BAND 7+ VOCABULARY

Swap Basic Words for Band 7+ Vocabulary

Examiners reward **Lexical Resource**: using less common words *accurately*. A fancy word in the wrong place loses marks, so for every word below you get its meaning, exactly **when** to use it, and when to avoid it.

Basic word → Precise word

Match the word to the chart type, the size of the change and its speed

Meaning	Use when	Watch out
What the word actually means.	The exact situation it fits.	Common mistakes to avoid.

INTRODUCTION SENTENCE · ALL CHART TYPES

1 Instead of "shows"

Use one of these in your paraphrase of the question. Match the verb to the type of visual.

Illustrates

Any chart

MEANING To show or explain something clearly using a picture, chart or example.

USE WHEN The safest all-rounder. Works for bar charts, line graphs, pie charts, tables and diagrams. Use it when you are not sure which verb fits.

*"The bar chart **illustrates** the distribution of household income across five regions."*

Depicts

Maps · diagrams

MEANING To represent something in the form of a picture or drawing.

USE WHEN Best for **visual** tasks: maps, diagrams of a machine or building, and before-and-after plans. It suggests the visual is a drawing, not just numbers.

*"The maps **depict** the structural transformations in the town centre between 1990 and 2020."*

Watch out Less natural for a plain table of numbers. Use *presents* or *provides* there.

Delineates

Process · flow chart

MEANING To describe or mark out something precisely, step by step or by its boundaries.

USE WHEN Use for **process diagrams and flow charts**, where the visual sets out a clear sequence of stages. Can also suit maps that mark out zones.

*"The flow chart clearly **delineates** the sequential stages of paper recycling."*

Watch out Too formal for simple bar or pie charts. Do not overuse it.

Renders

Tables (use carefully)

MEANING To provide or present something; to give it in a particular form.

USE WHEN Can introduce a **table** or data set that gives an overview of figures. It sounds formal and academic.

*"The tabular data **renders** an overview of consumer spending in four countries."*

Watch out Rare in IELTS answers and easy to misuse. *Provides an overview of* or *presents* is safer and just as strong.

LINE GRAPHS · BAR CHARTS

2 Instead of "went up"

Choose the verb by **how big** and **how fast** the rise was. Check the slope of the line before you choose.

Surged

Sudden · very large

MEANING To increase suddenly and powerfully.

USE WHEN Use only when the line rises **steeply over a short period**. Not for slow, gradual growth.

*"The number of subscribers **surged** from 2 million to 9 million in just two years."*

Watch out Wrong for a rise of 2–3% over a decade. Use *rose slightly* or *increased gradually*.

Escalated

Rapid · often negative

MEANING To become greater, more serious or more intense, usually quickly.

USE WHEN Best for **costs, prices, problems or risks**: things that become worse or more expensive. It carries a slightly negative tone.

*"The cost of imports **escalated** rapidly in 2010."*

Watch out Avoid for positive figures such as happiness or literacy rates. Use *rose* or *climbed*.

Climbed significantly

Large · steady

MEANING To go up by a noticeable amount, step by step.

USE WHEN Use when the rise is **large but steady**, often moving towards a high point or peak. Works for line graphs and bar charts.

*"Passenger numbers **climbed significantly**, reaching a peak of 80,000 in August."*

Experienced an upward trajectory

Long-term trend

MEANING To follow a rising path or direction over time.

USE WHEN Use for an **overall long-term upward trend**, especially in your overview sentence. It describes the general direction, not one sharp jump.

*"The employment rate **experienced an upward trajectory** over the 30-year period."*

Watch out A long phrase. Use it once per essay, not for every rise.

LINE GRAPHS · BAR CHARTS

3 Instead of "went down"

Again, match the word to the size and speed of the fall.

Plummeted

Sudden · very large

MEANING To fall very quickly and by a very large amount.

USE WHEN Use only for a **dramatic, steep drop** over a short time. It is the falling partner of *surged*.

*"Car sales **plummeted** following the tax hike, from 50,000 to 12,000 units."*

Watch out "Plummeted sharply" repeats the idea, since plummet already means a sharp fall. Write *plummeted* on its own.

Contracted

Size · market · economy

MEANING To become smaller in size or amount.

USE WHEN Best for **markets, economies, industries and market share**, things that "shrink". Often followed by *by + percentage*.

*"The market share for local businesses **contracted** by 15%."*

Watch out Sounds odd for people or events (e.g. "visitors contracted"). Use *fell* or *declined*.

Registered a decline

Formal · any size

MEANING To show or record a fall in a measured figure.

USE WHEN A formal, neutral way to report a fall in **measured data** (profits, rates, scores). Add an adjective to show size: *a slight / marked decline*.

> *"The profit margin **registered a marked decline** over the final quarter."*

Diminished

Gradual · steady

MEANING To become gradually smaller or less.

USE WHEN Use for a **slow, steady reduction** over time. It pairs well with *steadily* or *gradually*.

> *"The usage of fossil fuels **diminished** steadily between 2000 and 2020."*

Watch out Too weak for a sudden crash. Use *plummeted* instead.

LINE GRAPHS · TABLES

4 Instead of "stayed the same"

Check what happened **before** the flat part. That decides the best word.

