

Writing skills practice: Describing a graph of trends over time – exercises

Look at the exam question, line graph and answer and do the exercises to improve your writing skills.

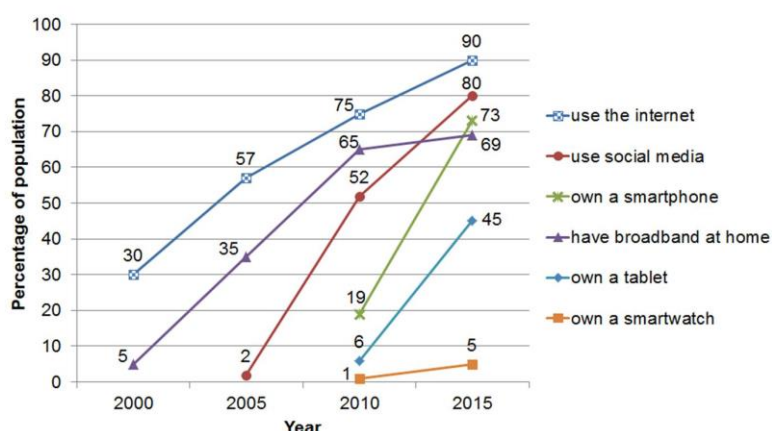
Preparation

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a–h next to the numbers 1–8.

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|----|--|
| 1..... | ownership | a. | to accept or start to use something new |
| 2..... | modest | b. | noticeably; remarkably |
| 3..... | steadily | c. | possession; having something |
| 4..... | to adopt something | d. | not large |
| 5..... | a trajectory | e. | the path that an object follows (often in the air) |
| 6..... | a surge | f. | gradually; consistently; in a controlled way |
| 7..... | strikingly | g. | existing among many people or in many places |
| 8..... | widespread | h. | a sudden, large increase |

Exam question

The graph shows information about technology usage in the UK over time. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features. Make comparisons where relevant.



The graph shows the rate at which British people adopted new technology over a 15-year period from 2000 to 2015. The figures are given as percentages of the population.

Overall, there was widespread adoption of new technology during these years. Nearly nine out of ten people in the UK were online by 2015. The figures for having broadband in the home, ownership of a smartphone and use of social media platforms were all high that year too, at around 70 to 80 per cent, and nearly half the population owned a tablet. The only exception to this is smartwatch ownership, which remained comparatively low at 5 per cent.

If we look at the trends over time, we can see that the uptake of new technology increased dramatically in this period. For example, internet usage tripled and social media usage grew strikingly by 78 percentage points. Smartphones and tablets appeared in 2010 and, similarly, these followed a steep upward trajectory. However, for some products, the graph shows that growth slowed down noticeably after an initial surge. Social media usage, for instance, was near zero in 2005 and shot up to 52 per cent in 2010, before climbing more slowly to 80 per cent in 2015. Also, broadband subscriptions rose steadily by 30 percentage points every five years to 2010, but by a modest 4 percentage points after then. In contrast, the newer technologies such as tablets showed no sign of levelling off.

Ownership of all the technologies was increasing; it will be interesting to see when it peaks.

Top Tips for writing

1. Give a brief introduction in paragraph 1 and a summary in paragraph 2. You can also give the summary in your final paragraph.
2. Use adverbs and adjectives to give opinions or comment on how big changes are. These often collocate with verbs and nouns for trends.
3. Make generalised descriptions of the data. These are sometimes easier to make sense of than exact percentages.
4. Use specific verbs and nouns for describing trends.
5. Make comparisons between different features of the graph.

1. Check your vocabulary: multiple choice

Circle the correct meaning of these words.

1. to plunge (v.), a plunge (n.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

2. to decline (v.), a decline (n.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

3. to soar (v.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

4. to grow (v.), growth (n.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

5. to shoot up (v.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

6. to level off (v.), a levelling-off (n.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

7. to drop (v.), a drop (n.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

8. to rise (v.), a rise (n.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

9. to surge (v.), a surge (n.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

10. to plummet (v.)

- a. a big decrease b. a decrease c. no change d. an increase e. a big increase

2. Check your writing: gap fill

Complete the sentences with an adjective or adverb from the box.

sharp

Notably

dramatically

modest

negligible

steadily

1. There was a _____ increase in profits last year. (sudden, big change)
2. Numbers of young people using the product grew _____. (change at a consistent rate)
3. Sales declined _____, despite increased advertising. (big change)
4. The difference between the figures for 2012 and 2013 was _____. (practically no difference)
5. The graph shows a _____ rise over the spring and summer period. (small change)
6. _____, production was moved out of the country before 2015. (important change)

3. Check your writing: gap fill

Complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first. Write two or three words.

1. Sales grew rapidly in the first quarter, then slowed down considerably.
The _____ sales was rapid in the first quarter, then slowed down considerably.
2. There was a lot of fluctuation in their income between 2014 and 2016.
Their income _____ between 2014 and 2016.
3. The popularity of the sport declined considerably over the following few years.
There was a _____ in the popularity of the sport over the following few years.
4. Ownership of tablets surged dramatically between October and December.
There was a _____ ownership of tablets between October and December.
5. There was a gradual increase in levels of interest after 2013.
Levels of interest _____ after 2013.
6. Despite the levelling-off of sales in 2012, production was increased.
Although sales _____ in 2012, production was increased.
7. There was a significant decline in profits in the second quarter.
Profits _____ the second quarter.
8. The price suddenly surged at the end of 2016.
The price _____ up at the end of 2016.

Discussion

What percentage of people in your country use the internet? Is this changing? What new technology are people starting to adopt?