

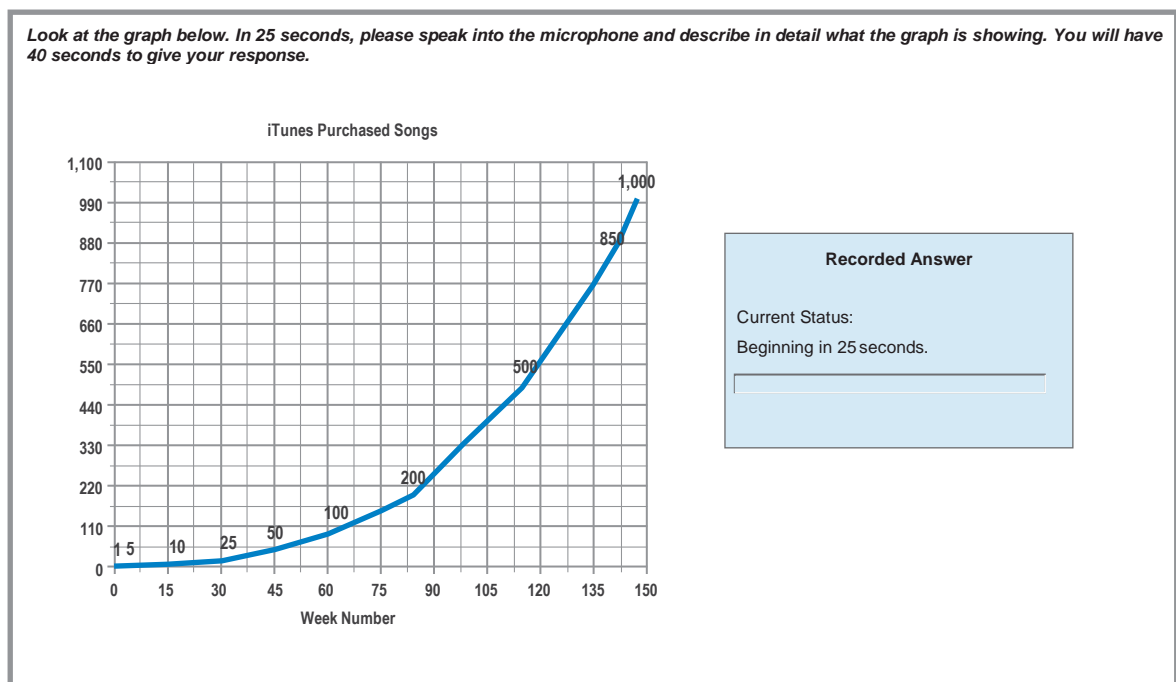
PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 3 – Describe image

Time allocated: 60 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Item Type

This is a long-answer item type that assesses speaking skills, and requires test takers to describe an image from an academic source such as a graph, map, chart, table or picture.



Step 2: Present the Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

You have 25 seconds to study the image. Try to understand the main ideas or features of the graph, map, chart, table or picture.

Strategy 2

Use appropriate statistical vocabulary to describe bars or segments, and their values in pie charts and bar charts, and to describe movements or trends in line graphs. Use a different set of language expressions when describing pictures.

Strategy 3

Make sure your description is simply and logically structured. Start with an introduction, followed by the main body, and end with a conclusion.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that they will only have 25 seconds to look at the image before the microphone opens. They should use the time efficiently to study the image and identify the main features that can be defined by answering questions such as, *What is happening?* *What are the smallest numbers?* and *What are the biggest numbers?* If the image is a time graph, they should establish the changes or the trends. Explain that “trends” means the main changes or differences over time.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Display Item 1. Give each pair 30 seconds to discuss and identify two to three main ideas represented in the graph, e.g., 1) *during the first 60 weeks, the songs purchased increased gradually*; 2) *there was a rise in week 60*; 3) *sales shot up in week 90*.
- Now ask students to support each idea with details from the graph, e.g., 1) *between week 1 and week 60, only 100 million songs were purchased*; 2) *after week 60, the number of songs purchased rose to 200 million in 30 weeks (almost doubled)*; 3) *after week 90, there was a rapid rise to 1,000 million songs in only 60 weeks*.

Strategy 2

Explain to your students that it is important to use correct vocabulary to describe statistical information. They may also need to use a different set of expressions to describe pictures.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Display some categories related to statistical information: *prepositions, movements down, movements up, adjectives, adverbs, no movement*, and have students brainstorm appropriate vocabulary for each category. For example,
Prepositions: from/between 1990 to/and 2010
Movements up: increased, rose, grew, went up
Movements down: decreased, declined, dropped, went down
Adjectives: slight, gradual, sharp, sudden, steady
Adverbs: slightly, gradually, sharply, suddenly, steadily
No movement: remained steady/stable, was unchanged, stabilized
- Ask students to look at Item 1 and make appropriate sentences to describe different features or trends within the graph using the vocabulary they have brainstormed.
- Now have students think about the phrases they can use to describe a picture. Display the following categories:
kinds of pictures and perspectives, structure, scene description, impression, intention, and have students brainstorm appropriate vocabulary or expressions for each category. For example,
Kinds of pictures and perspectives: viewer, photograph, bird's eye view, worm's eye view
Structure: foreground, background, in the upper/lower part, in front of, behind, next to, on the right/left, from behind/above/below
Scene description: describes, shows a scene, shows an image of (place), from a distance
Impression: attention focused on
Intention: evoke/express something, put forth a perspective

