

Introduction

The IELTS writing test has two parts, or tasks. The first part is an information transfer task. This means you need to take information from a table, chart or diagram and present it in the form of a short written description. The second part is a discursive composition. For this task you are given a statement or an opinion about something and you must present your view.

The whole test takes an hour, but you will need more time for Task 2 than Task 1 because you have to write more words and it is worth more points. The test is organised like this:

	words	suggested time
Task 1: Information Transfer	150	20 minutes
Task 2: Discursive Composition	250	40 minutes

In this first lesson you'll...

- learn about the different kinds of writing you may be asked to do in the test
- practise reading and understanding tables
- look at different ways of expressing numbers
- practise 'brainstorming ideas' for compositions
- revise language for expressing purpose, cause and effect
- look at ways of writing 'problem and solution' type compositions

Activity 1 > The IELTS writing test - types of writing > 5 minutes

Below is a list of the types of writing you have to do in the IELTS test. Sort the list into writing for Task 1 and writing for Task 2.

compare and contrast points of view
 describe an object or system
 evaluate and challenge ideas or an argument
 explain how something works
 justify an opinion
 organise, present and compare data
 describe the stages of a process
 present a solution to a problem
 present evidence to support an opinion

Task 1: Information Transfer	Task 2: Discursive Composition

IELTS WRITING TASK 1: TABLES
Activity 2 > Understanding Tables > 10 minutes

In IELTS Writing Task 1 you may be asked to describe data given in a table. Before you begin writing, take a few minutes to 'read' and understand the table. Think about the following:

- Read the instructions carefully - these will tell you what the table shows.
- Does the table have a title? If it does, read it *carefully* so that you know what the table is about.
- Is the table static or dynamic? Static tables show data at one point in time; dynamic tables show how data changes over time. This will affect the language you use in your description.
- What do the columns and rows represent?
- What unit of measurement does each cell represent? Kilometres, euros, litres...??
- Be clear about what the table *does not* show!

Read this IELTS task and then decide whether the statements which follow are true or false or if it is impossible to tell from the data. Choose **T / F / Im**

The table below shows how the percentage of British adults who use the Internet changed over a five year period.

Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown below.

Percentage of adults in Great Britain who have used the Internet for 3 months before being interviewed

		October 2000	October 2001	October 2002	October 2003	October 2004	October 2005
Age groups	16-24	70	78	85	88	90	87
	25-44	53	61	73	76	79	81
	45-54	46	50	59	64	67	75
	55-64	24	30	41	45	48	51

Source: National Statistics (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/copyright.asp> for copyright details)

Questions:

- 1 The table shows the number of people in Great Britain who use the Internet. **T / F / Im**
- 2 The table shows the percentage of people in Great Britain who used the Internet between July and October each year. **T / F / Im**
- 3 The table shows change over time (dynamic). **T / F / Im**
- 4 In October 2000, more 16 to 24 year olds used the Internet than 25 to 44 year olds. **T / F / Im**
- 5 The lowest percentage of Internet use is with the 55 to 64 year olds. **T / F / Im**
- 6 In October 2004, only forty eight 55 to 64 year olds used the Internet. **T / F / Im**
- 7 10 per cent of 16-24 year olds didn't use the Internet in October 2004. **T / F / Im**
- 8 The percentage of people in Great Britain who used the Internet increased over the five years. **T / F / Im**

Activity 3 > Ways of expressing numbers > 5 minutes

There are a number of different ways of expressing the same figure in English. For example, we can say 'a half', 'one in two' or 'fifty per cent' and they all mean the same. It's a good idea to vary the way you express figures in your description of the table or chart.

All the phrases below can be used to describe figures. Group them into phrases which mean the same.

a fifth
 a quarter
 a tenth
 a third
 just over sixty per cent
 just over thirty per cent
 one in five
 one in four
 one in ten
 one in three
 seventy five per cent
 ten per cent
 three out of four
 three quarters
 twenty five per cent
 twenty per cent
 two out of three
 two thirds

Activity 4: Ways of expressing numbers > 10 minutes.

Now look again at the table about Internet usage from Activity 2. Use expressions from Activity 3 to complete these sentences about the table. Remember to use a variety of ways to describe the figures.

16-24 year olds had the greatest Internet usage. In 2004, for example, 1 [] out of ten people in this age group used the Internet.

In 2001 just over 2 [] of 25-44 year olds used the Internet. Two years later, the figure was just over 3 [].

For the 45-54 age group, Internet usage rose from just under 4 [] in 2000 to 5 [] in 2005.

In 2000, only one in 6 [] 55-64 year olds used the Internet. This figure had risen to over 7 [] by 2005.

Activity 5: Using quantifiers (1) > 5 minutes

In Part 1 of the writing test you may have to describe amounts. You'll need to be careful using quantifiers - words like 'much', 'many', 'some' etc.

