Bar Charts

0. About IELTS Writing Task 1 Bar Charts

On this page, you'll learn how to meet the four official IELTS Writing Task 1 criteria in **bar chart** questions, with vocabulary lists, Band 9 sample answers, visual explanations, and practice ideas.

Subsection A | What does this task test?

IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 often asks you to describe a visual such as a **bar chart**, line graph, table, or process diagram.

A **bar chart** question tests whether you can:

- describe and compare values across categories (e.g. cities, age groups, products)
- identify the highest, lowest and similar figures
- describe changes over time when more than one time period is shown
- summarise information clearly and objectively using academic English

---

Subsection B | Timing & basic exam rules

- Paper: **IELTS Academic Writing**
- Task: **Writing Task 1** (a bar chart is one of the possible visuals)
- Recommended time: **about 20 minutes** (out of 60 minutes for Writing)
- Minimum length: **at least 150 words**
- Order: Task 1 + Task 2 in the same test; **Task 2 is worth more marks**, so you should not spend more than 20 minutes on Task 1.

A typical IELTS bar chart prompt includes:

1. A short description of what the chart shows
2. The bar chart itself (with categories on the x-axis and values on the y-axis)
3. The standard instruction:

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

Subsection C | Assessment criteria for Task 1

IELTS examiners use four criteria, each worth 25% of the Task 1 score:

1. **Task Achievement**

   ○ Did you summarise the **main features** of the bar chart?

   ○ Did you include a clear **overview** of overall patterns?

   ○ Did you select and report **important data** instead of copying the chart or listing every bar?

   ○ Did you reach **150+ words** and give a complete response?

2. **Coherence and Cohesion**

   ○ Is your answer well-organised into logical paragraphs (Intro, Overview, Body 1, Body 2)?

   ○ Do your ideas flow smoothly with linking words (e.g. *while, whereas, in contrast, on the other hand, in terms of*)?

   ○ Are your reference words clear (e.g. *this city, this figure, they, these levels*)?

3. **Lexical Resource (Vocabulary)**

   ○ Do you use a range of **comparison language** (e.g. *higher, lower, the highest, similar to, roughly the same*)?

   ○ Do you use **percentage, proportion and quantity phrases** (e.g. *about half, just under 40%, a small minority*) appropriately?

   ○ Are your word choices accurate and precise, with few spelling errors?

4. **Grammatical Range and Accuracy**

   ○ Do you use both simple and complex sentences correctly (e.g. *While Brisbane recorded the highest levels, Darwin remained the lowest.*)?

   ○ Is your tense accurate (mostly **past simple** when past years are given)?

   ○ Are your articles, plurals, and punctuation mostly correct, with only occasional mistakes?

---

1. Useful Vocabulary & Sentence Patterns for Bar Charts

To score well in an **IELTS Writing Task 1 bar chart** essay, you need precise reporting verbs, comparison phrases, and proportion expressions. Below is a curated Band 7–9 vocabulary set with ready-to-use patterns.

1.1 Reporting & Comparison Verbs

Describing what the chart shows

- *show, illustrate, compare, present, give information about, provide data on, represent, depict*

Example patterns:

- *The bar chart compares water levels in six Australian cities in 2009 and 2010.*

- *The chart illustrates the proportion of reservoir capacity used in each city.*

Describing higher / lower values

- *be higher / lower than*

- *exceed, be greater / smaller than*

- *lead, lag behind*

Example patterns:

- *In both years, Brisbane's water level was higher than that of Sydney.*

- *Perth and Brisbane exceeded all the other cities, with figures close to full capacity.*

Describing increases / decreases (when there are two time points)

- *rise, increase, go up, grow*

- *fall, decrease, drop, go down*

- *remain stable, stay the same*

Example patterns:

- *Water levels in Melbourne increased slightly between 2009 and 2010.*

- *The figure for Sydney remained unchanged at around 50%.*

1.2 Proportion & Amount Expressions

Percentages and fractions

- *about / around / approximately 40%*

- *just over / just above 60%*

- *just under / slightly below 80%*

- *almost / nearly 100%*

- *one third, a quarter, half, the majority, a minority*

Example:

