DOLLAR
- WRITING CLUB -
EST 2024

REPORT WRITING IN IELTS ACADEMIC

SPELT

ESSENTIAL REPORT WRITING SKILLS FOR IELTS ACADEMIC STUDENTS - *SPELT* OUT!

"..a perfect approach to Academic report writing" – M. Ross

Approach every IELTS academic report writing task with confidence. Find the facts, plan your response and deliver a high scoring IELTS report every time.

Mark Stanley
CEO – Founder – Dollar Writing Club

Introduction and welcome

We have spent years developing software that help students improve their writing. Dollar Writing Club delivers the passion my team and I have for helping students build good English writing skills.

Whilst DWC delivers great instant feedback and guidance on your writing, the greatest challenge of writing well actually begins with understanding what you have been asked to write about and then planning a response.

We watch many students facing a report task simply start blurting out numbers and facts from everywhere , constructing their response on the fly as they go. It's quite easy now with Word and Google to simply start typing, fixing and changing ideas as you go. Cut and paste become your friend, disorganised writing becomes your habit. Then along comes Grammarly and spell / grammar checkers that transform your words into sentences that you have not written and cannot recreate on exam day.

We don't see enough students taking the time to think about the question, the facts and what the facts are showing. You must interpret the charts, facts or process diagram and plan an approach before you start writing. Write to a good plan and your writing will improve ten fold.

In this book, we give you practical advice on how to write a high scoring IELTS report. In fact, we have SPELT out what you need to focus on. That's a pun! The acronym SPELT will guide you through identifying the key facts, planning your response and how to assemble a Band 9 report every time.

Register for Dollar Writing Club online where you can practice over 45 different General and Academic essay tasks. Use the online writing scaffolds to develop your SPELT response. SPELT is a word that is easy to remember – so don't forget!

Register : https://www.literatu.com/dwc/

Yours in good writing and planning

Mark
(P.S let me know how you go. Email me at : support@literatu.com)

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Report Writing with S P E L T

S	Select the Most Important Information
P	Provide Support
E	Establish Useful Language
L	Link Everything Together
T	Tie Up Loose Ends

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SPELT
elect the Most Important Information

Most Task 1 questions give you a graph/table/diagram and then ask the following:

> **"*Summarise* *by selecting and reporting on the* *main features* *and* *make comparisons*".**

You will be assessed on your ability to concisely summarise the information, identify the main features and establish relationships between variables by making any relevant comparisons.

You need to analyse the question and information displayed in the graph/table/diagram and select the most important information.

Spend 5-8 minutes analysing and planning your summary.

Don't start writing your answer straight away!

When under exam conditions it is important to manage your time carefully. Many students start writing their answer straight away because they are concerned that they will run out of time. This usually results in a poorly written answer. Make sure you take your time in the planning stage and you will feel more comfortable when you actually start writing your answer.

Brainstorm

Spend the first three to five minutes looking over the graph or diagram, brainstorming ideas and selecting the most important information. In this stage, you should write down ANY ideas regardless of how good they may initially seem. Once you have a comprehensive list of ideas, the main points and any relationships between them will be easy to identify.

Usually, you will find a graph, table or diagram that has multiple sets of data or information. As you will be dealing with more than one set of data you will have the ability to ***describe*** and ***compare***. The best way to respond to a Task 1 question is to build a short introduction, paraphrasing the question and giving a short overview of the data. Then simply write two paragraphs that describe and compare data from each of the data sources. There is no need for a conclusion.

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elect the Most Important Information

Introduction – (approx 40 words)

One sentence to ***paraphrase*** the question – Do NOT use the same words from the question!

One sentence ***Overview*** of the key information or trends. Do NOT quote statistics in this sentence.

Body Paragraph 1 – Describe Data Source(s) (approx 60 words)

A sentence describing the data and the broad trend it shows

One or two sentences outlining the minor details of the data source

Body Paragraph 2 – Compare Data Source(s) (approx 60 words)

A sentence describing the second data source and the broad trend it shows

One or two sentences outlining the minor details of the data source

The minimum word limit is 150 words. You will be penalised if you write less than this. If you write more you will not be penalised.

