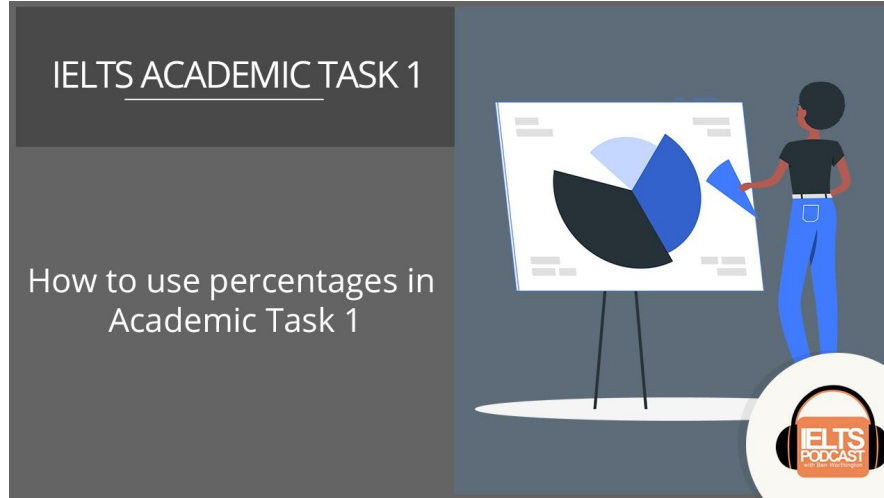[Music]

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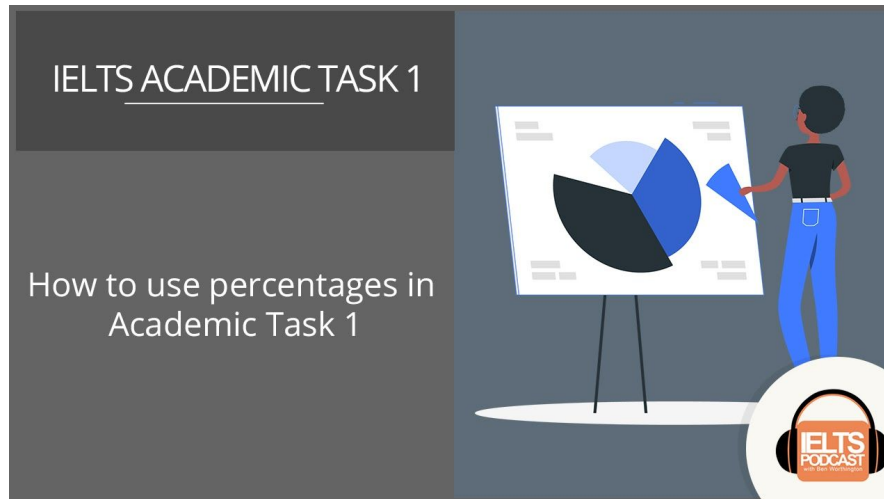
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INTRODUCTION

Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we are specifically looking at how to use percentages in Academic Task 1. This tutorial will help you because we're going to focus on not only the language but also the formula. Now, if you've got the language, that's extremely useful,

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but if you've got the formula, you are better equipped to face most of the tasks and that's what I'll be sharing with you later on.

Now, when I was teaching English in Spain, I had just finished university in Manchester which is, as you know, where I'm from; from the north of England and I basically did my Erasmus which is a student exchange program in Spain. This is where I struggled with the Spanish language and eventually I got there through determination and the friendliness of the Spaniards because they really did take me in and help me learn the language. It was incredible.
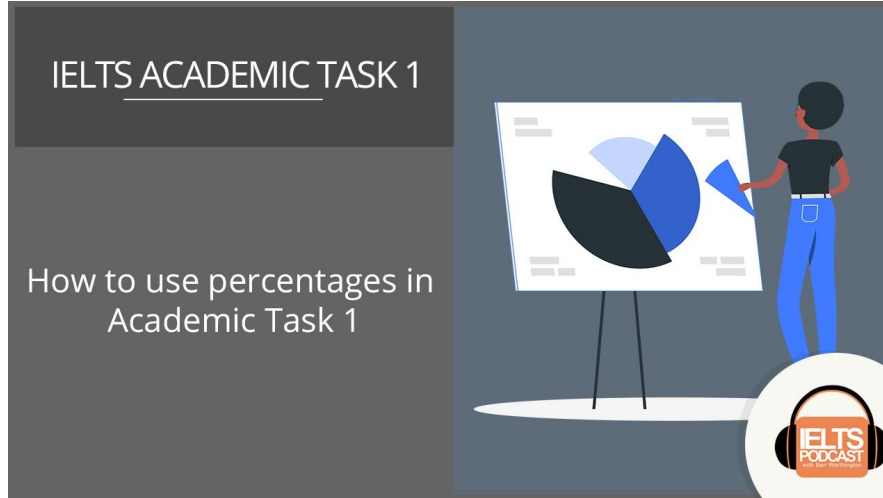
Anyway, after I finished my term, after I finished my course there, I didn't go back to England. I stayed in Spain and I started teaching English and I was preparing students for the IELTS exam. Back then, I had a rough idea, but I wasn't 100% confident and the way I kind of figured out Academic Task 1 was by just teaching it, seeing what worked, going back, asking the students,

