IELTS Podcast

Lesson 276
IELTS ACADEMIC

IELTS Band 6.5
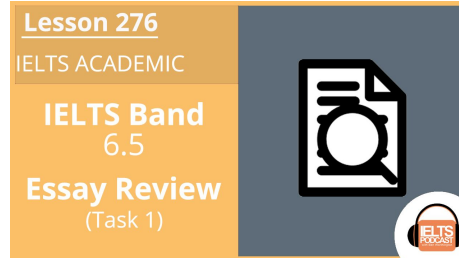
Essay Review
(Task 1)

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.

INTRODUCTION

Ben: IELTS academic band 6.5-7. **We are going to look at an academic task 1 graded by an ex-IELTS examiner one from o**ur team of [essay correctors](#)**.** So, when you send in your essay to us, you're going to get it corrected by an ex-IELTS examiner. That's not bad, is it? And sometimes I will ask the examiner to look at a student's essay and then write down the commentary and how they are thinking.

So, this will help us get into the mind of an IELTS examiner. It will also help you to choose the right information because we all know that when we are looking at academic task 1; pie chart, line graph, bar chart, whatever, a very common challenge is [choosing the right information](#). We're also going to look at the right sentence structures to use and we're going to look and decide which is the perfect tense to use for the specific graph.

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Now then, when you go to the post, when you would look at this online, you will see that-- or if you're getting the email of this, you will see that each of the sentences or fragments of the sentence that we analyze have been color coded. So, just very briefly, we use blue for cohesion and coherence, lexical resource we use purple, we use green for grammatical range and accuracy, and orange for task response. That's going to be very useful if you are listening to the podcast, but anyway.

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Rainfall (ml) in England, Scotland and Wales in 2018
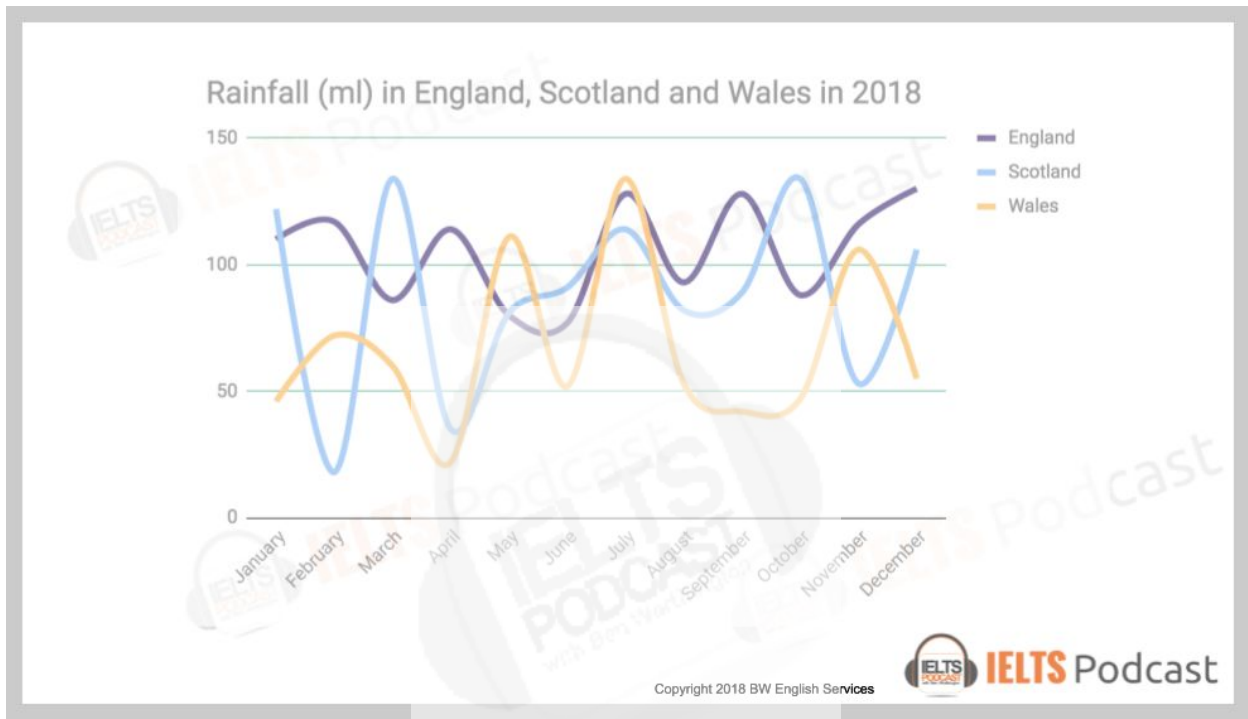
Let's jump straight into it. So, what we've got is a horrible, horrible, line graph and I made it horrible on purpose because this specific question comes from the online course. I wanted the students to be challenged on this and you probably-- you would get an easier chart to describe in the exam than this.

