

Test section – Academic Writing Task 1

# Grammatical structures for describing diagrams

## Activities

1. Labelling a diagram
2. Language for showing purpose – multiple choice
3. Language for showing cause and result – gap-fill
4. Language for giving extra information – sentence transformation

## Aims

- to help students describe diagrams in Academic Writing Task 1
- to help students develop their grammatical range

## Learning outcomes

- Students will have analysed different grammatical structures appropriate for describing diagrams.
- Students will have practised using these structures.

## Information about this section of IELTS

In Academic Writing Task 1, test takers will be presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram. Test takers will be asked to describe and summarise the information in their own words. This might involve describing and summarising data, describing the stages of a process or how something works, or describing an object or event. Test takers should write at least 150 words in a formal, academic style. The recommended time for this task is 20 minutes.

<b>Time</b>	60-75 minutes
<b>Level</b>	B1+
<b>Class</b>	Suitable for groups / large classes / F2F / Online
<b>Interaction</b>	Pair or group work / Individual work
<b>Materials</b>	Worksheets x3 attached

### Activity 1: Labelling a diagram

**Material:** Worksheet 1

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Procedure:**

- introduce the focus of the lesson: Academic Writing Task 1 Describing diagrams.
- give students a copy of Worksheet 1.
- put students into pairs and tell them to read the description and look at the diagram.
- tell students to label the diagram (exercise 1).
- put students into pairs to compare ideas.
- get class feedback.

**Answers**

A	(control) buttons	F	lift carriage
B	hydraulic fluid	G	piston
C	electric wires	H	valve
D	(fluid) tank	I	piston housing
E	pump		

### Activity 2: Multiple-choice

**Material:** Worksheet 1

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Procedure:**

- students work in pairs and look at the underlined phrases in the description and together work out the purpose/function of the phrases (exercise 2).
- get class feedback (to explain/express purpose).
- students work in pairs or individually to do the multiple-choice exercise (exercise 3).
- get class feedback.

**Answers (exercise 3)**

1 C, 2 B, 3 B, 4 A, 5 C, 6 B

Explain to students that they should try use these phrases in their descriptions of a diagram.

### Activity 3: Gap-fill

**Material:** Worksheet 2

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

### Procedure:

- give students a copy of Worksheet 2.
- students work in pairs.
- tell students to study the diagram and see if they can see any cause and result relationships (exercise 1).
- get class feedback.
- write their ideas on the board without providing feedback.
- elicit words and phrases that can be used to express cause and result/effect relationships.

### Possible answers

because

because of

due to

results in

as a result

- tell students to read the description of the process and look at the diagram.
- students can work individually to complete the gaps with words and phrases expressing cause/effect.
- put students into pairs to compare answers.
- get class feedback.

### Answers

1 because

5 due

2 results in

6 causes

3 as a result / consequently

7 Consequently / As a result

4 on account of

8 give rise to

### Activity 4: Sentence transformation

**Material:** Worksheet 3

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

### Procedure:

- photocopy Worksheet 3 for each student.
- give students 5 minutes to read through the grammar explanation and answer any questions.
- students can work individually to transform the sentences using relative clauses.

- put students into pairs to compare answers.
- get class feedback.

### Possible answers

- 1 A container, which is made of steel, catches the rain water.
- 2 Chlorine, which kills any dangerous bacteria, is added to the tank.
- 3 The pages pass through a machine that cuts off the edges.
- 4 The programming, which takes six months, is done in India. / The programming, which is done in India, takes six months.
- 5 The mixture is heated to a temperature which causes a chemical reaction.

### Extra information

- You may wish to download the Band Descriptors for Writing Task 1, or tell your students to do so.  
[https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/ielts\\_writing\\_band\\_descriptors.pdf](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/ielts_writing_band_descriptors.pdf)
- You can then point out the important differences in the criterion Grammatical Range & Accuracy for the levels appropriate to your class.