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SPELT Example

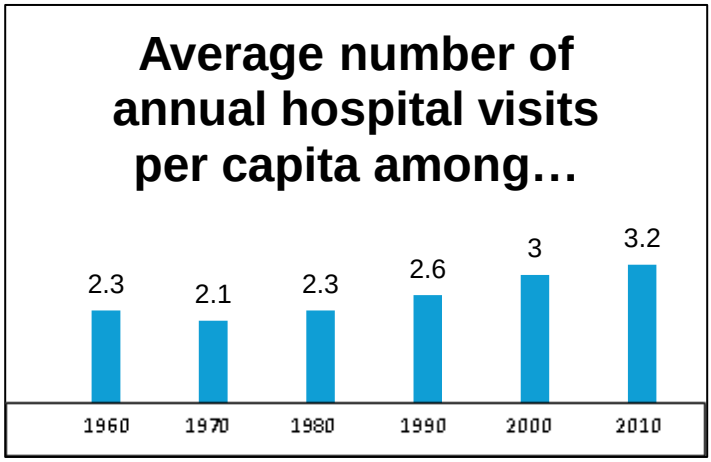
Select the Most Important Information

Example Question:

The chart and table below shows the age ranges of the total Sydney population and average annual hospital visits for Sydney Residents.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



Sydney Age Demographics (1998)	
Age Range	**% of Population**
0-12	14%
13-19	12%
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50-64	24%
64+	14%

From analysing the data in the table and graph, you should be able to record a number of main points. Try to write about seven or eight sentences describing the data. Then, look back over your notes and look for **key trends**. At this point you will decide on the most important piece of information that will form your **Overview** sentence in your Introduction. This will also establish your main argument. Check the notes below. These notes may appear in your plan.

- ❑ *In 1998 Sydney had a population that was heavily weighted with people aged between 35 and 64 > an aging population.*
- ❑ *In 1998 the children and the elderly populations are the same.*
- ❑ *The same number of hospital visits occurred in 1960 and 1980.*
- ❑ *Between 1960 and 1980 there was little change in hospital visits.*
- ❑ *A steady rise in average annual hospital visits between 1980 and 2010.*
- ❑ ***As Sydney residents get older, hospital visits increase (main trend).***
- ❑ *Older people rely more on the hospital system.*

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rovide Support

You have listed your main ideas and now it's time to arrange these ideas into logical order and provide some supporting information. Supporting information should back up your main idea or trend. Your supporting information should come from summarising the most important features of each set of data (or process).

Choose the two main trends or process highlights and write two or three supporting sentences under each idea. Here, you should be more specific with key statistics or values.

Overview
Main trend – *this should already be established from the previous exercise.*

Main Idea 1 (Data Source 1)
Supporting sentence 1
Supporting sentence 2
Supporting sentence 3

Main Idea 2 (Data Source 2)
Supporting sentence 1
Supporting sentence 2
Supporting sentence 3

Don't worry too much about using fancy vocabulary in this section. The goal is to establish each of the points that you will make in your body paragraphs. In the next section you can start to identify some appropriate higher level vocabulary to use.

DO NOT USE YOUR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
This is an analysis of the data or process provided. Do **NOT** elaborate using your own knowledge that supports the particular idea. For example, you may work in the health system and know a little bit about the trends in hospital visits. Resist the urge to comment based on your experience. Examiners are looking for your ability to report on specific data or processes that they have provided. You will not score well if you discuss your personal view of the topic.

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SPELT Example

rovide Support

Example Question:

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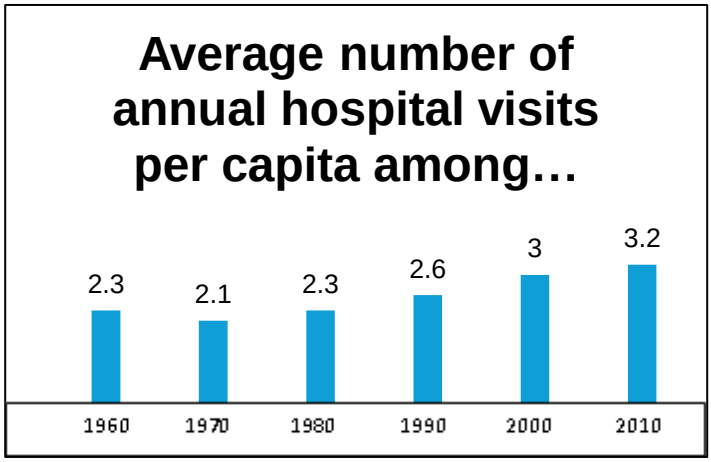

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Create an Overview Sentence

Sydney has an aging population which results in increased annual hospital visits.

