

Classroom & Self-Study

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IELTS Academic: High-Score Guide



Stephen Slater | Donna Millen | Pat Tyrie

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME to IELTS Academic: High-Score Guide! This test practice and preparation book has complete IELTS practice tests and High-Score strategy and activity sections. It has been written for candidates who are preparing for the IELTS Test (Academic) in order to enter an academic course in an English-speaking institution. It is designed both for independent study and for use as a classroom textbook. IELTS Academic: High-Score Guide is not an official IELTS publication and, like most other practice and preparation books, is not endorsed officially by IELTS.

WHAT IS THE IELTS TEST?

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is a widely used and recognised international Test of English administered by Cambridge Assessment English, the British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia. There are two versions: Academic (for students wishing to study in an English-speaking university or college) and General Training (for entry to vocational programs, schools or for immigration).

IELTS tests four performance areas: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

All candidates receive a test score between 1 (lowest) and 9 (highest). Academic institutions set their own IELTS entry scores.

The IELTS test is taken in this sequence:

Academic Writing	Two essay tasks — 60 minutes
Academic Reading	40 questions based on three texts — 60 minutes
Listening	40 questions — 30 minutes (+ 10 minutes to transfer answers)
Speaking	A standardised interview in three parts lasting 11–14 minutes

The current IELTS material for test applicants, which is available at all test centres worldwide, gives further information about the test. The official IELTS website www.ielts.org also gives up-to-date information and test data.

INSIDE THIS BOOK

IELTS Academic: High-Score Guide is divided into **four units** — Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

Each unit contains IELTS practice tests and a **High-Score Guide** section.

IELTS PRACTICE TESTS

4

COMPLETE LISTENING TESTS

The audio recordings offer a wide variety of English accents – British, American, Australian, Canadian and Scottish. This is consistent with the international nature of the IELTS test and the need for candidates to accommodate varieties of English spoken at a natural speed.

6

COMPLETE READING TESTS

Topics that are interesting, durable and even controversial have been favoured for inclusion. The aim has been to encourage critical thinking and discussion in IELTS preparation classrooms. All six tests are at a level comparable to the actual IELTS, but the later tests pose a slightly higher level of challenge than the earlier ones.

6

COMPLETE WRITING TESTS

The Writing Test Task 1 material covers a wide range of test task types. The Writing Test Task 2 prompts are usually short and clear. The aim has been to enable users of this book to focus on their own writing needs.

2

COMPLETE SPEAKING TESTS

The two sample IELTS Speaking tests on the audio recordings involve non-native speakers.

1

QUICK GUIDE to a higher IELTS score

This new section offers detailed guidance for managing test performance professionally and improving upon your IELTS score in each of the four subtests.

HIGH-SCORE GUIDE SECTIONS

The FOUR High-Score Guide sections offer easy-to-follow strategies, activities and support.

LISTENING and READING

Immediately following both Listening and Reading test sections, you will find the High-Score Guide sections. Refer to these pages to help you to analyse your mistakes and develop strategies for listening to and reading IELTS test material. Also check the student comments and language tips.

WRITING

The first part of this section explores the requirements of the IELTS Academic Writing Test and targets problem areas with hints for improvement. Each of the 12 Writing Tasks has planning assistance plus a Sample Answer, which generate language-building activities. Notes following the answers provide additional discourse pointers. Our belief is that IELTS candidates will become better attuned to the type of writing required for the test if they work analytically and interactively with whole sample answers. This is consistent with an inductive approach.

SPEAKING

Two speaking tests on the audio recordings are accompanied by listening activities so that you can 'track' in an active way the interview format and content. There are also teacher comments for the two candidates, examiners' suggestions, plus extra test practice topics and questions.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Of course, if you are working alone you will choose how best to use the book, but we would remind you of two principles that we hope may influence you.

Learn by reviewing performance

Our approach is based on an inductive view of learning. This means that we believe that it is better to learn by doing an IELTS test and then reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of your performance. Repeating the test helps to reinforce corrections and build confidence and speed. Your progress will be more efficient working this way than just doing one test after another.

'Use it or lose it'

Again, we strongly encourage you to try the same test several times to make sure you can build on what you have learnt about your performance, monitor and then demonstrate improvement. This is why we say 'Use it or lose it'.

You will find further guidance on how to use the book in each of the four units.

