

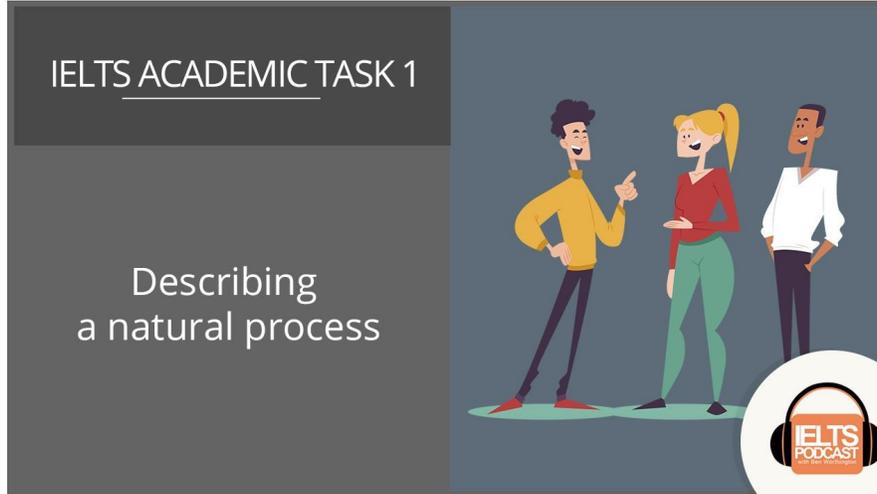
[Music]

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]

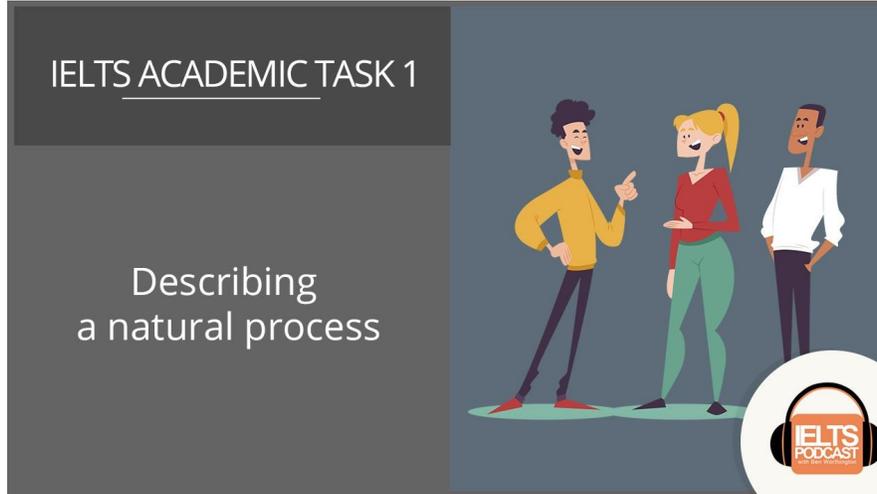
Ben: How to describe a natural process in Academic Task 1. Hello there, IELTS students. I am quite excited today because this is a recording that I've been wanting to do for a long time. Most of the tutorials out there online and in courses are usually about pie charts, bar charts, flow diagrams, and line charts. Not many tutors cover a natural process.



In this tutorial, we are going to do exactly that. We are going to look at where to start in understanding and interpreting the picture. We're going to look at what language to use to connect your ideas and link the stages in the process together. That, by the way, is extremely useful.

We'll also look at how to improve your coherence and I'll even suggest some grammar tips basically just to help you improve your score. Specifically, we're going to look at the passive voice and participle clauses.

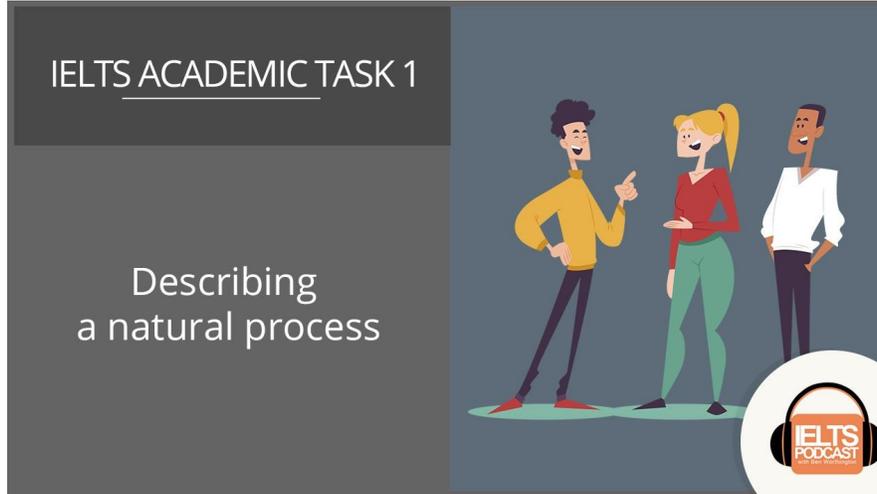
Now, just a side note. A good goal or a good North Star in this i.e. something to guide you is that if you set about doing your writing description with the goal of the reader being able to reproduce a picture from your writing, then you are on the right track. So, I'll just repeat that. If



the reader or the examiner could reproduce the picture just from your written summary, then you're on the right track.