Plateaued

Levels off after change

MEANING To stop rising or falling and stay at about the same level.

USE WHEN Use when a figure **rises (or falls) and then levels off**. Always state the level: *plateaued at* + number.

> *"After rising for five years, production rates **plateaued at** approximately 5,000 units."*

Watch out Not ideal for a line that was flat from the very start. Use *remained static*.

Remained static

No change at all

MEANING To stay exactly the same, without any movement.

USE WHEN Use when the figure shows **no change** across the period, or between two tables or years.

> *"The percentages **remained static** throughout the three-year period."*

Watch out If the line moves up and down a little, use *hovered around* instead.

Hovered consistently around

Small ups and downs

MEANING To stay close to one value while moving slightly above and below it.

USE WHEN Use for a figure that **fluctuates slightly** but stays near the same number. Always give the approximate value.

*"The temperature **hovered consistently around** 22 degrees all summer."*

Maintained a stable equilibrium

Balanced · very formal

MEANING To stay balanced and unchanged over a period.

USE WHEN Use when **two or more figures stay balanced** with each other, or a figure holds steady before a later change.

*"Exports and imports **maintained a stable equilibrium** until 2015, when imports rose."*

Watch out Can sound over-formal. *Remained stable* or *held steady* often reads more naturally.

PIE CHARTS · TABLES

5 Instead of "big part / most"

Use these for the **largest** slice or category. Add the figure in brackets or after the phrase.

Constituted the vast majority

Well over half

MEANING To form most of the total, usually far more than half.

USE WHEN Use only when the share is **clearly over 50%**, ideally 70% or more.

*"Renewable energy **constituted the vast majority** of the total output (78%)."*

Watch out Wrong for 35% even if it is the largest slice. Say *the largest share* instead.

Accounted for a dominant share

Largest · leading

MEANING To make up the biggest and most important part.

USE WHEN Use when one category is **clearly the largest**, even if it is under 50%. Very flexible for pie charts and tables.

*"International tourism **accounted for a dominant share** of revenue, at 46%."*

Comprised the lion's share

Largest by far

MEANING To make up the largest part of something (an idiom).

USE WHEN Use when one segment is **much bigger than all the others**. Gives your writing natural, advanced range.

*"Online shopping **comprised the lion's share** of retail revenue (61%)."*

Watch out An idiom. Use it once per essay at most. Note the apostrophe: *lion's*.

Emerged as the primary component

Main part · comparison

MEANING To appear or stand out as the main part.

USE WHEN Use when **comparing several categories** and one comes out on top. *Emerged* also works when it became the largest over time.

*"Agriculture **emerged as the primary component** of the national economy, at 38%."*

PIE CHARTS · TABLES

6 Instead of "small part / least"

Use these for the **smallest** slice or category. Always include the figure.

Accounted for a negligible fraction

Tiny · almost zero

MEANING To make up such a small part that it hardly matters.

USE WHEN Use only for **very small figures**, roughly 1–3%.

*"Public transit **accounted for a negligible fraction** of commutes (just 2%)."*

Watch out Wrong for 12%. That is small but not negligible. Use *a minimal proportion*.

Represented a minimal proportion

Small

MEANING To make up a very small part of the total.

USE WHEN Use for **small but noticeable** shares, often under 10%.

*"Expenditure on leisure **represented a minimal proportion** of the budget (6%)."*

Constituted the minority segment

Smaller group

MEANING To form the smaller group within a whole.

USE WHEN Best for **groups of people** (age groups, genders, nationalities) in a pie chart or table.

*"The 18–25 age group **constituted the minority segment** of respondents (9%)."*

Watch out Use for one group compared with others, not for things like fuel or spending.

Stood as the least significant category

Smallest of all

MEANING To be the smallest or least important category.

USE WHEN Use for the **very last, smallest category** in a comparison. Good for ranking sentences.

*"Coal **stood as the least significant category**, generating only 3% of power."*

REVISE IN 60 SECONDS

Quick Cheat Sheet

Shows	Illustrates (any) · Depicts (maps, diagrams) · Delineates (processes) · Presents / Renders (tables)
Went up	Surged (sudden, big) · Escalated (costs, problems) · Climbed significantly (big, steady) · Upward trajectory (long-term)
Went down	Plummeted (sudden, big) · Contracted (markets, share) · Registered a decline (formal) · Diminished (gradual)
Stayed the same	Plateaued (levels off after change) · Remained static (no change) · Hovered around (small ups and downs) · Stable equilibrium (balanced)
Biggest part	Vast majority (70%+) · Dominant share (largest) · Lion's share (largest by far) · Primary component (comparison)
Smallest part	Negligible fraction (1–3%) · Minimal proportion (under 10%) · Minority segment (groups of people) · Least significant category (smallest of all)

USE THEM WELL

- **Accuracy beats difficulty.** A simple word used correctly scores better than an advanced word used wrongly.
- **Always add data.** Follow the verb with a figure: *plateaued at 5,000 units*, *contracted by 15%*.
- **Vary, don't overload.** Use 3–4 of these words per answer, mixed with simple ones like *rose* and *fell*.
- **Check the size.** Never call 35% a *vast majority* or 12% a *negligible fraction*.

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