Change Over Time: IELTS Academic Task 1

Task Instructions

The IELTS Change over Time task is designed to test your ability to explain information during different time periods shown in a **line graph, bar graph, pie chart, table, process diagram, or map** (the last two tasks will be covered in a separate section)**.** You must present the information in your own words as complete sentences within paragraphs. You are required to write over 150 words, and the task should be completed in 20 minutes (both part 1 and 2 must be finished in 1 hour).

Questions:

1. How many words should you write?

2. How long should you take to write your essay?

3. Are there different time periods in this task?

Requires

1. Past tense
2. Verb and noun phrases to describe trends
3. Verbs and nouns to describe data levels
4. Prepositions for time and data

How to Improve

1. Do exercises to improve the grammar and vocabulary to complete this kind of task
2. Read sample questions and answers
3. Learn how to correctly structure a change over time task
4. Practice writing Change Over Time tasks
5. Receive feedback on practice tests
6. Use the feedback to improve your answers

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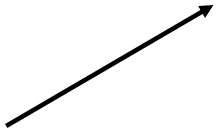
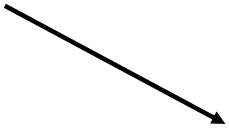
Vocabulary

- Learn vocabulary to describe numbers that are not precise (roughly, approximately, about, just under, just over)

- Use paraphrasing to avoid repetition (gives information about global sales = illustrates worldwide distribution)

- Build up lots of vocabulary to describe trends and comparisons

Describe the Trends below:

			
Nouns an increase a surge a rise A jump A leap **Verbs** increased surged rose soared rocketed	**Nouns** a decrease a decline A decrease A tumble a plunge **Verbs** decreased declined plunged tanked sunk	**Nouns** at a similar level a steady trend maintained stability a period of stability **Verbs** stabilized remained unchanged remained static maintained stability stayed the same	**Nouns** a fluctuation an oscillation **Verbs** Fluctuated oscillated

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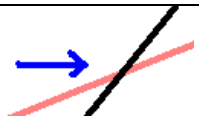
Describing specific points

Reached a peak (n) Peaked (v)	
Reached a low point (n) Reached a nadir (n)	
Was overtaken by (n) Overtook (v)	

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Sentence structure

For this task you should use the past tense and you should try to modify noun and verbs to improve the precision of your task, which will improve your TASK score as well as your VOCABULARY score.

For example:

was+ Adj+ noun *verb +adverb*

There was a slight increase…., ……. Increased slightly

Adjectives and adverbs according to the degree of change (biggest to smallest)

size Adjectives	**Time Adjectives**
A dramatic…	A sudden…
A Considerable…	A quick…
A steep	A rapid…
A Sharp…	A steady…
A Significant…	A gradual…
A Substantial…	A slow…
A Moderate…	
A Slight…	

Scale Adverbs	**Time Adverbs**
…dramatically	…suddenly
…considerably	…quickly
…sharply	…rapidly
…significantly	…steadily
…substantially	…gradually
…moderately	…slowly

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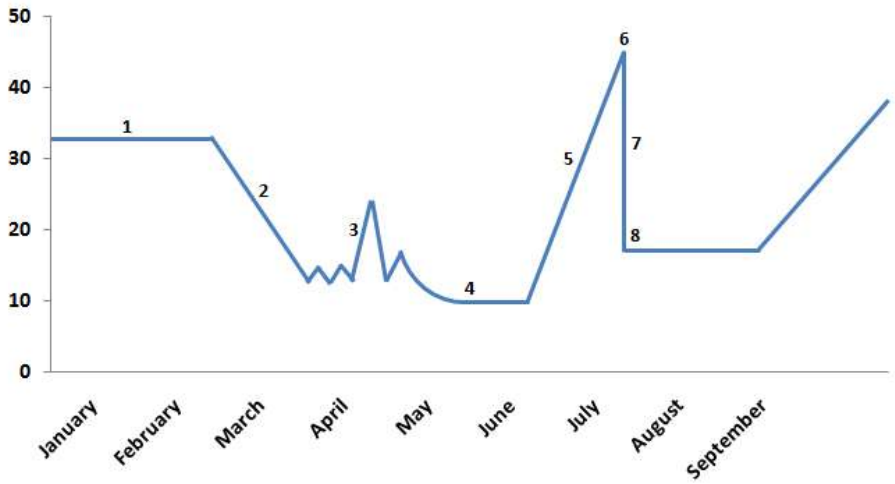
EXERCISE 1: describing trends

