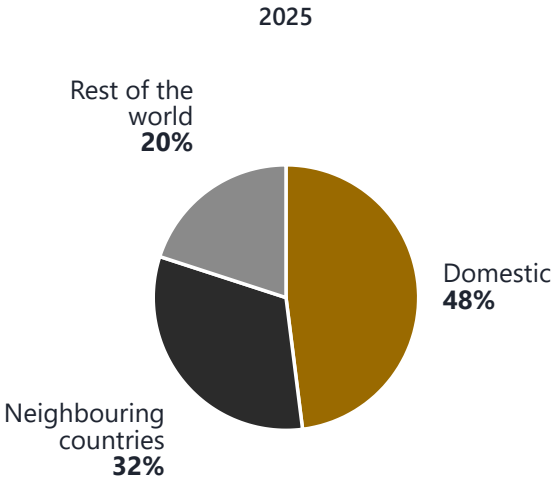


Figure 3.5b. Where the island's visitors came from in 2025 (% of the total)

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Figures 3.5a and 3.5b come with one task, so they get one report. The bar chart gives the visitors to one island in each season in two years. The pie chart divides the 2025 visitors by where they came from. The special thing here is the link: two charts are one answer, not two.

The four moves, as a plan

1. **What it is.** The two charts show how many people visited one island in each season of 2015 and 2025, and where the 2025 visitors came from.
2. **The overview.** Visitor numbers rose in every season, summer was the busiest season in both years, and domestic visitors were the largest group in 2025.
3. **Feature one.** Summer rose by the most, from 180 thousand to 240 thousand, and winter, the quietest season, more than doubled, from 40 thousand to 85 thousand.
4. **Feature two.** Of the 605 thousand visitors in 2025, domestic visitors made up just under half (48%), neighbouring countries almost a third (32%) and the rest of the world a fifth (20%).

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The report

> The bar chart shows how many people visited one island in each season in 2015 and 2025, and the pie chart shows where the 2025 visitors came from. Visitor numbers rose in every season, and summer was the busiest in both years, while domestic visitors were the largest group in 2025.
>
> Summer rose from 180 thousand visitors to 240 thousand, the biggest increase in numbers. Winter was the quietest season in both years, but it more than doubled, from 40 thousand to 85 thousand. Autumn and spring each gained 40 thousand. Added together, the seasons brought 420 thousand visitors in 2015 and 605 thousand in 2025.
>
> The pie chart divides those 605 thousand visitors by origin. Domestic visitors made up just under half of them (48%), which is roughly 290 thousand visitors. Visitors from neighbouring countries were almost a third (32%), and the rest of the world supplied a fifth (20%). Domestic visitors were therefore more than twice as many as those from the rest of the world.

At band 6: "The bar chart shows the number of visitors to the island in each season. In 2015 there were 180 thousand in summer, 90 thousand in autumn, 40 thousand in winter and 110 thousand in spring. In 2025 there were 240 thousand in summer, 130 thousand in autumn, 85 thousand in winter and 150 thousand in spring. The pie chart shows that 48% of visitors were domestic, 32% were from neighbouring countries and 20% were from the rest of the world. Overall, the island had more visitors in 2025."

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Both charts are described correctly, but as two separate reports in the printed order. The last sentence is a true overview of the bars only, and nothing says that the pie divides the same 2025 visitors that the bars count. No season is compared with another, and the paragraph states no difference between 2015 and 2025.

What two charts change. Write one overview for both charts, and let one paragraph hand over to the next. Here paragraph two ends with the 2025 total, 605 thousand (240 + 130 + 85 + 150), and paragraph three starts from it.

That link lets you work out one figure: 48% of 605 thousand is 0.48 × 605 = 290.4, so "roughly 290 thousand". A figure you work out is optional. Label it with "roughly" or "about", use it only when both charts count the same thing, and leave it out if you are not sure. Never write "48 thousand": the pie is in per cent and the bars are in thousands.

