

## IELTS Academic: Lexis for describing graphs

An activity which helps students use a range of suitable lexis for describing graphs. The session can be used for *IELTS* preparation or for more general academic writing skills.

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**Time required:** 60–70 minutes

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**Additional materials required:**

- sample task: One copy per student, or display on the board  
[https://www.ielts.org/PDF/120430\\_academic\\_writing\\_%20task\\_1B.pdf](https://www.ielts.org/PDF/120430_academic_writing_%20task_1B.pdf)
- assessment criteria for Academic Writing Task 1
- Worksheets 1 and 2 – one copy of each per student (folded, where indicated, before the lesson)
- Worksheets 3A and 3B – one copy of each for half the class

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**Aims:**

- to enable students to use a wide range of suitable lexis for describing graphs
- to improve students' understanding of the requirements of *IELTS* Academic Writing Task 1
- to practise writing an answer under timed conditions

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### Procedure

1. Write the following questions on the board and ask students to discuss them in pairs for two minutes:

*What time of day do you usually watch TV and what do you watch?*

*What time of day do you usually listen to the radio and what do you listen to?*

*Do you watch TV or listen to the radio more?*

*Do you think most people have similar TV and radio habits to you?*

Ask a few students to share their answers with the class and use their answers to generate a summary for the class of when they tend to listen to the radio, when they watch TV and which they do more of.

2. Tell students you will show them a graph that shows how radio and TV audiences change throughout the day in the UK. Show the graph on the **sample task** and ask them to read it and decide if it is similar to their habits.
3. Tell students they are going to read three different summaries of the graph and they have to decide which one is the best. Hand out **Worksheet 1** folded along the dotted line and make sure students don't unfold it yet. Elicit feedback.

## Key to Worksheet 1

Not **A** because it has some informal language (telly), too much simple language (repetition of 'big'), repeats language from the rubric (audience) and interprets the data instead of reporting.

Not **B** because it gives specifics not trends.

**Option C is correct** because it summarises the three main points (TV is more popular overall, radio is more popular in the morning and TV in the evening) and has a good range of academic language.

**IELTS option:** Focus students on the rubric and elicit the first instruction (summarise), then draw their attention to the phrase 'make comparisons' and ask which part of the summary does that (whereas).

4. Ask students which words or phrases in **option C** could be used in any summary (To sum up, overall, whereas, significantly). Ask if there are any words or phrases in the other summaries that could replace these words or phrases. Students can now unfold the worksheet to check. At this point you might want to elicit that 'but' is not a very sophisticated option. Ask students to work in pairs to put the other words from the second box in the right places. In feedback, draw students' attention to the use of commas and full stops for the contrast phrases and clarify the meanings of significantly, substantially and slightly. You could also elicit how the writer has avoided repeating the words 'radio and television audiences' and elicit a few more ways of doing so (viewers, listeners, etc.).

## Key to Worksheet 1

Box 1

In general

Generally speaking

Box 2

. However

. On the other hand

Box 3

substantially

slightly

5. Ask students to work in pairs to decide if the sentences on **Worksheet 2** (fold before handing out) are about the TV or the radio and then fill in the missing figures, which will either be percentages or times.
6. Elicit the part of speech of 'sharp' and 'rise' in the first sentence and of 'rises' and 'steadily' in the fourth sentence, then get students to unfold their worksheet and fill in the table with other noun and verb combinations from the example sentences. After feedback on this, show the student how to make the nouns in the first table into verbs (decrease → decreases) and the adjectives into adverbs (rapid → rapidly) and vice versa, then have them record these extra options in the tables. Elicit some more words that can go in the two tables.
7. Focus students' attention on the word 'approximately' in sentence 1 and clarify the meaning. Ask students to look through the other sentences for more words or phrases that can be used to give imprecise information.
8. Present the two possible structures for answering the question (**Worksheets 3A and 3B**). Pair students A and B and give each one the appropriate **worksheet** for them to write their answer according to the paragraph headings. Remind them of the phrases to use from both worksheets and not to repeat the rubric too closely in the introduction. As most of the preparation has been done they shouldn't need more than 10–15 minutes for this.
9. Ask students to exchange their answers and give feedback to each other on them.  
**IELTS option:** If students are already familiar with the marking criteria, hand these out and have them assess each other's writing using the criteria.

## Academic Writing Sample Task

Academic Writing Sample Task 1B

### WRITING TASK 1

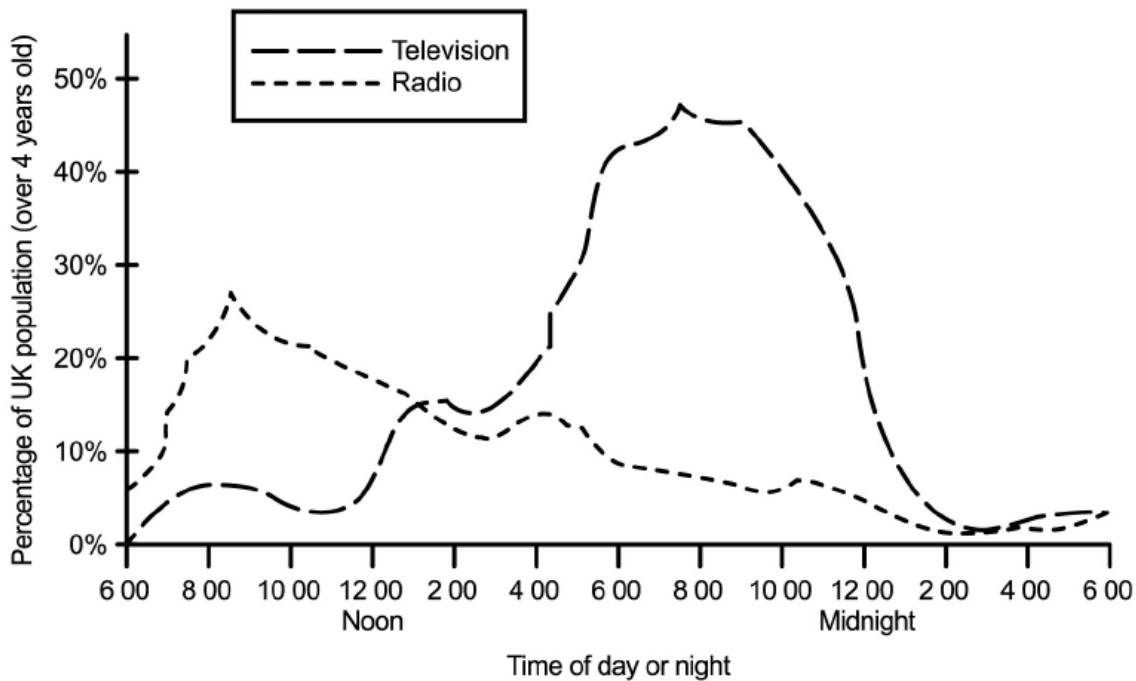
You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The graph below shows radio and television audiences throughout the day in 1992.

