

Writing skills

3 Academic Writing Task 1 – Describing diagrams

In this unit you will practise:

- understanding a diagram
- understanding Lexical Resource
- describing a process
- being accurate
- improving coherence and cohesion

1 Understanding a diagram

Another form of visual information is a diagram. Again, you need to spend a little time studying and understanding the diagram before you begin to write. Remember, you need to include all of the most relevant information.

1.1 Look at the diagram below for one minute.

How to make recycled paper from old newspapers.



Test Tip Try drawing your own diagram of an everyday machine in your home (e.g. a washing machine). Divide the process up into different stages and describe it.

1.2 Match the verbs to parts 1–9 in the diagram. You may use more than one verb for each image.

lift	pour	leave	drain	add	put	tear
mix	press	soak	dry	place	slide	beat

There may be some labels included in the diagram. These are usually the names of different objects that you are not expected to know. You should use these in your description.

1.3 Study the diagram again and complete these sentences.

- 1 You need old newspapers, a _____ to hold the mixture and a _____ containing 250 ml of water.
- 2 An _____ is used to form the mixture into a pulp.
- 3 The pulp is poured into a _____.
- 4 Some _____ is used to lift the pulp out of the water.
- 5 A _____ is used to flatten the pulp and press the water out.

Test Tip Remember, you have only 20 minutes to complete Writing Task 1, so you need to identify the most important information in only one or two minutes. To help plan your answer, write the different verbs you will use to describe each stage on the diagram itself. This will help to make sure you don't miss out any important steps in your description.

2 Describing a process – coherence and cohesion

Your Writing Task answer will be assessed based on its **coherence** (is it easy to understand?) and its **cohesion** (are the ideas connected well?). For every Writing Task answer, your ideas must be organised in a logical way and be connected together. Your answer must not be a list of individual sentences.

2.1 Complete sentences 1–9 with endings A–I.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 The diagram explains how to | 6 Then, use a piece of mesh, to carefully |
| 2 First, | 7 Next, open up an old newspaper and |
| 3 Then, add 250 ml of water and | 8 Then, use a rolling pin to |
| 4 Next, using an electric mixer, | 9 Finally, |
| 5 When it is ready, | |

- | |
|--|
| <p>A place the pulp mixture inside.</p> <p>B beat the mixture for about 45 seconds until it forms a pulp.</p> <p>C leave your new paper to dry in a warm place for at least 24 hours.</p> <p>D make recycled paper from old newspapers.</p> <p>E tear some newspaper into small pieces and put them in a bowl.</p> <p>F lift the pulp mixture out of the tray, allowing the water to drain.</p> <p>G press the paper down and force out any excess water.</p> <p>H leave the paper to soak for up to an hour.</p> <p>I pour the pulp into a shallow tray and add a further 100 ml of water. Mix it together by hand.</p> |
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● Writing skills

To describe a process, we usually use the passive voice.

Active voice

First, tear some newspaper into small pieces.

Passive voice

First, some newspaper is torn into small pieces.

2.2 Now complete the description below by changing the sentences in 2.1 to the passive voice.


The diagram explains how recycled paper is made from old newspapers. First, some newspaper is torn into small pieces and put into a bowl. Then, _____

2.3 Look at the complete description in the Answer Key. The beginning of each sentence helps to organise the information and link it together. Complete the list of words/phrases below that help do this.


First, ... Then, ...

3 Lexical Resource – being accurate


Common spelling mistakes

3.1  Accuracy in vocabulary includes using the correct spelling. The sentences below each contain one spelling mistake. Find the mistakes and correct them.

- 1 The government increased spending in 1988 and again in 1998.
- 2 The chart shows the percentage of students who have access to the internet in their home.
- 3 From the pie charts, we can see the different sports enjoyed by each age group.
- 4 These figures remained steady until 1990, when they rose steeply.
- 5 The charts show the energy use of four different countries over a 50-year period.
- 6 The highest rise occurred between 1970 and 1990.
- 7 This figure had decreased by 50% by the end of this decade.
- 8 While the amount of money spent on education remained the same, the budget for transport increased considerably over this time.

 **Test Tip** Remember, your answer for Writing Task 1 will be marked against specific criteria. One of these is Lexical Resource. To get a good score, you need to use a wide range of vocabulary (not repeating the same common words) and use vocabulary accurately (without mistakes).


Using the wrong noun

- 3.2**  Accuracy in vocabulary also involves using the most appropriate words. Improve the accuracy of the sentences below by replacing the underlined words with one of the nouns from the box.

percentage	number	means	method
amount	factors	figures	

- The number of traffic on the road continues to increase.
 - The diagram shows the way for making canned food.
 - The amount of children who do not have access to a computer at home is higher in Newtown than in Westbridge.
 - The chart shows figures for four different ways of transport in The Netherlands.
 - Another significant figure is the percent of the budget that the school spent on recruiting staff.
 - The chart clearly shows the reasons that led to the current energy problems.
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Using the wrong form

- 3.3**  Another accuracy problem occurs when you choose the right word but use it in the wrong form. Complete these sentences with the correct form of the words in brackets.

- The _____ between the two is only 9%. (different)
- This involved a great deal of hard _____. (work)
- The chart shows several of the areas we tend to take for granted in our _____. (live)
- In the older group, there was a dramatic _____ in 2000. (increase)
- The graph shows that the _____ rate of women increased far more than that of men. (attend)
- There was a _____ decrease from 2005 to 2010, but overall it remained the same. (slight)
- The figures show how many people in the area make use of the local _____ centre. (sport)
- We often go on _____ trips to museums and art galleries. (education)