

**IELTS Academic Module preparation > Writing > Lesson 5****Introduction**

In this last IELTS lesson we'll take a look at one more type of Part 1 academic writing task: describing a diagram. You will:

- practise 'reading' and understanding diagrams
- learn language for expressing purpose, cause and result
- review and practise relative clauses
- review and practise passive voice

In the second half of the lesson, we will take a final look at writing discursive essays. In particular, you will

- review sentence relationships that we have covered in previous lessons.
- learn how to organise a good academic style paragraph.
- practise writing more complex sentences.
- practice checking your work for mistakes.
- learn what makes a good conclusion to your composition.

**IELTS WRITING TASK 1: DESCRIBING DIAGRAMS****Activity 1 > Understanding diagrams > 15 minutes**

Sometimes the part 1 writing task asks you to describe a diagram. The diagram will usually show a process or how something works. You can see an example below. Just as for charts and tables, it is important that you spend some time carefully looking at the diagram until you understand what it shows. Look for the following:

- the main parts or sections of the diagram.
- the relationship between parts in the diagram.
- the order of any stages shown in the diagram.
- any key that accompanies the diagram and helps to explain it

Before you write, try to imagine in your mind how the object works or the process develops. Keep in mind what the result of each stage will be or what the purpose of each component is.

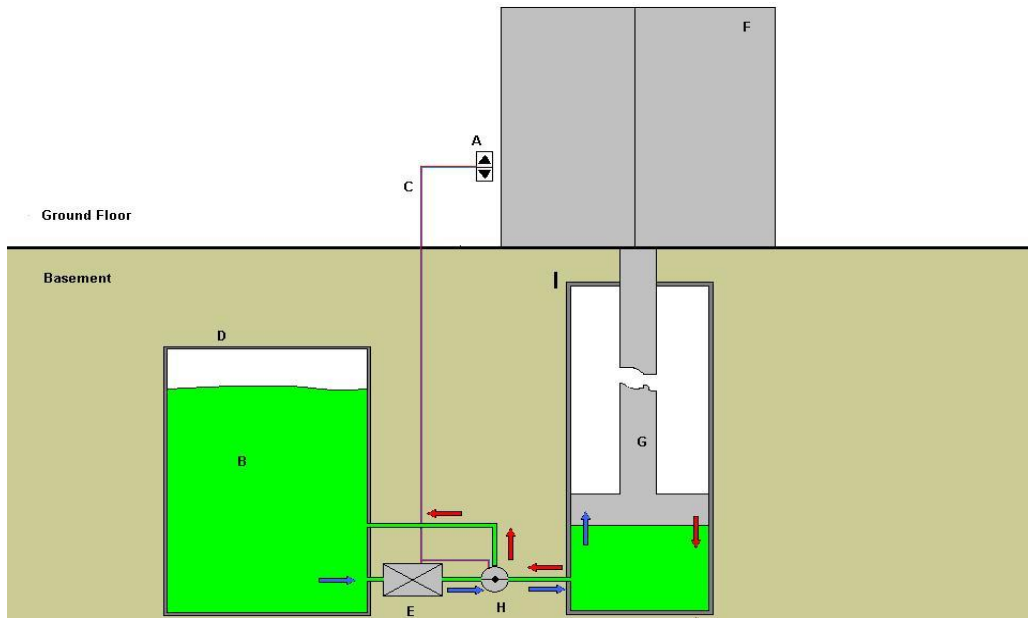
**a)** Look at this example question and match the letters in the diagram with the components listed below.

Writing Task 1

**The diagram below shows the basic operation of a hydraulic lift.  
Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information in the diagram.**

Write at least 150 words

**A hydraulic lift**



- |                   |     |                  |     |
|-------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| 1 lift carriage   | F   | 6 piston housing | ___ |
| 2 control button  | ___ | 7 pump           | ___ |
| 3 piston          | ___ | 8 valve          | ___ |
| 4 electric wires  | ___ | 9 fluid tank     | ___ |
| 5 hydraulic fluid | ___ |                  |     |

b) Now complete this example answer with the words from a) above.