- *In 2009, roughly two thirds of reservoir capacity was used in the Gold Coast.*

Strength of difference

- *slightly / marginally higher*

- *considerably / significantly higher*

- *by far the highest / lowest*

Example:

- *Darwin had by far the lowest water levels among the six cities in both years.*

1.3 Comparison & Grouping Structures

Basic comparisons

- *X was higher / lower than Y.*
- *X was roughly the same as Y.*
- *X and Y had similar figures.*

Example:

- *In 2010, water levels in Melbourne and the Gold Coast were similar, at around 80% and 70% respectively.*

Contrast linkers

- *while, whereas, in contrast, by comparison, on the other hand*

Example:

- *While Brisbane and Perth maintained very high levels, Darwin's reservoirs remained relatively low.*

Grouping by pattern

- *In all six cities··· / In most cities··· / In the remaining cities···*
- *A, B and C showed an increase, whereas D, E and F stayed the same.*

Example:

- *Melbourne, Darwin and the Gold Coast saw modest increases, whereas Brisbane, Sydney and Perth recorded no change.*

1.4 Core Sentence Patterns for Bar Charts

1. **Introducing the chart**
   - *The bar chart compares A in terms of B in [place] in [years].*
   - *The chart illustrates how A differed among B between [year 1] and [year 2].*
2. Example:
   - *The bar chart compares reservoir water levels in six Australian cities in 2009 and 2010.*
3. **Describing the highest / lowest values**
   - *X had the highest figure, at about ···*
   - *By contrast, Y recorded the lowest level, at only ···*

4. Example:

  - *Brisbane and Perth had the highest water levels, at around 100% and 80% of capacity respectively.*

  - *Darwin, by contrast, recorded the lowest figures, at roughly 30–40%.*

5. **Describing changes for a single category**

  - *In [year 1], X stood at ⋯, rising to ⋯ in [year 2].*

  - *X remained stable at around ⋯ in both years.*

6. Example:

  - *In 2009, the Gold Coast's figure was about 60%, rising to approximately 70% in 2010.*

  - *Sydney's reservoirs stayed the same at around 50% of capacity over the period.*

7. **Comparing two or more categories in one year**

  - *In 2010, X was higher than Y but lower than Z.*

  - *X and Y showed similar levels, both at around ⋯*

8. Example:

  - *In 2009, Perth recorded a higher level than Melbourne (80% versus 70%), but was slightly below Brisbane at 100%.*

9. **Overview patterns for bar charts**

  - *Overall, Brisbane and Perth consistently recorded the highest water levels, while Darwin had the lowest.*

  - *In general, several cities experienced small increases, whereas others remained stable over the period.*

---

2. Band 9 Bar Chart Sample Answer (with Writing Tips)

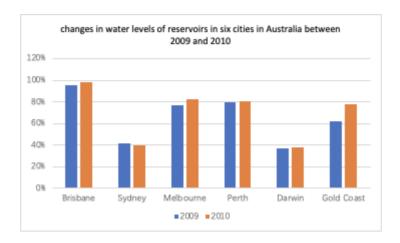High-scoring **IELTS bar chart** essays follow a predictable structure: an introduction, a clear overview, and two grouped body paragraphs that compare categories and changes. Below is a structured Band 9 sample using the given question and chart, plus planning notes.

2.1 Sample Question

Question
 The chart below shows changes in water levels of reservoirs in six cities in Australia between 2009 and 2010.

(The bar chart presents reservoir levels, expressed as a percentage of capacity, in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Darwin and the Gold Coast in 2009 and again in 2010.)

2.2 Planning Notes

Step 1 | Identify main features

- Two years: 2009 vs 2010.

- **Highest levels:** Brisbane (around 100%) and Perth (about 80%) in both years.

- **Middle range:** Melbourne (about 70 → 80%) and the Gold Coast (about 60 → 70%).

- **Lowest levels:** Sydney and Darwin (Sydney at around 50% in both years; Darwin 30 → 40%).

- **Changes:**

  - **Increased:** Melbourne, Darwin and the Gold Coast (all by about 10%).

  - **Stable:** Brisbane, Sydney and Perth (no noticeable change).

