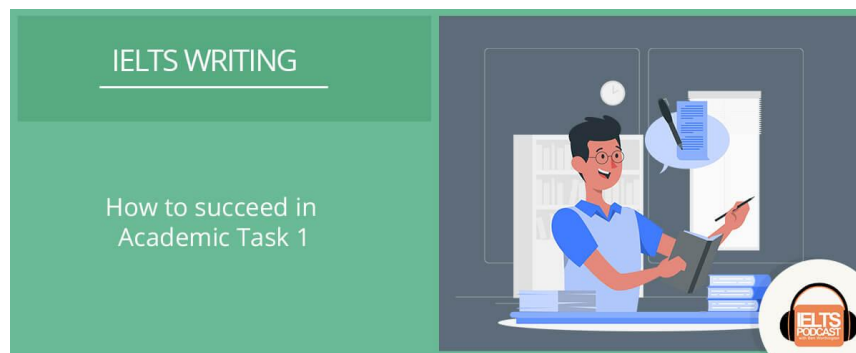
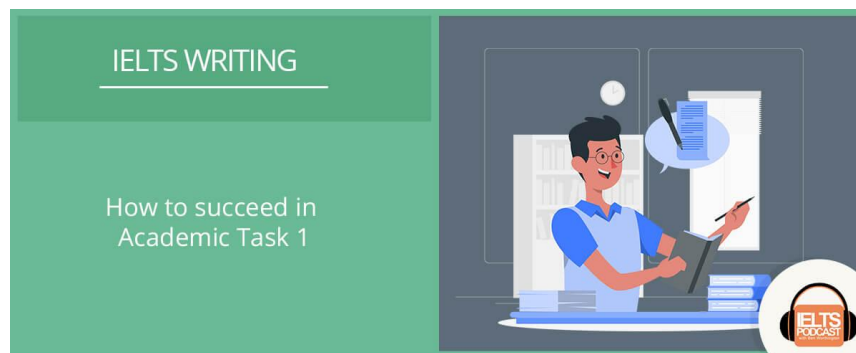




Robert: Hello. Hello. Hello to you all again. It's Robert Buckingham here again. Welcome to another IELTS podcast. Now, if you were listening to me talking about that rumor the other day that we all secretly know about, you know the one I mean. Yes, yes, yes, the writing test and all the headaches it might give us then you know where we're heading in today's podcast. The title is to attract your attention, isn't it? I hope it is true though. How to make a success of Academic Task 1.

Okay. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Before I go on, have you taken a look yet at that official IELTS website I mentioned where they show the statistical breakdown of the IELTS results? It's there on the website if you look at the script of that podcast I gave before.

There's so much stuff there: overall band scores, overall scores on reading, listening, writing, and speaking, details of all those things according to the main first languages spoken by candidates, and then there's a more detailed breakdown including a very long list-- I haven't counted the

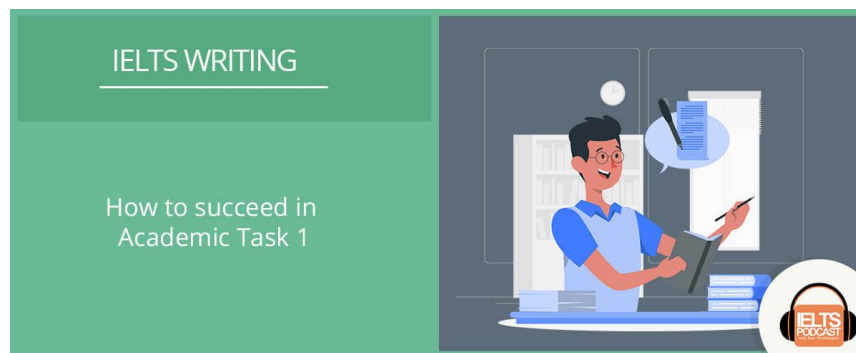


number of first languages spoken by IELTS test takers and their respective performance levels in all four parts of the exam.

For those of you who love statistics, I can almost hear you shouting I love statistics out there somewhere. One of you, two of you love statistics, maybe more. I don't know, but this web page for you is a dream come true.

For the rest of us, well okay, I admit it does make interesting reading and as a teacher of English, of course, from my point of view the numbers game helps me to understand the bigger picture; how to help you get a high band score in IELTS as possible. And one of the things that comes out clearly from all this data is that yes, there are trends, general tendencies that are a reflection of where you come from, what native language you speak.