The diagram shows how a hydraulic lift works. The system is quite simple and consists of the [1.....], where passengers stand, a [2.....] which raises and lowers the carriage and a circuit of pipes that carry [3.....].

When the passenger presses the 'up' [4.....] to raise the lift, an electric signal is sent to a [5.....]. This causes the pump to move fluid from the tank into the bottom of the [6.....] so as to force the piston up. As the piston housing fills up with fluid, the piston is raised higher. The lift carriage, which is attached to the top of the piston, is also forced up. The direction of the flow of hydraulic fluid is shown by the blue arrows.

When the passenger presses the 'down' control button, an electric signal is sent so that the pump is switched off. At the same time, a signal is sent to a [7.....] placed just in front of the pump in order to shut off the flow of fluid from the [8.....] to the piston housing. The valve's new position allows hydraulic fluid to flow from the piston housing back into the fluid tank. This reverse flow is shown in the diagram by the red arrows. The piston and the lift carriage which is attached to it are then brought back down due to the force of gravity.

**Activity 2 > Showing purpose > 5 minutes**

Often you will need to explain what a component or a stage in a process is for. In other words, you need to explain the *purpose* of something. Here are some examples from the description of the lift:

<b>to + infinitive:</b>	When the passenger presses the 'up' control button <b>to raise</b> the lift...
<b>so that + full clause:</b>	...an electrical signal is sent <b>so that</b> the pump is switched off.
<b>in order to + infinitive:</b>	...a signal is sent to a valve <b>in order to shut off</b> the flow of fluid...
<b>so as to + infinitive:</b>	...move fluid from the tank into the bottom of the piston housing <b>so as to force</b> the piston up.

Choose the best way to complete each sentence. There may be more than one correct answer.

1 The water is boiled [.....] kill harmful germs.

- A in order to
- B so as
- C to

2 Scales are used [.....] the ingredients are weighed accurately.

- A so as
- B so that
- C in order

3 There is a battery [.....] provide electrical power.

- A so as
- B to
- C in order to

4 [.....] grow straight, the plant needs to be supported with a piece of wood.

- A To
- B In order to
- C So as

5 The leaves need to be left in the sun [.....] dry thoroughly.

- A to
- B so that
- C so as to

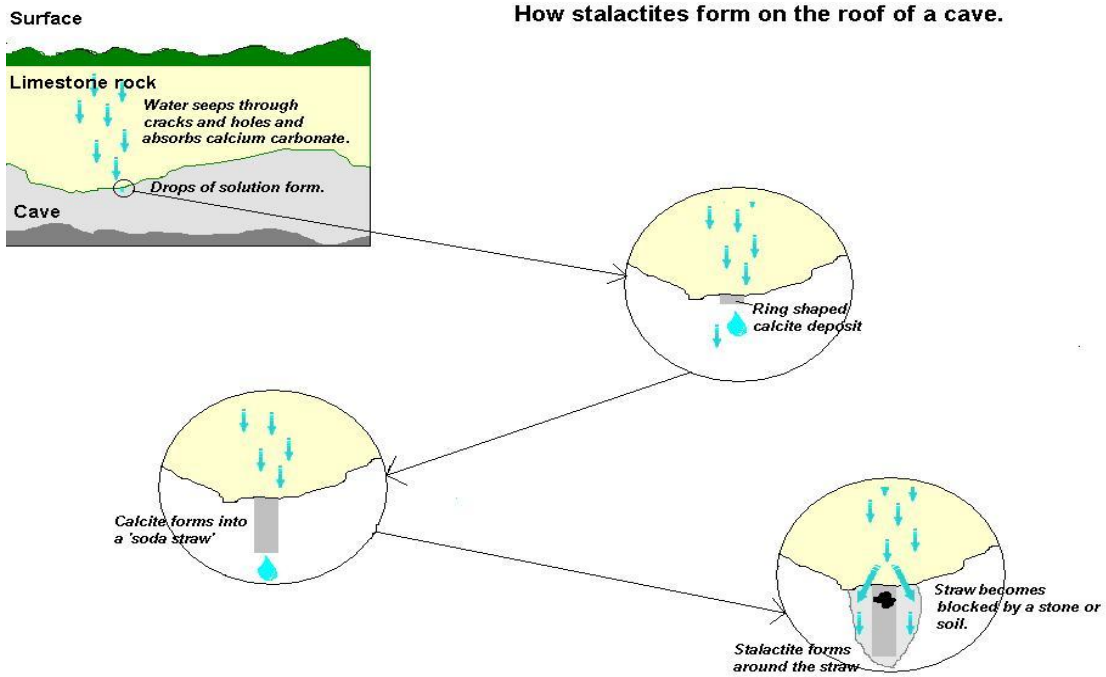
6 The frame is made of aluminium [.....] the structure is light but strong.