Step 2 | Mindmap for Band 9 Response

- **Thesis Statement**

  - Analysis of differences and changes in reservoir water levels across six Australian cities between 2009 and 2010, with brief reference to regional water management.

- **Body Paragraph 1: Overall patterns & high vs low cities**

  - Topic sentence: significant variation across cities, but limited change over time.

  - High and stable levels: Brisbane and Perth.

  - Low levels: Sydney and Darwin.

- **Body Paragraph 2: Cities with increases vs those with no change**

  - Cities with increases: Melbourne, Darwin, Gold Coast (approx. +10%).

  - Cities with no change: Brisbane, Sydney, Perth.

  - One short comment on what this might imply for water planning.

- **Conclusion**
  - Recap of main contrasts (high vs low; changing vs stable).
  - Emphasise the importance of monitoring storage in drier cities.

2.3 Band 9 Sample Answer

The bar chart compares reservoir water levels in six Australian cities in 2009 and 2010. **Overall, Brisbane and Perth consistently recorded the highest levels, while Sydney and especially Darwin had much lower figures. Only half of the cities saw modest increases over time, whereas the others remained stable.**

In both years, Brisbane's reservoirs were almost full, at around 100% of capacity, making it the city with the highest water levels. Perth followed, with figures of about 80% in 2009 and 2010. By contrast, Sydney and Darwin had much less water stored. Sydney's level stayed at roughly 50%, while Darwin's reservoirs were the lowest of all, rising only from around 30% to 40% during the period.

The remaining two cities showed moderate but noticeable improvements. In Melbourne, water levels climbed from approximately 70% in 2009 to 80% in 2010, bringing it close to Perth. A similar pattern can be seen in the Gold Coast, where the figure increased from about 60% to 70%. These gradual rises contrast with the unchanged levels in Brisbane, Sydney and Perth, and may indicate local differences in rainfall or water conservation policies, although the chart itself does not show any reasons.

In summary, the data highlight clear regional differences in reservoir storage across Australian cities, with some areas maintaining consistently high levels and others remaining relatively low despite slight improvements.

 (~185 words)

2.4 How Students Can Use This Sample

You can present these as tip boxes:

- ✅ **Step 1 – Copy the structure**
   Use the same four-part structure:
   Intro (1 sentence paraphrasing the question) →
   Overview (1–2 sentences: high vs low, change vs no change) →
   Body 1 (highest and lowest cities + key comparisons) →
   Body 2 (cities that changed vs stayed the same).

- ✅ **Step 2 – Highlight useful bar-chart phrases**
  Ask students to underline phrases such as:
  recorded the highest levels, by contrast, much lower figures, rose from approximately X to Y, remained stable at around, modest increases, the lowest of all.

- ✅ **Step 3 – Reuse patterns with new charts**
  Keep the same sentence frames and linking words, but substitute new city names, years and percentages when practising other IELTS Writing Task 1 bar chart questions.

3. Writing Tips for IELTS Bar Chart Essays

3.1 Task Response

- Always write a **clear overview**.
  - Put it immediately after the introduction.
  - Focus on big patterns: which categories are highest or lowest? Did most figures increase, decrease or stay the same?

- Do not explain causes in detail.
  - Task 1 is mainly about **describing data**.
  - One short sentence such as *This may reflect local rainfall patterns* is acceptable, but avoid turning the answer into a Task 2-style discussion.

3.2 Coherence & Cohesion

- Group data logically.
  - For two-year bar charts, a common pattern is:
    - **Body 1:** describe overall ranking in one or both years (highest / lowest cities).
    - **Body 2:** describe changes over time (cities that increased vs stayed the same or decreased).

- Use comparison language to link ideas.
  - *while, whereas, in contrast, on the other hand, compared with, similarly*
  - Example: *While Brisbane and Perth maintained high water levels, Darwin remained far lower despite a small rise.*

3.3 Language Use

- **Tense:** use **past simple** when the chart shows past years.