Now, a lot of students find this slightly overwhelming because it can look quite complicated and usually they're quite scientific as well. Now, they usually include maybe the water cycle, recycling, the carbon cycle, concrete making, heating systems; there are lots of different variations and you're not expected to know about these and you are given the vocabulary you need.

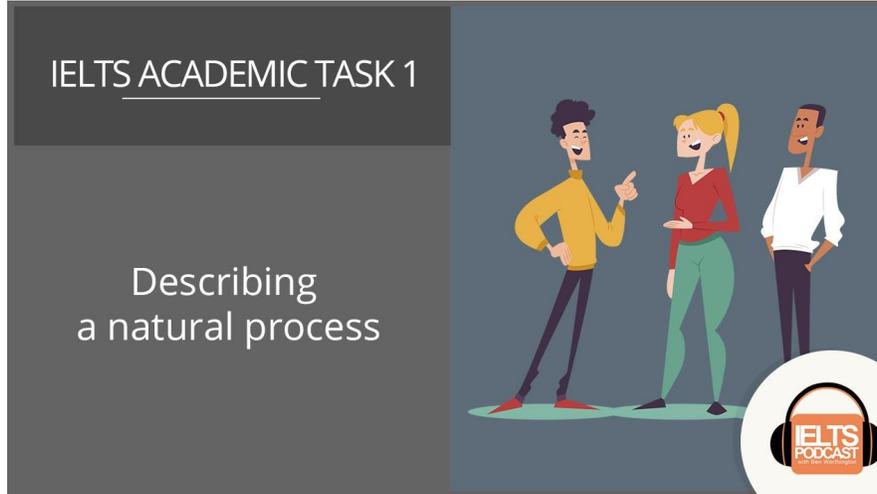
I'll go into more detail in the vocabulary, but what I want to say is that if you're not very confident about science, about geography, physics, or glass-making-- I don't know why you wouldn't be confident about glass-making, but anyway if you're not confident about these areas, you don't need to worry because as I said the vocabulary is there. You need to focus on your



ability to describe. This is a language test and this is exactly what we're going to be focusing on today.

So, step 1 we're going to look at the diagram and we're going to understand it and we're going to identify the stages. You need to be aware of what happens at this one, what happens at that one, not only an overview but you need to be very clear of the specific different stages from beginning to end. It's a useful step just to reassure yourself of the key stages. This will make it easier to reproduce your written summary when it comes to it if you're confident that this stage leads to this stage, this stage leads to that one. So, don't worry about spending a little bit more time just fully comprehending the overall system.

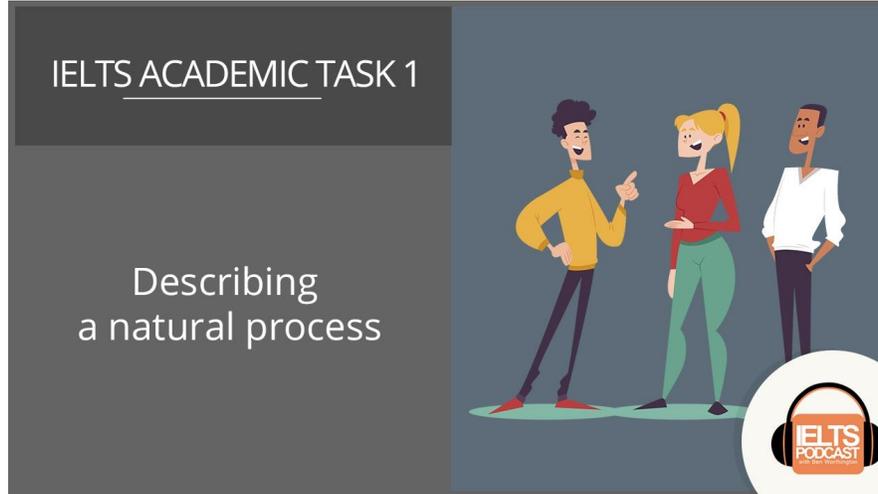
Now, this is an exam skill and if you do find yourself spending a lot of time comprehending what's going on, then you really need to start working on this skill. So, just go to Google Images,



do an image search online, go for flow diagrams, cycle diagrams, natural process diagrams, and try and develop this skill of interpreting and comprehending what is happening.

Now, a good way to start with this is to see if the diagram is divided. Does it start at one place? Does it split? Are there any arrows? So, basically we're looking for visual clues and quite often in a natural process, it's going to be cyclical and it doesn't really matter-- I mean obviously, it does matter where you start. Just be aware that there will be a clear start. Just to go back it doesn't matter where you start.