- A in order to
- B so that
- C to

**Activity 3 > Cause and result > 10 minutes**

In Lesson 1 we looked at phrases and words for expressing cause and result relationships. The same phrases are useful for describing diagrams.

a) Look at the diagram below. What cause and result relationships are shown?



How stalactites form on the roof of a cave.

b) Now complete this description of the process by using words and phrases from the box.

as a result because causes consequently due  
give rise to on account of results in

Water leaks slowly into the cave [1.....] there are thousands of tiny cracks and holes in the limestone rock. On its way down, the water absorbs the calcium carbonate present in the rock and this [2.....] a mineral solution. Small drops of this solution form on the roof of the cave. When each drop falls, it leaves behind a ring-shaped deposit of calcite. This process is repeated many times and [3.....] a thin calcite tube is formed. This tube is sometimes called a soda straw [4.....] its shape. Occasionally the soda straw gets blocked [5.....] to a piece of stone or soil. This [6.....] the drops of solution to pour down the outside of the straw. [7.....], calcite deposits build up around the straw and these [8.....] the typical cone shape of the stalactite. Only the straws that get blocked will eventually become stalactites.

**Activity 4 > Relative clauses > 5 minutes**

Relative clauses are clauses in sentences which add information about the subject of the sentence. Sometimes this is extra information, and the sentence would be correct without the clause. In this case, we call the clause 'non-defining'. Look at this example from the description of the lift in Activity 1:

*The lift carriage is also forced up.*

*The lift carriage, **which is attached to the top of the piston**, is also forced up.*

You can see that the clause adds extra information about the carriage, but the sentence is still grammatical without the clause. Notice that we use commas (,) to separate a non-defining clause from the main clause. Also, remember that you cannot use 'that' as a relative pronoun with non-defining clauses.

Other clauses add important information which describe or 'define' the subject of the sentence. Here's an example:

Only the straws **that get blocked** will eventually become stalactites.

This time, the sentence would not make sense without the relative clause. There are no commas to separate the clause, and we can use *that*, *where*, *who*, *which* etc as the relative pronoun.

Connect the information to make sentences with relative clauses (non-defining or defining).

There is a light.

It turns on when the temperature rises.

**Example:** There is a light which turns on when the temperature rises.

A container.

It's made of steel.

It catches rain water.

1

Chlorine is added to the tank.

It kills any dangerous bacteria.

2

The pages pass through a machine.

It cuts off the edges.

3

The programming takes six months.

It is done in India.

4

The mixture is heated to a temperature.

The temperature causes a chemical reaction.

5

### Activity 5 > Passive voice > 5 minutes

Using the passive voice can add a more formal tone to your descriptions. Often, it is not even necessary to say who or what is responsible for certain actions in the process. Compare these two sentences, for example:

(Active voice): A worker collects the materials from the recycling bins.

