



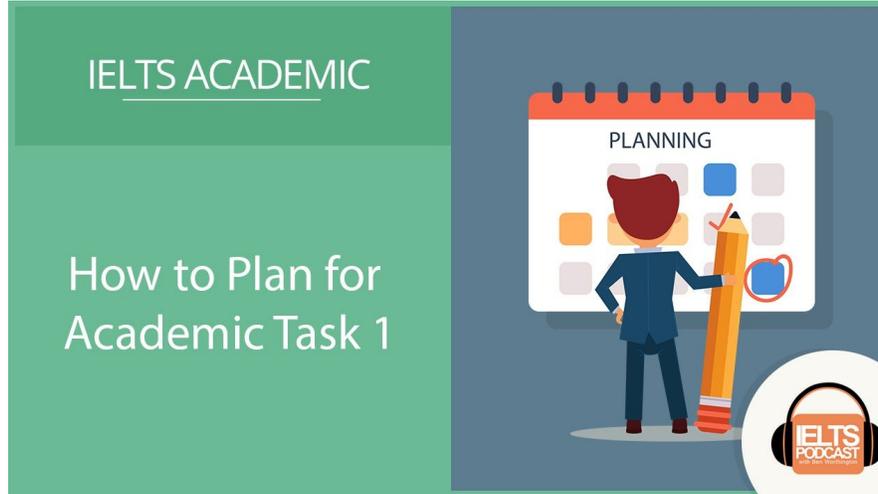
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Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host, Ben Worthington.

INTRODUCTION

[Music]

Ben: How to plan your Academic IELTS Task 1 Writing. Hello, there. My name is Ben Worthington and in this tutorial, we will specifically look at a strategy for planning your Academic IELTS Task 1 Writing. So, grab a pen and in this episode, Daphne is going to be with



us. Just in case you're sick of my voice, there's somebody who speaks like the Queen with us today. Hello there, Daphne.

Daphne: Hi, Ben. Hi, everyone. What a lovely intro. Thank you, Ben. I'm loving that.

Ben: Yes. I keep telling my friends that I've got this amazing new teacher with us and it must be a relief for the students because I get really paranoid about my accent. Coming from Yorkshire, England it's not the standard textbook English accent whereas Daphne-- whereabouts are you from, Daphne? South England is that right?

Daphne: Absolutely, yes. It's what they call Home Counties. I don't know where that expression came from, but the Home Counties are the counties right at the bottom of England, the south of England, yes. So, the way I speak is "normal"-- I put normal in inverted commas for down here



and Ben for me is from up north, but then for me, I'm from down south. So, the geography is important here.

Ben: Absolutely. By the way, listeners, I don't have a typical Yorkshire accent anymore. That left as soon as I left--I lost that as soon as I left England because nobody outside of Yorkshire-- basically nobody outside of England can understand the Yorkshire accent normally, but however some remnants remain and now it's just a jumbled mix. Anyway, Daphne speaks correct English.

Daphne: We could do a whole podcast, Ben, on different accents because I was watching a TV program the other day and everyone was from the north of Scotland and honestly, I didn't understand it. I need subtitles to translate.

Ben: Absolutely. Yes, absolutely. This is a good point actually for the listeners. Well, it's a good point because it usually takes-- even native English speakers like Daphne and myself if we face a



new accent that we're not used to for example, the Scottish accent that Daphne just mentioned, it takes a while to tune in and to adjust your interpretation of the sounds, to tune in and to be able to transform these sounds-- which are new sounds, existing words pronounced in a new way or a slightly modified way-- it takes a while to adjust your frequency so to speak and to adapt your ears to this new accent, but once you've done that tuning in period then most of the time it's plain sailing.

Daphne: That's it. I think it's almost like the IELTS listening is rather underrated, but it's actually quite hard. You do need those few moments just to tune in as Ben said. The voice, the intonation, the expression; before you can really focus on exactly the content of what people are saying.



