1 Gender roles

Aims: Understanding the task | Understanding visual prompts
Overview of the writing task and process | Analysing the question

Part 1: Vocabulary

1 **Many people believe that men and women are different in fundamental ways. Decide which words are commonly associated with men and which words with women.**

a aggressive
b authoritative
c competitive
d compliant
e gentle
f strong
g vulnerable

2 **A knowledge of abstract nouns is essential for academic writing. Complete the sentences 1–6 with the noun form (singular or plural) of the adjectives in brackets.**

Example: *Aggression is commonly considered a masculine trait. (aggressive)*

1 I believe that men and women have different _____. (strong)

2 _____ is not an exclusively feminine characteristic. (gentle)

3 Many men have difficulty showing _____. (vulnerable)

4 Some people have difficulty working with female _____ figures. (authoritative)

5 Women are often praised for _____, whereas men are praised for leadership. (compliant)

6 There is some evidence that girls are better at cooperation, while boys are happier when they are in _____ with one another. (competitive)

3 **In IELTS Writing Task 1, you have to summarise information which is usually presented in a visual form. Match the figures 1–6 with the headings a–f. Then complete the descriptions with the words i–ix. The first one has been done for you.**

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

i comparisons
ii axis
iii columns
iv *trends*
v percentage
vi vertical
vii segment
viii features
ix stage

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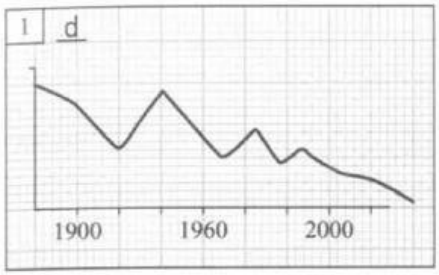
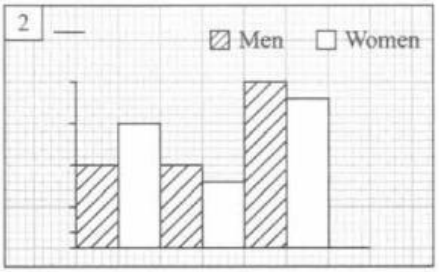
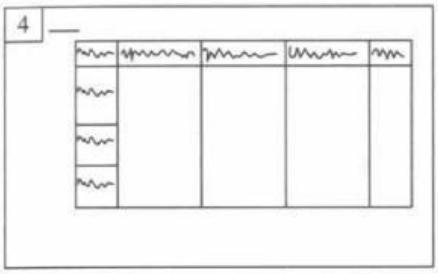


This type of figure can be used to show (7) __iv__. The horizontal (8) _____ often indicates time, and the (9) _____ axis often shows what changes over time.

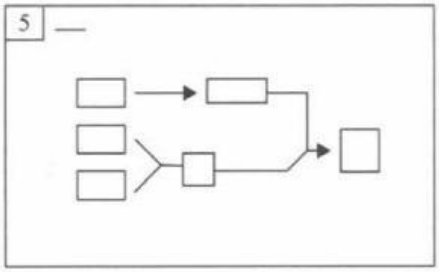


These figures are useful for illustrating (10) _____ between items or categories of items. This one compares men and women.

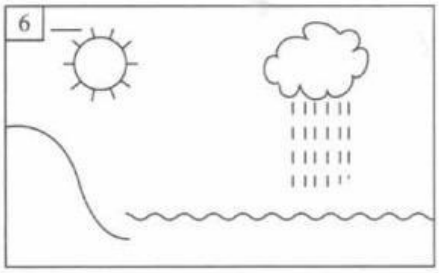
You can use a figure like this to show how a whole is composed of parts. Here, each (11) _____ indicates a (12) _____ of the whole.



You should present data like this if you need to give precise numbers. This example contains four rows and five (13) _____.



This type of figure is useful for representing a process. Each box represents one (14) _____ in the process.



Figures like this are also used to represent a process. They can also illustrate the (15) _____ of an object.