(Passive voice): The materials are collected from the recycling bins.

Now rewrite these sentences using the passive voice.

Someone fits solar panels to the roof of the vehicle.

**Example:** Solar panels are fitted to the roof of the vehicle.

Miners extract bauxite from the ground.

1

Occasionally someone adds zinc to the mixture.

2

Mechanics regularly test the engine's performance.

3

Once the production team has completed the production process, dispatch workers send the product out to stores.

4

As soon as the control centre has received the call, they send out a car to the customer.

5

**Activity 6 > Putting it all together > 10 minutes**

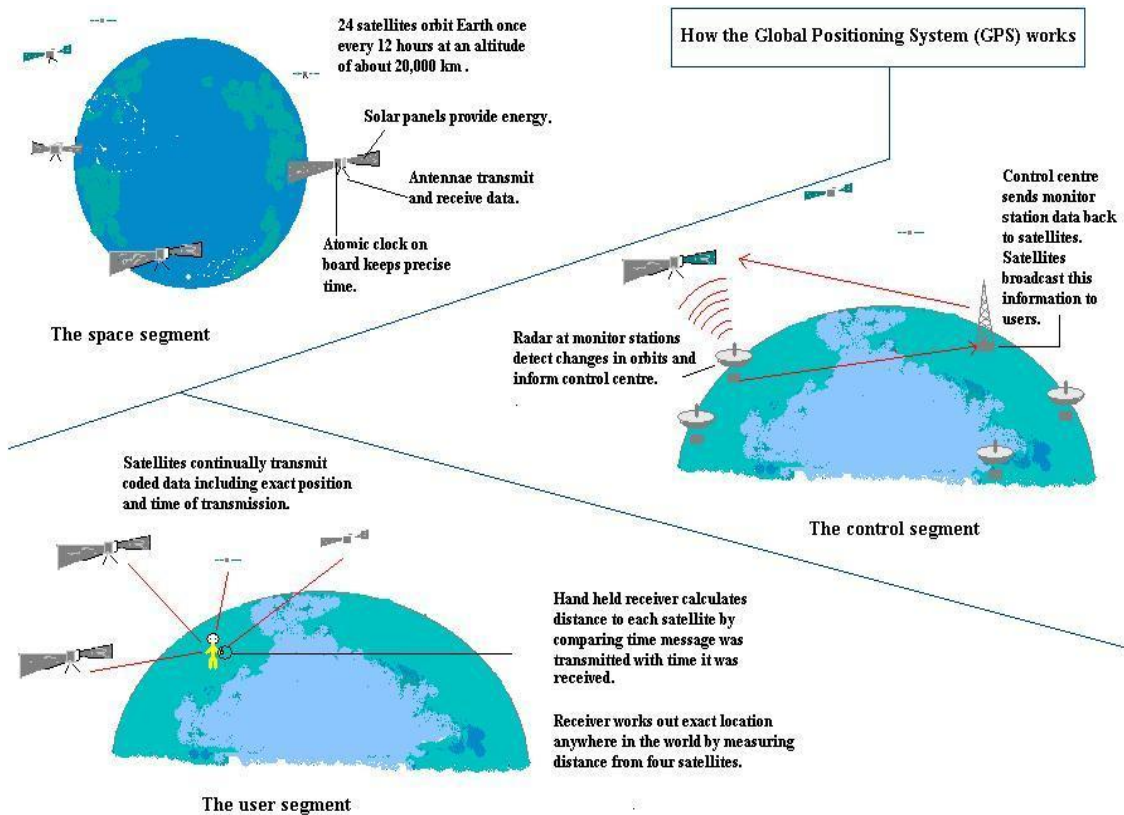
Now it's your turn. Look at the example IELTS question below:

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

**The diagram shows how the Global Positioning System (GPS) works in order to help people find their location anywhere on Earth.**

**Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown below.**

You should write at least 150 words



- a) Look at the diagram and answer the following questions.  
 How many segments are there in the system?  
 What are the main components of each segment?  
 What part does each segment play in the whole system?

