

The Key to (Academic) IELTS Writing Task 1

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The Key to IELTS Writing Task 1 (AC)

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این مجموعه با لوگوی مرجع زبان ایرانیا ن
به صورت نشر برخط و حامل به ثبت رسیده است .
کپی برداری از آن خلاف قانون، شرع و اخلاق است و شامل پیگرد خواهد شد.

A friendly note to readers and users:

This page is to appreciate you for purchasing “The Key to IELTS Writing Task 1”. I hope it helps you with your IELTS test, especially writing Task 1 (AC).

It is crucial that you double your practice by trying to use some of the tips and strategies that you will be illustrated here. This is the way to improve your writing score. Of course, everybody has a different learning style and some students are more comfortable with applying their own learning style.

You will be shown various strategies and techniques, but do not feel that you have to do everything the way it has been explained in this book – if you like some strategies or techniques, then use them practically. If there are hints which do not suit you, you can do them your own way or another way that you have been taught.

You will always hear different pieces of advice on ways to approach the IELTS writing Task 1 (AC) test as teachers have different methods – there is not always a right or wrong way, so it is important to be flexible – choose what works for you. For sure, whatever you do, you must ensure that you are meeting the criteria as set out in the band descriptors (Appendix 2).

Finally, as I hope you will understand, a lot of work has gone into creating and writing this work, so please do not share it on the Internet or post it anywhere as a free download.

Mohammad Naghavi

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To my brother

Acknowledgements:

I would like to extend my appreciation to a group of my colleagues who assisted me compiling and shaping the overall framework of this piece of work. First and foremost, I would like to appreciate Mr. Hoseini to bear the responsibility of editing this book. Second, my dear friend, Mr. Hajizadeh, must not be forgotten as he provided me with all the images, pictures and samples in the book.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

(Theoretical Issues)

What is the aim of the IELTS writing?

As always, to fully understand what you must do on the test, we must begin by looking at what the test is designed for. The IELTS writing test aims to find out whether or not you have the writing skills needed for academic study and professional life. Above band 6, we could say that it aims to measure how advanced or developed these skills are. Academic and professional writing involve describing and summarizing facts objectively, and clearly explaining your own ideas about serious topics. These skills are assessed in Task 1 and Task 2, respectively.

It is important to note again that you are **not** being tested on your ability to write an academic article. So, it is more accurate to think of the writing tasks as reflecting the general aim, which is often described as explaining the world around us.

How is the writing test assessed?

IELTS examiners will assess your two writing tasks using 4 criteria. Looking at these in detail helps us understand what the examiners are looking for at each level. Each criterion has 9 descriptors, which broadly describe the answers typically found at that band. The criteria that help us understand **what you must always include in your answer** are called Task Achievement (for task 1) and Task Response (for task 2). Your writing Task 2 is more important than your writing Task 1 answer; in fact, it is worth double the marks. To understand how this works, double your writing Task 2 score, add it to your writing Task 1 score and then divide the total by 3. So, if your Task 1 answer is band 7.5 and your Task 2 answer is band 6, your score would be 6.5 ($7.5 + 6 + 6 = 19 / 3 = 6.5$) (see appendix 1).

Task Achievement (TA) in Task 1

Task Achievement tells us that, a band 9 candidate will produce an answer that **fully** satisfies all the requirements of the task. So, we need to examine both the task and the Task Achievement criterion to understand what is required for the test. If we look at the instructions of **every IELTS Writing Task 1 question**, we can see that you must **summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant**. We are also told that you must **write at least 150 words**. Looking at the descriptors for Task Achievement, gives us an even more detailed idea of what you must include in your answer. One word that appears several times is **overview**.

What language should I use in Task 1?

A further note I will make here is that people often think of writing Task 1 in terms of describing data, a map, a diagram, or a process. However, every writing task has a topic, and it is your ability to report on that topic in an **impersonal way (DO NOT write about your personal ideas)**. You may need to do this using the language of data and numbers, or by explaining how something is made, or how something has changed over time. But, the same problems related to vocabulary, and the need to study a wide variety of general topics is true in both Task 1 and Task 2.

Is it ok to repeat the same vocabularies and grammatical structures in Task 1?