Put the words and expressions below into the correct group.

a large amount
a little
a lot of
a small amount
a small number
few
fewer
fewer and fewer
less
less and less
many
more
most
much
no
none of
several
the majority of

Used with countable nouns (men, women, cars, hours etc)	Used with uncountable nouns (time, money, water etc)	Used with both countable and uncountable nouns

Activity 6 > Using quantifiers (2) > 10 minutes

The table below shows how men and women spend their time each day. It's a static table - i.e. it doesn't show changes over time, but compares values at one point in time. Notice also that the table has two sets of figures: the black figures show time spent in minutes, the blue figures show the actual number of people asked who said that they do these activities.

Now look at the table and complete the description by choosing the best word or phrase for each gap.

Time spent by adults (over 16) on daily activities

	Men (total interviewed = 100)	Women (total interviewed = 100)	All
Activity	Average minutes per day (Number of people participating in activity)		
Sleep	503 100	513 100	508
Personal care i.e. wash/dress	41 97	52 98	47
Housework	126 85	215 96	173
Entertainment and culture	6 5	6 6	6
Hobbies and games	26 26	16 22	21
Watching TV	161 88	137 87	148
Childcare	11 14	28 24	20

(adapted from National Statistics information (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/copyright.asp> for copyright details))

The table shows how **1 [much/many]** time people spend on certain daily activities. Not surprisingly, everybody surveyed spent **2 [a lot of/many]** time sleeping. However, men spent slightly **3 [fewer/less]** time sleeping than women did. After sleeping, the next most time-consuming activity was housework, taking up 178 minutes per day, on average. Again, though, there was a marked difference between men and women, with women spending **4 [many/much]** more minutes per day on this activity than men. In addition, a greater **5 [amount/number]** of women than men reported that they spent time on housework and childcare. In contrast, men spent a greater **6 [amount/number]** of time on their hobbies and games than women did. Very **7 [few/many]** people surveyed spent much free time on entertainment and culture. For the **8 [majority/most]** of people, free time was spent watching television. Almost nine out of ten people reported that they spent **9 [several/lots]** hours watching TV every day.

Activity 7 > Example Task 1 > 10 minutes

Look at the example task 1 question below and then try to complete the sample answer using language we've looked at so far in this lesson.

The table below shows the prevalence of smoking amongst adults in Great Britain. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown below.

Cigarette smoking status by age and gender

	Light smoker	Heavy smoker	All smokers
Men	% of population		
16-19	19	4	23
20-24	32	5	36
25-34	26	9	35
35-49	18	12	31
50-59	13	12	26
60 and over	10	5	15
Women			
16-19	24	1	25
20-24	25	5	29
25-34	22	6	28
35-49	19	9	28
50-59	14	8	22
60 and over	10	4	14

The table shows [] and compares the prevalence of smoking []. It's clear from the figures that smoking is most common []. Nearly [] men and exactly [] women are light smokers at this age, while [] are heavy smokers. The figures also show that as age increases []. This trend is true for []. The most disturbing figures are those for 16 to 19 year olds. Around []. The percentage for girls [] in this age group, but it seems that teenage boys [].

IELTS WRITING TASK 2: PROBLEM AND SOLUTION
Activity 8 > Brainstorming ideas (1): 5 minutes

In Part 2 of the IELTS test you may be asked to write a composition discussing the causes of a problem and suggesting possible solutions. Here's an example:

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no special knowledge of the following topic.

Overfishing of the world's oceans threatens many species with extinction and is putting the livelihood of millions of people around the world at risk. What are the causes of this problem and what can be done to prevent it from happening?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Before you begin writing, spend a few minutes to think of ideas related to the topic. At this stage, don't worry too much about how you're going to express or organise these ideas - just 'brainstorm' the topic and jot down notes.

Spend 3 minutes brainstorming ideas for the example question above. Use these headings:

Causes of overfishing

Ways to prevent overfishing

Activity 9 > brainstorming ideas (2) > 5 minutes

Here are some ideas we've 'brainstormed' for the composition. Put each idea under the appropriate heading.

'factory fishing' makes huge catches too easy
 bring in laws to protect fish species and limit fishing
 create an international body to police the oceans and enforce laws
 fishing provides a quick return for companies and governments
 huge areas of the world's oceans are not protected by environmental laws
 illegal fishing is difficult to police
 put taxes on fishing which make it less attractive to companies
 raise public awareness through the media
 the problem does not get enough publicity
 there's a growing demand for fish worldwide
 ban the fishing of certain species of fish