Main Idea 1 (Data Source 1) – Aging Population

- ❑ *Children and teenage Sydney residents make up 14 and 12 percent of Sydney's overall population respectively.*
- ❑ *People between 20 and 34 account for 16 percent of the total Sydney population and this figure grows by increments of 4 percent for the next 2 demographics, those between 35 and 49 and those between 50 and 64.*

Main Idea 2 – (Data Source 2) – Rise in average number of hospital visits

- ❑ *The figures given between 1960 and 1980 appear to only differ slightly, at roughly 2.3 trips per year.*
- ❑ *A steady increase is seen over the next 30 years, with Sydney people ultimately reaching 3.2 annual hospital visits in 2010.*

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stablish Useful Language

Before writing your final report, spend 2 minutes to brainstorm some useful language. Try to achieve two things in this section:

List alternative vocabulary/phrases to use in the introduction to paraphrase the question

List a number of alternative words or phrases that you will use to describe the main trends, so that you are not repeating the same words and you are applying emphasis when needed.

Describing Changes

When describing changes, we can demonstrate good control of grammar by using words like ***rise***, ***fall*** and ***increase***. These can be nouns or verbs:

VERB	NOUN	VERB	NOUN
gain	gain	fall	fall
jump	jump	decrease	decrease
extend	extension	drop	drop
improve	improvement	slump	slump
grow	growth	dive	dive
increase	increase	slip	slip
escalate	escalation	decline	decline
develop	development	slide	slide
rise	rise	collapse	collapse
climb	climb	plunge	plunge

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Describing Changes *(continued)*

- Sydney saw *a* ***significant increase*** in the price of cars. (Noun)
  The cost of cars in Sydney ***increased significantly***. (Verb)
- There was a ***rise*** in car prices between 1989 and 1994. (Noun)
  Car prices ***rose*** between 1989 and 1994. (Verb)
- There was *a* 9% ***fall*** in the average car price in London. (Noun)
  The average London car price ***fell*** by 9%. (Verb)
- *The injury rates* ***reached a high point / peaked*** *in 1996. (Verb)*
- *Participation rates* ***reached a low point / reached a trough*** *in 2001. (Verb)*
- *The exchange rates* ***levelled out*** *since the most recent election. (Verb)*
- *Gold markets* ***remain stable****. (Verb)*

You can describe increases and decreases by using fractions to show the size of the change over a certain period:

- *The cost of rents* ***doubled in less than*** *a year.*
- *Birth rates* ***have halved since*** *the turn of the century.*
- *By July, the price of petrol* ***had fallen by*** *a third.*
- *The number of school leavers going on to university* ***has risen by*** *a quarter since* 1980.

Make Approximations

It can be useful to make approximations. This can be especially useful when you don't have time to make your own calculations. For example, sales figures for oranges rose from 4000 kilos to 7850 kilos. You could say: *"Orange sales* ***almost doubled****."*

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Discussing the Future

- *In 2018, the proportion of people using the Internet in Britain **is expected to be about 25%.***
- *The figures for France and Spain **are likely to be lower**, at about 10% and 5% respectively.*
- *In 2020, **it is predicted that** Internet usage in both the Britain and France **will rise** to around 70% of the population.*
- *The figure for Spain **should reach** just over 25%.*

Perfect Tenses

- *The price of oil **has risen** by €0.10 every month since 2001*
- *Average temperatures **have been increasing** since the beginning of the century*
- *The population **will have reached** sixty million by 2030.*

Transitional Techniques

Use transition techniques to guide the reader between sentences and paragraphs. This makes your essay coherent and easy to read. Here is a list of useful transitional words and phrases.

- **Introduce time passing** - *before, after, afterward, immediately, suddenly, finally, later*
- **Show ranking** - *first, second, third, more important, above all*
- **Indicate cause** - *because, since, for this reason*
- **Indicate effect** - *as a result, consequently, therefore, hence*
- **Introduce Comparison** - *similarly, likewise, just as, in the same manner*
- **Indicate Contrast** - *however, on the other hand, conversely, in contrast, whereas, instead, despite*
- **Add Emphasis** - *in fact, indeed, certainly, above all, significant, predominantly, overwhelmingly*
- **Summarise and conclude** - *in summary, in conclusion, to conclude, to sum up, therefore*

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stablish Useful Language

Use of Prepositions

They are only small words, but getting them right will help your score for *Grammatical Range and Accuracy*:

- ***in*** *[month / year / morning, afternoon etc]*
- ***at*** *[9 o'clock, 10.30 am etc]*
- ***from****...[a point in time]...****to****… [another point]*
- ***between****…[a point in time]..****and****… [another point]*
- ***during*** *[a period of time]*
- ***before*** *[a point in time or a period of time]*
- ***after*** *[a point in time or a period of time]*
- ***by*** *[a point of time arrived at]*
- ***until*** *[a point of time reached]*