4 **In IELTS Writing Task 2, you have to write an essay discussing opinions and the reasons for holding these opinions. Complete the Task 2 essay questions 1–5 with the words a–e.**

a agree **b** consider **c** feel **d** see **e** view

1. Many people think that boys and girls learn better when they are educated separately. How do you _____ about this view?
2. In your _____, what should be done to promote equality of opportunity for men and women?
3. Do you _____ boys to be naturally more aggressive than girls?
4. Many people argue that governments should intervene in the labour market to ensure that more women are promoted to positions of power. To what extent do you _____ with this practice?
5. What do you _____ as the main reasons for gender inequality in the workplace?

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Part 2: Practice exercises: Task 1

Exam information:
In IELTS Writing Task 1, you have to summarise information which is usually presented in the form of a table, a pie chart, a line graph, a bar chart, a diagram, or a flow diagram.

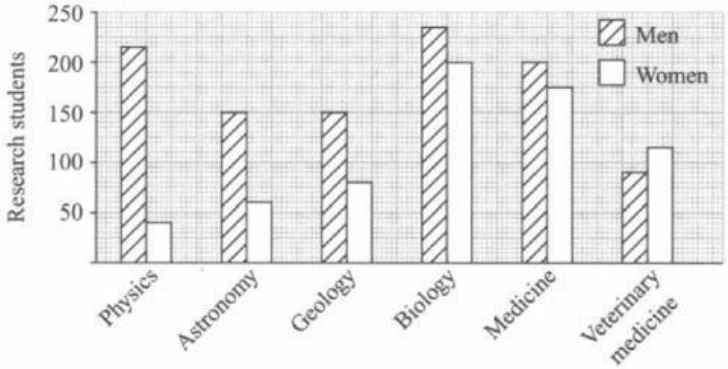
1 **Read the Task 1 instructions below and answer the questions 1–4.**

WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The chart below shows the numbers of male and female research students studying six science-related subjects at a UK university in 2009.
Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.



1 How long should you spend on this task?
2 How many words do you need to write?
3 Will you score higher marks if you include all the information in the chart?
4 Are you expected to give your opinion about the information?

2 **Your answer to Task 1 should include a brief introductory paragraph, 1–3 body paragraphs and, if you wish, a brief concluding paragraph. Read the sample answer on page 11 and answer the questions 1–6 below.**

1 What information does the introduction contain?
2 What is the main focus of the first body paragraph?
3 What is the main focus of the second body paragraph?
4 What is the purpose of the first sentence in each of the body paragraphs?
5 What is the purpose of the second and third sentences in each body paragraph?
6 What is the purpose of the conclusion?

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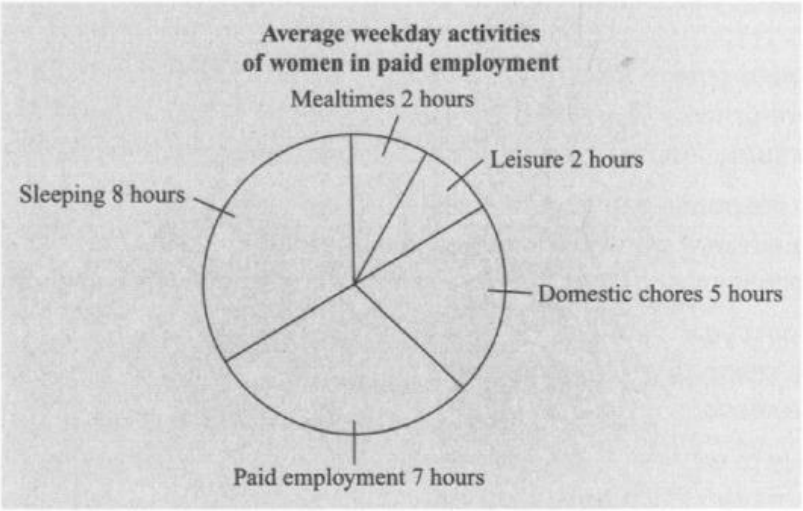
The bar chart shows the gender distribution of students doing scientific research across a range of disciplines at a UK university in 2009.

In five of the six disciplines, males outnumbered females. Male students made up a particularly large proportion of the student group in subjects related to the study of inanimate objects and materials: physics, astronomy, and geology. The gender gap was particularly large in the field of physics, where there were five times as many male students as female students.