In Task 1, you are given a lot of information on the test question. For your introductory sentence and throughout your answer, it is important not to simply copy the information or the exact words from the question. Nevertheless, some keywords do not have commonly used synonyms. For example, if you are given information about a hospital, then you would need to use that same word in your answer. Similarly, you should not try to replace words like **pie chart** or **table**, and even the verb **show**, which often appears in the question because it is the most natural verb to use. Rather than trying to replace every word in the question, it is often better to simply try to rephrase it. You can do this by changing some of the words, or the word order, by making changes such as replacing a verb with a noun. Look at the following extract from one of the 8 practice tests at the end of The Official Cambridge Guide to IELTS (p.283):

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The maps below show the village of Stokeford in 1930 and in 2010.

Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and making comparisons where relevant.

We cannot rewrite this without using some of the same words, but we can make sure that it is different, like this:

The two maps show how a village called Stokeford changed between 1930 and 2010.

As I mentioned earlier, a common problem is some students try very hard to avoid using the verb **show**, but this is often the most natural or accurate verb to use. If you look for synonyms for the verb **show**, you will find a long list of verbs, but a list of words cannot give you enough information (see page 9).

How can I make sure that my answer is not repetitive?

Your writing will also be assessed based on the language that you use in your answer. If your language is repetitive, both in terms of the vocabulary you use, and the structures you use, then this will lower your score. Authentic IELTS writing tasks have several different elements that force you to use a variety of structures and vocabulary in your summary.

However, many of the free IELTS test questions you can find online force you to write in a repetitive way, because they are too narrow in their focus and do not contain enough variety. For example, a task that compares the number of books borrowed from four different libraries will force you to only write sentences about how many books were borrowed. There are not many synonyms for books, libraries, or borrowing that can be used naturally. Thus, your answer to a question like this will force you to practice being repetitive. The same as all parts of the test, it is important to look for **authentic, well-written IELTS test materials** when it comes to useful and beneficial test practice.

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Two key problems in IELTS writing

In my view, as well as causing the most anxiety, the writing test also attracts the widest range of opinions, theories, and advice. While many test writers attempt to write their own versions of IELTS reading tests, with the writing test this number is much greater. Such materials often do not reflect the real test questions, and in my view, a great deal of the myths and **bad advice** for IELTS writing stem from examples like this.

A further problem comes from the fact that writing is a very personal skill that requires us to explain what we think and how we feel. For some people this feels unnatural, and can make them

feel confusing; others even describe it as a painful process. As a way of solving this, perhaps people develop more coping strategies for writing than for other skills - ways of easing something they see as a problem task rather than an enjoyable one. As a result, people prefer to accept any existing ideas they have about the writing test, which may be why it takes a long time to convince people to try a new method and strategy.

Key idea 1:

You may find it difficult to let go of old ideas and beliefs about the writing test. Try to keep an open mind.

Why do I only have 20 minutes for Task 1?

As with reading, the time limit is an important factor on the test. When you have more time, you would be likely to write a longer and more detailed answer. However, academic Task 1 is a short task, and should aim to write a summary of only the main trends or patterns rather than a detailed description. Those who spend too much time on Task 1 tend to write too much and include minor details from the information in the question. Remember, the instructions tell you to **select information** to include. Try to train yourself to use the time limit to help you focus on only the most important information.

How can I practice for Task 1?

As usual, you should divide your time between free practice (to help you learn and develop language skills) and timed practice (to be sure you can complete the task effectively within 20 minutes). When practicing for writing Task 1, many people focus on describing data and numbers. However, it is also important to focus on tenses and how to accurately describe changes over time. These might be changes in data, or changes in a geographical area or building.

You can also practice writing about the main trends using the following technique:

Find a writing Task 1 question and record yourself describing only the main trends in no more than two or three sentences. You must not give any specific details, such as a percentage or number. Ask a friend to listen to the recording and to draw what you have described. If their drawing shows the most important points or patterns, then you have done a good job of writing

about the main trends. If you do not have a friend or partner who can do this, listen to the recording yourself to see if you can recreate the main trends using only your description. If you are not happy with the result, then repeat the exercise until you are.

You can use this same idea to help practice the specific language needed to describe visual information. To do that, record yourself again, but this time describe the information in enough detail to your partner or yourself in the future to recreate the information almost exactly. If they are confused at any point, then perhaps your language is not precise enough. This can be a good way to see what gaps there are in your language.

You can go on to write out your description completely. Then edit it and make any changes or corrections. Work on it several days if necessary, so that you can practice being accurate and precise rather than only practicing writing quickly and under exam conditions.

CHAPTER II
PRINCIPLES of
WRITING TASK I
(AC)

How to form the introduction?