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SPELT Example
Establish Useful Language

Example Question:

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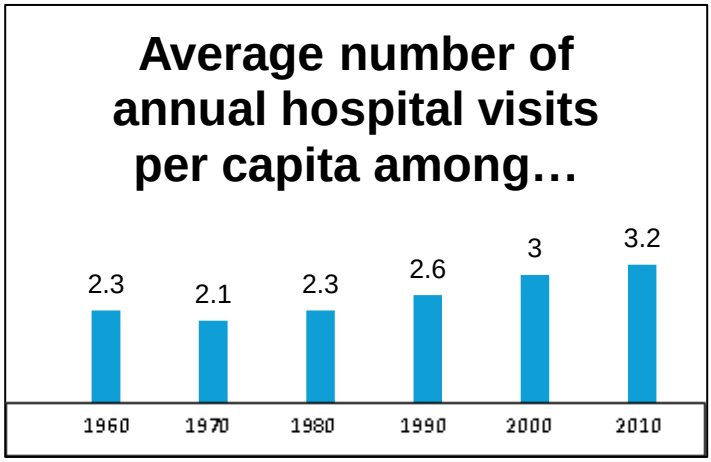
Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



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Useful Language

*The table **presents**…*

*The chart **shows**…*

*…**appears to reveal** an aging population*

*Children and teenagers **make up** 14 and 12 per cent*

*People between 20 and 34 **account for** 16 per cent*

*The elderly demographic **is equal to that of** Sydney children.*

*A **steady increase** is seen… over the next 30 years, with Sydney people **ultimately reaching** 3.2 annual hospital visits in 2010.*

*…when looking at the table and graph **comparatively***

***It is expected that** the annual number of hospital visits **will also rise**.*

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SPELT *ink Everything Together*

Your plan should now be complete. You have analysed the graph, table or diagram, selected a series of main ideas and brainstormed appropriate supporting language. You now have about 10-15 minutes to start your final draft, linking everything together.

Put your writing points in a logical order. Each idea must flow in a smooth, sensible path, so that the reader will go smoothly from one idea to the next. Readers must have a sense of continuity as they read your paper. You don't want to have a paper that jumps back and forth.

Begin by expanding on the ideas in the sequence that you have set for yourself. Pace yourself. Don't spend too much time on any one of the ideas that you are expanding upon. You want to have time for all of them. Make sure you watch your time. It can be a daunting task to cram a lot of information down in words in a short amount of time, but if you pace yourself, you can get through it all.

Introduction

- A quick paraphrasing of the diagram or table. Use your own words to briefly explain what the diagram or table is about.
- Give an overview, explaining the main message of the graph, table or diagram

Body Paragraph 1

- Take the first main idea and use your supporting points to expand further.
- Usually, your first point will be based on the first set of data or process.
- Use any examples where possible.

Body Paragraph 2

- Take the second main idea and use your supporting points to expand further. Usually, your second point will be based on the second set of data or process.
- Use any examples where possible.

DWC

SPELT Example

ink Everything Together

Example Question:

The chart and table below shows the age ranges of the total Sydney population and average annual hospital visits for Sydney Residents.

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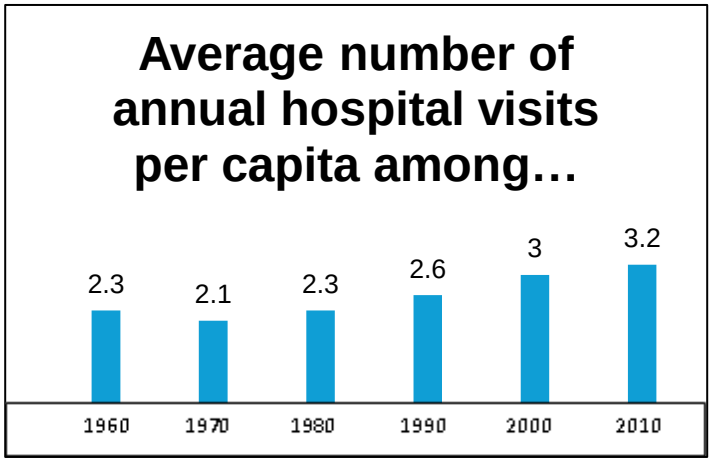

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Introduction

The data in the chart and table provide information on the demographics of Sydney people visiting hospitals over a 50 year period. There seems to be a correlation between the age of residents and the number of hospital visits they make.

Body Paragraph 1

The table presents Sydney age demographics in 1998 and appears to reveal an aging population. People between 20 and 64 accounted for 60 per cent of the total population. The populations of the elderly, children and teenagers were a lot lower at around 12 to14 per cent.

