



**Ben:** How to describe a pie chart for IELTS Academic Part 1. Hello there, my name is Ben Worthington and in this tutorial, we're going to take a deep look at explaining how to describe a pie chart. We're going to look at the structure, we're going to look at the steps involved, and obviously, there's going to be a few tips and some vocabulary. And we're also going to just look at a model answer as well, okay?

Before we get started, let me mention our sponsor. Our sponsor is ELSA Speak. You can go to their site at [elsaspeak.com](https://elsaspeak.com) to find out more, but with this app, you can get instant feedback on your pronunciation. And actually, they did a study and 95% of the people using ELSA for 10 minutes a day for three months, 95% said that they could express themselves with more confidence in English after using the app. Around 70% said they could speak clearer and 90% saw an improvement in their pronunciation. And at the end of this tutorial I will share a link with



you where you can go and get 40% discount on the lifetime plan and you can even get a 7-day trial as well.

Right then. Let's jump into it. So, in this tutorial as I said, we're going to look at how to describe a pie chart for IELTS. Now, this is quite a common question the pie chart. Sometimes you might get two pie charts, sometimes you might get a line chart or a flow diagram, but pie charts are pretty frequent. So, let's have a look.

We want to give the general idea. What I always tell my students is that ideally, the reader should be able to create the pie chart from your written description. Now, that doesn't mean every section exactly reported, but they should be able to get like an overview and a general idea, not an exact idea but a general idea of what is happening from your written description.



So, the first step that I always say is to prepare. So, we look for the largest and the smallest sections. Why do we go for the largest and the smallest? Because one, it's going to force us to use the superlative which will help with our grammatical range and accuracy score, but also you're going to get to a general idea quicker. You're going to find the general overview.

Now, while we're looking at these sections, we want to determine in our mind what do they represent, okay? Not only are we going to take note on okay, is it 30%? Is it 40%, but we're also going to get a clear idea. So, we could see something like 40% corn, okay? What does that mean 40% corn? Well then, we've got to go back to the title and just get it clear in our head that it might be preferences.



So, 40% of adults in the U.S.A. prefer corn as their favorite cereal, for example or it could be we see 40% corn and it could be 40% of Kazakhstani agriculture is corn or agricultural output is corn, for example. So, this is what it means about getting the idea clear in our head.

Also, while we're doing this, we're looking at the times, the dates, the measurements. So, if we're talking about output, it might be in kilos, it might be in tons. If we're talking about preferences, it could be American citizens in 2018, in 2021, in 2022, whatever, okay?

Now, what's important is that we get the general idea and I've said it before. I'm saying it again just because it's really important. We don't want to like focus on the corn. We want to get a general idea. So, if we're going back to the cereal preferences, when I get a rough idea, which is the most popular? Which is the least popular in the cereal export output-- sorry-- in the



agricultural example? Which is the most popular or which is the cereal that is getting most produced or exported, okay? We've got to get the general idea.

Now, this brings me smoothly into step two where we organize the findings. Now, I suggest organizing it into two groups. The reason is because we're going to have two body paragraphs here. Now, the way you kind of like organize it or structure it is up to you, okay, in the body paragraphs. Some people prefer to compare the largest sections altogether. Other people prefer to compare the largest with the smallest. It's up to you.

Usually, they'll probably be more data points or more information there and this makes it easier. For example, if there's less information, you have to really struggle, but if there's more information, you can make it into the largest sections or you could do the largest sections from one year followed by the next year. It's really up to you and this comes with practice.



I hate what I'm saying now which is I'm not saying practice, practice, practice, but I'm saying that the more times you do this, the easier it obviously gets. So, here are some kind of like guidance. We're looking for the major groups, we're looking for the major trends, and we're also looking for the exceptions, okay?

By exceptions we might be looking at a chart that shows Kazakhstan agricultural output, Turkish agricultural output, and Mongolian agricultural output and maybe for Turkey and Mongolia corn might be the largest output or wheat might be the largest output, okay? That's a similarity and we can start to group that together.