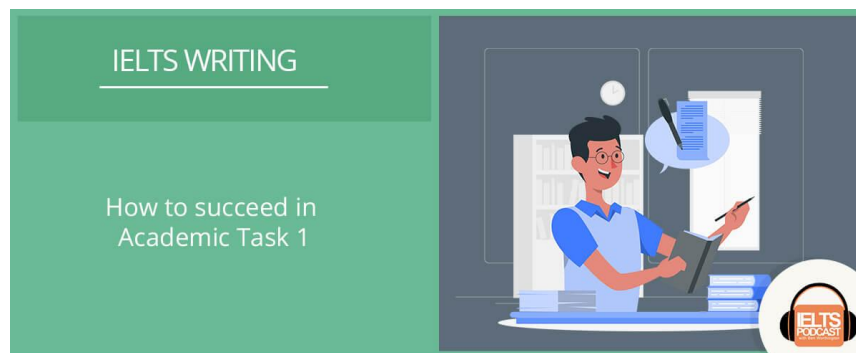
As test takers, I think we should face this and make sure that we are equipped to deal with these problem areas; let's call it that. And I believe that to stand out from the crowd, we have to make



that extra effort and work on improving our performance especially in the areas we find most difficult. And of course, that is more likely to be in writing and even more so if the style we write in in our native language might be very distinct from the way it's usually done in English.

Okay. Let's take an example. I'd like to go back to something I mentioned a while ago in another podcast talking about Task 1 Academic, that part where you have to write at least 150 words summarizing the information illustrated graphically, a table, a chart, a pie chart for example, a graph, or even a plan or a map and report on the main features you see and make relevant comparisons between these important or key features.

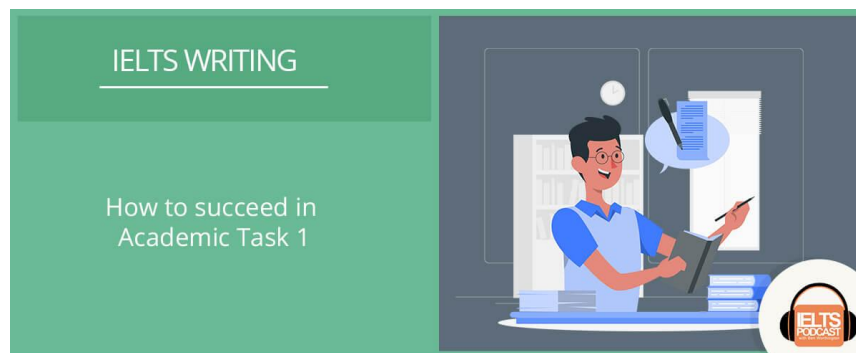
I talked to you before about how vital it is to spend some time studying the graphic data and making a note of what it's really all about; the key element or feature that will then be your overview. Remember that word? Your overview. The interpretation if you like of the information.



Spend two or three minutes on that at least. If we're going to spend 20 minutes on that part of the exam in total, two or three minutes at least really trying to understand what you have to do and what the information is all about in front of you.

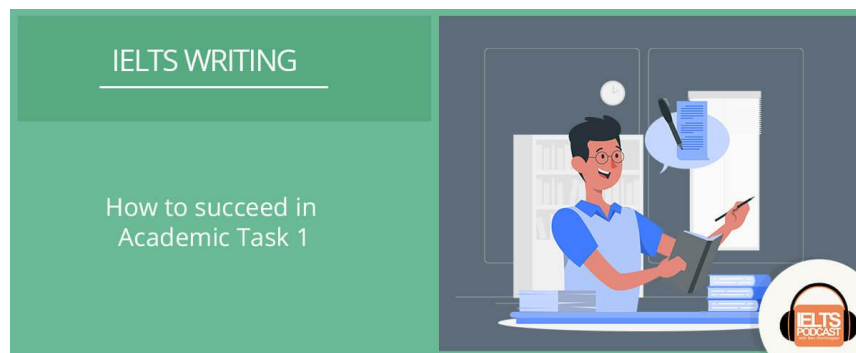
Okay, but it's not just a matter of seeing things clearly. We also have to support the overview with evidence using the data as examples. Remember what the examiner has for a guide. The band descriptors will tell the examiner these things. A simple mechanical description of the data presented will be worth on task achievement 5. We don't want that, do we? We don't want a 5.

A simple mechanical description; a few sentences put together one after the other without very many connections. It will show that you understood the data, that you can repeat it in words. You can put in words what you see, but did you really make an interpretation of it? Not very much of an interpretation at all.