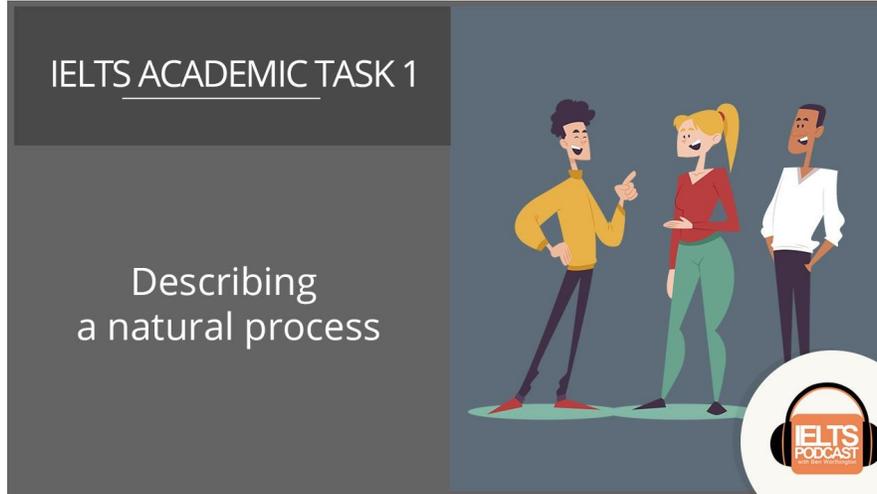
Right then. With natural cycles, we're going to have key vocabulary. This will guide you. You can use these words, but if you can find your own words or alternative words, then use those because you're going to score points with lexical resource.



Now, a typical question would start with something like you should spend about 20 minutes on this task. The diagram illustrates the life cycle process of frogs in a pond. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words.

Now, this 150 words it's a little bit confusing actually because on different official IELTS websites it says different things. You can find official papers that say write at least 150 words. Anyway, I'm not going to go into that right now. So, I'll just very briefly describe this cycle with a frog.

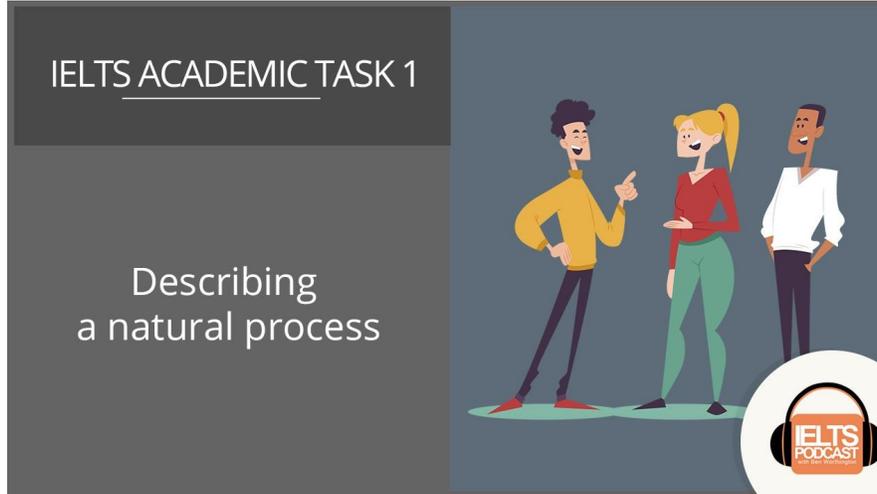
In the left hand corner, we've got an adult frog. Then it goes to eggs, embryo, tadpoles, external gills-- that's basically the development of the tadpole-- then the tadpole grows a tail or lives from food stored in the tail. Okay. It actually has got a tail. So, it starts to grow legs, the tail becomes



shorter, we get a young frog, then we've got an adult frog, and then we've got eggs. So, we can see with these arrows.

Now, you might wonder where are you going to start with this one because there is no number in place. Later, we'll get there, but what we want to do is be aware of what we can see. So, we can see these arrows there. They take us from the mature frog through the reproduction process. It's not shown, but we have to assume this and then the stages of development. It's a circular diagram, as we said before.

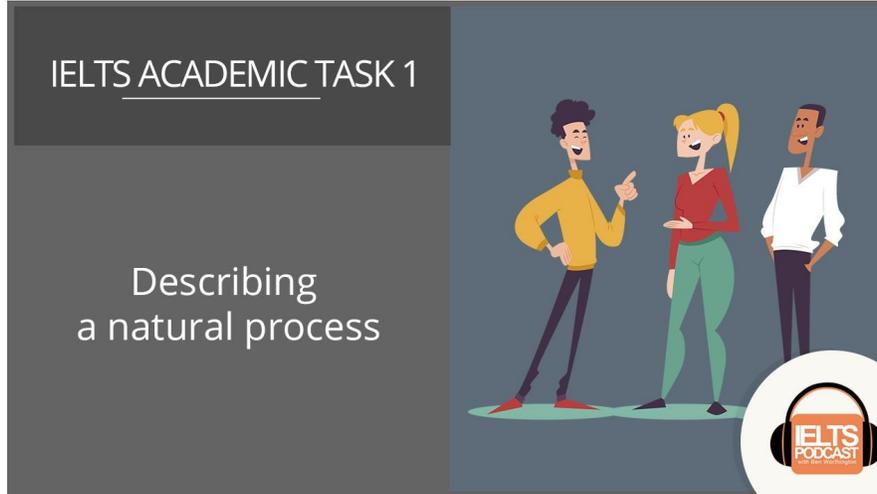
Although it doesn't really matter where we start, I would assume a logical place to start would be either the adult frog or the eggs. Starting with tadpoles developing legs just isn't logical at all. A side note here: we need this skill that we also need for pie charts and for bar charts. That is grouping. We can group these stages into logical groups and it's just going to make it easier to



develop our paragraphs. As I suggested, we'll start probably with eggs. This seems the most logical.

