LR (Lexical Resource)

IELTS Writing Task 1
Structure

Write at least **150 words** and aim to finish within approximately **20 minutes**.

1 Paragraph 1 Introduction

Paraphrase the question by stating what the visual shows, where relevant, and the time period.

2 Paragraph 2 Overview

Summarise the two or three most important features, such as the overall trend, highest or lowest category, or major differences.

3 Paragraph 3 Body 1

Describe and compare the first group of important data.

4 Paragraph 4 Body 2

Describe the remaining important data, including significant comparisons and changes.

Important: A separate conclusion is not necessary for Academic Task 1.
The **overview** is essential and should not be replaced by a conclusion.
Four paragraphs are a useful default structure, although three paragraphs can also work.

IELTS Writing Task 1

Introduction: Vocabulary and Sentence Structure

The introduction should paraphrase the question without copying it word for word.

Starting Phrases

- **The chart** illustrates ...
- **The graph** shows ...
- **The table** presents ...
- **The diagram** depicts ...
- **The line graph** compares ...
- **The bar chart** provides information about ...
- **The pie charts** illustrate ...
- **The maps** show ...
- **The process** diagram explains ...

> You can use the phrases directly.
>
> Words such as ***given***, ***provided***, ***presented*** and ***supplied*** are optional.

Useful Vocabulary & Sentence Structure

Key Vocabulary

illustrates	highlights
shows	features
compares	demonstrates
displays	reveals
presents	gives information about
indicates	depicts

Useful Sentence Structures

- **The chart illustrates** the changes in ... over a period of ... .
- **The graph shows** the comparison between ... and ... .
- **The table presents** information about ... in ... .
- **The diagram depicts** how ... works.
- **The bar chart provides** information about ... .
- **The pie charts illustrate** the proportions of ... .
- **The maps show** the location of ... .
- **The process diagram explains** the stages in ... .

IELTS Writing Task 1

Useful Verbs for Introductions

Choose verbs that accurately describe the visual.
You do not need to use an unusual synonym to achieve a high score.

Verb	Example
Shows	The graph **shows** changes in population.
Illustrates	The chart **illustrates** the percentage of graduates.
Compares	The table **compares** expenditure in four countries.
Presents	The diagram **presents** information on employment.
Depicts	The graph **depicts** trends in oil consumption.
Provides	The chart **provides** data on household spending.
Indicates	The table **indicates** differences in sales.
Summarises	The graph **summarises** changes in transport use.

IELTS Writing Task 1
What + Where + When

A useful introduction formula is:

The + visual + verb + what + where + when.

Example:

"The **line graph illustrates** changes in **the proportion of people using public transport** in **three Australian cities between 2000 and 2020.**"

In this example:

What?	Where?	When?
the proportion of people using public transport	three Australian cities	between 2000 and 2020

Remember: Include only the details supplied by the question. Do not add any extra information.

IELTS Writing Task 1
Introducing Multiple Visuals

Key Point Use **while** to **distinguish** between two **visuals.**

Examples

- The bar chart compares household expenditure in four countries, **while** the table presents their average incomes.
- The two pie charts illustrate changes in energy consumption, **while** the line graph shows the trend in carbon emissions.
- The maps depict changes in the layout of a town between 1990 and 2020.

More Examples

- The table shows the number of students, **while** the chart presents their age groups.
- The bar chart illustrates the percentage of people in different age groups, **while** the line graph shows the change over time.
- The pie chart compares the sources of energy, **while** the map shows the location of power plants.

Grammar Rule

With a singular subject, use a singular verb.

- One chart **shows** the data.
- Two charts **show** the data.

IELTS Writing Task 1

Overview: General Trend Vocabulary

The overview identifies the most noticeable features of the visual.
It should normally contain one or two sentences.

Useful Opening Phrases

- **Overall,** it is clear that …
- **In general,** …
- **Generally speaking,** …
- A **glance** at the chart reveals that …
- The **most noticeable feature** is that …
- It is **apparent** that …
- It is **evident** that …
- **The main feature** is that …

Avoid These

Avoid unnatural expressions such as:

- **"as it is observed,"**
- **"as an overall trend,"**
- **"at the onset"**
- **"it is crystal clear."**

These are unnecessary in formal IELTS reports.

Remember: The overview should be brief, **clear** and **focused** on the key features of the visual, using natural and formal language.

IELTS Writing Task 1
What to Include in an Overview

The overview should summarise the most important features of the visual.
It should be one or two sentences, not a list of details.

Key Points to Include

- The **overall increase** or **decrease**.
- The **highest** and **lowest** categories.
- The **most significant difference** between groups.
- The categories that **remained stable**.
- The **major change** or **dominant feature**.
- The **main stages or differences** in a process or maps, where relevant.

Examples

Good overview (summary, **not detailed numbers**)

"Overall, car use **increased** throughout the period, whereas bicycle use **declined**. Cars **remained** the **most popular** mode of transport."

Weak overview (too much detail)

"Overall, car use increased from **40% to 65%**, while bicycle use decreased from 30% **to 15%**."

