

IELTS Writing Task One tips and useful phrases

Read the tips below about IELTS Writing Task One and tick those which are (usually/ always) true/ good ideas. Cross off (X) those which are untrue/ bad ideas, and put a question mark (?) next to those which you aren't sure about or which depend on the situation.

IELTS Writing Task One introductions tips and useful phrases

- The first sentence of your introduction should be the background to that topic (“Nowadays more and more people are...”, “In modern society,...”, etc).
- Start your essay with the first sentence of the task, rephrased as much as possible.
- You can often rephrase the beginning of the first sentence of the task by being more specific (“line graph”, “bar chart/ graph”, “pie chart”, “flowchart”, etc) or being more general (“graph”, “diagram”, “data”, “figures”, “statistics”, etc) about the kind of thing that is given.
- If you are not sure which more general word to use, just use “graph” or “diagram”.
- In the first sentence you should then write a verb which isn't in the question but means the same thing (“represents”, “gives information on”, “shows”, “lists figures regarding”, etc).
- You can rephrase the places in the question by switching from numbers of places to names (“four places” to “Sweden, Denmark, Scotland and Wales”), switching between abbreviations and full names of places (“The United States of America”/ “The US”/ “The USA”, “The UK”/ “The United Kingdom”, “The UAE”/ “The United Arab Emirates”, etc), and paraphrasing in other ways (“several Northern European countries”, “half a dozen developed countries”, etc).
- You can also rephrase times (e.g. from “from 1975 to 2000” to “between 1975 and 2000” or “in the twenty five years from 1975”).
- If the only word that you can think of has a (similar but) different meaning to the word in the question, it is better than just copying the word in the question.
- The second sentence of your introduction could be a one-sentence summary of the data/ information (“Although the values fluctuate, overall there is a substantial rise in...”, “There are three different ways of making...”, “Although there is no change in the positions of the countries over the period, the differences between them vary quite a lot over that period”, “There are fifteen steps in the process”, “The map shows three small and two large islands”, etc).
- In the second sentence of the introduction you could give information on parts of the diagram or table such as columns (“The three columns give statistics on...”) and axes (“The x/ y/ vertical/ horizontal axis represents...”, etc).
- The last sentence of the introduction should always be a description of the topic of each paragraph in the body (“I will write about/ explain/ summarise/ focus on... and then describe/ turn my attention to/ look at/ move onto...”). This is because it forces you to plan properly, it means that the examiner can see that you have done so, and it can help the examiner understand your essay better.
- The last sentence of the introduction should rephrase the last sentence of the instructions (e.g. “I will write a summary of the info by choosing and explain the most important parts and comparing and contrasting when it is suitable”).

- The intro's last sentence needs to clearly explain each paragraph in the body and how they are different to each other, so you need words like "then" or similar longer phrases ("In the next paragraph I will... and in the following paragraph I will...", "I will... in the next paragraph and after that...", etc).
- Sometimes the organisation of your essay is the same as what you just wrote about in your summary sentence and/ or rephrasing the question sentence, so you can just refer back to that to describe the topics of your body paragraphs ("I will explain those two things in that order in the paragraphs below", etc).

Body of IELTS Writing Task One tips and useful phrases

- You should start the body paragraphs with "first(ly)" and "second(ly)".
- It's easiest to start Body 1 with the topic ("The bar chart shows...", "In Paris...", etc).
- The easiest way to start the second body paragraph is with changing topic phrases ("Turning our attention to...", "Moving onto...", "Looking at...", etc).
- You can sometimes start the second body paragraph by contrasting that information with what you wrote about in the first body paragraph ("In contrast to Sweden and Denmark, Scotland and Wales...", "Compared to Sweden and Denmark...", etc).
- Unless it is impossible, you should make some comparisons such as how different things are ("virtually identical", "almost the same", "fairly similar", "almost completely different", "much higher", "substantially higher", "slightly lower", "far lower", etc).
- You should try to write about both similarities ("An obvious similarity...", "both...", "Similarly...", "as... as...", etc) and differences ("In complete contrast...", "while/ whereas...", "not as... as...", "The biggest difference...", etc).
- "On the other hand" and "On the contrary" can be used for comparisons in Task One.
- Past data should mainly be described with Past Simple. To make up for this simple grammar, you can impress the examiner by knowing irregular forms (grew, sank, fell, rose, took off, overtook, shot up, shrank, etc).
- You can avoid repeating "will" by using other future tenses ("is going to...", "is about to...", Present Continuous, "was going to...", etc).
- You can avoid repeating "will" by using verbs that mean the same thing ("is forecast to", "is expected to", "is predicted to", "is projected to", etc).
- You can avoid repeating "will" by saying how probable the future things are ("will probably", "may well", "might", "could possibly", etc).
- You can show your range of language with use of positive and negative words ("remarkable", "surprising", "shocking", "outstanding", etc).
- You can speculate on the reasons for things ("This is probably because of...", "The main reason for this may well be...", "This is almost certainly caused by...", etc).
- Using vague times and numbers is a good way to rephrase ("approximately/ around...", "just under", "just over", "early in the morning", "in the early 1970s", etc).
- You can avoid repeating with other ways of saying "go up" ("rise", "climb", "grow", "expand", etc), "go down" ("drop", "fall", "sink", "shrink", "decline", etc) and "stay flat" ("remain at the same level", "not vary", etc).
- It's more useful and impressive trends to use language with more specific meanings like extreme ("crash", "plummet", "plunge", "rocket", "take off", "sharply", "dramatically", "soar", "shoot up", etc) or small ("creep up", "dip", "slightly", "gradually", "blip", etc).
- You can also show if the line is straight ("steadily", "at the same rate") or not straight ("accelerate", "exponentially", "slow down", "but not at the same rate").

