

IELTS Writing (Academic): Strategies & Skills

This lesson introduces the Academic Writing test format, teaches strategies for describing visual data in Task 1 and structuring essays in Task 2, covers key language for trends and comparisons, and gives students practice writing a Task 2 introduction paragraph.

Target Band:	5.0-7.0	Duration:	60 minutes
Test Module:	Academic	Format:	Instructor-led with slides

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- * Understand the two Academic Writing tasks and how they are assessed
- * Plan and structure a Task 1 report describing visual data
- * Write an organised four-paragraph Task 2 essay
- * Manage their time effectively between the two tasks

Materials

- * Slide deck (IELTS_Writing_Academic_Strategies_and_Skills.pptx)
- * Sample Task 2 essay prompt (displayed on Slide 9 or printed)
- * Timer
- * Whiteboard / shared screen

Lesson Procedure

Phase 1: Warm-Up & Test Overview

Time: 0:00-0:08 | **Duration:** 8 min | **Slides:** 1-3

- * Display title slide. Ask: *"What's harder -- writing an email or writing an essay? Why?"*
- * Show Slide 2 (Learning Objectives). Frame: *"Academic Writing has two very different tasks. Today we'll learn how to handle both."*
- * Show Slide 3 (Test at a Glance). Walk through Task 1 vs Task 2: time, word count, what you do, scoring weight.
- * Emphasise: *"Task 2 is worth twice as much as Task 1. That's why we recommend spending 40 minutes on it and only 20 on Task 1."*
- * Highlight the four assessment criteria: Task Achievement, Coherence & Cohesion, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy.
- > *Many students spend too long on Task 1 because they find it more straightforward. Stress the time split from the start.*
- > *The four criteria are the same for both tasks and mirror the Speaking criteria. Students who have done the Speaking lesson will recognise them.*

Phase 2: Task 1: Describe Visual Data

Time: 0:08-0:16 | **Duration:** 8 min | **Slides:** 4

- * Show Slide 4. Explain: *"Task 1 always gives you a graph, chart, table, or diagram. Your job is to describe the key features -- not every single detail."*
- * Teach the three-part structure: Introduction (paraphrase the question), Overview (2-3 key trends or features), Details (specific data points that support the overview).
- * Emphasise the overview: *"The overview is the most important paragraph. It shows the examiner you can see the big picture. Many students skip it and lose marks."*
- * Demo: Describe a simple bar chart verbally using the structure. Ask students to identify the introduction, overview, and details.
- * Key rule: *"Don't describe every number. Select the most significant features."*
- > *If students have never seen a Task 1 question, show a quick example from any IELTS prep book or the official website.*
- > *The overview paragraph is worth the most marks in Task 1. Students who write only details with no overview cap their score at Band 5.*

Phase 3: Task 1: Key Language

Time: 0:16-0:24 | **Duration:** 8 min | **Slides:** 5

- * Show Slide 5 (two columns: Describing Trends and Making Comparisons).
- * Walk through trend language: *"Increased, decreased, remained stable, fluctuated, peaked, reached a low."* Practise pronunciation.
- * Walk through comparison language: *"While X increased, Y decreased. Compared to A, B was significantly higher."*
- * **Quick drill (3 minutes):** Display a simple line graph. Students write 3 sentences describing it using the trend and comparison language. Share 2-3 with the class.
- * Key message: *"These phrases are your toolkit. Memorise them and you'll always have language ready for Task 1."*
- > This vocabulary is highly formulaic and learnable. Even Band 5 students can improve significantly by memorising 10-15 key phrases.
- > Common mistake: using 'the graph shows that the number of X has increased' in every sentence. Coach variety.

Phase 4: Task 2: Essay Structure

Time: 0:24-0:32 | **Duration:** 8 min | **Slides:** 6

- * Show Slide 6 (four-paragraph structure). Walk through each paragraph's purpose and length.
- * **Introduction:** Paraphrase the question + state your position. 2-3 sentences.
- * **Body 1:** Main idea 1 + explanation + example. 4-6 sentences.
- * **Body 2:** Main idea 2 + explanation + example. 4-6 sentences.
- * **Conclusion:** Summarise your position. 1-2 sentences. No new ideas.
- * Emphasise: *"One idea per paragraph. If you try to cover three ideas, none will be developed enough."*
- * Remind students: *"Task 2 is worth twice as much as Task 1. A well-structured essay is your biggest opportunity to improve your Writing score."*
- > Many students write 5-6 short paragraphs. Coach them to write exactly four: intro, body 1, body 2, conclusion.
- > The most common structural weakness is underdeveloped body paragraphs. Students write a claim but don't support it with an example or explanation.