Men and women were more equally represented in subjects related to the study of living things: biology, medicine, and veterinary medicine. In biology, there were nearly as many women (approximately 200) as men (approximately 240). This was also true of medicine. Veterinary medicine was the only discipline in which women outnumbered men (roughly 110 women vs. 90 men).

Overall, the chart shows that at this university, science-related subjects continue to be male-dominated; however, women have a significant presence in fields related to medicine and the life sciences.

3 **Study the pie chart and read the sample answer below. Underline and correct the mistakes the writer has made.**



The pie chart shows the numbers of hours devoted to various activities in the average working woman's day. Women spend the largest proportion of their waking day working in paid employment (seven hours) and doing domestic chores (five hours). Women have on average relatively little time for themselves; only two per cent of their day is devoted to leisure activities and two per cent to mealtimes. Overall, the chart shows that working women are busy every day of the week.

Exam tip: Always look carefully at what figures represent. If they represent percentages, you must use expressions such as *a large/small/higher/lower percentage of men* ... If the figures give numbers, you can write *many/more/most/few/fewer men* ...

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Part 2: Practice exercises: Task 2

Exam information:
In IELTS Writing Task 2, you have to write an essay of 4–6 paragraphs in answer to a question. The question will ask you to evaluate or present an idea or solution to a problem. Your aim should be to present a strong argument supported by evidence.

4 **Read the Task 2 instructions below and complete the statements 1–4 by circling a or b.**

> You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.
>
> Write about the following topic:
>
> In spite of the many advances women have made in education and employment, they continue to be at a disadvantage when it comes to pay and promotion. In your view, what should be done to promote equality of opportunity for men and women in the workplace?
>
> Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.
>
> Write at least 250 words.

1 You should spend
   a more time on Task 2 than on Task 1.
   b the same amount of time on Task 2 and Task 1.

2 In your response you should mainly
   a explain why women are at a disadvantage.
   b suggest solutions to the problem of inequality in the workplace.

3 To support your opinion, you should
   a give reasons and examples.
   b give reasons or examples.

4 You have to write
   a more than 250 words.
   b fewer than 250 words.

5 **Read the sample answer on page 13 and the explanatory comments in the boxes. Complete the boxes 1–5 by adding the comments a–e. Then answer questions 1–5.**

a an example
b summary of your main points
c a better solution
d an acknowledgement that there are difficulties
e advantage of this solution

LIVEWORKSHEETS

description of the situation and problem	In many parts of the world, there is now greater equality between working men and women. Nevertheless, women still tend to earn less and enjoy fewer promotions than men.	
an opposing opinion	Some would argue that this situation will correct itself over time. However, in my view, there is much that can be done to address the problem constructively.	your opinion and plan
	One possible approach would be for governments to force employers to promote the same numbers of men and women and to pay them the same salaries. This would certainly tackle the problem quickly. However, measures like this would probably be seen as excessive and difficult to enforce.	one possible but not ideal solution an advantage of this solution
a disadvantage of this solution		
	A more feasible approach would be for governments themselves to take the lead by ensuring that their male and female employees earn the same for equivalent work and that women are promoted fairly. This would help to establish gender equality as a norm and set a good example for companies in the private sector. Countries, such as Sweden and Iceland, which have done this are often regarded by others as socially-advanced models.	1 _____ an advantage of this solution
2 _____		
another solution	To further encourage equality, companies could be required to publish figures on the rank and average earnings of men and women in their workforce. Evidence of large inequalities would create a bad impression. In order to avoid bad publicity, companies might consider it worthwhile to pay fairer wages and promote more women to management positions.	3 _____
4 _____	It is true that the problem of gender inequality in the workplace will probably not be solved quickly. However, that is not a reason to avoid taking action. Governments can encourage change by showing the way forward and taking advantage of the need for companies to present themselves as fair and reasonable.	restatement of your opinion 5 _____

1 How long is the introduction?
2 How many body paragraphs are there?
3 How many main points are there?
4 In what order are solutions discussed: from strongest to weakest or from weakest to strongest?
5 What is the main purpose of the conclusion?

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Exam information:
There are four types of Task 2 questions (a–d below). The question type will determine how you plan and write your essay. Each type requires you to do something different.