That's why I included it because I just really wanted to be pushing the students. If the student can describe this effectively, then in the exam it's going to be much easier. I don't do this with all the questions because I think sometimes there is some importance and some value in
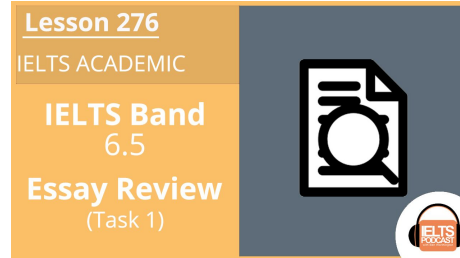
starting with an easier question then slowly building up your capabilities, but it's also good as well to tackle the really tough ones and this way as well, we make sure that all the students on the course are getting sufficiently challenged.

Now, why is this chart horrible? Well, **it's horrible because what the chart describes is rainfall in England, Scotland, and Wales in 2018. Now, of course, that's not horrible in itself, but the numbers are completely fictional and there are humongous fluctuations all throughout the graph, all throughout the year.**

LOOK FOR PATTERN

Also, **there is no set pattern.** For example, February for Scotland it's maybe about 20ml. Then the next month it's up to about 140ml and none of the countries have similar amounts of rainfall. To be honest with you, it was just totally random numbers. So, it really looks like scribbles.

Now, what happens when you've got a graph like this? Well, as you've heard me say before, try and **look for the patterns,** but here you could say that there is no pattern in which case I would

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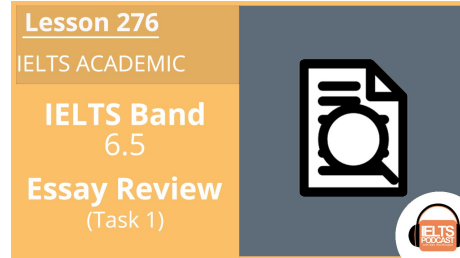
reply and say well, that is the pattern. **The pattern is that there is considerable fluctuation from month to month and country to country.**

That is the pattern that there is no pattern and that it is crazy. If you look at this, you would be insane to see a pattern here. The only pattern is that it's crazy for every single country. So, that's just one thing just to give you an overview here.

TITLE

Right then, let's jump into it. So, I'll give you the title. **The chart shows the average rainfall for three countries in Great Britain over a 12-month period in 2018. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words.**

Beautiful. Let's jump into this. So, the student has started with this sentence. The line graph reveals the information of rainfall in three countries; England, Scotland, and Wales for one year starting from January to December 2018.

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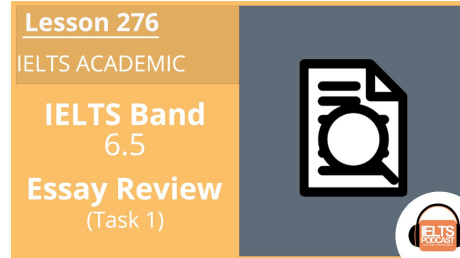
TASK RESPONSE

Now, **regarding task response, that's a good introduction-- sorry, that's a good use of paraphrasing and we've includ**ed the key information. Hopefully, you picked out on something that didn't sound very natural. Reveals the information of rainfall; that's not very natural. What we could have said is shows information about rainfall. Reveal is-- reveal has kind of like a little bit of intrigue, a little bit of surprise. I'm going to reveal to you and you're going to be waiting in anticipation.

