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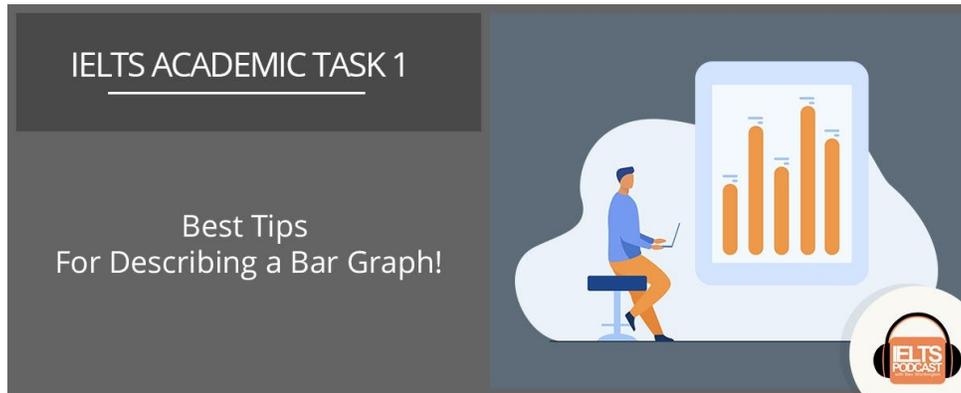
Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS Podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host, Ben Worthington.

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INTRODUCTION

Ben: Describing a bar chart. In this tutorial, we are going to look at horizontal and vertical bar charts. We are going to look at how to choose the right information, the structure to use, the language and I'll give you a few tips at the end.

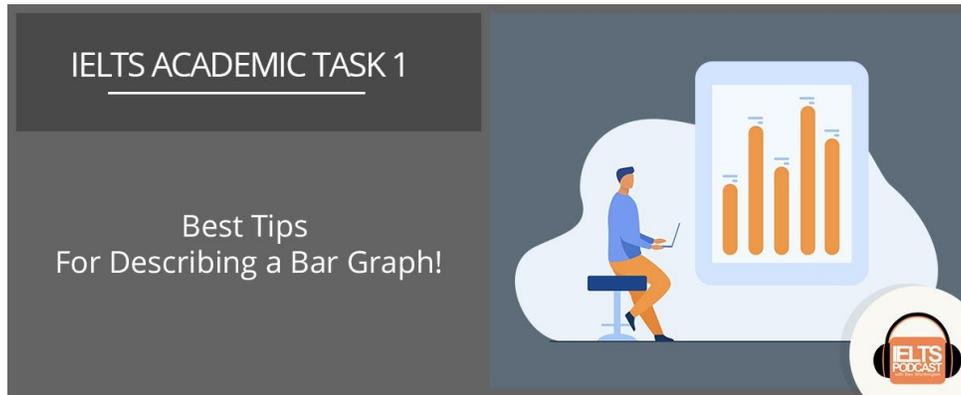
So, thank you for listening. My name is Ben Worthington and if this is the first time you're listening, let me just briefly explain who I am and where I come from. I'm from a town near



Manchester in the north of England and I started teaching after I did my year abroad while in university. I went to Spain and I studied Spanish there for a year. I decided to stay and I just decided to teach English.

Eventually, I got into teaching IELTS because it's like more results orientated and basically, I was a little bit lost. So, I started interviewing all the experts around at the time including colleagues, including finding experts from the linguistics and whatever online, interviewing them, and publishing the podcasts. And eventually, I figured out what was working. I took what they told me. Some of it was just rubbish, so I threw it out and eventually, I made the online course.

And yes, that's basically what I've been up to the last seven or eight years. So, we've been testing them. We get enough students and we test things every month-- new ideas. So, we're constantly improving the course, but it took a while. It took a while and you can possibly go through and



listen to all those podcasts and then try some of the advice that's been shared there or you could just go directly to the course and get what works. Your call. Your call and by the way, you're in good hands. We're getting so many amazing results and you've probably heard the interviews I've been doing with the other students. There's been Maria finally gets to practice pharmacy in the UK. It's her career. It's just going really well.

And Daphne is also doing a fantastic job with the speaking feedback service where we just send in a recording and we can give you some feedback on that as well. So, if you've got any questions, just send us in an email to ben@ieltspodcast and we can get right back to you and give you some advice and just help you out.