Going on to a 6, the examiner will read that for task achievement, the candidate has selected the information appropriately. Whatever that means. What it really means is it's done a bit better. Maybe the connections between the things are a little more explicit. It makes a little bit more sense, but what are we aiming for? 6? I hope not. 7. 7 at least, no?

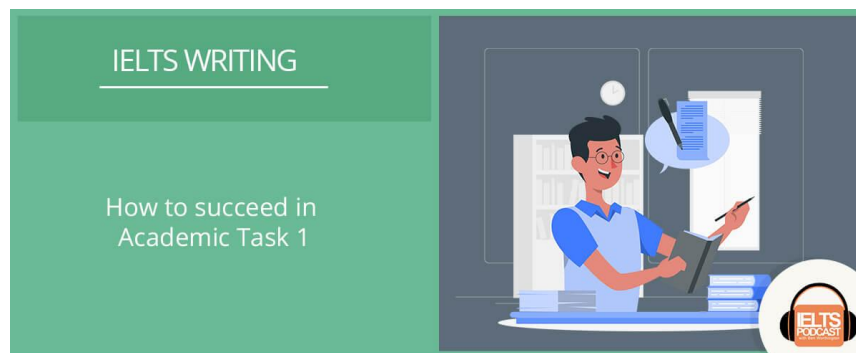
So for a 7, the descriptors will tell the examiner that the overview has to be supported by relevant data that shows the main trends, important differences, etc. We're getting there. We're getting there. We're getting there towards the higher grades. We've got to connect it together in a very convincing way. We have to show the examiner that we understood the graph-- if it's a graph-- that we can summarize that information, get the essence out of it, show the main idea there and then give relevant examples using the linguistic skills we have. Now, that's something we're going to go on to in a few moments, okay?



Now, what happens where test takers most often lose points in my opinion in Task 1 is precisely there; the main body of their essays, the main part where they describe and they compare the data is just far too bland. Do you know that word? It's an adjective. I like the word adjective bland.

It means there's no spicy bits there. It's too ordinary. It has no taste. We talk about-- a lot of people say English food can be very bland. If you like spicy food, don't try a lot of English food. It can be a little bit bland. There's no real taste to it. But what we really mean here is too mechanical, too mechanical, just a pretty boring description without any connections if you like.

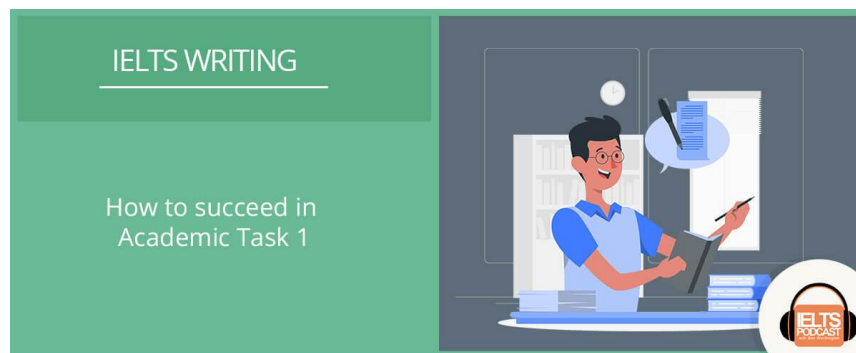
And maybe on a positive note, the candidate will show some good cohesive links, but maybe just straightforward ones like about or whereas as from time to time to compare things, but nothing special. Nothing special. Yeah, it's nothing particularly brilliant. It's a 5 if it's not very convincing, maybe a 6 if you're lucky.



Now, what I would strongly, very strongly recommend you to do is to work on making the examples you give in the main part-- in the body of your essay follow logically on from the introduction and the overview. I keep repeating this word overview. Remember it. Underline it. Make a mental note of it. Write it 50 times. Overview, overview, overview. That general idea of what is it really all about. What does it mean?

So, remember again your task is to interpret what does this graph really tell us, for example and how can I justify that with the data that I have in front of me? Interpretation and justification. And to really go beyond a 6 towards a strong 7 and hopefully an 8 in all four criteria-- task achievement, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary, and grammar-- please, please, please do it. Work very seriously on sentence construction for your data descriptions and comparisons.