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and writing out lots and lots of Academic Task 1 summaries myself and this is how I got better and better and better.

Also, I took a lot of courses on-- not specifically on IELTS but on academic English, on writing English for academic purposes, and so on and so forth and working with the students, working closely with them, we eventually sort of like-- not we. I eventually found a way to do it and then all of this knowledge was eventually put into the online course.
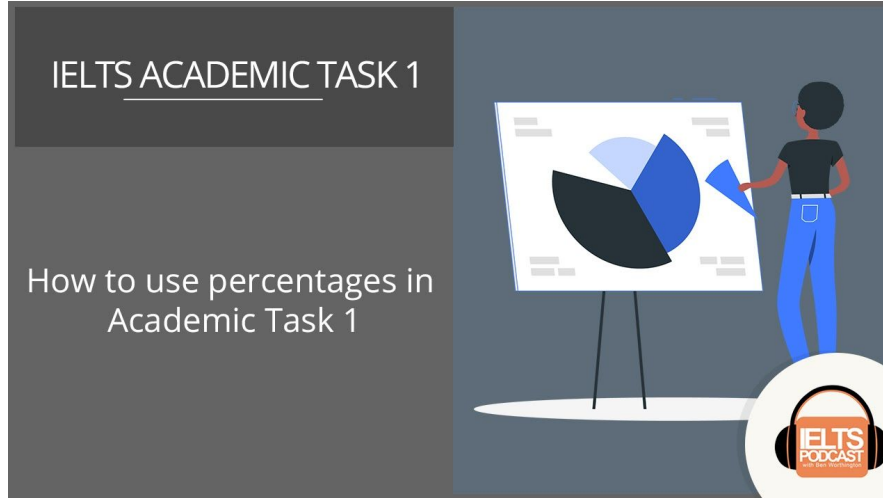
First, it was with Writing Task 2 and then I slowly crystallized and basically refined and perfected my knowledge for Academic Task 1 and then put that in another course. This is why I can talk about Writing Academic Task 1 now and this is why we're going to go into basically just a small section now. We're going to be looking at how to use percentages in your Academic Task 1.

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So, I just wanted to mention that you may be struggling, but with some determination and with some help, you can get there. You can either do what I did and just do lots of research online, trial and error, and then finally get in there and developing the course and that's going to definitely equip you or you can take the course and just take a shortcut.

It's up to you, but basically, it's not impossible. I used to really struggle with this especially teaching it, but eventually, I learned different formulas, different techniques and it just comes through practice. So, you can do this, trust me. It's not as difficult and plus this is one of the reasons for doing this tutorial today in that I just want to break it down.

So, let's jump into it. Now, the aim of this class, of this tutorial right now is just to help students who are not as equipped with describing these rubrics, describing these graphics, pie charts, and

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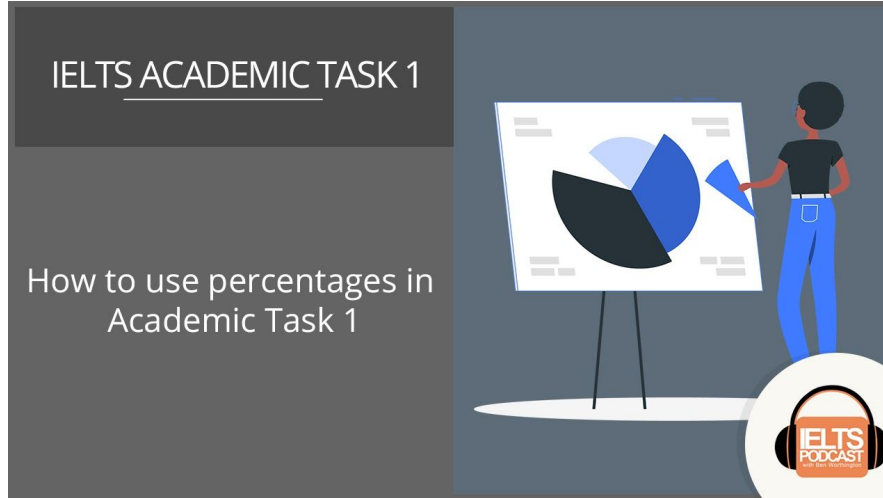
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flowcharts specifically pie charts in this tutorial. Now, with this skill, it's not just a case of repeating the numbers that you see in front of you.