As I said, we are going to be using some of the phrases, some of the vocabulary from this diagram, but we're also where possible going to be using our own. Step 2: choose which connecting words and vocabulary you need. Now, here is a very valuable piece of advice. Aim for chunks or fragments of the language. This makes it much easier to write and it will help you score higher because you'll be able to link the different points together more coherently.

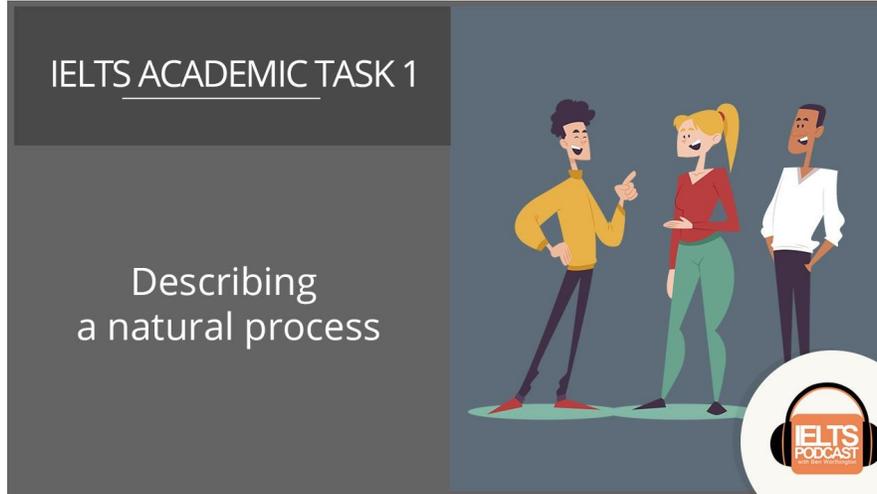
Now, grab a pen because there's an absolute value bomb coming. Adverbs will help you connect the stages in a cycle. Here are the phrases. First stage and we can start with the first stage is when-- a noun plus a verb-- So, the first stage is when the eggs are hatched, for example.



Another phrase: to begin with. Another phrase: the process commences with and then initially. Initially, the eggs are laid by the frog.

Now, for the middle stages, we could say phrases like this step involves verb + ing. This step involves hatching eggs. This step involves growing legs. Some other words: then, once, after that, the next stage in the cycle or the next stage in the process is. I hope you're writing these down because they are very valuable.

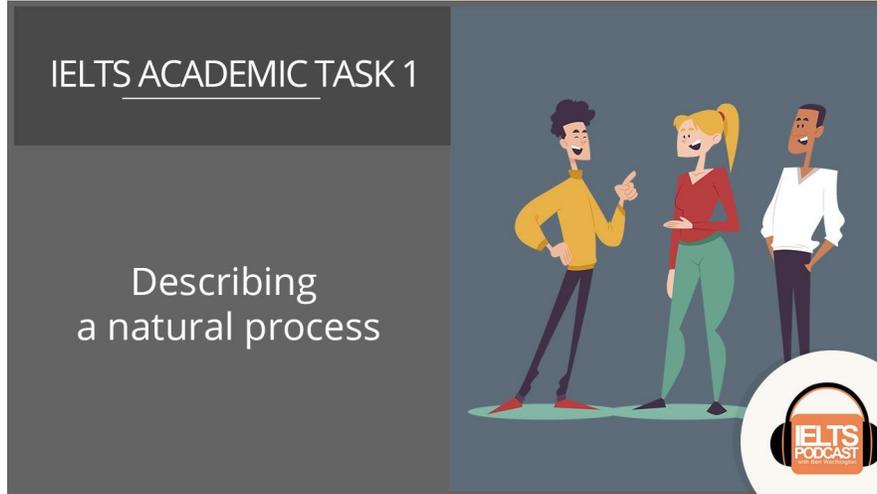
If you've got the IELTS podcast app which is available on the App Store and the Google Play store, then probably won't need to write these down because you'll have the transcript there inside the app which you can use maybe to copy/paste the phrases. Just copy/paste them all, send them to your email or whatever, post them in a message, but it's definitely worthwhile getting



your hands on these phrases and if you've got the transcript, then they're going to be perfect because we have a human transcriber. It's not machine transcribed like you find on YouTube.

