Improving writing skills
for
the academic version of IELTS

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Main differences between IELTS and EFL

- Syllabus - functional/ notional (e.g. tense range/ function) vs. grammatical

- Task driven vs. language practice

- Focus on purpose

- Noun phrase vs. verb phrase

- (Nominalization vs. denominalization)

- Abstract vs. personal

- Competence vs. knowledge

Discourse in IELTS

Exposition/ Argumentation

Text features

- Time relationships

- Problem and solution

- Cause and effect

- Classification

- Comparison and contrast

- Argument

- Description- processes/ sequencing
- Narrative
- Instruction
- Definition
- Explanation
- Exemplification
- Generalization and specificity
- Drawing conclusions
- Rhetorical organisation

Task 1

Techniques

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Task 1 Language features checklist

- Simple Present/ Past/ Present Perfect/ Simple Future/ Future Perfect

- Comparison

- Complex sentences: conjunctions/ adverbs

- Verbs of rise/ fall

- Trends/ writing introductions

- Noun phrases – synonyms/ paraphrases

- Singular/ plural

- Active/ Passive

- General v specific

- Nominalization

  Car sales rose gradually in the UK between 2005 and 2010.

  There was a gradual rise in car sales in the UK between 2005 and 2010.

Car sales in Russia between 2005 and 2010 were greater than those in France.

Car sales in Russia between 2005 and 2010 were greater than motorcycle sales over the same period.

- Word families

  Verbs of rise and fall

- General nouns such as: information, trend, difference, similarity, pattern

- Sentence patterns: general to specific

  Car sales experienced a fall, declining from/ with a drop from...

- Organizing information
- Labelling diagrams

Look for trends and striking features in the data and make sure you summarize and compare the data in your answer. You should not list all the data, but you should write about all the relevant and important data in your answer. You can, for example, write about the data for the beginning and the end of lines in line graphs and data for special features.

TIP
Number the main points on the graph that you want to write about.

Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

> *The graph below shows the proportion of holidays to different destinations which were taken as package holidays by UK residents.*
>
> *Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.*

Write at least 150 words.

UK residents' package holiday visits abroad¹

United Kingdom
Percentages
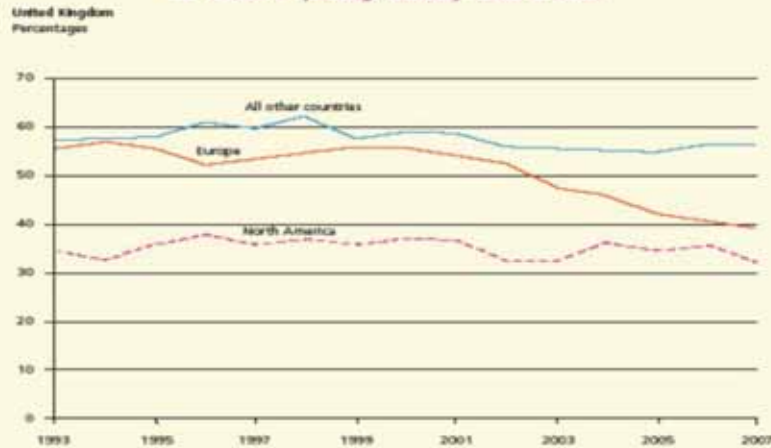
¹As a proportion of all holidays to the destination.
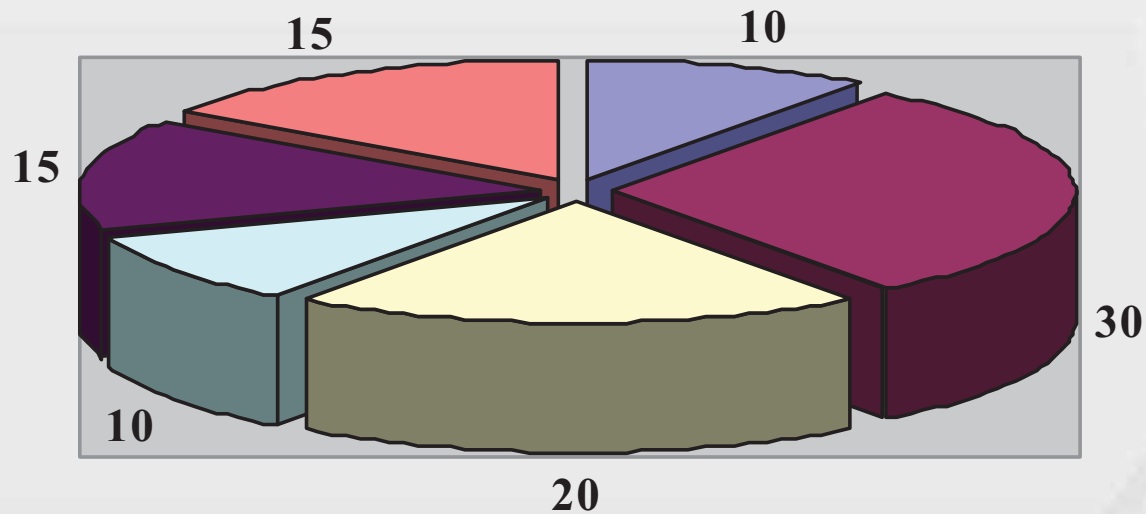
2   Work in pairs. Complete the table with the correct heading, a–c.

