

Writing

IELTS Academic

How Writing is marked

Writing is 60 minutes and two tasks. Each is marked against **four criteria**, each worth a band from 0 to 9, and the four are averaged into the task's band. **Task 2 counts twice as much as Task 1** in the Writing score.

Criterion	Task 1	Task 2
1	Task achievement 任务完成 — did you select and report the key features, with an overview?	Task response 任务回应 — did you answer every part, with a clear position?
2	Coherence and cohesion 连贯与衔接 — does the writing progress logically, one idea per paragraph, with the right linking words?	same
3	Lexical resource 词汇丰富度 — range, precision and collocation 词语搭配	same
4	Grammatical range and accuracy 语法准确度 — variety of structures, and how often errors appear	same

- Two thirds of the Writing band comes from Task 2, so give it 40 of the 60 minutes. Running out of time on Task 1 costs a third as much as running out on Task 2.
- Under the minimum length — 150 words for Task 1, 250 for Task 2 — is **penalised mechanically** on criterion 1. Count if you are unsure; the count costs 20 seconds and the penalty is a band.
- You must write in **full connected prose**. Notes and bullet points score as an unfinished answer.

Task 1 — select, report, and write the overview

Task 1 asks you to describe a graph, table, chart, diagram or map **in your own words**.

- **There is no opinion in Task 1.** No *I think*, no *this is because*, no recommendation. A sentence of opinion or an invented cause caps Task achievement at band 5.

- **The overview** 概述 is one or two sentences saying what the data does **overall** — the biggest movement, the largest category, the crossing point, the thing that did not change. **Without an overview, Task achievement cannot exceed band 5**, however accurate the detail is.
- Structure that always works: rewrite the question in your own words (1 sentence) → overview (1–2 sentences) → two body paragraphs of grouped detail.
- **Group, do not narrate.** Two paragraphs — one for what rose, one for what fell; or one for the two large categories, one for the three small ones. A year-by-year account of every line is the commonest band-5 answer.
- **Quote figures selectively.** Enough to support each statement, not every number on the chart.
- A process diagram needs no data at all: say how many stages there are and whether it is a loop or a straight line, then run through it in the passive.

Task 1 — the language of change

- Verbs: *rise, increase, climb, soar, peak, level off, plateau, fall, decline, drop, plummet, fluctuate, remain stable*.
- A **trend** 趋势 is the direction over the whole period; a **fluctuation** 波动 is movement without one.
- Nouns from the same verbs: *a rise in, a sharp fall in, a steady increase in*.
- △ **The prepositions are where marks are lost.** *Rise by 20* is the size of the change; *rise to 20* is the end point; *rise from 10 to 30* gives both. Chinese candidates overwhelmingly write *increased of* or *increased to 20%* when they mean *by*.
- △ **Percentage and percentage point are different.** From 20% to 24% is a rise of **4 percentage points**, or of 20%. Writing “a rise of 4%” there is a factual error.
- Approximation: *just over, just under, roughly, around, nearly, approximately*.
- A **proportion** 比例 is a share of a whole; an **amount** 数量 is not, and a pie chart shows only the first.
- Comparison: *twice as many as, three times the figure for, by far the largest, the same as, slightly higher than*.
- A pie chart shows **shares**, not amounts. “Households spent more on housing” is wrong unless you also know the total; “a larger share went on housing” is right.

Task 2 — answering the actual question

Read the question twice and decide which of the five forms it is, because each one has its own way of going wrong.

Form	What it asks	The trap
Agree or disagree	choose a position	sitting on the fence — caps Task response at 6
Discuss both views and give your opinion	both views and your own	giving the two views and no opinion
Advantages and disadvantages	both; <i>outweigh</i> means decide	listing four of each and never deciding
Causes and solutions	both halves, matched	a solution that answers no cause you gave
Two-part question	two answers	answering the second and forgetting the first

- **Answer every part.** A partly-answered question cannot exceed band 5, however well written.
- **Hold one position.** If your introduction disagrees and your conclusion says "both sides have merit", Task response cannot exceed band 6.
- A **counter-argument** 反驳 answered properly is what separates a position from a preference.
- **Support, do not assert.** Every main idea needs a reason, an example, or a consequence traced one step further. *Pollution is bad for health* is an assertion; *particles from traffic aggravate asthma, which is why clinics near main roads report more attendances* is support.
- A useful shape: introduction (rewrite + position) → body 1 (first reason, developed) → body 2 (second reason, developed) → conclusion (restate position, no new material).
- A **concession** 让步 names what the other side gets right.
- **Concessions raise the band.** Naming the strongest objection and answering it shows you have a position rather than a preference.

The template trap

Chinese candidates are often taught openers and "high-level" phrases to memorise. Examiners are trained to discount **memorised language** 背诵句式, so a template-heavy essay reads as a *lower* Lexical resource band, not a higher one.

Delete	Write instead
With the development of society / the economy	<i>(nothing — start with the topic)</i>
It is undeniable that / There is no doubt that	<i>Clearly</i> , or nothing
Every coin has two sides	<i>(state the two sides)</i>
As far as I am concerned	<i>I think / In my view</i>
more and more people	<i>a growing number of people / a figure</i>
in today's fast-paced world	<i>(nothing)</i>
Last but not least	<i>Finally</i> ,

- The problem is not that these are wrong English. It is that they carry **no information**, and the examiner has seen them a thousand times.
- The same applies to a rare word used out of collocation. *Ameliorate the problem* is not better than *improve the situation*; it is worse, because *ameliorate* does not collocate with *problem*. **A common word used precisely beats a rare word used wrongly.**
- Mechanical linkers hurt too. *Firstly, Moreover, Furthermore, Last but not least* at the start of every sentence lowers Coherence and cohesion. Real cohesion comes from pronouns, repeated noun phrases and the order of ideas.

Errors Chinese speakers make most

These are systematic, so hunt for the **pattern**, not the one instance.

- **Articles** 冠词 — Mandarin has none. *The government should build more school* → *schools*; *in the society* → *in society*.
- **Plurals** — an unmarked plural is the single most frequent error. *Many student* → *many students*; *informations, advices, equipments* are uncountable and have no plural at all.
- **Tense not carried through** — a paragraph that starts in the past drifts into the present.
- **Subject–verb agreement** — *the number of students have risen* → *has risen*.
- **Although ... but ...** and **Because ... so ...** — English uses one connector, not two. *Although it is expensive, but it is useful* → drop *but*.
- **Comma splices** — two full sentences joined by a comma. Use a full stop or a conjunction.
- **Missing preposition after a verb** — *discuss about, emphasise on, affect to* are all wrong; those verbs take a direct object.
- Fixing two of these consistently is usually worth half a band on criterion 4, and it

is faster than learning new vocabulary.

Exam tips

- Spend **5 minutes planning Task 2**. An essay with a plan is a different band from the same ideas written as they arrive.
- Do **Task 2 first** if you tend to run out of time. It is worth double.
- Count your words once, at the end. Learn how many words your own handwriting puts on a line and count lines instead.
- Leave 3 minutes to reread for articles, plurals and tense. Those three account for most of what a reread can fix.
- Sources, checked on 19 September 2026: Writing format, scoring in detail.