Remember: Focus on the big picture. Save the precise figures and detailed data for the body paragraphs.

IELTS Writing Task 1

Body Paragraphs: Starting the Report

Start a new paragraph after the introduction and overview.
Group related data logically rather than describing every figure in order.

Useful Linking Phrases

Phrase	Purpose
Regarding …	Introduce a category
Turning to …	Move to another category
In terms of …	Focus on a specific measure
As for …	Introduce another subject
According to the chart, …	Refer to the visual
Meanwhile, …	Describe a simultaneous feature
By contrast, …	Highlight a difference
Similarly, …	Show a similarity
In comparison, …	Compare two figures
Whereas …	Contrast two clauses
Respectively	Match figures to previously named items

Example Sentences

- **Turning to** car ownership, the figure rose steadily over the period.
- **In terms of** expenditure, food accounted for the largest share.
- **By contrast,** spending on clothing declined.
- **Similarly,** the two countries showed a similar trend in the final years.
- **In comparison,** the level of urbanisation was higher in country A than in country B.
- **Whereas** sales increased in the first half, they fell in the second half.
- France and Germany recorded 40% and 35%, respectively.

Remember: Avoid starting every sentence with phrases such as “As can be seen in the graph” or “It is clear that.” These expressions can make your report repetitive.

IELTS Vocabulary for Changes and Trends

A. Increase

Verb	Noun
Rise	A rise
Increase	An increase
Grow	Growth
Climb	A climb
Jump	A jump
Surge	A surge
Soar	A surge / a sharp rise
Rocket	A dramatic rise

Examples:

- Sales **rose** steadily during the period.
- There was a gradual **increase** in sales.
- The figure **surged** towards the end of the year.

IELTS Vocabulary for Changes and Trends

B. Decrease

Verb	Noun
Fall	A fall
Decrease	A decrease
Decline	A decline
Drop	A drop
Dip	A dip
Plunge	A plunge
Plummet	A sharp fall
Reduce	A reduction

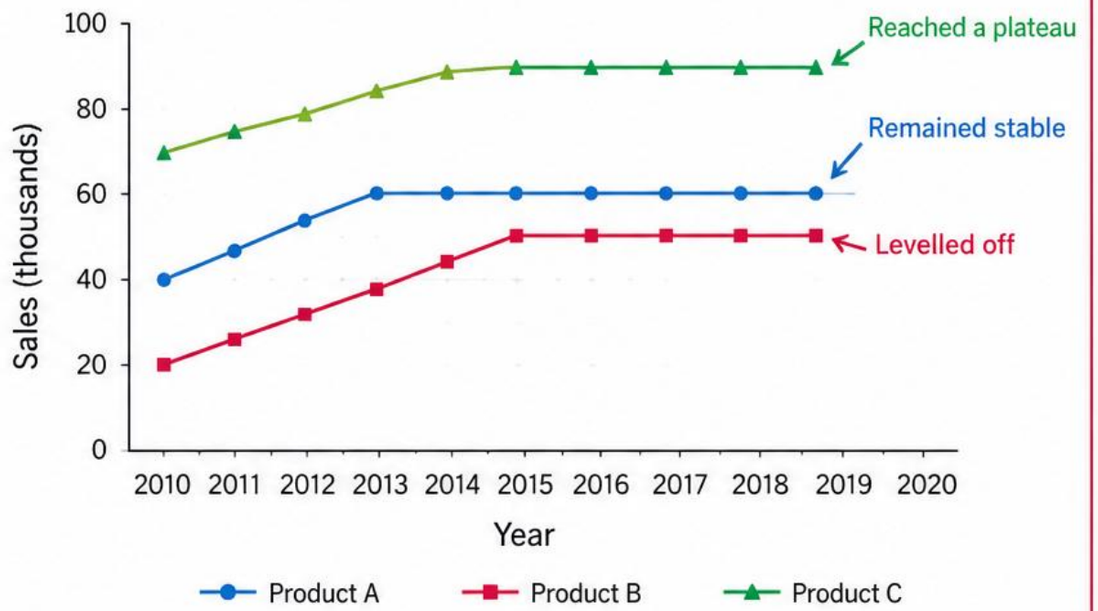
Examples:

- The unemployment rate **fell** sharply.
- There was a significant **decline** in sales.
- The figure **plummeted** in the final year.

Remember: Use **plummet, plunge** and **soar** only when the data shows a particularly dramatic change.