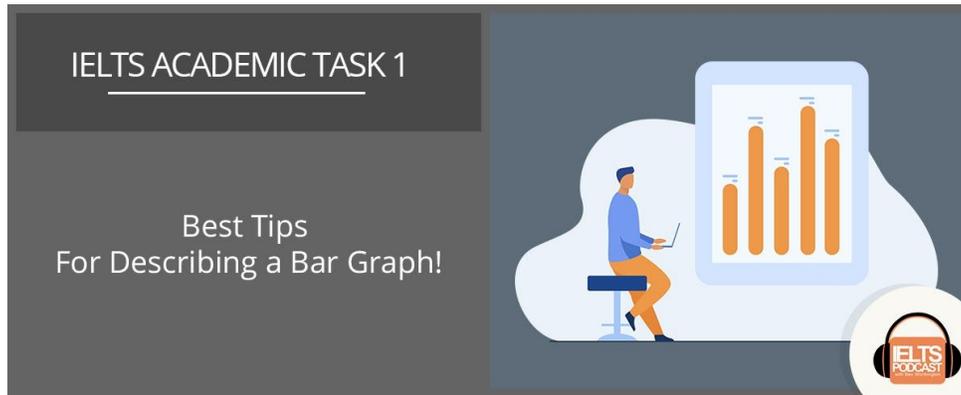
IELTS ACADEMIC TASK 1



Right then; describing a bar chart. So, this is part of Academic Task 1 and we recommend our students do this after Task 2 because with Task 2, that's going to get you the most of the points and Task 1 is only going to get you about 30%. So, allocate it 30% of your time obviously, but make sure you get the big one out of the way first.

Now, the structure. Let's get straight into it. So, one sentence for the introduction. Ideally, possibly we could paraphrase, but don't paraphrase to the point where we lose the meaning. On one hand, we do want to use words different from the question in order to pick up points, but on the second hand, we don't want to make it so different that we cannot really tell what the graph is about.

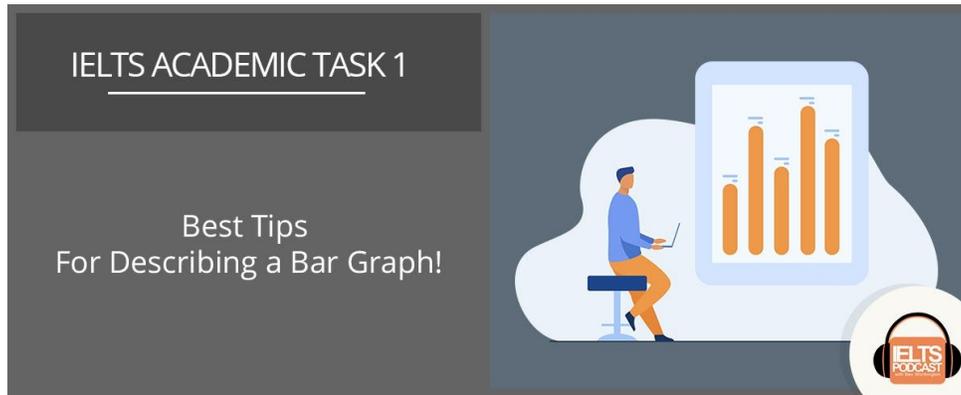
With the one I'm using in this example, it's a calorie source of UK males at different life periods. So, we could use something like say the bar chart shows the caloric intake of UK males in three different distinct age groups. So, there we did kind of paraphrase it, not to the point of losing the



meaning though. So, in that example, we used the adjective instead of the noun; caloric. So, it's worthwhile just reviewing your adjectives and your synonyms and also your prefixes and suffixes in order to expand your vocabulary.