If you want to avoid achieving Band 5 or 6 in your Task Achievement, you have to write a clear and strong introduction. Introduction is the first part (paragraph) of both Task 1 and Task 2. To form an intro; you need to present a 2-sentence-paragraph to introduce your report. This opening sentence says what the graph is about; that is, the date, location, and what is being described in the graph. **For example,**

Original sentence: The graph shows the number of cases of X disease in Someland between the years 1960 and 1995.

Paraphrased opening sentence: The given line graph indicates individuals diagnosed by X diseases in Someland over a period of 35 years.

Notice the tense used. Even though it describes information from the past, the graph shows the information in the present time. Besides, the sample **opening sentence** does not simply copy the words used on the graphic material.

Note 1: copied sentences will not be assessed by the examiner and so you waste your time including them.

➤ Words often misused in Task 1 as synonyms for the verb show:

Show and Tell

Indicate = shows that something is true

Display = place things in a place where they can easily be seen

Demonstrate = show how something is done (e.g. How to use a machine; prove something to be true (e.g. in a study)

Tell = give information (n.b. it needs an object – tell someone something)

Indicate = show that something is true (used to draw a conclusion about data)

Reflect = show an attitude (i.e. Act like a mirror)

Reveal = make people aware of something

Provide = give; supply

Present = give – used formally

Represent = stand in the place of (i.e. is a symbol of)

Signify = mean

Example sentences:

The chart **shows** the number and gender of students in both part-time and full-time education in Britain in three time periods.

The chart **tells us** the number and gender of students in both part-time and full-time education in Britain in three time periods.

How the other words are used:

The books were carefully **displayed** on a table.

The results **demonstrate** the need for further research.

These figures **indicate** that more funding is needed.

The protests in the street **reflected** the growing anger towards the government.

The survey **revealed** that fewer teenagers are planning on going to university than 10 years ago.

The lecturer **provided** us with a copy of his recent research.

In the chart, each line **represents** a different type of transport.

The dramatic increase in unemployment **signified** the start of the recession.

Samples of paraphrased titles in the opening sentence:

- The bar chart **features** the number of **children leaving school** at the age of 16 **between 1995 and 2000**.
- The line graph **provides a detailed statistical breakdown of** expenditure by different age groups in a selected European country in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

- The pie charts **illustrate** the number of **children who left school** after they reached 16 years of age over a five year period, **starting** in 1995.
- The graph **indicates the fluctuation** in the number of people at a subway station **over the course of a day**.
- The graph **provides some statistical data concerning** the changes in the amount of fast food consumed in the UK **in a twenty-year-period** starting in 1985.
- The two line charts **provide a general overview** of divorce rates in different regions of the world **from 1950 to 2010**.
- **The chart below shows the amount spent on six consumer goods in four European countries in 1990 and 2000.**
- **The charts represent what high school students in three selected schools in the UK spent their money on in 2009.**
- The **table lists** the average annual percentages of water pollution in four megacities **worldwide**.
- The pie charts **depict the proportion** of waste produced **by** each sector in 3 particular industrialized countries over the course of five years **from the start of the new millennium**.
- The bar chart shows the sleeping **habits** of the British by age **throughout the course of a decade**, starting in 2000.
- The **diagram illustrates** the process of turning dirty water into drinking water.
- The graph illustrates **how the sales of home appliances have undergone changes** in England between 2000 and 2012.
- The table **draws a comparison between** the Americans and the Japanese **in terms of** the number of hours spent online in 2010.
- The table shows **how** people in different age groups spend their leisure time in Hong Kong **over the course of a year**.
- The bar chart **provides information about** the weekly consumption of meat products in three selected cities **over a span of ten years**.
-

Key idea 2: Use general words for introduction: information, breakdown, data, difference(s), similarities, trends, results, proportion, figures, statistics, and numbers.

➤ Here are some simple changes you can make:

- graph = **line graph**
- chart = **bar chart**
- diagram = **figure**
- shows = **illustrates** (or 'compares' if the graph is comparing)
- proportion = **percentage**
- information = **data**
- the number of = **the figure for**
- the proportion of = **the figure for**
- people in the USA = **Americans**
- from 1999 to 2009 = **between 1999 and 2009**
- from 1999 to 2009 = **over a period of 10 years**
- how to produce = **the process of producing**
- in three countries = **in the UK, France and Spain** (i.e. name the countries)

Tip 1: The figure for / figures for is a great phrase that not many people use (e.g. the graph shows figures for unemployment in three countries).