C. Stability and no change

Verb phrase	Noun phrase
Remain stable	Stability
Remain constant	No change
Remain unchanged	Stability / no change
Level off	A levelling-off
Plateau	A plateau
Stay the same	No change
Stabilise	Stabilisation

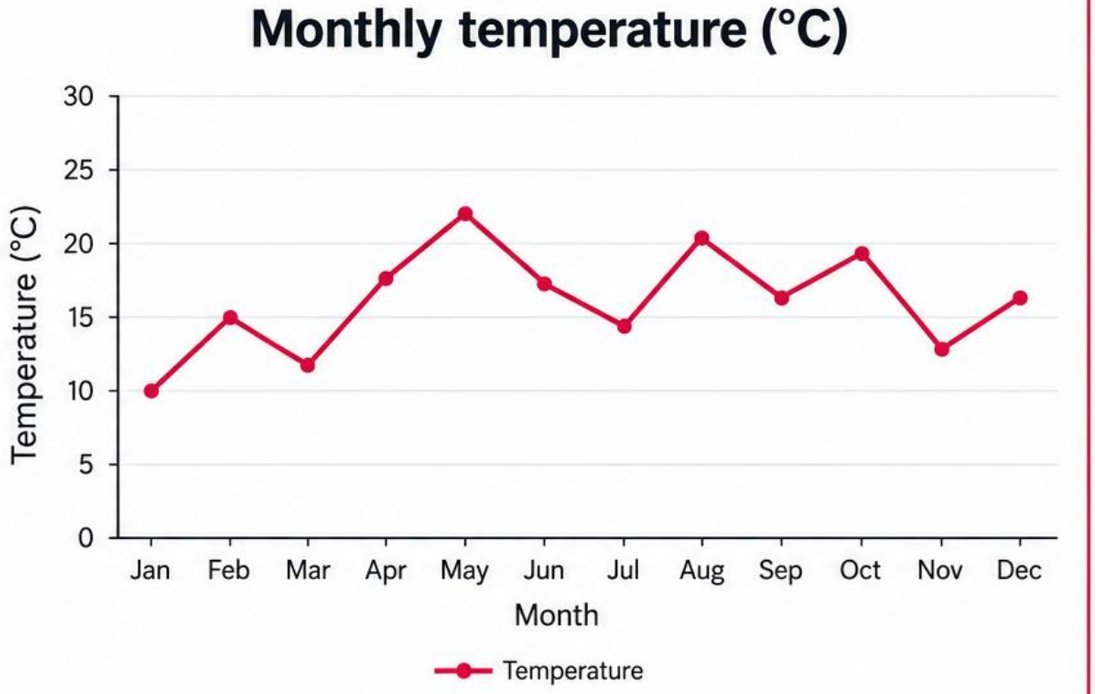


Examples:

- The figure **remained stable** throughout the period.
- Sales **levelled off** after 2015.
- The rate reached a plateau in the final years.

D. Fluctuation

Verb phrase	Noun phrase
Fluctuate	Fluctuation
Vary	Variation
Rise and fall	Rise and fall
Experience fluctuations	Fluctuations
Show considerable variation	Variation

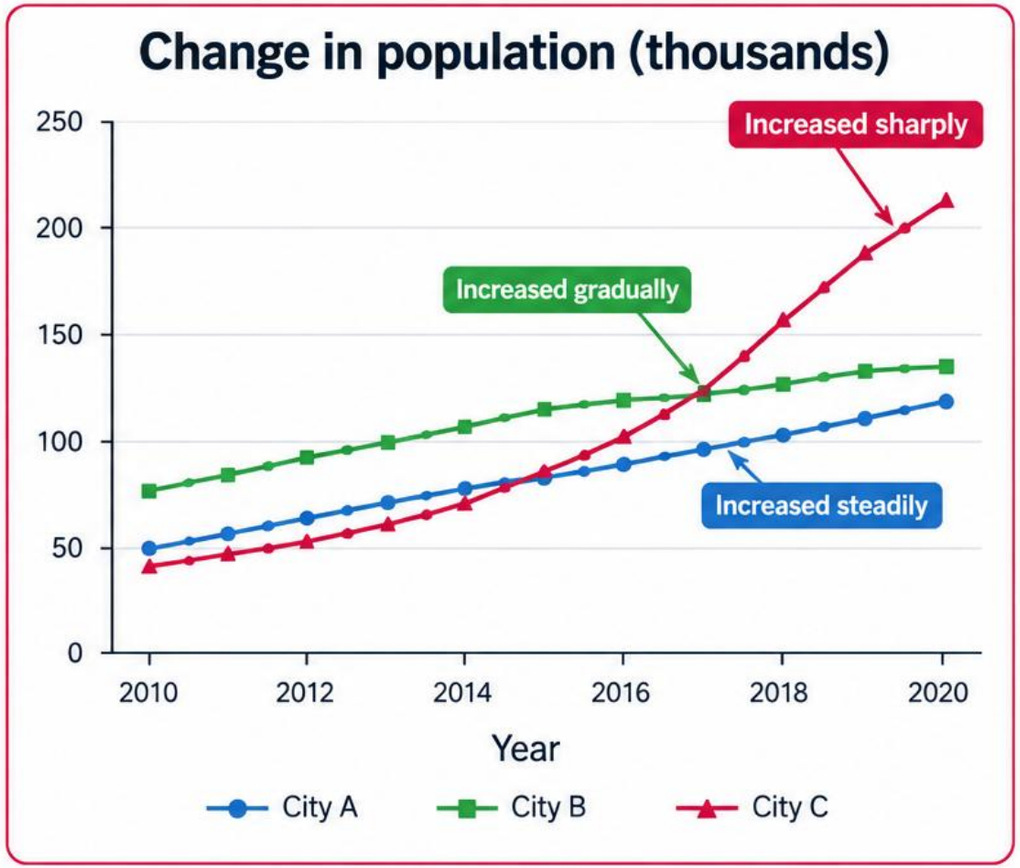


Examples:

- Oil prices **fluctuated** considerably over the period.
- The figure experienced several fluctuations before rising again.

