

# IELTS WRITING: FORMAT AND STRATEGIES



# **TEST FORMAT AND TASKS**

**Format and Tasks**

**Strategies and Examples**

**Further Help**

**References**

**Questions**



# TEST FORMAT

## Test Format

- Writing Module lasts 60 minutes.
- Two tasks:
  - Task 1 – 20 minutes, 150 words.
  - Task 2 – 40 minutes, 250 words.
- Words are counted by the examiners, so don't write too many or too few words.
- Tip - learn how many words you usually write on a line, and how many lines = 150 and 250 words, so you don't waste time counting words in the test.

# TEST FORMAT AND TASKS - ANSWERS

## Answers

- Must be written on the answer sheet.
  - Must be written in full.
  - Notes are not acceptable as answers.
  - Notes may be made on the question paper, but cannot be taken from the test room.
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# TEST FORMAT AND TASKS – TASK 1

## Task 1: (20 minutes, 150 words)

- Interpret a diagram or table, and present the information in **your own words**.
  - Organise, present and possibly compare data
    - e.g. money people spend on different forms of entertainment.
  - Describe stages of a procedure or process
    - e.g. the stages of human evolution.
  - Describe an object or event or series of events
    - e.g. How the water cycle works.
  - Explain how something works
    - e.g. How a car engine works.

# TEST FORMAT AND TASKS – TASK 2

## Task 2 (40 minutes, 250 words)

- presented with a point of view or argument or problem.
  - Present and justify an opinion
    - e.g. Do you think trial by jury should be used in all criminal cases?
  - Compare and contrast evidence, opinions and implications
    - e.g. How effective is it to reward good work with extra money?
  - Evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or an argument
    - e.g. 'Failure shows desire wasn't strong enough'. To what extent do you agree?

# TEST FORMAT AND TASKS: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

## General Points

You must respond appropriately in terms of:

- Register – formality and politeness; e.g. no short forms
  - Organisation – clear and logical
  - Style – academic; e.g. no rhetorical questions, no exclamations, no extreme opinions, use tentative expressions such as ‘this appears to be...’ ‘this is probably due to...’
  - Content – relevant and complete
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# TEST FORMAT AND TASKS – TASK 1

Considerations for Task 1 include:

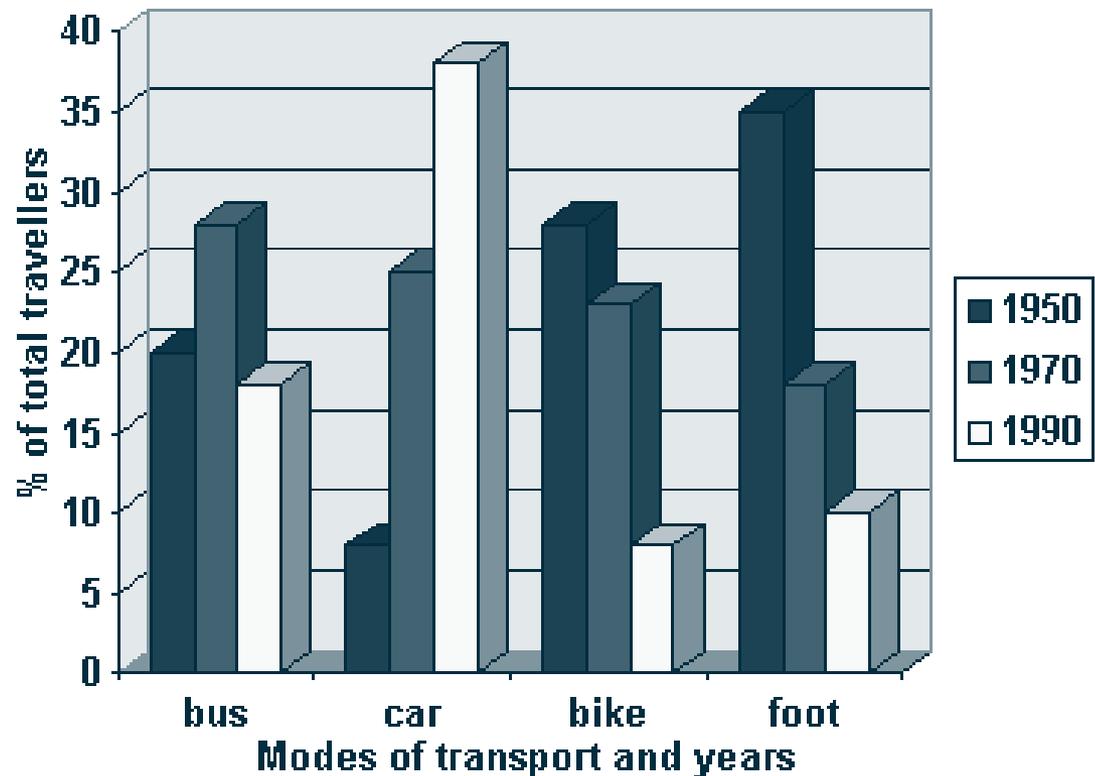
- Task Fulfillment – answering the question completely
  - Coherence – e.g. Firstly, Secondly, Finally
  - Cohesion – e.g. ‘this’, ‘it’, ‘he’, ‘and’, ‘but’ and synonyms
  - Vocabulary – good range, appropriate
  - Sentence Structure – concise but not simplistic; e.g. correct use of relative clauses.
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# EXAMPLE OF TASK 1