a   North America   b   All other countries   c   Europe

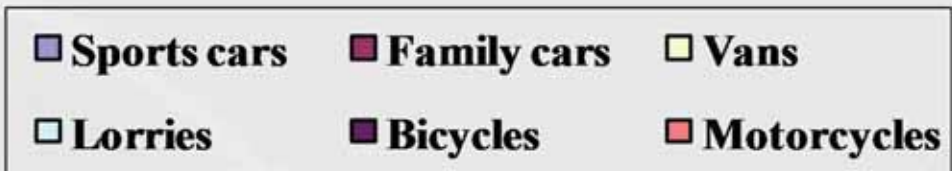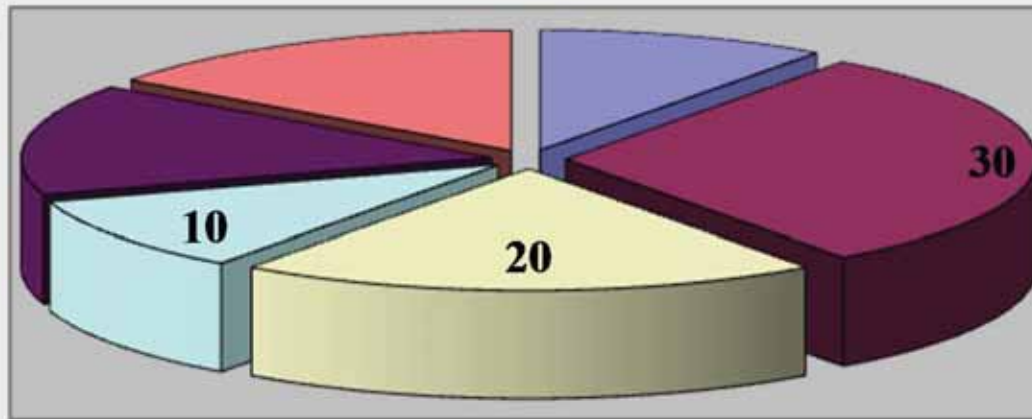| 1 _____	2 _____	3 _____
– more people took package holidays than non-package holidays to … – peaked at about 62% around 1998 – the most popular type of holiday	– fell significantly between 1999 and 2007 – dropped from just above 55% to just under 40% – a greater proportion went on holiday to … – dipped around 1996 – became less popular	– fluctuated between 30% and 40% – in 1996 the percentage peaked – approximately 35% in 1993 went on package holidays to … – in 2007 package holidays fell to just over 30%

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Data manipulation

Sales patterns in Russia

Pie chart showing sales patterns in Russia with values: 10, 30, 20, 10, 15, 15.

