



Examiner-approved tips

Brought to you by IDP: IELTS Australia

These tips provide helpful insights and reminders to help you do your best in each component of the test.

Remember that test tips alone will not be enough to succeed in IELTS. In order to do well in the test you must prepare and practise your English during the months and weeks leading up to the test.

Find other essential tools online

In addition to the tips provided here, you should also refer to the many other IELTS preparation tools available at www.ieltsessentials.com including:

- *Information for Candidates* booklet
- *IELTS Preparation Checklist* – a step-by-step guide to improving your language and test taking skills.
- IELTS assessment criteria – understand what the examiners are looking for in each section of the test.

Listening tips

1. At the beginning of each section read the questions for that section carefully, before the recording starts. This will help you to follow the recording and identify the answers.
2. After completing a section, it is better to look ahead and read the questions for the next section than to worry about the last section.
3. You will sometimes have a list of options to choose from as answers. The possible answers may be listed in alphabetical order and not necessarily in the order you will hear them.
4. Be careful to note word limits. If there is an instruction: *Write no more than two words*, writing more than two words will mean you will receive no marks at all for your answer, even if some of the words were correct.
5. Try to listen for key words or synonyms (words that have the same or nearly the same meaning as another word) from the question to help you identify the answer. For example, in the recording you might hear: "She likes going to the gym and playing tennis". On your answer sheet, this could appear as "She is an active person."
6. You may be asked to write down words that have been spelled out in the recording. In order to do this well, you need to know the English alphabet and how each letter is pronounced (for example, the letter 'W' is pronounced as 'double-u').
7. Listen carefully for words which indicate which stage of the recording you are listening to, e.g. 'firstly', 'my next point', 'to sum up'. These words will help you identify which question you have reached.
8. As you are listening to the recording, cross out options which don't fit. This makes it easier for you to find the right answer.
9. If you are writing dates as an answer to any question remember that there are several correct ways to write them (e.g. 24th April, April 24 and 24 April are all correct).
10. If there are questions you cannot answer leave them and move on to the next question. This will help you to stay calm and positive. Go back to those questions at the end, if you have time.
11. After the last recording has ended you have ten minutes to transfer your answers from the Listening booklet to your answer sheet. Don't make the mistake of copying these answers across to the answer sheet in between sections or you may miss important information about the next section of the test. Wait until the end of Section 4 before transferring your answers.

Listening test format (30 minutes)

The Listening component is the same for both versions of IELTS (Academic and General Training). There are four parts. You will hear the recording only once. A variety of voices and native-speaker accents is used.

Section 1: a conversation between two people set in an everyday social context (e.g. a conversation about accommodation).

Section 2: a monologue set in an everyday social context (e.g. a speech about local facilities or about arrangements for meals during a conference).

Section 3: a conversation between up to four people set in an educational or training context (e.g. a university tutor and a student discussing an assignment, or a group of people planning a project).

Section 4: a talk (e.g. a university lecture).



Reading tips

Reading test format: Academic (60 minutes)

There are three sections, each containing one long text. The texts are all real and are taken from books, magazines and newspapers. They have been written for a non-specialist audience and are on academic topics of general interest which means you do not need specialist knowledge to do well. The texts are appropriate to, and accessible to, candidates entering undergraduate or postgraduate courses or seeking professional registration. Texts range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. Texts may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms, then a simple glossary is provided.

Reading test format: General Training (60 minutes)

There are three sections.

Section 1: contains two or three short factual texts, one of which may be composite (consisting of 6-8 short texts related by topic, e.g. hotel advertisements). Topics are relevant to everyday life in an English-speaking country.

Section 2: contains two short factual texts focusing on work-related issues (e.g. applying for jobs, company policies, pay and conditions, workplace facilities, staff development and training).

Section 3: contains one longer, more complex text on a topic of general interest.

You'll be reading real passages taken from notices, advertisements, company handbooks, official documents, books, magazines and newspapers.

1. To improve your performance in the Reading test you need to practise reading a variety of English texts. This will help you develop the ability to read quickly, as is required under test conditions.
2. Read every question carefully first before reading the passages. This will make it easier for you to find the answers. Underline possible answers as you go.
3. When you come to reading the passage, read it quickly the first time in order to get a general idea of what it's about. Don't worry about words you do not understand. Then read each question again to remind yourself which parts of the passage you will need to read again in detail.
4. The Reading passages *always* contain the information you need to answer the question. You won't have to use your own knowledge of a topic.
5. If you are copying words from a question or reading passage to use in your answer, remember that your spelling must be accurate.
6. The Reading test may sometimes include questions which test your overall understanding of a passage. For example, the question may ask what the topic of a particular passage is. Try underlining key words and ideas in each paragraph as you read to help you understand the key message of each passage.
7. Circle or underline key words as you read. For example, if a reading passage contains many place names or dates, circle them as you go along. This will make it easier to find these details later, if they come up in any of the questions.
8. If you are asked to label a diagram, you will find the words you need in the text. Be sure to copy them carefully from the text with the correct spelling.
9. If there are questions you cannot answer, leave them and move on to the next question. This will help you to stay calm and positive. Go back to those questions at the end, if you have time.
10. Make sure you write down your answers for the Reading test on the answer sheet - not the question paper. There will be no extra time to transfer your answers after the Reading test.

Writing tips



Writing test format: Academic (60 minutes)

There are two parts. Responses to Task 1 and Task 2 should be written in a formal style.

