**Describing Graphs for The IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing**

What you need to do here is factually describe the graphs. You don't need to analyse the data, For example you don't need to give reasons for why figures are high or low. Sometimes, when there is more than 1 graph, there is a relationship between the two and you can bring in some comparison but more than this is not necessary. In the same way, no specialised knowledge of your own is needed or wanted nor your opinions.

Remember the function of many graphs is to describe a trend so be sure that you describe the trends. A trend is how values change generally over time and it is important to describe the changes along with some of the individual values. We will look at trends a bit later under line graphs.

One important issue with The IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing is how much detail to include in your report. This depends really on how much detail there is in the question. If there is only 1 graph and it doesn't have much numerical data in it, then you will be expected to include all or nearly all of the numerical detail. If, however, you have 2 graphs, both of which are very complicated with lots of values, you will not be expected to include everything as you only have 150 words to do the job. What you will have to do is to include a selection of what you feel is the most important and significant detail that needs to be included to accurately describe the graph. With practice from good [IELTS practice tests](http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/index.html), you will improve at including all the necessary detail with the right amount of words.

You must always have some numerical detail though.

Now let's look individually at the types of graph that you are likely to meet in the exam and how to describe them.

**Bar Charts for The IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing**

Hopefully you will have described the title of the bar chart in your introduction so you can go straight into the description. Basically, with a bar chart, you need to describe the bars and their values. When describing a bar chart you first have to decide in what order to describe the bars, highest value to lowest value or lowest value to highest value. It may be a mixture of this. If there are very many bars, you can sometimes group together for description 1 or 2 or 3 bars which have similar or the same values. If there are very many and you can't group them, then just describe the ones that are the most significant.

**Pie Charts for The IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing**

Pie charts are relatively straightforward as they only usually have a few sections though this is not always the case. You need to describe the segments and their values. If there are very many then just describe the ones that are the most significant. The values are often expressed in percentages but not always so be careful what scale you are using.

**Tables for The IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing**

These can sometimes be tricky as they provide a lot of information and it is often awkward and difficult to describe every piece of information. You have to decide and describe the values and sections that are the most significant.

**Line Graphs for The IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing**

The function of a line graph is to describe a TREND pictorially. You therefore should try and describe the trend in it. If there are many lines in the graph(s), then just generally describe the trend. If there is only one or two, then use more detail. So, describe the movement of the line(s) of the graph giving numerical detail at the important points of the line.

To describe the movement, there is some language which will always be useful. Below is a list of language you can use. Check with your dictionary words that you don't understand and practice using the words/phrases so you use them in the right way. As you will see, there are a number of words which are similar in meaning. This means that you will be able to use a variety of vocabulary which gives a good impression to the examiner who will read and mark your writing. The words below are particularly useful for line graphs but they can also be used where appropriate to describe the other types of graph.

**Expressing the Movement of a Line**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Verbs | Nouns |
|  |  |
| Rise (to) | a rise |
| Increase (to) | an increase |
| Go up to |  |
| Grow (to) | growth |
| Climb (to) | a climb |
| Boom | a boom |
| Peak (at) | (reach) a peak (at) |
|  |  |
| Fall (to) | a fall (of) |
| Decline (to) | a decline (of) |
| Decrease (to) | a decrease (of) |
| Dip (to) | a dip (of) |
| Drop (to) | a drop (of) |
| Go down (to) |  |
| Reduce (to) | a reduction (of) |
|  | A slump |
|  |  |
| Level out | a leveling out |
| No change | no change |
| Remain stable (at) |  |
| Remain steady (at) |  |
| Stay (at) |  |
| Stay constant (at) |  |
| Maintain the same level |  |
|  |  |
| Adjectives | Adverbs |
|  |  |
| Dramatic | dramatically |
| Sharp | sharply |
| Huge | hugely |
| Enormous | enormously |
| Steep | steeply |
| Substantial | substantially |
| Considerable | considerably |
| Significant | significantly |
| Marked | markedly |
| Moderate | moderately |
| Slight | slightly |
| Small |  |
| Minimal | minimally |
|  |  |
| **Describing the Speed of a Change** | |
|  |  |
| Adjectives | Adverbs |
|  |  |
| Rapid | rapidly |
| Quick | quickly |
| Swift | swiftly |
| Sudden | suddenly |
| Steady | steadily |
| Gradual | gradually |
| Slow | slowly |

**The Ending for the IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing**

You do not need a long and analytical conclusion for The IELTS Academic Task 1 Writing, but I do feel that you need to write something to end the report for reasons of structure. All you need to do is to write:

***This ends my report.***

This is all you need to end your Task 1; I think it's important to do this as it rounds off the report for the reader.

