

### A Context listening

- 1** You are going to hear Julie describing what happened when she was stung by a bee. Which symptoms do you think she had?

itching    pain    redness    shaking    sneezing    swelling

- 2**  **25** Listen and check if you were right.

- 3** **25**  Listen again and answer these questions.

- 1 What was unusual about what happened when Julie was stung by a bee? .....
- 2 Where did she get stung? .....
- 3 How did it feel? .....
- 4 What happened to her foot? .....
- 5 What other effects were there? .....

- 4** Read this written scientific account of the effects of bee stings.

Following a bee sting the normal reaction is burning pain, redness, irritation and itching. After a person has been stung by a bee once, they may become allergic to the bee's venom. There is a 60% risk of a serious reaction upon re-sting. In this situation there may be swelling in the area around the bite, it may become red and sore, the victim may have breathing difficulties, a dry cough, abdominal pain and vomiting. In extremely serious cases, the throat may swell, blocking the airway and the heart may stop.

Look at the underlined words in the extracts from what Julie said. How are these words expressed in the written text?

- 1 I was really surprised by how much it hurt. .....
  - 2 It itched a bit too. ....
  - 3 My foot began to go red and swell up. .....
  - 4 Then I began to find it difficult to breathe and kept coughing. .....
- 5** Compare the language in the written report with the spoken language.
- 1 What happens to the spoken verbs in the written report? .....
  - 2 What are the most common verbs in the written text? .....

## B Grammar

When we choose to give the main information in a clause as a noun phrase rather than as a verb this is called 'nominalisation'.

### 1 Nominalisation in written English

In spoken English we usually use a subject + verb to describe an event:

subject + verb

*I reacted badly.*

Then really quickly *my foot began to go red and swell up.*

In formal written language we use language that is less personal, so we often use a noun form instead of a verb. The written scientific account describes the same reaction like this:

Following a bee sting the normal *reaction* is *redness*, *irritation* and *itching*.

In this situation there may be *swelling* in the area around the bite.

In the spoken example the events are expressed by verbs (*go red*, *swell up*). In the written examples the events have been changed into nouns (*redness*, *swelling*). Notice that the only verb in the written examples is the non-action verb *be*.

We can also change some adjectives to nouns. Compare:

*The cathedral is tall and can be seen from all over the town.*

*The cathedral's height makes it visible all over town.*

The common differences between spoken and written English are:

#### Spoken

- ◆ action or events are expressed as verbs:  
*swell up*
- ◆ events happen to people or are carried out by people:  
*I reacted badly, my foot began to go red*
- ◆ personal pronouns are used as subjects:  
*I, she*
- ◆ verbs are often action or event verbs:  
*reacted, trod, itched*

#### Written

- ◆ actions or events may be expressed as nouns or noun phrases:  
*swelling*
- ◆ events are expressed impersonally:  
*the normal reaction is ...*
- ◆ nouns used as subjects:  
*a person, the throat*
- ◆ verbs are often not action or event verbs:  
*be, have*
- ◆ sentences have a lot of vocabulary words

## 2 Reasons for using nominalisation

### Making texts impersonal and authoritative

By turning actions into nouns we make the text sound less personal and more authoritative. We don't use personal pronouns (e.g. *I, you, he*) as much.

Compare:

*Following a bee sting the normal reaction is burning pain, redness, irritation and itching. In this situation there may be swelling in the area around the bite.*

*Then really quickly my foot began to go red and swell up. It just got bigger and bigger. It itched a bit too. I was really surprised by how much it hurt.*

The nominalisations have been underlined. The spoken account is much more personal and uses active verbs.

### Adding information

Nominalisation is particularly useful for Academic Writing Task 1 because we can do several things to add information to nouns in English:

- ◆ count: *the two charts*
- ◆ describe: *the two coloured charts*
- ◆ classify: *the two coloured bar charts*

We cannot do the same with verbs. It is only by changing verbs into nouns that we can add information words to a text in such a concise way.

### Avoiding repetition

We can use nominalisation to avoid repetition when we want to refer back to a previously mentioned idea (see Unit 21):

*The number of unemployed increased by 5% last month. The reason for this increase is still unclear.*

Nominalisation can also be used to paraphrase what has been said. In the IELTS Listening and Reading tests different words are used in the texts and the questions. Compare:

Listening text:

*Then I began to find it difficult to breathe and kept coughing, although I didn't have a cold.*

**Question:**

Which TWO of the following symptoms did Julie experience?

