

11 Words for describing graphs and figures

Naming graphs and figures and their components

Vocabulary

Nouns for graphs and figures:

- **bar chart (bar charts)**
NOUN A **bar chart** is a graph which uses parallel rectangular shapes to represent changes in the size, value, or rate of something or to compare the amount of something relating to a number of different countries or groups. [mainly UK; US **bar graph**] ■ *The bar chart below shows the huge growth of U.K. car exports over the past few years.*
- **diagram (diagrams)**
NOUN A **diagram** is a simple drawing which consists mainly of lines and is used, for example, to explain how a machine works. ■ *Each tube enters the muscle wall of the uterus (see diagram on page 20).*
- **flow chart (flow charts)**
NOUN A **flow chart** or a **flow diagram** is a diagram which represents the sequence of actions in a particular process or activity. ■ [+ of] *a flow chart of the process* ■ *Design a flow chart to explain the registration process.*
- **line graph (line graphs)**
NOUN A **line graph** is a diagram that shows the relationship between two sets of changing numbers or measurements. ■ *Begin by drawing the axes of a standard line graph.* ■ *The line graph shows the degree and direction of change over time.*
- **pie chart (pie charts)**
NOUN A **pie chart** is a circle divided into sections to show the relative proportions of a set of things. ■ *The pie chart above shows*

how much more Britain has saved in shares than bonds. ■ *The pie chart indicates that one company has emerged as the dominant market share leader.*

- **table (tables)**
NOUN A **table** is a written set of facts and figures arranged in columns and rows. ■ *Consult the table on page 104.* ■ *Other research supports the figures in Table 3.3.*

Components of graphs and figures:

- **axis (horizontal/vertical) (axes)**
NOUN An **axis** of a graph is one of the two lines on which the scales of measurement are marked. When you describe a graph, you refer to the line along the bottom of the graph as the **horizontal axis** and the line down the side of the graph as the **vertical axis**. ■ *The vertical axis shows the level of the students' knowledge and the horizontal axis shows the length of the course in weeks.*
- **column (columns)**
NOUN On a printed page such as a page of a dictionary, newspaper, or printed chart, a **column** is one of two or more vertical sections which are read downwards. ■ [+ of] *We had stupidly been looking at the wrong column of figures.*
- **key (keys)**
NOUN The **key** on a graph, chart, or diagram is a list of the symbols, abbreviations, or colours used and their meanings. For example, the **key** for a chart might show that the figures for girls are red and the figures for boys are blue.

• **row (rows)**

NOUN A **row of** things or people is a number of them arranged in a line. ▀ [+ of] *a row of plants* ▀ *Several men are pushing school desks and chairs into neat rows.*

• **segment (segments)**

NOUN A **segment** of a circle is one of the two parts into which it is divided when you draw a straight line through it. ▀ *Divide the circle into segments like an orange.* ▀ *The pie chart is divided into equal segments.*

• **step (steps)**

NOUN A **step** is one of a series of actions that you take in order to achieve something. ▀ [+ towards] *He greeted the agreement as*

the first step towards peace. ▀ *The next step is to put the theory into practice.*

Verbs meaning 'show':

• **depict (depicts, depicting, depicted)**

If a graph or diagram **depicts** something, it is shown there in the form of lines, shapes, or figures. ▀ *Reading from left to right, the first four columns depict our transactions with customers.*

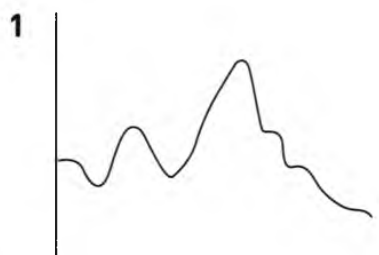
• **represent (represents, representing, represented)**

VERB If a sign or symbol **represents** something, it is accepted as meaning that thing. ▀ *A black dot in the middle of the circle is supposed to represent the source of the radiation.*

