

80 Academic IELTS Task 1 Overview & Trend Phrases

Overview openers, trend verbs, comparisons and time markers for Band 6.5-8 Academic Writing Task 1.

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Tip: highlight 8-12 items this week, practise them in a timed mock, then unlock Pro for fuller banks and AI feedback.

Overview openers

Start the overview with the big picture, not every number.

Phrase	Use
Overall, it is clear that...	Standard overview opener
In general, the data show that...	Neutral summary lead-in
Looking at the chart as a whole,	When one chart dominates
The most striking feature is that...	Highlight the standout pattern
At a glance, two main patterns emerge.	Multi-trend overview
Broadly speaking,	Soft overview opener
Taken as a whole,	Formal overview start
It is immediately apparent that...	Strong, clear overview
The overview reveals that...	Direct overview statement
In summary of the main trends,	Explicit overview signalling
What stands out most is...	Peak / trough / leader focus
Across the period shown,	Time-span overview
Comparing all categories,	Bar or table overview
The chart illustrates a clear contrast between...	Two-group contrast overview
Overall, X dominated while Y remained comparatively low.	Leader vs laggard overview

Overall trend language

Describe the direction of change without listing every data point.

Phrase	Use
...followed an upward trend throughout the period.	Steady rise summary
...showed a clear downward trend over time.	Steady fall summary
...remained relatively stable with only minor fluctuations.	Stability overview
...experienced significant growth between A and B.	Marked increase
...declined steadily before levelling off.	Fall then plateau
...rose sharply and then fell back slightly.	Peak then small drop
...fluctuated, but the overall direction was upward.	Noisy but rising
...saw little change until the final years.	Late movement
...increased gradually before accelerating.	Slow then fast rise
...decreased continuously across all categories.	Universal fall
There was a general rise in...	Noun-phrase trend

There was a marked decline in...	Noun-phrase fall
Figures for X and Y moved in opposite directions.	Diverging trends
Both categories followed a similar pattern.	Parallel trends
The gap between the highest and lowest values widened.	Growing disparity
The gap narrowed considerably by the end of the period.	Closing disparity
X overtook Y around the midpoint of the period.	Ranking change
X remained the highest throughout.	Consistent leader
Y stayed the lowest category in every year shown.	Consistent lowest
After peaking, values returned close to their starting level.	Rise then return

Rise / fall verbs & adverbs

Vary verbs and strength adverbs so detail paragraphs do not sound repetitive.

Phrase	Use
rose / increased / grew	Neutral rise verbs
climbed / went up	Slightly less formal rise
surged / soared	Very sharp rise (use carefully)
jumped / shot up	Sudden large increase
fell / decreased / declined	Neutral fall verbs
dropped / went down	Everyday fall verbs
plunged / plummeted	Very sharp fall
dipped / edged down	Small temporary fall
remained stable / stayed constant	No meaningful change
levelled off / plateaued	Stopped rising or falling
fluctuated / varied	Up-and-down movement
recovered / rebounded	Rise after a fall
slightly / marginally	Small degree of change
gradually / steadily	Smooth, continuous change
moderately / noticeably	Medium degree
significantly / considerably	Large but not extreme
sharply / dramatically / steeply	Strong, sudden change
approximately / roughly / around	Approximate figures
nearly / almost / just under	Just below a round number
just over / slightly more than	Just above a round number

Comparison & proportion

Compare categories and describe shares for bars, tables and pie charts.

Phrase	Use
X was considerably higher than Y.	Clear magnitude contrast
X was roughly twice as high as Y.	Double comparison
X accounted for the largest share of the total.	Pie / proportion leader
Y made up only a small proportion.	Small share
X and Y were almost identical.	Near-equal values
X exceeded Y by a wide margin.	Large absolute gap
In comparison with X, Y was far lower.	Explicit comparison frame

X was the second-highest category.	Ranking language
The figure for X was three times that of Y.	Multiple comparison
X comprised approximately one third of the total.	Fraction language
The remaining categories shared the rest evenly.	Even residual shares
X was slightly ahead of Y throughout.	Narrow lead
Y lagged behind the other groups.	Consistent underperformer
Relative to the start of the period, X had grown substantially.	Relative change
As a percentage of the total, X declined while Y	Share shift over time

Time markers & data reference

Anchor claims to the period or to specific points on the chart.

Phrase	Use
Over the period shown / between 1990 and 2010,	Full time span
At the beginning of the period,	Start-point reference
By the end of the period,	End-point reference
In the following years,	Sequence after a date
From then onwards,	Continuing after a turning point
During the same period,	Parallel time for another series
According to the chart / graph / table,	Data attribution
The data indicate that...	Neutral reporting phrase
As can be seen from the figure,	Visual reference
At this point / around this time,	Specific moment on the timeline

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