THE STRUCTURE

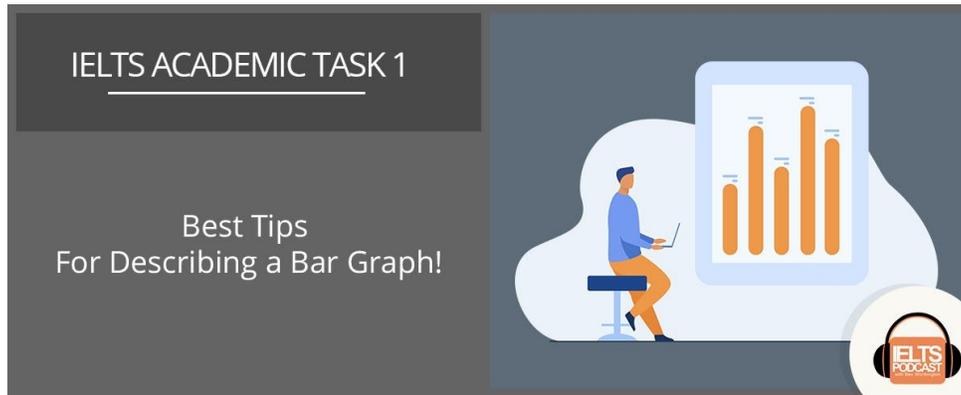
So, as I was saying, let's get back to the structure. We're going to use one sentence for the introduction. Now some tutors, Ellen namely, she recommends putting the summary in the second sentence just in case you don't get enough time-- just in case you run out of time and you forget to put it later. Personally, I prefer to put it at the end, but it's up to you. If you've got time issues, if you have time management issues, then definitely put it at the beginning, but if you're one of those students who's finishing early, then put it at the end. I mean it's your call. At the end of the day, the important thing is that it is in there, that it is in your essay.



So, one sentence for the introduction then your next sentence could be your summary. We definitely want to include a few sentences with the superlative because using the superlative will help us identify the key issues or the story behind the graph because we're going to be looking for the extremes: the largest and the smallest, the most significant.

By the way, for those advanced students when you review your work and you say biggest and you see big or biggest or small or smallest or best or better whatever, change them. Upgrade them. Big and small are amongst the first words we learn in any language. At IELTS if you're aiming for band 7, you definitely need to upgrade those simple vocabulary terms.

We're also going to make a few comparisons. Make comparisons where relevant. Don't just compare for the sake of it. Go for interesting points. What are interesting points? Well, extremes are interesting and changes; dramatic changes. So, if you've got like five data points and all of



them are the same, there's no point comparing them obviously, but if there's one of those data points that's just wild or just even out of the norm, definitely include it.

Now, this is another skill; being able to group the data. In the online course we've got for Academic Task 1, we have a whole module about selecting the right information. This is a rough guide what I'm telling you now, but in the online course, we go into a little bit more detail and we talk about how to group that information and then put it into sentences that will pick up points using comparative conjunctions and the like.

Next one: we want to be noting the exceptions as I said before. So, these are the ones that are usually the extremes; maybe the smallest, the biggest. So, this is why the superlative is essential because it will force you to pick up on these exceptions.

Also, we want to be describing the data in an advanced fashion. What does this mean? Well, we're going to pick up data points where we can use sentences such as three times that of the last



year. For example, barley production was three times that of corn production in 2020. And this goes back to selecting information. You want to select information that will make your writing shine. You want to select information that will fit into your high-scoring sentence structures.

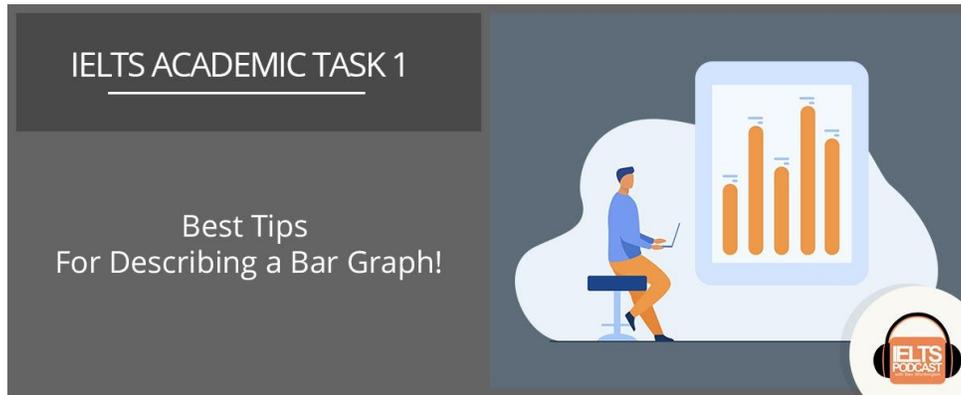
That's an important sentence. Let me just repeat it. You want to select information that you can include into your high-scoring sentence structures. These high-scoring sentence structures will range from almost triple that of the year before or production is half of that in the previous year. These kinds of sentences and as I said before, there's a list of these which makes it much easier. There's a list in one of the modules in the Academic Task 1 course.

