

Academic IELTS Writing Task 1: Graphs

Today we learn about **Task Achievement**.

📝 What is Task 1?

You look at a graph, chart, or diagram. You describe it clearly in your own words.

✅ What is Task Achievement?

It is 1 of 4 marking criteria checked by the examiner. It evaluates: *Did you answer the question well?*

Today's Goal: Understand what Task Achievement means and learn how to complete it successfully.

What is Task Achievement?

Task Achievement checks **4 key requirements** in your report:



1. Word Count

Did you write **at least 150 words**?



2. Key Info

Did you select the **important information**?



3. Overview

Did you write a clear, accurate **overview**?



4. Comparisons

Did you make good **comparisons**?



Important Rule: You do not need to write about every number. Choose only the important parts!

The 150-Word Rule

150+

Minimum Words

You must write 150 words or more to avoid penalties.

20

Minutes Allowed

Total recommended time spent planning and writing Task 1.



Under 150 Words

Writing under 150 words directly lowers your score.

💡 Teacher Tip

Try to write **160–180 words**. This is enough to answer the prompt fully without wasting valuable time.

Read the Task Carefully

Before you write, read the question **2 times**. Ask yourself these 5 questions:

- ❓ **WHAT** does the graph show?
- 📍 **WHERE** is the information from?
- 📅 **WHEN** did this happen? (past, present, future?)
- 📊 **WHAT UNITS** are used? (% , \$, people, kg...)
- 🔄 **WHAT** do I need to compare?

EXAMPLE TASK PROMPT

"The graph shows the number of people who used three types of transport in a city from 2000 to 2020."

You must identify: 3 transport types, 1 city, time range (2000–2020), and unit (number of people).

Do Not Copy the Task

Do not copy the prompt word-for-word. Use **your own words**. This is called **paraphrasing**.

✗ ORIGINAL QUESTION

"The graph shows the number of students who studied three subjects at a university between 2010 and 2020."

✓ BETTER INTRODUCTION (PARAPHRASED)

"The graph depicts the number of university students who enrolled for three different subjects from 2010 to 2020."

i Key Technique: You can reuse a few individual keywords from the task, but you must change the sentence structure and synonyms where possible.

What is an Overview?

The **overview** is the single most important part of your Task 1 response.

✓ Key Characteristics

- It gives the **big picture** summarizing main points.
- It highlights overall **main trends**.
- It does **NOT include numbers**.
- Without a good overview, your score cannot be high.

📍 Where do I put it?

Place it **right after your introduction** (Paragraph 2), or at the very end of your essay.

EXAMPLE OVERVIEW

"Overall, the number of students studying science increased, while the numbers for arts and history fell."

How to Write a Good Overview



Clear

Easy to read and understand immediately.



General

Focuses on general trends, avoiding tiny details.



Accurate

Matches the data in the graph correctly.



Relevant

Selects only the most significant changes.

ASK YOURSELF:

"If I could only say 2 main things about this graph, what would they be?"

Useful Starter Phrases:

- *"Overall, it is clear that..."*
- *"In general, the graph shows that..."*
- *"Overall, a key trend is that..."*

Trends: Look for Change

When a graph shows changes over time, describe the **direction of movement**:

↑ Going Up

- increase
- rise
- go up
- climb

↓ Going Down

- decrease
- fall
- drop
- decline

— No Change

- remain stable
- stay the same

⬆️ Up & Down

- fluctuate

Examples: "Sales rose steadily from 2010 to 2015." | "Prices remained stable between May and August." | "Visitor numbers fluctuated throughout the year."

Make Comparisons

Task Achievement requires you to **compare data points** effectively.

Key Vocabulary

COMPARISON WORDS:

higher than, lower than, more than, less than, the highest, the lowest

LINKING WORDS:

however, whereas, in contrast, while

BASIC SENTENCE

"In 2015, car use was higher than bus use."

BETTER SENTENCE (HIGH SCORE)

"Car use was much higher than bus use in 2015, but the difference became smaller by 2020."

Choose Important Information

✓ Focus On What Matters

You do **not** need every single number from the graph. Choose key data that shows:

- ✓ Main overall trends
- ✓ Important differences between categories
- ✓ Highest and lowest data points
- ✓ Major increases or decreases



The Filter Test

"Does this number help explain the main pattern of the graph?"

If NO, leave it out of your report!

Use Numbers to Support Your Ideas

Numbers provide evidence showing **how much** something changed.

WEAK SENTENCE (NO DATA)

"The number of visitors increased."

Lacks specific evidence or scale.

BETTER SENTENCE (SUPPORTED)

"The number of visitors increased from 20,000 in 2010 to 35,000 in 2020."

Clear start point, end point, and time frame.

⚠ Be Careful: Do not turn your essay into a repetitive list of numbers. Numbers should *support* your key ideas, not replace sentence structure!

Group Your Information

Good answers **group similar data together**. Never describe a graph left-to-right without a clear logical plan.

Strategy Option A

Body Paragraph 1: Categories that increased over time.

Body Paragraph 2: Categories that decreased or remained stable.

Strategy Option B

Body Paragraph 1: The highest figures and largest categories.

Body Paragraph 2: The lowest figures and minor categories.

 **Result:** Grouping information logically makes your response much easier for the examiner to follow.

Structure Your Essay (4 Paragraphs)

Paragraph	What to Write
1. Introduction	Paraphrase the prompt question in your own words (1 sentence).
2. Overview	Summarize 2–3 key main trends. NO numbers here!
3. Body Paragraph 1	Describe the first logical group of data with key numbers and dates.
4. Body Paragraph 2	Describe the second logical group of data with key comparisons.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

✗ Under 150 Words

Losing marks automatically for short responses.

✗ Missing Overview

Without a clear overview, your Task score stays low.

✗ Giving Personal Opinions

Never explain *why* something happened. Only describe data!

✗ Listing Every Number

Turning your text into a boring shopping list of data points.

✗ Copying the Question

Direct copying reduces your assessed vocabulary word count.

✗ Wrong Trend Direction

Misreading the graph (writing up instead of down).

i Remember: Writing more words does not always mean getting a better mark!

Checklist & Key Takeaway

Before You Finish, Check:

- ✅ Did I write at least 150 words?
- ✅ Did I write a clear overview (no numbers)?
- ✅ Did I select the key information?
- ✅ Did I compare the data points?
- ✅ Did I support my ideas with numbers?
- ✅ Did I avoid giving my opinion?

KEY TAKEAWAY

"Do not describe every part of the graph. Explain the main information clearly."

✂ Homework

1. Review this slide deck.
2. Complete the Task 1 practice worksheet.
3. Write a full response (min. 150 words) with a strong overview!