

IELTS Basics

مقدمه‌ای از بخش اسپیکینگ آیلتس

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IELTS Up Words!

Lesson 1: IELTS

I am Yasi, your virtual IELTS mentor. A mentor is someone who has enough experience to give you advice. So, throughout this course, I will give you tips and share techniques that can help you score better on the IELTS test by learning necessary words and expressions. But this course is not just about words. We will also focus on the speaking section of the test.

In this lesson, I will talk a bit about the IELTS test, and then, I will explain how the speaking part is scored in detail. You can skip this lesson and start from the next one if you want, and **refer** to this lesson when you need to.

What is IELTS?

First, I would like to **break down** different sections of the IELTS test and show you what this test is all about. This **walkthrough** will give you a better idea of the overall structure of IELTS.

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System.

It is an English language **proficiency** test, meaning it tests your ability to use the language proficiently or skillfully.

It **assesses** listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

The results of this test are accepted by universities and immigration offices in English-speaking countries, such as Canada and Australia.

IELTS is split into two modules: Academic and General Training.

The Academic and General Training modules are similar in speaking, listening, and task two of writing, but different in the reading part and task one of writing.

Either module can be given computer-delivered or paper-based.

Skill	Time	Sections/ Questions
Listening	30 minutes	4 sections/40 questions
Reading	60 minutes	40 questions
Writing	60 minutes	2 tasks
Speaking	11–14 minutes	3 parts

An IELTS Myth

The first thing to know when it comes to how IELTS is scored is that there is no “pass” or “fail.” So, **let me put your mind at ease**, you are not going to fail the test. You should see what score you need and how to achieve your desired band score. You are just going to get a score from zero to nine. You get a zero if you do not **attempt** the test.

How is IELTS Scored?

You are graded in each component, and the average of those parts combined makes up your score. So, for example, if you score in each section of the test like this:

Listening: 6

Reading: 7

Writing: 6

Speaking: 7

Then the average of those four marks will be 6.5, and that is going to be your overall band score. If that average turns out to be something like 6.75 or 6.25, your overall score will be rounded up to the next half band. So, 6.75 will be rounded up to 7, and 6.25 will be rounded up to 6.5.

Speaking Part One

Now, let's see what exactly the speaking section of IELTS looks like. The speaking section of IELTS consists of three parts and lasts around eleven to fourteen minutes. First, let's look at the first part. We will **go through** the other two afterward.

The speaking test starts with the examiner introducing themselves. Then, they will ask you to introduce yourself and confirm your identity by providing your passport or ID card. Next, they will start recording the session. They record the test mostly for training purposes, but also so that you can have a chance to ask the center to **re-mark** your score if needed. To re-mark means to re-examine your test and give you another mark.

Then, the first part of the test starts. We call it the interview stage, and it is usually four to five minutes **long**. The examiner will start by asking a few general questions on familiar topics like work, home, family, etc. There is no **set number of questions**, but you can usually expect to be asked four to five questions.

There is no need to create extended, developed answers here. This section should help you relax and talk naturally, as if to a friend. If you were talking to a friend, you wouldn't just say yes or no, right? You would explain a bit, but only a bit. You wouldn't give essay-length answers. Appropriate answers for this part are not too long, and not too short either.

Sample task one questions:

- Do you like your job?
- How long have you lived in your home?
- Do you have any pets?
- How do you spend your free time?

Speaking Part Two

In the second part of the speaking section of IELTS, you will be given a cue card. A cue card, **in this sense**, is a card with a question written on it for you to answer. It is a topic card that asks you to talk about a specific topic with some **prompts** to help guide your talk. A prompt, in this sense, is a set of directions to give you ideas for speaking. For example, look at the sample questions below:

Describe a time when you were ill. You should say:

- **when this was**
- **what your symptoms were**
- **how long the illness lasted**
- **how it affected your life at the time**

The highlighted sentences are the prompts to guide you through this question. The examiner will give you a pen and paper to write down notes for one minute and then will ask you to talk for about two minutes. Once the time is up, you will be told to stop, even if you are in the middle of a sentence, which is okay and you shouldn't worry if the examiner **cuts you off**. After the talk is over, the examiner might ask you some **follow-up** questions based on your talk, especially if your talk is shorter than two minutes. Follow-up questions are the questions they ask after they hear something and want to know more about what the speaker is telling them.

Speaking Part Three

The Discussion Stage

Even though it is called the discussion stage, it is just you who is answering some questions that the examiner asks. This part of the test lasts four to five minutes, and the examiner will ask you questions related to the topic in part two. These questions are meant to give you the chance to talk about more **abstract ideas**. Take, for example, this question: Do you think people these days are more pessimistic or optimistic?

There is no set number of questions—just like in part one; but unlike part one, you need to explain and support your answers here. In other words, you need to elaborate on your answers.

Band Descriptors

In this part of the lesson, I will give you an overlook of what band descriptors are, and then, I will break them down further for you.

IELTS speaking is **assessed** by looking at four different skills:

fluency and coherence

lexical resource

grammatical range and accuracy

pronunciation

So, for example, if you want to achieve a band 7 in the speaking section, you need to pay attention to what the band descriptors require for a 7 and practice **to meet the band 7 criteria**.

Band Descriptors: Fluency and Coherence

Now, let's look at the first category of band descriptors, fluency and coherence, and what you need to do to score a band 7 with regards to that. But first, let me explain what exactly we mean by "**coherence**." Coherence in speaking is **the logical arrangement of your talk** or how every part of your answer relates to another sentence. Take for example, "I got the flu. I couldn't go to school:" this is not very coherent; but "I got the flu, and that is why I couldn't go to school." is.

