

Task 1 · Lesson 2 — Key features, comparisons & sequence markers

Three moves that separate a Band 5 Task 1 answer from a Band 7 one, on one worked line graph.

NAME _____

DATE _____

TEACHER / SELF-STUDY _____

This lesson uses one line graph — international tourist arrivals in four countries, 1995–2020 — and returns to it for all three exercises. Study the figures below before you start; every answer in this handout can be checked against them.

Figure 1. International tourist arrivals in four countries, 1995–2020 (millions)

— France - - - USA China - . - . Turkey

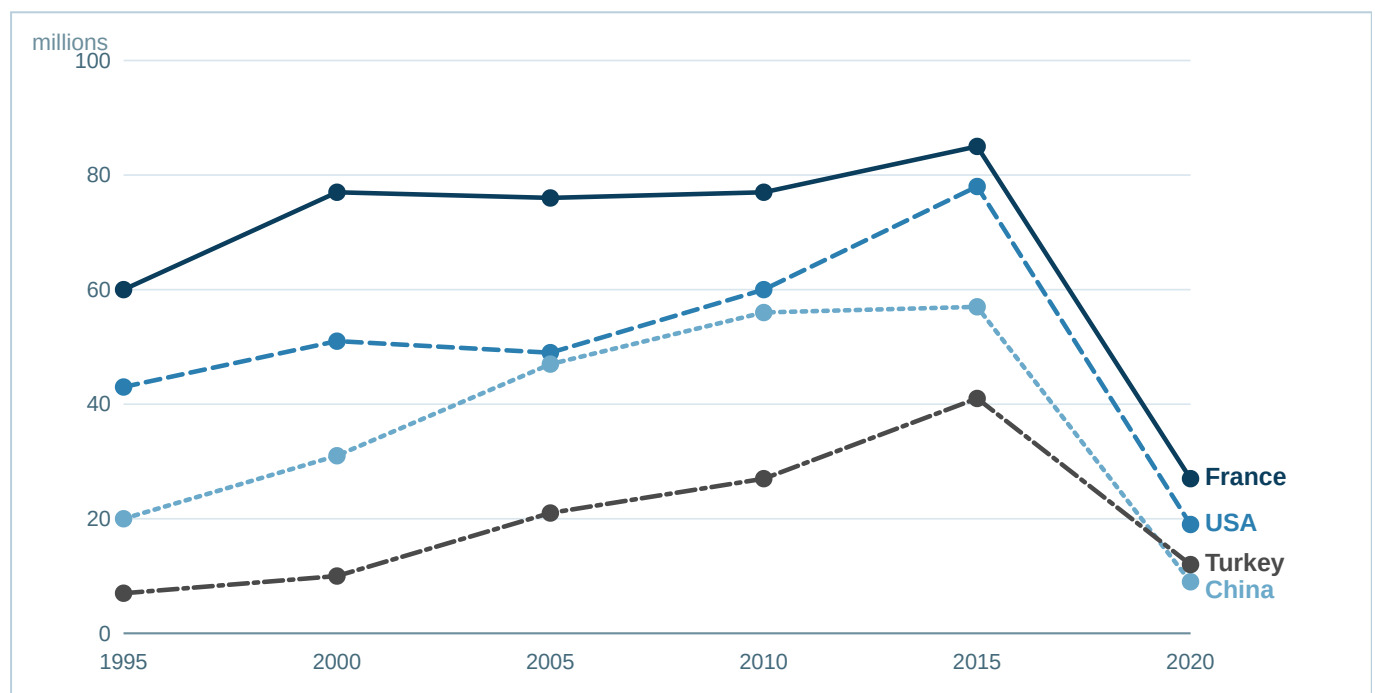


Table 1. The same figures, in millions

Year	France	USA	China	Turkey
1995	60	43	20	7
2000	77	51	31	10
2005	76	49	47	21
2010	77	60	56	27
2015	85	78	57	41
2020	27	19	9	12

- 1 Select the key features.** Task 1 rewards choosing the few big things that matter and putting them in an overview — not listing every number, and not inventing reasons the data doesn't show.