- Another way of being specific is by showing how a change is related to changes before and after (“recover”, “peak and then fall back”, “fluctuate”, “unstable”, “flatten out”, “plateau”, “bounce back”, “rebound”, “bottom out”, “level off”, etc).
- You can avoid repeating words by using reference expressions to talk about things that you have already mentioned (“the former”, “the latter”, “this trend”, “both”, “only the first of these”, “respectively”, “in that order”, etc).
- You shouldn’t describe all the information given.
- You can make sure that you select and summarise by concentrating on the most obvious points (“... stands out”, “There is a noticeable...”, “The biggest change/difference is...”, “The most significant...” etc).

Check as a class or with the suggested answers, asking about any which you classified differently, got right but are not sure why, etc.

Suggested answers

The ones which are true/ good ideas are given below. Anything not there is not a good idea, so make sure you understand why. Also ask if there are any example phrases which you don't understand.

IELTS Writing Task One introductions tips and useful phrases

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- You can often rephrase the beginning of the first sentence of the task by being more specific (“line graph”, “bar chart/ graph”, “pie chart”, “flowchart”, etc) or being more general (“graph”, “diagram”, “data”, “figures”, “statistics”, etc) about the kind of thing that is given.
- In the first sentence you should then write a verb which isn't in the question but means the same thing (“represents”, “gives information on”, “shows”, “lists figures regarding”, etc).
- You can rephrase the places in the question by switching from numbers of places to names (“four places” to “Sweden, Denmark, Scotland and Wales”), switching between abbreviations and full names of places (“The United States of America”/ “The US”/ “The USA”, “The UK”/ “The United Kingdom”, “The UAE”/ “The United Arab Emirates”, etc), and paraphrasing in other ways (“several Northern European countries”, “half a dozen developed countries”, etc).
- You can also rephrase times (e.g. from “from 1975 to 2000” to “between 1975 and 2000” or “in the twenty five years from 1975”).
- The second sentence of your introduction could be a one-sentence summary of the data/ information (“Although the values fluctuate, overall there is a substantial rise in...”, “There are three different ways of making...”, “Although there is no change in the positions of the countries over the period, the differences between them vary quite a lot over that period”, “There are fifteen steps in the process”, “The map shows three small and two large islands”, etc).
- In the second sentence of the introduction you could give information on parts of the diagram or table such as columns (“The three columns give statistics on...”) and axes (“The x/ y/ vertical/ horizontal axis represents...”, etc).
- The last sentence of the introduction should always be a description of the topic of each paragraph in the body (“I will write about/ explain/ summarise/ focus on... and then describe/ turn my attention to/ look at/ move onto...”). This is because it forces you to plan properly, it means that the examiner can see that you have done so, and it can help the examiner understand your essay better.
- The intro's last sentence needs to clearly explain each paragraph in the body and how they are different to each other, so you need words like “then” or similar longer phrases (“In the next paragraph I will... and in the following paragraph I will...”, “I will... in the next paragraph and after that...”, etc).
- Sometimes the organisation of your essay is the same as what you just wrote about in your summary sentence and/ or rephrasing the question sentence, so you can just refer back to that to describe the topics of your body paragraphs (“I will explain those two things in that order in the paragraphs below”, etc).