- **Numbers:** use approximation for readability: *about, around, roughly, just under, nearly.*
- **Comparatives & superlatives:**
    - *higher, lower, the highest, the lowest, slightly higher, far lower, by far the lowest.*
- **Sentence variety:**
    - Mix simple and complex forms:
        - *Brisbane had the highest level in both years.*
        - *Although Melbourne started below Perth in 2009, it almost caught up by 2010.*

3.4 Data Selection

- Don't try to describe **every bar**.
- Prioritise:
    - the **highest and lowest** categories,
    - any **very similar** figures,
    - and any **noticeable change** between the years (e.g. +10%, big drop, no change).
- Use grouped sentences:
    - *Three cities showed increases of about 10%, while the other three remained unchanged.*

3.5 Exam Technique
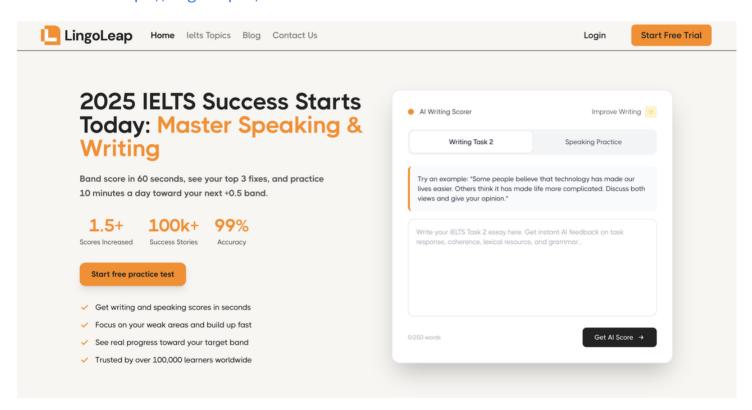
- Spend the first **2–3 minutes**:
    - checking the units (percentage, number, millions, etc.),
    - spotting the highest, lowest and any "outliers",
    - deciding how to group cities or categories.
- Aim for **160–190 words**.
    - Long enough to fully cover key features, short enough to protect your time for Task 2.
- Reserve **1 minute** at the end to check:
    - tense consistency,
    - singular/plural nouns (*levels,*

4. Practise IELTS Writing Task 1 with Lingoleap

If you would like to practise IELTS Writing Task 1 -2 with instant AI feedback, you can use **Lingoleap**, an AI-powered platform designed for IELTS and TOEFL learners.
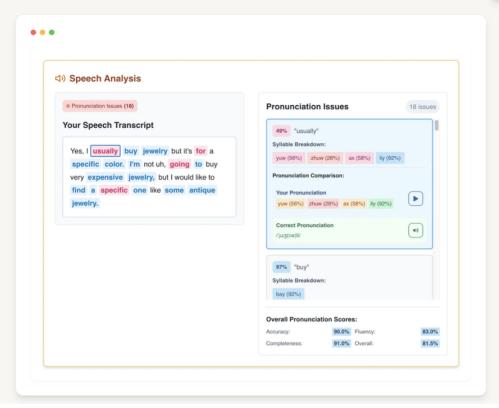
On Lingoleap's IELTS page, you can:
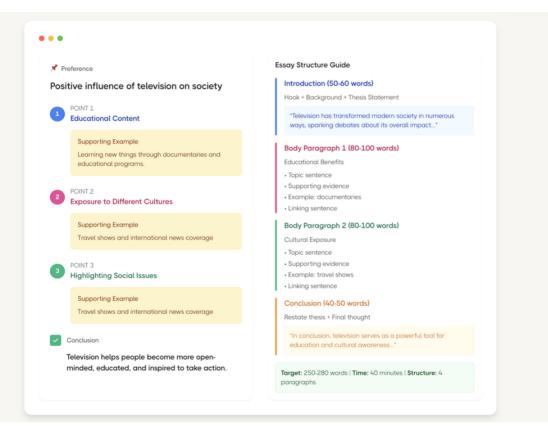
- generate and practise **Writing Task 1** and **Task 2** questions

- get **AI scoring and corrections** on your essays, including feedback on task response, coherence, vocabulary and grammar

- build your own bank of sample answers and vocabulary for different IELTS topics

- combine writing practice with integrated **speaking, reading and listening** tools

💻 **Website:** https://lingoleap.ai/ielts

Improve your writing. Free grammar check and feedback

Try IELTS AI Evaluation

🔊 Speech Analysis

● Pronunciation Issues (18)

Your Speech Transcript

Yes, I usually buy jewelry but it's for a specific color. I'm not uh, going to buy very expensive jewelry, but I would like to find a specific one like some antique jewelry.