Over and over again, I used to see students describing Academic Task 1 pie charts by actually just basically reproducing what they saw in front of them and this is wrong because the goal of Academic Task 1 is basically you need to interpret that data. Interpret, understand that data and then you summarize it like it says specifically in the task.

So, it's really important to interpret and then summarize. We are not just communicating it basically from left to right. We've got to eat it, digest it, and regurgitate it and that was a beautiful analogy. It's the only one that came to mind.
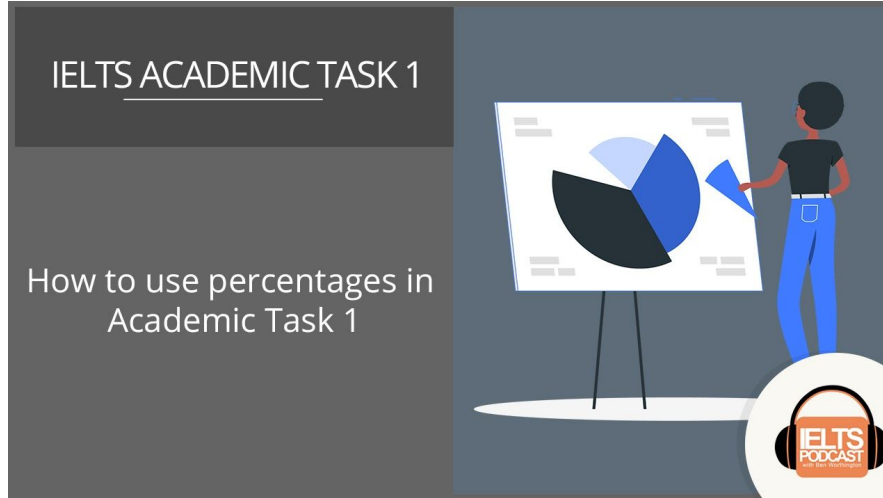
Anyway, just to cut a long story short, this is an English language exam and the aim is to examine the extent of your vocabulary, of your lexical resource and coincidentally, this is what

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we are using in the speaking challenges. Daphne is making a new speaking course. Well, together-- Daphne and I-- and one of the key challenges that we are going to give is the ability to give instructions, to debate, and to explain abstract concepts because these are all challenging your use of the English language and specifically in IELTS Academic Task 1. We're looking at interpreting and summarizing the data.
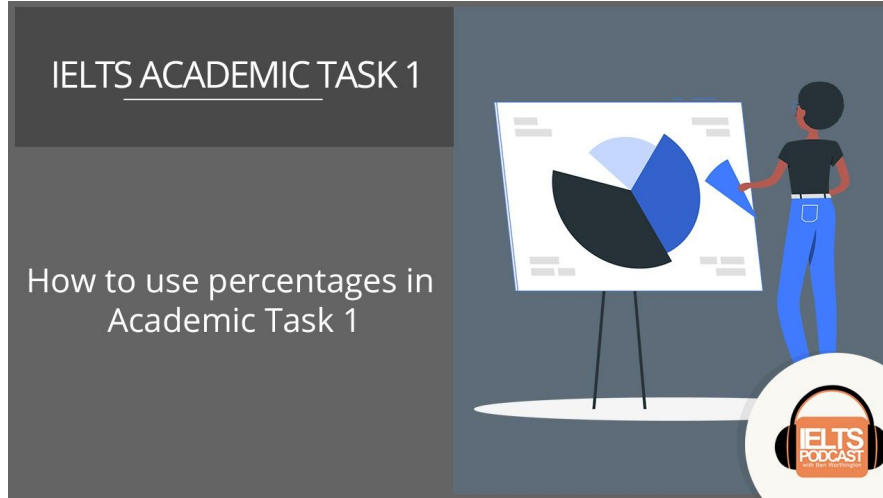
DESCRIBING A PIE CHART

Now, in front of me, I have a pie chart. I'm going to give you the basic description and I want you to try and identify what is wrong with the description. I will start. This chart shows that 25% of household income is spent on food and 25% on education. 13% is spent on clothes and 12% is

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spent on transport. 8% is spent on a mixture of household and personal items and 5% on power. That leaves households with just 15% to save.

