

9 Describing information in figures and tables

Numerical evidence is often presented in essays and reports in the form of a figure or table. When describing information in figures or tables we often follow the four stages listed below.

9.1 Complete the description of each stage using the words in the box.

aspect	column	detail	limitations	significance	statement
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Stage 1: Introduce the topic
Describe the general topic the figure or table relates to, or give other background information.

Stage 2: Explain what the figure or table shows
Briefly expand on the title of the figure or table. Sometimes more **1** _____ is given, such as what is shown by each axis on a graph, or each **2** _____ in a table.

Stage 3: Highlight information of particular interest or relevance
This stage may be repeated a number of times, each focusing on a new **3** _____ of the information. Often a general **4** _____ is followed by supporting detail.

Stage 4: Comment on the information
This may be, for example, on the **5** _____ of the information to the essay or report more generally, or on the **6** _____ of the information.

9.2 You have been asked to discuss the controversial statement "Women work harder than men". In pairs or groups suggest what types of evidence you would look for in order to research and evaluate this controversial point of view (e.g. working hours).

9.3 a Complete the following extract from a report, which describes information in Table 4.1 on page 134, by putting the sentences (a–g) in the correct order.

- The main differences between men and women are in the time spent in paid and domestic work. _____
- Table 4.1, for example, shows the time spent on activities by people in Great Britain in 2005 by gender. _____
- However, because more women have entered the workforce since this survey was conducted in 2005, it seems likely that these differences will now be less marked. _____
- In some countries, national surveys have gathered information on how much time people spend on certain activities during the day, and have also compared time spent on these activities by men and women. 1 _____
- Free and unspecified time amounts to about a fifth of each day, and work, both paid and domestic, and study together take about a quarter. _____
- As can be seen, for the group as a whole the main activity is sleep, which takes over a third of each day. _____
- Men spend substantially more time in paid work and study, while women spend over 50 percent more time on domestic work than men. _____