Every chart, apart from a pie chart, is made up of an x-axis (the horizontal line) and a y-axis (the vertical line). The x-axis often shows units of time (in hours, days, months, years, and decades) and the y-axis shows the changes that take place over that time. Although, you will usually have to write about events that happened in the past, occasionally you will have to write about the future.

The number of women studying IELTS at the Excel Night School in Sydney in 2006.

(units in 10s)



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Look at the line chart above and put the appropriate number next to each word or phrase shown in the table below. Each number may have more than one answer.

climbed steadily		fell	
increased		fell dramatically	
increased substantially		reached a peak	
rose		sharp fall	
rose slightly		trough	
declined		fluctuated	
dropped		levelled off	
dropped sharply		remained stable	**1**

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Prepositions for time and data

Time

from 1900 to 2000

during the period From 1900 to 2000

from 1940 onwards

in 1940

Numbers

use ' **amount** ' with things that cannot be counted but ' **number** ' with things that can be counted

increased from 1,000 to 2,000

increased by 1,000

reached a peak at 2,000

fell to its lowest point at 1,000

Exercise 2: Prepositions

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Language with numbers and percentages

When writing your report you must carefully identify whether the information that is given involves countable data (trees), uncountable data (water), or percentages (15%). This is because the language used with the three types is different. If you use the incorrect language the examiner will easily identify it and your vocabulary score will be lowered.

Countable numbers

The number of trees planted increased

Uncountable numbers

The amount of water used increased

Percentages

The percentage of water used increased

The proportion of water used increased

The rate of water usage increased

The water usage increased by 15%

The water usage increased by 15 per cent.

The water usage increased by 15 percent.

The water usage increased (to 15%).

Exercise 3: language with numbers and percentages

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Task 1: Changes over time

1. Read the question.

2. Underline key vocabulary in the question and write words with the same or related meaning

3. Identify the highlights of the task. There should be about 10 critical points that should be mentioned for each task)

4. Be clear about whether the data is about percentages or numbers.

    - For percentages you use: proportion, %, per cent, rate, one-third, two-thirds
    - For percentages you use: amount for uncountable nouns, number for countable nouns

5. Brainstorm key points for the answer

You can do this by circling key parts of the chart. Look at the following:

1. beginning numbers
2. ending numbers
3. highest point
4. lowest point
5. data series that overtake other ones (e.g. line chart where one line crosses over another line)

Look for:
Striking trends
Comparisons/similarities
Overall trends

6. Work out the overall summary. There should be 1 or 2 key points that must be mentioned

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7. Plan the structure for the answer

Paragraph 1: One sentence rephrasing the original question+ information from the axes.
Overall summary
Comparisons (er, est; more, most)

Paragraph 2: group 1 data (either a category or period of time)

Paragraph 3: group 2 data

[if required]

Paragraph 4: group 1 data (either a category or period of time)

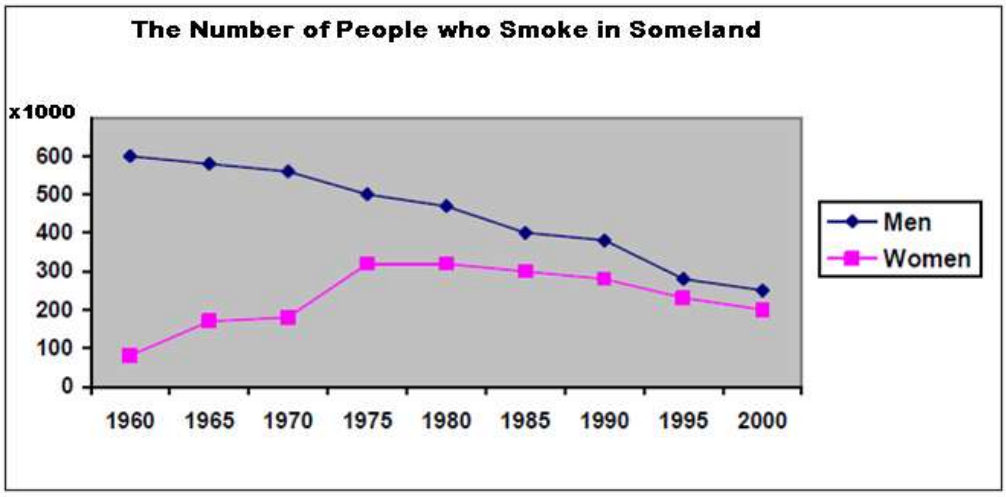
Paragraph 5: group 1 data (either a category or period of time)