Hopefully, you saw what was wrong with this description. First of all, it's not very exciting at all. If you didn't fall asleep, well done to you. Basically, if you write a description like this, then it shows very little of your skills. Also, you will have hopefully identified that the words spent and percentage run right through the paragraph and basically just explain what can be seen from the get-go. If I just look at this graph, I can see exactly what has been described.

Now, that might sound confusing, but I will show you now how we can improve this basic description that we've got. I'll give you four ways; four methods to improve it and to master these, I would recommend you start experimenting with them to the point where you're comfortable.
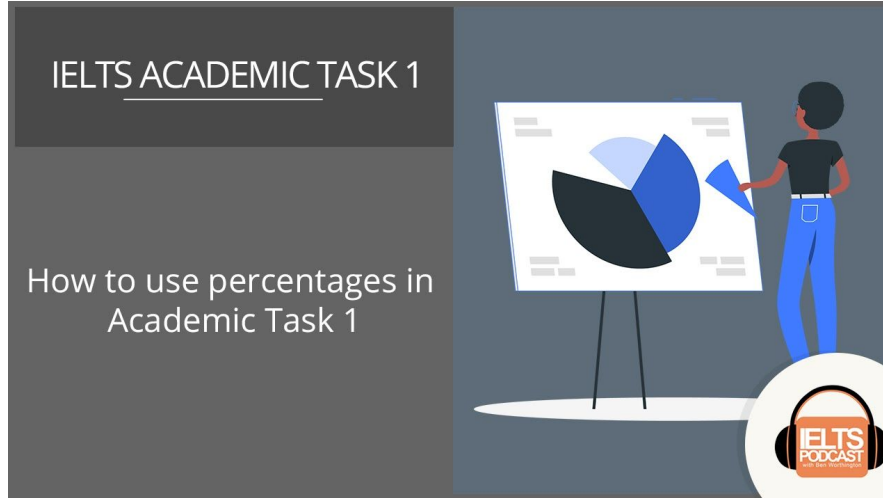

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Now, how do you experiment? Well, you write out your own reports, you check them, and you can either get somebody else to give to you feedback or you can send them in to our service and we can give you feedback and we can guide you on how to improve. Let's have a look.

The first point that I want to show to help you to improve your score is to start introducing comparisons. For example, we could say householders spent 25% of their household income on food. This is more than five times what they spend on power and just over twice the amount spent on transport which comes in at 12%.

Now, there's a lot of comparisons there. We go into this in much more detail in the online course, but some comparative words that you can use are not as-- as in it's not as large as that of transport, for example. Obviously, you can use as, you can use less, you can use more, you can

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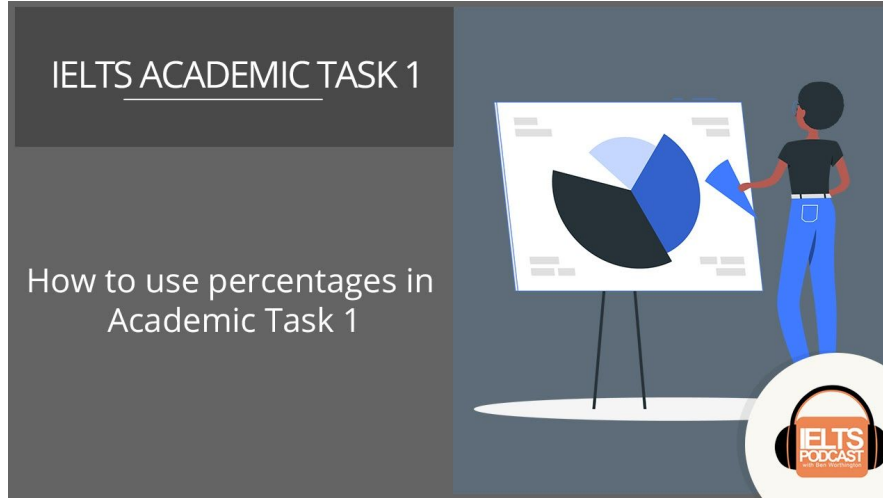
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use least and most. These are extremely useful. I would write them down. So, that's not as, as, less, more, least, and most.

