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How to write map essay in ielts

January 28, 2019 by Liz Below is an IELTS map model answer which is estimated at band score 9. This is a comparison of three maps in different time periods for the academic writing task 1. If you wish to do practice exercises for grammar for the maps below, before you read this model, please follow the link: IELTS Map Comparison Exercise. Source: Map above not produced by IELTS Liz. Model Writing Task 1: Map Comparison The maps illustrate how Meadowside village and Fonton, which is a neighbouring town, have developed over three different time periods (1962, 1985 and the present). Overall, Meadowside village increased in size and has become Meadowside Suburb as it merged together with Fonton. Furthermore, there have been significant changes in infrastructure, housing and facilities over the period given. In 1962, both Meadowside and Fonton were completely separate with no roads or rail connecting them. While Fonton had a railway line running through it to the north, Meadowside, located to the west of Fonton, only had a small road from the west. By 1985, there was a considerable growth in the size of Meadowside village and Fonton. The small road in Meadowside village had been converted into a main road and was also extended to the east to connect with Fonton. Meadowside, moreover, had also developed a housing estate in the west, a leisure complex and a supermarket in the south. Currently, both Meadowside, which is now a suburb, and Fonton are joined. The railway line, which runs through Fonton, has been extended to the west where a train station has been built. To the north of the station, a hotel has been constructed and opposite the station, to the south, there is now a business park. Free Subscribe to get new Posts by Email IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 sometimes requires you to describe a map, using key IELTS map vocabulary. Read on to learn all about IELTS Writing Task 1 map vocabulary, and how to put it to good use. And for advice on describing other types of graphics that are common in the first IELTS Writing task, see our post on useful words for writing an IELTS graph essay. Below, I'm going to walk you through the five steps to writing top-scored IELTS map essays: Master the basic vocabulary Understand the objectives of the task Fully describe the items on the map Describe the way elements of the map change (an IELTS Writing map is two part, showing how a place changes) Combine all of these skills into a full essay A full walkthrough of Writing Task 1 maps, including a model essay, can be seen in Eliot's video above. (You can watch the video now, or check it out later after reading this guide!) IELTS Map Vocabulary Before we look at the finer parts of how to write about an IELTS map, let's think about the basic features of these maps and the IELTS map vocabulary used to describe them. In a nutshell, most IELTS maps will show a large location with buildings and other specific types of areas and locations. And typically, there will actually be two maps: a before and after map. With that in mind, there are three major important categories of vocabulary for describing such maps. For each of the three categories below, I've given a partial list of the kinds of words you might use. This should give you a general idea, and I would encourage you to think up additional similar words on your own. Words that Describe the Places NOUNS: building housing business region forest river lake entrance exit road bridge complex district facility ADJECTIVES: larger smaller longer shorter urban rural crowded broad narrow Words that Describe the Locations of Places COMPASS WORDS: north east south west northeast southwest etc... NOTE: Even if a compass does not appear on a map, you can assume that up is north, down is south, left is west, and right is east DIRECTIONAL WORDS AND PREPOSITIONS: left right above below inside around adjacent near opposite across from Words that Describe Actions and Change built constructed replaced extended removed expanded demolished renovated newly mostly significant substantial How to Write About an IELTS Map How to write a map essay in IELTS involves a simple 5 step process: 1. Get Fluent in Basic IELTS Map Vocabulary Develop your skills and knowledge for words that describe places, where places are located in relation to each other, and how places change in IELTS Writing maps. The lists I've provided are a great place to start. 2. Understand The Objectives To tackle the challenge of describing a map for the exam, you must understand the objectives of the task at hand. Importantly, while 75% of your score represents your linguistic performance (coherence and cohesion, vocabulary, and grammar), 25% depends on your achievement of the task. Earning a high band score for task 1 completion is awarded for a "clear overview of main trends, differences, or stages." If a clear overview cannot be achieved, you must minimally highlight the key features related to the prompt. With this in mind, check out the image below: If we want to consider key features or trends, it wouldn't be enough to say that there are rides, recreational areas, and places where goods can be purchased. This doesn't provide any overviews; it simply lists elements. Noting patterns and overall "trends" requires looking at the bigger picture, not isolated elements. An overview might point out instead that rides and tours tend to be farther from the parking area (i.e. the roller coaster, Ferris wheel, and magic castle), and that places where visitors can rest are closer to the theme park entrance (i.e. the food court and the playground/picnic area). But you probably won't be given an image and simply told, "describe it." Instead, you will be given a specific task, and you will use the information in the image to complete it. For example, for the image above, a the full task is actually to describe the key features and differences between the current layout of the theme park, and the way the theme park will look after some planned future changes. 