Grammar for IELTS Writing Task 1: tenses and the passive

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One-page cheat sheet · Grammatical Range & Accuracy · ~~struck out~~ = wrong, **[is]** = missing

> **The years on the graph choose the tense. About the graph itself → Present (The chart shows…). About past data → Past Simple (Sales rose…).**

Which tense

On the graph	Tense	Example
Years in the past	Past Simple	Car ownership rose steadily.
Years in the future	Present Simple passive + to · Future Simple	The population is expected to reach 9 million. · Demand will double.
Past and future	Past Simple, then a forecast	Sales fell until 2020 but are predicted to recover.
No dates: process, machine, shares	Present Simple	The water is filtered and then stored.
"Then and now" map	Past · Present · Present Perfect for changes	There was a farm. · The village has a school. · The farm has been replaced.

Irregular trend verbs

Base	Past	3rd form
rise	rose	risen
fall	fell	fallen
grow	grew	grown
stand	stood	stood
overtake	overtook	overtaken
become	became	become
spend	spent	spent
lead	led	led

-ed spelling: dropped, planned · studied, varied · stayed · decreased · levelled off (UK) / leveled off (US)
-s with he/she/it: The diagram illustrates · The number of stages is · Each stage takes

The passive: be + 3rd form

Tense	Form	Example
Present	is / are done	The bottles are washed.
Past	was / were done	A bridge was built in 2005.
Pres. Perfect	has / have been done	The trees have been cut down.
Future	will be / is expected to be done	A car park will be added.

- **Factory process** → passive. Active only if a machine or person is named: A machine cuts the sheets.
- **Natural process** → active: The eggs hatch. Water evaporates. Passive only if something acts on it: The rock is worn down by wind.
- **No passive** for rise, fall, happen, occur, remain. rise (by itself) ≠ raise (someone does it).
- **Order of steps:** first, next, then, once, after, finally · Once the grapes have been picked, they are crushed. · After being stored, the wine is bottled.

Typical mistakes → fixed

✗	✓
The graph ~~showed~~ that sales rose.	The graph shows that sales rose.
Sales ~~has rose~~ in 2010.	Sales rose in 2010.
The number of cars ~~were~~ 2 million.	The number of cars was 2 million.
Unemployment ~~was decreased~~.	Unemployment decreased.

✗	✓
The clay **[is]** heated.	The clay is heated.
Prices ~~raised~~ sharply.	Prices rose sharply.
A school ~~has been built~~ in 2005.	A school was built in 2005.
Demand will ~~doubles~~.	Demand will double.

Three-question check for every verb

1. **When?** Finished past date → Past Simple. Future date → is expected to / will. No dates or about the graph → Present Simple. Change up to today, no date → Present Perfect.
2. **Who does the action?** Changes by itself → active. Someone does something to it → passive (be + 3rd form).
3. **Is the form right?** -s with he/she/it · 2nd form in Past · 3rd form after has and be · the number … was.