Body Paragraph 2

The chart shows the average annual number of hospital trips a Sydney person makes. The figures given between 1960 and 1980 appear to only differ slightly, at roughly 2.3 trips per year. However, a steady increase is seen over the next 30 years, with people ultimately reaching 3.2 annual hospital visits in 2010. As these older Sydney demographics continue to age, it is expected that the annual number of hospital visits will also rise.

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SPELT*ie Up Loose Ends*

Congratulations, you've almost finished Task 1 of the Writing test. You now have 3-5 minutes to check over your work. If you spent enough time planning effectively there shouldn't be too much to change, but as you are writing under pressure you are bound to make a few spelling and grammatical errors. Make sure you leave a little time to fix these errors.

Checklist:

- ❑ Have you written a minimum 150 words? Don't count them…you should know.
    - You will be penalized for answers shorter than the required minimum limit.
    - Don't keep writing about a subject just to add words and sentences
    - Don't start repeating yourself.
    - Expand on the ideas that you identified in the brainstorming session if you need to write more
- ❑ Reread and make sure that everything you've written makes sense and flows.
- ❑ Clean up any spelling or grammar mistakes that you might have made.
- ❑ Make sure there aren't any half-finished sentences.
- ❑ Make sure there aren't any sentences that run on; saying the same thing twice.
- ❑ Check for sentences that are too short or too long.
- ❑ If the sentence is too short, look to see if you have an identifiable subject and verb.
- ❑ If it is too long, break it up into two separate sentences.
- ❑ Watch out for any 'big' words you may have used. It's good to use difficult vocabulary words, but only if you are positive that you are using them correctly. Your paper has to be coherent and cohesive; it doesn't have to be fancy. You're not trying to impress anyone with your vocabulary, just your ability to develop and express ideas.

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Tables, Charts, Graphs and Process Diagrams

These are the four common ways in which Task 1 information can be displayed

Tables

Funding Amounts for the Special Diabetes Program for Indians Community-Directed Diabetes Programs By IHS Area		
Area	2004	2005
ABERDEEN	$9,432,052	$9,432,052
ALASKA	$8,963,599	$8,963,599
ALBUQUERQUE	$7,395,069	$7,319,223
BEMIDJI	$7,777,210	$7,777,210
BILLINGS	$5,231,685	$5,277,397
CALIFORNIA	$6,344,378	$6,338,378
NASHVILLE	$5,462,036	$5,462,036
NAVAJO	$14,056,955	$14,056,955
OKLAHOMA	$17,950,277	$18,908,010
PHOENIX	$13,674,139	$13,674,139
PORTLAND	$5,734,543	$5,734,543
TUCSON	$2,539,246	$2,539,246
URBAN	$7,343,512	$7,343,512
Total	$111,904,701	$112,826,300

The word "**Table**" is used to indicate data displayed in a rows and columns format.

Tables are possibly the most common form of data display.

- A Table will have a general title, and will consist of rows and columns.
- The rows are horizontal, the columns are vertical. Both rows and columns should be titled to indicate the data recorded within.
- A common format would be that the rows will contain a number of major named variables, and the columns will contain year by year values, over a period.

- In analyzing tables, the general title should be noted as to its statement of variables, such as "yearly expenditures of taxpayers on food items for period 1990-2010".
- The analysis should then be focused on each food type, its relativity to other food types, and the year to year variability.
- Sometimes, sub-totals of the data values are shown. When sub-totals are aggregated for you, they highlight a key point that should be discussed.
- It is a good idea to total the data that is mentioned in the title so as to look for major trends.

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Tables *(continued)*

Funding Amounts for the Special Diabetes Program for Indians Community-Directed Diabetes Programs By IHS Area		
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Total	$111,904,701	$112,826,300

Units of Measurement - Tables

- A table will generally cover a period in time, so it is regarded as dynamic. It will show changes over time, and so the analysis should be based on changes, both over time (horizontal), and within the variables (vertical).
- Other tables may take on a variety of relationships, such as pressure, temperature and volume. Look for patterns and discontinuities in both the horizontal and vertical data.

