



IELTS PReparation Guide

A guide to the 4 parts of the IELTS exam

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A photograph showing students in a classroom or exam hall, sitting at desks and writing in notebooks. The focus is on the hands and pens of the students in the foreground, with others blurred in the background.

THE IELTS EXAM

The IELTS Exam

Every year, more than 2 million people take the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Test. There are two types of test:

1. The General Training Module
2. The Academic Module

General Training is usually taken by people who need IELTS for visa immigration purposes, while the Academic is usually taken by candidates who need it for university entrance. However, it's also worth taking IELTS even if you don't need it for these purposes, because it is an internationally recognised exam, which many employers will accept as proof of your level of English. You can take the IELTS test almost every week at many different centres around the world, and you get your results after just 13 days! Here's a link to the dates and times of the exams.

The test is divided into 4 modules: listening, reading, writing and speaking and candidates are given an overall test score (between 1 and 9) based on the average of their scores on each part.

Here is a preparation guide for you for the four parts of the exam, which also gives you some top tips to help you along the way; both for when you are preparing for the exam and also during the exam itself.

But remember in order to prepare properly for the IELTS Test, there's no better way than to take an IELTS preparation course with an experienced IELTS teacher! Here at UKCE we offer IELTS preparation courses for you at 4 different time slots (subject to availability); in the morning, afternoon as well as in the evening. If the times do not suit your schedule you can also book one-to-one classes with an experienced teacher that can focus completely on your skills and needs and prepare you for getting the grade you need in the exam.

We are here to help you achieve your goals and ensure you get the best results you can!

ACADEMIC or GENERAL?



IELTS Academic or IELTS General Training?

In both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training tests, you are tested on all four language skills: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. In both exams everyone has the same Listening and Speaking tests, however, there are different Reading and Writing tests for the IELTS Academic and IELTS General exams. Here is an overview of the sections in each exam and how long you have for each section:

| IELTS ACADEMIC | IELTS GENERAL |
|--|--|
| <p>Listening (30 minutes + 10 minutes transfer time) 4 recorded monologues and conversations by native English speakers.</p> | <p>Listening (30 minutes + 10 minutes transfer time) 4 recorded monologues and conversations by native English speakers.</p> |
| <p>Reading (60 minutes) Three reading passages with tasks. Texts range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. These are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers.</p> | <p>Reading (60 minutes) Three reading passages with tasks. Texts are authentic and include extracts from books, magazines, newspapers, notices, advertisements, company handbooks and guidelines.</p> |
| <p>Writing (60 minutes) Writing task of at least 150 words where the test taker must summarise, describe, or explain a table, graph, chart, or diagram. Short essay task of at least 250 words</p> | <p>Writing (60 minutes) Letter writing task of at least 150 words. Short essay task of at least 250 words.</p> |
| <p>Speaking (11-14 minutes) Face-to-face interview. The long turn. The two-way discussion.</p> | <p>Speaking (11-14 minutes) Face-to-face interview. The long turn. The two-way discussion.</p> |



PAPER- BASED or ONLINE?

Paper-based or online?

You can now take the IELTS exam either by paper or on the computer.

Paper-based:

This test requires test takers to sit at a desk with the question papers and answer sheets for the Reading, Listening and Writing tests in an official IELTS test centre. Test takers will write their answers in either pen or HB-pencils. The Speaking test is carried out face-to-face with a trained IELTS examiner.

Computer:

This test requires test takers to sit the Reading, Listening and Writing tests in front of a computer with the questions presented on the screen in an official IELTS test centre. The test takers then submit their answers through the use of a keyboard and a mouse. The Speaking test is not on computer and is carried out face-to-face with a trained IELTS examiner.

To find out more about computer-delivered exams click [here](#) from the official IELTS website.

Online:

Lastly, you can also take the test online, called IELTS Indicator. It's a live, online test with an allocated start time and duration – to take it you need a suitable computer with reliable internet access. The Listening, Reading and Writing parts of the test need to be completed in one sitting, with the Speaking test happening a few days before or after the other sections.