- A breathing problems**
- B shaking**
- C a cough**
- D a high temperature**
- E chills**

Options A and C are nominalisations of the verbs used in the listening text.

## C Grammar exercises

### 1 Write possible noun forms for the following verbs.

- 1 to research: research, researcher
- 2 to study: .....
- 3 to find: .....
- 4 to respond: .....
- 5 to measure: .....
- 6 to earn: .....
- 7 to advertise: .....
- 8 to examine: .....
- 9 to suggest: .....
- 10 to create: .....

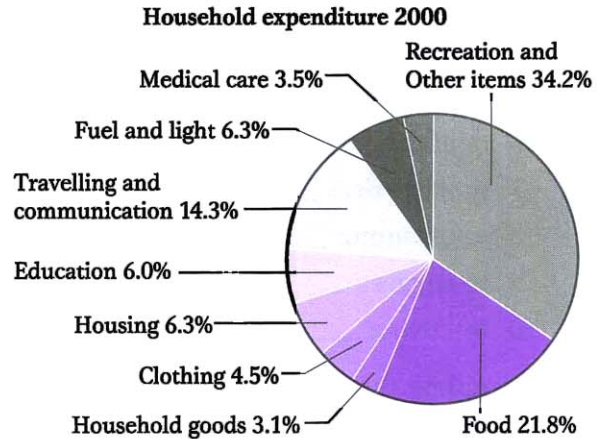
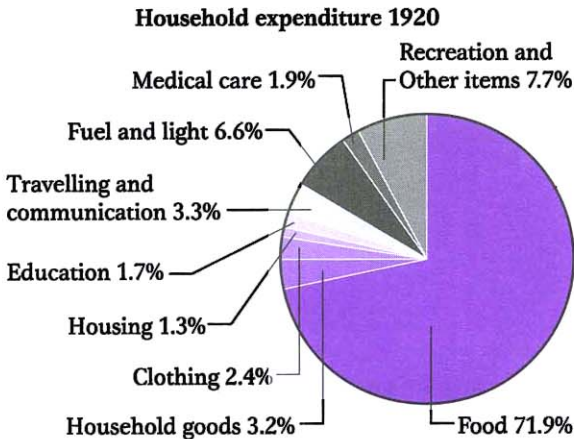
### 2 Complete the sentences with the noun form of the adjectives in brackets.

- 1 The graphs show a significant difference (*different*) between the ages at which men and women marry.
- 2 The ..... (*strong*) of the government's argument for changing the law is that many car accidents happen whilst drivers are speaking on their mobile phones.
- 3 The ..... (*deep*) of the lake means that no one has ever seen the bottom.
- 4 Some parts of the world are not only important in terms of their biodiversity, but they also have a special ..... (*beautiful*) that must be conserved.
- 5 This is a good essay in parts, but you need to express yourself with more ..... (*clear*) at times.
- 6 The discovery of a new species of monkey in Africa is of great ..... (*interesting*) to both naturalists and the general public alike.
- 7 The ..... (*difficult*) facing the scientists now is how to prove their theory.
- 8 The results of this research need to be treated with ..... (*cautious*).
- 9 The ..... (*significant*) of the findings surprised even the researchers.
- 10 Many older people are afraid to go out at night due to the increase in ..... (*violent*) in our larger cities.
- 11 The current ..... (*controversial*) over pensions is likely to continue for some time.
- 12 We apologise for any ..... (*confusing*) caused by the last-minute change to the schedule.

**3 Underline the best answers.**

**The two pie charts show the average spending by households in a country at two different points in its economic development.**

**Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.**



The two pie charts give information about **1 what households spent their money on / household expenditure on goods and services** in 1920 and 2000. It is immediately obvious that **2 there are some quite significant differences / some things are significantly different** between the two charts.

In 2000 **3 the largest proportion of expenditure was / most money was spent** on recreation and other items whereas in 1920 it was on food, with recreation and other items accounting for just 7.7%. There is a great difference in terms of **4 the amount of money people spent on food / food expenditure** between the two years. In 1920 nearly 72% of **5 the total household budget / the total of what households spent** went towards food, compared to only 22% in 2000.

**6 There has been a notable increase in / People have notably increased** the amount of money spent on travelling and communications between the two dates. In addition, the charts show **7 a significant rise in the proportion of money spent on clothing / that people spent more on clothes** in 2000 compared to 1920.