- Always check the following sources of data presented in in TABLE format.
  - **Dates –** which indicate the period under consideration
  - **Units of Measurement –** dollars, other currency, volumes, quantities, distances, lengths, percentages
  - **Column Totals –** these give total figures to which each variable can be compared and percentages calculated
  - **Relative size of the Variables –** concentrate on the larger values. Follow Pareto's Law – 80% of value is in 20% of number. Observe and describe the behaviour of the major variables firstly.
  - **Patterns –** Tables will exhibit patterns of data, such as consistently large numbers for one or more variables, and consistently small numbers for other variables.
- Any change in the pattern is worthy of comment. These are (non-graphical) trends, but observable as increasing or decreasing over time.
- Each major variable will exhibit a trend, which will agree with, or contradict, other trends of major variables. **The comment will be "why is this so?"**

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Tables, Charts, Graphs and Process Diagrams

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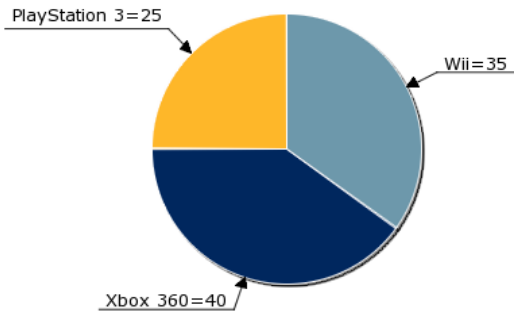
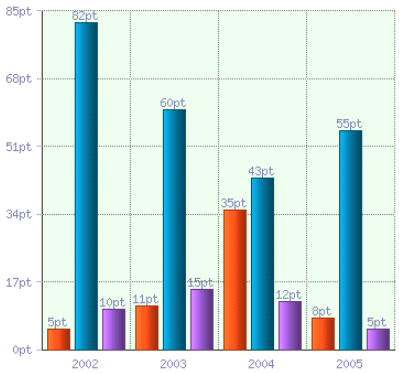
Charts





Pie Chart **Bar Chart**

The word “Charts” is used to cover a variety of diagrams which display information in a graphical manner.

The information is usually numerical and the purpose of the chart is to make the numerical information more easily understood by displaying it. Meaningful relationships can be easily seen.

There are three important things to look at in any chart before you write:

1. Title of the chart - this will tell you what is being shown overall, and it usually gives the time period that it represents (e.g. 1980-2000)
2. Titles of the vertical and horizontal axes - these will tell you what the units of measurement are (e.g. centimetres, kilos, euros) and what groups are being compared
3. Key or legend (if there is one) - this will tell you what groups or time periods are shown.

[**Tip:** *The titles and labels on the chart also give you useful vocabulary to use in your* ***overview***]

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Tables, Charts, Graphs and Process Diagrams

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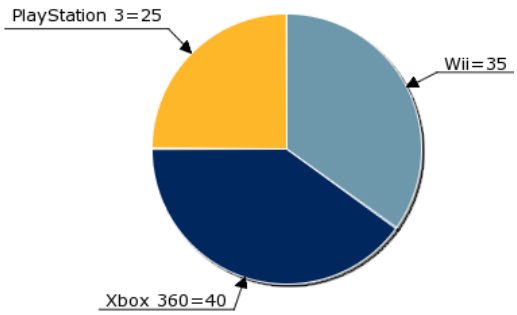
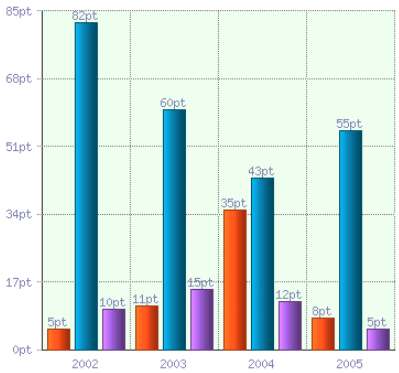
Charts *(continued)*





Pie Chart **Bar Chart**

Bar Charts

Bar charts are used to compare two or more sets of data. For example, "Comparison of consumer spending and disposable income 1990-2010".

- Bar Charts cover a stated period of time, usually several years.
- A series of slim rectangles would be shown at each yearly interval, with one rectangle showing consumer spending, and an adjacent rectangle showing disposable income.
- Their heights are to scale and relative differences can be readily seen.

Pie Charts

Pie charts are by their name, circular like a pie. They show, **for a stated point in time**, the relative "share" of the pie which each variable occupies.

- Often the pie chart is given a general title, such as "distribution of income sources for the total population 2010".
- There may be more than one pie chart that you are asked to compare. This kind of chart is called a *static chart*.
- When you describe a static chart, you only need to use simple tenses (present simple or past simple, for example – "32% of people in NSW are connected to the internet." or "Some 30% of people were connected to the internet in 2001."

