

Writing reference

What to expect in the exam

The Writing Test is the third paper in the exam and it takes place after the Reading Test.

You do two tasks in one hour:

- Task 1 is a summary of one or more charts or diagrams on the same subject.
- Task 2 is a discursive essay. There is only one topic.

Task 1

In this task, you must summarise and compare information from a graph, chart, table or diagram, or a combination of these.

Your summary must be at least 150 words long. You may write more than this, but if you write less, you will lose some marks. You need to spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You should try to:

- include all the key points;
- include some details or data to support the key points;
- compare relevant features of the information;
- include an overview;
- organise your answer in a logical way;
- use relevant vocabulary;
- use your own words where possible, rather than copying from the question;
- write grammatically correct sentences;
- use accurate spelling and punctuation;
- write in a formal academic style (not bullet points or note form).

You studied and practised Writing Task 1 in Units 1, 3, 5 and 7.

How to do Task 1

- 1 Read the instructions and study the headings and information carefully. Find at least three key points and decide which features you should compare. (Allow between two and three minutes for this.)
- 2 Decide how many paragraphs to write and what to put in each one. Decide what will go in your overview. (Allow between two and three minutes for this.)
- 3 Write your answer, allowing a couple of minutes to check it through afterwards. (Allow 15 minutes for this.)

Graphs, charts and diagrams

There are different types of visual information that you will have to deal with.

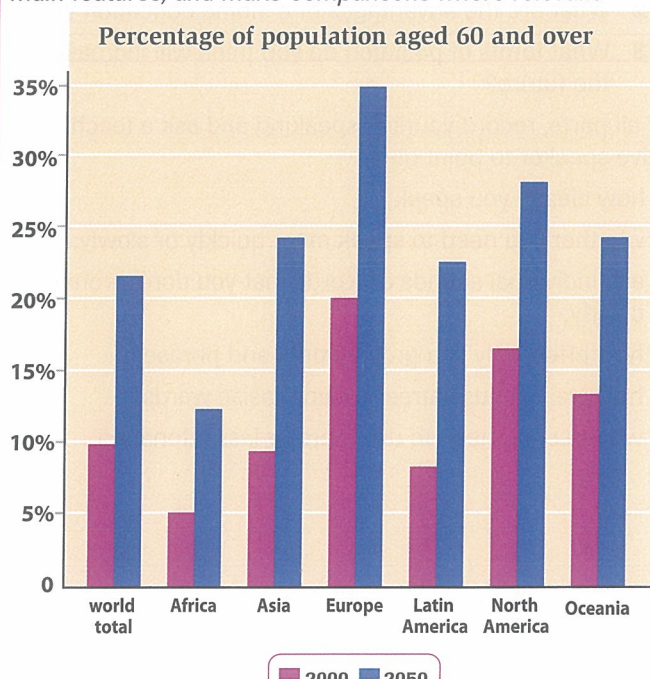
1 Graphs that compare figures at different points in time

1 Look at the Writing task below and answer these questions.

- 1 What do the figures on the vertical axis represent?
- 2 What periods of time does the graph focus on?
- 3 How do the first two columns on the chart relate to the rest of the chart?
- 4 Find three key points that you can compare on the chart.
- 5 What tenses and verb forms would you use to write your answer?

The chart below gives information about the ageing population worldwide in 2000 and makes predictions for 2050.

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



2 Read the sample answer below.

- 1 Underline the writer's key points.
- 2 Underline the comparative and superlative structures the writer uses.

Introduce the summary using your own words as far as possible.

One approach is to summarise the main trend in one paragraph, then describe this in more detail in the next.

The overview gives an overall picture of the information. It often comes at the end and forms the final paragraph.

Sample answer

The graph shows how the size and distribution of the world's ageing population is likely to change over a 50-year period.

Overall, the proportions around the world are predicted to rise significantly. In 2000, just under ten percent of the world's population was over 60, but by 2050, this will more than double to approximately 22 percent.

A closer look at the data reveals that the ageing population is expected to rise more in some parts of the world than in others. In 2000, Europe had the largest group of ageing citizens, at 20 percent of its population. The second-largest group could be found in North America and the third in Oceania, while only 5 percent of Africa's population was in this category.