Strategy 3

Explain to your students that they should include an introduction, a main body and a conclusion in their descriptions. The first sentence should introduce the image and provide a brief description, e.g., *The graph shows/displays the number of iTunes songs bought ...*, *In this graph, we can see the number of iTunes songs purchased ...*, *The photo/image shows a (scene, buildings, place) from a distance.*

In the body, students should describe each feature or main idea as identified in Strategy 1, and provide supporting details. They should conclude with one sentence summarizing their description and drawing the relevant conclusion, e.g., *The information indicates ...*, *From the chart/graph, we can conclude that ...*

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Have each pair come up with one sentence to introduce the graph, e.g., what is being described in the graph.
- Ask students to decide on the most logical order to present the main ideas or features, e.g., time graphs/charts usually present information in chronological order so the most logical order would be to structure their descriptions from earliest to latest.
- Have students summarize their descriptions.
- Remind students that this item type may also include pictures, and have them think about the most logical structure for a picture description, e.g., from left to right; from the foreground to the background, or from general impressions to details.
- Provide some suitable pictures for students to describe (e.g., of famous buildings) and have them work in pairs or groups to plan the structure of their descriptions.

Step 4: Respond to a Describe Image Item

Explain to your students that they will now respond to the test item simulating the test conditions. They will have 25 seconds to study the image and 40 seconds to give their response. Remind students of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply these strategies.

If possible, seat students at separate workstations or position them in a way that they will not interfere with each other when speaking. Have them record their responses using the recording devices on their mobile phones or computers.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

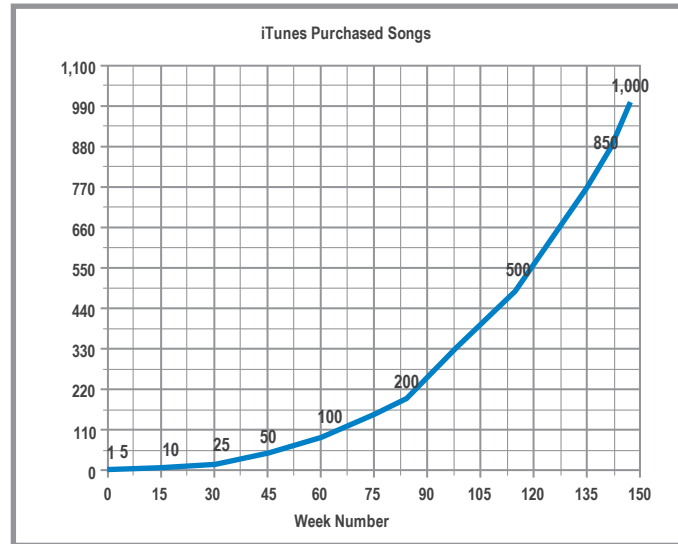
Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful?

If students have recorded their responses, ask them to compare and evaluate each other's responses in pairs or groups.

Play the three sample responses in audio files [L3_Describe_image_1_Response_B1], [L3_Describe_image_1_Response_B2] and [L3_Describe_image_1_Response_C1], and ask students to rank the responses from the weaker to the stronger. Then provide the explanations.

Item 1

Look at the graph below. In 25 seconds, speak into the microphone and describe in detail what the graph is showing. You will have 40 seconds to give your response.



Item 1: Explanations

Audio [L3_Describe_image_1_Response_B1]

There is no discussion of the relationships between elements of the graph; only the content of the graph is described and the description is disorganized. This response has an uneven rate, several hesitations and at least two repetitions, which negatively affect fluency. Incorrect pronunciation of vowels and consonants make several words unclear. This response demonstrates limited control over simple grammatical structures. There is frequent pausing for lexical planning, and the overall response is labored. This response is 39 seconds.

Audio [L3_Describe_image_1_Response_B2]

While the response describes basic elements of the graph, it is disorganized and there is little discussion of the relationships between elements. The speech is somewhat uneven, but the speed is acceptable and contains several long utterances. Incorrect pronunciation of vowels and consonants make several words unclear. Ideas are expressed through linked discourse. Language use is acceptable, although several grammar and vocabulary errors are present. This response is 30 seconds.

Audio [L3_Describe_image_1_Response_C1]

Although the major aspects of the graph are accurately described, the discussion of the relationships between elements contains one misinterpretation. This response contains several long runs of language with an even tempo. Word and phrase stress is appropriate. Incorrect pronunciation of some consonant clusters does not affect understanding. This response demonstrates good control of standard English grammar with very few grammatical errors. The vocabulary used is precise and appropriate for the context. This response is 35 seconds.