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Tables, Charts, Graphs and Process Diagrams

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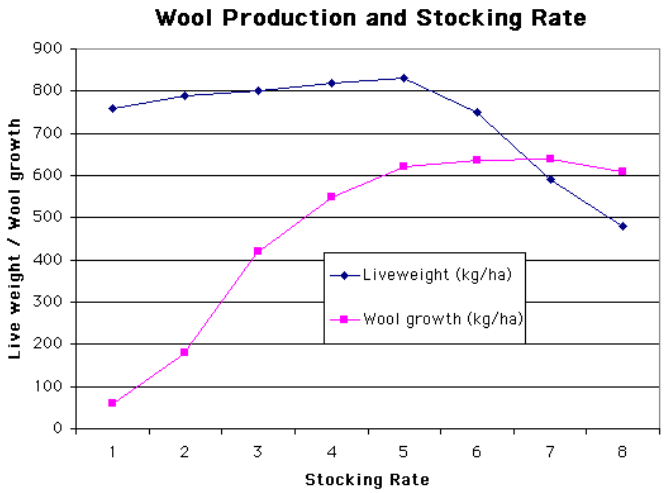
Graphs

Graphs will show lines (or curves) of the behaviour of named variables over a period of time, such as several years.



The first step in analysing such a diagram is to take note of the major items displayed.

- It may be a simple and single graph such as “trend line of Consumer Spending 1990 – 2010”.
- There may be more than one graph shown, such as “trend lines of **Consumer Spending** and **Disposable Income** 1990-2010”.
- In general terms the title of the diagram will disclose the content of the information displayed. Graphs cover a stated period of time.
- Graphs are generally dynamic, and exhibit trends from one year to another:
    - If a trend line is flat – comment on *plateau*
    - If a trend line is upward sloping – comment in *increase*
    - If a trend line is downward sloping – comment on *decrease*

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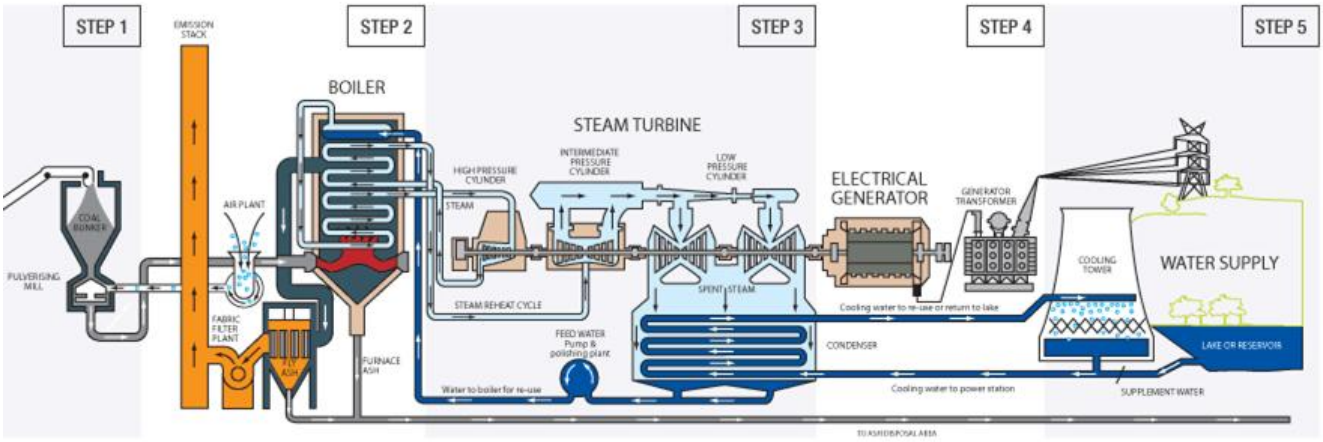
These are the four common ways in which Task 1 information can be displayed

Process Diagrams and Flow Charts

These kinds of questions usually relate to the following formula:

Inputs + Process = Outputs



Often the question gives a summary or title to the diagram. This gives an initial indication of the overall purpose of the diagram and the comment required. This should be closely examined.

E.g. *"The diagram above shows a process of turning water into electricty.*

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant."