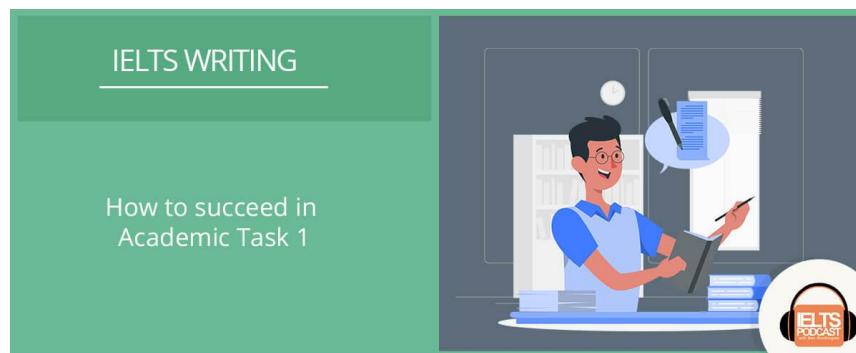
That's where you shine. That's where the examiner looks and thinks wow! This is good. I like this one. The complexity of the sentences. Not all complex. We can mix simple with complex, but showing that you can join things up using the information you have to make interesting



comparisons that are all connected to the main point you're making. No irrelevant information. Quoting the data.

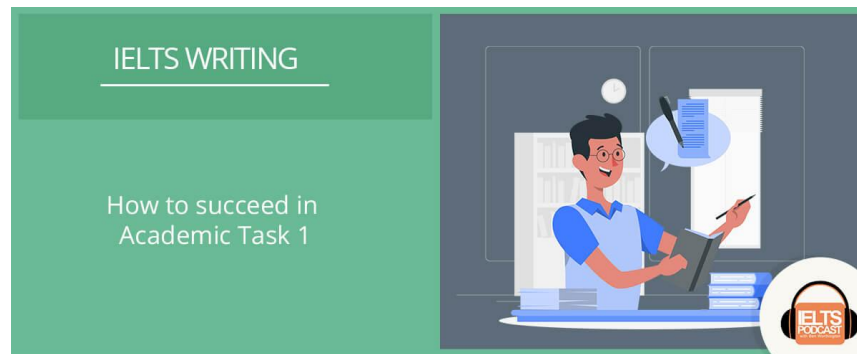
Okay. We need an example. Let's work through a simple example, shall we? It's nice and simple. It has to be because come on, this is like the radio, isn't it? You can hear me, but you can't see me. It was like ages ago. I used to love-- I grew up listening to the radio. We didn't have a television believe it or not until I was about nine years old and the radio for me was magic because it's where you can use your imagination. Radio leaves so much to the imagination.

So, on the radio and on this podcast, you hear my voice, maybe later you can check what I've written on the ieltspodcast.com relevant webpage on the website. Of course you can, but just listening to it, we need something simple, something we can grasp. So this is it. Okay. I think I mentioned this before. It's something I thought of. I think it's a nice example and it's relevant to us because we all probably enjoy watching movies.



So, let's imagine something like this; a pie chart or maybe a bar chart. Pie chart probably better. Pie chart. Pie chart. Maybe two pie charts, different years-- two different years. Typical for an IELTS exam Task 1 Academic and these two pie charts show media preferences. What kind of preferences? Well, let's say that we have these two pie charts that compare the ways people watch movies at home. Nothing to do with cinema. Forget the cinema for a moment. At home.

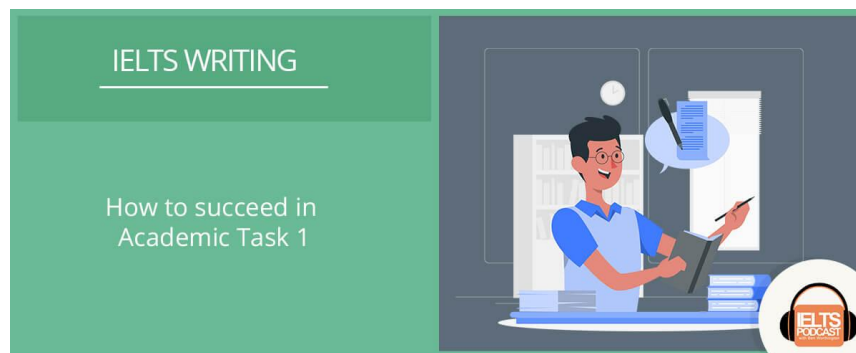
How do you watch movies at home? In two different years. Let's say okay, 2016 and 2021, 5 years difference. 2016 - 2021. In each pie chart, we see it divided up into little parts of the pie and percentages according to how we watch or how people in a certain place watched or are watching movies at home. We've got four different sections. First one: national TV channels. Second: cable TV channels. Third section: Blu-ray or DVD? Oh, do you have one of those at home, Blu-ray or DVD? Do you still watch those things? And finally, streaming services: Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney Channel, whatever it might be. There are lots of them, aren't there? Very popular these days.