- 2 **Make comparisons.** The instruction says “make comparisons where relevant.” Marks come from relating the four countries to each other *and* quoting the figures accurately, not describing each line in isolation.
- 3 **Use sequence markers well.** Guide the reader through the time period — but cohesion is scored on *appropriacy*, not on how many linkers you can pile in.

MOVE 1 Select the key features

The single most repeated criticism of weak Task 1 answers is that they have **no overview** — they walk down every data point instead of standing back and naming the big picture. Reporting the data accurately also means you must **not invent causes**: the graph shows *what* happened, never *why*. Speculating (“because of the pandemic”) is off-task.

“The candidate would be expected to summarise the most important features of the graph in an overview... [this script] fails to present an overview and some of the key features are not adequately covered.”

— IELTS examiner comments on a Band 5 Task 1 script (paraphrased)

EXERCISE 1 · SORT THE STATEMENTS

8 MARKS

For each statement about Figure 1, tick **one** box: is it a **key feature** (belongs in your overview or main body), a **minor detail** (true, but too small to lead with), or **not supported** (an opinion, a cause, or a prediction the graph cannot show — leave it out)?

#	Statement about Figure 1	Key feature	Minor detail	Not supported
1	All four countries' arrivals rose to a peak in 2015 and then fell sharply in 2020.	☐	☐	☐
2	France remained the most-visited of the four countries in every year across the whole period.	☐	☐	☐
3	Turkey grew fastest in relative terms, rising from 7 to 41 million between 1995 and 2015.	☐	☐	☐
4	France dipped very slightly from 77 million in 2000 to 76 million in 2005.	☐	☐	☐
5	The USA's arrivals were an odd number of millions in 1995.	☐	☐	☐
6	Arrivals collapsed in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.	☐	☐	☐
7	France is clearly the most attractive country for tourists to visit.	☐	☐	☐
8	Tourist numbers will keep recovering after 2020.	☐	☐	☐

MOVE 2 Make comparisons — and get the figures right

A Band 7 answer handles individual trends *and* the overall comparison. Weak answers describe France, then the USA, then China, then Turkey, with nothing tying them together. Strong answers **relate the lines to each other** — which is higher, which overtakes which, where the gap widens — and back every comparison with **accurate figures**.

EXERCISE 2 · CHECK THE COMPARISON AGAINST THE DATA

6 MARKS

Read each comparison and check it against Table 1. Tick **accurate** or **inaccurate**. If it is inaccurate, write a corrected version on the

line underneath — in your own words, not by copying the frame. Treat a gap of **3 million or less** as “a similar number”.

#	Comparison	Accurate	Inaccurate
9	In 1995, France received more visitors than the USA.	☐	☐
10	In 2005, China received a similar number of visitors to the USA.	☐	☐
11	In 2015, Turkey received more visitors than China.	☐	☐
12	In 2020, Turkey received a similar number of visitors to China.	☐	☐
13	In 2010, the USA received a similar number of visitors to China.	☐	☐
14	In 2000, Turkey received fewer visitors than every other country shown.	☐	☐

REWRITE THE INACCURATE ONES CORRECTLY (NUMBER EACH ONE)

MOVE 3 Sequence markers — enough to guide, not to clutter

Sequence markers move the reader through time: *at the start of the period, over the following decade, by the final year*. They make a trend easy to follow. But cohesion is marked on **appropriacy, not quantity** — bolting *Firstly, Secondly, Moreover, Furthermore* onto every sentence is a Band 5–6 habit.

EXERCISE 3 · PUT THE PERIOD IN ORDER

4 MARKS

Number these markers **1 to 4** in the order they would guide a reader through 1995–2020, from first to last. Write the number in the box.

