

## Test section – Academic Writing Task 1

# Describing data and making approximations

### Activities

1. Describing increases and decreases: matching & sentence transformation
2. Making approximations: sentence writing

### Aims

- To provide students with practice in the use of a range of structures and expressions to describe change in charts.

### Learning outcomes

- Students will have used appropriate words and phrases for describing increases and decreases in charts.
- Students will have used language of approximations to describe data.

### Information about this section of IELTS

In Academic Writing Task 1, test takers will be presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram. Test takers will be asked to describe and summarise the information in their own words. This might involve describing and summarising data, describing the stages of a process or how something works, or describing an object or event. Test takers should write at least 150 words in a formal, academic style. The recommended time for this task is 20 minutes.

<b>Time</b>	30-40 minutes
<b>Level</b>	B1+
<b>Class</b>	Suitable for groups / large classes, F2F / Online
<b>Interaction</b>	Individual / pair work
<b>Materials</b>	Worksheets x2 attached

## Activity 1: Describing increases and decreases

**Material:** Worksheet 1

**Time:** 20-25 minutes

**Procedure:**

- introduce the focus of the lesson – Academic Writing Task 1 – Describing data and making approximations.
- give out Worksheet 1 and tell students to look at the graph and the information on the axes.
- ask: what does the vertical axis show? (percentage)  
what does the horizontal axis show? (dates / months & years)
- draw attention to the text and elicit that this is NOT the entire response, this is the main body only. Elicit predictions of what might be included here e.g. the details, description of the main points of the graph, supporting data taken from the graph.
- students read to check predictions.
- draw attention to Ex. 1 and do the first example together.
- give students time to work alone to match the rest of the words and phrases in bold with their definitions in Ex. 1,
- allow time for students to check their answers in pairs / small groups.
- get class feedback.

### Answers Exercise 1

went up and down frequently: fluctuated a great deal

did not change (2 phrases): remained stable, stayed at this level

went up a little: there was a small increase, had risen slightly

went up very quickly (2 phrases): the figure shot up, rose sharply

arrived at its highest point: reached a peak

went up noticeably over a period: there was a marked upward trend

went down (2 phrases): had fallen, there was another small drop

went down gradually over a period: there was a steady downward trend

- write *The unemployment rate rose dramatically* on the board and elicit the sentence structure i.e. noun phrase (subject) + verb + adverb.

- elicit the tense used and the reason for this i.e. the information is in the past therefore the past simple is used.
- write *There was...* on the board and elicit how to complete the sentence so that it means the same as the previous example i.e. *There was a dramatic rise in the unemployment rate.*
- draw attention to the reformulation of verb (rose) into noun (rise) and elicit where the past tense is (was). Elicit the change from adverb, *dramatically*, to adjective, *dramatic*.
- draw attention to the grammar explanation on the worksheet for consolidation.
- draw attention to the task, completing the first one together in open class.
- students work alone to complete the sentence transformation.
- students check in pairs.
- get class feedback.

### Answers Exercise 2

- 1 There was a sharp rise in the price of oil.
- 2 Temperature increases noticeably from May onwards.
- 3 There has been a dramatic fall in the number of people attending the theatre.
- 4 DVD sales had risen steadily during the first six months of the year.
- 5 The use of alternative energy sources has grown rapidly.
- 6 There was a significant decrease in the popularity of self-catering holidays during the 1990s.

### Material: Worksheet 2

**Time:** 10-15 minutes

### Procedure:

- write *Sales figures for oranges rose from 4000 kilos to 7850 kilos* on the board.
- draw attention to the figures provided and elicit ways to describe the increase i.e. nearly / almost doubled.
- draw attention to the fact that it's not always possible to use exact numbers so these types of approximations are required.
- give out Worksheet 2.
- introduce the words and phrases for making approximations in Ex. 1 and ask students to match them, in terms of meaning, on their own.
- get class feedback.

## Answers Exercise 1

1c, 2a, 3b

- draw attention to the bar graph and ask:  
What does the vertical axis show? (millions of units)  
What does the horizontal axis show? (5 electrical goods)  
What do the two colours represent? (2 years/2000 and 2006)
- tell students that they will write one sentence about each of the electrical goods using the language provided in the text boxes in Ex. 2.
- give some quiet time for students to look at the first one, DVD players, before eliciting the answer to this first one in open class.
- draw attention to the use of 'doubled' as a verb and the other verbs like this in the text box (tripled, halved).
- give students time to complete the rest of their sentences on their own.
- put students in pairs to check their sentences.
- get class feedback and accept appropriate accurate answers.