## Academic Writing - Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The graph below shows the different modes of transport used to travel to and from work in one European city in 1950, 1970 and 1990.



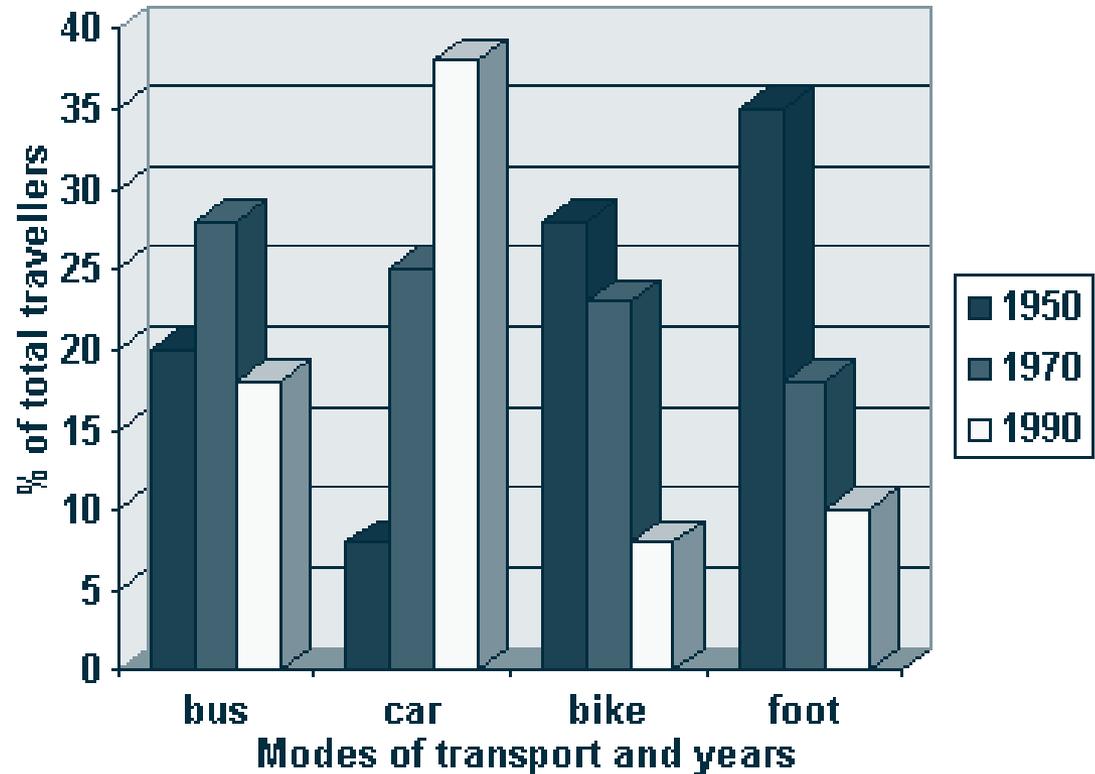
Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown. You should write at least 150 words.

