

Task 1

# How to describe a process in IELTS Writing Task 1

BY IELTSETC ON JANUARY 14, 2018

This lesson will take you through 5 key aspects of describing a process for Academic IELTS Writing Task 1:

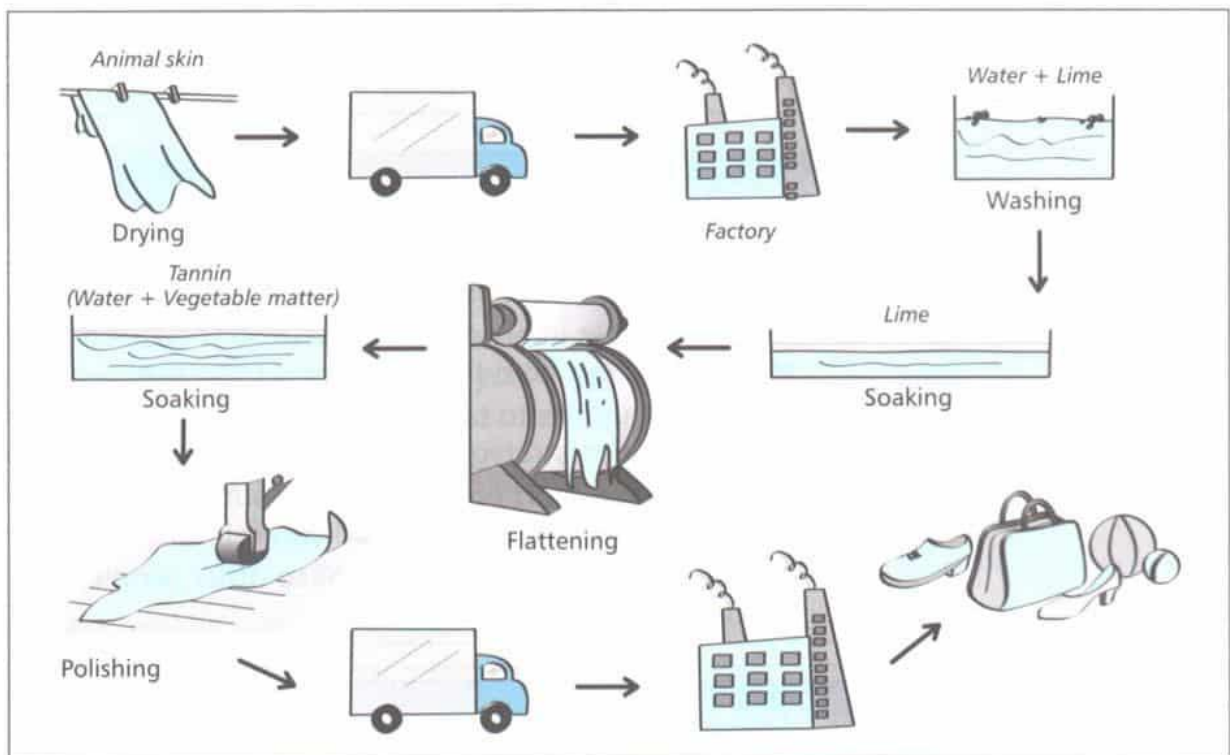
1. Rewriting the introduction
2. Using Present Simple and Passives
3. Using linking words
4. Writing an overview
5. Adding some Band 7 'magic'

To learn how to **describe a cycle** in IELTS Task 1, click [here](#).

Look at a typical IELTS process below:

*The diagram shows the stages involved in the process of making leather goods.*

*Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words*



## 1. Rewrite the introduction

You have to re-write the introduction in your own words. If you use words that are already given in the Task, the examiner will NOT COUNT them in the overall 150 words, because these words are NOT YOUR OWN words, and they want you to use your own words.