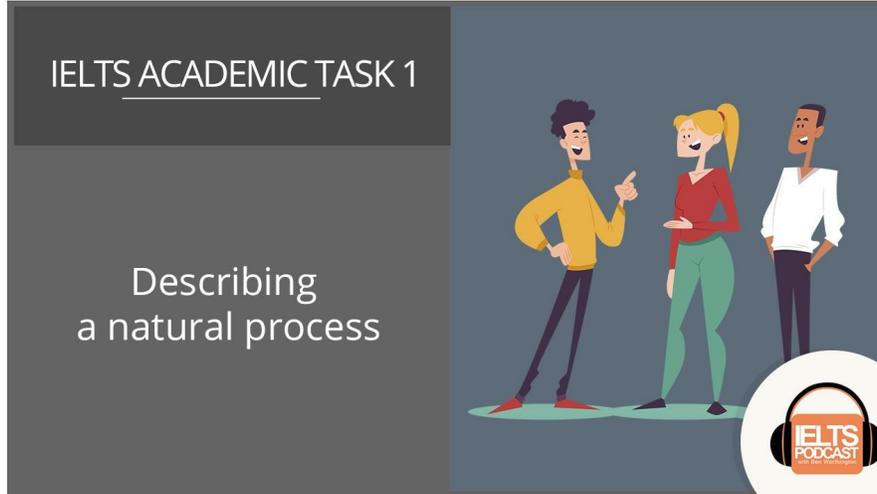
The next stage in the cycle or the next stage in the process is. After the completion of this stage, the next step is usually to grow legs or the next step is usually to store food in the tail as we mentioned before. Other phrases could include once A is finished B is able to start. Once the rain has finished, the soil absorption process is able to start or once the legs are fully grown, the young frog is able to start developing into a mature adult. Or as a result of, when, as soon as, and where. All very useful phrases.

For the final stage, we can use subsequently, following this. Once the stage is complete or once this stage is complete the frog can complete the cycle and lay its own eggs. This results in the process starting again, for example. Other phrases: finally and eventually.



Now, as I said before, although the diagram will give you a certain amount of language, you have the choice of whether to repeat it or use your own. If you can use your own accurately, then use it, but don't stress out. Sometimes there might not be a synonym. Sometimes they might not be an alternative phrase in which case just use the one from the diagram obviously. Also, your ability to expand on the vocabulary will probably depend on how well you understand the diagram. As I said, it's not an absolute disaster if you are repeating them, but when you can try and use alternatives.

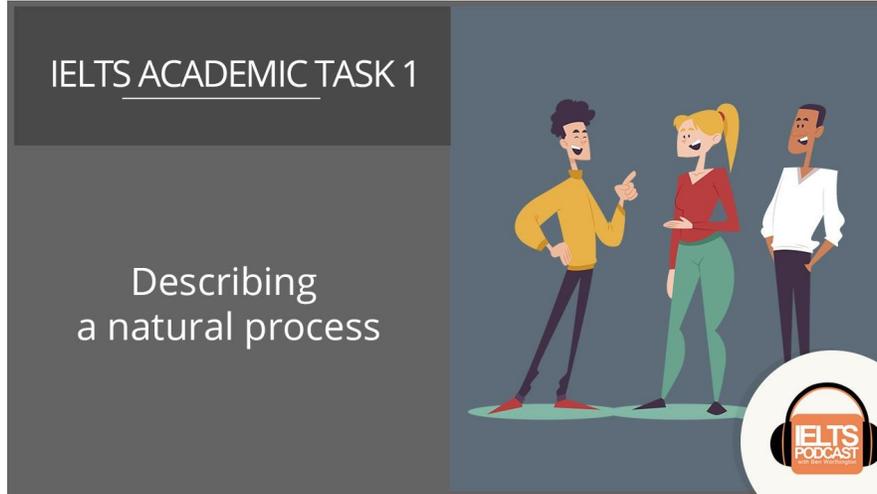
For example, what could we say instead of frog? Well, we could say amphibian. We could say toad maybe. Instead of mature, we could say adult, fully grown. Let me just check the diagram. We have adult frog, so we could say when the frog matures or when the frog reaches adulthood,



when the frog has become fully grown for mating. We could say reproduction process or cycle for frog spawn. We could say fertilized eggs and so on and so forth.

There are usually quite a few alternatives-- not usually, but in this specific case, there is. For tadpole, no alternative exists. It's not a word that we use quite a lot in the English language surprisingly.