# EXAMPLE OF TASK 1

## Academic Writing - Writing Task 1

With a partner:

1. Identify the main trends for each mode.
2. Identify any large increases or decreases.
3. Are there any clear and consistent directions?
4. Does anything seem surprising?
5. Are there any clear relationships between modes or percentages?



# POSSIBLE ANSWER FOR TASK 1

## FULL ANSWER

The graph shows the percentage of travellers in a European city who used bus, car, bike and foot to commute to and from work in the years 1950, 1970 and 1990.

The amount of people using cars grew considerably, rising from just over 5% in 1950 to 25% in 1970, and then climbing to almost 40% by 1990.

However, the amount of people using bikes decreased. Over 25% of commuters cycled in 1950, but this had fallen to less than 10% by 1990. Similarly, the amount of people who walked to work fell from more than a third in 1950 to about 10% in 1990.

The amount of people using buses initially rose in 1970 to about 30%, but had dropped to about 17% by 1990.

The graph indicates the growing use of cars for commuting and the corresponding fall in the popularity of other modes of transport since 1950.

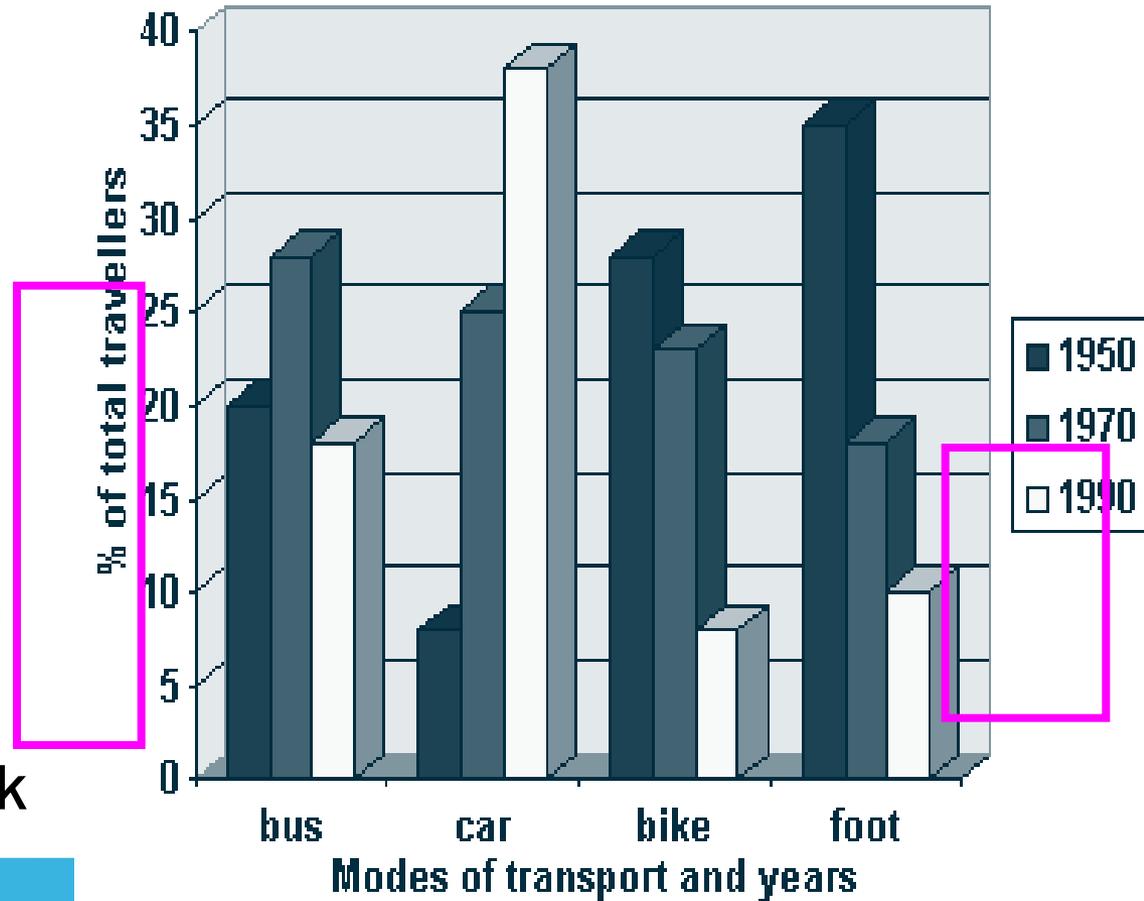
# POSSIBLE ANSWER FOR TASK 1 - INTRODUCTION

Instructions:

The graph below shows the different modes of transport used to travel to and from work in one European city in 1950, 1970 and 1990.

