

WRITING SKILLS

When you study in an academic context, you need to be able to write clear, formal English. There are two writing tasks in IELTS, reflecting some of the different types of writing that you will have to produce if you study in the medium of English. You have one hour to complete the two tasks. You will need to:

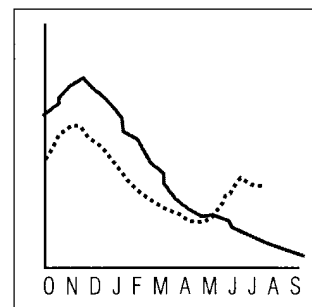
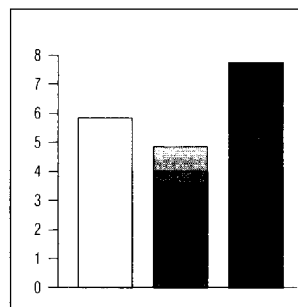
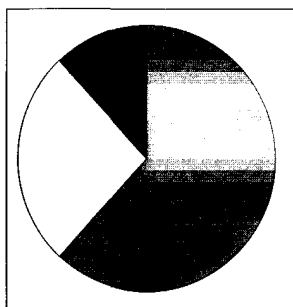
- ▶ complete the task appropriately
- ▶ organise and link your ideas clearly
- ▶ write accurately and with a good range of vocabulary

Developing writing skills 1

Completing the task appropriately

▶ What is expected of you in Task 1?

In the IELTS Task 1, you may need to describe any of the following types of graphs or diagrams:



You may also have to describe a process illustrated by a diagram, or information presented in a table.

In answering a Task 1 question, you will need to:

- interpret the data accurately
- point out overall trends rather than details
- include only relevant information
- use appropriate vocabulary.

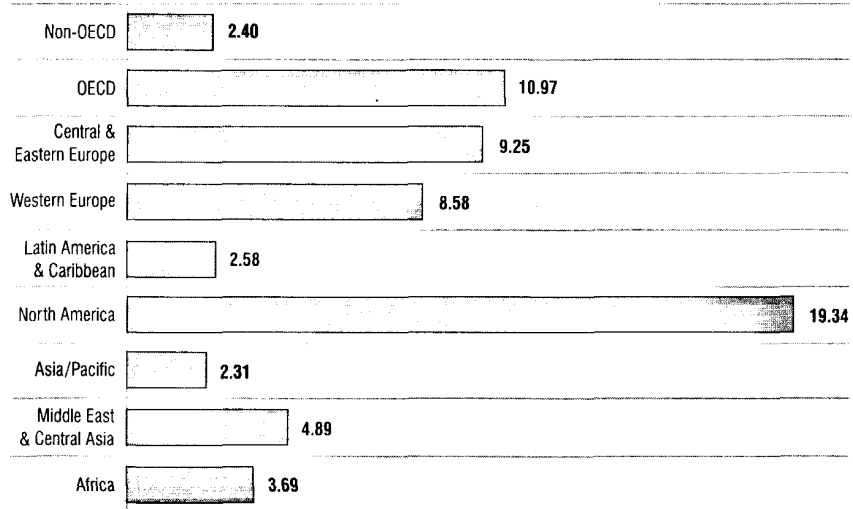
Exercise 1 ▶ a *Read the following task and answer these questions by referring to the graph on page 22:*

- 1 According to the instructions, what does the graph show?
- 2 What does OECD stand for? What do the numbers represent?
- 3 What is a key feature of the graph?
- 4 What trends are shown on the graph?

The graph below shows carbon dioxide emission in several areas of the world. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown below. You should write at least 150 words.

CO₂ emissions

Tonnes per person per year, 1995 data



OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Exam Tip

The examiner will look for evidence that you can:

- group information
- link points in complex sentences
- use appropriate vocabulary and structures for describing trends, etc.

b Read this sample description and answer the following questions.

- 1 What information has the writer started with?
- 2 Are the figures correct?
- 3 What trends have been described?
- 4 How have the ideas been linked?

The graph shows that countries in the developed world produce far more CO₂ than developing countries. Not surprisingly, North America is the chief culprit producing 19.34 tonnes of CO₂ per person per year. This is almost double all the OECD countries combined. In contrast to this, Latin America and the Caribbean produce the smallest levels of CO₂ emission at 2.58 tonnes per person per year. European nations also emit huge amounts of CO₂, with Central and Eastern Europe producing 9.25 tonnes per capita, and Western Europe slightly less. However, this figure is still only half the North American statistic. Countries in Africa and the Asia/Pacific area, on the other hand, are only responsible for considerably smaller amounts.

▶▶ Now go to Test 1, and try the first writing task.

Refer to the **Tip Strip** in Test 1 for guidelines on how to approach Task 1.

▶ What is expected of you in Task 2?

In Task 2 you are expected to produce an academic style essay in which you present your views on the topic given. In order to do this you will have to follow the conventions of essay writing. You will need to:

- state your thesis
- clearly organise your argument
- produce evidence to support your thesis
- write an appropriate conclusion.

- Exercise 2** ▷ Read the following task. What do you have to write about? Underline the **words** which help you decide.

University lecturers are now able to put their lectures on the Internet for students to read and so the importance of attending face to face lectures has been reduced.

Do you believe the use of the Internet in formal education is a good idea? What future effects will the Internet have on academic study?

Think about the task.

- 1 What are your personal views on the subject?
- 2 What is a possible future effect?
- 3 Think of two pieces of evidence to support your idea.
- 4 Think of a personal example to support your idea.

- Exercise 3** ▷ **a** Read a sample answer by a student. What is his view? Do you agree?

Over the past few years, computer technology has started to change many aspects of our lives. One of these is our approach to teaching and learning. Many people believe that the Internet will greatly enhance students' lives but in my opinion, the costs will outweigh the benefits.