E. Gradual and dramatic changes

Degree	Adjectives	Adverbs
Small	Slight, modest	Slightly, modestly
Gradual	Gradual	Gradually
Steady	Steady	Steadily
Moderate	Moderate	Moderately
Large	Significant, considerable	Significantly, considerably
Fast	Rapid	Rapidly
Dramatic	Sharp, steep, dramatic	Sharply, steeply, dramatically



Grammar reminder:

- **Adjective + noun:** a sharp increase.
- **Verb + adverb:** increased sharply.

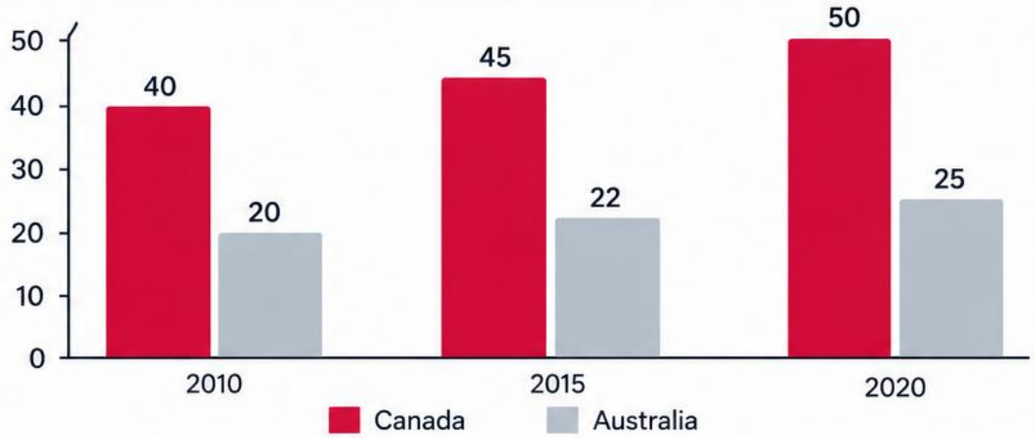
Comparing Data

Useful comparison phrases

- Higher than / lower than
- Greater than / smaller than
- More than / fewer than / less than
- Twice as high as
- Three times as much as
- Similar to
- Almost identical to
- In contrast to
- Compared with
- Whereas / while

Example: Comparing two countries

The number of students (in thousands) in two countries



Examples:

- The figure for Canada was **twice as high as** that for Australia.
- Spending on housing was considerably **greater than** spending on entertainment.
- The two countries recorded **almost identical** figures.
- **While** the number of male graduates increased, the number of female graduates remained stable.

Common mistake:

Use **fewer** with countable plural nouns (fewer cars) and **less** with uncountable nouns (**less** money).

Tenses for Task 1

Time shown	Tense	Example
A completed past period	**Past simple**	Sales increased between 2000 and 2010.
No time specified or a present fact	**Present simple**	The chart shows four categories.
Past changes continuing to the present	**Present perfect**	Sales have increased since 2020.
Future projections	**Future forms**	The figure is expected to rise by 2035.
Completed change by a future deadline	**Future perfect**	The population will have doubled by 2050.

Always check the dates in the question before selecting your tense.

Trends
Percentages

1. Vocabulary for the Speed and Degree of Change

Use adjectives before nouns and adverbs after verbs to describe how quickly or significantly a figure changes.

Type of change	Adjective + noun	Verb + adverb
Dramatic	A dramatic increase	Increased dramatically
Rapid	A rapid rise	Rose rapidly
Sharp	A sharp decline	Declined sharply
Significant	A significant change	Changed significantly
Considerable	A considerable fall	Fell considerably
Moderate	A moderate increase	Increased moderately
Gradual	A gradual rise	Rose gradually
Steady	A steady growth	Grew steadily
Slight	A slight decrease	Decreased slightly
Marginal	A marginal difference	Differed marginally

Examples

- Inflation increased sharply in 2008.
- There was a sharp drop in industrial production in 2009.
- Demand for new houses rose dramatically in 2002.
- Oil prices increased moderately, while the cost of everyday goods rose considerably.

Important: Choose vocabulary that matches the actual data.

Avoid words such as hurriedly, tediously, and ceaselessly when describing ordinary graph trends; they are generally unnatural in IELTS reports.

2. Vocabulary for Fluctuations

Use these expressions when a graph repeatedly rises and falls.

Verb	Noun	Example
Fluctuate	Fluctuation	Prices fluctuated throughout the year.
Oscillate	Oscillation	The figures oscillated between two levels.
Vary	Variation	The results varied considerably.
Rise and fall	Fluctuations	The figures experienced several fluctuations.