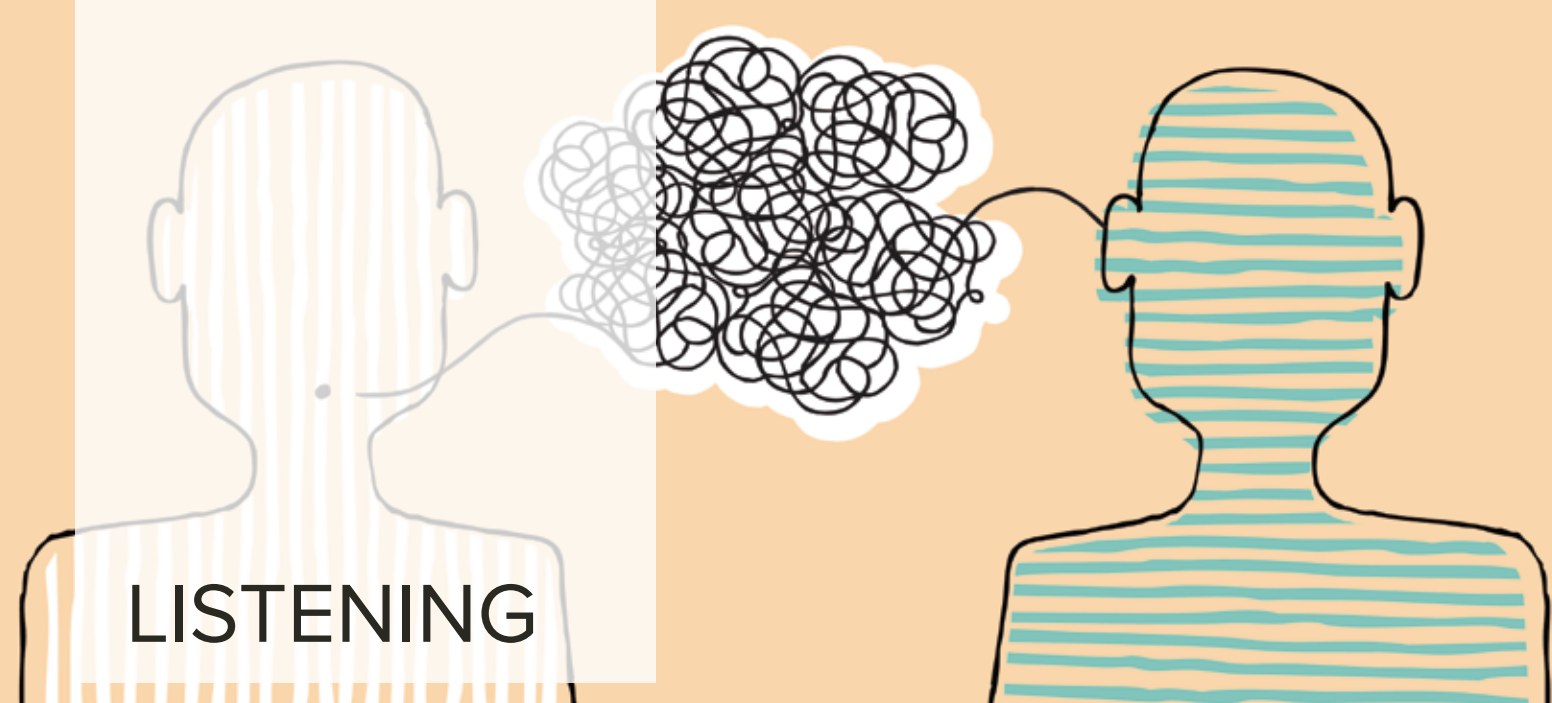
You can find out more about the IELTS Indicator [here](#) at the official website.

IELTS Scoring

The IELTS nine-band scale:

Your performance on test day in each language skill — Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking — is reported as a band score on a scale of 1 (the lowest) to 9 (the highest). All parts of the test and the overall band score are reported in whole or half bands (e.g. 6.0, 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, etc.)

| BAND SCORE | SKILL LEVEL | DESCRIPTION |
|------------|--------------------------|--|
| 9 | Expert user | The test taker has fully operational command of the language. Their use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and shows complete understanding. |
| 8 | Very good user | The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. They may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. They handle complex and detailed argumentation well. |
| 7 | Good user | The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. They generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning. |
| 6 | Competent user | The test taker has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. They can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations. |
| 5 | Modest user | The test taker has a partial command of the language and copes with overall meaning in most situations, although they are likely to make many mistakes. They should be able to handle basic communication in their own field. |
| 4 | Limited user | The test taker's basic competence is limited to familiar situations. They frequently show problems in understanding and expression. They are not able to use complex language. |
| 3 | Extremely limited user | The test taker conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication. |
| 2 | Intermittent user | The test taker has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English. |
| 1 | Non-user | The test taker has no ability to use the language except a few isolated words. |
| 0 | Did not attempt the test | The test taker did not answer the questions. |



The listening test has 4 sections with a total of 40 questions and takes around 30 minutes to complete. Unlike the Cambridge suite of tests, in the IELTS listening test candidates only hear the recording once, and each section is different.

In **section 1**, you will hear a conversation between two people involving an exchange of information, it is often between a student and someone providing a service, such as a library or accommodation agency. Candidates need to complete tasks with information about the student and the information the student is asking for.