Body of IELTS Writing Task One tips and useful phrases

- It's easiest to start Body 1 with the topic ("The bar chart shows...", "In Paris...", etc).
- The easiest way to start the second body paragraph is with changing topic phrases ("Turning our attention to...", "Moving onto...", "Looking at...", etc).
- You can sometimes start the second body paragraph by contrasting that information with what you wrote about in the first body paragraph ("In contrast to Sweden and Denmark, Scotland and Wales...", "Compared to Sweden and Denmark,..." , etc).
- Unless it is impossible, you should make some comparisons such as how different things are ("virtually identical", "almost the same", "fairly similar", "almost completely different", "much higher", "substantially higher", "slightly lower", "far lower", etc).
- You should try to write about both similarities ("An obvious similarity...", "both...", "Similarly,..." , "as... as..." , etc) and differences ("In complete contrast,..." , "while/whereas..." , "not as... as..." , "The biggest difference..." , etc).
- Past data should mainly be described with Past Simple. To make up for this simple grammar, you can impress the examiner by knowing irregular forms (grew, sank, fell, rose, took off, overtook, shot up, shrank, etc).
- You can avoid repeating "will" by using verbs that mean the same thing ("is forecast to", "is expected to", "is predicted to", "is projected to", etc).
- Using vague times and numbers is a good way to rephrase ("approximately/around...", "just under", "just over", "early in the morning", "in the early 1970s", etc).
- You can avoid repeating with other ways of saying "go up" ("rise", "climb", "grow", "expand", etc), "go down" ("drop", "fall", "sink", "shrink", "decline", etc) and "stay flat" ("remain at the same level", "not vary", etc).
- It's more useful and impressive to use trends language with more specific meanings like extreme ("crash", "plummet", "plunge", "rocket", "take off", "sharply", "dramatically", "soar", "shoot up", etc) or small ("creep up", "dip", "slightly", "gradually", "blip", etc).
- You can also show if the line is straight ("steadily", "at the same rate") or not straight ("accelerate", "exponentially", "slow down", "but not at the same rate").
- Another way of being specific is by showing how a change is related to changes before and after ("recover", "peak and then fall back", "fluctuate", "unstable", "flatten out", "plateau", "bounce back", "rebound", "bottom out", "level off", etc).
- You can avoid repeating words by using reference expressions to talk about things that you have already mentioned ("the former", "the latter", "this trend", "both", "only the first of these", "respectively", "in that order", etc).
- You shouldn't describe all the information given.
- You can make sure that you select and summarise by concentrating on the most obvious points ("... stands out", "There is a noticeable..." , "The biggest change/difference is..." , "The most significant..." etc).

Brainstorming stage

Without looking above, brainstorm suitable phrases to achieve the things below. Many phrases not above are also possible.

IELTS Writing Task One introductions tips and useful phrases

Start your essay with the first sentence of the task, rephrased as much as possible. You can often rephrase the beginning of the first sentence of the task by being more specific or being more general about the kind of thing that is given.

In the first sentence you should then write a verb which isn't in the question but means the same thing.

You can rephrase the places in the question by switching between abbreviations and full names of places and paraphrasing in other ways.

You can also rephrase times.

The second sentence of your introduction could be a one-sentence summary of the data/information.

In the second sentence of the introduction you could give information on parts of the diagram or table such as columns and axes.

The last sentence of the introduction should always be a description of the topic of each paragraph in the body. The intro's last sentence needs to clearly explain each paragraph in the body and how they are different to each other, so you need words like "then" or similar longer phrases.

Sometimes the organisation of your essay is the same as what you just wrote about in your summary sentence and/ or rephrasing the question sentence, so you can just refer back to that to describe the topics of your body paragraphs.

Body of IELTS Writing Task One tips and useful phrases

It's easiest to start Body 1 with the topic.

The easiest way to start the second body paragraph is with changing topic phrases.

You can start the second body paragraph by contrasting that with the first body paragraph.

You should make some comparisons such as how different things are.

You should try to write about both similarities and differences.

Past data should mainly be described with Past Simple, including irregular forms.

You can avoid repeating "will" by using verbs that mean the same thing.

Using vague times and numbers is a good way to rephrase.

You can avoid repeating with other ways of saying "go up", "go down" and "stay flat".

Use trends language with more specific meanings like extreme or small.

You can also show if the line is straight or not straight.

Another way of being specific is showing how a change is related to before and after.

You can avoid repeating words by using reference expressions to talk about things that you have already mentioned.

Make sure you select and summarise by concentrating on the most obvious points.

Compare your phrases with those above, checking anything different that you wrote. Then test each other on the phrases above, first by reading out the tip and one or more example phrases for your partner to provide more examples for, then with just the tips.