3. Go Beyond Naming Ultimately, your task requires more than mere description. While nouns are obviously important (for naming various structures and natural elements and their basic positions on the map), task completion involves more than listing items. Describing trends, differences, or stages requires noting the relationship among elements and between images for comparison. Remember, there's far more to IELTS Writing Task 1 vocabulary than just the names of things. Imagine that your task is to examine before and after illustrations of a neighborhood over the course of a century. For this task, it is clearly not enough to name what is new. Don't just describe what's there, describe the relationship between what's there. For example, do not simply say "there is an office complex that wasn't there before." What relationship does this have to the big picture? Remember, you must be able to provide an overview. NO: YES: There was a cannery. The cannery was along the northwest side of Oak Avenue. There is a main road and side roads. The main road is connected to side roads that are closer to the lake and river. There is a petrol station. There is a petrol station on the other side of the road from the Yang Office Complex. There are two shops. The main road currently has two shops between some apartment buildings and homes. There was a smaller elementary school. The smaller elementary school sat on the north side of Miller's Lake. 4. Describe the Changes Between the Two Maps But, wait! Your overview shouldn't just mention elements and their relationship to one another. How are the elements that you're describing relevant to the prompt? What changes have been made? We must connect these observations to the before and after context, reflecting change: The cannery along the northwest side of Oak Avenue was replaced by an office complex. The main road is connected to side roads that are closer to the lake and river. In the second map, the road that ended near the river now goes over the river via bridge. There is a petrol station on the other side of the road from the Yang Office Complex, where the elementary school had been on the older map. The main road currently has two shops, where previously there had been just one shop. These shops sit between the more recently constructed apartment buildings and an expanded set of homes. The smaller elementary school on the north side of Miller's Lake was expanded and moved to the east side of the lake. Now that's more like it! Always remember that the IELTS Writing Task 1 map comparison between the old and new features is very important. 5. Put These Skills Together into a Full Essay At this point, you've mastered the basic vocabulary, made your descriptions of the places on the map more detailed, and learned to describe change between two maps. Of course, these are just a few of many ways you could describe the map above. Your final step is to apply all this knowledge to map essays of your own creation. Try writing your own essay about the map above, or create an essay based on our full set of IELTS Writing Task 1 practice questions. That set includes a link to the full model IELTS Writing Task 2 essay based on the map above. Final Takeaways For Using IELTS Writing Task 1 Map Vocabulary Main takeaways for using IELTS map vocabulary to compare and describe an IELTS map: Remember that the examiner is looking for an overview with main points, not an exhaustive list of elements. (Notice, for example that I didn't precisely quantify housing units, describe exact comparative distances, or give the exact names of every location.) Think of the big picture. Rather than focusing on what's there, think about how they're related to the overall developments. Don't forget your primary task - What changes have been made? What occurred, resulting in the differences you see? Check out more helpful articles on the use of IELTS Writing Task 1 map vocabulary (and this bonus IELTS Video!) on preparing for the IELTS Academic Writing Task 1: Some IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 questions present a map, which you'll need to describe and explain. To give you a better idea of how to approach this Task 1 question type, we'll show you a practice question with a model band 9 essay. To see why this essay is band 9, see our Band 9 essay with scorer commentary, and check out the official IELTS rubric for Task 1 (PDF). This particular prompt is an IELTS map. Your approach to this map should be the same as your approach to any other Task 1 infographic. Take a look at the information and think carefully. What is the best way to summarize the way the information is structured and the main points? From there, how can you best compare the most relevant pieces of information? Finally, how should you structure that summary and comparison? For more advice on how to approach this, see our article on IELTS Academic Task 1 paragraph structure, as well as our main page for IELTS sample questions and practice resources. Try to do this prompt yourself. Then check out our band 9 model essay below the prompt and compare it to your own work to see how you did. Model IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Prompt: Describe a Map The diagrams below show changes that have taken place in the Sawry District neighbourhood since 1920. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant. Model Essay This pair of maps depicts change over the course of a century in the Sawry District neighborhood by showing the area in 1920 and 2020. The overall change in the neighborhood is one of growth. By 2020 there are more businesses, more housing, and greater public services. However, not all businesses and services remained intact after 1920. Business and housing saw the most change and growth. The cannery present in 1920 was replaced by an office complex. Two of the houses near the Elmwood River were demolished and replaced by a road and an apartment complex. Oak Avenue went from having two houses and a shop to having three houses, two shops, an apartment complex, and a petrol station. The change in public services was less significant than the change in housing and businesses. Prestwich Primary School was demolished and then rebuilt as a bigger school, closer to Oak Street's shops. And Elmwood River gained a bridge and a bike path, the latter of which replaced the small beach seen on the 1920 map. More Practice IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Sample Questions with Model Essays Also, make sure you are prepared for the entire Writing section. Click here for a page full of IELTS Writing resources. Today, I am going to show you how to describe maps for task 1 of the IELTS writing test. I have written about this before, but this will be the first in-depth lesson on map descriptions. In this lesson, you will find out everything you need to know in order to get a great score if you encounter a map in your next writing test. First of all, you need to understand the purpose of IELTS map description. In fact, it is important to recognise the purpose of task 1 of the IELTS test! This part of the exam is designed to see how well you can describe things. In that regard, it is quite different from task 2. Maps are used in IELTS because they require you to describe the physical layout of a location in addition to showing changes over time. Normally, you will be given two maps of the same area and you will be asked to explain what changes have occurred. It is really important to know this because otherwise you might not understand how to approach the essay. There are many misconceptions about IELTS but really it is quite simple - you are required to