In **section 2**, you will hear one person usually giving information about a facility. For example, a visitor centre or library and often involves completing a map or plan.

Section 3 consists of a conversation, often between a student and their tutor or between two students and this is usually about how to complete an assignment they have to write.

Finally, in **section 4** you will listen to a talk by an expert on a non-specialized topic.

There are 7 types of task in the listening test. These are either, sentence completion; note, form, table and flow-chart completion; short answer questions; map, plan and diagram labelling; multiple choice with one answer; multiple choice with more than one answer, and matching. In each section, there will be 2 or 3 different types of task.

In order to get the score, you require in the listening test, you will need to do the following:

Before the test

- Familiarise yourself with each type of task, preferably by taking an IELTS course at a British Council-recognised college, such as UKCE, where you can get training in the exam and lots of practice and feedback from an experienced IELTS teacher.
- Listen regularly to talks and conversations like plays and other dramas on the radio or podcasts on the internet, where you can listen to different native English speaker accents.

During the test

- Listen carefully to the instructions so you know exactly what you need to do to answer each question.
- Look at each task carefully and underline key words in the question.
- Be careful not to choose an answer just because it has the same words as words you hear in the recording. The test will try to trick you with this, but the real answer will usually use synonyms and paraphrasing of the words in the questions.
- Don't leave any answer blank as you don't lose marks for a wrong answer and your guess may be the right one!

READING



The IELTS reading test takes 60 minutes and consists of 3 factual passages of between 1200 and 1400 words, covering a wide range of non-specialist topics taken from magazines and online sources. Candidates need to answer questions and complete tasks covering factual information of views and opinions expressed in the texts.

There are 13 types of task used, though some of them are very similar to each other, and you can expect to have 2 or 3 different tasks for each text. Let's take a brief look at each task:

Type 1. True, False or Not Given. Candidates read a passage and decide if the statements about the information in it are the same as in the text, the opposite or if there is no information about whether they are true or false.

Type 2. Note, Table, Flow-chart Completion and Diagram Labelling. Candidates complete notes or a table, etc. with information from the text.

Type 3. Short Answer Questions. Candidates write short answers of up to 3 words to questions about the passage.

Type 4. Matching Headings. Candidates choose headings from a list that describes the main ideas in the passage.

Type 5. Matching Information. Candidates choose statements that describe main ideas of each paragraph.

Type 6. Matching Features. Candidates match statements to an option.

Type 7. Multiple Choice. Candidates choose 2 statements out of 5 options that match information in the text.

Type 8. Sentence Completion. Candidates complete sentences with information from the passage.

Type 9 and 10. summary Completion. Candidates complete gaps in a text that summarizes the passage.

Type 11. Matching Sentence Endings. Candidates choose the endings of sentences about the passage from a list of options:

Type 12. Multiple Choice. Candidates choose the answer to questions about the text from 4 options.

Type 13. Yes, No, Not Given. Candidates decide if statements about the text agree, disagree with views expressed in the text or are not stated.

How to Prepare

- Read a wide range of factual articles from magazines or online sources, such as the BBC.
- Build up your vocabulary by recording any new words you find when reading these texts.
- Learn to skim read to get the general ideas from a text and to scan read for specific details.
- Improve your reading speed so you can read the passages and answer the questions in the time required in the test.
- Take an IELTS course taught by an experienced IELTS teacher who can help you develop these skills, such as those offered by UKCE.

On the Day of the Test

- Read the instructions carefully so you know exactly what is required for each task.
- Read the text quickly to get a general idea.
- Read the questions carefully and underline the key words then scan the text to find the area where the answer is located.
- Be careful not to choose an answer because it contains words included in the text.
- Make sure the answer you choose is the best one by ruling out other possibilities.
- Do not leave any questions unanswered. If you are not sure, make a guess from the options available.

WRITING



This is the third part of the test you will take on your test day.

It lasts for 60 minutes and consists of two tasks.

Task 1

This task requires candidates to describe some visual information presented as some type of chart, diagram or map or plan. You must write **a minimum of 150 words** covering the overall trend and the most important features shown and **should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.**

There are 3 main types of task:

Type 1. Line Graphs, Bar Charts, Tables and Pie Charts. These show statistical information that may show a change over a period of time given on the chart. In this you need to describe the overall trend and the most important features shown, such as the biggest changes. For example, population trends in 4 different countries over a 10-year period.

Type 2. Diagrams. This task will show a process presented in a series of pictures often in the form of a flow chart. candidates are required to describe the most important parts of the process. For example, the process of recycling bottles and glass.

Type 3. Maps and Plans. candidates are given two maps or plans of the same location before and after a major development project and need to describe the most important changes between the maps or plans. For example, an airport before and after an expansion project.