If those two countries have the largest agricultural output is in wheat, then we can group that together whereas if the largest agricultural output for Kazakhstan is corn, it could be an exception to the data. This is an example of kind of like a pattern or pattern spotting. So again, we're looking for similarities, we're looking for exceptions. With those similarities, we want to



group them into groups and this is a specific requirement from the IELTS criteria; being able to group the data.

In our IELTS Academic Task 1 course, we've got two modules-- I mean there's quite a few modules in fact. There's vocabulary, there's trends, there's tenses, but the two important modules that our students say they like the most is one is where we very specifically show you which information to choose or how to choose the right information, how to select the right information. And that's a key, key point.

And then the other module is how to express it, how to organize it, how to-- basically, what I'm saying now like how to group the information, how to organize it for a high scoring Academic Task 1.



Now, just to summarize, we've looked at the major trends, we've grouped the data, we've spotted the exceptions, we've managed to incorporate any other ideas in the data. For example, you might have a horrible chart and you might not be able to group the data and then that is a feature of the chart; that it's difficult to group. So, you could say in effect that is a group.

You could say each country leads in a different type of cereal produced. For example, Kazakhstan leads in corn whereas Mongolia leads in barley and Turkey leads in wheat. And that in itself is a group. We've identified that each country has a different leading cereal or produces a different type of cereal.

Now, we've carefully selected the information. We've carefully grouped the information into the biggest producers, for example, are the smallest sections or the largest sections and we've been





able to compare them where appropriate; maybe different years, maybe different countries, okay?

And while we're doing this, we are trying to separate all this information into two paragraphs as well. These will be our two body paragraphs. Our first paragraph will be the introduction. Now, you can paraphrase the title and this is why paraphrasing is quite a useful skill to have. Not only can you use it in IELTS Writing Task 2-- as you've just heard Writing Task 1. You can also use it in your speaking exam as well just to buy you a few more seconds while you organize your answer.

Now, as I said, the first paragraph is the introduction. So, we might have a title that says holiday destinations chosen by Welsh people between 1955 and 2005. Now, this is a skill in itself that you can just do over and over again by writing, by just practicing, but we would paraphrase that



as the pie chart shows the vacation preferences of Welsh people over a 50-year period starting in 1955 and finishing in 2005, okay?

The dates will be written as numbers because it just gets too clumsy if we're writing 2 thousand and five. It's ridiculous, okay? So, we're obviously going to write them in numbers. Also, we're going to try and substitute-- we're not going to force it, but we are going to try and substitute some of the vocabulary. So, you may have heard holiday destinations, vacation preferences. It's pretty much the same. I mean vacation does sound a little bit more American, but English is a vast, vast language, so you will be okay.

Generally speaking though, don't mix the grammar; the tiny differences between British grammar and American grammar and spellings, but with the words you're okay, okay? So, if you do start off with American spellings in your writing, use American spellings all the way through.



Don't mix it up and likewise, if you're using British spellings, use British spellings all the way through. It's not very common, in all honesty, but it is worth noting.

Now, we've done our introduction, okay? Now, you can also in this introduction give a brief overview. You can say the pie chart shows the vacation preferences of Welsh people over a 50-year period starting in 1955 and finishing in 2005. Throughout this period, there was a general shift from domestic tourism to Mediterranean tourism especially favoring countries such as Spain, Italy, and France. And that's kind of like the overview.

Now, some tutors recommend doing this-- giving the overview at the beginning just in case you run out of time at the end. I think it seems a little bit more natural at the end, but doing it my way assumes that you've planned your essay and you've got enough time and that you're not going to run out of time.



So, it just depends on you. If you're a student who struggles with time management, you probably want to get that overview in the first section just so you pick up points for the overview and you're not going to lose it whereas if you are good with your time and you do regularly finish your IELTS essays with a few minutes to spare, then stick it at the end because that seems like a more natural place to put the summary. And also, there's no repetition there either. It just seems a natural way to finish.

Now then, in paragraph two, we're going to talk about the information, okay? We're going to focus on that first group of information that we separated out while we were preparing, while we were organizing our findings. Remember to include the comparisons there as well.

Now, in the Academic Task 1 course, we've also got quite a few sample sentences that just speed up your progression. These include you know like just little ones like respectively. So, we could



use that in this example. We could say by 2005, the most popular destinations were Spain, France, and Italy with around 20%, 15%, and 11% each respectively.