**b)** Now write a description following this plan:

- Describe briefly what a GPS is and what the three segments of the system are.
- Describe the space segment: what it consists of and what it does.
- Describe the control segment: what it consists of and what it does.
- Describe the user segment: what it consists of and what it does.

Remember not to spend more than 20 minutes writing.

**c)** Now look at the example answer in the key. Can you find examples of the language we've looked at in this lesson?

**IELTS WRITING TASK 2: PARAGRAPHS AND CONCLUSIONS**

So far in these IELTS lessons we've looked at three types of discursive composition:

- Describing a problem and offering a solution
- Describing the advantages and disadvantages of something
- Expressing your opinion on a controversial issue

These are the main types of composition you may be asked to write. We've also looked at how to spend your first five minutes before you start writing:

- Brainstorming ideas
- Organising ideas in a mind map
- Planning your composition

In this lesson we'll look at how to organise your writing at the level of the paragraph and, finally, how to write a good conclusion.

**Activity 7 > Building paragraphs (1) > 10 minutes**

One of the features of good academic writing is that it has a logical 'flow' to it. Sentences should not be isolated, but each sentence should follow on logically from the one before it. They should all build into a united paragraph. The basic building block of your paragraphs should be pairs of sentences or sets of three sentences.

Up to now we have looked at the following types of sentence pairs:

- i** Argument & counter argument
- ii** Opinion & supporting examples
- iii** Opinion & supporting reasons
- iv** Listing (reasons or examples)

**a)** Make sentence pairs by matching each sentence (**1-4**) with one that follows on from it (**a-d**). For each pair, say what type of pair it is (from the list above).

- 1** Firstly, television news reports are often too short or superficial to explain the full context of a story.
- 2** In my view, products such as cosmetics or soaps should not be tested on animals.
- 3** I am convinced that governments' economic policies do harm to the environment.
- 4** It is often said that the only way to prevent crime is to enforce stricter punishments.

- a** For instance, governments do nothing to encourage people to use public transport instead of their cars.
- b** Such items are not essential, and there is no need to make creatures suffer for the sake of making money.
- c** However, statistics show that stiff punishments do nothing to reduce crime rates.
- d** Secondly, television news editors tend to favour stories which offer sensational images that make 'entertaining' viewing.

**b)** Now write a suitable sentence to follow on from each of these sentences below.

Most road accidents are caused by careless and irresponsible driving.

It is sometimes said that modern technology has helped create greater understanding between nations.



In my view there should be a total ban on the advertising of cigarettes and other tobacco products.

A first measure we could take to in order to reduce the AIDS pandemic is to make suitable drugs more readily available.

### Activity 8 > Building paragraphs (2) > 10 minutes

Your writing should be clear to understand and you can achieve this by writing short sentences with only one or two clauses. However, if you are looking for an IELTS grade of 7 or higher in the writing test, examiners will expect you to include a few examples of more complex sentences. For instance, you can join two ideas together into a single sentence with linking words like these:

*not only, apart from, despite, even though, although, contrary to, while*

For example, these two ideas:

*Space exploration has some scientific value.*

*The money spent on space exploration could be better spent on relieving starvation around the world.*

could be joined into a single sentence:

*Even though space exploration has some scientific value, the money could be better spent on relieving starvation around the world.*

Now link the ideas below into a single sentence by using the linking word or phrase in brackets.

Industries waste huge amounts of water. Industries are responsible for the contamination of water supplies.

1 (apart from)

The popular belief is that machines have replaced skilled workers everywhere. There are many skilled artisans in China and other Asian countries.

2 (contrary to)

Billions of dollars in aid have been sent to developing countries. Millions of people in developing countries still live in absolute poverty.