8. Write the start of the introduction by paraphrasing the question/ information given in the chart

You are advised to spend a maximum of 20 minutes on this task.

The line chart below shows the number of men and women that smoke cigarettes in Australia.

You should write at least 150 words.



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The graph reveals statistics about female and male smokers in Australia between the years 1960 and 2000. Overall, the number of male smokers declined strongly, whereas the total number of female smokers rose slightly. In addition, there are always more male smokers than females.

The number of men who smoked in 1960 was approximately 600,000, but this decreased gradually to 500,000 by 1974. Subsequently, it continued to decrease but more steeply to 250,000 in 2000, which was the lowest point in the entire period surveyed.

In contrast, the popularity of smoking for females fluctuated throughout the period. In 1960 it was very low at only about 80,000. By 1968 this increased by about 100,000 to 170,000, and increased again but more steeply to reach a peak at 320,000 in 1977. The number of female smokers then dropped slightly to 200,000 by 2000. [142 words]

Task Analysis

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Notes about this task:

1. rephrases “shows”
2. rephrases men and women
3. **overall** sends a clear signal the examiner that here is your overall summary (necessary to score over 5 for the task completion score)

4 indicates which genders data you are describing. Since this task is arranged according to gender and not by the time period this information should come before the time period in the sentence.

9. Used to indicate the female data is quite different. If it followed a similar trend to the men you could use “Similarly” to start the sentence.
10. Must include the data at the start
11. A good idea to include this in the task somewhere to increase your score for task completion and also for vocabulary. Other include (low point, plateau, fluctuation, overtaking)
12. Must include the data at the end

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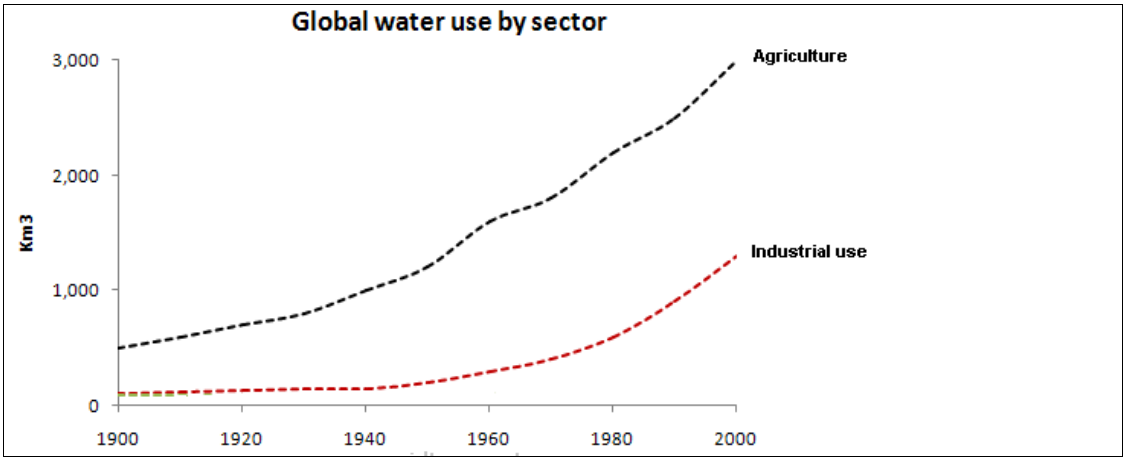
The graph below gives information about global water use.



Paragraph 1: One sentence rephrasing the original question+ information from the axes.