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Part 4 — What the method leaves out

The four moves are for one job: describing the figures in a graph, a chart or a table. Three other kinds of Task 1 look different, and the moves do not carry over to them unchanged. This part says why, in a paragraph each, and where to read. It teaches none of them.

General Training letters. General Training Task 1 is a letter, not a description of data. There is no chart, so there is no overview to find and no figure to compare. What a letter needs is a clear purpose, every bullet point covered and one tone from start to end. Section 4.3 of *Why You Keep Getting 6.5 in Writing — and the 3 Fixes That Move You to 7.0* sets that out.

Process diagrams. A diagram of a process shows steps in an order. There are usually no figures to rank, so moves 3 and 4 have nothing to choose between. What you must get right is the order of the steps. Section 4.2 of *The Band 7.0 Blueprint* names the diagram and gives Task 1 in outline. It has no worked report for one, and neither does this book.

Maps. A map shows where things are. You describe places and positions, which are not figures, so there is usually no biggest number to be feature one. The same section of the Blueprint names maps and gives the same outline, with no worked report. Do not squeeze a map into the four moves.

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Part 5 — The language of numbers



The four moves tell you what to say. This part gives you the words to say it with: how to compare two figures, how to describe movement, how to be approximate and still be right, and what never goes in. For word pairs in general, see *Vocabulary & Phrasing for Band 7*.

5.1 Comparing

A comparison puts two figures side by side and says how far apart they are. In this book's method every body paragraph has at least one. The figures come from Figures 2.1, 3.4 and 3.5a.

- **Higher and lower.** In 2005, Leisure (45 thousand trips) was higher than Commuting (30 thousand). Use *more* and *fewer* for things you count, and *a higher share* for per cent.
- **The same.** Study trips were almost the same in 2005 and 2025, at 24 thousand and 25 thousand.

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- **As … as.** In 2025, Transport (27% of the budget) was nearly as high as Health (28%). In 2020, Study (26 thousand) was not as high as Leisure (30 thousand).
- **Times.** In 2015, there were more than twice as many Commuting trips (52 thousand) as Study trips (23 thousand).
- **A third more.** Summer visitors to the island numbered 240 thousand in 2025, a third more than the 180 thousand of 2015.

Compare without repeating the figure. Give each figure once. After that, let a word or a ratio carry the comparison: *Leisure fell to 22 thousand trips in 2025. Commuting, at 96 thousand, was more than four times as high.* A gap does the same job: Commuting was ahead of Leisure by 74 thousand trips.

5.2 Movement

Trend words say which way (direction), how much (size) and how fast (speed). Choose each one from the figures.

Direction	Verbs	Nouns
Up	rise, increase, grow	a rise, an increase, growth
Down	fall, decrease, decline, drop	a fall, a decrease, a decline
Level	stay level, remain stable	little change, no change
Highest or lowest point	peak at, reach a low of	a peak, a low

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Size. *Slightly* or *a little* for a small change. No extra word (*rose*, *a fall*) for a clear one. *Sharply* or *dramatically* for a large one, or *doubled*, *halved*, *more than tripled*. **Speed.** *Gradually* for small steps over a long time. *Steadily* for the same direction in every period. *Suddenly* for one big step. *Suddenly* needs a point every year. With a point every five years you cannot see what happened between the points, so use *sharply* for a steep line there.

The one restriction: choose the word the figures justify. A move from 22 to 24 is small, and *soared* tells the reader it was huge. If the verb and the figures do not match, the sentence is wrong, even though every figure in it is right.

Figures	A word the figures justify	A word they do not
22 to 24	rose slightly	soared
Commuting, 30 to 96	more than tripled; rose sharply	grew a little
Leisure, 45 to 22	roughly halved; fell steadily	dipped slightly
Study, 24, 25, 23, 26, 25	stayed level, between 23 and 26	rose steadily
E-books in hours, 0.8, 1.4, 2.1, 2.8, 2.4	rose to a peak of 2.8 in 2020, then fell to 2.4	rose steadily to 2.4

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5.3 Approximating

About, *around* and *roughly* work on either side of a figure. *Just over* and *more than* point a little above it. *Nearly*, *almost*, *just under* and *under* point a little below it.

