

Writing task one: bar graphs

You will be given one or more bar graphs. Your task is to describe the information given in the graph by writing a 150 word report. You are not asked to give your opinion. You should spend around 20 minutes on the task.

What is being tested is your ability to:

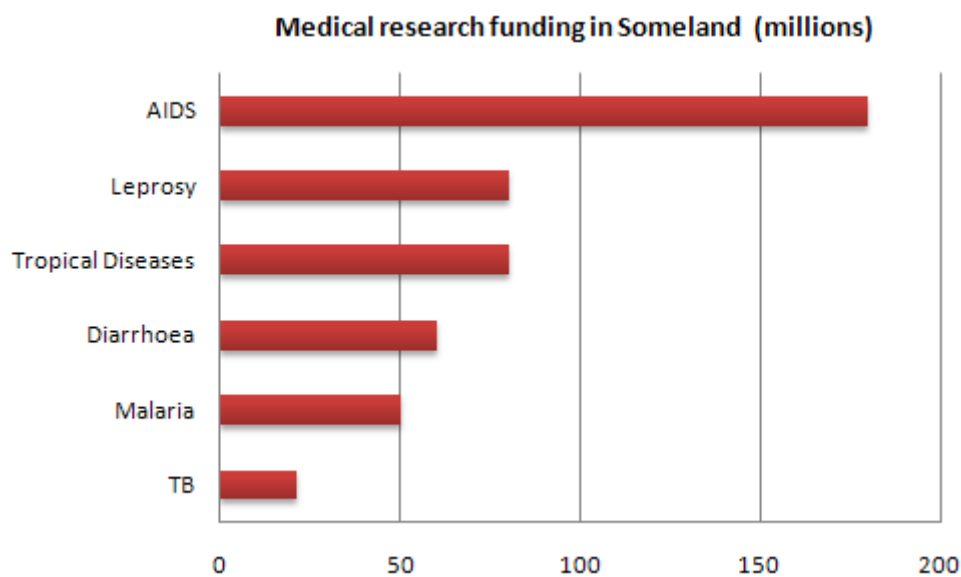
- objectively describe some graphic information
- compare and contrast
- report on an impersonal topic without the use of opinion
- use the language of graph description

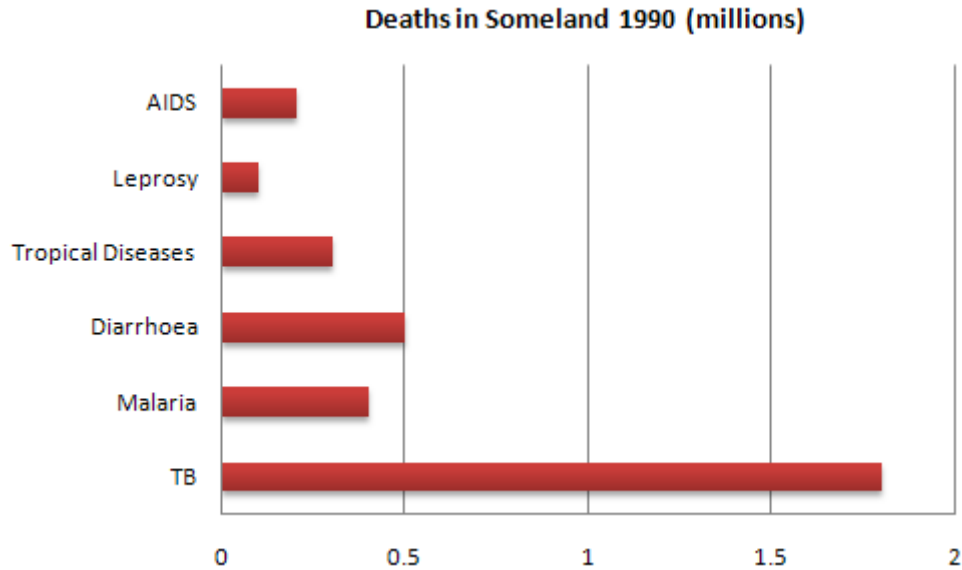
Sample task

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information in the graph below.