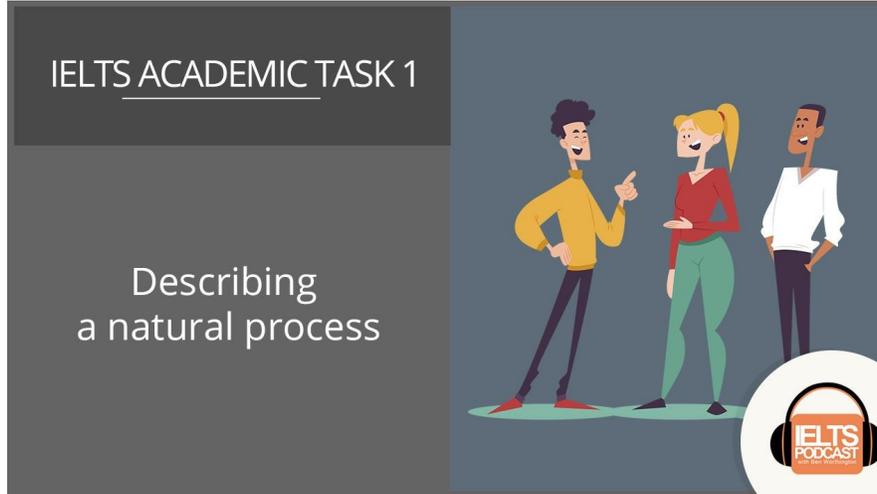
Now, the third step what you want to do is plan and organize your answer. So, you can start with an overview using words to describe the sequence such as stage, step, phase. Then we need to be aware of the tense. Tense is a common pain point for Academic Task 1 descriptions. Now, because this is a natural cycle and it's a cycle which is going to be repeated, we're going to use the present simple throughout.



Now, a very important point is that to make sure when we're planning that we're going to be using transitive and intransitive verbs correctly. Some of these we can use in the passive voice and some of them cannot be used in the passive voice. So, this is back to the language skills we mentioned earlier. Also, make sure you form the active and the passive voice correctly.

Finally, probably the point that you're very aware of is using linking words and adverbials that are related to the sequence and of course ordering. We've mentioned ordering before. It's up to you to find the logical start point.

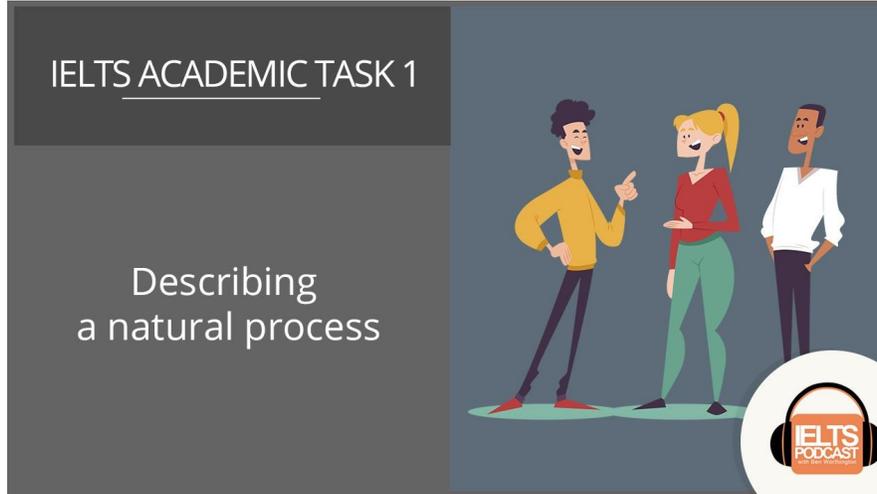
Final stage: the model answer. Writing your answer. Now, if you have a pen, maybe you want to write this down and see if you can circle some of the key vocabulary. I'm going to dictate it now and if you hear a useful phrase then-- I guess if you're in the car maybe you want to repeat that phrase. It's just worthwhile remembering or at least making an attempt to remember this phrase



so you can use it in your own description the next time you write an Academic Task 1 natural process answer.

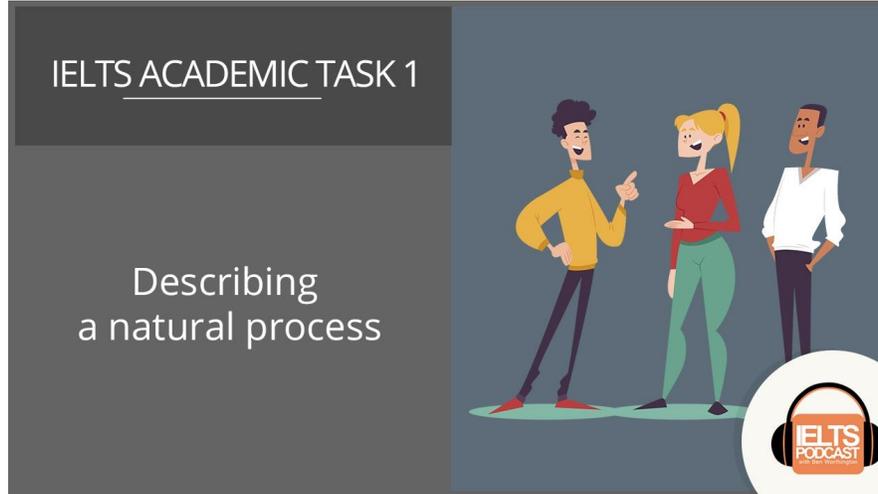
Let's go. The diagram shows the natural process life cycle of a frog from the embryo stage through seven developmental phases from tadpole to fully grown amphibian. Hopefully, you'll have spotted there that I was using alternatives and synonyms. For example, instead of frog I used amphibian and also I added developmental phase which I don't think was in the description. No, it wasn't. So, points there for Benjamin.