According to the official IELTS speaking band descriptors, to achieve band 7 and above:

- you must **speak at length** without noticeable effort or loss of coherence;
- you may **demonstrate** language-related **hesitation**, some repetition, and/or self-correction;
- you must use a range of connectives and **discourse markers** with **flexibility**.

Band Descriptors: Lexical Resource

Let's move on to the second band descriptor: Lexical Resource. Lexical resource simply means vocabulary and to score a band 7,

- you must use vocabulary flexibly to discuss a variety of topics;
- you must use less common and idiomatic vocabulary and show some awareness of style and collocation;
- you must paraphrase effectively.

Band Descriptors: Grammatical Range and Accuracy

We have learned about two of the speaking band descriptors so far. Now it is time to find out what the third one is.

Grammatical Range

According to the official IELTS speaking band descriptors, to achieve band 7 and above,

- you must use a range of complex structures with some flexibility;
- you must frequently produce error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes may persist.

Speaking Band Descriptor: Pronunciation

The fourth and final category of IELTS speaking band descriptors is pronunciation. Your pronunciation is extremely important when it comes to scoring high in the speaking section. But don't get me wrong, I am not talking about having a British or American accent. **Rest assured** that speaking with a perfect British or American accent is not scored in IELTS. Pronunciation is different; it is about the stress and the correct way of pronouncing words according to dictionaries. So, you won't lose marks if you speak English with a Persian accent, but you will lose marks if you are **incoherent** and cannot make yourself understood.

According to the official IELTS speaking band descriptors, to achieve band 7 and above,

- you must show all the positive features of Band 6, but not all the positive features of Band 8;
- you must use a wide range of pronunciation features with mixed control;
- you must be generally understood (Band 6)/should be easy to understand throughout the test (Band 8).

In the table below, you can find the band descriptors for every band score.

IELTS™

SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; • any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures though these rarely cause comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only produces isolated words or memorised utterances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot produce basic sentence forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech is often unintelligible
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no communication possible • no rateable language 			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not attend 			

topic-related words and structures	meaning	translation	other structures
refer to something	to look at something for information or help	نگاه کردن به چیزی برای کسب اطلاعات	reference
to break down a complex idea	to separate something into smaller parts so that it is easier to do or understand	تجزیه یک ایده پیچیده	to analyze something
walkthrough	written instructions that tell you all the details of how you should do something	راهنما	synonym: guide; a detailed explanation
to assess	to evaluate	ارزیابی کردن	assessment; evaluation (noun)
criteria	plural of criterion; a standard by which you judge, decide about, or deal with something	معیارها	singular: criterion
proficiency	a good standard of ability and skill	مهارت؛ تسلط	language proficiency; reading proficiency
myth	an idea or story that many people believe, but which is not true	افسانه؛ باور غلط	synonym: misconception; misbelief
let me put your mind at ease	to make someone stop worrying; to assure	بذار خیالت رو راحت کنم	synonym: let me ease your mind
attempt the test	to try to do the test	تلاش برای انجام آزمون	

topic-related words and structures	meaning	translation	other structures
to go through a question	to read a question carefully	با دقت خواندن یک سؤال	to examine a question
to re-mark a score	when IELTS examiners check your test and give you another mark	نمره دهی مجدد	to apply for a re-mark; appealing your IELTS score
a set number of questions	a specific number of questions	تعداد مشخصی سؤال	
twenty minutes long	lasting for twenty minutes	بیست دقیقه طول می کشد	length (noun) lengthy (adjective)
prompt	hint	نکته؛ سرنخ	
follow-up questions	the questions you ask after you hear something and you want to know more about what the speaker is telling you	سؤالات تکمیلی	synonym: additional questions; further questions
to cut someone off	interrupt	وسط حرف کسی پریدن	synonym: disrupt
in this sense	in this regard	در این زمینه؛ در این معنا	
an abstract idea	an idea based on general ideas or principles rather than specific examples or realistic events	یک ایده انتزاعی	abstract idea/ concept

topic-related words and structures	meaning	translation	other structures
the logical arrangement of your talk	the meaningful arrangement of words following the natural laws and universally accepted concepts	چینش منطقی گفتار	alternative arrangements
speak at length	to speak in detail	به تفصیل صحبت کردن	talk at length
to demonstrate a skill	to show (present) a skill	نشان دادن یک مهارت	demonstration (noun) demonstrator (noun)
hesitation	the action of pausing before saying or doing something	درنگ؛ تأمل	to hesitate (verb)
discourse markers	words or phrases whose functions are to organize discourse into segments, for example: well or I mean.	نقش‌نماهای کلامی	example: oh, well, now, then, you know, and I mean
flexibility (noun)	the ability to change or be changed easily to suit a different situation	تغییرپذیری؛ قابلیت تغییر	flexible (adjective)
coherence	when something such as a piece of writing is easy to understand because its parts are connected in a clear and reasonable way	انسجام؛ یکپارچگی	coherent (adjective)
lexical	related to words	واژگانی؛ لغوی	lexical analysis a lexical entry
awareness	knowledge or understanding of a particular subject or situation	آگاهی	to raise awareness environmental/ political/social awareness

topic-related words and structures	meaning	translation	other structures
paraphrase	to express the meaning of something using different words	به بیان دیگر گفتن؛ بازنویسی / بازگویی	
incoherent	not expressed or organized clearly, and therefore difficult to understand	(حرف‌های) نامفهوم	opposite: coherent
rest assured	used to tell someone not to worry, because what you say about a situation is true	خیالت راحت باشد	be assured of something



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