Write at least 150 words.





Your task

Complete the task one report writing exercise above. Spend only 20 minutes. Then look at the guidelines and the sample answer below.

Guidelines for a good answer

Does the report have a suitable structure?

- Does it have an introduction, body and conclusion?
- Does it include connective words to make the writing cohesive within sentences and paragraphs?

Does the report use suitable grammar and vocabulary?

- Does it include a variety of sentence structures?
- Does it include a range of appropriate vocabulary?

Does the report meet the requirements of the task?

- Does it meet the word limit requirements?
- Does it describe the whole graph adequately?
- Does it focus on the important trends presented in the graphic information?

Now read sample answer one. How well does it follow the guidelines?

Sample answer 1

The graphs compare the number of deaths caused by six diseases in Someland in 1990 with the amount of research funding allocated to each of those diseases. It can be clearly seen that the amount of research funding in many cases did not correlate with the seriousness of the disease in terms of numbers of deaths.

In 1990 there were around 0.2 million deaths from AIDS, 0.1 million deaths from leprosy, 0.3 million deaths from tropical diseases, 0.5 million deaths from diarrhoea, 0.4 million deaths from malaria and 1.8 million deaths from TB. These figures can be contrasted with the amount of funding allocated for each disease. In 1990 AIDS received 180 million dollars in research funding, leprosy 80 million dollars in research funding, tropical diseases 79 million dollars in research funding, diarrhoea 60 million dollars in research funding, malaria 50 million dollars and TB 20 million dollars in research funding.

In conclusion it is clear that funding allocation for disease research in Someland is not wholly determined by the number of deaths for which each disease is responsible in a given year.

Strategies for improving your IELTS score

Selecting information

In completing this task, it is important that you fully describe all of the graphic information given. However, this does not mean that you should note every detail. In most cases there will be too much information for you to mention each figure. You will therefore need to summarise the graph in meaningful segments. In other words, you will describe the significant trends in your report.

Report structure

Like the line graphs, your report should be structured simply with an introduction, body and conclusion. Tenses should be used appropriately.

Use two standard opening sentences to introduce the graph and your report. These opening sentences should make up the first paragraph. Sentence one should define what the graph is about, that is, the date, location, what is being described in the graph etc. For example:

The graphs compare the number of deaths caused by six diseases in Someland in 1990 with the amount of research funding allocated to each of those diseases.

Notice that in the single line graph we said that ‘the graph shows...’ but with two bar graphs we can more accurately say ‘the graphs compare ...’.

Notice that the Simple Past tense is used. Even though it describes information from the past, the graph shows the information in the present time.

Notice that the sample opening sentence does not simply copy the words used on the graphic material. Copied sentences will not be assessed by the examiner and so you waste your time including them.

Sentence two (and possibly three) might sum up the overall trend. For example:

It can be clearly seen that the amount of research funding in many cases did not correlate with the seriousness of the disease in terms of numbers of deaths.

Notice the tense used. Here we are talking about 1990.

The body of the report will describe the graph or graphs in detail. You will need to decide on the most clear and logical order to present the material. In this case it might be best to work through the diseases one by one.

Ideally your report should end with one or two sentences which summarise your report or draw a relevant conclusion.

