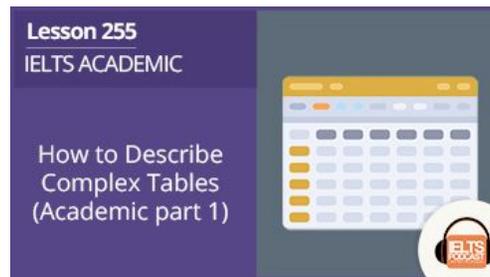


**Ben:** Hi there, IELTS students. Welcome to IELTS podcast. You no longer have to worry, fret, or panic about IELTS because we are here to guide you through this test jungle. Enjoy these IELTS tutorials and if you need more help or want to access the famous online course, you can visit us at [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com).

**Ellen:** Hey everybody, this is Ellen and I'm back with another tutorial, another writing tutorial. This time, I decided to give my two cents about task 1 specifically for Academic. There's so much information out there about task 1 that I thought I would try to give you guys something that I at least haven't seen a lot of. So, specifically, I wanted to talk about tables. Now, a little bit of the good news and the bad news with the tables.

I'll start with the bad news first. The bad news is I hate them. They are my least favorite task 1 partially because I'm a really visual person and it's really easy for me to say, when I see a line graph or a bar chart or a pie chart, it's really easy for me to say oh, yes well, that's the highest, that's the lowest. This is the biggest change, etc., etc., but when you're looking at a table, that information becomes much harder to distinguish.

So, I personally when I'm either grading a task 1 or if I'm trying to write my own kind of sample for it, which I do from time to time, I find tables the hardest. I don't know if you agree with me. Maybe you do, maybe you think they are easy. If you do, wonderful, tell us your secret. So, that's the bad news.



The good news is that they don't really show up a lot in the exam. Based on all the information that I hear from my students, from examiners who I speak to, they are not the most common and when they do appear, they usually appear in conjunction with some other type of diagram.

So, it could be, for example, a bar chart with this really minor minimal sort of table that just sort of sub-limits information which makes it a lot easier. That said, occasionally, you do get a table that is just there on its own. What I wanted to talk to you all about today specifically was two types of tables: tables with really little information and tables with tons of information.

Both of these types present some really different challenges. The tables with really little information present the challenge where test takers then say, "Well, gosh! How can I possibly write 150 words when there is so little data? How can I possibly expand my answer in order to reach a word minimum?" On the other hand, you have these tables with sometimes 30 or even sometimes 40 pieces of information and people say, "Wow! How can I possibly group this information together? How can I include all the key points when I can't even locate them," because they are all in numerical form and it just becomes really complicated. Well, that's the goal of this tutorial; to help you and guide you with how you can deal with some of these challenges.

Okay, so you can see that I have up here a really, really simple table. I would love to tell you where I found it. I can't because I don't know what the source is. It's just one of the tables I found on the internet used a bunch of times in a bunch of different sites. So, if you made this

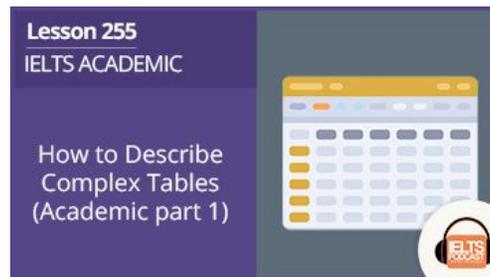


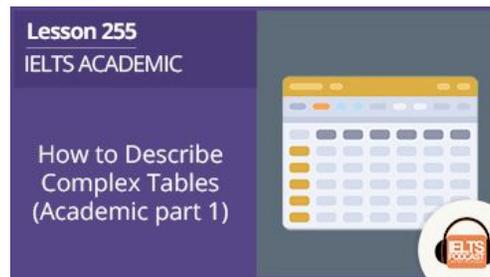
table somebody out there, I would love to give you credit, but I don't know who you are so let's just assume I'm giving the creator of this table some credit.

Okay. So, the first thing that creates a challenge here at least from my experience, is not only that there's very few-- there are very few pieces of data here specifically we have-- what is it? Seven. We have seven pieces of data, okay? What I find is that a lot of you diligent IELTS students you try really hard to learn this relevant IELTS academic task 1 vocabulary where you're talking about increases and you're talking about decreases and a sudden rise or dramatic fall or a three-fold increase and then suddenly you get to something like this and you can't use any of that language.

Why? Because we're not talking about any increases, any decreases, any falls, or any rises. It's what we call a static diagram. So, what that means is that you're going to have to refer to some other vocabulary which is also really necessary for IELTS which is more the vocabulary of comparison.

