

Describing charts and graphs

Today a lot of presentations, reports and newspaper articles contain graphs, tables or charts. There are many different types of data charts and graphs, the most popular ones being pie charts, line graphs, flow charts, bar charts, diagrams, bubble graphs, scatter graphs, column charts, etc. They are used to visually represent data in the same proportion as the numerical data in a table.

During a presentation or even in a report, a graph or a chart is normally accompanied by an explanation of how to interpret the data. In the following exercises you will find some verbs frequently used in the description of graphs and charts. Find out what their meaning is and hopefully you will be able to use them next time you have a presentation or you need to write a report.

A. Put the following verbs in the correct box, depending on whether they express a rising or a falling trend: *decline, tumble, increase, surge, plunge, plummet, lift, rise, climb, decrease, rocket, slump, crash, take off, soar, jump, drop, improve, slide, fall.*

Rising trend:
Falling trend:

Key: Rising trend: increase, surge, lift, rise, climb, rocket, take off, soar, jump, improve

Sometimes we want to describe a graph in greater detail and with much precision. For that purpose we need to use different verbs to express nuances of meaning.

B. To discover the meaning of specific verbs describing trends, complete the sentence with the appropriate expression from the right-hand column.

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|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. To plunge means to fall | a. continuously between one level and another. |
| 2. To level off means to stop | b. extremely quickly. |
| 3. To fluctuate means to change | c. suddenly and often a long way down. |
| 4. To slide means to go | d. quickly and without control. |
| 5. To stagnate means to stay | e. increasing or decreasing. |
| 6. To rocket means to rise | f. the same and not grow or develop. |
| 7. To jump means to increase | g. suddenly by a large amount. |
| 8. To tumble means to fall | h. suddenly and strongly. |
| 9. To surge means to increase | i. quickly to a high level. |
| 10. To soar means to rise | j. into a worse state due to lack of control or care. |

Key: 1c, 2e, 3a, 4j, 5f, 6b, 7g, 8h, 9i, 10j

As you might have noticed in the previous exercise, verbs describing trends are often accompanied by a variety of adverbs indicating the degree or the speed of change.

Some of the adverbs indicating the degree of change are: considerably, dramatically, hugely, a little, a lot, moderately, significantly, slightly, substantially, vastly, etc.

Some of the adverbs indicating the speed of change are: abruptly, gently, gradually, quickly, quietly, rapidly, sharply, slowly, suddenly, steadily, steeply, swiftly, etc.

C. Underline the correct word in order to complete the following sentences.

1. The annual growth rate has been rising *steadily/stable* in the past few years.
2. Last year domestic sales grew *critically/significantly*.
3. The company's shares rose *quickly/fastly* and stayed well above their initial offering price.
4. The need for natural gas has soared *rapidly/fastly* since the flood.
5. GDP jumped *considerately/considerably* in the country between April and July.
6. The unemployment rate lifted *slightly/slight* to almost 5% in the past year.
7. Life expectancy of these people decreased *rarely/rapidly* due to the working conditions.
8. The number of new email accounts is declining *vastly/gradually* because of social networks.
9. The singer's popularity ratings soared *quietly/suddenly* after she appeared in the chat show.
10. Gold prices are fluctuating *steeply/a lot* at the moment.

Key: 1. steadily, 2. significantly, 3. quickly, 4. rapidly, 5. considerably, 6. slightly, 7. rapidly, 8. gradually, 9. suddenly, 10. a lot