- One way to **use your own words** is to keep the basic sentence structure but use **synonyms**.
- Remember that it is impossible and unnatural to change every single word, so just **change a few**.

e.g. *The diagram shows the stages involved in the process of making leather goods.*

**Re-write as:** *The images illustrate the steps involved in the production of leather goods.*

This is a **safe option**, as it keeps the same sentence structure.

### Watch out!

- Check where you put the 's' when you use '*the diagram show**S***' (3rd person 's') or '*the image**S** show*' (plural 's'). This is a common mistake.

You could also use a **more complex sentence structure**: change the word order and use the verb in the **Passive**

e.g. *The diagram illustrates **how animal skins are processed** in order to produce a range of leather items such as shoes, handbags and toys.*

Using the **Passive Tense** gives you an instantly sophisticated, complex and academic option.

Here's another example:

e.g. *The illustration depicts the numerous steps involved in the **treatment** of animal skins before they are **turned** into leather products such as handbags and shoes.*

### Watch out!

- Remember that you **should NOT use any opinion** or any external/background facts.

## 2. Use the Passive Tense

The diagram gives you several of the verbs that you need to describe each stage e.g. *drying, soaking, polishing, flattening*.

Again, you have the problem of **avoiding** using these words exactly as they are in the text.

So using the **Passive Tense** gives you an **easy solution**.

Even better, when describing a process you only use the **Present Simple Passive**.

- The only thing you have to worry about is whether you need **Singular or Plural**. Both are possible here and both are correct.

e.g. *The skins ARE dried OR The skin IS dried.*

*The skins ARE polished OR The leather IS polished.*

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## Quick review of Passive Tense

**Basic structure:** Thing(s) + **be** + **past participle**

**Leather** + **is** + **dried**

**Skins** + **are** + **dried**

**Past Participle** – in **Purple** to help you remember! These can be regular (just add ‘-ed’ but watch out for spelling changes like *dry-dried, stop-stopped*)

The verb ‘**to be**’ – I put this in **orange** to help you remember that you need to **CHANGE** this verb depending on Number and Tense.



## IELTS Task 1: Describing a Process - Passives



The diagram below shows the process of recycling plastic bottles.  
Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features and make comparisons where relevant

The bottle **is discarded**.

The bottles **are picked up**.

They **are taken** to the recycling plant.

The bottles **are washed**.

They **are sent** to another machine.

They **are shredded** into small pieces.

The shredded pieces **go into** the extruder.

The pieces **are turned** into pellets.

The pellets **are used** to make new items.



Check out the full lesson on  
[YouTube/fionawattam](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfionawattam)

[www.ieltsetc.com](http://www.ieltsetc.com)

### 3. Use a variety of linking words

Now you've got a list of stages all written in the Passive Tense, you need to put them all together NICELY with a variety of linking words.

One problem many people have is that they just put the linking words at the **start** of the sentence. This can sound **repetitive**, and it is important **not to OVERUSE** linking words.

- Don't choose a different linking word for the start of every sentence. Use some in the middle

e.g. *the process **by which** leather is treated, the liquid **in which** the skins are soaked, the place **where** the skins are flattened.*

**Compare these two versions:**

## Version 1: simple, accurate but a little 'mechanical'

*The skin is dried. Then it is taken to a factory. In the factory it is washed in water and lime, then soaked in lime and flattened and submerged in tannin. After that it is polished and taken to another factory. In the factory it is turned into leather goods.*

## Version 2: More fluent and natural

*In the initial stages of the process, the skin is dried **before being** taken to a factory **where** it undergoes two treatments. **Firstly** it is washed with water and lime, **followed by** a soak in lime **and then** flattened, **after which** it is submerged in tannin.*

*The last stage involves polishing the leather with a roller. The pieces are **subsequently** transported to a processing factory **where** they are made into a number of items **in preparation for** shipping.*

## 4. Write an overview

This is the **most essential part** of ANY Task 1.

If you don't write an overview, you are limited to a Band 5 for Task Achievement.

But what can you say that you haven't already said?

Many people DO just repeat what they've already said e.g.