So, in other words, saying that something is twice as high as something else or something is four times higher than something else. So, this is the kind of language we are going to use rather than this language of movement like increases, decreases, three-fold and so forth.

So, I actually went ahead and I did a model for this. I may or may not share it. I'm not sure, but what I found is that my model was about 161 words. Could I have beefed it up a little more?

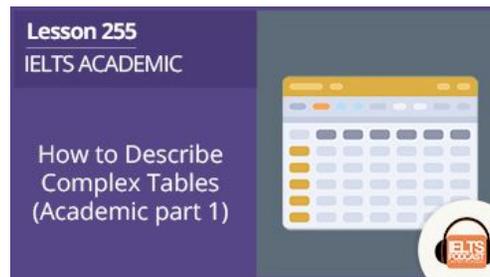


Yes, I could have, but I think it's pretty indicative of what you could do for this. So, let's start with how I approached it.

First of all, you need to understand what you are looking at. One thing that I find in a lot of test takers task 1 is they misunderstand this: all households. What they fail to realize is that this is essentially the average of all of these. And that's an important piece of information because this is kind of on its own. A lot of people end up writing responses where they take this as a seventh category and it really isn't. Like I said, it's just the average of all of these figures and that's an important distinction to make.

So, we've talked a little bit about vocabulary. We've talked a little bit about making sure you understand this. Now, when you have only six pieces-- well, in this case, seven pieces of information, it's pretty clear that you're going to write about every single one of them. First of all, I would have to say that when we were talking about key information and those of you who have listened to my essay corrections, you'll hear me sometimes talk about key pieces of information.

Well, because there is so little happening here everything is key, but generally speaking, the key pieces of information are all of your categories. So, all of these categories here, the family types, every single one of them is a key piece of information. So, you're absolutely going to have to refer to each one. You don't want to leave a single one out.

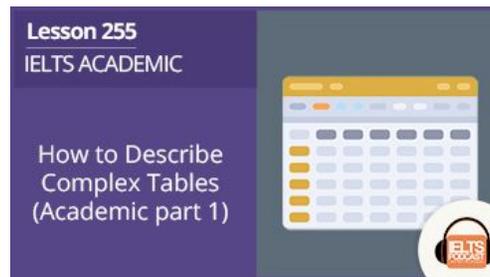


Similarly, all of these is also key pieces of information, but generally what I want you to understand is that all of your categories on the outside here on this frame, those are always your key pieces of information. You don't have to talk in detail about every single one if you've got a lot, but the categories at the very least should be mentioned by name if nothing else, okay?

So, what I did here-- all right, all right. I'll share at least my introduction, my overview. There we go. So, the table provides information regarding percentages of people living in poverty divided into different household types. Overall, single people living with or without children have the highest rates of poverty.

Why did I say this? Single people living with or without children; because I'm referring to this piece of data here, sole parent, okay, and single no children. That's why I phrased it like that. So, you can see that I've done a lot of rephrasing of the words here, but not so much that it's something totally different, but certainly using some synonyms and showing my ability to use some synonyms.

The other thing that I want to point your attention out to is the tense I used. Now, there is absolutely no information about when this table is happening and so I've decided to use the present tense. And that's okay. You can do that if there's absolutely no mention of the time.

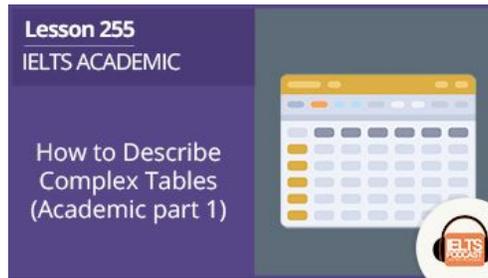


Similarly, you can use the past tense. The point is that you have to be consistent. There should be no flip-flopping of tenses. So, if you started it with the present tense, continue with the present tense and again, if you started it with the past, just be consistent and use the past tense.

So, what I then did in this, this is what I suggest here is starting with this. Since you've understood this is your average, I start with that and then I use it as my frame of reference throughout. You have to mention this. This is really important. You can even see it's in bold. What I then decided to do-- I didn't have to start with this, but I chose to since it was the average.

What I then decided to do was I decided to talk about sole parents at 21% and then I refer back to the whole-- all the households saying that this is almost double. This figure is almost double this figure. Then I go on to talk about single no children saying that it's close behind this figure, but with two less, 2% less. Then where do we go?