By 2050, Europe is still going to have by far the greatest percentage of over 60s, with figures likely to reach 35 percent. However, the biggest increases in this age group, relative to the rest of the population, are predicted to occur in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In Asia and Latin America, for example, figures will increase almost threefold to between 20 and 25 percent; in Africa, they will more than double.

Although Europe will maintain its lead in terms of its proportion of elderly citizens, the rate of increase in other parts of the world by 2050 will be much more significant.

- 3 Read the sample answer again and note the verb tenses and forms the writer has used to describe future trends.

2 Charts/tables/graphs that show related information

1 Look at the Writing task below and answer these questions.

- 1 How are the charts linked?
- 2 What are the key features of the charts?
- 3 How would you organise an answer? Why?

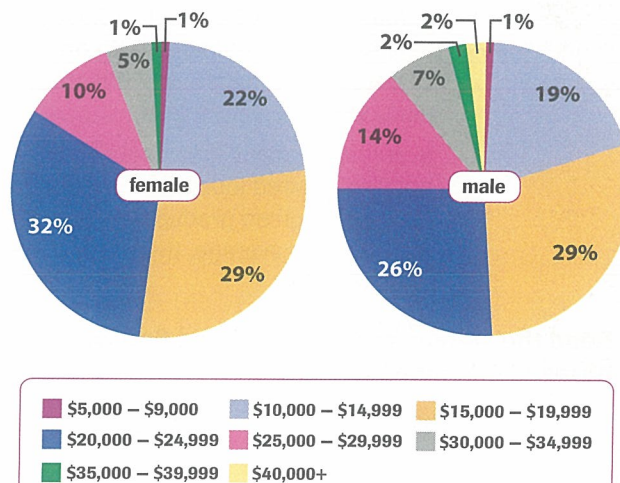
The table and charts below provide information about the destinations and employment of UK first degree holders.

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

Destinations of UK graduates by academic year (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010
full-time employment	64	62	59	63
part-time employment and study	9	8	8	7
further study only	16	17	18	17
not employed	11	13	15	13

Salary bands for 2009/10 graduates in employment that year



2 Read the sample answer on page 104.

- 1 Which sentence sums up the first key point?
- 2 Where is the overview?

Some phrases from the task can be used but try to rephrase where you can.

Note the use of *comprising* to mean 'consisting of'.

Sample answer

The table and charts show the study and employment choices of UK graduates over a four-year period and the annual salaries of the 2009/10 group in full-time employment.

According to the table, the pattern in graduate destinations altered very little over this period. The largest category, comprising approximately two-thirds of graduates, found full-time jobs, while 7–9 percent opted for a mix of work and further study. Approximately twice this number continued their studies, while the percentage of graduates not working ranged from 11–15 percent.

Among those 2009/10 graduates who were employed in the UK, the majority were earning between £15,000 and £25,000 per year. Female graduates in the £20,000–£25,000 salary band formed the largest group at 32 percent, and a higher percentage of women than men were employed at lower salary levels. However, 14 percent of male graduates earned £25,000–£30,000 a year compared with only 10 percent of females, and this trend continued as salaries rose.

In summary, many first-degree holders secured jobs after graduation. However, women graduates tended to earn less, on average, than their male counterparts.

3 Read the sample answer again and find words/phrases that mean:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| 1 did not change much | 5 most |
| 2 group | 6 bands |
| 3 chose | 7 got work |
| 4 about | |

3 Graphs that show trends over time

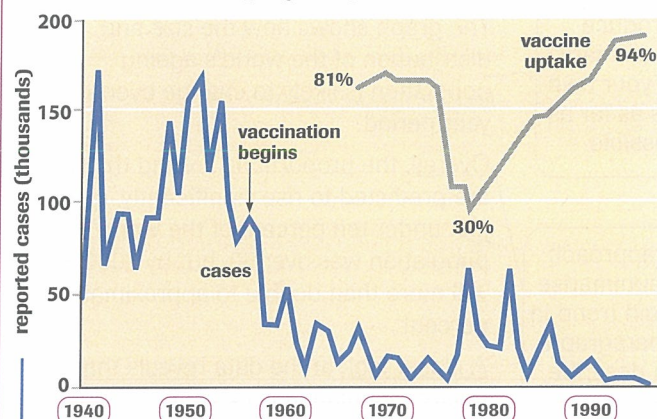
1 Look at the Writing in the next column and answer these questions.