3 (Despite)

People claim to show concern for the environment. People compromise their ecological values almost daily.

4 (While)

There is an epidemic of obesity amongst Western adults. Obesity is becoming widespread in Western children.

5 (Not only)

### Activity 9 > Building paragraphs (3) > 15 minutes

In good academic writing, each paragraph should have a logical structure to it. You should think of each paragraph as a mini essay, with an introduction, development and conclusion.

Topic sentences act as the introduction. As you saw in the last lesson, topic sentences signal to the reader that you are going to discuss a particular aspect of the question. You can then build the paragraph by using pairs or sets of three sentences which develop a logical argument. These can be of the type we looked at in the previous exercises. Finally, round off your paragraph with a

restatement of your topic sentence. This signals to your reader that you have come to the end of one part of your discussion and that you are about to move on.

**a)** In the box are two paragraphs taken from different compositions, but mixed up. Reorganise the sentences into two paragraphs following the paragraph structure discussed above.

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Although technology such as the Internet has increased the ease and speed with which people from different countries communicate, there still exist misunderstandings about each other's cultures and beliefs.

For example, people seem to be no closer in their understanding of faiths other than their own.

Communication technology may have the potential to improve the world, but we have not exploited that potential to best effect.

Drivers who exceed safe speed limits, for example, cause many accidents. In addition, drivers often overtake when it is not safe to do so, such as on sharp bends.

Finally, many road deaths are due to people driving when under the influence of alcohol.

Have the recent rapid developments in communication technology made the world a better place?

It is sometimes said that modern technology has helped create greater understanding between nations. However, there is little evidence to support this view.

There is, of course, a human factor involved in road safety. Most road accidents are caused by careless and irresponsible driving.

These are just a few examples of how human error or recklessness can lead to tragedy on the roads.

**b)** Now write your own paragraph which carries on from the topic sentence provided below.

Remember to use the paragraph plan:

Topic sentence (TS)

Developers (D1, D2, D3 etc)

Restatement sentence (R)

*Unfortunately it is not unusual for dogs to be owned by people whose homes and lifestyles cannot offer what their pet needs...*

### **Activity 10 > Checking your work > 10 minutes**

It is very important that you leave 2-3 minutes at the end of the writing test to read carefully through what you have written and check for errors. At this point, don't worry about ideas. Just make sure that your spelling and grammar are accurate.

**a)** Here's a typical Part 2 writing task of the 'problem and solution' type. Plan and write your answer (in not less than 250 words).

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no special knowledge of the following topic.

***Having a large pet dog is becoming ever more popular, although the lifestyles and homes that people have are becoming less and less suited to dog ownership. What problems does this cause and what possible solutions are there to these problems.***

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

b) Read through your composition carefully and check for errors in grammar and spelling.

c) Now read this example answer. There are ten mistakes with spelling or grammar. Can you find them?

Increasingly, people are opting to keep large dogs such as Rottweilers or Dobermans. This is largely because they can now afford to buy these 'status symbol' breeds. However, people often fail to take into consideration the needs of the dog before they buy. This causes to a number of serious problems. Below I will show the main problems this situation causes and suggest possible solutions.

Unfortunately it is not unusual for large dogs to be owned by people that homes and lifestyles cannot offer what their pet needs. The first requirement for a large dog is plenty of space. Not only are many dogs kept in tiny yards, but some owners even keep their dogs in city flats with only small balconies for them to move about on. A second basic requirements is that the dog gets plenty of exercise. Again, owners often neglect this need because they don't have time to take their dogs out for walks. They're work and family commitments mean that the dog stays cooped up inside for days at a time. Clearly, modern city lifestyles are incompatible with the needs of a large dog.