So, we got the four. Okay. We've got the more traditional ones: TV, your national channels, you watch a movie there. You've got the cable systems or satellite TV. Then you've got watching a film on DVD or Blu-ray or whatever and finally connecting it to your computer, your smart TV, whatever, you're watching Netflix or HBO or whatever system you've got. Okay?

So, that sounds like fun, isn't? It's pretty easy for you to visualize it. So, use your imagination. Just think of it. You're looking at those two pie charts. Let's go to the 2016 pie chart. Close your eyes, just imagine those numbers. I'm going to give you some numbers now. These are the numbers from 2016.

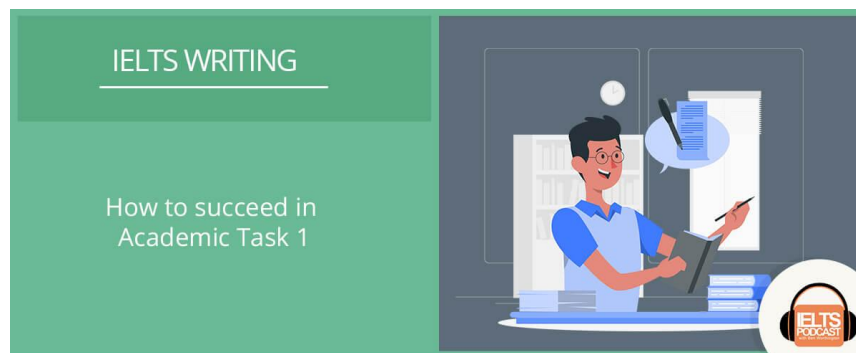
I've got there 25%, a quarter, 25% of people watched movies through streaming 2016 compared to DVD Blu-ray 20%. And that means I've got around a bit over 50% about 55% I think through the other two and that falls like this. 30% --that's the biggest one, not by much-- 30% cable TV, your cable channels, 200 channels, sports channels, whatever, film channels.



You've watch them. Switch channels every 5 minutes. What do you call it? Zapping, you're zapping those channels looking for a good film. Good luck to you. And finally, 25%-- that's quite high actually-- 25% the same as streaming in 2016 on straight old-fashioned TV national TV channels.

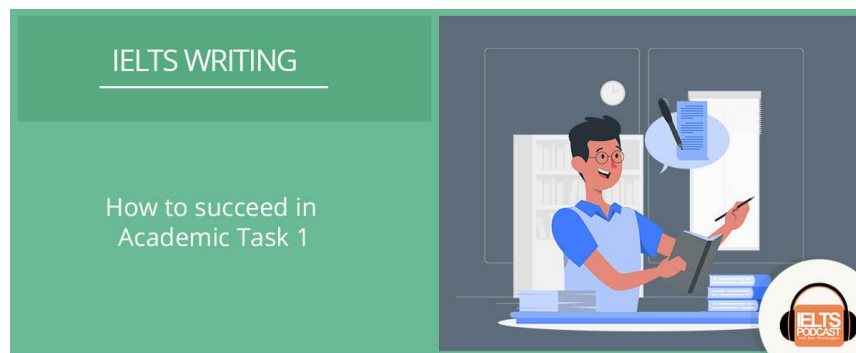
Okay. Now 5 years later, let's move our eyes and our imagination to the other side of the exam paper. We're now looking at pie chart number two, 2021, 5 years later. We see quite dramatic changes. Oh my God. From 25% before it goes up to 60. 60% now go for streaming, so that's a big jump and the other 40%? Well, the breakdown is like this: DVDs less than 10%, a little more than 15% cable, and a little under 15% national TV.

Now, that is quite a big change, isn't it? So, we can see perhaps in that where we're going. We can interpret it in all kinds of ways. Remember of course that the numbers tell us everything there. We've got the idea of introducing our essay, just summarizing what it's all about.



The two pie charts show or compare TV viewing figures in a certain country-- I don't know which country it is-- in 2016 and 2021 broken down into four areas: national TV, cable TV, DVD or Blu-ray, and finally streaming services. A simple introduction using some of the words from the exam paper yes, from the question changing it a little bit, showing that we can use synonyms, etc. It's our introduction.