- What are the key features of the data?
- What comparisons could you make?
- What should you mention in your overview?

The graph shows the impact of vaccinations on the incidence of whooping cough, a childhood illness, between 1940 and 1990 in Britain.

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

Cases of whooping cough (Britain) 1940–1990



2 Read the sample answer below.

- How has the writer organised the information?
- Where is the overview?
- Which figures are included, and why?

Study the data carefully before you start writing. Note that the number of cases are in thousands.

Sample answer

The graph shows the changing number of cases of whooping cough in Britain from 1940 to 1990, and how the introduction and use of a vaccine for the disease affected the pattern. Clearly, there was a direct link between the administration of the vaccine and the number of cases of whooping cough among children during this period in history.

Overall, the number of cases fell from a high of 170,000 to almost zero. However, there were significant fluctuations in the trend. For example, just after 1940, there was a surge in the number of cases from 50,000 to approximately 170,000. Although the figure fell back in the next few years, it peaked again in the early 1950s and fluctuated considerably until the introduction of a vaccination in the late 1950s.

Following this, the number of cases dropped sharply to well below 20,000 in the mid-1970s, until a sudden fall in vaccinations, from 81 percent to 30 percent, resulted in a parallel rise in the incidence of the illness. Figures then went up again to 60,000 around 1980, but gradually fell back to their earlier level as vaccinations were resumed. By 1990, 94 percent of children were being vaccinated against whooping cough, and there were few, if any, cases.

Remember to vary the verb phrases that you use to describe trends.

3 Read the answer again and underline the words/phrases the writer uses to:

- 1 introduce similarities and differences
- 2 describe events over time
- 3 link causes and effects.

4 Diagrams that show a process and/or how something works

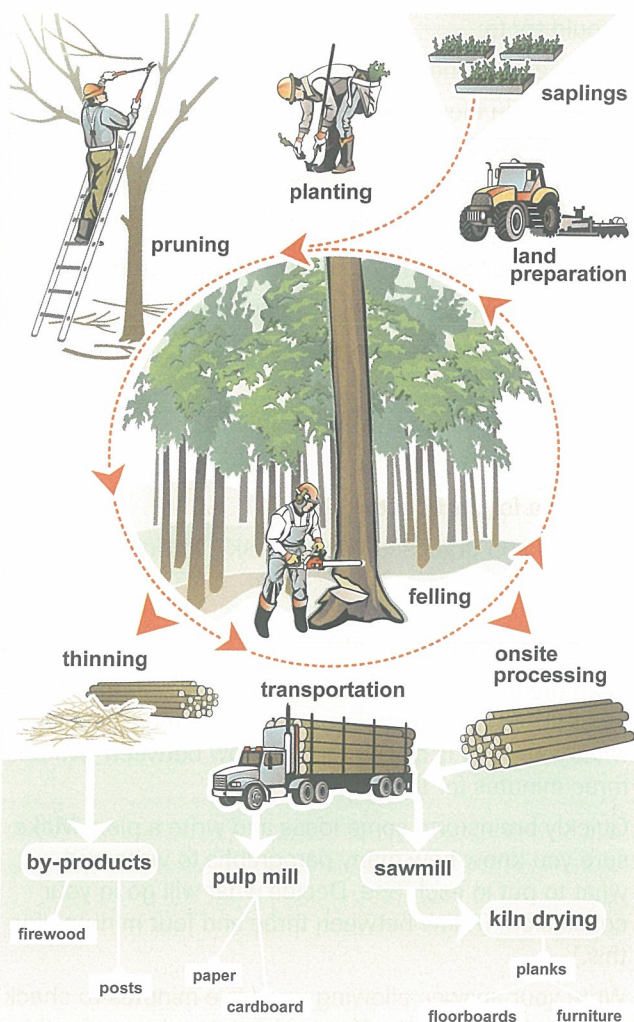
1 Look at the Writing task below and answer these questions.

