

Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host Ben Worthington.

Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we are going to specifically look at analytical writing for IELTS Writing Task 1. We're going to look at how to analyze the question. We're going to look at what the question requires from you and then I'll give you some very useful techniques that you can do to break down questions so you can allocate a number of sentences for each data point and how we can basically acquire a natural and logical structure for our reports.

Before we jump into this, I'd like to just mention one-- just a very, very brief story just to help you with your IELTS preparation. So, this happened to me about four or five years ago. I was teaching in Spain because in Spain there is a lot of demand for native English speakers like myself.

Anyway, I decided I was going to teach. I enjoyed it and I got a lot of satisfaction from doing this job, but I also had an interest in the internet and I had an interest in teaching online because I could reach more students, find better students basically. So, I was really determined and this was one of my goals for that specific year.

When summer came, I am in Spain, it's really hot and nobody wants to learn English. So, I went to Budapest. I went to Hungary and I decided to spend the whole summer there because it was cheaper and I could really just bootstrap and focus on my business, focus on teaching students, helping students.

It was hard. I was working six days a week. I didn't have a lot of friends there. I was writing tutorials, learning WordPress, reading dictionaries, asking everybody for help. I wanted to create something extremely valuable and useful for students. Interestingly, I've said this before, but there are only three sectors where you are not paid by your results, okay?

For example medicine-- or where you're not in control of your results. That's better. We've got medicine because the patient might react differently. We've got agriculture where the weather

might just mess up all your planning for the season and education because maybe the student just isn't responsive and doesn't like your learning style or--

So, there are these three sectors. The problem is that a lot of teachers know that-- know this fact that they cannot control the outcome. They cannot control it 100%. It's not like engineering where you can do the calculations and you can predict the outcome pretty much 100% of the time.

In education, it's not like that and that kind of annoyed me. This is-- especially the teachers who just relaxed and said, "I can't learn English for you," and all these kind of things. That was kind of annoying for me. Basically, a friend in Budapest, he told me-- I think he's in Budapest, but he told me-- he said, "Look, Ben, what would you do if you only got paid for results?"

Then once I had this in my mind, once I learned this, it was amazing because everything that I started to do, all my preparation, all my writing, everything was centered around getting results, okay? At the end of this tutorial, I'll tell you a very useful question to ask yourself which will help you with your IELTS prep.

Anyway, I spent the whole summer working. I spent the whole summer, as I said, writing tutorials, writing IELTS essays. I wrote so many, it is unbelievable, but eventually, I came across a formula, a structure and I started experimenting by giving it to the students.

When the students started getting results, like Ausian from years ago, he jumped, I think it was a whole band score in one week, just from using the structure and then there's that famous story of Yvonne who jumped, I think it was like three days just from applying the structure.

As soon as I got that, I knew I was on the right track. I knew I was doing well. But then after a couple of months, I went back to Spain and I was like oh, cool. I have my-- I can correct essays in the evening with my website and help the students and then during the day, I can teach.

That worked for a while, but then the website took more and more and more time and I was getting stressed out. So, I quit my teaching job in Spain and I was like, okay, I'm just going to

dedicate myself to correcting essays and working online. Then as soon as I did that, all my sales, all the essay corrections stopped. And I was like, oh, what have I done here.

If there was a technical problem with the website, I had to pay a developer and all of a sudden, I'd gone from having two incomes, two wages to having none. I still had the rent to pay. I still had the food to pay. So, I was like okay, I don't want to go back to the academy, I'm too proud.

So, I found a few private students. I started teaching them so I could pay the rent and I was back to doing two jobs, again, except for the private ones I had a little bit more control and I could scale it up or scale it down as necessary. So, I did this for a while. I did it for a long time.

Another six months, a year maybe, but I was just doing private classes and the online business as well, correcting essays and stuff. Then finally, finally, I could leave the private classes and focus on helping students 100% online. What did I learn from all this? Well, it just takes patience and persistence and this is what I want to say. This is the best advice.

So, when I mean persistence, I don't mean taking test after test after test. I mean writing essay after essay after essay. That's persistence and then once you've got to that certain ability, once you've reached that ability and you've got some feedback and you've been improving, then you submit to do the test. Then you pay the money once you are supremely confident.

So, I just wanted to mention that. I thought that would be useful. Here's a very useful question for you when you are preparing for IELTS. I love this question and about a year ago, but I reread the book at the weekend and there is a lot of value. I realized it could be applied to IELTS preparation.