**Ideas to Think About for the IELTS Academic Task 2 Writing**

**1 Timing**

The exam paper recommends that you spend about 40 minutes on this question and this is about right. Remember that Task 2 gives more to your final writing band and so you should make sure that you have enough time after Task 1 to properly answer Task 2. Some students do Task 2 first in order to make sure that Task 2 is answered well before they get onto Task 1. There is no problem with this but make sure you write the 150 words to give a good answer for Task 1 as well.

So, whatever you decide to do about your approach to Task 1 and Task 2 in the writing paper, make sure that you spend approximately 20 minutes on Task 1 and 40 minutes on Task 2. This should give you the right amount of time to provide good answers to both tasks.

Practice from [IELTS practice tests](http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/index.html) on writing both tasks in under an hour is an important part of your preparation for the IELTS exam.

**2 Answering the question.**

Although this sounds very straightforward, people don't often properly answer the question set and therefore don't get the band that they should even if the writing is very good.

First of all read the question very carefully in order to see exactly what it asks you. Very often there will be more than 1 part to the question; sometimes even 3 or 4 parts. When you produce your answer you must answer all the different parts of the question. How much you produce on each part depends on how important you think it is.

You have to write a formal academic English essay of the type that would be required for teachers or tertiary education courses. Formulate and develop an argument and show a personal response. Give your opinions and back them up with evidence and examples. Your answer should persuade, be consistent and develop logically towards a conclusion, which answers all parts of the question.

Another important basic is to write at least 250 words. Writing less does not answer the question, which tells you to write at least 250 words. If you write less than 250 words, the examiner marking your paper will give you a maximum of 5 for Arguments, Ideas and Evidence or even less. It is no problem to write more than the 250 words; there is no upward word limit on the essay. Time is your only constraint. Writing more than the minimum under the time limit requires practice on proper questions from [IELTS practice tests](http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/index.html).

The question wants you to produce an essay. Therefore don't give a list of numbered notes (your paragraphs should not be numbered). Give the examiner a proper essay with an introduction, a main body with your ideas and evidence and a conclusion, all divided of course with the paragraphing techniques discussed above.

**3 Planning**

Many students that I have taught have regarded writing an essay plan as a waste of time. The only answer I can give is that it depends on the individual. If you are a good essay writer who can automatically organize your ideas and structure in your head so well that you can produce a good structured essay without planning, then I say that's it's fine not to write an essay plan.

Also if you're really short of time and you need to get writing on page, then you don't want to waste time on planning. However, if none of these conditions apply, then 1 or 2 minutes thinking about your ideas and how you are going to present them will not be wasted. I'm not saying that you should spend 10 minutes on this. Just take a scrap of paper and jot down some ideas that you are going to use in your essay.

Then you can divide the ideas into 3 or 4 paragraphs in a logical order. This shouldn't take you long and the structure that this will give your essay will be well worth the time that you spend doing it.

The above skills do not come easily and it is important that you practice planning with proper IELTS writing questions from [IELTS practice tests](http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/index.html).

**Writing The Essay in the IELTS Academic Task 2 Writing**

**1 The Introduction**

First of all, don't repeat any part of the question in your introduction. This is not your own work and therefore will be disregarded by the examiner and deducted from the word count. You can use individual words but be careful of using "chunks" of the question text.

Your introduction should first say what you understand by the question. Then give the main issue or issues that you intend to bring into your answer. Don't go into any detail; you can save that for the later paragraphs.

Finally, the question often asks you to take up a position over an issue. There is no right answer for putting your views at the start and then explaining this through the essay, or developing your opinion though your essay and stating your final stance at the end. I personally like the opinion at the start of the essay. Quickly and clearly answer the question, making your attitude plain. Don't give any reasons. Again, that's what the body of your essay is for. You don't have to do it this way though. You can wait until your conclusion to give your position as regards the question.

**2 The Body of Your Essay**

You should aim to have 3 or 4 paragraphs in your answer. This is not exact. You can write more or fewer paragraphs, as your answer requires. Remember you've only got about 40 minutes to cover all the question areas so don't be too ambitious and try to write too much.

In the body of your essay you should do several things. You need to examine all parts of the question. Remember there is often more than 1 question contained in the essay question text. You need to look at all that is asked and look at both sides of every issue. IELTS essay questions usually ask you something which has two or more points of view, and you need to consider both sides of every argument no matter what your opinion is.

Look below at the example. The question asks whether or not you believe whether societies should use capital punishment. There are, of course, two points of view:

(1) capital punishment should be used and

(2) capital punishment shouldn't be used.

Let's say for example that you don't believe that capital punishment should be used by societies. No matter what point of view you have, you should look at both sides, though naturally your writing will favour the position that you have taken. Give the reasons why you don't believe in capital punishment but then look at the opposing view and say why you don't accept it. In this way you will show the reader your powers of analysis when looking at such an issue.