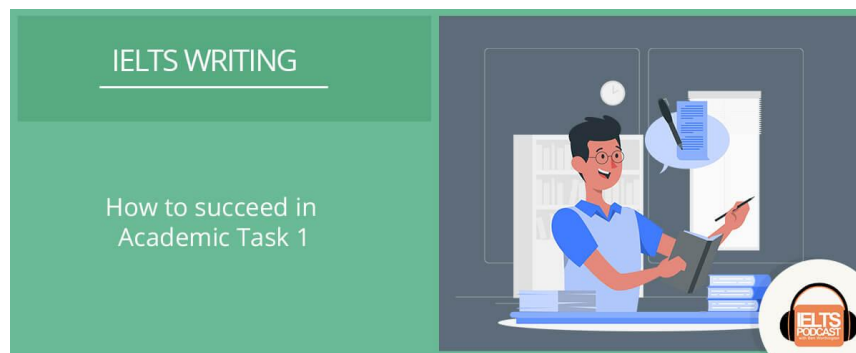
Then comes our very important sentence, perhaps the most important part of the whole essay; our overview. And it shows the examiner that you've really captured the idea what it's all about. And then we got the body of it, maybe one paragraph, perhaps two comparing the information, giving the evidence, using our knowledge of how we can make comparisons and the way that we can describe numbers in words. Sometimes we can just use the percentage itself. 30%, for example. Sometimes we can say that in a different way. 30% is a little under a third. Oh God. That's impressive. I like that one.



So, let's look at my example. My example is my example. It's not your example. It's my example. If you want to take this example and use what I've got here and incorporate it into your knowledge, I love that idea. Use it and also use things that you can learn yourselves and that you feel comfortable with.

Okay. Here then is my example. It includes the overview and then my first example and obviously-- well, is this so obvious? It makes sense, let's say it that way. If I'm going to do it like this, I think the best idea is to always start our data description, our evidence, our examples, our comparisons with the most important information. The information which will support our main idea.

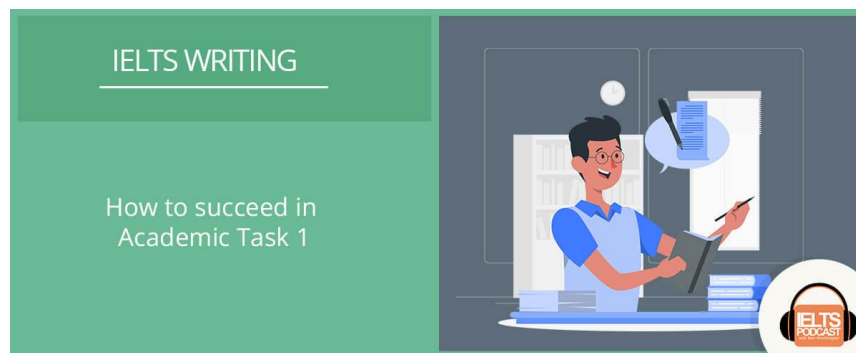
So, it could go like this. Listen. Okay. The pie charts clearly show that watching movies through streaming services has grown dramatically over this 5-year period with a corresponding decline in media such as cable or national TV channels as well as Blu-ray or DVDs. End of my first sentence.



Go on to the examples. For example, the use of streaming services such as Netflix has more than doubled rising from around 25% in 2016 to a little over 60% 5 years later. At the same time, watching movies on cable TV has halved in the same period falling to around 15% in 2021, a figure similar to that of traditional national TV.

I could go on. I haven't got it here, but I could also then in my next short sentence mention the fall in the use of DVDs or Blu-ray over the same period. It fell also by quite a lot-- no. Well, exactly half actually, a little bit more from 20% to a little under 10%.

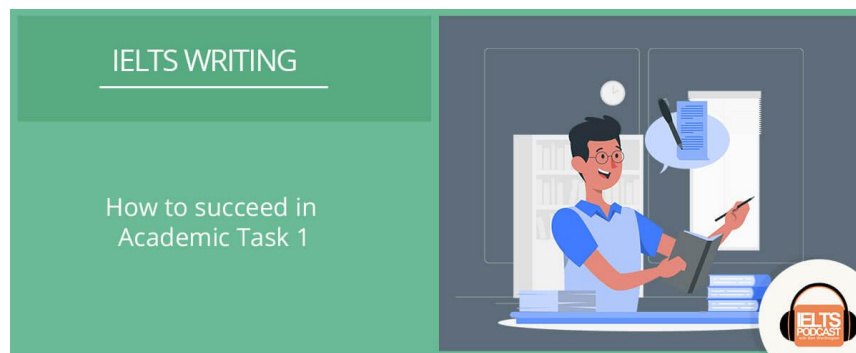
Now, I hope-- well, you can read this online later, but I hope that my pauses also showed you where I was using my punctuation: the full stop between sentences long pause, a shorter pause meant I put a comma there. I'm sorry. I'm a bit of a fanatic about punctuation. I love it. I love it. I insist that it should be well done when you're writing. Okay?