Fraction words are the easiest to get wrong. Use this check. A fraction word is safe only if the figure is within about 2 percentage points of it: a quarter is 25%, a third 33.3%, a fifth 20%, a half 50%, two thirds 66.7% and three quarters 75%. The check is this book's own, not an exam rule.

Figure	Safe	Not safe
32%	almost a third	just over a quarter
26%	just over a quarter	almost a third
48%	just under half	just over half
20%	a fifth	nearly a quarter
62%	more than 60%	nearly two thirds

62% is 4.7 points below two thirds, so *nearly two thirds* claims too much. *More than 60%* is true.

When the exact figure is safer. If the chart prints the figure, the exact figure is never wrong. Write it when it is far from any simple fraction, such as 14% or 7%, and when the gap between two figures is the point. In 2025, Health took 28% of the budget and Education took 26%. 28 is 3 points from a quarter, so *just over a quarter* fails the check for Health. Write 28% and 26%, and the reader sees the gap. If a point sits between two gridlines, *about* is the honest word: *about 40 thousand*.

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5.4 Units and labels

Read the label on the chart before you write a figure. It gives you the unit.

- **Write the unit once, in the chart's own terms.** The label of Figure 2.1 says *thousands of trips*, so 96 means 96 thousand trips. Write *from 30 to 96 thousand trips*, not *96,000 thousand*. In Figure 3.1 the label is *hours a week*: *from 6.0 to 3.4 hours a week*.
- **Use percentage points for the gap between two percentages.** Education took 32% of the budget in 2010 and 26% in 2025. That is a fall of 6 percentage points. It is not a fall of 6%, because 6% of 32 is only about 2 points.
- **Ask "per cent of what?"** In Figure 3.4, the slices of one pie add up to 100, because they are parts of one whole, the council's budget. In Figure 3.2, the five bars for 2010 add up to 202, so each bar is its own age group's 100%. The 62% for the 16–24 group means 62% of the adults in that age group. It does not mean that 62% of everyone who played a sport was aged 16 to 24. A sentence that says so has the right figure and the wrong meaning.

5.5 Tense

This is the one grammar point in the book, because the time frame of the chart decides it. *Writing 7.0* covers Grammatical Range and Accuracy in its Part 6, and word choice at sentence level in its Part 5.

- **Data from the past: the past tense.** Every date in Figure 2.1 is 2025 or earlier, so write *Leisure fell from 45 thousand trips in 2005 to 22 thousand in 2025.* Keep one tense in a sentence. *Commuting rose from 30 thousand in 2005 and reaches 96 thousand in 2025* changes tense half-way. The second verb should be *reached*.

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- **A projected year: the future, in the chart's words.** Suppose a table about one town gives 41 thousand people for 2025 and a projected 45 thousand for 2035. Write *The population is projected to reach 45 thousand in 2035.* Use the chart's own word, *projected* or *expected*. Add no forecast of your own.
- **No time frame: the present.** A bar chart of the students in one school, by subject, has no date. Write *Science has the most students, and Art has the fewest*.

5.6 What never goes in

Some things are on no chart, so they never go in: a reason for a change, an opinion such as *I think*, and a forecast past the last year. Here is a paragraph with all three.

At band 6: "Leisure trips fell from 45 thousand in 2005 to 22 thousand in 2025. This is probably because people now have less free time and prefer to stay at home. I think this is a pity, and the number will keep falling."

Every figure is right and on the chart. The trouble is what else the writer added. The chart counts trips. It does not say why people made fewer, so *probably because people have less free time* is a guess. *I think this is a pity* is an opinion, and *will keep falling* goes past 2025, where the chart stops. The public band 6 wording says: "Some irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate information may occur in areas of detail."