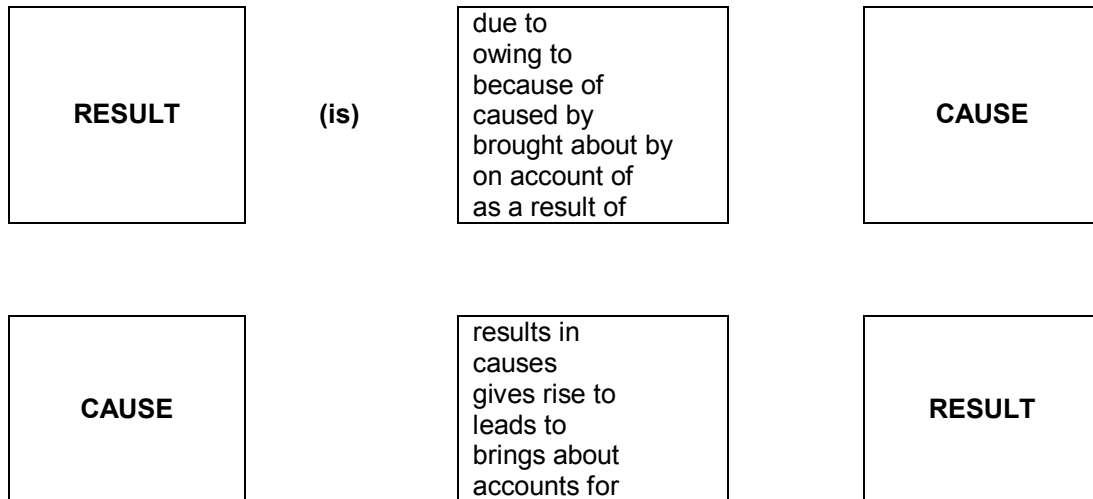
Causes of overfishing

Ways to prevent overfishing

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Activity 10 > Expressing cause and effect (1) > 10 minutes

If you are asked to discuss a problem and possible solutions in Task 2, you will need to be able to outline the causes of the problem and show what effects these have. Here are some useful expressions for doing this.



Each of the sentences below describes a cause and effect relationship. Choose the best expression to complete the gap.

- 1 Global warming is partly **[as a result of/causes]** increasing emissions of greenhouse gases.
- 2 The decline of manufacturing industry **[on account of/brought about]** high unemployment in many countries.
- 3 People are more worried about crime **[on account of/brings about]** exaggerated reports in the media.
- 4 Increasing pressure to work overtime **[owing to/causes]** parents to spend less time with their children.
- 5 Drugs for the treatment of AIDS remain unavailable to millions **[owing to/gives rise to]** their high cost.
- 6 Globalisation **[as a result of/has given rise to]** a bland 'pop culture' followed by young people worldwide.
- 7 Poor discipline at school **[is due to/leads to]** poor parenting at home.
- 8 The desire for higher profits **[on account of/leads to]** companies setting up in countries where labour is cheap.

Activity 11 > Expressing cause and effect (2) >5 minutes.

Now let's see how these expressions can be used in our composition about the overfishing of the world's oceans. Complete the paragraph by using appropriate phrases from activity 9.

There are a number of reasons why overfishing of the world's fish stocks has reached crisis levels. Firstly, catching large numbers of fish has become very easy [1] modern methods of factory fishing. Secondly, the scarcity of fish [2] higher prices, making fishing a more attractive industry for governments and companies to invest in. This [3] even more fishing and [4] a vicious circle of increasing demand and diminishing supply. Furthermore, fishing in most parts of the world remains uncontrolled [5] the lack of environmental laws. Finally, where laws do exist they are difficult to enforce [6] the lack of an international maritime police authority.

Activity 12 > Suggesting solutions > 10 minutes

Once you have discussed the causes of the problem, you are ready to put forward your suggestions for possible solutions. For every suggestion you make, you need to back up your argument by explaining how this idea will help. Again, there are useful words and phrases for you to do this.

The phrases below are used to show the purpose or reason for doing something. Match each one with the verb form which follows it.

1	so (that) in this way
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A	to prevent overfishing
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2	with the purpose of
----------	---------------------

B	overfishing is prevented
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3	in order so as
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C	preventing overfishing
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Now complete this paragraph with phrases from above.

What can be done in [1] prevent fish species being wiped out by overfishing? One immediate measure is to put a complete ban on the fishing of certain species of fish [2] save them from extinction. Environmental agencies should work to give the problem a higher profile in the media [3] the public become more aware. Governments can help by imposing taxes on the fishing industry. [4], companies may be less likely to see fishing as an easy way to make money. Governments should also bring in stricter laws in order to protect fish stocks from uncontrolled factory fishing. Finally, an international body ought to be created [5] enforcing these laws worldwide.

Activity 13 > Example Task 2

Here's another example of a task 2 question requiring a 'problem and solution' approach. Spend five minutes brainstorming the question, and then write your composition, using language we have looked at during this lesson.

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no special knowledge of the following topic.

The numbers of indigenous peoples living traditional lives in the world's rainforests are becoming fewer and fewer. Within a few decades the last of these indigenous tribes may have disappeared forever. What are the causes of this problem and what can be done to prevent it from happening?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Lesson Review

In this em@il lesson you have:

- learnt about the different kinds of writing you may be asked to do in the test
- practised reading and understanding tables
- looked at different ways of expressing numbers
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