Grammatical Range & Accuracy	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>A wide range</b> of structures within the scope of the task is <b>flexibly and accurately used</b>. The majority of sentences are error-free, and punctuation is well managed. Occasional, non-systematic errors and inappropriacies occur, but have minimal impact on communication.</p>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>A variety</b> of complex structures is used with <b>some flexibility and accuracy</b>. Grammar and punctuation are generally well controlled, and error-free sentences are frequent. A few errors in grammar may persist, but these do not impede communication.</p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>A mix of simple and complex sentence</b> forms is used but <b>flexibility is limited</b>. Examples of more complex structures are not marked by the same level of accuracy as in simple structures. Errors in grammar and punctuation occur, but rarely impede communication.</p>

**Academic Writing Task 1 Worksheet 1**

**Purpose**

1 Read the description of how a hydraulic lift works and look at the diagram on the following page. Using the words in bold in the description, label the diagram from A to I. The first one has been done as an example.

The diagram shows how a hydraulic lift works. The system is quite simple and consists of the **lift carriage**, where passengers stand, connected to a **piston** which raises and lowers the carriage and a **tank** that holds **hydraulic fluid**.

When the passenger presses the 'up' **button** to raise the lift, an electric signal is sent via **electrical wires** to a **pump**. This causes the pump to move fluid from the tank into the bottom of the **piston housing** so as to force the piston up. As the piston housing fills up with fluid, the piston is raised higher. The lift carriage, which is attached to the top of the piston, is also forced up. The direction of the flow of hydraulic fluid is shown by the blue arrows.

When the passenger presses the 'down' control button, another electric signal is sent so that the pump is switched off. At the same time, a signal is sent to a **valve** placed just in front of the pump in order to shut off the flow of fluid from the tank to the piston housing. The valve's new position allows hydraulic fluid to flow from the piston housing back into the fluid tank. This reverse flow is shown in the diagram by the red arrows. The piston and the lift carriage which is attached to it are then brought back down due to the force of gravity.

- |   |       |   |               |
|---|-------|---|---------------|
| A | ..... | F | lift carriage |
| B | ..... | G | .....         |
| C | ..... | H | .....         |
| D | ..... | I | .....         |
| E | ..... |   |               |

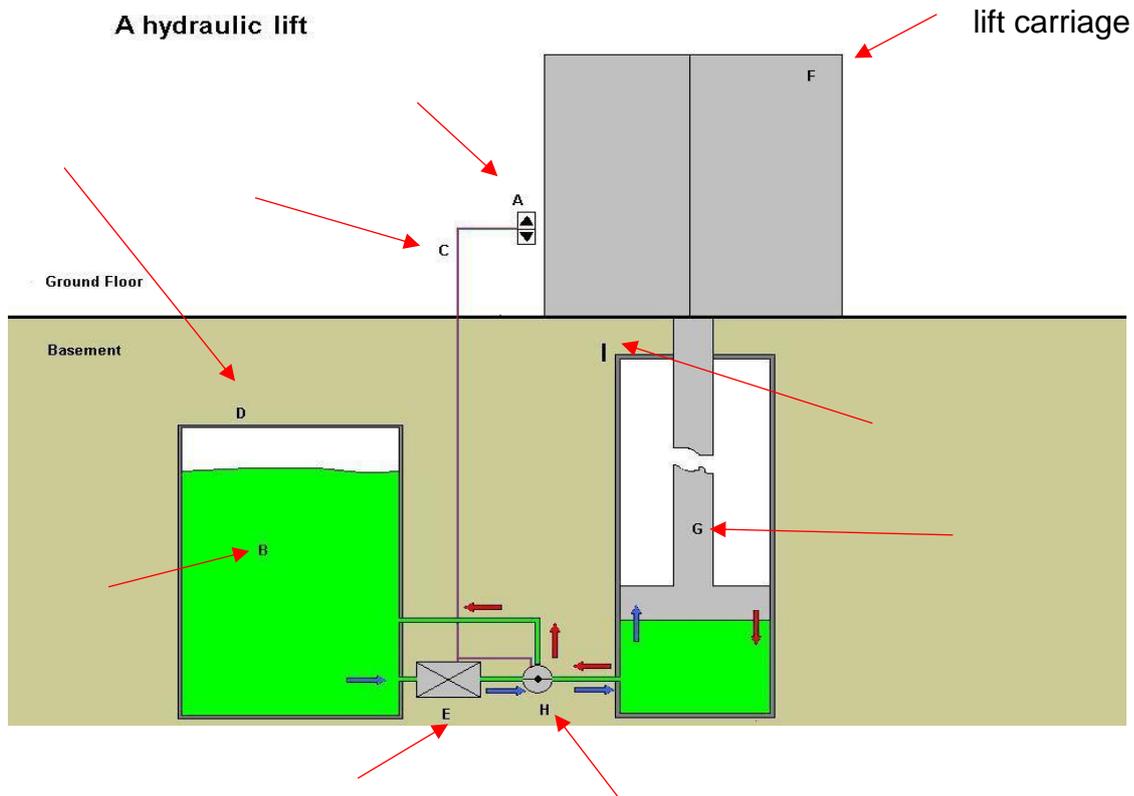
2 Work with a partner. Look at the 4 underlined phrases in the description. Discuss what the function of these phrases is.