There are some similarities, however. For example, in both 1920 and 2000 **8 people spent a similar proportion on fuel and lighting. / the proportion of fuel and lighting expenditure was roughly the same.**

**4** Fill in the gaps in the second sentences with nouns so that they have a similar meaning to the first sentences.

- 1 a She wrote books that children enjoyed.  
b Children enjoyed her writing .
- 2 a Young girls are spending increasing amounts on make-up because they have been influenced by advertising.  
b ..... on make-up amongst young girls is on the ..... due to the ..... of advertising.
- 3 a I failed to get good enough grades to get into university because I was ill on the day of the exam.  
b The reason for my ..... to get good enough grades to get into university was my ..... on the day of the exam.
- 4 a If you eat healthily you can reduce the chances of getting ill.  
b A healthy ..... can lead to a ..... in the chances of getting ill.
- 5 a If you use the Internet you risk getting viruses and losing important information.  
b ..... of the Internet increases the ..... of getting viruses which may cause the ..... of important information.
- 6 a When people are content because their lives are successful they tend to be easier to communicate with.  
b ..... due to personal ..... tends to lead to improved ..... with other people.
- 7 a In the thirteenth century engineers developed new ways to construct buildings which made it possible to build the soaring arches of Salisbury Cathedral.  
b ..... in ..... in the thirteenth century made it possible to build the soaring arches of Salisbury Cathedral.
- 8 a The IELTS reading module is difficult because it has long articles with lots of new vocabulary in them.  
b The ..... of the IELTS reading module is due to its long articles containing a lot of new vocabulary.

## D Test practice

### Academic Writing Task 1

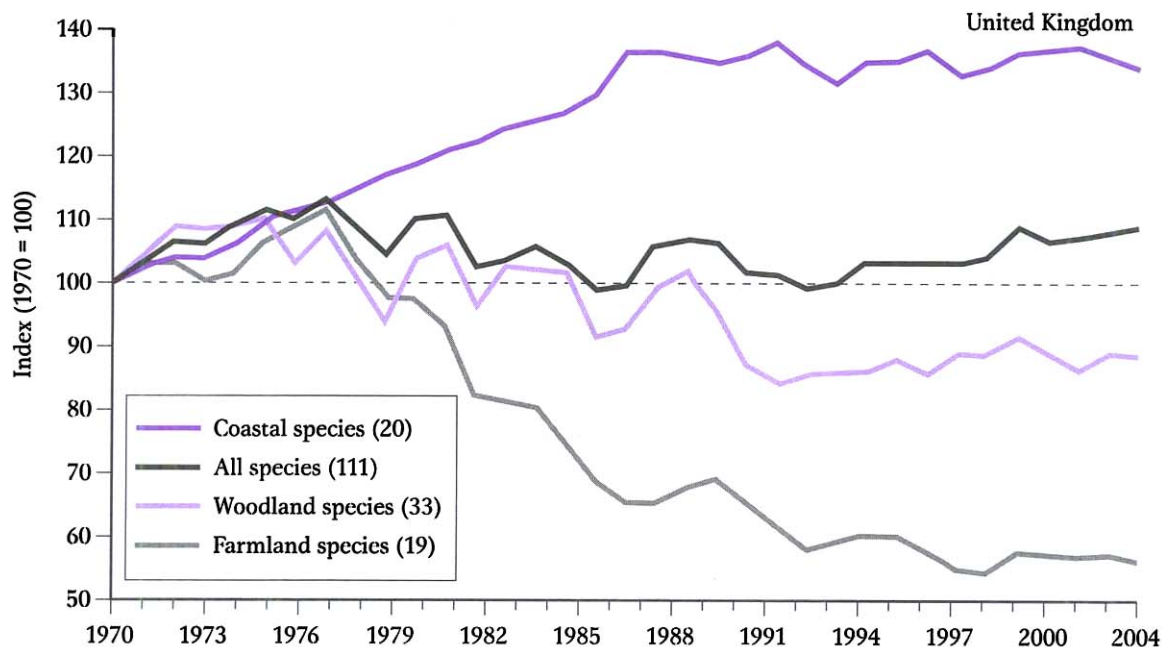
You should spend 20 minutes on this task.

**The graph below shows the population figures of different types of wild birds in the United Kingdom between 1970 and 2004.**

**Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.**

Write at least 150 words.

Population of wild birds: 1970–2004



### Grammar focus task

Look at the extracts from a model answer and underline all examples of nominalisation.

- 1 Since 1994 there has been an improvement in numbers of all species, although the graph shows a slight decrease in 2000.
- 2 There was also a fall in the number of woodland birds of around 30% between 1974 and 1998.
- 3 It is only the coastal birds that have seen a steady increase in population over this period.