Ben: Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay. So, we're going a bit off topic which is something that we tell our students day in day out to avoid doing especially for their writing, but anyway, today's tutorial as I said at the start, is about how to plan your Academic IELTS Task 1 Writing. So, why is a strategy a good idea? I'm playing devil's advocate here for the listeners. So, Daphne, could you share that with us, please?

A STRATEGY IS IMPORTANT

Daphne: Okay. So, a strategy is really important and I know when you come to Academic Task 1, for many people it is terrifying. If you're not familiar with maths or economics, if this is something you did at school at very long time ago and you were very happy to stop doing it, suddenly you are faced with a graph or a pie chart or a bar chart or a complicated diagram and



this isn't about writing an essay. This is about writing a report. You have 20 minutes and you have to write efficiently and accurately so that your answer will have maximum impact and the chance for the best possible result.

So, if you don't plan and if you don't have a careful strategy for this planning, this can be a disaster. You'll miss out key data. You might misinterpret what the chart is trying to tell you. So, this whole having a strategy for planning is really important and it will help you just build your confidence for this task.

Ben: Absolutely, absolutely and in this tutorial, not only are we going to give you the whole strategy but we're going to guide you as to what you should look for when you see the graph or the pie chart or the flow chart or the table. We're going to explain how this planning works and



finally, we're going to help you build your confidence with regards to meeting and ideally exceeding the criteria for the IELTS test.

So, sometimes a student might say I don't have time to plan for the IELTS Academic Task 1. What would you say to that and why would you say that's a bad idea or a bad thought?

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE PLANNING

Daphne: I have this real thing about planning and so many students say to me oh, I don't need to plan. I'm fine. Planning is a waste of time and it's one of these things that really gets me very frustrated. I take a deep breath and I say planning is the most important thing you can do not only in your Task 2 where we maybe talk about it more but also in your Task 1 as well.



These few minutes, this strategy for planning will save you time. This will just make sure that when you start writing you know exactly what you're doing. You're going to write the right answer to the right question. So, even though we say the recommended time for Task 1 is 20 minutes and it you think okay, that's fine. I'm just going to go for it. In those 3-4 minutes, you are saving time.

You're going to save time because firstly, you'll know what to write. If you know what to write, the rest is easy and if you plan, you won't waste time deciding what to write next. You won't get to that stage where you've written three great sentences and then you think oh, I need another 50 words because you'll know what you're going to say next.

Ben: Absolutely and you can get into flow where you're just like in the writing process. Rather than having to check back, check back, check back, you can just focus the next 17, 15 minutes on



purely writing which makes it a lot easier and there's just two-- one phrase actually. Is it failing to plan is planning to fail which is just a common maxim I think maybe from the U.S. or the UK, but it definitely applies to the writing task for both Task 1 and Task 2.

Daphne: I think that's worth repeating, Ben. I think that's really good. Can you say that again slowly?

Ben: Failing to plan is planning to fail basically and there is another one as well. What is it my friend used to say because he used to work at Morrison's in the UK, which is a big supermarket. What was it? Proper planning prevents poor performance. He always used to say that. Anyway, I think that he got that from the corporate office, but anyway let's go. How does a student plan?

Daphne: What you need to do is take a pencil. Take a pencil and you need to write down a few notes. So, this isn't just planning in your head which a lot of people say oh, yes. I planned it in



my head. I'm fine. You need that pencil and you need to make some notes and these notes will be the guide towards your actual answer. So, when you take these 3-4 minutes to do the planning and then remember it's very quick to write 150 words if you know what you're going to say.

Ben: Absolutely, absolutely. Yes, I would definitely spend a good 3 or 4 minutes; just to re-emphasize what Daphne said before and really and as I said in previous tutorials that if you struggle with interpreting the graph or choosing the information-- I know this is a very common pain point for students-- then you really need to isolate this specific pain point and work on this one. So, look at graph after graph after graph and try these; just specifically developing this habit of grouping the information or of choosing the information. In the next stage of this tutorial, we're going to look at a five-point strategy.