- 1 What are the key stages in the process? (Explain them to a partner.)
- 2 What vocabulary could you use in your answer?
- 3 What comparisons could you make?
- 4 What would you write in your overview?

The diagram shows the stages in the cultivation and management of a forest.

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

The life cycle of forest trees



2 Read the sample answer below and underline the words/phrases used to mark the stages in the process.

Sample answer

The diagram illustrates the stages in the creation of a man-made forest and the various uses of the wood that is produced.

Before planting can take place, the land must be cleared and prepared. Heavy machinery is used to turn over the soil and ensure that it is ready for young trees. Once this has been done, saplings that have been grown in a nursery are taken to the area and planted individually.

Over time, the young trees start to grow. As they reach a certain height, they are pruned by hand and the forest is thinned. Trees that have been cut down at this stage are used for firewood or to create posts for fences.

The remaining trees gradually reach maturity and are not removed until they are required for wood products. When this happens, individual trees are felled using electrical saws, and prepared for transport on site. The trunks are transported by lorry either to the pulp mill, where they are turned into paper or cardboard, or to the sawmill, where they are dried and cut into planks, to be used for floorboards and furniture. Meanwhile the cleared forest ground is prepared for the planting of new saplings.

Clearly, the agricultural process required to produce wood-based products consists of a number of well-defined stages that allow forest trees to reach a certain age before they are cut down and new forests are planted.

Note how the writer has used a mix of vocabulary from the diagram and original vocabulary.

3 Read the answer again and underline the passive verb forms.

Useful language

Starting your answer / Introducing a key point

The graph/chart/table/diagram gives/provides/highlights information about / on / regarding / with regard to ...

The graph/chart/table/diagram indicates that / provides a breakdown of ...

The diagram illustrates ...

According to the graph/chart/table/diagram, ...

A closer / more detailed look at X reveals ...

Comparing and contrasting

while / on the other hand / however
although
similarly / in contrast / in comparison / unlike ...
the next most significant/important/marked
twice/three times as many
double / three times the number

Describing trends

(to experience) a(n) increase/decrease/rise/fall/drop in/of
to increase/decrease/rise/fall/drop by/from ... to
to fluctuate
to undergo a change
to remain stable/steady
to stagnate
to dip
to peak
to increase twofold/threefold
to surge
a less/more marked increase/decrease, etc. (occurred / took place)
less/more significant / steady / especially strong growth
a parallel rise/fall
to expect/ predict / forecast

Describing figures

just over/under
a little below/above
slightly more/less than
approximately
not nearly as high/low as
to widen/narrow (e.g. a gap/difference)

Describing amount/extent/categories

a high/low level/incidence of
a large/small quantity of
one aspect/type of
a great/small proportion of
a slow/fast rate (of growth)
to a large/great extent

Summarising the stages in a diagram

after that / following that
before / prior to
once
as
meanwhile
over time / gradually
finally/lastly/eventually

Introducing the overview

Overall / Thus / Clearly / In summary / To summarise

Task 2

This task is in the form of a statement and question(s). There may be more than one part to discuss, and you need to give your own opinion.

Your answer must be at least 250 words long. You can write more than this, but if you write less, you will lose some marks. You need to spend about 40 minutes on this task. There are twice as many marks for Part 2 as for Part 1.

You should try to:

- discuss all the questions or issues in the task;
- present main ideas and provide some supporting ideas or examples;
- include relevant examples from your own experience;
- draw a logical conclusion;
- organise your answer into fully coherent paragraphs;
- link your ideas together in a logical way;
- use your own words where possible and avoid copying from the question;
- write grammatically correct sentences;
- use accurate spelling and punctuation;
- write in a formal academic style.

You studied and practised Writing Task 2 in Units 2, 4, 6 and 8.

How to do Task 2

- 1 Read the instructions carefully. Decide how many parts there are to the question and underline them. Decide what your view is on the topic. (Allow between two and three minutes for this.)
- 2 Quickly brainstorm some ideas and write a plan. Make sure you know how many paragraphs to write and what to put in each one. Decide what will go in your conclusion. (Allow between three and four minutes for this.)
- 3 Write your answer, allowing up to five minutes to check it through afterwards. (Allow about 34 minutes for this.)

Task 2 questions

In addition to writing about a single question or statement, there are other types of task you may have to deal with.