So, I'll just give you that description again of the phrase. Householders spend 25% of their household income on food. This is more than five times what they spend on power and just over twice the amount spent on transport which comes in at 12%. So, we've got a comparison and we've also got what we call a fancy phrase where we are saying it's three times that of or just under that of.
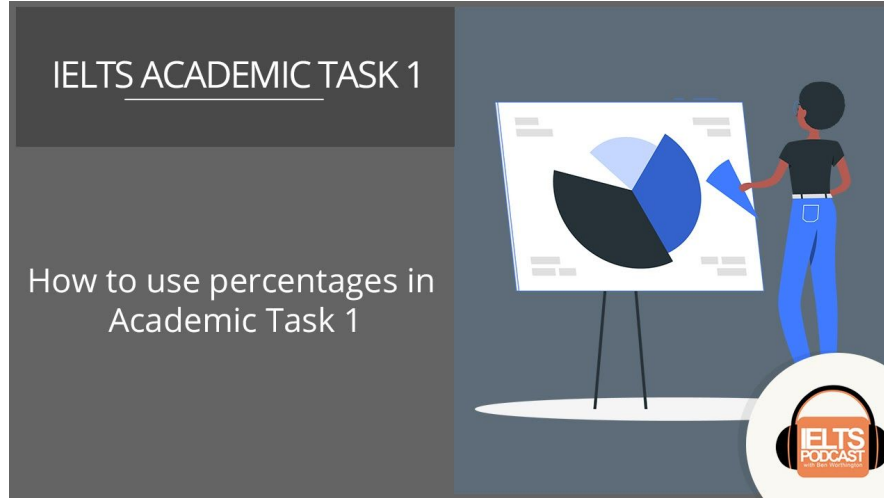
The next piece of advice I want to give you is to use fractions instead of percentages. You want to review these. I'm not going to go into it in much detail now, but we should know and we should be aware that 50% is a half, 25% is a quarter, and so on and so forth. It's very easy. You

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can just research online, refresh it, maybe write out a few sentences with these phrases, but it is a very simple way to improve your vocabulary.

By the way, I was talking about formulas before and I just mentioned one previously. I only mentioned it briefly, but basically, the formula is if you can write out fancy phrases like three times the size of or double that of or half that of the previous year. This is one of the formulas that I discovered. So, although we've got the phrases, if we know the actual formula to take, then we can use that formula in almost all of them; probably not in the describe a diagram, in describe a process, but bar charts, line graphs, all the rest, we can definitely use that formula.
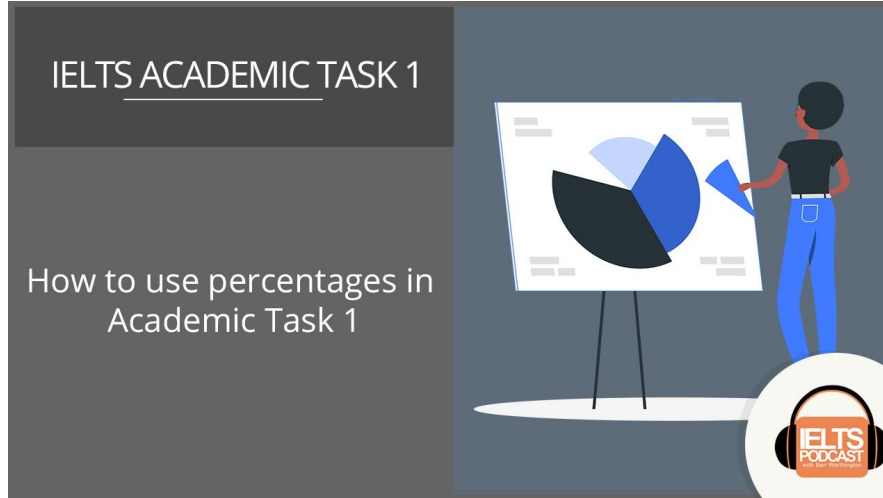
Next way to improve it is to expand your vocabulary. So, we could talk about segments. We could talk about proportions. We could say figure, number, one in five, one in ten. For example, we could say that while a quarter of the household income is spent on food each month at 22%,

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only slightly less is spent on education. The smallest proportion of the household income pays for power with $5 of every $100 spent on power.