Daphne: Actually in this strategy, we're going to suggest obviously you practice as much as you can. Ben has given us a really good point there. By looking at lots of graphs which appear in the newspapers or The Economist or wherever you can find these graphs quite easily, practice this strategy so that when it comes to this exam, you're going to be really confident. You have done it loads of times before. You'll think, yes. It will become automatic for you.

Ben: Absolutely, absolutely and just to emphasize that, look at not just IELTS model sample answers for Academic Task 1 but expand your horizon a little bit. So, you could go to The Economist Daily Chart. They've got some amazing writers there. Look at the BBC. Whenever you see a graph, just hone in on that and look at how they've described the data there. Financial Times is another resource that pushes out a lot of graphs on a daily basis. So, back to the five-point strategy. What's number one on the strategy?



Daphne: Okay. So, if we look at the rubric question, the question format for Task 1 is always the same and you have to summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, make comparisons where relevant. So, it's just worth spending a second just thinking about that; selecting and reporting the main features and making comparisons.

I do not want-- the examiner does not want every single detail of every single thing you can see.

1) That's really boring and 2) that will not get you good marks on task response, task achievement because you haven't selected and reported.

So, the first thing of this five-point strategy is look at the time period and look at the vocabulary.

So, is this a dynamic diagram? So, is it changing over time or is it static; one moment in time?

So, the way you can tell that obviously is by looking at the years. Is it from 1990 to 2020, for



example? Or is it the months in a year? So, therefore it's changing over time. Or is it just a pie chart with some data on and you have no idea when it was?

This is important because this tells you what tense you're going to use. So, are you going to be using the past tense? Are you going to use the present tense if there is no time given? Or even if it's going into the future, you may need to use future tense as well. So, this is really, really important. So, look at the time period and look at the vocabulary.

What is the data talking about? Is it student courses? Is it computer owners? Is it travel destinations? By literally thinking about that, you will activate some vocabulary and you do need a bit of vocabulary for this.

Ben: Absolutely, absolutely. Two points there that I just want to mention. Just going back to the question task; summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make



comparisons where relevant. So, if--just to emphasize what Daphne said-- if you have mentioned every single data point in a list form in your Task 1 report, then you've selected nothing.

So, you haven't fulfilled the question criteria. You've done nothing. All you've done is just regurgitated all the data points into a block of text and made the examiner's life that little bit more boring if he or she has a boring life. So, avoid that.

The second point that I want to mention is that regarding time period and vocabulary-- the point that Daphne just made-- so many times I see when I'm correcting essays that a student will use the language of change to describe a pie chart. For example, the student will write geography represented 30% of the subjects chosen. In the following segment, it fell to 12% for economics and that just doesn't make any sense at all.



It didn't fall. It's just a different segment for a different subject. So, there was no change. There was no fall in there. So, just be aware that you've got the right language for the right graph. One way to just be aware of this and to be certain is to review, as we said at the beginning, to review authentic native English speaker material such as the Financial Times, The Guardian, the BBC, or whatever. Just review those and I'd even suggest that they could be slightly better than looking at model essays because at least then you know it is 100% perfect and it's going to be authentic material rather than--

Daphne: Absolutely, yes and I completely agree with all of that, Ben, and it's written by real economists not just students. Not just students who are quite good at economics maybe.

Ben: Exactly.



Daphne: It's authentic, yes.

Ben: Exactly and it's been quality checked as well and proofread and you'll never see in a million years the Financial Times talking about a pie chart where the segment fell from 32% to 12%. It's just impossible to happen. Anyway, let's move on. Step two, Daphne.

Daphne: So, step two is step back and look at the big picture. So, this may seem really obvious, but check how many items are there? So, in your pie chart with school subjects, for example, how many subjects are there on this? Six? Seven? Nine? How many shoe types are there? Two or three? Because you need to be able to refer to everything.