Answer:

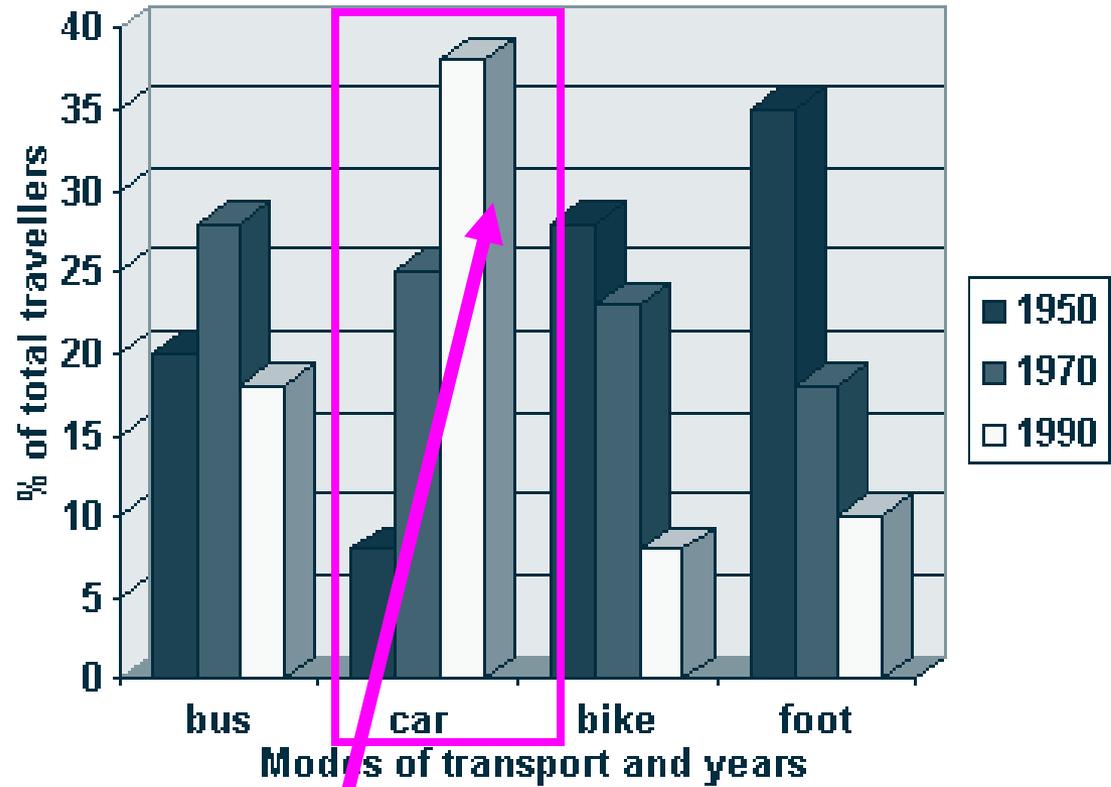
The graph shows the percentage of travellers in a European city who used bus, car, bike and foot to commute to and from work in the years 1950, 1970 and 1990.