And that's not what the graph is doing. It's a graph. All it's doing is showing information. So, for lexical resource, word choice there with reveal isn't the best. Just something more straightforward, more appropriate like show is better.
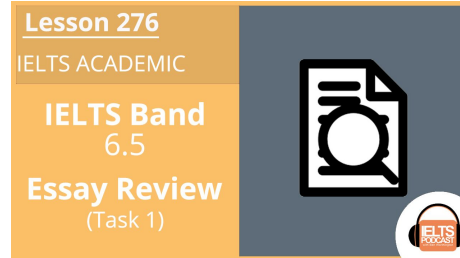

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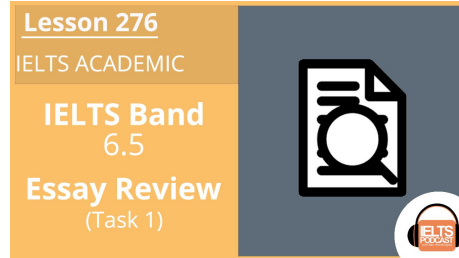
NEXT PARAGRAPH

Now then, let's have a look at the next paragraph. In England... Now, this is a good way-- a good systematic approach to presenting the information. We start with the subject and this student, I think, has assigned a paragraph for each country, which is logical, but I would be surprised if they can get that much mileage out of making comparisons, which is actually requested of you.

So, anyway, in England, the amount of rainfall... Now, this is good grammar, good grammar here. The amount of rainfall is the correct way. The student actually wrote the amount of the rainfall. So, it's not as good as I initially read it. So, the amount of rainfall in January was recorded just above 100ml, which slightly increased in next month by 5ml.

Obviously, that should be which slightly increased in the next month by 5ml and dipped to 90ml in March. Good. Now then, the trend of raising and falling continue... Two issues there. Should we have raise or rise? We need rise. The trend of rising or falling continued... So, an issue with grammar and an issue with lexical resource there for the incorrect use of raise when we should have rise.
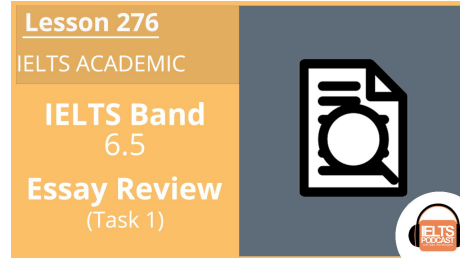

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…for a couple of months and reached its lowest figure in the graph for the month of June at around 70ml. Good. So, what was excellent about that as well was that we had the superlatives; lowest figure. It's always a good idea to mention the minimums and the maximums especially on the graph and especially for each of the subjects; in this case England, Scotland, or Wales.

After that, it is predicted that the level of rain will fluctuate and will remain around 120ml in December. Right then, it's not predicted, is it? Because this is all in the past and this is a task response issue. It is predicted… No, it shows the average rainfall recorded. There's no prediction there, so be very careful. That's the wrong tense there.

Also, let's see... also, just the sentence it's not very coherent. It is predicted that the level of rain will fluctuated and will remain around 120ml. So, what is it doing? Is it fluctuating or is it remaining? Never mind the tense. So, that's going to affect task response as well.

NEXT PARAGRAPH

Let's move on to the next paragraph. In Scotland, the amount of rain in January was 125ml dropped... So, this is a clear issue of cohesion and coherence. The sentences don't join together

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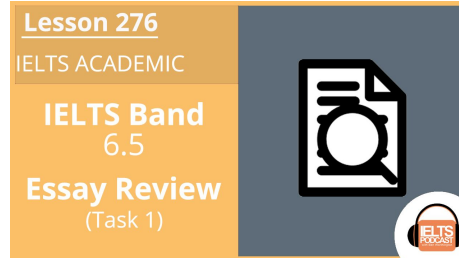IELTS ACADEMIC

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here. In Scotland, the amount of rain in January was 125ml dropped unexpectedly to its lowest level to 20ml.

So, we need something like followed by and let's just rewrite it. In Scotland, the amount of rain in January was 125ml. This dropped unexpectedly to its lowest level to 20ml in February. Just adding 'this' is a modest improvement. However, it still probably needs to be rewritten. So, some issues there with cohesion and coherence. So, if your essays-- if your sentences sound like that try and make sure you can link your ideas together especially when we are jumping from data points.

Okay, following on from that sentence, we have comma and rocketed the next month to its peak value of 135ml. So, let's just have a look because rocketed is a strong-- a very strong verb. So, after February, let's see. We've got Scotland reaches blue and it did rocket. It's one of the steepest climbs, steepest and longest climbs on the graph. So, that's accurate use there. So, that's good lexical resource because it's being used accurately.