So, the question is, what can I do today to make sure I have a band 7 in three months? What can I do today, what's the one thing I can do today so that everything else is irrelevant? What's the one thing I can do today to make sure I get a band 7 in 90 days? Write that down. What's the one thing I can do today? What's the one thing I can do this week? What's the one thing I can do this month?

Keep working like that and deconstruct it. What's the one thing I can do today in order to pass IELTS? Well, here are a few tips. You could write an essay. You could apply everything that you've learned from this tutorial-- you can apply it all into writing a new essay today, writing a Task 1 essay. You could start writing an IELTS Task 2 essay every single day. You could start getting feedback. What's the one thing you could do today?

My suggestion is that you take a pen and paper and you work through the tutorial that we're going to be doing today. Right, let's jump into it. Analytical Writing for IELTS Writing Task 1. In this tutorial we're going to look at how to report the main features of the information, how to select the main points of the information from the chart.

Also, we're going to break down a question into its component parts and we're going to allocate a certain number of sentences to each data point, to each group that we've made. This way, we can acquire a natural and logical structure for our essays. Now, let's jump straight into it. So, IELTS Writing Task 1.

Obviously, you're going to be, for the academic exam, you're going to be asked to describe a graph, a chart, or a table. Your job is to analyze this information and to select and report the most important features clearly and coherently. Very important there: to select and report. Choice, we have to make a choice here.

Now, let's have a look at a chart-- sorry at a table and then we're going to go into more detail about how to attack this. The table we're looking at, it shows the takings of three different branches of a supermarket in the same English city. Takings mean income, money coming in.

The question says, "Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and making comparisons where relevant. You should write at least 150 words." Now, grab a pen. Sorry, if I just surprised you with this, but grab a pen and make a table and it's got four columns and six rows.

The top row says the word average, then we have Tesco Green Street-- sorry, column one: average. Column two: Tesco Green Street. Column two: Station Tesco. Column four: Tesco

Express. Sorry, I've mixed it up. Column one: average. Column two: Tesco Green Street. Column three: Station Tesco. Column four: Tesco express.

In the average column, we're going to have daily takings; on row number three, number of transactions; row number four, cash transactions; row number five, credit card transactions; and number six-- yes, if we include the title, floor area in square meters.

So, let's go through it. Daily takings in Tesco Green Street-- I'm giving you the-- I'm rounding it up. So, I'm giving you round numbers. By the way, this is what I always do when I'm writing a table. I don't look at the numbers specifically. I just round it up in my mind so I can get a better grasp, a better feel, and a better understanding of the chart.

So, let's go. Daily takings for Tesco Green Street: 17,000. Daily takings for Station Tesco: 13,000. Daily takings for Tesco Express: 11,000. Number of transactions for Green Street: 2,600, Station Tesco: 4,000, Tesco Express: 3,600. Cash transactions for Tesco Green Street: 440, Station Tesco: 2,000, Tesco Express: 3,000.

Credit card transactions for Tesco Green Street: 2,200, Station Tesco: 2,000, Tesco Express: 600. Floor area Tesco Green Street: 8,000, Station Tesco: 3,000, Tesco Express: 5,000. Now then, maybe you want to go back and write that information down, just to check it. I would advise you to do that. Let's move on.

The most important piece of advice is read the question carefully. Now, if you've done lots and lots of task 1s, this probably won't be a serious issue for you, but there's one main instruction in this task 1. That is to summarize. Summarize the data.

All the other ones are subordinates. They are I guess you could say slightly less important, but only marginally, only very slightly. Summarize is the main instruction and then we have select report and compare. In previous podcasts, I did a whole tutorial about comparisons and comparative conjunctions.

They are a very useful structure to learn as we go into this-- we in the online course, we have a whole video, a whole tutorial about this with all the construction, the structures and the

phrases you need. Let's move on. Now, as I said before, the first element of summarizing information is to select, okay? A very important point to mention is that we are not going to mention every single fact.

We're only going to choose the main features. This is why rounding up the numbers is a useful skill to have and to apply when you're looking at the table. You do not want to get bogged down or slowed down by small numerical numbers that really do not have any impact, do not really share in any information.