The obvious choice is to talk about couples with children. Now, that's one way to do it and when I did my little model, that's how I chose to do it. You didn't have to. In fact, what you could have done here is you could have talked about the lowest, all right, which is these two figures here. I just decided for simplicity just to go from high to low. Like I said, you don't have



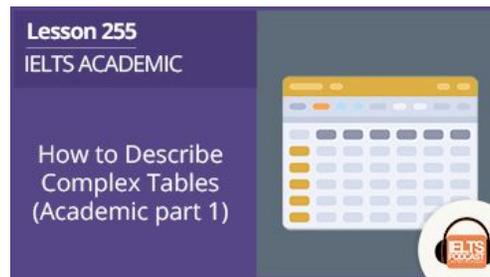
to. You could have then talked about these middle ones and you'll see why I did it like this though.

So, I talked about couples with children and the thing that I found really interesting is how close it is to the average for all households. I even used a linking word like surprisingly, 12% of couples with children are also under the poverty line with a total of 933,000 people. So, you can see that these figures are there and they are in parenthesis.

So, you could decide to pick and choose when and if you would want to include them. I did include them, not throughout my answer, but I kind of picked a few here and there. I'd say maybe three times I used these which is okay. Could you do more? Yes, but I guess you could use them for each of the figures you decide to talk about, but like I said, I decided to refer to these numbers maybe like three times.

So, then I did something for the rest of the answer that I think will help really, not only with this particular one but with lots of different types of task 1s is I decided to group. I decided to start my next paragraph with a sentence like this: The remaining categories all have less than 10% poor. So, what is that? It's essentially an introductory sentence. And you're going to need to use things like this like I said before, to beef up your answer.

So, then you can give specific data. So, that's when I then start talking about couples with no children and then I talked about-- I grouped these guys together too. So, I grouped the single

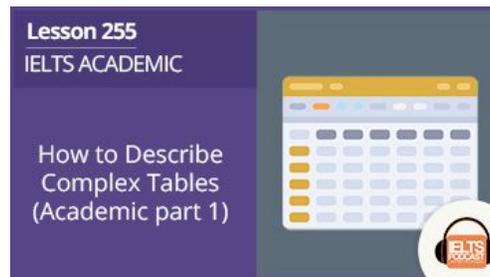


aged with the aged couples together saying that the lowest figures for poverty were found in the elderly or are found in the elderly specifically 6% of single aged people are under the poverty line whereas 4% of aged couples live in poverty.

So, if you do it like this and you provide some of this comparison, some of this grouping using some introductory sentences at the start of a new paragraph, then you can really give a lot more meat to your answer, okay?

Since we've talked about how to deal with a simple table, I now want to look at a complex table. Again, I don't remember where I got this from. If you created this table, then thank you very much. I give you credit. Let's take a look at this. When I first saw this, I was so overwhelmed just looking at all these numbers. If you look at it, it is 42 pieces of data. Look, you've got seven age categories, and then you have six categories of activity. So, 42 pieces of data which is really overwhelming.

You may ask yourself how on earth am I going to organize this? Well, like I said, I'm a really visual person, so looking at this I found it very challenging. So, take a look at what I did. I actually created a bar chart out of the data that was in the table. Now, I do this really just to help me kind of get a handle on this information and really see where the trends are because like I said before, when you look at 42 pieces of information, you may have no idea where to start.



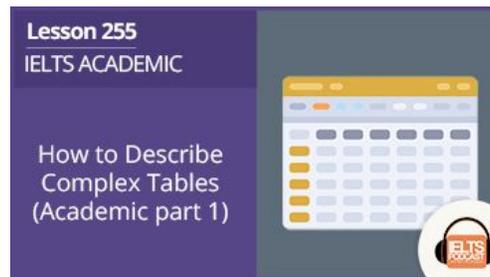
So, suddenly when I saw it like this, it just made so much more sense to me. Now obviously, you're not going to be able to do this the day of your exam. You're not going to be able to just sit there and construct a bar chart, but it will at least give you an idea that you know what? It's really not that overwhelming. All you have to look for is trends and similarities in the numbers.

So, when you look at it like this, it becomes super clear that watching videos is the most popular, cinema is consistently the lowest, but also pretty low is socializing with four or more people and then you've got different things happening with these activities.

Now, one of the things that I talked about in the simple table is how important it is to group information. Well, if you look at the actual activities themselves, you can group them in terms of not numbers necessarily, but in terms of activity itself. So look at what I mean. You've got two different activities here that deal with socializing. What differs is how many people you're socializing with.

Similarly, you've got two different activities that deal with exercise and watching TV and videos is kind of similar to going to the cinema. So, suddenly you've taken your six categories and you can effectively reduce them to three, but then talking about how those figures differ. So, let's take a look again at that bar chart.

