

PeiP2 - October Mid-Term Test – GENERAL FEEDBACK

To understand my feedback on your papers, see the PDF with my correction codes on eCampus.

Graph:

You were asked to do two things: to describe it factually (what information it represents, what each axis shows, what each curve does etc.) then attempt to analyse/explain it. Some of you didn't attempt to do the latter.

- Avoid “we can see”/“we find” etc. Use impersonal forms: “it can be seen/observed” –or nothing at all. Avoid superfluous rhetoric: keep your language crisp, simple and to the point. Replace “we have” by “there is/are”. Avoid “we” (unless you really mean “we”): use a passive or impersonal form instead.
- Be careful with the language of writing numbers/figures: 4.5 (use a point), 7 million with no S. (When do you put an S on million, thousand and hundred?)
- **Graph terminology:** What's the difference between “a graph” and “a curve”? Between “to fall”, “to drop” and “to drop off”? Between “to rise” and “to rise up”? Does a curve increase, rise or grow? What about the number of visitors? Also, some of you hadn't learn the vocabulary carefully enough.
- Which tense should you use when describing a graph – the simple present or the simple past? If it's purely descriptive (i.e. what each curve does) then the simple present is better: “The black curve rises sharply between 2003 and 2004.” (This is logical because the curve always does that: it's something regular- it does that whenever you look at it.) At times it is better to use the simple past; why? (e.g. “The number of visitors to Hong Kong from mainland China rose dramatically between 2003 and 2004.”)
- In either case, use the simple form – not BE + -ING.

So far as trying to explain the trends, why do you think the number of visitors from mainland China increased so much then? And why did the number of visitors from other Asian countries and elsewhere drop in 2003? Look at the links in my section on eCampus for the answer!

Essay:

Note the difference between to believe vs to believe in:

- You believe something/somebody if you believe it/they are right: “He said he was late because he got stuck in traffic and I believed him.” (You believe a fact, a statement etc.)
- If you believe in something/someone, you believe they exist: “She believes in Father Christmas.” Some people believe conspiracy theories – they don't believe in them. However, some people believe in UFOs!

Grammar:

- Countable versus uncountable nouns: news is uncountable and therefore always singular, despite the S at the end. An uncountable noun means just that: you can't count it, therefore there is no plural and you can't precede it with the indefinite article a/an.
- The use of ~~the~~ vs the zero article.
- Less vs fewer: the correct usage is less with uncountable nouns (less information), fewer with countable nouns (fewer people).

Other difficulties/points you could work on:

- Correct use of capital letters (at the beginning of sentences, on proper nouns etc).
- Paragraphing: see the PDF in my section on eCampus for information on how to structure an essay, if your mind needs refreshing on this point.
- Be careful with register – i.e. using the correct tone. Don't be too informal in this type of writing. This is often difficult to gauge but you should be working on it at your level. Use a lot of/plenty of /a great deal of (rather than ~~lots of/loads of~~ – too informal). Likewise, much more rather than ~~way more~~ (you may hear the latter all the time but it is informal too). Say quite rapidly rather than ~~pretty rapidly~~.