

IELTS Writing Task 1 — Active vs Passive

Exercise: Choose the correct verb form (10 questions, ~10 minutes)

Rules to remember

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Rule A | <p>Verbs that describe data — NEVER use passive: <i>show, indicate, reveal, demonstrate, suggest</i> ✗ An increase is shown by the graph. ✓ The graph shows an increase.</p> |
| Rule B | <p>Verbs of increase/decrease — NEVER use passive: <i>rise, fall, increase, decrease, grow, drop, go up/down</i> ✗ Sales were risen sharply in 2020. ✓ Sales rose sharply in 2020.</p> |

Questions — circle the correct answer

| # | Rule | Sentence & options |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1 | Rule A | The chart ___ a steady rise in internet usage between 2010 and 2020. <input type="checkbox"/> A. shows <input type="checkbox"/> B. is shown <input type="checkbox"/> C. was shown |
| 2 | Rule B | Overall, sales ___ dramatically in the second quarter. <input type="checkbox"/> A. were increased <input type="checkbox"/> B. increased <input type="checkbox"/> C. is increasing |
| 3 | Rule A | The data ___ that younger consumers prefer online shopping. <input type="checkbox"/> A. is suggested <input type="checkbox"/> B. are suggested <input type="checkbox"/> C. suggests |
| 4 | Rule B | The number of users ___ sharply after the new policy was introduced. <input type="checkbox"/> A. was fallen <input type="checkbox"/> B. fell <input type="checkbox"/> C. was decreased |
| 5 | Rule A | The graph ___ that temperatures have been rising consistently. <input type="checkbox"/> A. is revealed <input type="checkbox"/> B. was revealing <input type="checkbox"/> C. reveals |
| 6 | Special case | As ___ by the pie chart, the largest proportion belongs to Asia. <input type="checkbox"/> A. shown <input type="checkbox"/> B. shows <input type="checkbox"/> C. is showing |
| 7 | Rule A | The figures ___ that spending on education doubled over the decade. <input type="checkbox"/> A. demonstrate <input type="checkbox"/> B. are demonstrated |

| # | Rule | Sentence & options |
|----|------------|--|
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> C. were demonstrated |
| 8 | Rule B | Between 2000 and 2010, the unemployment rate ____. <input type="checkbox"/> A. was risen <input type="checkbox"/> B. was rose <input type="checkbox"/> C. rose |
| 9 | Rule B | The proportion of elderly residents ____ from 12% to 21% over the period. <input type="checkbox"/> A. was grown <input type="checkbox"/> B. grew <input type="checkbox"/> C. were grown |
| 10 | Rule A + B | The line graph ____ that car ownership ____ steadily until 2015, then levelled off. <input type="checkbox"/> A. indicates / rose <input type="checkbox"/> B. is indicated / was risen <input type="checkbox"/> C. indicates / was risen |

Answer key & explanations

| # | Answer | Explanation |
|----|--------|---|
| 1 | A | 'Show' is an intransitive verb for describing data — always active. Subject = 'the chart'. |
| 2 | B | 'Increase' is a verb of change — never passive. Use simple past active: 'increased'. |
| 3 | C | 'Suggest' is intransitive in this context — always active. 'The data' treated as singular: 'suggests'. |
| 4 | B | 'Fall' is intransitive — no passive form exists. Use simple past active: 'fell'. |
| 5 | C | 'Reveal' in Task 1 is intransitive — use active present simple: 'reveals'. |
| 6 | A | 'As shown by...' is a fixed transitional phrase — the only acceptable passive form for these verbs in Task 1. |
| 7 | A | 'Demonstrate' is intransitive here — always active. 'The figures demonstrate that...' is the standard structure. |
| 8 | C | 'Rise/rose/risen' is fully intransitive — never used in passive. Use simple past: 'rose'. |
| 9 | B | 'Grow' (in the sense of increase) is intransitive — use active: 'grew'. 'Was grown' implies someone cultivated it. |
| 10 | A | Two rules in one sentence: 'indicate' (Rule A) needs active; 'rise' (Rule B) needs active. Only option A uses both correctly. |