

Academic Reading Sample

Wind Power in the US

Prompted by the oil crises of the 1970s, a wind-power industry flourished briefly in the United States. But then world oil prices dropped, and funding for research into renewable energy was cut. By the mid 1980s US interest in wind energy as a large-scale source of energy had almost disappeared. The development of wind power at this time suffered not only from badly designed equipment, but also from poor long-term planning, economic projections that were too optimistic and the difficulty of finding suitable locations for the wind turbines.

Only now are technological advances beginning to offer hope that wind power will come to be accepted as a reliable and important source of electricity. There have been significant successes in California, in particular, where wind farms now have a capacity of 1500 megawatts, comparable to a large nuclear or fossil-fuelled power station, and produce 1.5 per cent of the state's electricity.

Nevertheless, in the U.S., the image of wind power is still distorted by early failures. One of the most persistent criticisms is that wind power is not a significant energy resource. Researchers at the Battelle Northwest Laboratory, however, estimate that today wind turbine technology could supply 20 per cent of the electrical power the country needs. As a local resource, wind power has even greater potential. Minnesota's energy commission calculates that a wind farm on one of the state's south western ridges could supply almost all that state's electricity. North Dakota alone has enough sites suitable for wind farms to supply more than a third of all electricity consumed in the continental US.

The prevailing notion that wind power is too costly results largely from early research which focused on turbines with huge blades that stood hundreds of metres tall. These machines were not designed for ease of production or maintenance, and they were enormously expensive. Because the major factors influencing the overall cost of wind power are the cost of the turbine and its supporting systems, including land, as well as operating and maintenance costs, it is hardly surprising that it was thought at the time that wind energy could not be supplied at a commercially competitive price. More recent developments such as those seen on California wind farms have dramatically changed the economic picture for wind energy. These systems, like installations in Hawaii and several European countries, have benefited from the economies of scale that come through standardised manufacturing and purchasing. The result has been a dramatic drop in capital costs: the installed cost of new wind turbines stood at \$1000 per kilowatt in 1993, down from about \$4000 per kilowatt in 1980, and continues to fall. Design improvements and more efficient maintenance programs for large numbers of turbines have reduced operating costs as well. The cost of electricity delivered by wind farm turbines has decreased from about 30 cents per kilowatt-hour to between 7 and 9 cents, which is generally less than the cost of electricity from conventional power stations. Reliability has also improved dramatically. The latest turbines run more than 95 per cent of the time, compared with around 60 per cent in the early 1980s. Another misconception is that improved designs are needed to make wind power feasible. Out of the numerous wind turbine designs proposed or built by inventors or developers, the propeller-blade type, which is based on detailed analytical models as well as extensive experimental data, has emerged as predominant among the more than 20,000 machines now in commercial operation world-wide. Like the gas-driven turbines that power jet aircraft, these are sophisticated pieces of rotating machinery. They are already highly efficient, and there is no reason to believe that other configurations will produce major benefits. Like other ways of generating electricity, wind power does not leave the environment entirely unharmed. There are many potential problems, ranging from interference with telecommunications to impact on wildlife and natural habitats. But these effects must be balanced against those associated with other forms of electricity generation. Conventional power stations impose hidden costs on society, such as the control of air pollution, the management of nuclear waste and global warming. As wind power has been ignored in the US over the past few years, expertise and commercial exploitation in the field have shifted to Europe. The European Union spends 10 times as much as the US government on research and development of wind energy. It estimates that at least 10 per cent of Europe's electrical power could be supplied by land-based wind-turbines using current technology. Indeed, according to the American Wind Energy Association, an independent organisation based in Washington, Denmark, Britain, Spain and the Netherlands will each surpass the US in the generating capacity of wind turbines installed during the rest of the decade.

Glossary

fossil fuel: coal, oil and natural gas
kilowatt: 1,000 watts; a watt is a unit of power
kilowatt-hour: one kilowatt for a period of one hour
megawatt: one million watts
wind farm: a group of wind turbines in one location producing a large amount of electricity
wind turbine: a machine which produces energy when the wind turns its blades

Questions 1 - 5

Complete the summary below using words from the box. Write your answers in boxes 1-5 on your answer sheet.