## Answers Exercise 2

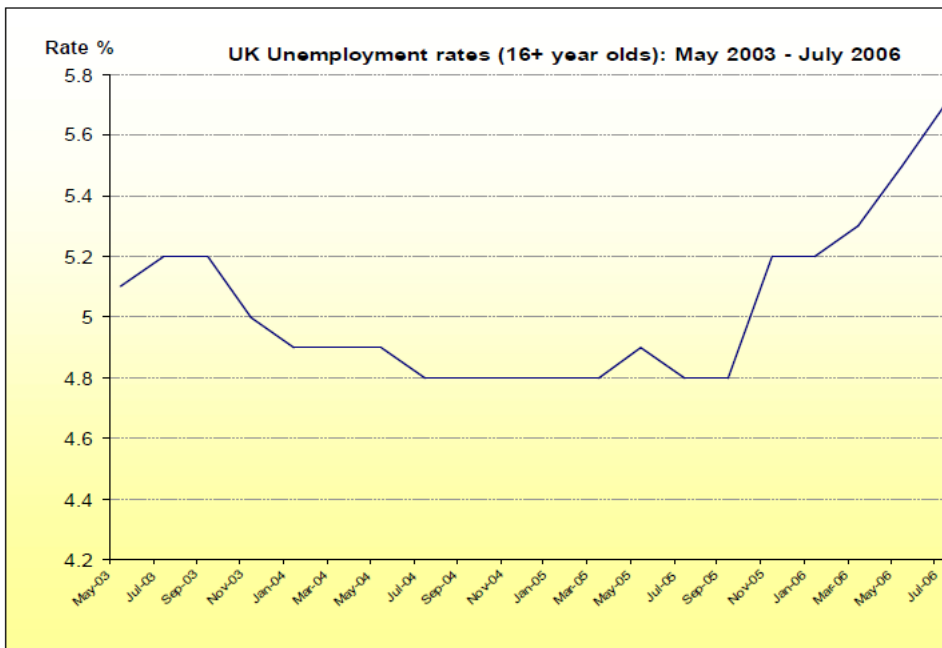
- 1 Imports of DVD players nearly/almost/approximately doubled.
- 2 Imports of CD players fell by just under/approximately/nearly a quarter.
- 3 The number of televisions imported rose by just over/slightly more than a third.
- 4 The number of imported radios rose by slightly more than/just over a quarter.
- 5 Imports of video recorders approximately halved.

**Academic Writing Task 1**

**Worksheet 1**

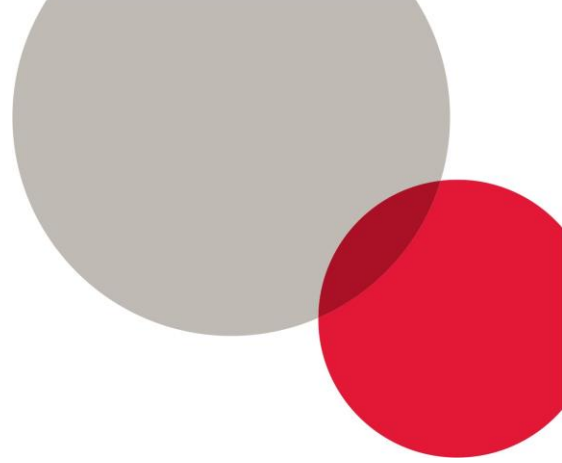
**Describing increases and decreases (1)**

Look at the line graph below and read the description.



**Body paragraph**

At the beginning of the period, unemployment stood at nearly 5.1 per cent. A few months later, the figure **had risen slightly** to 5.2 per cent. Unemployment then **remained stable** until September 2003. From this point on, **there was a steady downward trend** and by January 2004, the rate **had fallen** to around 4.9 per cent. It **stayed at this level** until May the same year, but from May to July **there was another small drop** of 1 per cent. There were no further changes in the level of unemployment until March the following year. From March to May 2005, **there was a small increase** of 1 per cent, but this did not last long, and the figure had fallen back to 4.8 per cent by July. From September 2005 onwards, however, **there was a marked upward trend** in the rate of unemployment in the UK. From September 2005 to November the same year, **the figure shot up** from 4.8 to 5.2 per cent. The rate remained stable for a few months, but then **rose sharply** again, and had **reached a peak** of approximately 5.7 per cent by July 2006.



1 Read the description again and find phrases in **bold** which mean...

- went up and down frequently
- did not change (2 phrases)
- went up a little (2 phrases)
- went up very quickly (2 phrases)
- arrived at its highest point
- went up noticeably over a period
- went down (2 phrases)
- went down gradually over a period

In the last activity, there were some useful phrases for describing increases and decreases. Here are two sentence structures for doing this:

**1 noun phrase + verb + adverb**

For example:

<b>noun phrase +</b>	<b>verb +</b>	<b>adverb</b>
The unemployment rate	rose	rapidly
The cost of living	fell	dramatically

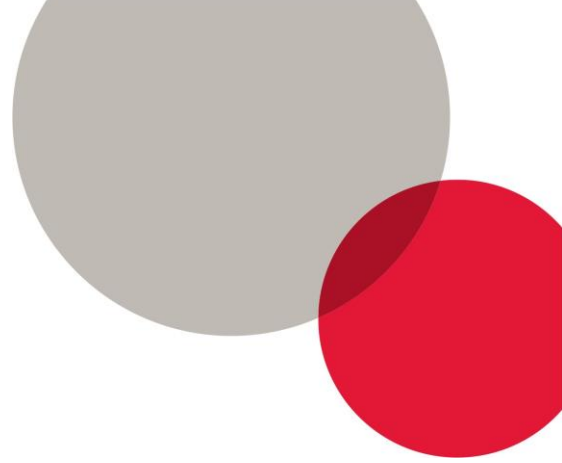
**2 There is/are + noun phrase**

For example:

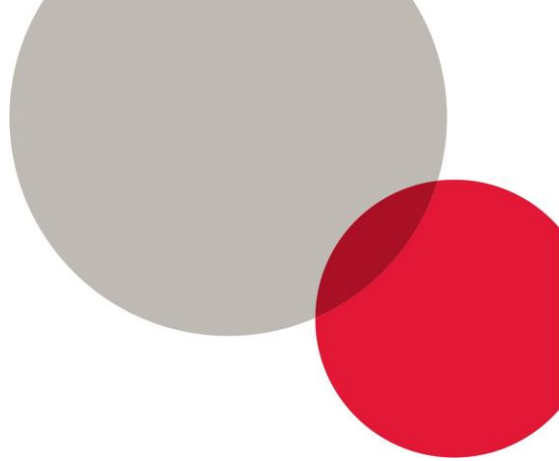
<b>There is/are +</b>	<b>+ noun phrase</b>
There was	a rise in unemployment
There has been	an increase in the cost of living

2 Finish each sentence below so that it means the same as the one given.

- 1 The price of oil rose sharply.  
There.....
- 2 There is a noticeable increase in temperature from May onwards.  
Temperature.....
- 3 The number of people attending the theatre has fallen dramatically.  
There.....



- 4 There had been a steady rise in DVD sales during the first six months of the year.  
DVD sales.....
- 5 There has been a rapid growth in the use of alternative energy sources.  
The use of alternative energy sources.....
- 6 The popularity of self-catering holidays decreased significantly during the 1990s.  
There.....



## Academic Writing Task 1

### Worksheet 2

#### Making approximations

*It can be difficult to use exact numbers when describing charts. A useful strategy for dealing with this is making approximations.*

*For example, if sales figures for oranges rose from 4000 kilos to 7850 kilos, you can say 'orange sales **almost doubled**'.*

- 1 *Here are some useful words and phrases for making approximations. Match phrases with the same meaning.*

1 just over

a around

2 approximately

b nearly

3 just under

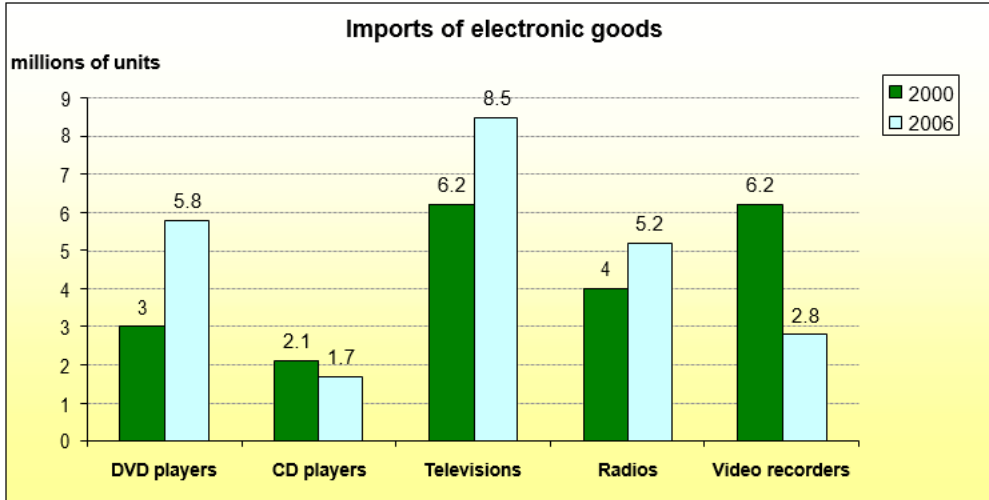
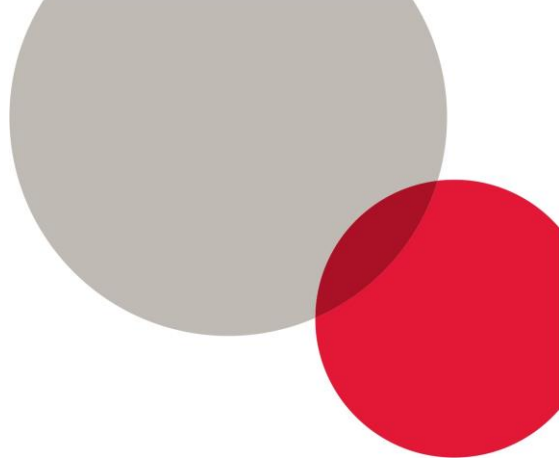
c slightly more than

- 2 *Now write sentences about the following bar chart, which shows changes in the quantities of imports of certain electronic goods. Use the words in the boxes.*

just over  
approximately  
just under    around  
nearly    slightly  
more than

halved    doubled    tripled  
fell by    rose by  
a quarter    a third





1 (DVD players)

.....

.....

2 (CD players)

.....

.....

3 (Televisions)

.....

.....

4 (Radios)

.....

.....

5 (Video recorders)

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