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The diagram below shows the basic operation of a hydraulic lift.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where appropriate.

Write at least 150 words.



3 Look at these ways of explaining or expressing the purpose of something. Choose the best way to complete the sentences 1 to 6.

<b>to + infinitive:</b>	When the passenger presses the 'up' control button <b>to raise</b> the lift...
<b>so that + full clause:</b>	...an electrical signal is sent <b>so that</b> the pump is switched off.
<b>in order to + infinitive:</b>	...a signal is sent to a valve <b>in order to</b> shut off the flow of fluid...
<b>so as to + infinitive:</b>	...move fluid from the tank into the bottom of the piston housing <b>so as</b> to force the piston up.

1 The water is boiled ..... kill harmful germs.

A in order            B so as            C to

2 Scales are used ..... the ingredients are weighed accurately.

A so as            B so that            C in order to

3 There is a battery ..... provide electrical power.

A so as            B to            C order to

4 ..... grow straight, the plant needs to be supported with a piece of wood.

A In order to            B So as            C So that

5 The leaves need to be left in the sun ..... dry thoroughly.

A in order            B so that            C so as to

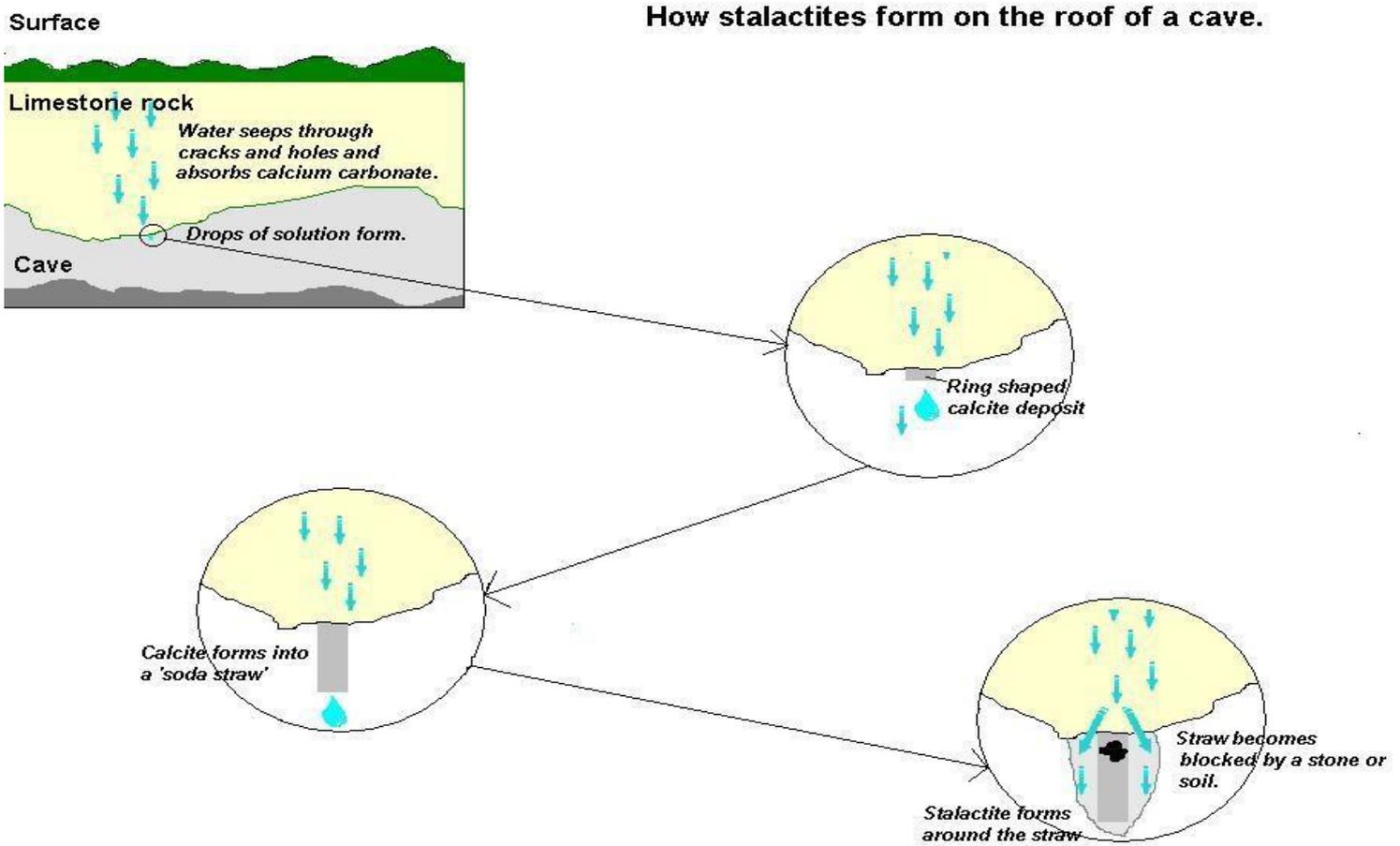
6 The frame is made of aluminium ..... the structure is light but strong.