Legend: Sports cars, Family cars, Vans, Lorries, Bicycles, Motocycles

Information gap

Sales patterns in Russia 2012

| Sports cars | Family cars | Vans |
| Lorries | Bicycles | Motorcycles |

Sales patterns in Russia 2012
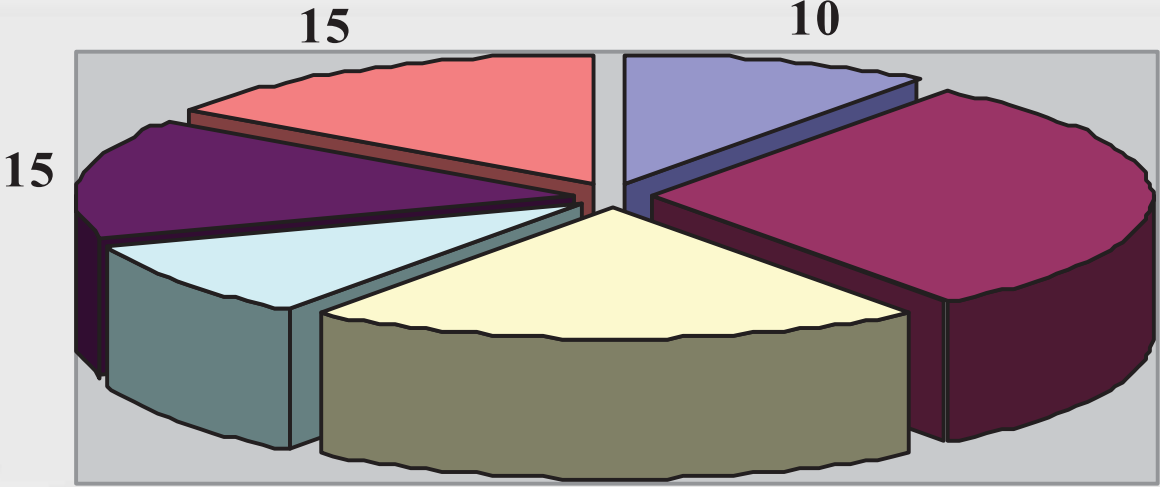
- Draw your own graphs and dictate
- Partial dictation
- Information gap
- Create data with students
- Short exposure to data
- No writing
- General statements -no data
- Complete frames
- Focus on part of the writing process e.g. introductions

- Dictate the map/ process/ data

Cinema	Theatre

- Jumble/ cut up diagrams

- Complete frames

- List of statements relating to map/ data/ process etc

- Project answer to task –rub out text
- Revision cards

Writing Task 2

Techniques

- Question types
- Preventing over-generalization
- Aim for organization
- Rubric: Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.
- Safe frames – created/ supplied
- Checklists
- Models or samples ?

- Categorize ideas
- True/ False Statements
- Irrelevant statements
- Frames

  Pre-writing
- (Lexical) cohesion

  Brainstorm: vocabulary, structure
- Introductions/ first and last sentences
- Conclusions

- Reaction or memory in both skills
- Creating spontaneity/ flexibility
- Ideas bank/ angles/ perspectives
- Avoiding repetition
- Fluency/ accuracy
- Knowing what is required
- Critical thinking and writing/ speaking
- Speaking into writing
- Basic principles of written discourse
- Organization/ What is being tested
- Complex structures

Organisation	Ideas	Connection
Topic		
Reason		because
Example 1		For example, if
Example 2		Moreover,... can...
Result		As a result, ...
Contrast		, but may not always
Conclusion		Yet

The 'types' of vocabulary to teach

- Task/ 'text types'
- The General Service List (GSL)
- AWL

  (Coxhead, A. 2000. A new Academic Word List. *TESOL Quarterly, 34 (2): 213–38.)*
- AKL

  (Paquot, M. 2010. *Academic Vocabulary in Learner Writing: From Extraction to Analysis*. London & New-York: Continuum.)
- Student vocabulary- number of words?
- Word frequency: 2,500 -80%/ 7500- c 90%?

- Prepared materials –writing exercises
- No materials - student-centred
- Students create questions- test of independence

'Trigger' words to create a template rather than a writing vacuum:

Because

For example/ For example, if/ Like / such as

But/ However

As a result/ however/ Moreover

And their synonyms

Other triggers

- positive adjectives: beneficial/ important/ crucial

- negative adjectives: dangerous/harmful/

General/ Carrier nouns for organization

- benefits/ advantages
- disadvantages/ drawbacks/ downsides
- causes effects solutions
- measures/ proposals/ suggestions

Helpful as they require explanation

Blend of speaking, writing and reading

- Structure of 'text'
- Pre- reading brainstorming

  List words/ideas/ sentences from the text

- Search for ideas etc
- Jumble the ideas and match them to the questions
- Improve texts
- Summarizing texts
- Redrafting/ Checking for mistakes

Not a lack of ideas

- A lack of ability to organise and link ideas
- If chains
- Cause and effect chains

- Exercise improves health
- Health improves ….
- Education improves...

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- Word association
- Dictation of words to build schema – writing/ reading/ speaking/ listening