*'Overall, the diagram shows that many items can be made from leather.'*

This is better than no overview, but it is **too obvious, too vague and there is no analysis**.

- You need to say something **noticeable** about the process.

Here are some examples:

*Overall, the diagram shows that it is necessary for animal skins to undergo a number of treatments before they can be made into everyday household items. The process is still a complex and lengthy one despite being mostly done by machinery rather than by hand.*

*Overall, the diagram shows that, despite the fact that the process of treating animal skins so that they can be made into everyday household items is done mostly in factories with the help of machinery, it is still lengthy and complex, involving several stages.*

## 5. Add the 'Band 7+' finishing touches

In 4 steps, you have completed all that needs to be done for a very good Task 1.

But what if you want to make it **even better**? Have a look at this final example – what kind of changes have been made to give it a little extra magic?

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*The diagram illustrates how animal skins are processed in order to produce a range of leather items such as shoes, handbags and toys.*

*In the initial stages of the process, the skin is **air-dried** before being **loaded onto trucks and** taken to a **nearby** factory where it undergoes two **chemical** treatments to **clean and soften it**. Firstly it is washed with a **mixture of** water and lime, and then it is soaked in **concentrated/pure** lime and **pushed through a rolling machine in order to flatten it**, after which it is submerged in a **vat of tannin, which is a substance derived from vegetables**.*

*The last stage involves polishing the leather with a roller to **improve its appearance**. The pieces are subsequently transported **by road** to a processing factory where they are made into a number of **everyday** products **like footwear and sports items** in preparation for shipping.*

*Overall, the diagram shows that, despite the fact that the process of treating animal skins is done mostly in factories with the help of machinery, it is still lengthy and complex, involving several stages.*

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You can:

- say **WHY** something is done (*in order to...*, *so that...*) (*to soften the leather, to remove impurities*)
- give extra **details** (*transported by road, which is a substance, a mixture of*)
- give more **examples** (*like footwear and sports items*)
- add **adjectives** (*air-dried, everyday products, a nearby factory*)

**All of these will show the examiner how fluent and flexible you are in describing a process!**

Yes, you only have **20 minutes** to do all of this.

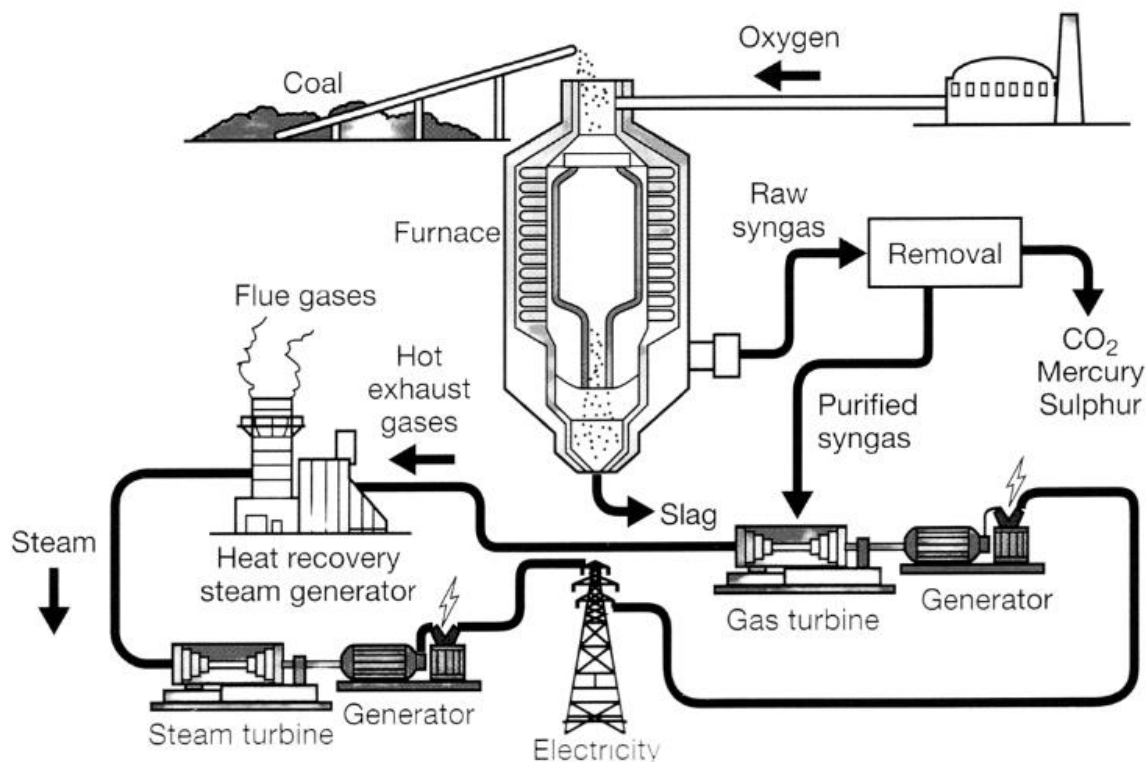
But if you have a clear **strategy**, and you've practiced using these strategies before the exam, with a **variety** of different types of processes, you will be equipped with all the skills and knowledge you need to write a really excellent Task 1 Process Description.