So, I've given my examples. I've used-- yes, I've quoted the numbers, the percentages and remember, this is important. You can either do that literally 25%, 15%, a little more, a little under, a little higher than 20% or whatever or and/or through verbs such as double: 25% to 60% more than doubled. Half: 20% to 10%, it halved and well, not in our example, but could you imagine triple, multiplied by three.

And of course, we can use a load of possible more neutral traditional verbs which also serve almost always as nouns to describe things going up and things going down: rise, fall, increase, decrease, drop and we also have some more dramatic ones. If it goes up a lot, in English we could say something shoots up. The number of viewers watching Netflix over this period shot up from 25% to 60% or we can also use of course different descriptive adjectives and also adverbs.

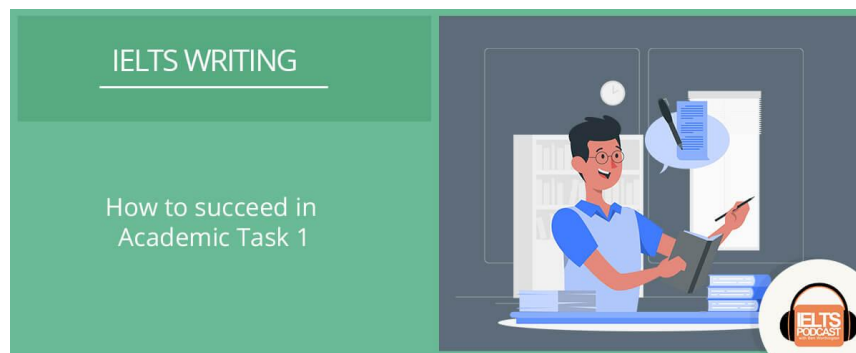
For example, a fall yes. We don't say a big fall. Well, we can say a big fall, but that sounds so childish. Why not a dramatic fall? An increase? Yes. What about a sharp increase? It went up a



lot, a sharp increase. And what about something that goes up bit by bit? Something has risen steadily, a steady increase.

And of course, we can think of a lot more examples. I don't want to talk about these. They're here. You can find a lot of excellent examples on the IELTS Podcast relevant pages when they give you advice about how to write the Task 1 exam and also from your own writing when you get feedback. You'll get advice about how you could improve your vocabulary and perhaps also of course on the grammatical structures.

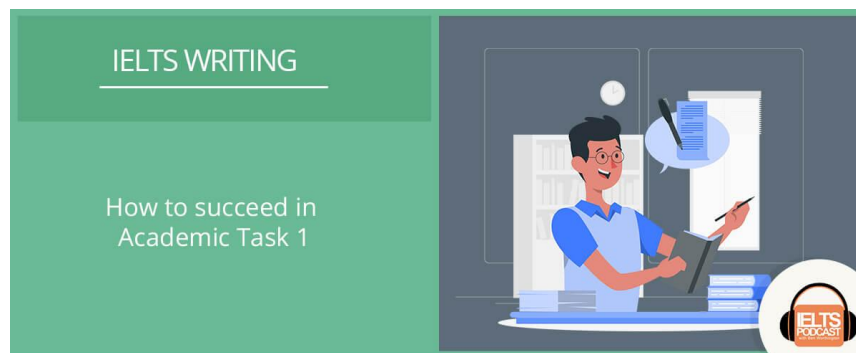
That's not my job here. I can guide in some ways. Obviously, there's no time. I don't have time. You don't want to listen to that either on this podcast. You want a different kind of thing. So, there's no space here to go into those details or on these possibilities except to remind you once again how very important it is to dedicate a lot of time to that.



Okay. Practice. Practice, practice as many of these Task 1s as you can. Send them into the IELTS Podcast experts who will give you their feedback. Pay close attention to the feedback and then write another one. Take it positively. Feedback is a positive thing. Good things that need improving. Look at it. Use the information you get there. Write another one. Rewrite the one you did. Get more feedback and so on. It's a circular thing. Until you're satisfied, until you think that's it. I'm ready for the test. I know I'm going to get at least a 7 now.