# POSSIBLE ANSWER FOR TASK 1 - CARS

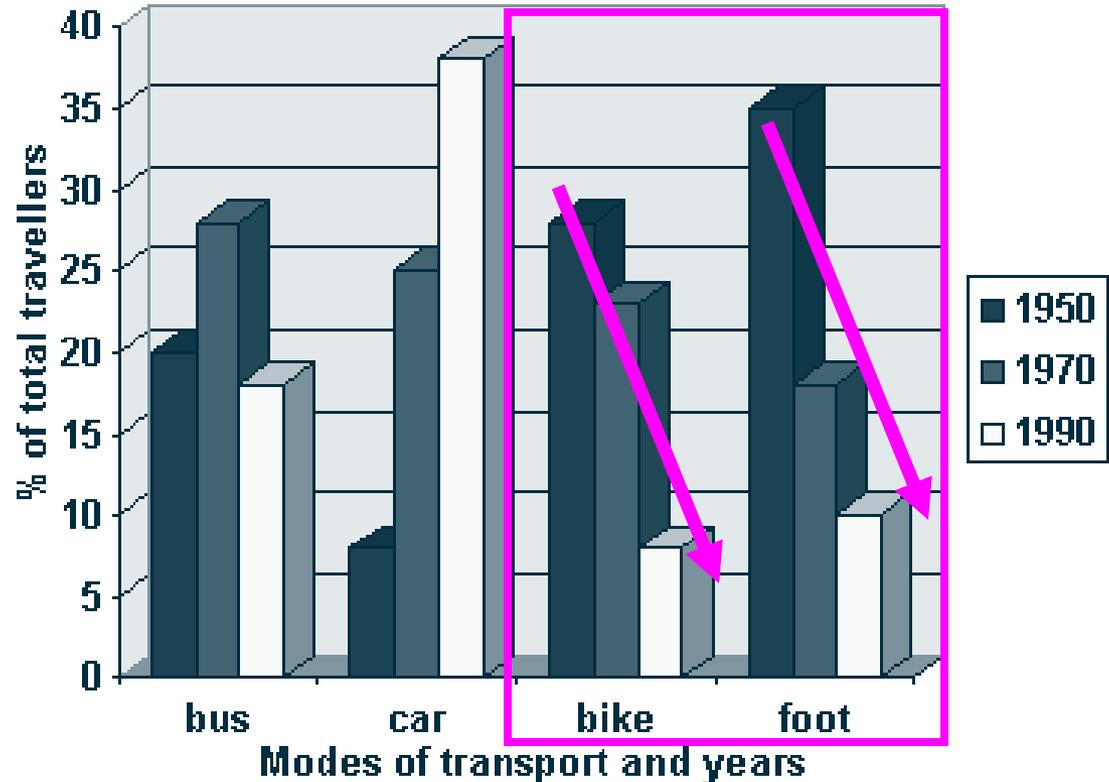
Answer:

The amount of people using cars grew considerably, rising from just over 5% in 1950 to 25% in 1970, and then climbing to almost 40% by 1990.



# POSSIBLE ANSWER FOR TASK 1 – BIKES AND WALKERS

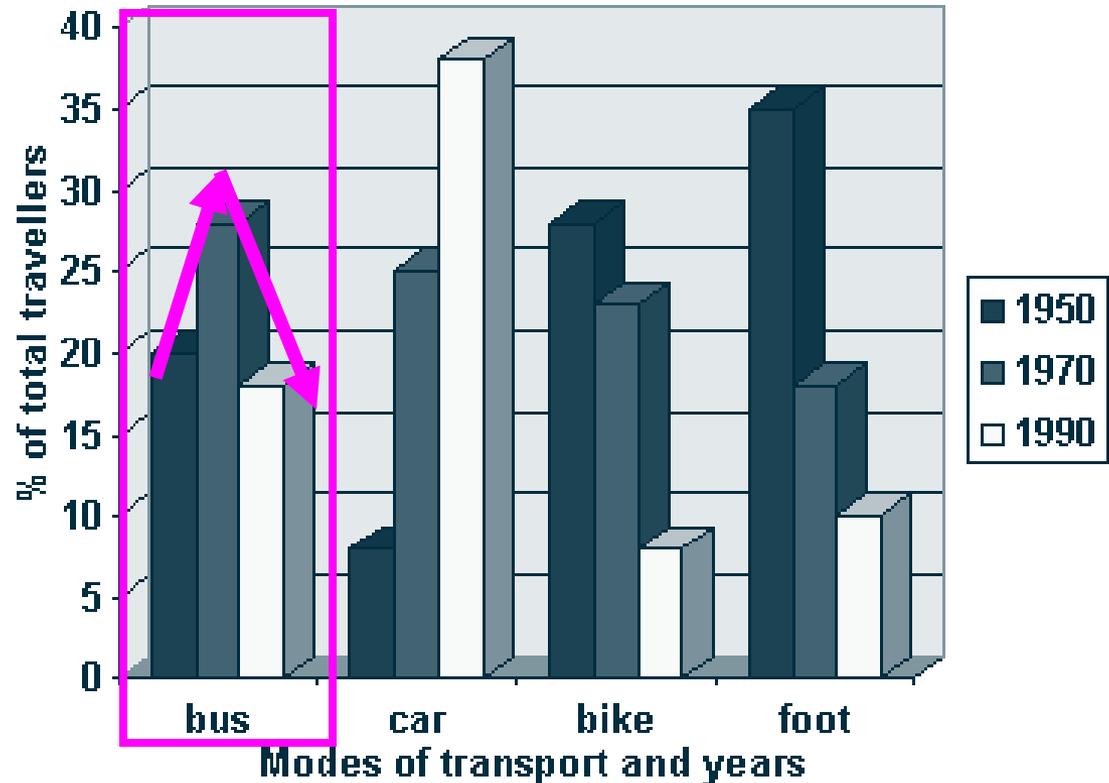
Answer:  
However, the amount of people using bikes decreased. Over 25% of commuters cycled in 1950, but this had fallen to less than 10% by 1990. Similarly, the amount of people who walked to work fell from more than a third in 1950 to about 10% in 1990.