A in order to            B so that            C to

**Academic Writing Task 1 Worksheet 2**

**Cause and result**

1 Look at the diagram below. What cause and result relationships are shown?



2 Complete this description of the process by using words and phrases below.

as a result	because	causes	consequently
due	give rise to	on account of	results in

Water leaks slowly into the cave **1**..... there are thousands of tiny cracks and holes in the limestone rock. On its way down, the water absorbs the calcium carbonate present in the rock and this **2**..... a mineral solution. Small drops of this solution form on the roof of the cave. When each drop falls, it leaves behind a ring-shaped deposit of calcite. This process is repeated many times and **3**..... a thin calcite tube is formed. This tube is sometimes called a soda straw **4**..... its shape. Occasionally the soda straw gets blocked **5**..... to a piece of stone or soil. This **6**..... the drops of solution to pour down the outside of the straw. **7**....., calcite deposits build up around the straw and these **8**..... the typical cone shape of the stalactite. Only the straws that get blocked will eventually become stalactites.

## Academic Writing Task 1 Worksheet 3

### Extra information clauses

*Relative clauses are clauses in sentences which add information about the subject of the sentence. Sometimes this is extra information, and the sentence would be correct without the clause. In this case, we call the clause 'non-defining'.*

*Look at this example from the description of the lift in Activity 1:*

The lift carriage is also forced up.

The lift carriage, **which is attached to the top of the piston**, is also forced up.

*This clause adds extra information about the carriage, but the sentence is still grammatical without the clause. Notice that we use commas (,) to separate a non-defining clause from the main clause. Also, remember that you cannot use 'that' as a relative pronoun with non-defining clauses.*

*Other clauses add important information which describe or 'define' the subject of the sentence.*

Only the straws **that get blocked** will eventually become stalactites.

*This time, the sentence would not make sense without the relative clause. There are no commas to separate the clause, and we can use that, where, who, which etc. as the relative pronoun.*

*Connect the information to make sentences with relative clauses (non-defining or defining).*

**Example:** There is a light.  
It turns on when the temperature rises.  
There is a light **which** turns on when the temperature rises.

1 A container. It's made of steel. It catches the rain water.

.....  
.....

2 Chlorine is added to the tank. It kills any dangerous bacteria.

.....  
.....

3 The pages pass through a machine. It cuts off the edges.

.....  
.....

4 The programming takes six months. It is done in India.

.....  
.....

5 The mixture is heated to a temperature. The temperature causes a chemical reaction.

.....  
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