In this lesson we’re looking at the ‘details’ aspect of the task achievement score (for both academic and general IELTS writing task 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Task achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9    | - fully satisfies all the requirements of the task  
     | - clearly presents a fully developed response |
| 8    | - covers all requirements of the task sufficiently  
     | - presents, highlights and illustrates key features/ bullet points clearly and appropriately |
| 7    | - covers the requirements of the task  
     | - (A) presents a clear overview of main trends, differences or stages  
     | - (GT) presents a clear purpose, with the tone consistent and appropriate  
     | - clearly presents and highlights key features/bullet points but could be more fully extended |
| 6    | - addresses the requirements of the task  
     | - (A) presents an overview with information appropriately selected  
     | - (GT) presents a purpose that is generally clear; there may be inconsistencies in tone  
     | - presents and adequately highlights key features/ bullet points but details may be irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate |
| 5    | - generally addresses the task; the format may be inappropriate in places  
     | - (A) recounts detail mechanically with no clear overview; there may be no data to support the description  
     | - (GT) may present a purpose for the letter that is unclear at times; the tone may be variable and sometimes inappropriate  
     | - presents, but inadequately covers, key features/ bullet points; there may be a tendency to focus on details |
| 4    | - attempts to address the task but does not cover all key features/bullet points; the format may be inappropriate  
     | - (GT) fails to clearly explain the purpose of the letter; the tone may be inappropriate  
     | - may confuse key features/bullet points with detail; parts may be unclear, irrelevant, repetitive or inaccurate |

**Yellow highlighting** = how well you cover the requirements of the task  

**Green highlighting** = how well you present key features (academic) or bullet points (general)
1) Covering the requirements of the task

In the General Training test, this is easy. We must write what the bullet points tell us to write.

I suggest writing a short paragraph about each point. For example, the task below requires us to write about the three bullet points highlighted in yellow.

You are not satisfied with the changing rooms in a sports centre that you visit.
Write a letter to the sports centre manager. In your letter
• explain the problem
• say how you feel about this problem
• and say what steps you would like the manager to take.

In the Academic test, covering the requirements of the task is a bit trickier. If the graph or chart shows a lot of information, we will need to make decisions about what the key features are.

As a basic ‘rule’, I suggest that you look for something that you can say about each item or category shown on the chart. For example, when describing the table below, I would try to say something about each mode of transport and each year.

Average distance in miles travelled per person per year, by mode of travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>3,199</td>
<td>4,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local bus</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long distance bus</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All modes</td>
<td>4,740</td>
<td>6,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This does not mean that you must mention every number shown on the chart.
2) Presenting the bullet points or key features

In the **General Training** test, it’s easy to see what this means. If you want a high score, you need to write something relevant about each of the bullet points.

To achieve a higher score, you’ll need to **extend** or **develop** each point. Look at how I did this in the band 9 model answer below.

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Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to complain about the unacceptable state of the male changing room at the Sprint Sports complex.

I have been using the gym at your centre for several years now, and it would appear that no maintenance work has been carried out on the changing room facilities in all that time. As a result, paint is peeling off the walls, floor tiles are cracked, and there is mould and mildew growing around the showers.

The neglected and shabby state of the changing room makes me think that you do not care about your customers. I feel that we are being treated like farm animals, and I worry that you are putting our health at risk. It seems that profit is more important than the customer experience.

Please address the changing room issue as a matter of urgency. I suggest that a full refurbishment is required, and that you should consider some form of compensation for members. We have tolerated this situation for too long.

Yours faithfully,

John Smith

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To ensure a high score, I **develop** my three points in detail. For example, in the first main paragraph, I present the ‘maintenance problem’ and I then illustrate this problem with detailed description.

By developing my ideas and / or giving examples, I’m also demonstrating ‘range’ for my vocabulary score.
In the Academic test we need to **make choices** about

- how we **group** the information in our ‘details’ paragraphs
- which numbers to include (giving a number is how we ‘**illustrate**’ a key feature)
- which items or categories we can mention without giving the precise number(s)

Look again at the table below and my two ‘details’ paragraphs underneath it.

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In 1985, the average person travelled **3,199** miles by **car**, and this rose to **4,806** miles in the year 2000. The figures for miles travelled by **train**, **long distance bus**, **taxi** and **other** modes also increased from 1985 to 2000. Travel by taxi saw the most significant change, with more than a threefold increase from **13** miles per person per year in 1985 to **42** miles in 2000.

There was a fall in the average distances for three forms of transport, namely **walking**, **bicycle** and **local bus**. In 1985, English people walked an average of **255** miles, but this figure fell by **18** miles in 2000. Bicycle use fell from **51** to **41** miles over the period shown, while the biggest downward change was in the use of local buses, with average miles per person falling from **429** to **274** over the 15-year period.

**Analysis:**

- Out of the total of **18** numbers in the table, I specifically mentioned **9** numbers (highlighted in **orange**). I included one more number in my description (fell by **18**), but this described a **change**; it wasn’t an actual number that I took from the table.
• I mentioned 8 modes of travel (in green) and both years. I had already written about the “all modes” category in my overview paragraph, so all 9 categories are covered in my answer.

• I found a simple way to group the information. The first paragraph contains a description of numbers that rose between the two years, and the second paragraph contains modes of travel which saw falling numbers.

• I described the figures for 5 modes of transport in detail: car, taxi, walking, bicycle, local bus.

• I quickly mentioned the other 3 modes: train, long distance bus, other.

In short, we need to work on…

- grouping information
- mentioning all of the categories or items
- selecting which categories or items to focus on
- selecting which precise numbers to include

…and we need to do all of this concisely and accurately, and without adding any irrelevant details.

To do this well takes practice!

Homework task. If you have time, try this:

- Take one of the model answers above. Choose the test that is relevant to you (general or academic).
- Read my answer carefully and take detailed notes on a separate piece of paper. Make sure you write notes, not full sentences. Include all key points / numbers in your notes.
- Next, hide my answer, and try to rewrite it using only your notes.
- Finally, compare your answer with mine. Don’t worry about grammar or vocabulary. Just look at the task achievement ‘details’ that we’ve covered in this lesson.

Let me know how you find this exercise. It is based on a writing technique used by Benjamin Franklin.