This situation gives rise to a number of problems, both for the dogs and other people. Firstly of all, the dogs suffer physically. Being kept in cramped conditions without proper exercise leads to poor health and even disfigurement for the dog. Apart from this physical problems, dogs also suffer mentally. Just like humans, dogs get bored and depressed sitting indoors all day, or pacing up and down on a tiny balcony. While dogs are the main victims of this situation, people who live close by also suffer. Inevitably, bored dogs bark and incessant barking becomes a nuisance, and even a torture, to neighbours. So, the situation affects the welfare of both of the animals and the wider community.

How can the problems described above be prevented? One way is to create laws which prevent people from to own large dogs if they live in city flats. A second measure is to impose fines on owners whose dogs are seen to be suffering, or who cause unacceptable disturbance in the neighbourhood. Finally, there need to be publicity campaigns which educate the public in how to be responsible pet owners.

#### **Activity 11 > A good conclusion > 5 minutes**

The example answer in Activity 10 is missing one important thing - a good conclusion. A good conclusion should have the following qualities:

- It should not be more than a few sentences long.
- It should sum up the main points you have mentioned.
- It should not include new ideas or thoughts not already mentioned in the composition.
- It should bring the compositions to a satisfying end.

a) Write a conclusion for the example composition you read in the previous activity.

b) Compare your conclusion with the example in the key.

**Lesson Review****In this lesson you have:**

- practised 'reading' diagrams.
- learned language for expressing purpose, cause and result.
- reviewed and practised relative clauses and passive voice.
- learned how to organise a good academic style paragraph.
- practised writing more complex sentences.
- learned what makes a good conclusion to your composition.

## Lesson 5 > Answer key

### Activity 1

a)

1 lift carriage	F	6 piston housing	I
2 control buttons	A	7 pump	E
3 piston	G	8 valve	H
4 electric wires	C	9 fluid tank	D
5 hydraulic fluid	B		

b)

- 1 lift carriage
- 2 piston
- 3 hydraulic fluid
- 4 control button
- 5 pump
- 6 piston housing
- 7 valve
- 8 tank

### Activity 2

- 1 A, C
- 2 B
- 3 B,C
- 4 A,B
- 5 A,C
- 6 B

### Activity 3

- 1 because
- 2 results in
- 3 as a result / consequently
- 4 on account of
- 5 due
- 6 causes
- 7 Consequently
- 8 give rise to

### Activity 4 (Possible answers)

- 1 A container, which is made of steel, catches the rain water.
- 2 Chlorine, which kills any dangerous bacteria, is added to the tank.
- 3 The pages pass through a machine which cuts off the edges.
- 4 The programming, which takes six months, is done in India. /The programming, which is done in India, takes six months.
- 5 The mixture is heated to a temperature which causes a chemical reaction.

### Activity 5

- 1 Bauxite is extracted from the ground.
- 2 Zinc is occasionally added to the mixture.
- 3 The engine's performance is regularly tested.
- 4 Once the production process has been completed, the product is sent out to stores.
- 5 As soon as the call is received, a car is sent out to the customer.

**Activity 6**

c)

The diagram shows how someone can find their exact location anywhere in the world by means of the Global Positioning System (GPS). The system has three main segments: the space segment, the control segment and the user segment.

The space segment consists of 24 satellites which are put into orbit at an altitude of about 20,000 km. Each one takes 12 hours to orbit the earth once. They have solar panels which provide power and antennae in order to receive and transmit data. Each satellite continually transmits a coded message which includes information about its position and the exact time of transmission. The satellites are fitted with atomic clocks so that time is kept with great accuracy.

The control segment consists of a number of monitor stations at different locations on Earth and a main control centre in Colorado, USA. Any slight changes in the orbit of the satellites can be detected by the monitor stations. This information is then sent to the control centre, and from here it is transmitted back to the satellites. Consequently, the satellites can always transmit their exact position to users.

The user segment is basically a hand-held receiver capable of picking up signals from the satellites. The receiver compares the time a signal was sent with the time it was received. As a result, the distance between the user and the satellite can be calculated. By taking similar measurements from four satellites, the receiver can pinpoint the exact location and altitude of the user on Earth.

