IELTS Writing Part 1

Here is a question from a past IELTS paper.

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

The table below gives information about changes in modes of travel in England between 1985 and 2000. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

Write at least 150 words.

**Average distance travelled in miles per person per year, by mode of travel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Travel</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>3,199</td>
<td>4,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local bus</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long distance bus</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All modes</td>
<td>4,740</td>
<td>6,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to approach the task.

It is important to notice first of that the task asks you to **summarise the main features** and **make comparisons where relevant**. It is important not to get bogged down in the details and lose sight of the bigger picture. So, the first thing to do is to decide what the main features are. If we look carefully at the table we can see that the main features are:

- overall rise in average miles travelled of approximately 35%
- most of this rise can be accounted for by a similar increase in car use
- walking has declined slightly
- steeper fall in cycling
- sharp rise in use of long-distance buses, fall in use of local buses
- increase in the use of trains of around 25%
- use of taxis has more than tripled
Now look at an example of how to put this information into an extended text. Notice how the writer has used a variety of expressions to express change. These have been highlighted in bold.

The first thing we notice from this table is that there was an overall rise in the average number of miles travelled per person in the period 1985-2000 of approximately 35%. Most of this increase can be accounted for by a corresponding rise in car use, which itself rose by over 50% during the same period. As a proportion of total miles, the number of miles travelled by car increased from approximately two-thirds to approximately three-quarters. The increase in car use was at the expense of both walking, which declined slightly, and cycling, which fell by around 20%. There was also a drop in the use of local buses, but a dramatic rise of over 100% in the use of long-distance buses. The increase in the use of the train was less marked, rising by about 25%. There was a slight rise in the use of trains, while the number of miles travelled by taxis more than tripled, although they still accounted for less than 10% of the total miles travelled.