Let's move on. …in next month... What's missing here? …in the next month to its peak value of 135ml. So, its peak value there is also pretty good line graph vocabulary, which is what we need. Unfortunately, we have in next month and obviously, that should be in the next month to its peak value of 123.

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So, by the way, **if you've got access to Google Docs, start writing your essays in Google Docs because it's got this new function which is like a blue underline and it helps you with the grammar. It is pretty accurate**. Personally, I do not like Grammarly because it tells you to put commas in all your-- every single-- like you have five commas in every single sentence and it really drives me crazy, but the Google Docs one seems to be much more intelligent and less crazy, less fanatical about commas for sure.

Anyway, moving on: In April, the amounts of rain... The amount of rain would be better here. In April, the amount of rain was less than 50ml then start went up slightly until June. Then it started to increase slightly until June or even better, then it slightly increased until the month of June.

So, a **big grammar issue there**: …then it start went up... That's not good. So, we can either restructure it like I did or just try and add some other words than it started to-- yes, we just have to change that actually to modify it. …then it started to increase slightly until June.

COHESION AND COHERENCE

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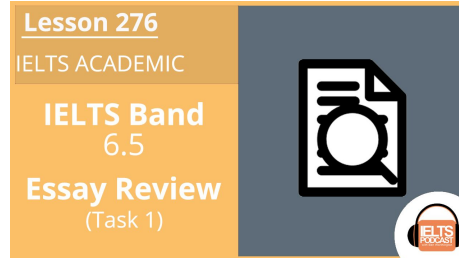**IELTS Band** 6.5

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Next one: Then after... That's good for **cohesion and coherence** because it's linking the ideas together. Then after, it is predicted to drop until September. The following month, it will start climbing up to October. Will start climbing up to 60ml will probably be easier because we've already said the following month and everybody knows the following month after September is October.

...and it will decreased... No, we can't say it will be decreased to 50ml. We say it will decrease. So, be careful with the grammar there. By the way, if you really struggle with tenses and especially with the tenses like in a grammatical fashion one tip to try is just to keep the sentence in the same tense all the way through. It's playing it safe when it comes to writing your academic task 1 essay.

When you're writing and getting feedback and practicing, then try different tenses, different structures and get some feedback on it, but in the exam, all your experimenting should be over and you should just be writing confidently what you know are correct sentences.

So, finishing off the final fragment of that sentence: ...to 50ml before reaching to 105ml in December. So, let's see. Here problem we should omit-- we shouldn't have the to. ...before reaching 105ml in December. So, be careful there.
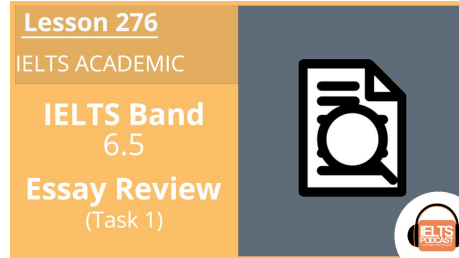

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I think two ways to improve: one, you find model academic task 1 essays. We've got lots of them on the online course and we've got them on the website as well. What you do is you look at a sentence, you cover it up, you write it from memory and then look at the next sentence, cover it up, and write it from memory.

The other way probably faster is you get feedback. You write your essay, you send it in for correction and then you can get some feedback and this way you're going to see specifically where you're losing points and you'll be able to improve faster with this kind of feedback.

PENULTIMATE PARAGRAPH

Now then, **we are going on to the penultimate paragraph**. So, here: In wales... You cannot hear me. There is no capitalization for Wales, which is a shame because that's a no-brainer. That's a no-brainer. We need capital letters for proper nouns. So, in Wales, the rainfall was 50ml in January and it increased slightly in February.

So here, what we've got is what-- I've seen a lot of times is that a student will just list every single data point and these are so boring to read because it's just... Yes, it's like a machine

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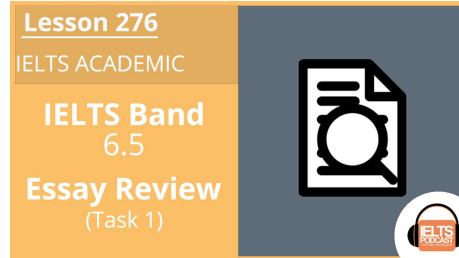IELTS ACADEMIC

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wrote it. Be careful here. We can sometimes omit details and we can just sort of like-- I'll give you an example in this case.