Phase 5: Task 2: Planning Your Essay

Time: 0:32-0:38 | **Duration:** 6 min | **Slides:** 7

- * Show Slide 7 (planning process). Teach the 5-minute planning method.
- * Step 1: Read the question carefully. Underline the key instruction (discuss both views, agree/disagree, advantages/disadvantages).
- * Step 2: Brainstorm 3-4 ideas in 2 minutes.
- * Step 3: Choose your 2 strongest ideas -- one for each body paragraph.
- * Step 4: Note one supporting point or example for each idea.
- * Step 5: Decide your position (for Task 2 questions that ask for your opinion).
- * Key message: *"5 minutes of planning saves 10 minutes of confused writing. A planned essay is always more coherent than an unplanned one."*
- > *Students resist planning because it 'wastes time.' Show them that a 5-minute plan produces a more focused essay that actually takes less total time to write.*
- > *Model the planning process on the board with a sample question so students can see what 5 minutes of planning looks like.*

Phase 6: Before & After

Time: 0:38-0:42 | **Duration:** 4 min | **Slides:** 8

- * Show Slide 8. Read the BEFORE introduction: copies the question word-for-word.
- * Read the AFTER introduction: paraphrases the question and clearly states a position.
- * Ask: *"What's wrong with copying the question?"* (Answer: copied words don't count toward your word count; it shows no language ability.)
- * Key message: *"Always paraphrase. Use synonyms and change the sentence structure. This immediately shows lexical and grammatical range."*
- > *This is one of the quickest improvements students can make. Paraphrasing the introduction is a high-impact, low-effort skill.*

Phase 7: Practice Activity

Time: 0:42-0:55 | **Duration:** 13 min | **Slides:** 9

- * Show Slide 9. Read the Task 2 prompt. Students write an introduction paragraph only.
- * **Step 1 -- Read and plan (3 minutes):** Students read the prompt, identify the question type, and note their position.
- * **Step 2 -- Write (5 minutes):** Students write their introduction: paraphrase the question + state their position. 2-3 sentences.
- * **Step 3 -- Peer review (5 minutes):** Swap with a partner. Check: Did they paraphrase (not copy)? Did they state a clear position? Is it 2-3 sentences, not a full essay?
- * Class debrief: Ask 2 volunteers to read their introductions. Class evaluates against the criteria.
 - > *The introduction-only focus is intentional. Writing a full essay in 13 minutes would produce rushed, low-quality work. A polished introduction teaches more.*
 - > *Common errors to watch for: copying the question, not stating a position, writing too much (4+ sentences), or introducing body paragraph ideas in the introduction.*

Phase 8: Wrap-Up & Key Takeaways

Time: 0:55-1:00 | **Duration:** 5 min | **Slides:** 10

- * Show Slide 10. Read each takeaway.
- * *"How do we split our time?" -> 20 min Task 1, 40 min Task 2. "What's the most important paragraph in Task 1?" -> The overview. "How many body paragraphs in Task 2?" -> Two. "What do we never do in the introduction?" -> Copy the question.*
- * Close: *"Writing is the skill that improves most with practice and feedback. Write at least one Task 2 essay per week under timed conditions."*
 - > *Keep tight. The practice activity is the real capstone.*

Differentiation Notes

For students targeting Band 6.5-7.0: Extend the practice to include writing one body paragraph after the introduction (additional 7 minutes). During peer review, partners evaluate the body paragraph for: clear topic sentence, supporting explanation, specific example, and logical linking words. Challenge these students to use at least one complex sentence structure (e.g., a conditional or a relative clause).

For students at Band 5.0-5.5: Provide a sentence-starter handout for the introduction: 'It is often argued that...', 'This essay will discuss...', 'In my opinion...'. Allow students to refer to this during the writing activity. Focus assessment on whether the student paraphrased (rather than copied) and stated a clear position, not on grammatical sophistication.

Assessment

Formative assessment throughout. Evaluate against:

- * **Task 1 structure:** Can the student identify the three parts of a Task 1 report (introduction, overview, details) and explain why the overview matters?
- * **Key language:** Can the student use at least 3 trend-description phrases and 2 comparison phrases accurately?
- * **Task 2 planning:** Does the student spend time planning before writing, and can they explain the 4-paragraph structure?
- * **Introduction quality:** Does the student's Task 2 introduction paraphrase the question (not copy it) and state a clear position?