**Activity 7**

1d - type 4; 2b - type 3; 3a - type 2; 4c - type 1

**Activity 8**

1 Apart from wasting huge amounts of water, industries are responsible for the contamination of water supplies.

2 Contrary to the popular belief that machines have replaced skilled workers everywhere, there are many skilled artisans in China and other Asian countries.

3 Despite billions of dollars in aid having been sent to developing countries, millions of people in developing countries still live in absolute poverty.

4 While people claim to show concern for the environment, they compromise their ecological values almost daily.

5 Not only is there an epidemic of obesity amongst Western adults, but obesity is becoming widespread in Western children.

**Activity 9**
Paragraph 1:

**(TS)** There is, of course, a human factor involved in road safety. **(D1)** Most road accidents are caused by careless and irresponsible driving. **(D2)** Drivers who exceed safe speed limits, for example, cause many accidents. **(D3)** In addition, drivers often overtake when it is not safe to do so, such as on sharp bends. **(D4)** Finally, many road deaths are due to people driving when under the influence of alcohol. **(R)** These are just a few examples of how human error or recklessness can lead to tragedy on the roads.

Paragraph 2

**(TS)** Have the recent rapid developments in communication technology made the world a better place? **(D1)** It is sometimes said that modern technology has helped create greater understanding between nations. **(D2)** However, there is little evidence to support this view. **(D3)** Although technology such as the Internet has increased the ease and speed with which people from different countries communicate, there still exist misunderstandings about each other's cultures and beliefs. **(D4)** For example, people seem to be no closer in their understanding of faiths other than their own. **(R)** Communication technology may have the potential to improve the world, but we have not yet exploited that potential to best effect.

**Activity 10**

b)

Increasingly [Increasingly], people are opting to keep large dogs such as Rottweilers or Dobermans. This is largely because they can now afford to buy these 'status symbol' breeds. However, people often fail to take into consideration the needs of the dog before they buy. This causes [leads] to a number of serious problems. Below I will show the main problems this situation causes and suggest possible solutions.

Unfortunately [Unfortunately] it is not unusual for large dogs to be owned by people that [whose] homes and lifestyles cannot offer what their pet needs. The first requirement for a large dog is plenty of space. Not only are many dogs kept in tiny yards, but some owners even keep their dogs in city flats with only small balconies for them to move about on. A second basic requirements [requirement] is that the dog gets plenty of exercise. Again, owners often neglect this need because they don't have time to take their dogs out for walks. They're [Their] work and family commitments mean that the dog stays cooped up inside for days at a time. Clearly, modern city lifestyles are incompatible with the needs of a large dog.

This situation gives rise to a number of problems, both for the dogs and other people. Firstly [First] of all, the dogs suffer physically. Being kept in cramped conditions without proper exercise leads to poor health and even disfigurement for the dog. Apart from this [these] physical problems, dogs also suffer mentally. Just like humans, dogs get bored and depressed sitting indoors all day, or pacing up and down on a tiny balcony. While dogs are the main victims of this situation, people who live close by also suffer. Inevitably, bored dogs bark and incessant barking becomes a nuisance, and even a torture, to neighbours. So, the situation affects the welfare of both of the animals and the wider community.

How can the problems described above be prevented? One way is to create laws which prevent people from to own [owning] large dogs if they live in city flats. A second measure is to impose fines on owners whose dogs are seen to be suffering, or who cause unacceptable disturbance in the neighbourhood. Finally, there need to be publicity campaigns which educate the public in how to be responsible pet owners.

**Activity 11**

To sum up, prospective owners of large dogs need to consider whether they can offer their intended pet the right conditions for a healthy, happy life. Dog owners who do not provide these conditions, either through ignorance or selfishness, cause harm to both the dog and the community.