And that's quite a straightforward sentence and it just helps you-- what I did there was I grouped the leading destinations and I used respectively and it's just a little stylistic element rather than-- using that phrase, you don't have to say Spain was the most popular destination with 30% followed by Italy with 20% and then followed by France with 11%. Just using that little device there respectively just makes it flow a little bit easier.

If you go to Google and you put Economist Daily Chart, you will see a massive list of chart descriptions done by some of the best writers in the world. And I'm not exaggerating. The Economist has some of the best writers, the clearest communicators and it's all in the style that we are aiming for for the exam.



So, I just went there and the title a handful of items are driving inflation in America. Now, you see what I mean about the higher-level vocabulary? How many of us would have used a handful? A handful of countries, a handful of Welsh tourists still preferred domestic tourism. And then are driving inflation in America.

Just moving back, we could use that. Welsh holiday preferences are driving changes in tourism across Europe. It's just that higher level and that was just from the title that I got those two useful words.

Let's jump in. Consumer price inflation has risen to 5.4% in America the highest in 30 years. You see? Exactly what I was talking about. We've got the superlatives in there and we've got a good use of the verb has risen to and the tenses. There we go. And you can only read the summary unfortunately unless you're paying, but you could tell just from reading the headlines as well we



got some value out there. So, that's if you just go to economist-- or go to Google and put economist daily chart or economist graphic detail, you'll see some great descriptions there.

Now, before we finish, let me just give you a few more tips for interpreting pie charts. Now, when I'm correcting essays, it drives me crazy when I see students adding their personal opinions. For example, if you know that the cost of air travel fell between 1955 and 2005 and you think that was the reason why Welsh people started going abroad to Europe-- the Mediterranean instead of staying in the UK, you do not put it in there. You can only report what you see in front of you on the graph on the exam paper.

Next tip. Pay attention to the time frame of your pie charts. Some of them will have data from the past. Some of them might even have predictions for the future. Either way, you need to pay



special attention and use the appropriate tense. Use the appropriate tense that corresponds to that data.

Now finally, if you cannot compare the information, don't panic. Just try and get a summary. In some cases, there might be too much information there in which case that's when you need to really rely on your grouping skills. And as I said at the beginning, grouping the largest, grouping the smallest, and then even grouping the random, for example. And the smallest, as you just heard, is a perfect opportunity for saying a handful of countries, a handful of students prefer mathematics. Some lovely descriptions there.

Now then, if you need more summaries to write out and just to look at, we've got a massive selection at [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com). Just go to Google, put IELTS podcast sample academic task 1





essay. We've got pages upon pages. Most of them were written by myself a native English speaker, so the grammar is going to be tip top.

In the next tutorial coming out in about a week or two, we're going to look at the vocabulary, we're going to look at tenses, and we're going to break down a model answer and we're also going to look at how to compare two pie charts.

Now, two things before we finish. 1) A big thank you to our sponsor ELSA Speak. As I said, this is an app that you can use to help increase your pronunciation and it's great if you've got your exam, as I said before, if you are in a pickle which means if you're in a difficult situation. If you're in a pickle i.e. you have your exam coming up the next day or even a job interview, then you might want to get some feedback on the phrases that you know you're going to be saying. And with this app, you get the feedback afterwards.



Now, if you go to our site, you can get the ELSA pro for free. You can get seven days of pro membership for free and if you go to this link [elsaspeak.com/inf/ieltspodcast](https://elsaspeak.com/inf/ieltspodcast), you can get 40% off a 12 month membership and 85% off a lifetime membership.

Second thing I want to say is that if you are still struggling with IELTS and you need some help, then please get in contact. When you sign up for our mailing list, you'll get some free IELTS materials, but you'll also get our email address where you can send us an email and just tell us what you're struggling with and we can guide you and give you some resources there.

And remember we've also got the course of Jump to Band 7 or It's Free. We are getting some great success there and I love seeing the essays, seeing the improvement and students getting the feedback and just getting that motivation, getting to the next level, getting IELTS, and just moving on.



So, thank you very much for listening. Have a great day and all the best with your IELTS preparation.

[Music]

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