This is what the student wrote. In Wales, the rainfall was 150ml-- sorry, was 50ml in January. It increased slightly in February and decreased to its lowest point in April around 30ml. In the next month, it went up sharply. So, there are some good points there, but we could have used a structure such as between January and April, Wales experienced its wildest fluctuations reaching its maximum in January followed by its lowest in February and then plateauing to its lowest in March.

That's okay or we could even say reaching its highest in January, its lowest in February and then a midpoint in April at around 110, 20, and 60 respectively for each month. Just using a little structure like that breaks up the monotony and we're still covering the same amount of data. It's just showing a little bit of flare.

Anyway, let's go back to what the student wrote and there are a few grammar mistakes here. In Wales, the rainfall was 50ml in January increased slightly in February. Obviously, that's wrong and it's not only grammatically incorrect but it's going to hinder and harm your cohesion and coherence score because we've got two ideas joined together very abruptly.

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So, what we should have written was the rainfall was 50ml in January and increased slightly in February and decreased to its lowest point in April around 30ml. There we've got almost two ands, so it's not the most eloquent way. It works, but it's just not the most eloquent way.

By the way, the student would have picked up points for lexical resource by this sentence: ...decreased to its lowest point in April... because that's a very natural use of language.

Next sentence: In next month... Ouch. The student did it again. Said in the next month or we've already used in the next month. So, what could we say after that? In subsequent months or in the subsequent month, rainfall went up sharply... Now, that was a good term to use. ...to 110ml and dipped by 50ml in June. So, two good phrases there: went up sharply and dipped.

Also, what I liked is we can-- for the line graph in this case, we can say the amount it reached or the amount it dropped to, but we can also say it increased by 50, it decreased by 80 and we can say the amount of the change. This is a very useful skill to have especially in line graphs because we can say that it just increases the variety of language that you can use and increases the chances of scoring higher.

Next one: It is predicted that the highest amount of rain will be in July. Let's see. What's the problem here? As you know, the graph reports information in 2018, so it's not a prediction. It's a shame really because the student used the tense-- sorry, the grammar correctly, but

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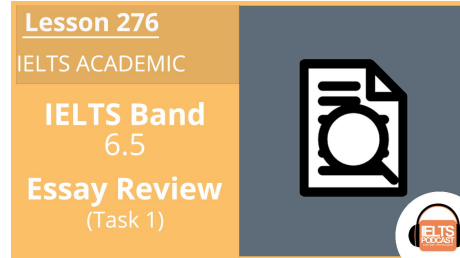
inappropriately. So, it's correct grammar, but used in a wrong way and it seems to me that the student kind of forced this tense because they really wanted to use it is predicted.

As a side note, sometimes I will recommend a student to put that at the end of task 2. It is predicted that the trend of pollution will continue unless it is solved by the governments promptly. It is predicted that employment in city centers will continue to rise unless addressed by the government promptly. I'll sometimes suggest this for the students to do because here we can use the passive tense and we can pick up points.

However, in academic task 1, we do not want to do that because the data-- unless we are talking about the future, but that's it. The tenses used in academic task 1 will be dictated by the graphic. At least in task 2, you've got a little bit more freedom and you can incorporate them as long as you do it in a skillful way.

Let's move on. So, …went down just below the month of June's record. Good. Next sentence, it will remain constant for two months before reaching 105ml in November then will dip down in December to 52ml. So, we've kind of already used dip, but once again, despite the tenses, as we've mentioned before, the lexical resource isn't that bad actually. …will remain constant.

CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH

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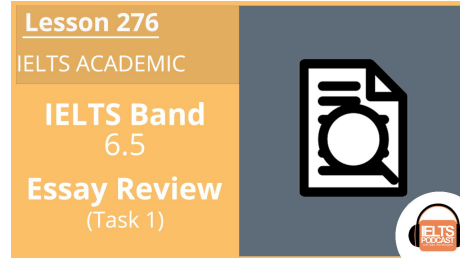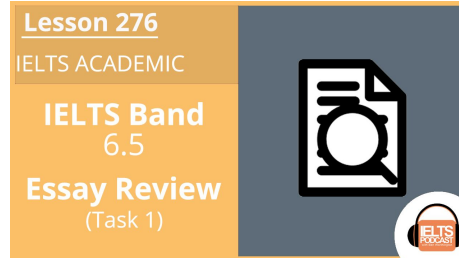
Now then, final paragraph and this is kind of like the summary. It's not a conclusion. Conclusions are made after arguing and debating. There is no arguing, there is no debating in academic task 1. There's an objective report of the facts. So, this is why we shouldn't use however or surprisingly because it's just not appropriate.