Paragraph 2: group 1 data (either a category or period of time)

Paragraph 3: group 2 data

Paragraph 4: Comparisons (er, est; more, most)

Paragraph 5: Overall trends

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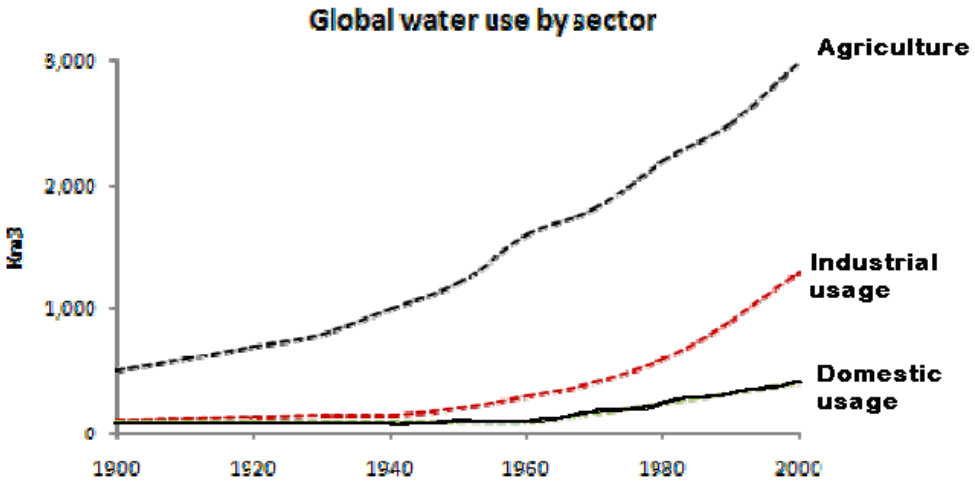
You should spend about 20 minutes on this task

The graph and table below give information about global water use and examples of the water usage of two different countries.

Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words.



Paragraph 1: Rephrase for line chart + Overall trends

Paragraph 2: agriculture

Paragraph 3: industrial usage

Paragraph 4: domestic usage

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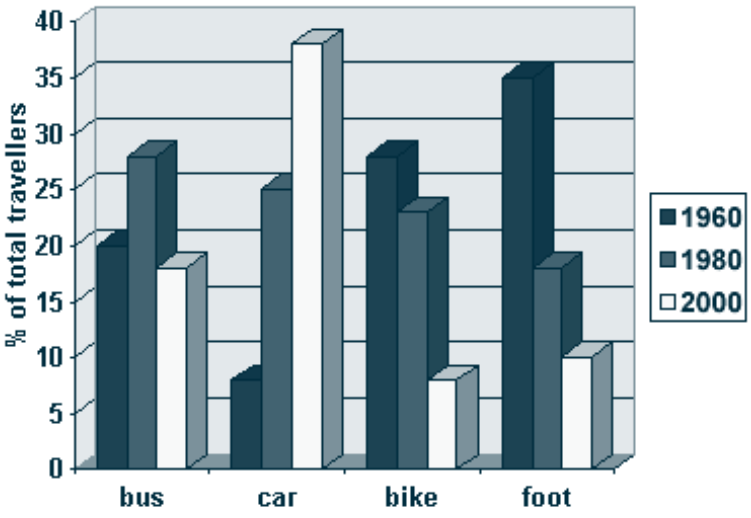
Homework: Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task

The graph below shows the different modes of transport used to travel to and from work in one European city in 1960, 1980 and 2000.

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

Write at least 150 words.



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COT: Common Errors with the Task

1. Rephrase categories

   Bus =

   Car = automobile

   Bike = bicycle, cycled

   Foot = walked, pedestrians

   different modes of transport = diverse types of transportation

   used to travel to and from work =commuted

   in one European city = a city in Europe

2. Categories need S: "Most people drove cars"
3. Transportation is uncountable
4. ~~A~~n Europe (it's a "y" sound)
5. During the ~~4~~ four decades
6. ~~Fewest~~ lowest proportion (use fewest with numbers)

topped out 或 peaked 表示「達到頂點後轉為下滑」（但不說 peaked out），反過來則是 bottomed out，即「跌至谷底，轉為上升」。