1 To what extent do you agree?

1 Read the Writing task below. What does the statement in the task mean?

- a Graduates should get work before they do a second degree.
- b Graduates should continue studying if they cannot find a job they want.
- c Graduates with second degrees are usually over-qualified for their first jobs.

To what extent means 'how much?'. You can agree completely or disagree completely, or you can present both sides of the argument.

Write about the following topic.

Graduates who cannot find work in their chosen field should be advised to do a second degree, rather than taking a job that does not interest them.

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

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

2 Read the sample answer on the right and complete this plan for the essay.

para. 1	introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 <i>Reasons why this happens</i> Depends on situation
para. 2	main idea supporting idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paying for university Supported by 2 or a loan Not good to continue like this
para. 3	main idea supporting idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough 3 May have to wait or start at bottom of 4 Has advantages, e.g. my father
para. 4	main idea supporting idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 5 for some people Good idea in today's 6
para. 5	conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult 7 Only good advice if part of your career 8

Sample answer

These days, it can be difficult to get a good job when you leave university. Many more students are studying for degrees, so the job market is very competitive. Some people believe that it is better to take a second degree if you cannot secure suitable employment. But I tend to think it depends on your circumstances.

The first consideration is finance. Universities charge high fees for their courses, and in some countries it can cost up to £25,000 to do a first degree. Although some students are fortunate in that their parents can fund their studies, many others have to borrow the money and then repay it when they start working. In my view, it is not a good idea to recommend that these students continue this situation, particularly if they have no real desire to study further.

I think we now have to accept that there are not always enough jobs to go round. So the second consideration is that it might be better to be patient, start at the bottom and work your way up the career ladder. This is what my father did, and it definitely gave him a fuller understanding of his chosen field.

On the other hand, a second degree may be a natural progression for students who wish to enter a certain profession or to pursue a research-based career. If they can afford the course without getting into debt, it may be advisable for them to carry on with their studies, especially in the current economic climate.

Ultimately, the decision may be a difficult one. However, I feel that those who do not really want to continue studying or cannot afford it should not be encouraged to do so. Unless you had already planned to do a postgraduate course, it could turn out to be much better if you start working, whatever the status or salary.

State your position in the introductory paragraph.

Make sure the sentences in each paragraph follow each other logically.

Give a personal example if it is relevant to your main idea.

Write a final concluding paragraph that sums up your points and re-states your position.

3 Read the sample answer again.

- How does the writer link the second and third paragraphs?
- What discourse marker does the writer use to signal that he is moving on to a counter-argument?

4 How does the writer express these ideas using more advanced vocabulary?

- 1 get the right job
- 2 pay for someone's course
- 3 do not want to
- 4 take a low-level job
- 5 go into a particular type of work

5 Find four phrasal verbs in the sample answer. What do they mean?

2 Benefits and drawbacks

1 Read the Writing task below and answer these questions.

- 1 What two points of view are presented in the opening statement? Underline the key words.
- 2 Which point of view do you agree with most? Why?

Write about the following topic.

Some people believe that technological tools such as body scanners and CCTV have significantly enhanced our safety and security, while others feel that they have resulted in a loss of privacy.

Do the benefits of these items outweigh their disadvantages?

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

2 Read the sample answer below, then write a one-sentence summary of the writer's view. Is it the same as your view?

Sample answer

Information technology has progressed in leaps and bounds over the past few decades. New devices are being designed and upgraded all the time, and it is inevitable that society will want to use them; what is important is how they are used. I believe that if they are employed for the right purposes, their benefits outweigh their drawbacks.

No one can deny that CCTV makes many public places safer for people. If youngsters need to travel by train or underground on their own, for example, their parents feel happier knowing that the public are being monitored on the platforms. **This type of surveillance** also reduces anxiety for those travelling in the evening, and has certainly been welcomed by staff working in shops and cafés at night.

Note the writer's use of reference words and phrases to avoid repetition.

Introduce main ideas clearly and then support these with examples and reasons.

Like CCTV, scanners are also used in many situations where the public welcome the heightened security that they provide. Flying is the form of travel that makes people most nervous, so body and luggage scanners can help ease **this concern**. Although **it** can be time-consuming, most passengers do not mind the additional wait as long as the process is efficient.