That would be definitely useful, but remember we must have that-- actually, that would probably work, but we'd have to be aware that the graph is in US dollars. So, there are some more gems in that little sentence. We used while which is a very good way to make a comparison. We also used the superlative; the smallest proportion of the household income pays the power.
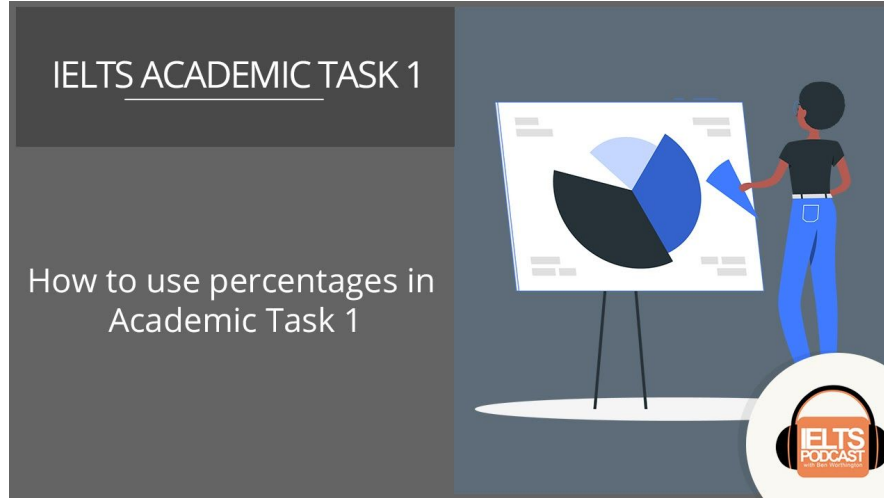
Once again, this is one of the formulas. If we know the superlative, it's extremely useful because also it's going to force us to give an accurate description of the task. So, I'll just review those phrases again. Hopefully, you can write them down. We've got proportion, figure, number, amount, one in five, one in ten.

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Be careful though with the last one. You want to get a good grip of numbers before doing that. So, if your math is poor, then you have two options. You either refresh it, bring it up to scratch so to speak or you just avoid those phrases, but basically, one in ten is 10%. So, just be aware. I'm sure you can just jump onto YouTube and get a brief description.

Next point: try grouping data together. This is also something that we go into in more detail in the course. So, we could say that almost 60% of household incomes are spent on food, clothing, and education, but when we do this, do it strategically. Don't just group together three random ones. Maybe you group together the three smallest ones or you group together the three largest ones.
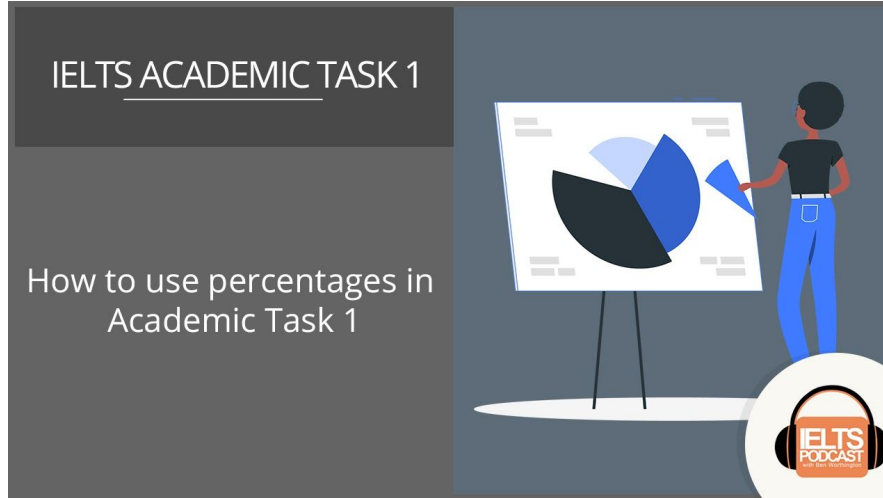
In this one, we did the three largest ones. So, I'll start again. 60% of household incomes are spent on food, clothing, and education. While households spend almost as much on transport as they

