

Writing about Graphs

Before you Begin

Underline key words. Write related words - turn nouns into verbs, verbs into nouns, adjectives into adverbs, etc. Write opposite words, similar words, synonyms, etc.

Circle and highlight the graph. Use arrows. Make notes. Circle the biggest, the smallest. stable or unchanging parts, sudden increases, etc.

Identify trends. A trend is the overall idea of the graph

- what is happening/what happened
- the main change over time
- the most noticeable thing about the graph
- the pattern over time
- the pattern for different places or groups or people.

Most IELTS graphs will have two trends, or there will be two graphs with a trend in each. You could write about the two trends in two separate paragraphs. Make sure you have identified the trends in the graph. If you don't, you can't get IELTS Band 6.

While you Write: Layout

Introduction

- First sentence: Describe the graph. You can use some slightly different words or word forms from those on the question paper, but be careful to give the full information. Start "The graph shows"
- Second sentence: This gives the trend or trends. You can put two trends in this sentence or only one - you could keep the other one for the conclusion. Start "Overall, ..."

Paragraph 1: Trend 1

- Start with a sentence with no number. "City size increased sharply over the period." "The most obvious trend in the graph is that women are having fewer babies." "Oil production has increased slightly in all the countries in the graph"
- Follow this sentence with an example (sentence with number) and perhaps another example (another sentence with number). Keep alternating.

Paragraph 2: Trend 2

- Start with a sentence with no number. “City size increased sharply over the period.”
- Give an example (sentence with number) and perhaps another example (Sentence with number)

Conclusion

- Finish by repeating the main trends, or identify a second trend. Use different vocabulary.
- Don't have any numbers in the conclusion (you could use words like "most", "the majority" "a minority", "a small number").
- Don't give an opinion.

While You Write: Some Don'ts

- Don't describe the X and Y axis. Give the information.
- Don't write about everything on the graph. Pick the biggest, the smallest, the main points, the main trends. Group similar things together
- Don't write about the line or the bar: ~~“The line went up,” “The bar went down.”~~ Instead, write about the idea. “The number of people going to work by train increased gradually.” “Oil production shot up in 1965”
- Make sure you write about the idea. Don't use shorthand: ~~“Men went up.” “Women went down.”~~ Instead, write about the real data: “The number of men at university fell dramatically,” “The percentage of female students getting a degree rose suddenly.”
- Don't use “I feel”, “as I have written,” “as you can see,” etc. Keep it academic.
- Don't start sentences with **But, So, Also, And, For, Since, Because, Although**

Word Length

Make sure you have 150 words. You should have some short sentences (about 6-10 words) and some long ones (12-18) words, but your average should be about 12 or 13 words per sentence.

A sentence without a number will usually be short. Use a mix - a sentence without a number followed by a sentence or two with a number.