Now, here's a pro tip that only came from correcting hundreds and hundreds of Academic Task 1s and I see this day in day out, but the pro tip is when you are describing the data, obviously we're not going to list every single data point, but there will be a few sentences where there are quite a lot of data points we want to include.



When we are including these, if we start with a detailed number, for example 0.311 and then in June 0.122, followed by July which reached 0.5, what we're going to do is just keep it all-- in this case-- all decimals. We're not going to say almost reached a half in July. We're going to keep it all decimals and this is consistency in the sentence. For example, if I were to say it reached 0.1 in June and then it was almost a third in the following year, it's just a mismatch. I need to keep it consistent throughout and this takes a while to get used to.

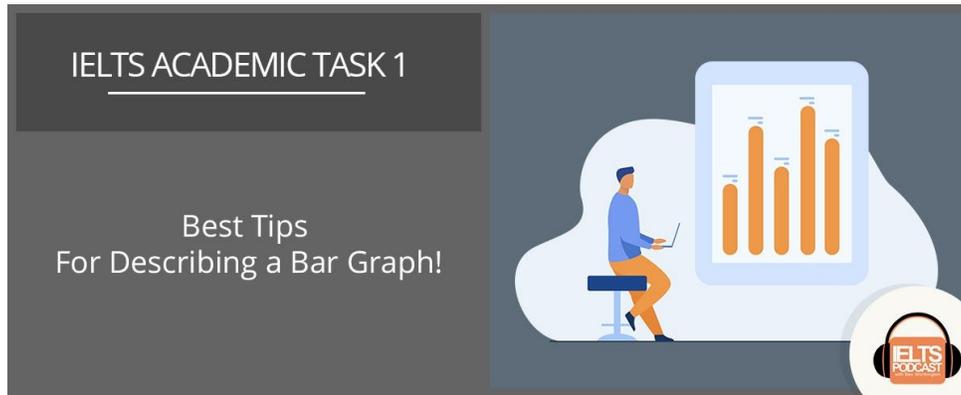
So, just in summary, if we've got one sentence with all the detailed numbers taken directly from the graph, keep it all detailed numbers and then in the next sentence, we can use more sophisticated or more natural terms which will be something like reached almost a half in June followed by three quarters-- that's probably more pie chart vocabulary. So, we could say it reached almost 10 points in July followed by around 15 points in August and then it fell to just under 2 points in September.



And with that sentence I was using kind of like rough estimations just to break up the monotony of using the direct detailed numbers. So, just bear that in mind and this is what makes it easier to read if we've got this kind of style. These are stylistic elements.

Then obviously at the end, you probably want your two sentences for the summary if you did not include it at the beginning. And a great way to start this is overall, we can see there was a large-- the production grew considerably in June, but fell throughout the months of September, August, and October, for example.

Now, final tip. Be careful with the tense. We can use the tenses-- sorry. We can use the present and the past tense when we're describing a bar chart especially if it doesn't have a time reference on it and also even if it's in sort of like the current year which is 2020 or the year before, obviously we can use the present and the past there as well.



Now, after we've finished writing it, we do need to go back obviously and check for mistakes, check for opportunities to improve the vocabulary. Also check that we've included what we have studied. For example, if you've been studying the respectively sentence then you obviously want to check have I included this. Also, when we're reviewing our work, we want to look for mistakes that we've made before.

How do we know what mistakes we've made before? Well, we've invested and we got some feedback. We had a very qualified friend looking at the work. If they are a native English speaker, that's fantastic, but even if they are a native English speaker or they've got that level, just be careful because they'll be able to spot the grammar issues, but having a collocation for example in your Academic Task 1 description is grammatically fine, but the examiner will still mark you down because it's not appropriate. This is academic. This is English for academic purposes and this is where your friend, who is a native English speaker, might not pick up or might not know English for academic purposes.