Useful phrases:

- Fluctuated considerably
- Experienced frequent fluctuations
- Showed an irregular pattern
- Rose and fell repeatedly
- Varied throughout the period
- Fluctuated within a narrow range

Example: The price of oil fluctuated considerably during the first half of 2017 before stabilising.

Avoid using palpitate for graph data. It usually describes a rapid or irregular heartbeat, not changes in production, prices, or passenger numbers.

3. Vocabulary for the Size of Differences

Degree	Adjective	Adverb
Very large	Enormous, substantial	Enormously, substantially
Large	Significant, considerable	Significantly, considerably
Moderate	Moderate, noticeable	Moderately, noticeably
Small	Slight, marginal	Slightly, marginally
Very small	Minimal, negligible	Minimally, negligibly

Examples:

- There was a substantial difference between the two groups.
- The figure increased significantly over the period.
- The two categories differed only marginally.
- The percentage remained almost unchanged.

Grammar note: Somewhat is an adverb, not an adjective. Write “somewhat higher,” not “a somewhat increase.”

4. Vocabulary for Dates and Time Periods

Purpose	Useful expressions
Starting and ending years	From 1990 to 2000; between 1995 and 2005
A specific year	In 1998; by 1995
Months	In February; during March
A period	Over the period; throughout the period
Parts of a year	In the first half of the year; in the final quarter
Decades	In the 1980s; during the 1990s
Approximate decades	In the mid-1970s; in the late 1980s
Duration	Over a ten-year period; within five years
Sequence	Initially; subsequently; thereafter; finally
Future projections	By 2030; over the following decade

Important differences

- From 1990 to 2000: identifies the beginning and ending points.
- Between 1990 and 2000: also identifies a time range.
- By 2000: indicates a value reached at or before that deadline.
- Since 1990: describes a period extending from 1990 to a later reference point.
- During 1990: refers to the year itself.

Write the 1980s, not “the 80s,” in formal academic writing when clarity is important.

5. Percentages, Fractions and Proportions

A. Useful percentage expressions

Figure	Expression		
4%	A very small proportion	49%	Just under half
16%	Approximately one-sixth	50%	Exactly half
24%	Almost a quarter	51%	Just over half
25%	Exactly one-quarter	73%	Nearly three-quarters
26%	Just over a quarter	77%	Just over three-quarters
32%	Nearly one-third	79%	Nearly four-fifths
		89%	Almost nine-tenths

These fractions are approximate where indicated. Choose the closest accurate expression for the figure.

B. Describing changes in percentages

- Increased by 15 percentage points.
- Rose from 30% to 45%.
- Fell by 10 percentage points.
- Declined from 60% to 50%.
- Doubled from 20 to 40.
- Halved from 80 to 40.

Crucial distinction: percentage vs percentage points

If a rate rises from 30% to 45%, it increases by 15 percentage points, or 50% relative to its original value.

Avoid vague expressions such as “double fold” and potentially ambiguous comparisons such as “three times lower.” Instead, state the original and final values or say “fell to one-third of its original level.”

6. Vocabulary for Approximation

Use approximation when the graph does not require an exact figure or when the value is estimated visually.

- Approximately
- Nearly
- Roughly
- Almost
- About
- Around
- More or less
- Just over
- Just under
- Slightly above
- Slightly below
- A little more than
- A little less than

Examples:

- The figure stood at approximately 40%.
- Just over half of respondents preferred public transport.
- The rate was slightly below 25%.
- Around three-quarters of the population used the service.

Avoid combining approximations unnecessarily, such as “approximately around 40%.”

Highest/Lowest Points, Fluctuations and Multiples

1. Vocabulary for the Highest and Lowest Points

A. Highest point

Verb / phrase	Example
Peak at	Oil prices peaked at $120 in June.
Reach a peak of	Sales reached a peak of 2 million units.
Reach the highest point	The figure reached its highest point in 2015.
Hit a peak of	Production hit a peak of 50,000 tonnes.
Climb to a peak of	The number climbed to a peak of 80,000.
Reach a maximum of	The figure reached a maximum of 75%.

Useful nouns: a peak, the highest point, a maximum, a high, a peak level.

B. Lowest point

Verb / phrase	Example
Reach a low of	Sales reached a low of 10,000 units.
Fall to a low of	The figure fell to a low of 15%.
Hit a low of	Oil prices hit a low of $30 per barrel.
Reach the lowest point	The rate reached its lowest point in 2010.
Drop to a minimum of	Production dropped to a minimum of 500 tonnes.
Bottom out at	The figure bottomed out at 20% before rising again.

Useful nouns: a low, the lowest point, a minimum, a trough, a low point.

C. Example comparisons

- The price of oil peaked at $20 in February before falling to a low of $10 in July.
- Student enrolment rose dramatically, reaching a peak of over 20,000 in 2004.
- The highest number of books was sold in July, whereas the lowest sales occurred in December.
- Oil prices reached their highest level in 2003 and their lowest level in 2006.
- DVD sales peaked at two million copies per month before plunging to just 20,000.

Grammar tip: Use peak at for the value and peak in for the time.