One future effect of the Internet on academic study is that the level of lecturer/student contact that we are used to may be reduced. This might happen simply because students do not need to spend so much time on the university campus. The same may be true of lecturers. If they are able to put their lectures on the Internet, they may choose to do this from home and so be less available for consultation. In my view this would be a great disadvantage. In my home country, tutors usually stress the importance of regular, informal meetings and students' work could suffer if efforts are not made to maintain these.

Apart from the negative impact that the Internet may have on student/lecturer relationships, I think we also have to consider the disadvantages to student health. Studying is by nature a very sedentary activity involving long hours reading books and writing assignments. In addition, these activities are usually done alone. Going to campus offers students a change of scenery, a bit of exercise, and an opportunity to meet and socialise with other students. If it is no longer necessary to leave home because lectures are made available on the Internet, then students may suffer physically and mentally because of this change.

Whilst I can appreciate that the internet will be a valuable source of information for students, I cannot agree that it is the best means of transmitting this information and I think we have to guard against developing an unhealthy dependence on it.

- b** Look at the sample answer again.

- 1 How many paragraphs does the writer use to answer the question?
- 2 What is the purpose of the first and last paragraphs?
- 3 Now re-read each paragraph. What is the function of the first sentence in each paragraph?

Exercise 4 ▷ An academic essay in English follows a specific conventional structure. Complete the following paragraph plan, which illustrates the structure of the sample composition:

Exam Tip

Don't forget to include examples relevant to your experience. Remember you are not expected to be an expert on the topic. Personal experience counts!

Introduction:	re-statement of topic indication of writer's position.....
Body of the composition	
Paragraph 1:	main ideas..... supporting ideas.....
Paragraph 2:	main ideas..... supporting ideas.....
Conclusion:	summary of views and re-statement of position.....

▶▶ Now go to Test 1, and try the second writing task. Refer to the Tip Strip in Test 1 for guidelines on how to approach Task 2.

Developing writing skills 2

Organising and linking your ideas

▶ **How is your ability to organise and link your ideas assessed in IELTS?**

When writing your answer to Task 1, you will need to use appropriate linkers and structures to present the data clearly. Your answer to writing Task 2 must have a clear line of argument with relevant points that are linked well.

Exercise 5 ▷ The writers of the sample answers to Task 1 and Task 2 (see pages 22 and 23) have used a variety of devices to link ideas. Read through the sample answers and underline all the examples of linking.

Exercise 6 ▷ Look at the sentences in columns A and B below and join them together using one of the linking words or phrases in the box. Use the sentences in column A first and then reverse the exercise and start with the B sentences but always keep the same overall meaning. You may need to alter or omit some of the words or use a different linking word or phrase.

Exam Tip

When you write your answer, you must be able to demonstrate that your ideas follow a logical sequence within and across the paragraphs. If you do this, your ideas will be coherent or clear.

	A	B	Linking words
1	The driving test was on Friday.	I took the day off work.	and
2	The president was extremely unpopular.	The majority of people voted for the president.	so
3	The swimming team trained hard.	The team went home unsuccessful.	but
4	Eat your dinner.	Go to bed.	because
5	I forgot to give my homework to the teacher.	My teacher didn't mark my homework.	while
6	I can't comment on the film.	I haven't seen the film.	although
7	People continue to smoke.	People continue to suffer from respiratory diseases.	despite the fact that
			when
			as
			before
			since

Exercise 7 ▷ *Re-order the sentences below to create one coherent text. Underline all the words which help you to do this and say whether the link is in the meaning (i.e. lexical or in the grammatical structure i.e. grammatical).*

- a Firstly money is collected at source from everyone in Australia who has a job.
- b Tax on petrol is also aimed at reducing the number of vehicles on the roads by discouraging motorists from using their cars.
- c The Australian government collects tax in a number of different ways.
- d Income tax, as this is known, can be as high as 48% for some people.
- e In addition to this tax on luxuries, there is a special tax on fuel which brings in a large amount of revenue for the government.
- f Secondly, the government gains money by imposing a tax on all goods purchased or services received so that every time money changes hands a tax of 10% is paid.
- g The term 'services' includes anything from getting a haircut to having your house painted.
- h Another way that the government raises money is by charging an additional tax on luxuries such as wine, tobacco or perfume.

Developing writing skills 3

Writing accurately and with a good range of vocabulary

▶ What aspects of grammar and vocabulary will be assessed by the examiner?

There are many areas of grammar that the person marking your answer will be checking for. These include:

- verb tenses and verb agreements
- tense range
- sentence structure and word order
- spelling and punctuation.

You will also need to demonstrate that you can:

- produce a range of sentence patterns.
- use a range of vocabulary and structures.

The more mistakes you make in a piece of writing, the more difficult it is to read and make sense of what you are trying to say.

Exam Tip

It is easy to make mistakes when you are under pressure so it is vital to leave time to check your answer for mistakes before you hand in your work.

Exercise 8 ▷ a *Rewrite the following paragraph to improve its grammatical accuracy:*

This graph shows that how much money was spent on different products over a ten years period. Those products are computers, telephones and video cameras. The areas shown are Asia, Europe and United States. Now let describing the information shown.

b *Rewrite the following General Training Task 1 introductory paragraph to improve its grammatical accuracy. Try to improve on the style at the same time. Remember to avoid repetition and to use conjunctions to join sentences together.*

Dear Sir/Madam

I'm writing to request my bag that I left on the train when I am travelled to Dover. When I arrived home, I realised that I had left my bag in your train. Would you mind to check my bag in your lost property please! My bag is just a black small bag with the handle on a top. Inside of my bag are some of my personal possessions and my certificate from the English course that I studied in.