Next one. Next paragraph. Initially, the fertilized eggs grow into embryos from which very small tadpoles emerge and shelter under plants in the water or pond. A tadpole begins life black in color and it has a long tail and shorter body. This goes back to what I was saying before about being able to reproduce the diagram from your text.



As it grows, external gills for breathing are produced while subsequent stages-- that's a very useful phrase-- while subsequent stages in its development include a longer tail and when this stage is complete, black limbs begin to appear which allows the tiny creature to swim faster. I'm just wondering if we're adding information there. Let's see. Hind legs appear. Okay, I guess we are adding a tiny bit of information. Generally, I wouldn't advise that, but I think this is kind of important for the process. Let's carry on.

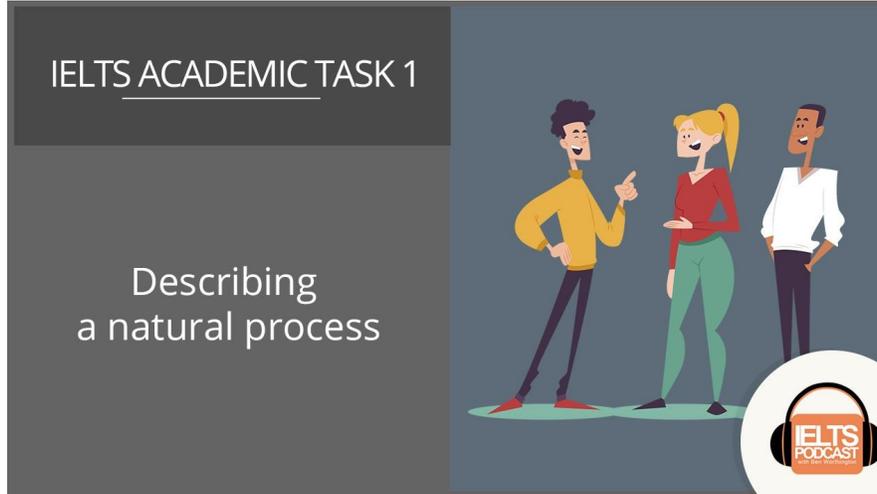
The baby frog is nourished from food and nutrients stored in its tail and the next stage in the cycle-- very useful copy-paste sentence there-- and the next stage in the cycle is for front limbs to begin growing while the tail shrinks and eventually disappears. At each stage-- another useful phrase-- at each stage, the creature continues to enlarge significantly and changes in color from



black to dark green and ultimately to bright green. Once the tail has disappeared, the frog is supported on four limbs and continues in the final phase to develop into a full-sized amphibian.

Okay. So, lots of useful phrases there and as you can see, it's neatly organized there. We've got three paragraphs; the overview and then we've divided it up into two body paragraphs. Also, there is no conclusion there. A conclusion is given after an argument has been made. After an argument and we use the conclusion just to summarize or to reach our final decision. Here there was no argument made. We were just basically reporting.

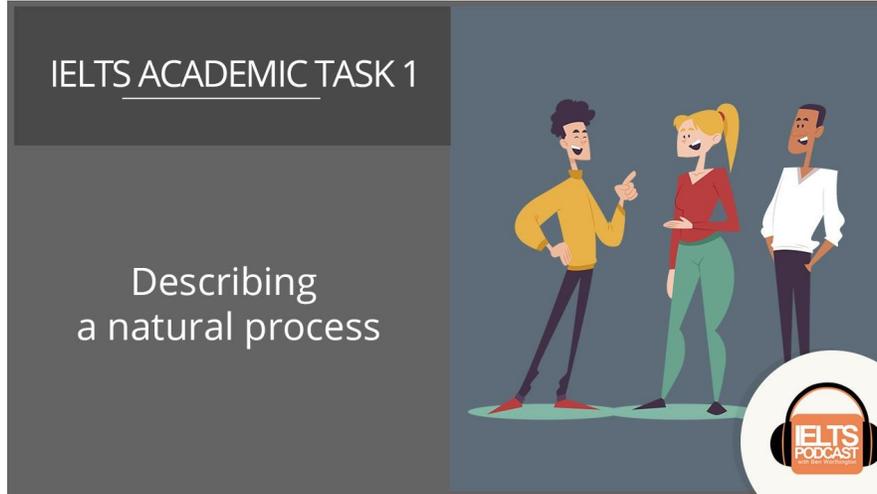
When I correct essays, I very often see to conclude, we can see... and a summary. You can put to summarize at the end. In this one, we put it at the beginning. So, let's just review this description that I just shared with you. You could hear there were lots of adverbial phrases to connect the sentences together. This adds coherence and it shows connection between the stages.



This is what we're looking for especially for band 7 or higher; the use of vocabulary and lexis connected to animals. This is lexical resource. Not only are we talking about frogs, we use the phrase amphibian, growth, development, food. This variety of words keeps the answer connected and it's precise and also we're avoiding repetition.