Practice exercises

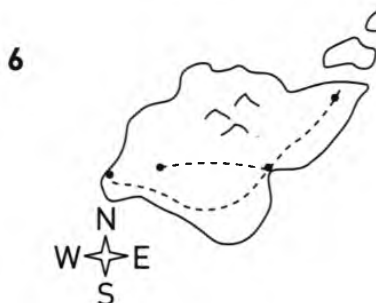
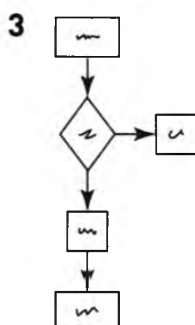
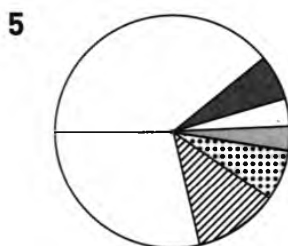
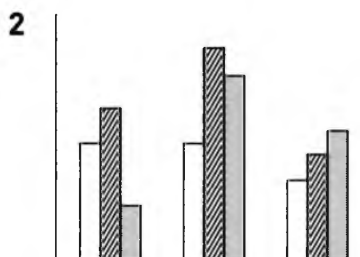
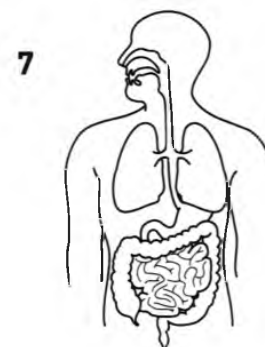
1 Match expressions a-g with pictures 1-7.

a bar chart	c flow chart	e map	g table
b diagram	d line graph	f pie chart	



4

lm	u	u	u	u	u
u	1	2	7	7	
u	9	.	7	4	8
u	12	2	4	9	11
u	43	2	2	.	.
u	2	.	.	4	.
u	.	.	4	3	9



2 Indicate the type of graph or figure a–g in Exercise 1 that you would use to represent the kinds of information 1–7 below. Write a letter a–g in each space.

- 1 Steps in the process of recruiting staff for a company: _____
- 2 The number of children vaccinated for measles over a 30-year period: _____
- 3 The percentage breakdown of a country's total working population by ethnic origin: _____
- 4 The layout of a university campus: _____
- 5 A solar-powered hot water system: _____
- 6 Percentage of male and female police officers in six cities across the UK: _____
- 7 Sales figures for ten different types of mobile phone in twelve retail outlets: _____

3 Words 1–9 can be used to describe parts of graphs or figures. Complete the table by writing numbers 1–9 in the boxes. Some words may be used more than once.

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 arrow | 4 horizontal axis | 7 segment |
| 2 bar | 5 key | 8 step |
| 3 column | 6 row | 9 vertical axis |

bar chart	diagram	flow chart	line graph	map	pie chart	table

Exam tip: For the IELTS Writing Task 1 you have to summarize information that is usually represented in the form of a table, a pie chart, a line graph, a bar chart, a diagram, a map or a flow chart. You should write at least 150 words and organize your work carefully into three separate parts:

- An **opening paragraph** briefly describing what the graph or figure shows (1–3 sentences)
- **Body paragraph(s)** highlighting the key information
- A **concluding paragraph** summarizing the most important point (1–2 sentences)

4 Passages 1–7 are examples of introductory paragraphs of Writing Task 1 essays. Complete the passages with words and expressions from exercises 1, 2 and 3.

- 1 The _____ shows the online university application procedure. The process consists of six _____.
- 2 The _____ depicts the city of Milan. As can be seen from the _____, the dark shaded areas represent industrial zones, and the light shaded areas represent commercial zones.
- 3 The _____ compares the literacy levels of primary school pupils at age eleven in thirteen schools across the country. Attainment is indicated along the _____ axis, and the schools are listed on the horizontal axis.
- 4 The _____ illustrates how a telescope works. The _____ on the right show the direction of light as it passes through the lens.