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> Leisure trips fell in every period, from 45 thousand in 2005 to 22 thousand in 2025, which was roughly half the starting figure. By 2025 they had dropped below study trips, which stood at 25 thousand.

Nothing the reader needs has been lost. When you feel the pull to explain, compare instead. A comparison uses only what the chart gives you. Question 9 in Part 7 checks for this.

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Part 6 — The twenty minutes

6.1 3 / 14 / 3

ielts.org gives Academic Task 1 "no more than 20 minutes". This book splits them into three parts: 3 minutes to plan, 14 to write and 3 to check. It is the same split that section 7.5 of *Why You Keep Getting 6.5 in Writing — and the 3 Fixes That Move You to 7.0* uses in its sixty-minute plan, so the two books agree.

Minutes	What you do	Where in this book
0–3	**Plan.** Look at the chart. Write the four sentences: what it is, the overview, feature one, feature two.	Parts 1 and 2; one example for each chart type in Part 3
3–17	**Write.** Extend each sentence by one or two: a comparison, a figure pair, a *while* or a *whereas*. Aim for 150 to 180 words, in three paragraphs.	Section 2.4, Part 3 and Part 5
17–20	**Check.** Answer the ten questions and fix what they find. Fix, do not rewrite.	Part 7

The three minutes of planning feel long, and they are the part not to skip. With four sentences on the page, the next fourteen minutes are about wording. Without them, the next fourteen are about deciding what to say, and you decide it one number at a time.

Section 6.2 puts one chart on this clock, minute by minute.

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6.2 One chart on the clock

Here is Figure 3.2, the sport chart, on the clock. The times are a plan, not a measurement, and your own pace will differ. What matters is what is on the page at each stop.

Minute	What is on your page
0–3	The four plan sentences from section 3.2, rough. In the margin, the two sums the chart does not print: 62 − 22 = 40 and 58 − 34 = 24.
10	Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the report, about 107 words. Paragraph 1 says what the chart is and gives the overview. Paragraph 2 sets the youngest group against the oldest.
17	All three paragraphs, 172 words. The clock says stop writing.
20	The same report, after the check.

The check is where the last three minutes go. Say the draft of paragraph 3 reads: "The 25–34 group went up by only 4 points, from 48% to 51%." Question 6 in Part 7 asks whether every figure is copied correctly. You put a finger on the chart and read the figures one at a time. 51 − 48 is 3, not 4. You change one word. The next two questions, on units and tense, find nothing, and the check is done with a minute to spare.

A check that finds nothing is still worth its three minutes, because now you know the figures are right. A check you skip finds nothing too, and the wrong figure stays in your report.

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6.3 When time is short

Some days the plan runs long, or the chart is crowded and the minutes go. Decide now what you will cut, so you do not decide in a panic.

Never cut these three.

- **The overview.** It is the sentence the rest leans on.
- **Feature one, with its figures and one comparison.**
- **The check on the figures.** Read each figure in your report against the chart.

Cut in this order. First the extra figure pairs in feature two, then the extra figure pairs in feature one. Keep every plan sentence.

When you must choose, choose a report with an overview and one well-supported feature over a list of every figure with no overview. This is a priority, not a mark. The band 7 words say "It presents a clear overview". The band 5 words warn of "a tendency to focus on details (without referring to the bigger picture)". A list of figures is all detail, so the overview comes first. A short report is still short, though: the exam asks for at least 150 words. If you are under, add a comparison to the feature you have before you add anything new.

When the 14 minutes run out. Finish your sentence. If you are in the second body paragraph, close it with one sentence, such as a comparison, and do not start a third feature. If you have written only one body paragraph, write feature two as a single sentence. Then go to the check.

With one minute left for the check, look at three things in this order: the figures, the units and the tense. They are questions 6, 7 and 8 in Part 7.