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do on clothing. When all household expenses are paid, most households can save just $15 out of every $100. Now, didn't our last sentence sound much richer than 15% is saved?
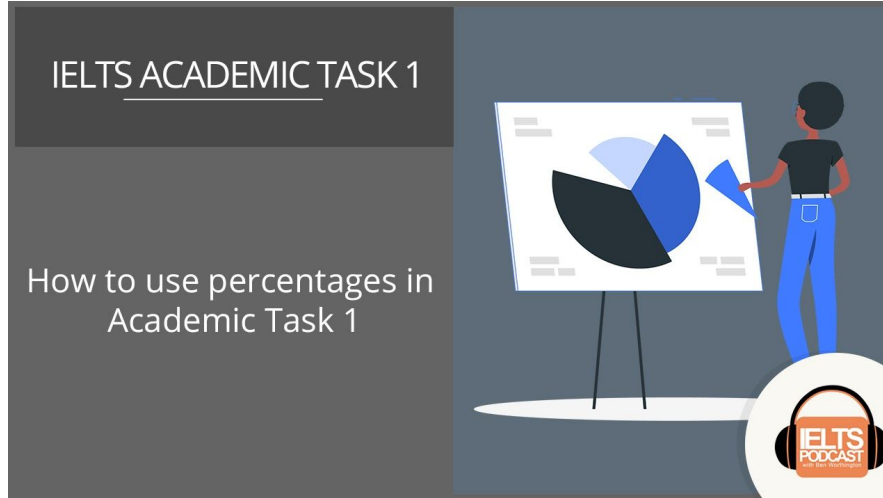
I'll just say it again. When all household expenses are paid, most households can save just 15%-- oops-- just $15 out of every $100. So, this is another skill. This is another formula of how to represent the data. For example, if we've got a line graph, we could say after the whole year, just December has the lowest amount at 200,000 metric tons or whatever the graph says. So, this is another useful formula.

Now then, it's a shame we don't have a video here, but when you go to the ieltspodcast.com-- you can just put into google IELTS podcast how to use percentages in Academic Task 1 and we have a chart there. It's quite straightforward and it shows how people commute to work in New York. So, we've got basically 42% take the subway.

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So instantly, I could say that almost 50% or almost half and I'm going to use my fancy sentences. Almost half of passengers are-- sorry. Almost half of New York residents take the subway to work. Maybe it's a bit generous because it's only 42%, but it's fine. It's fine. I'd probably just clarify it. Almost half (42%) take the subway while a quarter often drive-- not often-- while a quarter drive alone.
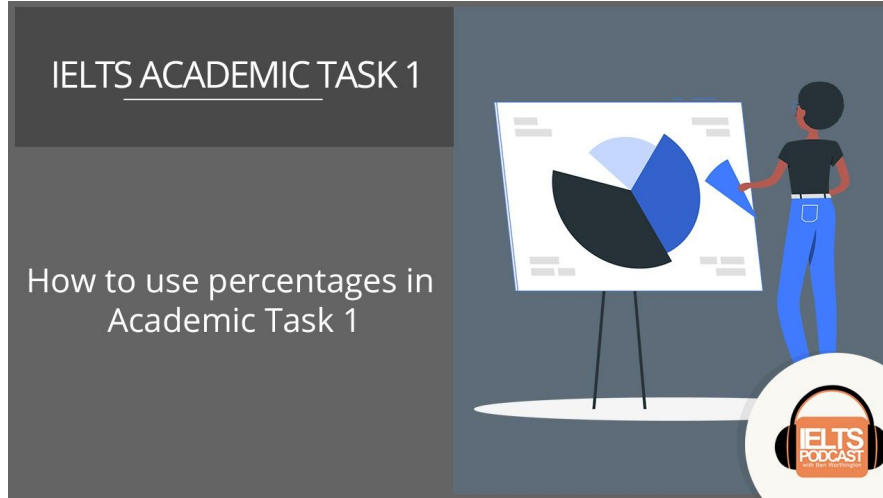
Now, here's a bonus tip and these kinds of tips that I'm about to give you now only come when you've corrected over hundreds and hundreds of Academic Task 1 essays which I have definitely done. So, this tip is basically when you start your sentence, if you're starting it with fractions, make sure you continue using fractions throughout that sentence. Don't mix a pure number like 42% whereas a quarter catch the train, for example. Don't mix it because it's just not good style.

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What you want to do is start a sentence using fractions, finish the sentence using fractions. Then in your next sentence maybe you use your fancy sentences. Whereas just 13% take the bus, similarly, 11% walk. This way-- it's just good style. It's just good style.

Also, what is good style is to-- it might not be the case with the pie chart, but possibly grouping the information and explaining the information as you see it. This is definitely useful for bar charts and for line graphs and just working from one end and working through rather than jumping-- for example, starting at September then going back to January and then finishing in October. That's just ridiculous.