Don't forget that when you have finished looking at this issue there is a second part of the question to be analysed too.

As we said earlier, your ideas need to be supported by examples and it is in the body of your essay that they should appear. For every idea that you present try and give an example from your own experience that shows that your idea is right.

An example from your own experience means something that you know from your life, from your country's news or history or anything that you have read anywhere. You can actually invent examples if you need as long as they seem realistic and believable. The examiner is probably not going to research anything you write about.

The example below should illustrate what we have been discussing here.

**3 The Conclusion**

This doesn't need to be a long paragraph. You need to sum up your points providing a final perspective on your topic. All the conclusion needs is three or four strong sentences, which do not need to follow any set formula. Simply review the main points (being careful not to restate them exactly or repeat all your examples) and briefly describe your feelings about the topic; this provides an answer to all parts of the question. An anecdote can also end your essay in a useful way.

**An Example of the IELTS Academic Task 2 Writing**

It's very difficult to visualize and understand all the things that I have said above. You need to practice with good quality questions from [IELTS practice tests](http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/index.html). Here I will try and provide you with an example question and then go through the stages of thought to show you how to approach an IELTS Task 2 essay.

Here is a possible question that would be typical for a Task 2 essay question.

***"Do you believe that societies ought to enforce capital punishment or Are there alternative forms of punishment that would be better used?"***

First of all you need to consider the question. What does it ask? Straight away, you can see that it asks 2 things.

It wants to know if you believe that society should use capital punishment (cp) and it also wants to know if you can offer any alternatives to capital punishment. Your answer should give a balanced view of both parts of this question. What is important to realize is that there is no correct answer here. You can present any point of view as long as you can support it.

So, in your planning stage you should have a roadmap for the introduction, each paragraph and the conclusion. Here is my brief plan for the essay.

**Intro**

* What cp is. Where it's used. (not my country). Differing opinions.
* I don't believe in cp.
* There are alternative punishments.

**Body**

1. Inhumane - we shouldn't sink to the level of criminals.
2. We can get convictions wrong; prisoners can be released if there's an error. Mentally ill.  Examples.
3. Alternative punishments: life means life; hospitals for criminally insane. Costs more but society has a duty to care.
4. Many countries favour it and they say it works. Prisons too full. Killers deserve nothing less. Some crimes deserve it. Not my morals though.

**Conclusion**

I don't agree. We can do other things. Avoid mistakes and make modern society a humane one.

The above is a basic plan of how I want to write my essay. It's not rigid. I can change my ideas and format as I write if I feel I can do better.

I can also add things that I've forgotten as the essay goes on. It's normal of course for you to have new, good ideas as you write and the skill is to get them into your essay without upsetting the balance of the essay. How do you do this? It's practice again. You won't get good at writing essays and adapting your writing well without practice with relevant questions from quality [IELTS practice tests](http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/index.html).

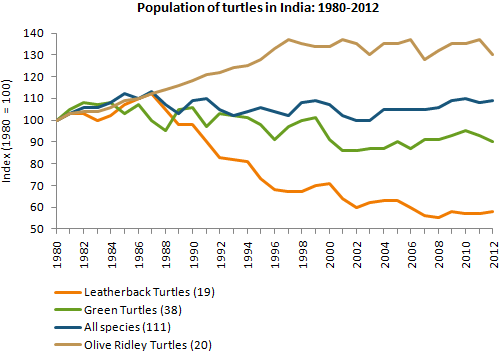
So, below is an example essay using the plan above as a basis.

**Assignment**

Please choose either sample #1 or #2 and write at least 150 words

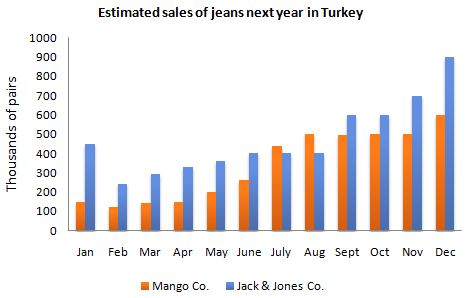
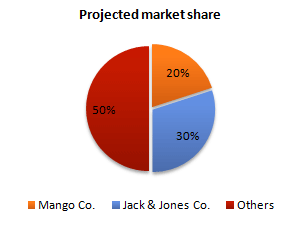
* 1. **The graph below shows the population figures of different types of turtles in India between 1980 and 2012.  
       
     Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.**

Write at least 150 words.



* 1. **The bar chart below shows the estimated sales of jeans for two companies next year in Turkey. The pie chart shows the projected market share of the two companies in jeans at the end of next year.  
       
     Write a short report for a university lecturer describing the information shown below.**

Write at least 150 words.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_