- Correct: Sales peaked at 50,000 in June.
- Correct: Sales peaked in June.

Avoid expressions such as “reached the vertex,” “touched the lowest point,” or “reached the bottom” in ordinary graph reports. They are generally less natural than peaked at, reached a low, and fell to its lowest point.

2. Vocabulary for Fluctuations and Irregular Changes

Use these expressions when the figures repeatedly rise and fall.

Expression	Example
Fluctuate	Prices fluctuated throughout the year.
Rise and fall	The figures rose and fell over the period.
Fluctuate considerably	Oil prices fluctuated considerably between 2000 and 2010.
Vary irregularly	Production varied irregularly during the period.
Show erratic changes	The data showed erratic changes.
Experience frequent fluctuations	The market experienced frequent fluctuations.
Oscillate between	The rate oscillated between 20% and 30%.

Useful vocabulary:

- Erratic — unpredictable or irregular
- Sporadic — occurring occasionally and irregularly
- Intermittent — occurring at intervals, with breaks
- Fluctuating — repeatedly changing
- Stable — remaining relatively unchanged

Example: The number of passengers fluctuated throughout the day, with peaks during the morning and evening rush hours.

Note that sporadic and intermittent suggest irregular occurrence, so they should not be used as automatic synonyms for every rising and falling trend.

3. Dates, Months and Years: Grammar Rules

Expression	Usage	Example
From … to …	Beginning and ending points	Sales rose from 2000 to 2010.
Between … and …	Time range	Prices fluctuated between 1995 and 2005.
In + year/month	Years and months	Production increased in 2018.
On + day/date	Days and specific dates	The survey was conducted on 5 June.
During + period	An event or period	Sales declined during 2010.
By + time	A deadline or achieved value	By 2020, the figure had doubled.
Over the period	Changes across a period	The rate increased over the period.
Throughout + period	The whole period	Prices remained stable throughout the year.
Since + starting point	From the past until a reference point	Sales have risen since 2015.

Additional expressions:

- In the first half of the year
- In the final quarter
- Over the following decade
- During the previous five years
- Towards the end of the period
- At the beginning of the year
- In the mid-1980s
- Over a ten-year period

Important: Use between 1980 and 1990 or from 1980 to 1990. Do not write “between 1980 to 1990.”

4. Presenting Percentages, Proportions and Fractions

Percentages can be expressed in three main ways.

A. Percentages

- 20% = twenty per cent
- 45% = forty-five per cent
- 75% = seventy-five per cent

Example: The percentage of households owning cars stood at 75%.

B. Proportions

- 40% = two-fifths
- 25% = one-quarter
- 75% = three-quarters

Example: Two-fifths of households owned cars.

C. Fractions

- One-half = 50%
- One-third ≈ 33.3%
- One-quarter = 25%
- Two-thirds ≈ 66.7%

Example: Approximately one-third of respondents preferred cycling.

Grammar note: Use per cent or percent, not “25 percentage.” The word percentage is a noun used in expressions such as “the percentage of households.”

Also, use two out of five students, not “every student out of three,” when expressing a proportion.

5. Vocabulary for Comparing Multiples

Expression	Meaning	Example
Exactly the same	Equal values	Both categories recorded the same figure.
Roughly the same	Similar values	The two figures were roughly the same.
Twice as high as	Two times the comparison value	Sales were twice as high as in 2010.
Three times as much as	Three times the amount	Spending was three times as much as in 2005.
Four times the figure	Four times the original/comparison figure	The final figure was four times the initial figure.
Half as much as	50% of the comparison amount	Spending was half as much as in 2015.

For formal IELTS writing, twice, three times, four times, and half as much as are usually clearer than thrice or fourfold.

Be precise when comparing values: “three times as high as” means the value is three times the comparison value, not three times higher in addition to it.

6. Vocabulary for How Much a Value Changes

Change	Verb	Example
Decrease by 50%	Halve	The figure halved from 80 to 40.
Increase to twice the original value	Double	Sales doubled from 20,000 to 40,000.
Increase to three times the original value	Triple	Production tripled from 10 to 30 tonnes.
Increase to four times the original value	Quadruple	Output quadrupled from 5,000 to 20,000 units.
Increase fivefold	Increase fivefold	The figure increased fivefold from 2 to 10.
Increase tenfold	Increase tenfold	Production increased tenfold from 100 to 1,000 units.

Other mathematical terms include quintuple (five times), sextuple (six times), septuple (seven times), and octuple (eight times). However, these are rarely necessary in IELTS Task 1. Writing “increased sixfold” or stating the initial and final values is often more natural.

Important distinction:

- Doubled: increased to twice the original value.
- Increased by 50%: rose to 150% of the original value.
- Halved: decreased to 50% of the original value.

Comparisons, Linkers and Prepositions

1. Vocabulary for comparing quantities

Use these expressions to show whether figures are similar, slightly different or substantially different.