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Part 7 — Check your own report

You have a report and about three minutes. These ten questions are the check. Each one is a yes or a no, and yes is the answer you want. Where a question leans on the public Writing band descriptors (Academic Task Achievement, updated May 2023), the words are quoted exactly.

7.1 The ten questions

1. **Could a stranger read one sentence of your report and know the shape of the data?** That is the overview. The band 7 words begin: "It presents a clear overview".
2. **Is that overview free of numbers?** Figures belong in the two features.
3. **Does your first sentence say what the chart shows, in your own words, without changing what is measured?** Trips are not people (section 2.1).
4. **Are the data grouped around two features, not listed in the printed order?** The band 7 words say "the data are appropriately categorised". The band 5 words warn of "a tendency to focus on details (without referring to the bigger picture)".
5. **Does every body paragraph have figures and a comparison?** The band 7 words say "main trends or differences are identified". The band 6 words say "supported using figures/data".
6. **Is every figure copied correctly?** Check each one against the chart, one by one. The band 6 words mention "inaccurate information".

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7. **Is every unit right and written once, and do you know what each per cent is a per cent of?** Section 5.4.
8. **Is the tense right for the time frame?** Past data take the past tense. Section 5.5.
9. **Is everything in the report on the chart?** No reason, no opinion, no *I think*, no forecast. The band 6 words mention "irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate information". Section 5.6.
10. **Are there at least 150 words?** Count the words in one full line of your writing, then multiply by the number of lines.

Ten yes answers do not give you a band. A trained examiner decides that. If you have several noes, fix the lowest number first, because the top questions are the big ones.

7.2 Where to find charts to practise on

Any chart will do. Newspapers and statistics offices publish them every day. Choose one with two to four lines or bars, so the four moves have something to choose between.

- **Cover the words around the chart,** including the headline. They often say why a number changed, and your report must not.
- **Write the four moves before you read any report on the chart.** Then compare your plan with the chart, not with someone else's answer.
- **Run the clock.** Use 3 / 14 / 3, then the ten questions.
- **Test the overview on a friend.** Ask them to sketch the chart from that sentence alone.

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Part 8 — The one-page method

Keep this page next to you while you practise.

The four moves

1. **What it is.** One sentence, in your own words.
2. **The overview.** What the whole picture says. No numbers.
3. **Feature one.** The biggest thing: figures and one comparison.
4. **Feature two.** The next thing, with what belongs to it.

Extend each by a sentence or two: 9 to 10 sentences, 150 to 180 words, three paragraphs.

3 / 14 / 3. Minutes 0–3 plan the four sentences. Minutes 3–17 write. Minutes 17–20 check.

Ten checks

Questions 1 to 5	Questions 6 to 10
☐ The overview shows the shape	☐ Every figure checked
☐ The overview has no numbers	☐ Each unit right, written once
☐ First sentence in my own words	☐ Tense fits the time frame
☐ Grouped, not in printed order	☐ Nothing the chart does not show
☐ A comparison in each paragraph	☐ At least 150 words

The trap. Do not describe the chart in the order it is printed. Decide the overview first.

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The end

You started this book with a chart and a list of numbers. You finish it with four moves. Say what the chart is. Say what the whole picture says, with no numbers. Pick the biggest thing in the data. Pick the second thing, and group the rest with one of the two. Four sentences, written in three minutes, are the plan.

The clock is 3 / 14 / 3: plan, write, check. The plan is extended into a report of 150 to 180 words, and the ten questions in Part 7 check it. None of this asks for new English. It asks for the same few decisions, made in the same order, on a new chart each time. That is a habit, and practice builds it.

About the charts and reports. Every chart, table and report in this book was invented for it. The task format, the word and time limits and the marking wording are from ielts.org and its public Writing band descriptors, checked when this edition was written. Rules like these get adjusted over time. Confirm the current ones with ielts.org before you rely on them.

Good luck with the test, and with whatever it is a step toward.

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