show that you can use the language for different purposes. Types of Map You will see different types of map in the IELTS writing test. There are maps of streets, towns, villages, islands, parks, and even interior layouts of buildings in some rare cases. However, they pretty much all serve the same function - there will be two maps that show changes over a period of time. You should not think too much about the type of map as the function is basically the same - it will show a physical location. Your job is to describe that location and then highlight the changes that take place. Vocabulary for Map Descriptions I have a full article on vocabulary for describing IELTS maps so you should read that if you want to know the details. This lesson is quite important because it teaches you about the key things you need to know. I will summarise the important parts here. In describing a map, you have to imagine that your reader cannot see the same image that you see. Your job is to put that image into their head. This requires you to be accurate and concise in the words that you use. Start with cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west. These will help you immensely. It is not enough to say "on the right" because that is relative. One person's right could be another person's left. You need to know prepositions as well. This is incredibly important. If you get your prepositions wrong, it could lead to a totally inaccurate description of the map. That would be a huge problem. Example of Direction and Preposition Use Look at these two maps of a place called Felixstone: We can see many changes but before we begin to describe them, we need to explain where those things were. Where is the farmland? In 1967, there was an area of farmland in the eastern part of the map, just to the north of the road. Where is the private beach? In 2001, there was a private beach in the south of the map. It meets the road at its northernmost point and leads all the way to the sea at the south. Where are the wind turbines? By 2001, four wind turbines had been added between the dunes and the sea. Please note that there could be other great ways to describe any of these things. These are just a few examples to show you the uses of accurate language. Sample Answer Here is my full description to the Felixstone map: There are two maps of a place called Felixstone. One map is from 1967 and the other from 2001. Many changes took place in the intervening years, including the removal of a marina and pier. In 1967, Felixstone was comprised of a road with a golf course, high street, and farmland to the north of it. To the south, there were trees and dunes, a hotel and a café, and a marina and fish market. By 2001, the farmland to the north of the road had been replaced by a hotel with a swimming pool and tennis courts. Half of the shops on the main street had been converted into apartments. To the south of the road, the hotel had gained a large car park and some wind turbines were added between the dunes and the sea. However, the biggest change was the removal of the marina and pier, which were replaced by a public beach and a private beach. The fish market beside the pier was also removed. Tenses and IELTS Task 1 Maps One thing that people often overlook is the importance of accurate tense use in IELTS task 1. Of course, verb tenses are always important in English. They are complicated but essential for conveying meaning. However, in task 1 people often focus on just describing the physical layout. This is important, but so is capturing time. Considering my example above, let's look at the first sentence of paragraph three: By 2001, the farmland to the north of the road had been replaced by a hotel with a swimming pool and tennis courts. Why did I use the phrase "had been replaced"? This is the passive form of the past perfect tense. I used the passive form because it was appropriate here. In describing map changes, we do not know who made the change, so passive voice is necessary. As for past perfect, this is how we look further into the past from the perspective of a point in the past. Let me explain more: This map referred to two points of time - 1967 and 2001. Both of these points of time are in the past. Thus, when we look at changes that have occurred by 2001, we must use look back into the past from the past! It seems so complicated, but it really isn't. Choosing What to Describe When it comes to IELTS maps, you might face two potential problems about choosing what to describe: There are too many things to describe. There aren't enough things to describe. This can be difficult, particularly in an exam scenario. I would offer the following advice: If it seems that there are too many things, then begin by picking the most important and then describe it as best you can. Then pick other things logically. If you find it is taking too long, you can finish and not worry about the others. After all, you don't need to describe everything. If it seems that there aren't enough things, you are going to need to get creative. You should devote a little extra effort to giving details about the key aspects of the map. Don't just say "there is a bridge in the north." Say "there is a bridge in the north of the map that goes over the Severn River. It connects the towns of Dorwirth and Forslom." This will help you to use more words. However, it really shouldn't be a problem as IELTS maps tend to contain enough data to easily write 150 words. Anyway, the most important thing is that you select the most important data and sequence it logically. How to Structure an IELTS Map Description I wrote this article on IELTS writing task 1 essay structures. You should read this because maps really don't require anything special. The structure will basically be the same as it would for charts, tables, and so on. It should look like this: Introduction - say what the map is and highlight a key changeBody paragraph one - describe the first mapBody paragraph two - describe the second map and highlight changes There are other reasonable ways to approach this. You may, for example, devote a paragraph to the main changes and another paragraph to lesser changes. However, it is usually best to give a paragraph on each of the two maps. One thing is the "general trend" sentence. As you probably know, IELTS writing task 1 essays require a sentence that gives the general trend of a chart or table. However, there is no such thing for maps. You can instead highlight a significant change or try to capture the gist of the differences. Video about Difficult Maps for IELTS Last year, I made this video about describing difficult IELTS maps. You might find it useful given the information in this lesson. You can also find sample map descriptions here and here. On a related note, you can find IELTS listening map skills here.

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