So, check how many items are shown, how many sections, how many segments, how many countries or subjects or cars or on a line graph, how many lines are there. That's one thing. So, is there a common overall pattern throughout the time? Is the data totally erratic with no pattern or



does it start from a low base and all of the trends rise, for example? Or if it's a static picture obviously, you won't be using that kind of language, but just make sure you understood the data given.

So, a bit like with the Task 2 where we talk about understanding the question, this is the same thing. It's understanding what is this picture about?

Ben: Exactly, exactly and this again is a unique exam skill that unless you've just come out of university, you probably haven't done this in a long time and it really is unique to IELTS. So, if you're struggling with this, just be aware that it's not only a language skill that you need to develop. It's also an exam specific skill that you need to develop.

As Daphne said, stepping back and maybe even just moving a meter away and holding the chart up from a distance and squinting your eyes just to blur it like what's the big thing there that pops



out? And as Daphne mentioned as well, I just want to restate this that even if the graph doesn't have a unique pattern, even if no pattern doesn't pop out, that is the pattern. The pattern is there is no pattern.

In the online course, I set horrible, horrible charts that clearly don't have a single pattern just to make the students aware that that is the pattern, that there is no pattern. So, it is a little bit tricky.

Daphne: Yes. I call that one the crazy line graph.

Ben: Yes, it's horrible, isn't it?

Daphne: It is a crazy line graph, but as Ben said, the big picture is that there is no overall pattern and it's okay to say that. You don't have to pretend there is one.

Ben: Exactly, exactly. Let's move on to step three.



Daphne: Okay. So, step three this is decide which points to include and this is where you need your pencil. For me, this is what I do when I'm correcting and it really helps. Look at extremes. That's the first thing. Look at extremes. Circle the biggest, the smallest, the highest, the lowest. Those are your extremes. Look at any patterns and write this down because we're recommending here that you do write a few notes. It's not just the pencil.

So, you write down okay, totally crazy or you write down rising trend or you write down fluctuations or you write down overall gradual decline. Some little chunks of words or phrases that you can import from your little notes into your writing when you start. So, looking at patterns.

Ben: Absolutely. Go on, sorry.



Daphne: Looking at changes over time. So, is there anything substantial? Is it a particular year where there was an enormous increase? Is there a particular year where there was a dramatic decline? So, is there anything there to notice or is it pretty boring and rather steady?

Ben: Absolutely and while you're making notes, if you're doing the paper-based test, then just go crazy. Go full on graffiti on that chart, circle things and a technique to experiment with is to put numbers next to your notes so that when you are reproducing or transferring your notes into a fully coherent report, you can go through the numbers.

It goes back to what we were saying about getting into the writing state of mind and just keeping in that state while you are producing your report.

Daphne: Exactly. You are right.



Ben: No. 4

Daphne: One more thing just to add on that. So, going back to this idea about selecting and reporting. So, when you're deciding the main points to include, you are doing this selection so selecting the extremes, the patterns, changes over time, and then make comparisons where relevant; you're looking at the differences and the similarities.

So, are there any points in that graph where the lines are following the same trend or are there any subjects that have exactly the same amount of votes from students? So, what are the things that are similar and what are the big differences? I think those are the things that I would be circling and then scribbling down a few notes very quickly.