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**Find out how to describe another process (How energy is produced from coal) [here](#).**

# Describing a process

The diagram shows how energy is produced from coal.

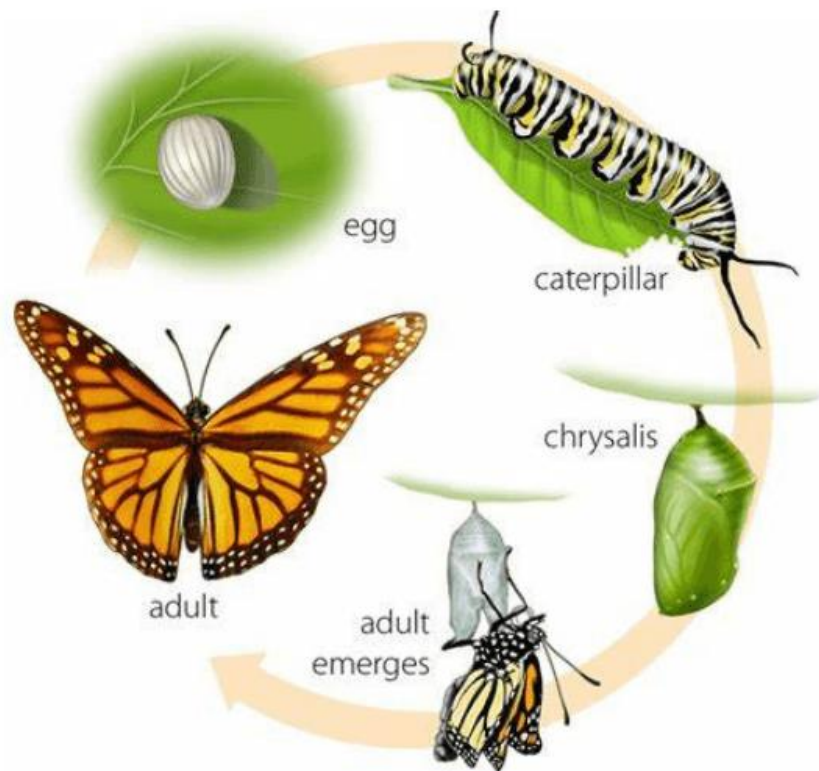


Picture from Writing Skills Macmillan McCarter & Whitby 2007

How is a cycle different from a process? [Click on the image to find out.](#)

## IELTS Task 1: Describing a Cycle

### The lifecycle of a butterfly



Check out the model answer, which uses **passive verbs**, **active verbs** and logical **linking words**.

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Adapted from a YouTube clip about the Monarch Butterfly