

IELTS Academic Writing Task One tips and useful phrases

Look at the IELTS Writing Part One task(s) your teacher gives you and try to think of tips for doing well in this part of the exam.

Cross out or change any of the tips below which you don't agree with.

Describe all of the information given.

Start your introduction with a very general description of the graph, table, etc.

Split the information into two main paragraphs and describe how you have done so at the end of your introduction.

Always start the main paragraphs with expressions meaning "First" and "Second".

Describe the most important information at the beginning of each main paragraph.

Avoid starting sentences with "and" and "but".

Try to avoid simple time clauses like "in 1997" and "at seven o'clock".

Compare and contrast.

Write a conclusion giving the reasons for the data being that way.

Avoid simple phrases like "go up", "go down" and "stay flat".

Be more specific about the changes.

Use reference phrases rather than repeating the subject.

Write exactly 150 words.

Write approximately 150 words.

Write as many words as you can.

Describe everything in the Present Simple tense.

Use more complex tenses if you can.

Try to avoid using words and phrases from the question.

If you can't think of words which aren't in the question, just change the parts of speech of the words that are there.

Suggested answers with suggested phrases

- Describe all of the information given – Not a good idea. It would be too long, the language would be too simple, and it goes against the instructions in the exam.
- Start your introduction with a very general description of the graph, table, etc. – “The (line) graph/ bar chart (= bar graph)/ pie chart/ map/ table/ diagram...”, “... shows/ represents/ compares/ illustrates...”, “information/ data/ figures”
- Split the information into two main paragraphs and describe how you have done so at the end of your introduction – “I will describe... and then.../ “First I will..., and after that I will...”, “In the first paragraph I will... and in the following paragraph I will...”
- Always start the main paragraphs with expressions meaning “First” and “Second” – Not a good idea. These expressions should be used with some kind of list.
- Describe the most important information at the beginning of each main paragraph – “The first thing you notice...”, “The most noticeable... is...”, “The biggest/ most noticeable/ most important difference/ similarity between the lines/ graphs is...”, “Overall,...”, “The main trend...”, “In general,...”, “The thing that stands out (most) is...”
- Avoid starting sentences with “and” and “but” – “However”, “Furthermore”, “Moreover”, “In contrast”, “In addition”
- Try to avoid simple time clauses like “in 1997” – “subsequently”, “between... and...”, “at the same point (in time)”, “late in the afternoon”, “initially”, “following that”
- Compare and contrast – “Comparing the...”, “(far/ much) ...er/ more/ less...”, “(not) as...as...”, “similar/ almost the same”, “...whereas...”, “In contrast,...”, “(almost) the opposite”, “While...,...”, “... shows a rather/ very different pattern/ trend”, “We can contrast this with...”, “... is (a/ the) (major) exception...”
- Write a conclusion giving the reasons for the data being that way – Not needed because the question doesn’t ask you to do that, and usually very difficult because you don’t know enough to draw a conclusion
- Avoid simple phrases like “go up”, “go down” and “stay flat”. Be more specific about the changes – “significant(ly)”, “huge(ly)”, “dramatic(ally)”, “considerable(bly)”, “gradual(ly)”, “slight(ly)”, “steady(ly)”, “sharp(ly)”, “shoot up”, “crash”, “bottom out”, “bounce back”
- Use reference phrases rather than repeating the subject – “The former”, “The latter”, “This”, “Both”, “Only the first of these...”
- Write exactly 150 words – Not a good idea, because you’d have to spend too long rewriting and there’s no need to waste time counting every word
- Write approximately 150 words – Not a good idea because it must be 150 words or more, so 149 words isn’t enough
- Write as many words as you can – Not a good idea because it will waste time and won’t summarise enough (as you are asked to in the question)
- Describe everything in the Present Simple tense – It is better to use more complex language, such as past tenses for past data
- Use more complex tenses if you can – “will (+ be + ing)”, “had already...”
- Try to avoid using words and phrases from the question – Suitable language depends on the question
- If you can’t think of words which aren’t in the question, just change the parts of speech of the words that are there – Suitable language depends on the question