What is an overview?



In Task Achievement, an **overview** is mentioned at several key points in the scale. In fact, we can see that a key difference between bands 5, 6, and 7 relates to whether an answer provides an overview (band 6) or not (band 5), and whether the overview is clear, and consists of the main trends (band 7). Clearly, it is important to learn about writing an overview when it comes to preparing for the test. The Free Cambridge Online Dictionary defines a summary as a short, clear description that gives the main facts.



While an overview is defined as:

overview

noun [C] • UK  /'əʊ.və.vjuː/ US  /'oʊ.və.vjuː/

  a short description of something that provides general information about it, but no details:

Thus, if you need to score band 7 or above, then **your summary must contain a clear overview of the main trends which contains no details.** You can see examples of overviews in the next pages. Also you can find more help with identifying the main ideas and writing your overview, at the end of this book and on pages 97-99 of The Official Cambridge Guide to IELTS.

Key idea 3:

To score band 7 or above in writing task 1, your summary must contain a clear overview of the main trends, which contains no details.

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Should my overview come at the end or at the beginning?

This is most frequent question students ask about writing Task 1. To answer, there is no rule about where to write your overview – it is only important that you make your overview clear. It may help to see this as a sentence that explains the main idea of your summary. It can come after your introduction or at the very end.

How to from an overview?

Sentence two (and possibly three) might sum up the overall trend.

Example:

It can be clearly seen that X disease increased rapidly to 500 cases around the 1980s and then dropped to zero before 1999, while Y disease fell consistently from a high point of nearly 600 cases in 1960 to less than 100 cases in 1995.

Note 2: Notice the tense used. Here we are talking about the occurrence of the disease in the past.

Expressions to start overviews:

- **Overall**, the numbers are significantly lower in the later years of the study.
- **As a general overview**, team sports are among the most popular activities in all age groups.
- **In general terms**, the biggest share of students' budget was spent on the entertainment in both years.
- **It can be clearly seen** that the amount of leisure time available varies considerably across the age groups and that people of different age levels have very different ways of spending their leisure time.
- **At first glance we see that** classical music is **far** less popular than pop or rock music.
- **As an overall trend, it can be seen that** there was an unprecedented rise in the number of the Internet users at the start of the new century.

Tip 2:

Do not use the phrase according to the graph. This is because such phrase generally means that the information comes from another person or source, and not from our own knowledge. (For example, According to title Handbook, you cannot take the exam more than once in three months. According to my friend, the essay question as not too difficult). When a graph or table is shown, the information is right in front of you, and so you both the writer and the reader can understand it. That is, it does not come from another source.

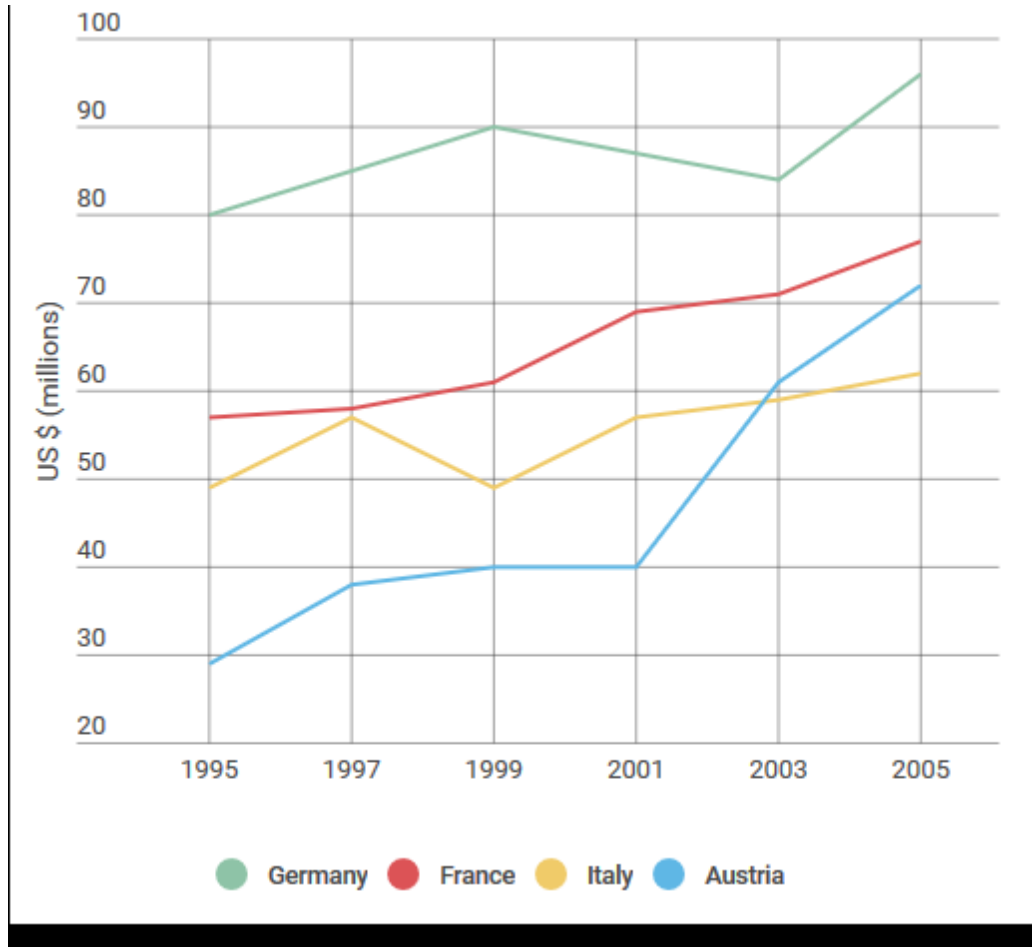
Tip 3:

Do not use the word present(s), since it needs a sophisticated summarizing noun to follow. For example: the graph presents an overview of the population growth of Seattle in the last 20 years.

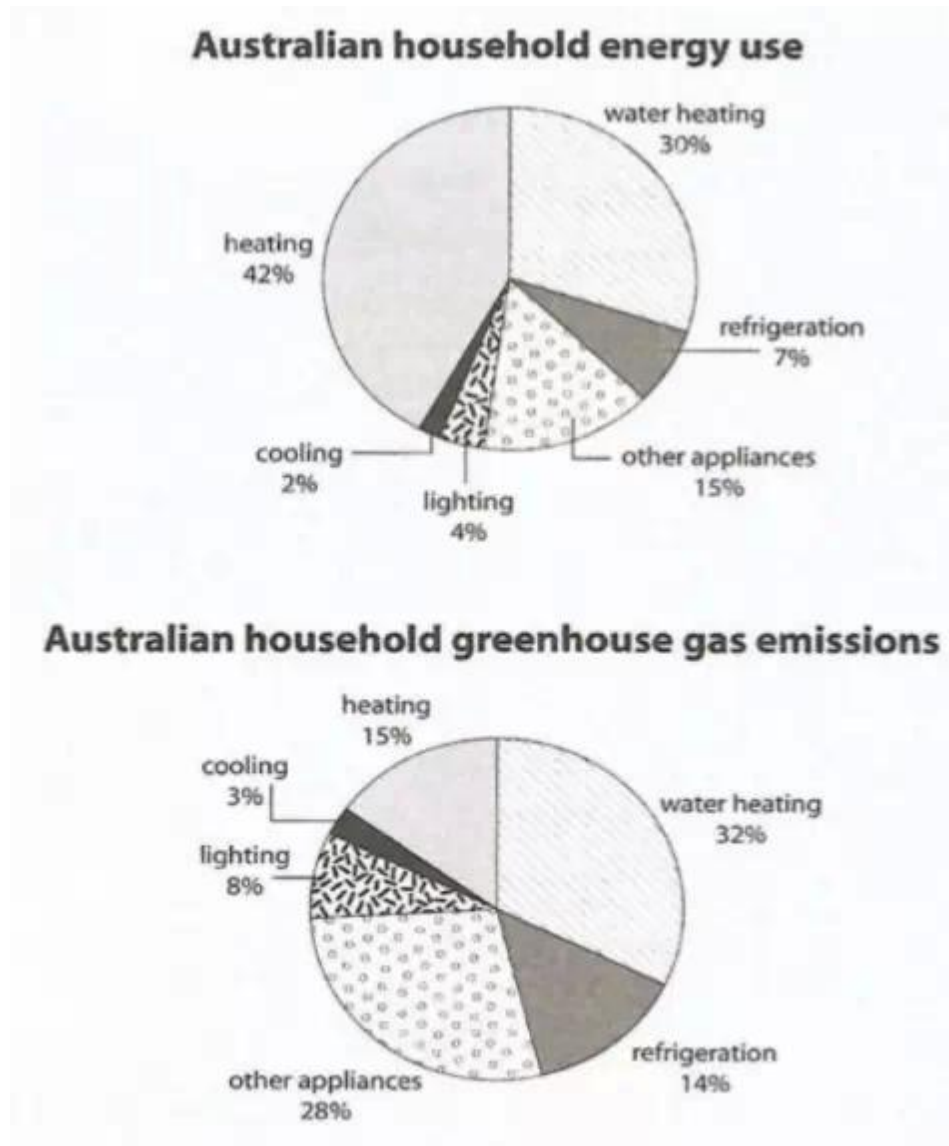
➤ **Time expressions:**

- (in) the period from to
- (in) the period between and
- in the first/last months of the year
- over the period to
- over the next years/ decades/ quarter of a century etc.
- over a/an period
- throughout the century
- from to
- between and
- in thes (decade)
- in
- before/after
- around/about
- since
- for

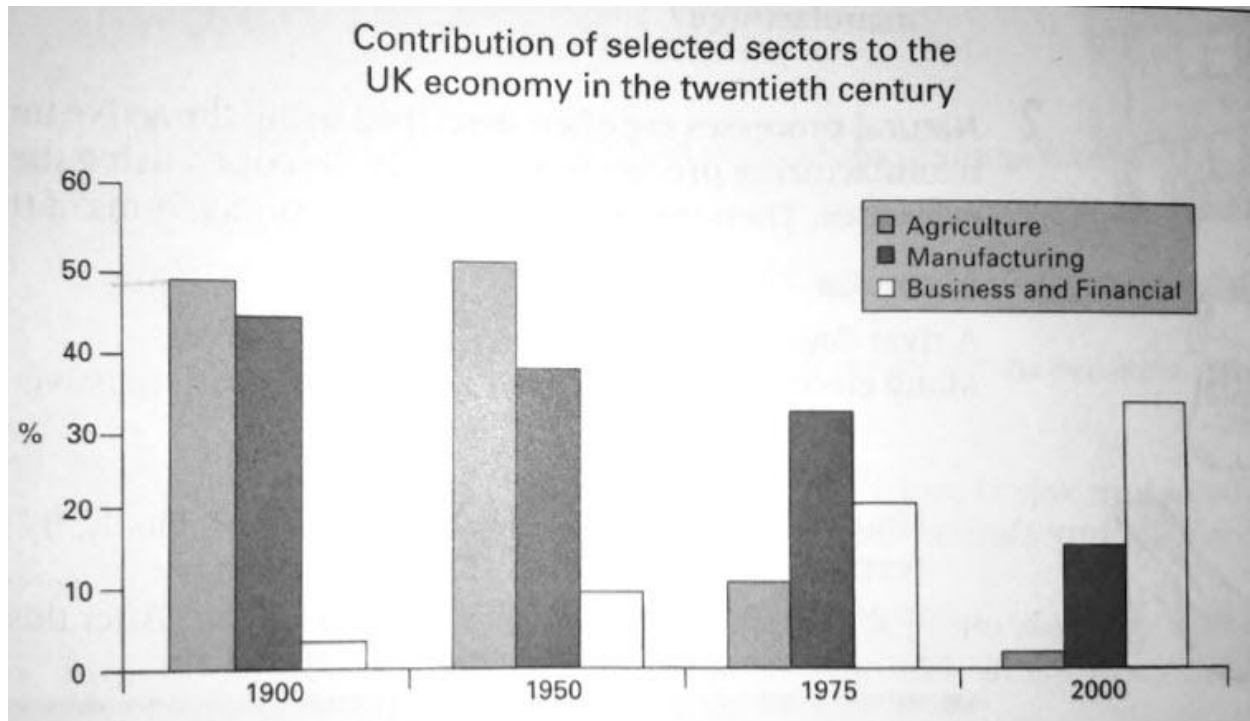
Samples of overviews



Overall, Germany spent the most amount of money on reading materials during the entire period. It is also clear that despite some fluctuations, spending on books increased in all four places over the 10 years.



As it is evident, we can see that heating both the home and water make up the vast bulk of power consumption, but this is different when it comes to emissions with other devices and water heating giving off the biggest emissions.



As it is clear from the bar chart, the financial and business sector saw a remarkable rise, the manufacturing sector witnessed a dramatic decline and agricultural fluctuated throughout the century.