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

Write at least 150 words.

Radio and television audiences in UK, October – December 1992



## Academic Writing, describing data (IELTS Task 1): Worksheet 1

- A. In summary, the radio audience is bigger in the morning because people listen to the radio in their cars on the way to work, and the TV audience is bigger in the evening because people prefer watching television as a way of relaxing.
- B. In conclusion, we can say that radio audience figures peak at just under 30% in the mornings, while the television audience hits a high of 45% in the evenings.
- C. To sum up, overall more people watch television than listen to the radio. The radio is more popular in the morning, whereas the television has a significantly larger audience in the evening.

..... fold here .....

To sum up  
*In conclusion*  
*In summary*

overall

more people watch television than listen to the radio.

(Box 1)

The radio is more popular in the morning

. whereas  
*, but*  
*, while*

(Box 2)

the television has a

significantly

larger number of viewers in the evening.

(Box 3)

(Box 3)

. However      . On the other hand      slightly      in general  
. In contrast      generally speaking      substantially

Between 1) \_\_\_\_ and 2) \_\_\_\_ there is a sharp rise from approximately 3) \_\_\_\_ % to a peak of just under 4) \_\_\_\_ %.

It stays at about 5) \_\_\_\_ % until just before 6) \_\_\_\_ when it shoots up rapidly to its peak of 7) \_\_\_\_ %.

It remains at roughly the same level until 8) \_\_\_\_ when it sees a rapid decrease in numbers until it reaches its lowest point of 9) \_\_\_\_ % at 10) \_\_\_\_.

The audience figure rises steadily from 11) \_\_\_\_ to 12) \_\_\_\_, then falls briefly at 13) \_\_\_\_ before jumping to 14) \_\_\_\_ % at 15) \_\_\_\_.

This figure experiences a gradual decline to 16) \_\_\_\_ % over the rest of the day, although there is a slight increase at around 17) \_\_\_\_ and again at 18) \_\_\_\_.

..... fold here .....

		<u>ADJECTIVE</u>	<u>NOUN</u>	
It sees		sharp	rise	from __ % to __ %.
It experiences	a/an			to a peak of __ %.
There is				until it reaches its lowest point of __ %.

	<u>VERB</u>	<u>ADVERB</u>	
The figure/ number/ percentage	rises	steadily	from __ % to __ %.
			to a peak of __ %.
			until it reaches its lowest point of __ %.

## ANSWER KEY: Academic Writing, describing data (IELTS Task 1): Worksheet 2

Between 1) **6.00 a.m.** and 2) **8.00 a.m.** there is a sharp rise from approximately 3) **7%** to a peak of just under 4) **30%**. (Radio)

It stays at about 5) **15%** until just before 6) **4.00 p.m.** when it shoots up rapidly to its peak of 7) **45%**. (TV)

It remains at roughly the same level until 8) **10 p.m.** when it sees a rapid decrease in numbers until it reaches its lowest point of 9) **2%** at 10) **2 a.m.** (TV)

The audience figure rises steadily from 11) **6.00 a.m.** to 12) **8.00 a.m.**, then falls briefly at 13) **10.00** before jumping to 14) **15%** at 15) **2.00 p.m.** (TV)

This figure experiences a gradual decline to 16) **2%** over the rest of the day, although there is a slight increase at around 17) **4.00 p.m.** and again at 18) **10 p.m.** (Radio)

..... fold here .....

		<u>ADJECTIVE</u>	<u>NOUN</u>	
It sees		sharp	rise	from ___ % to ___ %.
It experiences		<b>rapid</b>	<b>decrease</b>	to a peak of ___ %.
There is	a/an	<b>gradual</b>	<b>decline</b>	
		<b>slight</b>	<b>increase</b>	until it reaches its lowest point of ___ %.

	<u>VERB</u>	<u>ADVERB</u>	
The figure/ number/ percentage	rises	steadily	from ___ % to ___ %.
	<b>shoots up</b>	<b>rapidly</b>	to a peak of ___ %.
	<b>falls</b>	<b>briefly</b>	until it reaches its lowest point of ___ %

## Academic Writing, describing data (IELTS Task 1): Worksheet 3A

Student A

Introduction	
Radio	
TV	
Summary	

## Academic Writing, describing data (IELTS Task 1): Worksheet 3B

Student B

Introduction	
Morning (Radio, then TV)	
Afternoon (Radio, then TV)	
Evening (Radio, then TV)	
Summary	