# POSSIBLE ANSWER FOR TASK 1 - BUSES

Answer:

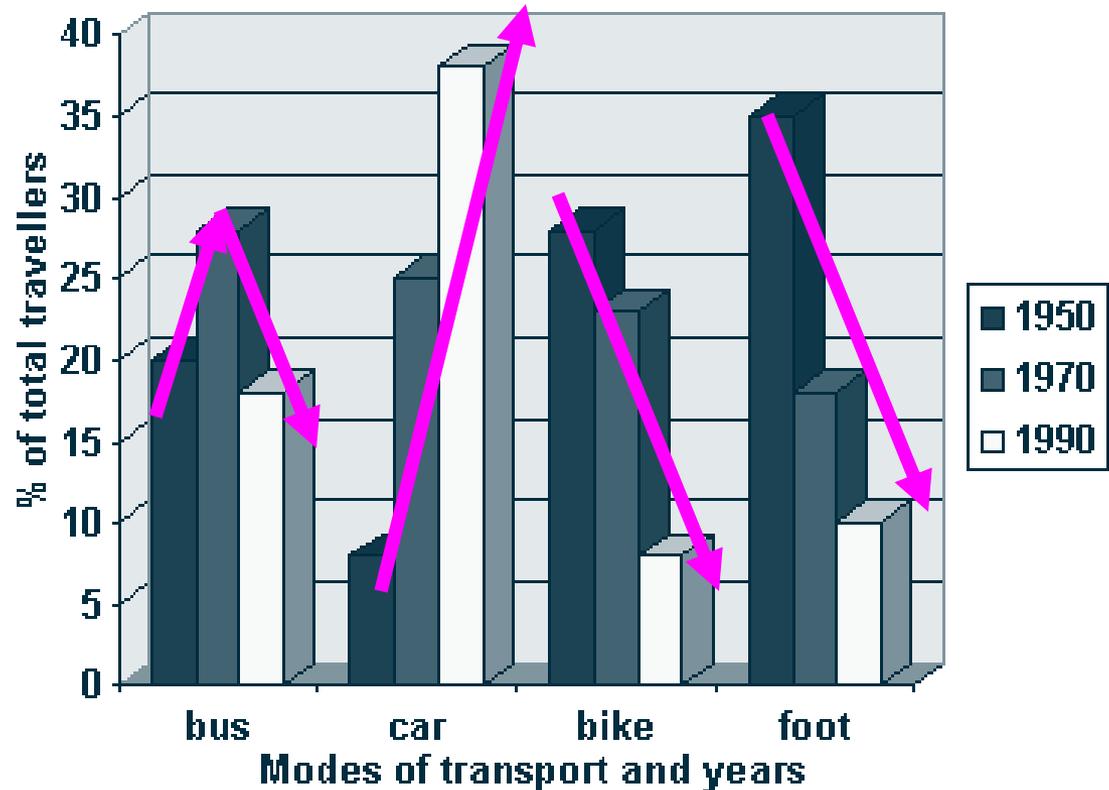
The amount of people using buses initially rose in 1970 to about 30%, but had dropped to about 17% by 1990.



# POSSIBLE ANSWER FOR TASK 1

## CONCLUSION

Answer:  
The graph indicates the growing use of cars for commuting and the corresponding fall in the popularity of other modes of transport since 1950.