So, if I were now going to describe this, I would talk about watching TV, videos, and cinema, I would put them together. I would say this was clearly the most popular among all the age



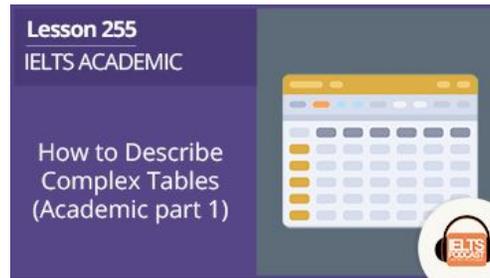
groups with the exception of people in their 40s whereas cinema was consistently the least popular with less than 50 for each category.

Now, of course, you're also going to want to talk about the individual age groups. So, you'll mention that teenagers participated in this activity the most followed by people in their 70s and we've already talked about people in their 40s and you can say that it's pretty similar here as well. The teenagers engaged in this activity the most followed by people in their 70s and in their 20s as well.

You don't have to go into a ton of detail. You don't have to talk about those kind of middle figures like I said, because you're certainly not going to talk about 42 pieces of information. So, you've talked about the teens, you've talked about people in their 70s. So, that's 1, 2, 3, 4. You've talked about this. That's five pieces of information and you can pretty much be done with it. You can be done with these two categories.

Then you have a decision to make. Say well, what do I talk about next? As far as my logic is concerned, I would probably go to the exercise category since you've got this really-- you've got this figure that really stands out right here. Maybe it will be clear if I showed you on the table.

So, here it is and look at that. It's the only place other than watching TV and videos that you see this large number right there, okay? That's the kind of thing you might want to circle on your



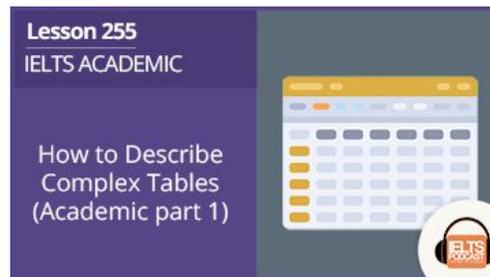
exam paper. That's probably a good habit to get into as well. Maybe you underline some things, circle some things so that they really stand out.

So, that's probably what I would do first. Assuming that we've talked about TV, videos, and cinema I would then describe the exercise preferences, okay? So, exercise is a very popular activity among various age groups. Group exercise fares the best for those who are in their teens at 450 hours per year and then I would say that this figure declines considerably for each of the following age groups with people in their 60s and 70s not participating in group exercise at all.

In contrast, individual exercise is most popular with people in their 30s and 40s, okay? And then I would mention maybe another figure there as well either one of the lows or maybe say that it's also very popular with teens and people in their 70s interestingly enough.

So, let's take a look now at the figures for socializing. Let's look at the little bar chart I created to help us with this. When you look at it here, it's pretty clear that people in their teens and 20s socializing in a group of four or more was really popular, but then for everybody else it just totally was less popular, like almost not at all.

In contrast, socializing with fewer than four people was popular except of course for that 20-and-under group or 20s-and-under group I should say, okay? Again, you're going to want to make some analysis there as well.

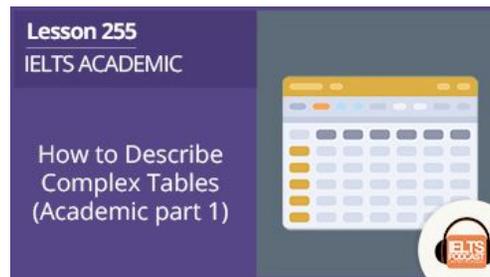


So, what you want to remember in something like this is that you don't have to give all of these pieces of information. You do have to group-- you absolutely have to group some of them together. You won't mention all seven of these for each category. You'll pick the most important ones.

You also may want to use ranges. So say, for example, if we're talking about the TV and video one, you could have talked about teenagers are at 1200 and people in their 70s are at 1,100 and everyone else was either at 700 and below or you could say that everyone else was between-- what figure is that? 400 and 700. So, this way you've included everybody.

I'm a huge fan of ranges especially when you have things like this, okay? Another place where you could have used a range was here, okay? You could say if you're talking about the socializing for people-- socializing with four people or less you could write a sentence like this. You could say that people in their 30s spent 300 hours socializing with four or fewer people. The lowest figures were found for people in their teens and 20s at 150 and the remaining groups were between these two figures, okay?

So, you're not burdening your answer with too, too many pieces of data yet at the same time you are giving all the important features that you need to talk about. That's how I deal with really simple tables as well as really difficult tables. I hope you have found this information helpful.



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