So, these kind of points you can learn yourself through trial and error or you can basically learn through all the essays that I've corrected and all the hours that I put in and discovered these, researched these, tested these, and then put it all into the Academic Task 1 course.
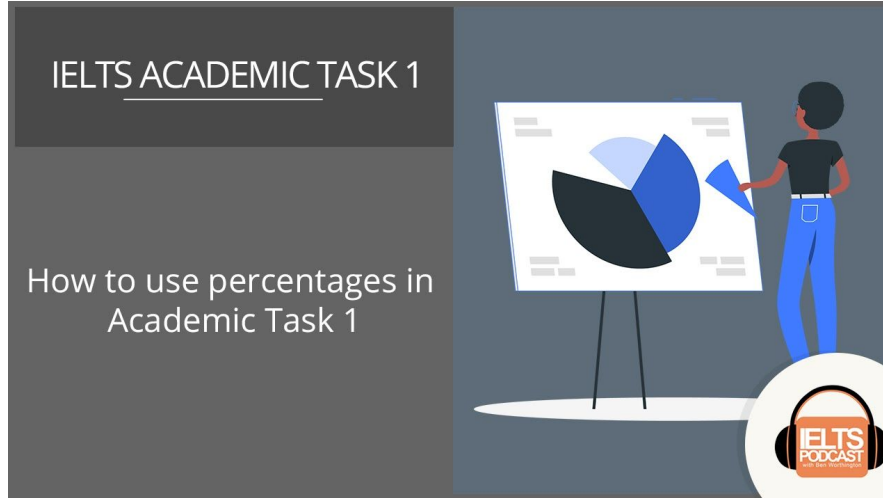
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Now, if you are struggling with the IELTS exam, then I recommend you go to ieltspodcast.com, start getting help, invest in yourself. It's basically cheaper to invest in yourself rather than take the exam numerous times, rather than gamble if you're going to pass this time.

Also, remember if you're in lockdown at the moment and your IELTS test center is also closed and your exam has been suspended, you've got two options. You can either degenerate to your lowest habits. That sounded horrible and this is something that I think I was guilty of doing the first two weeks of lockdown. I really was in a slump-- or you can up the level, up your standards and I think this is the healthiest way.

This is eventually what I started to do. Basically, my friend as soon as lockdown started, she said right, I'm going to do a hundred days of sport every single day; drew a big chart, crossed out

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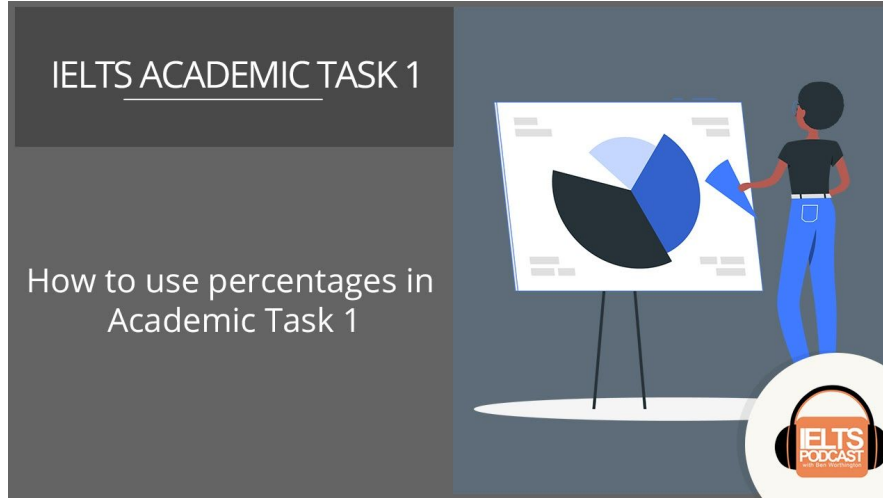Click here for IELTS Materials (free)

every single day that she did sports and I think we should be doing the same with our IELTS preparation.

We can either degenerate into sitting on the couch watching YouTube, watching Netflix, whatever or we can up our standards and really invest in ourselves so that when the test centers open-- and it is a when. It's not if. When the test centers open, then we are supremely prepared. We've invested in ourselves. We took the best of the situation. We made the most of the situation and now we're pretty confident we are going to get that band 7 or higher.

Just one last thing before we finish. Remember to sign up at ieltspodcast.com. There are free IELTS materials when you sign up. Also, you'll get on the email list where I send special offers. Also download the new IELTS podcast apps and I would recommend these because not only do you get some more special offers but you also get the transcript which is extremely useful.

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You can listen to the whole tutorial while actually reading and this helps you with your pronunciation. It's especially useful as well if you're having difficulty understanding me. I'm a native English speaker. I speak slightly slower than most native English speakers because I'm usually not speaking with native English speakers because I live abroad. However, it's still a good guide.

That's it from me today. Good luck with your IELTS preparation and remember just to keep moving, keep studying, and you will get there. Take care.

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