NB There are more words or phrases than you will need to fill the gaps. You may use any word or phrase more than once.

Example
The failure during the late 1970s and early 1980s of an attempt to establish a widespread wind power industry in the United States resulted largely from the ... (1) ... in oil prices during this period. The industry is now experiencing a steady ... (2) ... due to improvements in technology and an increased awareness of the potential in the power of wind. The wind turbines that are now being made, based in part on the ... (3) ... of wide-ranging research in Europe, are easier to manufacture and maintain than their predecessors. This has led wind-turbine makers to be able to standardise and thus minimise ... (4) ... There has been growing ... (5) ... of the importance of wind power as an energy source.

criticism	success	design costs	production costs	failure
stability	operating costs	fall	growth	recognition
scepticism	decisions	effects	decline	results

Questions 6 - 10

Look at the following issues (Questions 6-10) and the list of implications below (A-C). Match each issue with the correct implication. Write the correct letter A-C in boxes 6-10 on your answer sheet. N.B. You may use any letter more than once.

Example
The current price of one wind-generated kilowatt... Answer A

Issues

- The recent installation of systems taking advantage of economies of scale ...
- The potential of meeting one fifth of current US energy requirements by wind power ...
- The level of acceptance of current wind turbine technology ...
- A comparison of costs between conventional and wind power sources ...
- The view of wind power in the European Union ...

Implications

- A provides evidence against claims that electricity produced from wind power is relatively expensive.
- B supports claims that wind power is an important source of energy.

C opposes the view that wind power technology requires further development.

Academic Writing Sample

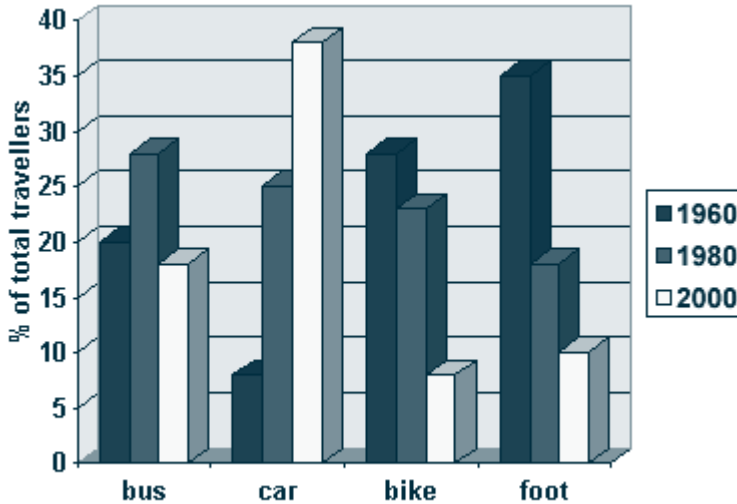
Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task

The graph below shows the different modes of transport used to travel to and from work in one European city in 1960, 1980 and 2000.

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

Write at least 150 words.



Writing Task 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

It is inevitable that as technology develops so traditional cultures must be lost. Technology and tradition are incompatible - you cannot have both together.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

General Training Reading Sample

Read the passage below and answer Questions 1-10.

Daybreak Trips by Coach

SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

Welcome to our Spring Daybreak programme which continues the tradition of offering daytrips and tours at unbeatable value for money. All the excursions in this brochure will be operated by Premier Travel Services Limited or Millers Coaches; both companies are part of the CHL Group, which owns Cambridge's Cambus fleet.

WE'RE PROUD OF OUR TRADITION

Premier was established in 1936; the Company now offers the highest standards of coach travel in today's competitive operating environment. Millers has an enviable reputation stretching back over the past 20 years, offering value for money coach services at realistic prices. We've travelled a long way since our early days of pre-war seaside trips. Now our fleet of 50 modern coaches (few are more than five years old) operate throughout Britain and Europe but we're pleased to maintain the high standards of quality and service that were the trademark of our founders nearly sixty years ago.