Task 1: you are presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram and are asked to summarise and report the information in your own words. You may be asked to select and compare data, describe the stages of a process, describe an object or how something works.

Task 2: you are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. *Task 2 contributes twice as much as Task 1 to the Writing score.*

Topics are of general interest to, suitable for and easily understood by candidates entering undergraduate/postgraduate studies or seeking professional registration.

Writing test format: General Training (60 minutes)

There are two parts.

Task 1: you are presented with a situation and are asked to write a letter requesting information or explaining the situation. The letter may be personal, semi-formal or formal in style.

Task 2: you are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. The essay can be less formal in style with a more personal response than the Academic Writing Task 2 essay. *Task 2 contributes twice as much as Task 1 to the Writing score.*

Topics are of general interest.

1. In your Writing test there are no right or wrong answers or opinions. The examiners are assessing how well you can use your English to report information and express ideas.
2. Analyse the questions carefully to make sure your answer addresses all the points covered by the question.
3. Notice the minimum word limit. If you write less than 150 words for Task 1 and less than 250 for Task 2, you will lose marks.
4. Be careful to use your own words because the examiner will not include words copied from the question in the word count.
5. You must write both your answers in full, not in note form or in bullet points. You must arrange your ideas in paragraphs, to show the examiner that you are able to organise your main and supporting points.
6. You do not have to write very long sentences to do well in your Writing test. If sentences are too long, they will become less coherent and also make it harder for you to control the grammar.
7. In Academic Writing Task 1 you have to select and compare relevant information from data presented in a graph, table or diagram. In your introduction, do not copy the text from the question. Use your own words. You shouldn't try to interpret or give reasons for the data; keep your response factual.
8. Task 2 of the Academic Writing test is an essay. Don't forget to plan your essay structure before you start writing. You should include an introduction, ideas to support your argument or opinion, real-life examples to illustrate your points, and a conclusion based on the information you have provided.
9. You have 40 minutes to write your Task 2 essay. Make sure you give yourself up to five minutes to plan your answer before you start writing. Also leave five minutes at the end to review your answer and check for mistakes.
10. Make your position or point of view as clear as possible in your essay for Academic Writing Task 2. Your last paragraph should be a conclusion which is consistent with the arguments you have included in your essay.
11. Memorising a model answer for the Writing test won't help you. The examiner will see that your answer does not match the topic of the essay.
12. Many candidates confuse singular and plural nouns. For example, the plural form for many nouns includes an 's' – students, journals, articles, issues. Pay attention to this when writing.
13. Take care to spell words correctly. Standard American, Australian and British spellings are acceptable in IELTS.



Speaking tips

1. In the lead up to the Speaking test, make sure you take the time to practise speaking English – with friends, at work and on the phone. You should also consider recording yourself, so that you are confident speaking English during your test.
2. There are no right or wrong answers in the Speaking test. The examiner will assess you on how well you can express your ideas and opinions in good English.
3. It will help you to feel relaxed if you imagine you are talking to a friend. Remember that you are not being assessed on your opinions, rather on your use of English.
4. Try to avoid repeating the words used in the examiner's question. Use your own words, to show the examiner your full ability.
5. Speak clearly and at a natural pace. If you speak too quickly, you may make mistakes or pronounce words incorrectly.
6. Answer in as much detail as you can. Don't just answer 'yes' or 'no'. Try to develop your response to each question – draw on your own experience and give examples. The examiner wants to hear whether you can talk at length on a range of topics.
7. Use the correct verb tense when answering questions in the Speaking test. Listen carefully to the question and notice which verb tense is used. For example, if the question is 'What kind of music do you like?' (in the present tense) your answer should also be in the present tense (e.g. '*I like pop music best*'). You can go on to use other tenses as you extend your response, e.g. '*I haven't always enjoyed that kind of music...*'.
8. Practise the pronunciation of numbers to be sure that your meaning is clear. For example, many numbers can sound very similar when spoken, so be sure to say them clearly, e.g. 'Thirty' and 'Thirteen', 'Forty' and 'Fourteen', 'Fifty' and 'Fifteen' etc.
9. It is better to use simple, commonly used vocabulary and to use it correctly than to use advanced vocabulary that you are unsure about. However, to get a high score, you must show you know how to use more advanced vocabulary.
10. In Part 2, the examiner will give you a task card and some paper. You then have one minute to prepare your answer. First think about the topic and then decide which is the most appropriate tense to use in your response. You should use the same tense(s) as the questions on the card.
11. Try to answer as fully as possible and give reasons for your answers. This will help you to use a wider range of vocabulary and grammar.

Speaking test format (11-14 minutes)

The Speaking component is the same for both versions of IELTS (Academic and General Training). There are three parts. The test is recorded.

Part 1: Introduction and interview (4-5 minutes)

The examiner introduces him/herself and asks you to introduce yourself and confirm your identity. The examiner asks you general questions on familiar topics, (e.g. family, work, studies and interests).

Part 2: Individual long turn (3-4 minutes)

The examiner gives you a task card which asks you to talk about a particular topic and which includes points you can cover in your talk. You are given one minute to prepare your talk, and you are given a pencil and paper to make notes. You talk for one to two minutes on the topic. The examiner then asks you one or two questions on the same topic.

Part 3: Two-way discussion (4-5 minutes)

The examiner asks further questions which are connected to the topic of Part 2. This gives you an opportunity to discuss more general issues and ideas.