Task 2

The second task involves writing an essay of a **minimum of 250 words** with a clear introduction, 2 body paragraphs and a conclusion on a given topic in the remaining **40 minutes** of the test.

There are 4 main types of essay:

Type 1. Agree or Disagree Essay. Candidates are given a statement and asked to what extent do they agree or disagree with it. For example, "The rich should pay more tax".

Type 2. Discussion and Opinion Essay. Candidates are given two opposing opinions on a topic and need to discuss each opinion before giving their own opinion. For example, "Some people believe it is better to learn a second language in primary school while other think secondary school is better".

Type 3. Problem and Solution Essay. Candidates are required to write about a given problem by describing its causes and possible solutions. For example, the causes and possible solutions to climate change.

Type 4. Advantages and Disadvantages Essay. Candidates write an essay discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a situation and usually need to decide if the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. For example. The advantages and disadvantages of buying a home.

How to Prepare

- Learn about what is required to complete each type of task in terms of the structure of the task and the language required and practise until you are confident you can produce the required standard under exam conditions.
- By far the best way to do this is to take an IELTS preparation course with an experienced teacher to give you the necessary advice and feedback.

In the Exam

- Make sure you read the instructions carefully, so you know exactly what you are required to do.
- Identify the main features you need to include or brainstorm the main ideas you need to complete the task.
- Make sure you answer all aspects of the question completely.
- Write your answer in the time and minimum number of words required for each task but remember to give yourself time to check your writing for any mistakes.



SPEAKING

The IELTS Speaking Test is the final part of the exam and you'll take this in the afternoon on your test day having completed the listening, reading and writing parts in the morning.

The Speaking Test takes between 13 to 14 minutes and is in three parts.

Part 1. The introduction and Interview. The examiner will ask you 3 sets of questions about yourself covering a wide range of topics, though the first set of questions will always be about where you live or your job or studies. When you answer each question, you should always give extra details, such as reasons for your answer but don't speak for too long, about 10 to 20 seconds should be fine.

Part 2. The Individual Long Turn. The examiner will give you a topic and 1 minute to prepare your talk on a piece of paper. You will then need to talk about the topic for 2 minutes. You should always make use of the preparation time to read the question carefully and make simple notes on the points you need to talk about. You structure your talk according to the instructions and make sure you keep talking for the full 2 minutes. Don't stop talking until the examiner tells you to.

Part 3. The Two-Way Discussion. The examiner will ask you some more questions related to the topic of Part 2. You will be expected to give your opinion, say whether you agree or disagree, make comparisons, talk about advantages and disadvantages, etc. The questions will not be about you but about your country and the world in general, so don't speak about yourself in this part and try to speak for about 20 to 30 seconds in reply to each question. Although this part is called the Two-Way Discussion, you mustn't ask questions to the examiner, except if you don't understand their question.

To Prepare

- Practise speaking about a range of topics describing your own life experiences, such as holidays you've been on and people you know or famous people from your country for 2 minutes.
- Practise speaking about topics and issues in the world in general, such as the education system in your country where you give your opinion, make comparisons, talk about advantages and disadvantages, etc.
- Taking an IELTS preparation course is the best way to get the advice, practice and feedback on how to do the speaking test with an experienced IELTS teacher.

In the Exam

• Remember to give full answers to the questions the examiner asks you but don't try to speak too much. Moreover, don't interrupt the examiner and don't ask them questions about them or about what they think.

• Maintain eye contact with the examiner when speaking with them.

• Don't be afraid to ask the examiner to explain if you don't understand their instructions but they won't be able to explain any vocabulary you don't know.

• Try to stay as relaxed as you can while waiting for your turn and think about this part as a test. Think about it as an opportunity to practise speaking English and to show how well you can speak English.



OUR COURSES

Our courses here at UKCE are here to help you achieve the score you need in IELTS. We have four different time slots for you, either face-to-face or online (subject to availability):

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| AM | F2F/Online | 09:00 – 12:00 |
| PM | Online | 12:30 – 15:30 |
| PM | F2F | 15:00 – 18:00 |
| EVE | Online | 18:30 – 20:30 |

If none of these times suit you then you can contact us at info@ukenglish.org.uk and enquire about one-to-one courses that can be organised at times that are best suited to both you and your teacher.

The layout of the course

Our IELTS course is made up of a 12-week in-house syllabus that offers practice at the 4 different skills for the exam, the different types of questions for the exam, tips and suggestions as well as practice tests every week, using a range of official materials and coursebooks. Each course is taken by an experienced teacher that can offer advice for the exam in general as well as tailor the course specifically for the needs of the individual students within each lesson, in order for the students to get the practice they need before taking the exam.