EXCLUSIVE FEATURES

All Daybreak fares (unless specifically stated otherwise) include admission charges to the attractions, shows and exhibits we visit. Many full day scenic tours are accompanied by a fully trained English Tourist Board 'Blue Badge' guide or local experienced driver/guide. Some Daybreaks include lunch or afternoon tea. Compare our admission inclusive fares and see how much you save. The cheapest is not necessarily the best and value for money is guaranteed with Daybreaks. If you compare our bargain Daybreak fares beware - most of our competitors do not offer an all inclusive fare.

SEAT RESERVATIONS

We value the freedom of choice, so you can choose your seat when you book. The seat reservation is guaranteed and remains yours at all times when aboard the coach.

NO SMOKING COMFORT

With the comfort of our passengers in mind, coaches on all our Daybreaks are no smoking throughout. In the interests of fellow passengers' comfort, we kindly ask that smokers observe our 'no smoking' policy. On scenic tours and longer journeys, ample refreshment stops are provided when, of course, smoking is permitted.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Do I need to book?

Booking in advance is strongly recommended as all Daybreak tours are subject to demand. Subject to availability, stand-by tickets can be purchased from the driver.

What time does the coach leave?

The coach departs from Cambridge Drummer Street (Bay 12) at the time shown. There are many additional joining points indicated by departure codes in the brochure. If you are joining at one of our less popular joining points, you will be advised of your pick up time (normally by telephone) not less than 48 hours before departure. In this way, we can minimise the length of pick-up routes and reduce journey times for the majority of passengers.

What time do we get back?

An approximate return time is shown for each excursion. The times shown serve as a guide, but road conditions can sometimes cause delay. If your arrival will be later than advertised, your driver will try to allow for a telephone call during the return journey.

Where can I board the coach?

All the Daybreaks in the brochure leave from Cambridge Drummer Street (Bay 12) at the time shown. Many Daybreaks offer additional pick-ups for pre-booked passengers within Cambridge and the surrounding area. This facility must be requested at the time of booking.

Questions 1-10

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the passage above?

In boxes 1-10 on your answer sheet write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

1. Millers Coaches owns Cambridge's Cambus fleet.
2. Premier is an older company than Millers.
3. Most of the Daybreak coaches are less than 5 years old.
4. Daybreak fares are more expensive than most of their competitors.
5. Soft drinks and refreshments are served on most longer journeys.
6. Smoking is permitted at the rear of the coach on longer journeys.
7. Tickets must be bought in advance from an authorised Daybreak agent.
8. Tickets and seats can be reserved by phoning the Daybreak Hotline.
9. Daybreak passengers must join their coach at Cambridge Drummer Street.
10. Daybreak cannot guarantee return times.

General Training Writing Sample

Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You rent a house through an agency. The heating system has stopped working. You phoned the agency a week ago but it has still not been repaired.

Write a letter to the agency. In your letter

introduce yourself

explain the situation

say what action you would like the agency to take

Write at least 150 words.

You do **NOT** need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear.....,

Writing Task 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Write about the following topic:

Some businesses now say that no one can smoke cigarettes in any of their offices. Some governments have banned smoking in all public places. This is a good idea but it takes away some of our freedom.

Do you agree or disagree?

Write at least 250 words.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Speaking Sample

This section provides a sample of Part Two of the Speaking Module. There are three main parts to the IELTS Speaking Module. In Part One the candidate answers general questions about themselves, their home/family and other such personal topics. This part lasts about four-five minutes. Part Two is sampled below and in Part Three the candidate and Examiner engage in a discussion of more abstract issues and concepts which are related to the topic in Part Two.

Speaking Part Two Sample

Describe a teacher who has greatly influenced you in your education.

You should say:

where you met them;

what subject they taught;

what was special about them;

and explain why this person influenced you so much.

You will have to talk about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes. You have one minute to think about what you are going to say. You can make some notes if you wish.