Purpose	Useful expressions	Example
Approximately equal	about, around, roughly, approximately	The figure was approximately 500.
Almost equal	nearly, almost, just about	Sales were almost equal in both years.
Slightly higher	just above, just over, marginally higher than	The figure was just over 500.
Slightly lower	just below, just under, marginally lower than	Sales were just below 500.
Much higher	well above, far higher than, considerably greater than	Male employment was well above female employment.
Much lower	well below, far lower than, considerably less than	The figure was well below the 2010 level.

Important corrections

- Use just over, not just bigger, to describe a numerical value.
- Use just below or just under, not just short on its own.
- Use well above or well beyond when appropriate; well across is not a standard expression for comparing numerical values.
- Use higher than for figures, levels and rates; use more than for quantities or amounts where appropriate.

Corrected examples

1. The number of female executives was well below the number of male executives in the organisation.
2. Approximately 1,000 people died in road accidents in 2003, well above the figures for all the other years.
3. Domestic violence cases stood at just below 500 in March, slightly higher than in the previous months.
4. London's average rainfall in 2014 was slightly higher than that of the other two cities.
5. Male executives' salaries were well above those of female executives in three of the four companies in 1998.

2. Expressions for focusing on a particular feature

Use these to introduce a category, country, period or data series in a body paragraph.

Expression	Example
Regarding…	Regarding car sales, the figure rose steadily.
With regard to…	With regard to energy use, coal remained the main source.
In the case of…	In the case of France, the rate declined.
As for…	As for the youngest age group, participation was relatively low.
Turning to…	Turning to the final decade, production increased sharply.
When it comes to…	When it comes to exports, China recorded the highest figure.
As far as … is concerned	As far as electricity consumption is concerned, the figure remained stable.

IELTS tip: “Turning to,” “Regarding,” and “In the case of” are particularly useful. “When it comes to” is grammatical, but can sound conversational, so use it sparingly in formal reports.

3. Comparison and contrast linkers

Showing similarity

- Similarly, — Similarly, the figure for France increased.
- Likewise, — Likewise, spending on transport rose.
- In the same way, — In the same way, both groups experienced a decline.
- Compared with… — Compared with 2010, sales were considerably higher in 2020.

Showing contrast

- However, — Sales increased in 2015. However, they fell the following year.
- In contrast, — In contrast, the figure for Germany declined.
- By comparison, — By comparison, the rate in Canada remained stable.
- Whereas / While — Sales rose in France, whereas they fell in Italy.
- Meanwhile, — Meanwhile, the proportion of older users remained unchanged.

Be careful with these distinctions:

- On the contrary corrects or rejects a previous statement; it is not a general substitute for “in contrast.”
- On the other hand introduces a contrasting point or perspective.
- Meanwhile usually connects events or trends occurring at the same time.
- Same as is generally used within a sentence, not as a formal sentence-opening linker. Prefer “Similarly” or “Likewise.”

4. Describing identical or similar figures

When values are equal

- identical to
- equal to
- exactly the same as
- the same as

Examples:

- The two countries recorded identical figures in 2015.
- The percentage for men was equal to that for women.
- The figures for both categories were exactly the same.

Note: Say equal to, not equal to with. “Identical to” is generally more natural than “identical with” in this context.

When values are close but not identical

- almost the same as
- nearly identical to
- broadly similar to
- approximately equal to
- about the same as

Example: The proportions of households using gas and electricity were roughly the same in 2020.

When trends move in opposite directions

- Conversely, ...
- In contrast, ...
- The opposite trend was observed in...
- While X increased, Y declined.

Example: Car ownership rose steadily in urban areas. Conversely, it declined slightly in rural areas.

5. Comparative and superlative forms

Comparatives compare two things; superlatives identify the highest or lowest within a group.

Adjective type	Comparative	Superlative
Most one-syllable adjectives	higher, cheaper, larger	highest, cheapest, largest
Adjectives ending in consonant + y	happier, easier	happiest, easiest
Many longer adjectives	more expensive, more significant	most expensive, most significant
Irregular forms	better, worse, farther/further	best, worst, farthest/furthest

Some two-syllable adjectives allow more than one form: cleverer / more clever, for example.

Common errors to avoid

- Incorrect: The price in Store A is cheaper than the price in Store B.

Correct: The price in Store A is lower than that in Store B.

Alternatively: “The items in Store A are cheaper than those in Store B.”

- Incorrect: The temperature became more worse.

Correct: The weather conditions became worse.

- Incorrect: The figure was more higher than before.

Correct: The figure was higher than before.

- Incorrect: The largest proportion of water was used in agriculture, while Europe used the highest percentage for industry — if this does not accurately reflect the chart.

Better approach: use largest or highest only for the category that actually has the greatest value.

Useful comparison structures

- A was higher than B.
- A was the highest of all categories.
- A was twice as high as B.
- A was similar to B.
- A was considerably lower than B.
- A was the second-largest category.

6. Prepositions of time: in, on and at

IN

Years, months, seasons, decades and longer periods

- in 1998
- in January
- in summer
- in the 1990s
- in the 21st century
- in the morning

ON

Days and specific dates

- on Monday
- on 5 May
- on 4 July
- on Friday morning
- on Tuesday evening

AT

Exact times and certain fixed expressions

- at 8:00 a.m.
- at noon
- at midnight
- at night
- at the weekend (common in British English)

Remember these distinctions:

- in the afternoon, but on Monday afternoon
- in 2015, but by 2015 when referring to a deadline or a value achieved by that point
- during the year, throughout the period, and over the decade describe periods of time.