Having made these points, it is true that every invention receives some criticism, and perhaps **this** is a good thing. It is perfectly possible that the huge amounts of data gathered by CCTV and scanners could be misused by authorities or passed on to other organisations without people's knowledge. **Such uses** would amount to an abuse of personal privacy. If this were to happen, I would agree with the view expressed in the task.

In the end, it is up to us to ensure that technology is used wisely. Generally, **this is what happens**, and people who complain are often too impatient or too short-sighted to see the advantages that it offers. However, **that** does not mean that we should become complacent about it.

Use appropriate language to introduce your arguments.

3 Read the sample answer again and underline the phrases the writer uses to introduce arguments.

4 What do the eight words/phrases in bold refer to?

3 Two questions

1 Read the Writing task below and answer these questions.

- 1 What does *this* in the first question refer back to?
- 2 What issues are you likely to write about for each question?

Write about the following topic.

Recent research has confirmed that 'human activity has become the greatest threat to plant and animal life'.

Why do you think this has happened?

How can we reduce our impact on the natural world?

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

You need to cover both questions, but you do not have to write the same number of words on each one

- 2 Read the sample answer below. In which paragraphs does the writer deal with each question in the task? How does the writer link his points across paragraphs?

Sample answer

There can be no doubt that human beings have been responsible for loss of wildlife. While we tend to exploit the natural world for our own purposes, some of our ancestors understood their relationship with other species much better. I would argue that it is this sense of harmony with nature that we need to **recapture**.

One of the main reasons why certain species of wildlife have become threatened is loss of habitat. As the population of the world has grown, humans have claimed increasingly large areas of land for the construction of homes and cities. An inevitable result has been the removal of plants and trees and the destruction of animal territories.

Increasing urban development has, in turn, led to global warming, which is another contributing factor. Temperature and rainfall are critical to the survival of wildlife. Global warming has resulted in a **shift** in weather patterns, resulting in drought, flooding and heatwaves, all of which **have taken their toll** on the natural world.

So what can be done? I believe that the problem has to be **tackled** on a number of levels. As individuals, we should ensure that we treat the countryside with respect, avoid activities that harm animal life and, if possible, participate in projects or donate to charities that work to protect the world around us.

However, it seems that the real work has to be done on a national and international level. What governments need to do in their own countries is to encourage sustainable building practices, limit urban growth and reduce human activities which contribute to global warming. But they also need to sign up to treaties that enable nations to **collaborate** in the protection of the world's diverse species. After all, we cannot live without our flora and fauna.

Many of the threats to plant and animal life are a direct result of human activity, so it is now time to **redress the situation**. If we do not do this, we may be the next species to become endangered.

Use discourse markers and/or reference devices to your ideas across paragraphs.

Aim to include some advanced phrases and words.

A direct question can be a useful device for opening or closing a paragraph.

- 3 Read the sample answer again and underline the emphatic devices that the writer uses.
- 4 What do you think the words and phrases in bold mean in the sample essay? Use a dictionary if you need to.

Useful language

Giving your opinions / expressing attitude

In my view/opinion, ...

From my point of view, ...

(Personally,) I tend to think/believe/feel that ...

I would argue that / I tend to think that ...

I am not sure I agree with/that ...

I tend not to believe that ...

As far as I'm concerned, ...

Arguably / As a matter of fact / Interestingly / Clearly / To a certain extent, ...

Introducing arguments

The main argument in favour of / against ...

It is (certainly) true that ...

It is (generally) believed/felt that ...

The general view is / has been that ...

Experts/Professionals would argue/say that ...

Presenting reasons/examples

One of the main reasons why ...

The main reason why ...

There are a number of reasons why/for ...

For this reason, ...

Presenting a counter argument

Having said that / made this point / these points, ...

Despite / In spite of this, ...

Expressing purpose

with the aim of / in order to / so as to

Expressing cause and effect

due to / otherwise

as a result/consequence / with the result that / resulting in

Emphasising

What we/people/governments need to / should do is ...

All that X needs to / should do is ...

It is X that ...

Drawing a conclusion

Overall, ... / All in all, ...

Ultimately, ... / In the end, ...