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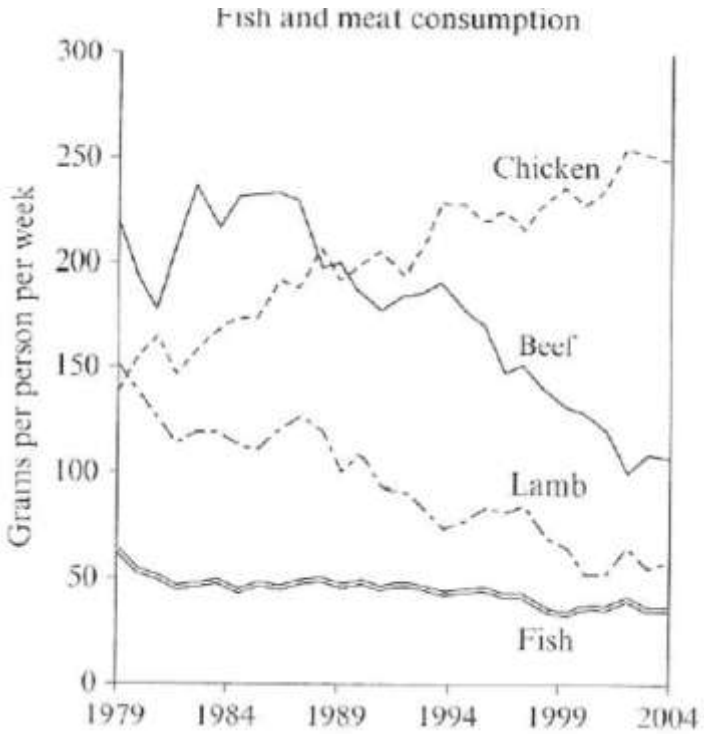

Beef and lamb showed a similar significantly downward trend throughout the period. Beef and lamb started at 220 and 150 grams, respectively. Beef sales peaked at about 240 grams in 1984, while Lamb reached a low point of about 55grams in 2000. By 2004 they plunged to approximately 120 and 60 grams, respectively.

(53 words)

See how much detail I packed into this paragraph!

Also, note how the two categories are combined.

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The table depicts data on the types of job status of non-Australian workers who had a paid position in Australia between 1992 and 2001. Overall, it can be clearly seen that temporary employees became more frequent than permanent ones.

Comment [z1]: DURATION is about how long (how many hours per day; or full tiem versus part-time)

Comment [z2]: This word is important. It is a signal word to the examiner who is looking for an overall sumamry of the task.

The fixed settlers' figures had a U-shaped evolution. In 1992, there were 40 thousand newcomers and this value had a steady decrease, hitting the bottom in 1994, with less than fifteen thousand workers. However, since then, there was a steady rise, reaching a bit more than 35,000 migrants in 2001.

Conversely, temporary jobs had a stable evolution from 1992 to 1996, with absolute migrant numbers oscillating close to 15,000. Nevertheless, after this period, the non-fixed jobs presented a dramatic increase, peaking in 2001 with 45,000 employees.

The year of 1997 represented the first time that temporary workers became more prevalent than their permanent counterparts, a scenario still true at the end of the survey.

Grade Criteria	Estimated Grade	Comments
Task response	7-8	You did the task really well. You covered all the key points. Well done for covering the peak, low point, and also where temporary workers

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		overtook the permanent ones.
Cohesion and coherence	7	Well structured. Ideally, the last paragraph could be included as the last sentence of the first paragraph, as it just seems to be 'hanging' there all alone. Still, it is better to have this sentence here than not write it at all.
Vocabulary	7-8	You did some effective rephrasing of "permanent/temporary employees" but try to get it in earlier. It's important to show this rephrase in the introduction because the examiner will be partly focused on checking for this in the introduction. Lots of trend language is used. Minor errors only
Grammar	7-8	A couple of errors with "the," but the main damage comes from "it is clearly seen" which needs to be "it can be clearly seen"
overall	7-7.5	I think if you fix "it is clearly seen" then I would be more likely to give an 8 for vocabulary and grammar. This is a very strong answer.

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