For IELTS Task 1, dates and time expressions should match the information shown in the visual.

7. Prepositions for describing changes

These are particularly important for describing line graphs and numerical changes.

Structure	Meaning	Example
rise to	final value	Sales rose to 80 units.
rise from X to Y	starting and final values	Sales rose from 58 to 80 units.
rise by	amount of change	Sales rose by 22 units.
a rise of	size of the increase	There was a rise of 22 units.
peak at	highest value reached	The figure peaked at 80.
reach a peak of	highest value	It reached a peak of 80.
fall from X to Y	starting and final values	The figure fell from 10 to 3.
fall by	amount of decrease	The figure fell by 7 units.
a fall of	size of decrease	There was a fall of 7 units.
a fall in	category affected	There was a fall in sales.
reach a low of	lowest value	The figure reached a low of 3.

Important correction: We say “It reached 80,” not “It reached at 80” or “It reached to 80.”

Compare:

- The number of students increased to 520. — final figure
- The number of students increased by 20. — amount of change
- There was an increase of 20 students. — size of the change
- There was an increase in student enrolment. — the category that changed

For percentages, distinguish between a percentage change and a percentage-point change. If a rate rises from 20% to 25%, it increases by 5 percentage points, equivalent to a 25% relative increase.

8. Other useful prepositions and expressions

- by the dozen / by the ream — a selling or measuring unit
- in kilograms / in dozens — a measurement or grouping
- per week / per year — a rate
- made of glass — the material something consists of
- junior to someone — the correct preposition after “junior”

For Task 1, the most relevant examples are:

- The figure increased by 12%.
- The proportion stood at 45%.
- Spending on transport declined.
- The percentage of households with internet access rose.
- The number of visitors increased over the period.
- The figure remained stable between 2010 and 2015.

Avoid memorising long lists of prepositions without their grammatical patterns. Learn the whole expression, such as “increase by,” “increase to,” “a rise of,” and “reach a peak of.”

Formal and informal vocabulary

Formal and informal vocabulary

Informal or simple expression	More formal alternative
Go up	increase, rise, climb
Go down	decrease, fall, decline
Look at	examine, consider
Find out about	determine, establish, discover
Point out	indicate, highlight
Need to	need to, be required to
Get	obtain, receive, acquire
Think about	consider
Seem	appear
Show	illustrate, demonstrate, indicate
Start	begin, commence

Keep	maintain, retain
But	however, whereas, in contrast
So	therefore, consequently, thus
Also	additionally, furthermore, in addition
In the meantime	meanwhile
In the end	ultimately, finally
Anyway	nevertheless, regardless
Lots of / a lot of	many, much, a large number of, a considerable amount of
Kids	children
Cheap	inexpensive, low-cost
Right	correct, accurate

Important: The alternatives are not always interchangeable. Choose the word that matches the meaning and grammar of your sentence.

2. Special advice for IELTS Writing Task 1

Task 1 describes information presented in a graph, chart, table, map or process. You generally do not need to express personal opinions.

For example:

- Avoid: I think the number of visitors went up a lot.
- Better: The number of visitors increased considerably.
- Avoid: The chart looks at the amount of money people got.
- Better: The chart illustrates the amount of money people received.
- Avoid: Lots of people bought cheap cars.
- Better: Many people purchased inexpensive cars.
- Avoid: The figure went down, but it went up again in the end.
- Better: The figure declined before rising again towards the end of the period.

3. Formal does not always mean better

Some words in the original list are already acceptable in formal academic writing.

Word or expression	IELTS guidance
But	Grammatically correct; “however” may be useful for a more formal transition.
Need to	Acceptable in many contexts; “be required to” is more formal but can change the meaning.
Start	Natural and appropriate; “commence” can sound unnecessarily stiff.
Get	Often too vague, but “get” is correct in many expressions. Replace it when a more precise verb is available.
Cheap	Can imply poor quality; use “low-cost” or “inexpensive” when describing price neutrally.
Seem	Acceptable, but Task 1 usually benefits from precise descriptions supported by the data.
I think / In my opinion	Usually unnecessary in Task 1 because you should report the data rather than give a personal opinion.
Anyway	Usually too conversational for a formal report. “Notwithstanding” is not a direct replacement; it means “despite.”

4. Useful formal expressions for Task 1

These are especially helpful when describing trends and comparisons.

Describing increases and decreases

- The figure increased steadily over the period.
- Sales declined considerably after 2015.
- The proportion rose sharply before stabilising.

Introducing data

- The chart illustrates changes in household expenditure.
- The table presents information about employment rates.
- The graph compares the figures for three countries.

Comparing categories

- By contrast, the figure for France remained stable.
- Furthermore, the proportion of older people increased.
- Whereas sales rose in 2010, they declined in 2011.