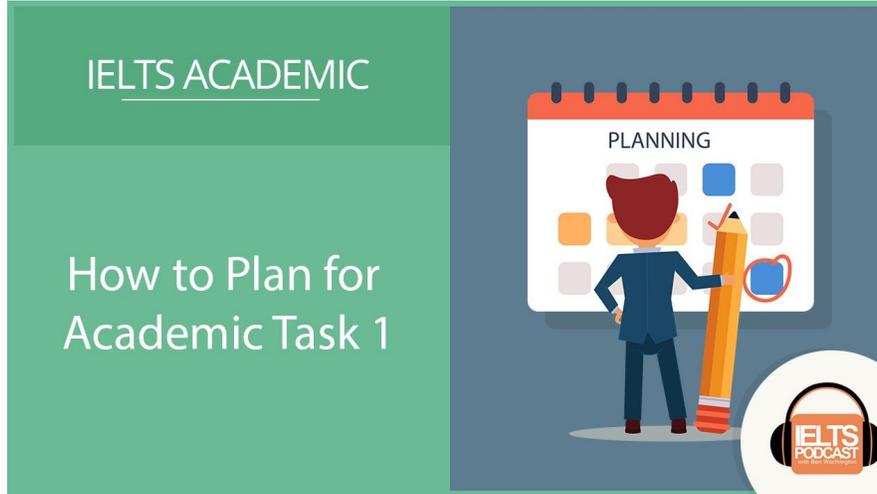
Ben: Absolutely, absolutely and now going on to step four which is also part of the planning process and a very important component to include. I like this piece of advice because it's going



to force the student to incorporate higher-level language and also, if I remember correctly, it does relate directly to the question task about-- where is it now-- summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant. So, what is step no. 4, Daphne?

Daphne: Yes. So, can you see any comparisons? And it very much says where relevant. It might not always be possible, but this is how you score the good marks. You need to look for these comparisons and as Ben says, that brings you into the most fantastically rich area of vocabulary where you can be using not as dramatic as or three times higher than.

You have got so many phrases which we've done podcasts on before to help you use this language of comparison, but let's find them. So, have a look with your pencil quickly and write



this down. It's a fundamental part of the question and a lot of students forget even to make basic comparisons.

Ben: Absolutely. Yes, go on, sorry.

Daphne: It's about comparing where relevant and also a very important point to make you'll lose marks if you do not do this. In order to score well on the task achievement task response, you need to show that you are making these comparisons where relevant.

Ben: What could you-- off the top of your head, I'm sorry to put you on the spot here, Daphne, but what would make a comparison relevant?

Daphne: That's a good question, Ben, said she playing for time. I'm thinking particularly the line graph actually that I've got in front of me. One point there's a steep rise in this chart, in these



two lines, but not at the same time. So, I could say, for example, popularity of one music site rose dramatically between days 9 and 11 whereas the biggest surge in popularity for the other one was day 11 to 12.

So, for me that's relevant because they both have a dramatic rise, but not at the same time. So, I'm using that dynamic language-- the dramatic surge or the rapid increase-- but I'm contrasting it. So, I'm saying while it happens with one on day 9, the other one happens on day 11.

Ben: Excellent there.

Daphne: So, using those nice contrasting words while and whereas which are just the best words in Task 1 .

Ben: I totally agree there. I totally agree. Okay, step five; final stage.



Daphne: Final stage is organize. So, you have put-- as Ben says, you've made graffiti. You've made lots of pencil marks all over this graph. You've made a few notes. You've numbered your notes and this is the good bit. We're nearly there. So, you're going to organize, so thinking of the structure and coherence.

So, in the structure of this essay, you need one sentence to paraphrase the information in the question. That links back to the point that you did at the beginning. You had a look to see what was the big picture. So, you've got your first sentence then you've got your overview, which is one or two sentences to give highlights, not too much technical data.

Again, this is the big picture. You know the time period. You know the vocabulary. And then the next two paragraphs, you're going to get into this fantastic data that you've already selected in



your planning. So, the highs and lows, the trends, any dramatic movements, any differences or similarities, and any fantastic comparisons.

Ben: Excellent. Super point there. Super point. This reminds me actually-- I'm just going to go a little bit of topic-- about a friend who-- it was last year actually and he was traveling around Central America and he was in Cuba. He was in Barbados. He was in St. Lucia and he was telling me about the prices of all the pies there, but actually-- no. I'll complete this in the next tutorial. I'll complete this little anecdote in the next tutorial. I've been waiting a long time to actually share this and it just pops into my mind now. Sorry to go a little bit off topic there.

Daphne: It's sounding very obscure, Ben and I'm longing to hear the end of the story.