Question type	Comment and example
a Propose one or more solutions to a problem	This type of question either contains the word *should* or it can be rephrased with *should*. Example: *How can the problem of inequality in the workplace best be addressed?* = How should we solve the problem of inequality?
b Evaluate one or more solutions to a problem	You will recognise this type of question in the same way as **a** above. Example: *Many people believe that boys and girls learn better when they are educated separately. What is your view on this practice?* = Should boys and girls be educated separately?
c Present your ideas about a topic	This type of question usually requires you to make a prediction or write about causes and/or effects. Example: *What do you see as the main reasons for gender inequality in the workplace?* = What are the causes of gender inequality in the workplace?
d Evaluate an idea about a topic	This type of question asks you to consider the truth value of a prediction, explanation or statement. Example: *Many people maintain that boys are naturally more aggressive than girls. To what extent do you agree with this view?* = Consider the truth value of the statement that boys are naturally more aggressive than girls.

6 **Read the essay questions 1–5 below and indicate the type of essay (a–d) you need to write. (See the Exam information box above.) Underline the words in the essay question that helped you decide.**

1. Why do you think women generally hold fewer positions of power?
2. In many parts of the world, unemployment among men is rising whilst the number of positions in jobs traditionally held by women is increasing. Do you think that women will overtake men as the main wage earners?
3. To what extent should governments intervene in the labour market to ensure that men and women are paid the same amount for equivalent work?
4. Although there has been a large increase in the numbers of women who go out to work, women continue to do a disproportionate amount of housework and childcare. What can be done to promote greater equality between men and women within the home?
5. Some people believe that boys and girls behave differently only because society teaches them that they are different. What is your view?

Exam tip: You should spend 6–7 minutes on the first 3 stages of writing: analysing the question, thinking of ideas, and making a plan. You should spend about 30 minutes writing your essay, and 3–4 minutes checking your essay for mistakes.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Part 3: Exam practice

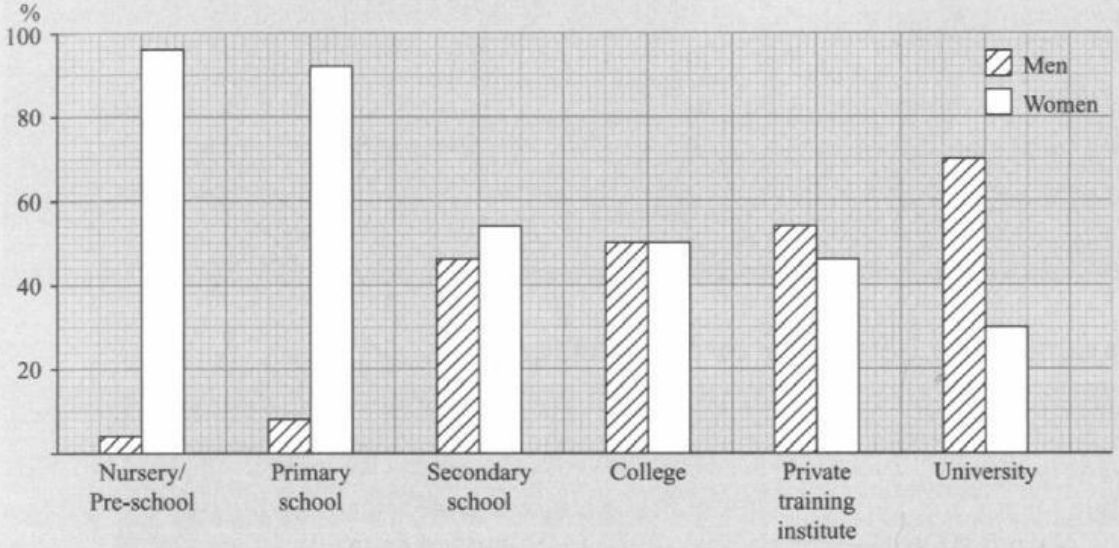
WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The chart shows the percentage of male and female teachers in six different types of educational setting in the UK in 2010.

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

Write at least 150 words.



WRITING TASK 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Women and men are commonly seen as having different strengths and weaknesses. Is it right to exclude males or females from certain professions because of their gender?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

LIVEWORKSHEETS