Also, we've got a good use of passive verbs. For example, the baby frog is nourished. As it grows, external gills for breathing are produced. Basically, a very brief description on how to describe a natural process for Task 1.

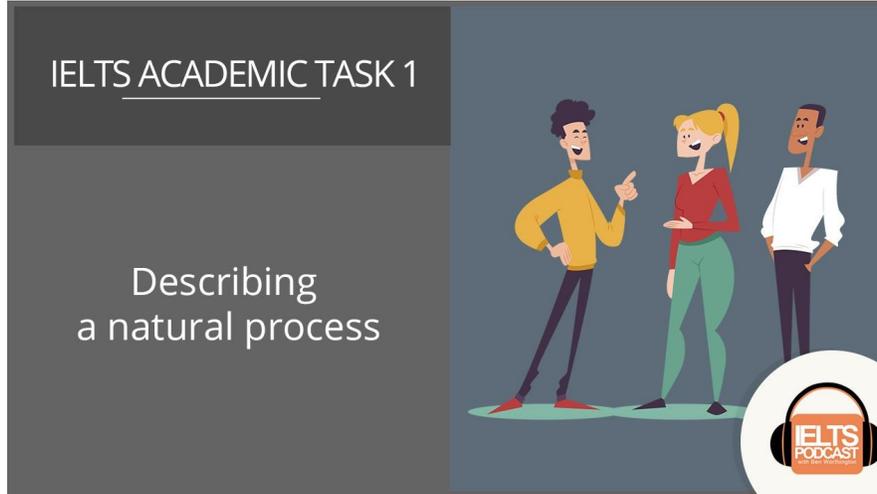
In this tutorial, we looked at the vocabulary. We looked at the stages for starting to write your summary. We looked at the adverbs to connect the stages. We looked at synonyms. We looked at planning and then we finished with the model answer. I think I was being quite generous today.



Anyway, that's it from me today and if you need help with your Academic Task 1 summaries, then don't hesitate to get in contact with us. We offer a feedback service. We can evaluate your work and we can tell you how to improve, where you're going wrong, how to get better and this is the fastest way to improve.

You can buy packs of essay corrections or if you want to follow the program, we've got an online course where we give you tutorials which basically break down like we've just done now, but with video format so it's easier and a little bit more detail and a little bit more practical because in this one, we have to go pretty quick, but we give you more help.

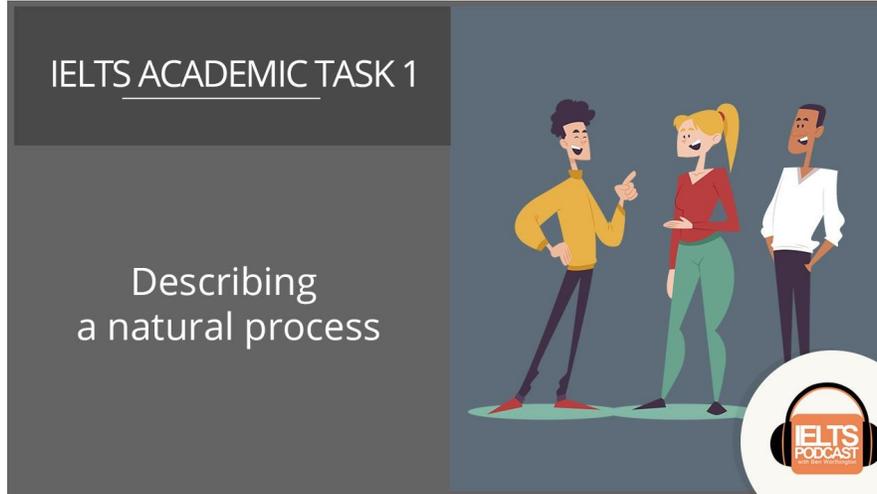
We'll tell you to do this certain task, you do it, then you send us the work. We'll give you feedback on your essay, on the piece of work that you've done and then we send it back to you and you see where you've gone wrong. You see your errors. You see what you've done right and



then you do the next task in the course or some tutorials, you write your essay, send it to us, and we'll give you feedback.

This is basically the feedback and improvement cycle that we've mastered to help students get to band 7 or higher. This is the reason why we can offer a guarantee of jump to band 7 or it's free. So, go to ieltspodcast.com if you want to find out more information about this unique course that we offer. You can also go there and inquire about getting feedback. We've got the essay correction service and that's about it from me today. Have a great day. Keep on studying. Keep working. You will get there eventually.

My name is Ben Worthington. I'm from England, from Yorkshire. I sometimes say Manchester because not many people know where Yorkshire is, but anyway, I'm from the north of England and I've been teaching IELTS for a long time. When I first started teaching it, I was struggling,



too. After years of persistence, years of correcting essays, years of teaching this stuff, I found out unique strategies, unique insights which I share with you on this podcast and in the online course. So, keep working. You will get there. Have a great day and thank you for listening.

[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltpodcast.com