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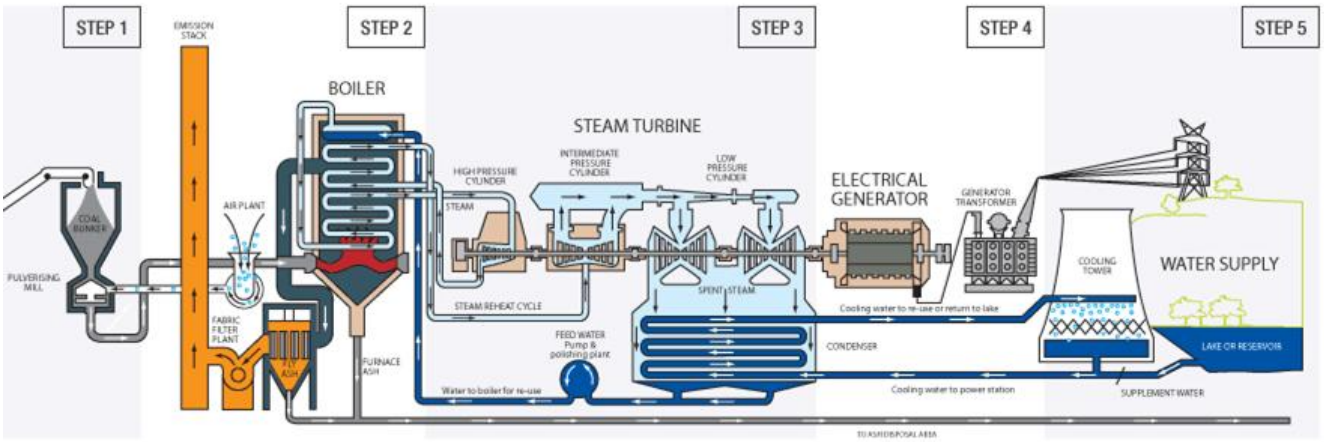
Process Diagrams and Flow Charts *(continued)*



Analysis should relate to the *water supply* (**inputs**), the *generation* (**process**) and the resulting *electricity* (**outputs**).

- The process or flow chart will have a title which should indicate the general process and/or its purpose.
- It may indicate data such as volumes, or values, for each variable involved in the process.
- Process steps will be linked by connecting lines to each step, and flows shown by arrows on the lines indicating the direction of the process step flow.
- The next step is to analyse each of these operations further and comment on features of each component of the process.

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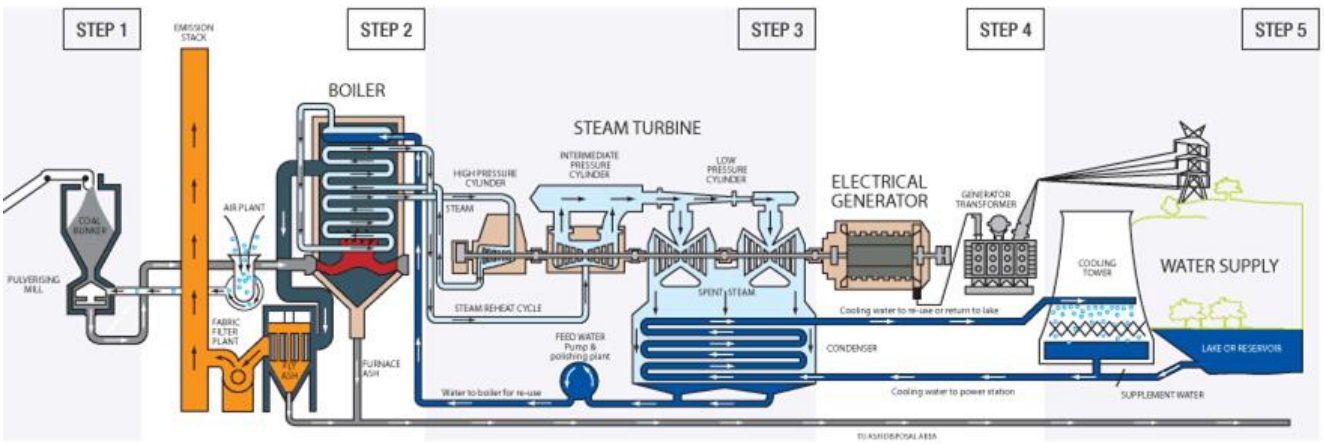
Tables, Charts, Graphs and Process Diagrams

These are the four common ways in which Task 1 information can be displayed

Process Diagrams and Flow Charts *(continued)*



Points to consider when analysing a process:

- The main sections of the diagram, and the component parts.
- The relationships between the major parts.
- The sequence of the parts/operations shown in the diagram.
- Other information supplied such as input and output volumes and/or processing costs .

Units of Measurement

- Take note of the units of measurement. If it is money, is it expressed in thousands (000) or millions (000,000).
- If it is time, then it may be in years, months, or weeks.
- Relate your answer to the correct units of measurement.
- It may be useful if the changes in relationships are expressed as percentages, as these will reveal more quantitative information for comment.

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