The first thing to do is to decide what the main features are. This is in the tutorial in the course-- in the online course. I strongly recommend that we make a plan of how we're going to write about this task 1 report, about this task 1 table. What is the data we're going to include? What data are we going to include first? Which parts are interesting to compare? Which parts are broadly similar regardless of the column or row? Obviously, with a logical argument behind it.

So, these are the questions we have to answer when we are looking at the main feature. What are the main features when we are talking about our chart, okay? So, the horizontal axis names the branches of the shop. So, we've got Station Street Tesco, Green Street Tesco and I think the other one was the Tesco Express.

So, those are the three different branches on the horizontal axis. The vertical axis gives us a series of comparatives. This is going to be our first sentence. This is going to be the first sentence of the report. Now, although I'm explaining it like this, if I were to attack this in exam conditions or just practicing writing, the first thing I do is I choose my information, I start selecting it and I start looking for those factors that I mentioned before: similarities, major differences, maximums, and minimums and I'm going to make a plan.

Then I'm going to write my first two sentences, which is basically paraphrasing and telling the reader, in this case, the examiner, what the graph is about. So, here is the first possible two sentences. "The table compares three different branches of the same supermarket chain which stand at different locations in the same city." Sentence one out of the way.

I now clearly understand the idea behind the table. Next sentence, "A range of comparators is given for the three branches showing their relative size, how much money they bring in and what proportion of their takings is found by cash and credit card transactions respectively."

So, now I know roughly the data behind the table. First two sentences, you can probably squeeze that into one sentence if you wanted. You can say the physical size and the financial performance. As I said, it's just an overview describing what the actual table is going to display.

Now, these two sentences are useful because now the reader knows what the table is about, as I said, and once you've got that out of the way, it's almost like your summary before you even start, but there's no story there. It's just the information. As I've said before, just information, no story.

Now we can start making comparisons. Obviously, the most logical place to start when we're making comparisons is going for the most striking differences, which we will have observed beforehand when we made our plan. While we were making our plan, we were going through the numbers, we were rounding them up and we're keeping an eye out for big differences.

Now, when I was looking at it, okay, one way I was doing it was to look across the table horizontally. That is basically because I was reading it to you guys and we could have compared each one individually, okay, but that's going to make a long, boring report and we're not really selecting. So, this is why we need to think which set of comparisons are going to be the best.

One striking comparison was the difference in size between the stores. We have Tesco Green Street with 8,000, Station Tesco 3,000 and Tesco Express 5,000, okay? We could even say, and there's kind of a story here, we could say there's a large difference in the square meters, but what's interesting is that the biggest store takes the most then the second largest store takes the least amount of money and the average or the smallest sized store takes the middle amount or the second highest amount of money.

Can you see there's a story there because logic would tell us the latest store takes the largest amount of money and the second largest store takes the second largest amount of money and

the third largest store takes the third largest amount of money. That would be the logical thing, but that's not the case here. So, we're going to mention that data point.

Also, hopefully, you have heard me use the superlatives. I'm saying the least. I'm saying takes the most, has the largest income, has the smallest floor space. So, to get a real good control of academic task 1 using the dominating, not just using, dominating the use of superlatives is essential.

As you may have guessed on the online course, we've got a good tutorial about that, on how to master them, how to apply them and when to use them. Also, a bonus tip here. When you are planning your report, and this is good for your bar charts, your pie charts, when you are planning it and you're looking at the chart for the first time, look for opportunities to use fancy sentences.

Fancy sentences are sentences such as, "almost double that of Statoin Tesco", "is three times larger than Tesco Green Street", "is twice as small as Tesco Express." So, I'm looking for opportunities, okay? One opportunity that did catch my eye is cash transactions. "Cash transactions in Tesco Green Street are--" actually I'll go for-- yes, "Cash transactions in Tesco Express are almost ten times more frequent than cash transactions in Tesco Green Street."

Why did I choose that? Well, cash transactions are at 3,050 for Tesco Express and at 440 and probably it's not 10,000-- sorry, it's not 10 times larger because that would be 4,000, but it's almost because it's 3,000. So, I'm going to use that structure "almost 10 times". That's a really dramatic point, yes?

You could even switch it round and say, "Likewise, credit card transactions are roughly four times larger at Tesco Green Street than at Tesco Express." Also, just because I'm speaking this I'm not saying the numbers in some of the cases, but usually it's a good tip to put in the numbers after you've said the amounts.

