Data Commentary Notes
➢ Simple is not the enemy
➢ Specificity is your friend (dates, locations, etc.)
➢ Numbers add precision

Getting Started Analyzing Charts, Tables, or Graphs:
● Refer to Step 35 *What language should I use to interpret tables and graphs?* (p. 143-146) in "50 Steps to Improving Your Academic Writing" by Chris Sowton
● Similar to choosing a quote to support an argument in your research paper, when you are choosing data from a graph or table you must consider what you are trying to convey to your reader.

1. Introducing Visuals:
   ● Location Statement + Summary Statement
   Examples:
      ○ *As seen in Figure 1, the number of technological goods imported from China in the past ten years has increased.*
      ○ *In this chart we can find a timeline for surgical advancements in the past three centuries.*

2. Look for Meaningful Issues:
   ● A high point
   ● A low point
   ● Significant differences
   ● Surprising similarities

3. Address Overall Patterns and Trends:
   ● Trends over time
   ● Long-term analysis

4. Interpret and/or Comment on the Data:
   ● What does this data mean?
      ○ *This decline might/may/could be due to…*
   ● Can recommendations be made based on this information?
      ○ *As a result...*
      ○ *Consequently…*
   ● Does this graph/chart/table omit information? How is this omission significant?
      ○ *This gap suggests/indicates/demonstrates...*

Beyond Basic Analysis of Charts, Tables, or Graphs:

1. Consider Positive or Negative Connotation (i.e. *stagnate* versus *remain constant*)
   (This can be better addressed through peer review)

2. Consider Appropriate Language:
   - Avoid using two words with the same (or similar) meaning in a row. For example, *complete apex*, the *apex* is already the highest point so it is already fully *complete*. Just write *apex* in this case.
   - Read other texts from the research field to find collocations (words commonly placed together in a sentence) to use in your own writing.
   - Use precise or hedging language to avoid false reporting of information. Having someone read and edit your writing can help you with this step.

3. Consider Grammar Usage:
   - Passive Voice (i.e. *as can be seen/as is shown*) recommended by the texbook.
   - Active Voice recommended by Swales & Feak and Helen Sword.
   - SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT (Sowton, 2012, p.91-94)
   - Comparative and Superlative forms
   - Impersonal Expressions (i.e *There is/are*, *It is*, *One can…*)
   - Modals and frequency adverbs

References

Sowton, C. (2012). *50 Steps to improving your academic writing*. Garnet Publishing Ltd.

Swales, J. & Feak, C. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills*

(3rd ed.). University of Michigan Press.

Sword, H. (2012). *Stylish academic writing*. Harvard University Press.