Pronunciation Issues
18 issues

49% "usually"

Syllable Breakdown:

yuw (56%)   zhuw (26%)   ax (58%)   liy (92%)

Pronunciation Comparison:

Your Pronunciation

yuw (56%)   zhuw (26%)   ax (58%)   liy (92%)   ▶

Correct Pronunciation

/juːʒ(oə)li/   🔊

97% "buy"

Syllable Breakdown:

bay (92%)

Overall Pronunciation Scores:

Accuracy:	90.0%	Fluency:	83.0%
Completeness:	91.0%	Overall:	81.5%

📌 Preference

Positive influence of television on society

1 POINT 1
Educational Content

> Supporting Example
> Learning new things through documentaries and educational programs.

2 POINT 2
Exposure to Different Cultures

> Supporting Example
> Travel shows and international news coverage

3 POINT 3
Highlighting Social Issues

> Supporting Example
> Travel shows and international news coverage

✅ Conclusion

Television helps people become more open-minded, educated, and inspired to take action.

Essay Structure Guide

Introduction (50-60 words)

Hook + Background + Thesis Statement

> "Television has transformed modern society in numerous ways, sparking debates about its overall impact..."

Body Paragraph 1 (80-100 words)

Educational Benefits

• Topic sentence
• Supporting evidence
• Example: documentaries
• Linking sentence

Body Paragraph 2 (80-100 words)

Cultural Exposure

• Topic sentence
• Supporting evidence
• Example: travel shows
• Linking sentence

Conclusion (40-50 words)

Restate thesis + Final thought

> "In conclusion, television serves as a powerful tool for education and cultural awareness..."

Target: 250-280 words | **Time:** 40 minutes | **Structure:** 4 paragraphs

WORD	PHONETIC SYMBOL	PART OF SPEECH	ENGLISH DEFINITION	SAMPLE SENTENCE
Influence	/ˈɪnfluəns/	Noun	The power to change or affect someone or something	Television has a positive **influence** on society by
Open-minded	/ˌəʊ.pən ˈmaɪn.dɪd/	Adjective	Willing to consider new ideas	Watching television makes people more **open-minded** as they learn about various cultures and ways of life.
Discrimination	/dɪˌskrɪmɪ ˈneɪʃən/	Noun	The unjust treatment of different categories of people	Television programs can help raise awareness about **discrimination** and inspire people to fight against it.
Educational	/ˌedʒu ˈkeɪʃənl/	Adjective	Relating to the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction	**Educational** content on television helps people learn new things and expand their knowledge.
Social issues	/ˈsəʊ.ʃəl ˈɪʃ.uːz/	Noun	Problems that affect many people within a society	Television highlights important **social issues** like poverty, inspiring viewers to take action and make a difference.

AI Scoring That's 10x Faster, 10x Cheaper, 90% Cost Savings

Lingoleap AI delivers instant, reliable writing feedback at a fraction of the cost, with 95% accuracy.

Feature	LingoLeap AI Review	Traditional Human Review
Price per essay	≈ **$1.25** (about 10 % of human cost)	$15 – $40
Turn-around time	≈ **30 seconds**	24 – 72 hours
Scoring accuracy[1]	≈ **95%** (benchmark-matched to official IELTS examiners)	80 – 90 % (subject to individual rater variation)
Feedback coverage	Full 4-band descriptors • Task Response • Coherence & Cohesion • Lexical Resource • Grammatical Range & Accuracy	Primarily written comments; often incomplete or unbalanced across bands
Error detection depth	≈ 2x more granular flags per essay	Depends on reviewer's expertise & time
Rewrite capability	One-click "Reword" → Band 7+ model answer	Requires extra fee or self-editing
Targeted improvement advice	Actionable tips at sentence, paragraph, and overall levels	General remarks only