So, "Credit card transactions at Tesco Green Street at 2,200 were roughly four times larger than credit card transactions at Tesco Express at 600." Also, I'm just saying very roughly here, okay?

So, what I want to explain is that we're looking for opportunities and we want to start by making comparisons with striking information points. Now, then-- okay.

Another possible sentence would be to look at-- the physical space. Now, I want to choose the physical space because it's a good opportunity to give you a very brief tutorial about implying information. So, here's a sentence.

"Of the three different shops, the largest in terms of physical ground area is the Green Street shop and the smallest, the shop at the station." Now, I do not need to mention that Tesco Express is in the middle because I said of the three shops, we've got the largest and I've just said the smallest. So, obviously, Tesco Express is in the middle.

Now, we've just mentioned floor space. We can also go on to make comparisons about the takings, okay? We could say something like, "The largest store in terms of physical size also takes the most money each day; the shop on Green Street." There we go. "Although the store at the station is the smallest, however, it takes more money each day than in the Tesco Express or than the Tesco Express."

So, we've got two sentences there that, as I said before, we're using superlatives and we're also using comparisons. Now, comparisons more than, while, although. These conjunctions are vital for scoring high. So, here what we're doing is we're making connections between the data points. I'm not going across horizontally. I'm just listing them.

I'm talking about, as I said before, smallest amount does not take the smallest amount of money. I'm looking for links. I'm looking for connections, okay, and the connections have to be relative. Now, and it's also-- you could argue the most important and interesting features.

So, just going back to what I was saying before, I wrote out these sentences about credit card transactions and cash transactions and here's another version. "There are comparatively few cash transactions at the largest store whereas there're relatively few card transactions at the Tesco Express. At the Station shop, however, credit card and cash transactions are more or less evenly balanced."

So, there we get the whole overview and if we wanted we could include the figures, but we're still getting a good picture without the figures. You do not have to mention the figures all the time, but you also do not go for extremes where you mention every single figure. We need to find a balance. So, a couple of sentences without numbers is fine, okay, but make sure that in the next sentences we do include the numbers.

When we're doing this, for example, in this whole explanation here I'm talking about transactions, okay? For the whole idea of transactions, I haven't mentioned figures. Maybe my next point will be about floor space. Here, I'm probably going to mention floor space just to put in the numbers, okay?

However, I'm not going to miss some of the numbers out for floor space and include some of the numbers for transactions. No. It's like one or the other per information group you are explaining. Also, it's interesting to note that in those sentences that I gave you, there's some good vocabulary. We have comparators.

We have comparatively, relatively, however, and in the sentence before that, we had although and we had while and-- what was the other one-- and however, which I just mentioned. As I said, we're making connections, we're making contrasts and then once we've picked out the information, the most striking information, we are going to include that in our paragraphs and then at the end we're just going to give a summary.

In this case, I would give a summary like, "Overall, we can see that each store or each shop has-- let's see. Overall, each store has a different income. The shop taking the most is Tesco Green Street followed by Station Tesco followed by Tesco Express; store size does not dictate income although it is influential for Tesco Green Street."

Maybe something like that. That's probably not the best one. Let's see. Let's try again. "Overall, of the three Tescos, Green Street has the highest income and also the largest space whereas Station Tesco has the second largest income and the smallest space." Now I know tht Tesco Express is in the middle for area and at the last for daily takings, yes?

So, that's my final sentence. One last point, "All three shops have a different makeup of card transactions between credit and cash." I'll probably rewrite that, but at the moment that's sufficient. If I could see it in front of me, I could go back and edit it and rewrite it, but what I'm saying is that I'm going to give an overview with the main points. That's all.

Right, so, as I said before, hopefully, you've written out the table, feel free to write out the whole report as well and then you can go to ieltspodcast.com and submit that essay for feedback. You can buy an essay correction and if you get that on the email list, if you subscribe you can get offers for reduced price essay corrections.

What I wanted to say was that take action, stay persistent and get feedback on your work and you'll see a much quicker, faster, more effective improvement. Perhaps the most important thing is be persistent with your preparation. Do not be persistent with the amount of exams you take, okay?

So, write an IELTS essay every day, write 30 every month and do one test every three months, every two months max I would say. Give yourself time to improve. Don't pour your money down the drain taking test after test. Look after that money, spend it on something that's going to help you pass, not taking exam after exam.

Okay, have a great day and keep your head up and keep working. You're doing well and all the best in the future.

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com