#	Sequence marker	Order (1–4)
15	“Between 2010 and 2015,...”	☐
16	“In 1995, at the start of the period,...”	☐
17	“In the final year shown, 2020,...”	☐
18	“Over the following decade,...”	☐

What “too many linkers” looks like

OVER-LINKED — MECHANICAL, BAND 5–6

Firstly, France began at 60 million. Secondly, it rose to 85 million. Moreover, the USA also rose. Furthermore, China rose too. In addition, Turkey rose. Finally, all of them fell.

France started the period as the most-visited country, at 60 million, and climbed steadily to a peak of 85 million in 2015. The other three followed the same upward path before all four fell sharply in 2020.

The stronger version uses *far fewer* markers. It leans on referencing (“the other three”, “all four”) and one clear time signal instead of a linker per sentence.

EXERCISE 4 · WRITE THE BODY PARAGRAPH

WRITING

Using Figure 1 and Table 1, write **one body paragraph** of about 60–80 words covering 1995–2015. Use **no more than two** sequence markers, make at least **two comparisons** between countries, and support each one with an accurate figure.

CHECK YOUR OWN WRITING BEFORE YOU LOOK AT THE KEY

- ☐ Two sequence markers at most — and no *Firstly / Secondly / Moreover* chain.
- ☐ At least two sentences *relate* two countries, rather than describing one at a time.
- ☐ Every figure you quote matches Table 1 exactly.
- ☐ No causes, no predictions, no opinions.
- ☐ You have used referencing (“the other two”, “both”, “this figure”) at least once.

ANSWER KEY — TURN THE PAGE UPSIDE DOWN TO READ

EXERCISE 1 — SORT THE STATEMENTS

1 Key feature. The dominant shape of the whole graph — the strongest candidate for your overview sentence.

2 Key feature. A clear, high-level comparison that holds from 1995 right through to 2020.

3 Key feature. A roughly six-fold rise is striking, and it is backed by exact figures.

4 Minor detail. True, but a 1-million wobble is too small to lead with. Supporting detail at most.

5 Minor detail. Technically accurate but trivial — it tells the reader nothing about the trend or the comparison.

6 Not supported. The graph shows the fall, not its cause. Inventing a reason is off-task for Task 1.

7 Not supported. A personal opinion. Task 1 reports the data; it does not judge it.

8 Not supported. A prediction beyond the data. The graph stops in 2020.

EXERCISE 2 — CHECK THE COMPARISON

9 Accurate. France 60m vs USA 43m — a 17m gap.

10 Accurate. China 47m vs USA 49m — 2m apart, so “a similar number” holds.

11 Inaccurate. Turkey 41m vs China 57m: Turkey received **fewer**, by 16m.

12 Accurate. Turkey 12m vs China 9m — exactly 3m apart, so “similar” just holds. Worth noticing anyway: 2020 is the only year in which Turkey finishes above China.

13 Inaccurate. USA 60m vs China 56m — a 4m gap, which is more than 3m, so this is “more than”, not “similar to”. A near miss like this is exactly what costs accuracy marks.

14 Accurate. Turkey 10m, below China 31m, USA 51m and France 77m.

EXERCISE 3 — ORDER THE MARKERS

15 → 3, 16 → 1, 17 → 4, 18 → 2. Reading order: In 1995, at the start of the period → Over the following decade → Between 2010 and 2015 → In the final year shown, 2020.

EXERCISE 4 — MODEL PARAGRAPH

“At the start of the period France led the four countries by a wide margin, welcoming 60 million arrivals in 1995 against 43 million in the USA and just 7 million in Turkey. All four then climbed, but at very different rates: China more than doubled to 57 million by 2015, while Turkey, from the lowest base, grew almost six-fold to 41 million. France still finished ahead in 2015, at 85 million, though the USA had closed the gap to only 7 million.” (78 words)

Note what it does: two time signals only (“At the start of the period”, “then”, “then”), every figure checkable against Table 1, and each sentence sets countries *against* each other rather than listing them.