# TEST FORMAT AND TASKS – TASK 2

**Task 2 is assessed on:**

- Quality of Arguments – logical, well-considered
  - Ideas and Evidence – support your points
  - Communicative Quality
  - Vocabulary and Sentence Structure
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## EXAMPLE OF TASK 2

Read the question carefully and read it several times. Decide what the focus of the task is?

The first sentence is sometimes background information, the focus of the essay and the question come after. For example:

*‘Some businesses now say that no one can smoke cigarettes in any of their offices. Some governments have banned smoking in all public places.*

*This is a good idea but it takes away some of our freedom.*

*Do you agree or disagree?’*

Decide what the task requires you do.

# STRATEGIES - ORGANISATION

## Organisation

- After you have produced your ideas, you need to **organise** them.
  - Do not produce a list of ideas without development.
  - Decide on the key ideas. How many ideas can you cover in 150 or 250 words?
  - Select some supporting points for each key idea in your list.
  - Think about your own experience – do you have any further points to add.
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# STRATEGIES – CONTENT

**Respond to each point mentioned in the task.**

- Your answer must be complete.
  - Make sure you do not:
    - misunderstand the question;  
e.g. smoking in Government offices
    - write about something not required in the question; e.g.  
banning smoking completely
    - answer only half of the topic;  
e.g. you write about is it a good idea, but don't write about freedom.
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# STRATEGIES - PLANNING

## Allow some time to think about the question.

- note down clear and relevant ideas
- make a brief plan of the organisation and content of your answer. For example:
  - Intro – smoking in businesses & Govt. - good idea, freedom?
  - Smoking in businesses
    - Good idea?  
Smokers may work better if they can smoke  
Passive smoking – objections from other staff
    - Takes away freedom?  
Businesses have the right to limit staff activities
  - Govt. limitations on smoking in public places
    - Good idea?  
Costs to society - Passive smoking, litter, health care  
Benefits to society – tax revenue, pleasure of smokers  
Pressure groups – smokers, tobacco companies, sponsors
    - Takes away freedom?  
Govt. has the right to regulate citizens' activities  
Will citizens support regulation?

Conclusion

# STRATEGIES – CONTENT - INTRODUCTION

## The Introduction

- Important: gives first impression.
  - A few sentences.
  - Introduce the topic.
  - Preface the main points.
  - Define what you understand by the task
  - Show how you intend to approach the task.
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# STRATEGIES – INTRODUCTION - EXAMPLE

Limitations on smoking in businesses and public places are a controversial topic as, although they may be a good idea, they may also interfere with people's freedom. Non-smokers are likely to think that banning smoking is a good idea, but smokers naturally may not. Different cultures may have varying attitudes to whether businesses or governments have the right to ban smoking in certain places.

# STRATEGIES – BODY - EXAMPLE

Banning smoking in businesses may not be a good idea because smokers may work better if they can smoke. However, passive smoking can cause objections from colleagues.

Although such bans may reduce freedom, businesses are widely seen as having the right to regulate staff activities. Governments may also ban smoking in public. This may be a good idea due to the costs to society of smoking such as litter and health care. However, smoking in public may also benefit society, for example in tax revenue and the pleasure of smokers. Also, pressure groups such as tobacco companies may discourage limitations on smoking.

As for freedom, in many cultures the government has the right to regulate citizens' activities. It is also increasingly possible that citizens would support such bans.

# STRATEGIES – CONTENT - CONCLUSION

## The Conclusion

- Important: Opportunity to leave a good impression.
  - A few sentences.
  - Summarises your key ideas and your main ideas.
  - If appropriate, a final decision, statement, or recommendation.
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## STRATEGIES – CONCLUSION - EXAMPLE

As a non-smoker I believe that limiting smoking in workplaces and in public is a good idea. I can also understand the opinion of smokers that banning smoking in such places limits their freedom. If the effects of smoking were limited to smokers I would oppose bans, but as smoking affects the health of others, I support them.

# USEFUL WEBSITES

UGC Introductory site <http://www.ugccepta.com>

IELTS homepage <http://www.ielts.org/index.htm>

ELC homepage <http://elc.polyu.edu.hk>





It's Exam Time!  
Here's a **BIG**

**GOOD**  
**LUCK!**  
wish to you