Final sentence: Overall, it can be clearly seen... Well done there because this will help with cohesion and coherence and we're getting back to the main features of the graph. Overall, it can be clearly seen that in each country the amount of rain in January will be approximately the same as in December.

What? Is that really the case? Maybe, yes. It is kind of. I don't think that would be the biggest pattern though, is it? Remember that ideally, we want somebody to be able to draw a rough outline of the graphic from your text. And although that last piece of information was-- it was an okay observation. I think the biggest and the most striking observation is, like I said at the beginning, there are wild fluctuations in this graph and there is no symmetry and there is no pattern. That is what we can see.

So, maybe I would have been tempted to say something like overall, it is clear there are wild fluctuations from month to month and country to country. Scotland had the lowest amount of
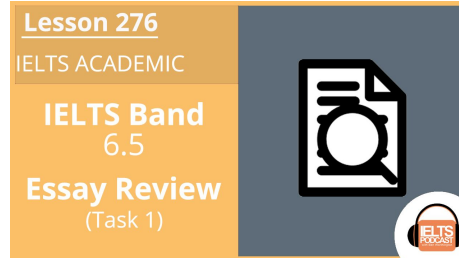
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rainfall on the graph and it also had the highest amount along with Wales or we could even just say and all three reached a peak amount of rainfall at around 140ml. That's just like a bit of an overview, it's not so clear from the graph because the-- all the number points are not clearly marked, so I'm just making a guess here.

By the way, being able to make a guess is also a good skill to have. If you cannot see it clearly, it's definitely worth just guess. We guess because we want to include the information and it's also going to give us an opportunity to say-- to use slightly better quality sentences such as almost 140, nearly 20, just above 20, slightly below 30.

All of these kinds of phrases are very appropriate for academic task 1 and they break up the monotony of a boring report where we're just saying rainfall in Scotland in February was 20 followed by 80 in March and 60 in April and 20 in May and 15 in June. If I can just break it up and sprinkle a little bit of light and love into the report then obviously, we're going to pick up more points for grammatical range and accuracy. It's going to help with the lexical resource and it's just going to make it a better article, a better report.

Now then, that's-- and the overall score for this is probably between 6.5, 7. I'd say 6.5 to be honest because there's the tense-- the tenses used were quite severely inappropriate. We can't use future tense especially when it says clearly on the graph 2018.

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Anyway, that's everything from me that I would like to say about academic-- about this academic task 1 report. If you're still struggling then you might want to have a look at the academic task 1 course that's included in the Sentence Guide course that is available at ieltspodcast.com/online-ielts-course/ and I'll just give you an overview of some of the chapters.

We've got choosing what to write about. We've got sentence structures you must have to score high. We've got an essential technique to score 7. We've got a whole chapter about tenses and then there's like three or four modules about the vocabulary and then one final one about advanced sentence structures.

By the way, it does follow a similar structure to the IELTS task 2 course that we have as in you get a formula, a framework to use which just makes it a lot easier. And of course, you're going to get feedback on your essays. So, that's everything from me today.

If you've got any friends who are struggling with IELTS, then send them this link. Send them the Spotify link, the iTunes link or whatever. We can help them out too. If you enjoyed this episode, I'd be really grateful if you left us a 5-star review or a 10-star review, whatever it is, whatever platform you're using and tell Nadyne on our team-- email us and tell her that hey, I just left a review and she's got a surprise for you if you do that.

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FINAL TIPS

Final two things: **if you're struggling with the course, please get in contact-- if you're struggling with IELTS, sorry, please get in** contact. We can help you. We **can give you** [feedback on your essays](). **We can point you in th**e right direction. Also one last t**hing,** [sign up for the email list]() **and you can get some discount**s, special offers, tutorials, tips, r**eports, everything. Okay?**

My name is Ben Worthington. Thank you very much for tuning in today and remember just to keep your head up, keep working and you will get there. With persistence and determination and a solid routine, you will get there. Good luck with your [IELTS preparation]().

[music]

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