Ben: I've been itching to tell you this story for a long time. So, I'm going to break it up and stretch it out. So, before we finish, let's just review this five-point strategy. So, no. 1.

Daphne: No. 1 is time period and vocabulary. So, look at the time period. Look at the vocabulary you're going to need.

Ben: Excellent. No. 2.

Daphne: Is step back and see the big picture. So, although it may seem obvious, how many items are on here? So, what is it actually talking about?

Ben: Excellent. No. 3.



Daphne: Is where you need your pencil and you're going to start making some very quick notes and number of the notes. What are the extremes? The patterns, the changes over time, the differences and similarities and write these down. This is your planning.

Ben: Excellent. It feels like bingo this. No. 4.

Daphne: Can you make any comparisons because if you can make comparisons, you will be answering the question fully. Compare when relevant. Look at anything you could compare or contrast obviously.

Ben: Excellent and no. 5.

Daphne: Is organize. So, you've made these notes. You've got pencils everywhere. Now, you need to get the data. If you've written numbers by it, that's even better. Get the data into your



paragraph-- into your answer, sorry. So, this is when you're going to organize your notes and then start writing.

Ben: Super. Okay. Thank you very much for that, Daphne, and remember students, if you are still struggling with that, we can and we love giving feedback. So, just go to ieltspodcast.com or if you're in China, you can just go to the WeChat mini app we have which is BW English IELTS podcast and you can buy your feedback from the app.

What happens is you purchase it-- this is a similar process with on the website-- you purchase it, we send you the question then you write down your answer to the question and then you send it in as an attachment, as a Microsoft Word attachment or a Google Doc, whatever or just copy-paste in your email.



We review it. We tell you where you're going wrong, where you're going right. We tell you how to improve it and then we send you all this feedback back to you within 24 hours so you can continue the improvement and feedback process. So, it's very straight forward and we do this for Academic Task 1 and for Academic Task 2.

In the online course, it's built into the course and it's a little bit more meticulous because we give you specific exercises to complete. I just wanted to mention that because we get a lot of students who do ask about the online course. The online course, as I said, has the essay corrections and feedback built into it.

It's basically a case of watch the tutorials, write your essay, send it to us, we review it, we send it back to you with all our feedback, you implement those improvements, you watch more tutorials,



and then you write another essay, send it to us, and so on and so forth. This is basically the feedback and improvement-- positive feedback loop that we've set up in place.

So, that's everything from Daphne and myself. Thank you very much for listening and remember, as I said, you can get feedback to improve faster at the site. You can download the app where you get the transcript for all these tutorials that we are sharing and the biggest difference-- just one final point-- between the tutorials here that we offer for free on the website and online and the course is that in the course, we go into more detail. We give you detailed feedback. We've also got the forum now, so you can ask questions. It's just a little bit more intense and obviously as well, as you hopefully know, we offer the guarantee that you will improve.



So, if you've got your test coming up and you don't want to fail again or if you want to just pass first-time, then have a look at ieltspodcast.com. So, thank you for listening. Any last points there, Daphne, before we finish?

Daphne: Thank you, everybody. I completely agree with Ben. I think the whole feedback improvement system that we work with is brilliant and I correct a lot of your essays. It's fantastic to engage with so many of you and it's really, really exciting when you can see that improvement. It's just brilliant. So, I recommend that and good luck everyone with your preparation.

Ben: Yes, I'll just mention before we go that is a very valid point there that it is exciting as a tutor when you find the first essay that you get and you're like it's all right, but there's definitely potential there and you send back the corrections and the student is watching the tutorials,



working through the course, and then the next essay and sometimes it's like a whole band score improvement or more common maybe a half a band score and you're like wow! This student has potential to go on further if they keep on improving like that.

Okay, that's everything from us for the third time I said it. That's everything, honestly and truly. We are finishing. Good luck with your IELTS preparation. Bye-bye.

Daphne: Bye everyone.