So, this is why it's definitely worth investing in getting some professional feedback and also, you'll realize that you could be saving yourself some money as well. It's better to discover these errors before the exam rather than waiting two weeks, getting your exam paper back, getting that 6.5 when you could have really avoided this by investing in an essay correction service.

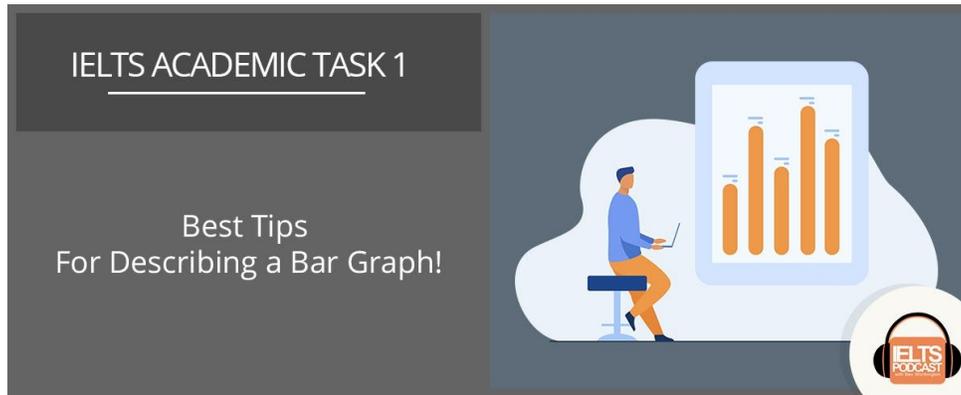
So, if you are a self-study student, then you probably want to practice as much as you can first without having to pay for an essay correction after each essay you write. Now, if this is your situation, if you're a self-study student, then I would strongly recommend you go to Google and you can write The Economist Daily Chart. Now, these are experts at writing about graphic descriptions. Also look at the BBC. Just put into your search bar BBC chart explanation. Maybe put it in something relevant; elections chart.



They usually do some quite entertaining and interesting info graphics related to topical news and current events such as coronavirus pie chart or whatever. And there you'll be able to pick up some amazing-- not amazing but some very useful vocabulary especially Economist Daily Chart.

Now, the best way to use this is not just sitting there passively reading. You want to copy-paste it maybe, read it, underline, embolden those sentences that vocabulary that you think will be useful, maybe build your vocabulary bank. And if you really want to take it to the next level, I strongly recommend you grab a pen and paper and you do the look-cover-write where you read, you cover it, and then you write it from memory. Start with a few words first then extend it to a few sentences. This is a really useful method.

Also, gold list method can help you. This will help you improve your vocabulary. I tried using it, but I was a little bit overly ambitious and in the end, I left it, but I know there is a big community



of students using this, not necessarily IELTS students. There's a big community of language learners using this especially polyglots who are trying to improve their vocabulary.

Now, if you are still struggling after doing all of this, you probably want to invest in getting some feedback or even better just invest in a course and you can quickly and effectively learn the whole structure; the sentence structures needed and some other stylistic elements that will help push you probably to a band 7 or higher.

Now, I would recommend this if you are short on time and if you just want to get the IELTS out of the way. I know this can be terribly frustrating and especially if you are in lockdown at the moment. It's a good opportunity to invest in yourself to improve your work and move faster. So, just keep moving forward. Keep working with this. Also, the new modules in the online course we talk about setting up a schedule. We talk about organizing your work and keeping yourself motivated. There are lots of tips in there which will help you improve much faster and just help



you work better and become a better student. So, keep an eye out for those if you do join the course. They are right at the front.

Conclusion

That's everything from me today. I hope you are staying healthy. Remember to wear a mask. It sounds crazy saying this in an IELTS Podcast maybe, but everything's getting a little bit upside down recently, so just stay safe. Keep focused. Keep working and you will get there. You will get there.

Every month we are interviewing students who thought it was impossible, who thought that after six tests, seven tests that they were just going to have to change their whole life plan. It doesn't have to be like that. You just need to stay positive. You only fail when you give in, okay? So, don't give in. Keep working forward and remember listen to those success stories. They share



lots of tips, lots of advice and it really is an inspiration. You can do this. You can do this. So, keep your head up high. Keep moving forward. All the best and thank you for listening.

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