Okay. Before I leave you today, two final points. Please-- point no. 1-- don't forget to leave out any interpretation, any data, any opinion, whatever, that is not there, that is not there in the chart or the graph. The example I've given, one thing that we could have added, but please never add it to my imaginary pie chart is the most obvious one.

You know and I know that the switch from TV to streaming is mainly largely being led by younger people. Quite a lot of young people I know don't even have a television. They watch

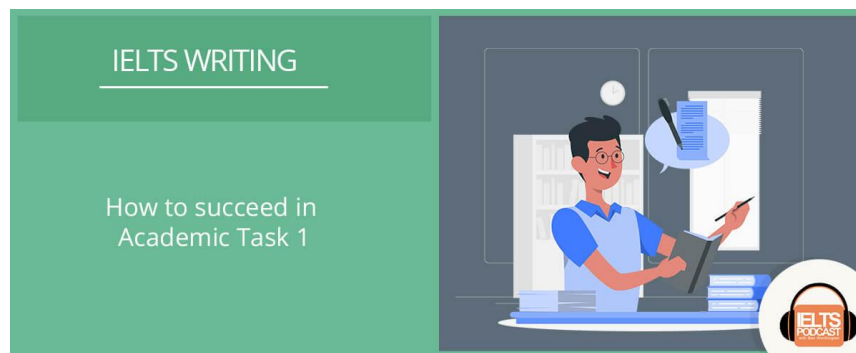


movies on their laptops, on their tablets, even on their phones I guess, but that information is not in the chart. It's not mentioned there, so don't mention it at all.

You can't say-- you can never say the main reason for this change has been the dramatic rise in the way that young people watch movies these days. Okay, probably that's true, but it's not the topic we're talking about. It's not there in the pie chart.

The last thing. Remember I'm an ex-examiner, okay? And how did I do it when I was an examiner? I would sit in this room and I'd have a pile-- a whole load of exams to look at and then I'd look at the test question. I would read it and spend my two or three minutes studying it, noting down my interpretation of it and the data that I thought was worth mentioning in the essay.

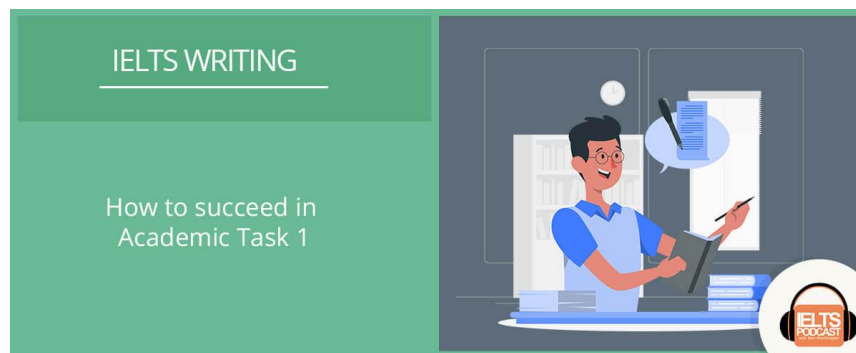
And then I would put that to one side. I wouldn't look at the pie chart at all and then I would read each answer without looking back at the chart or the graph or my notes. And my idea really was



hey, reading this one, does it make sense? Is it clear? Do I need to look at the chart, the pie charts, the question again while I read it to help me understand the essay?

If it was perfectly clear first time around, I would make a little note. I would say okay, next to the name of the candidate maybe. Good. 7 maybe 8. That wouldn't be my final score. That would be my first tentative idea.

Then after reading all of those Task 1s or a number of them, I would go back again to the first one and through the whole load again and read them all the second time paying much more close attention to the grammar, the vocabulary, the details. Okay. Of course, this second time around I'm not expecting perfection. I know that there's going to be an error here, an error there, but what I was most interested in is whether particularly the first time around everything made sense and you get a high score on task achievement.



If that score is high and then everything else falls into place unless there's some problem with the vocabulary, the grammar, or whatever or the lack of cohesion, but you know that if it makes sense that you're heading towards that good score. The other things often take care of themselves, okay? Give that a thought. Give that a thought. Work on it during this week.

Okay. Lovely to talk to you. Great to talk to you all again. Have a great week. I'll speak to you again soon, okay? Bye for now.

[Music]

Female Speaker: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com