Grammar and vocabulary

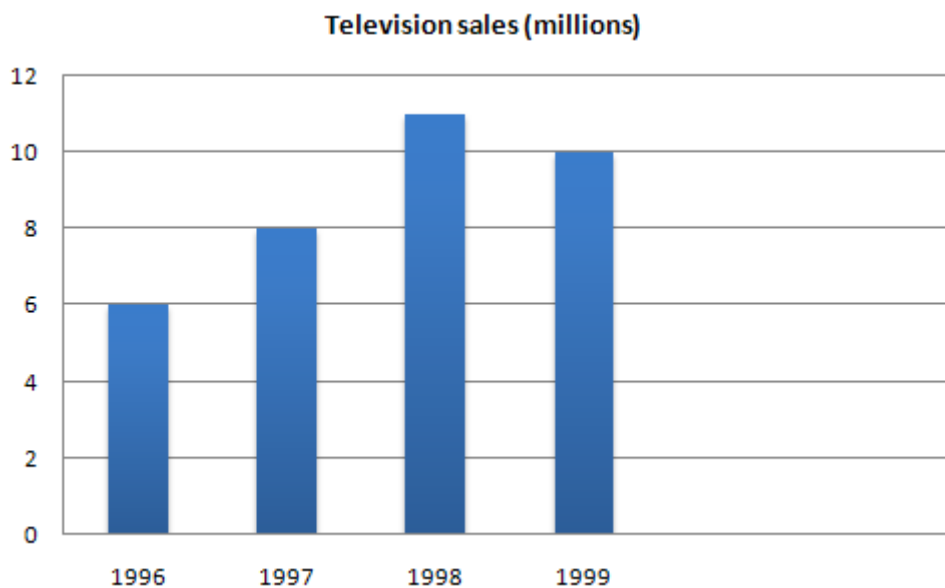
You will receive a higher mark if your writing uses a range of structures and vocabulary correctly rather than a limited number.

When describing some bar graphs you will sometimes use the same language as the line graphs. This will be the case if one axis of the bar graph gives a time scale. In that case, your report will generally describe the information in terms of time from the earliest event to the latest. For example:

In 1990 X fell.

In 1990 there was a rise in X.

Look at the following graph and read the description.

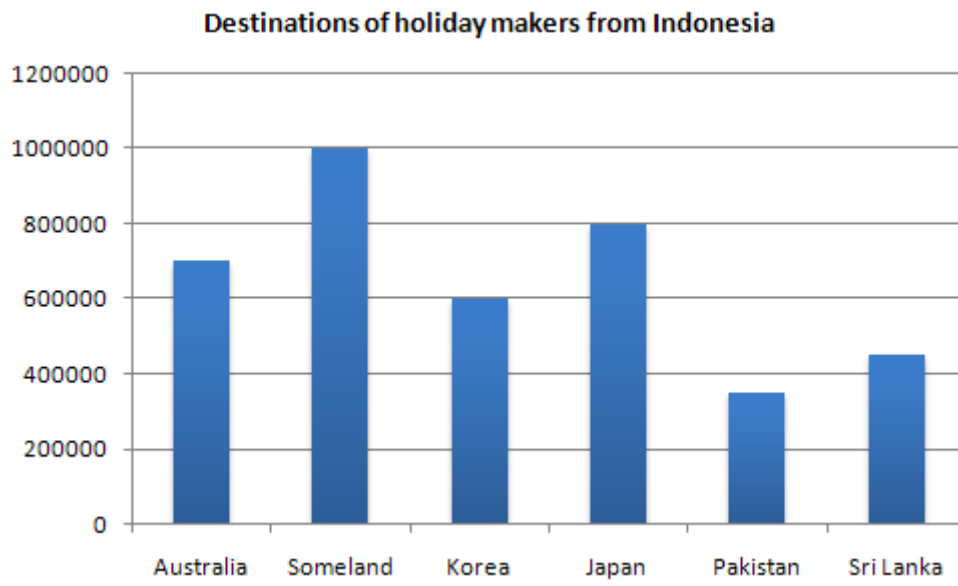


In this graph of Electro Inc's television sales between 1996 and 1999, we can see that purchases of televisions went up in 1996 and continued to rise steadily until 1998 when they dropped slightly.

In some cases, however, it will not be appropriate to describe the bar graphs in terms of time and different language will need to be used. For example, in the following graph we could not say:

In 1990 there was a rise in holiday makers from Indonesia.

because the word 'rise' implies that the graph also shows a lower number of holiday makers at an earlier time, which in fact it doesn't.



In this case we can say:

Someland was the most popular destination for holiday makers from Indonesia.