Look at the bar chart, exam question and sample answer and do the exercises to improve your writing skills.

**Preparation**

Write the verbs in the correct group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>increase</th>
<th>rise</th>
<th>grow</th>
<th>rose</th>
<th>increased</th>
<th>grew</th>
<th>was spent</th>
<th>goes up</th>
<th>is spent</th>
<th>went up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Exam question

The bar chart shows the amount of money spent on two types of electronic items in country X.

Summarise the information in the chart by selecting and reporting the main features. Make comparisons where relevant.

The chart gives information about how much money was spent on computers and smartphones in country X between the years 2011 and 2015.

According to the chart, there were upward trends in spending on both items. **Computer sales increased steadily by $5 million each year.** Smartphone sales remained level at $10 million until 2013 and then increased dramatically, reaching $45 million dollars in 2015. Although they are still less than the value of computer sales, they are only $5 million behind.

People’s total expenditure on these electronic devices rose dramatically in this period. **The total was $40 million in 2011 and it rose to $95 million in 2015.**

Overall, the sales of both of these items grew, but smartphone sales grew more quickly. If these trends continue, we can expect smartphone sales to overtake computer sales in 2016 or soon after.

Top Tips for writing

1. The first paragraph is short. It should simply say what the chart shows and where and when it describes.
2. Avoid repeating words in the question. Instead, use other words with the same or similar meanings.
3. Describe the trends you can see. Use numbers from the chart.
4. To sum up, highlight the most important things the information shows. You can also say what is likely to happen in the future.
5. Don’t try to explain the chart. In this type of exam question you just have to describe what happened, not say why it happened.
Writing skills practice: Describing a bar chart – exercises

1. Check your understanding: multiple choice
Circle the correct option to complete these sentences.

1. The chart shows sales of one / two / three types of electronic item.
2. The graph shows spending over a three / four / five -year period.
3. The data shows sales from 2011 / 2012 / 2014 to 2015.
4. Sales of both items increased / remained level / fell.
5. Sales of computers / smartphones / both remained level and then increased dramatically.
6. Sales of computers / smartphones / both increased steadily.

2. Check your writing: matching
Write the description in the box below the correct bar chart.

... remained level  ... increased dramatically  ... fell steadily
... fell dramatically  ... rose steadily

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3. Check your writing: gap fill
Complete the sentences with a word.

1. This chart gives information ___________ spending on smartphones and computers.
2. The chart shows information for country X ___________ 2011 and 2015.
3. According ___________ the chart, spending increased on both items.
4. Spending on computers increased ___________ $5 million each year.
5. From 2011 to 2013 smartphone sales remained level ___________ $10 million.
6. Expenditure on smartphones is still less ___________ on computers.
7. Total spending on these items rose from $40 million ___________ $95 million in the period described.
8. Spending on smartphones could overtake spending on computers ___________ 2016.

4. Check your writing: gap fill
Complete the sentences with a phrase from the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>grew</th>
<th>overtake</th>
<th>increased steadily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>increased dramatically</td>
<td>remained level</td>
<td>in this period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Computer sales ___________ \((went up at a steady rate)\) during the five years.
2. Smartphone sales ___________ \((stayed the same)\) until 2013.
3. In 2014 and 2015 smartphone sales ___________ \((went up a lot in a short time)\).
4. People’s total spending on these electronic devices rose dramatically ___________ \((during these years)\).
5. Overall, the sales of both these items ___________ \((went up)\).
6. If these trends continue, we can expect smartphone sales to ___________ \((become greater than)\) computer sales in 2016.

Discussion

How often do you buy a new computer or smartphone?

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