GOOD LUCK!

UNIT 1 LISTENING

WHAT'S AHEAD ... IN THE LISTENING UNIT

- **The IELTS Listening Test**
- **Instructions for Test Practice**
- **Listening Tests 1–4**
- ***High-Score Guide to Listening***
 - **Learn from your mistakes**
 - **How can I improve?**
 - **Tips from test-takers**

THE IELTS LISTENING TEST

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT IT?

Structure of the test

The test has four sections of increasing difficulty:

- Section 1: a conversation on a general topic with two or three speakers
2: a talk by one speaker on a general topic
3: a conversation on an academic topic with two or three speakers
4: a talk or lecture in academic style



Questions

There are 40 questions, made up of seven different question types.

Pauses

Within each section there are two short pauses, one at the beginning and one in the middle. These give you time to read questions before listening. There is also time at the end of each section to finish writing your answers.

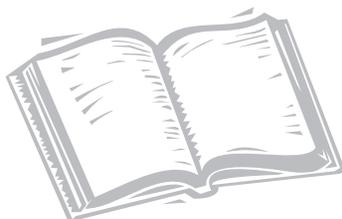


Time

The listening test takes 30 minutes. You hear the recording ONCE only.

Test instructions

There are recorded instructions at the beginning of the test. As you listen, write your answers on the question paper. At the end of the test, you are given time to transfer the answers to an answer sheet.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEST PRACTICE

*There are
FOUR
Listening
Practice Tests*

4

Before you start

Make a photocopy of the Sample Answer Sheet on page 130 of this book or write your answers in the book. Use pencil.

Practise under test conditions

Time: 30 minutes

Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted.

DO NOT use a dictionary.

There are instructions for the test at the beginning of each recording.

Do not stop the recording once you begin the test.

After you finish

Practise transferring your answers to the Sample Answer Sheet on page 130.

Check the Answer Key on page 218.

Before you try the next test

Turn to **HIGH-SCORE GUIDE TO LISTENING** on page 43.

Repeat For Listening Tests 2 to 4.

Read the Quick Guide on pages 207–209 for more suggestions on improving your score in the Listening Test.

LISTENING

TEST 1

SECTION 1 Questions 1–10

Questions 1–5

Circle the correct letter A–C.

EXAMPLE

Andrea is feeling happy because ...

- A she's seen Harry.
- B she's finished her exams.
- C she can sleep in.

[1] What is Harry's problem?

- A He doesn't want to sell his things.
- B He needs to decide what to do with his possessions.
- C He wants to take everything to England.

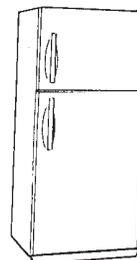
[2] Which of the items below does Harry want to sell?



A



B



C

[3] Where is Harry going to advertise his books for sale?

- A In the university bookshop.
- B In the student newspaper.
- C In the Economics Department.



[4] Andrea thinks it is unlikely students will buy the furniture because ...

- A they're all doing the same thing.
- B they live at home.
- C it's the summer vacation.

[5] Andrea thinks that a second-hand shop ...

- A may not pay well.
- B may not take your goods.
- C may only take free goods.

Questions 6–10

Complete Harry's notes using **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS**.

THINGS TO DO:

- [6] furniture, etc., in Trading Post.
- [7] or sell kitchen things.
- Get [8] first from second-hand shop.
- Give clothes to [9] shop.
- [10] fridge and microwave to Andrea.



SECTION 2 Questions 11–20

Complete the Fitness Centre brochure using **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS**.

Sevenoaks

HEALTH & FITNESS CENTRE

Located conveniently at the [11] of Marion Street and Giles Street.

WE ARE OPEN FOR YOU

Monday–Friday [12] a.m. to 9.30 p.m.
Saturday 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Sunday 9.00 a.m. to [13] p.m.

WET AREA

Aqua aerobic [14] for all ages and levels.

[15] lessons on weekday afternoons and weekend mornings.

SUPER CIRCUIT CLASSES

A cardio workout class that is easy to [16]

AEROBIC & STEP CLASSES

Aerobics room holds over 55 participants.

LARGE WELL-EQUIPPED GYM

Have a personal fitness assessment & individual [17] to suit you.

CARDIO-VASCULAR ROOM

Use the treadmills, bikes and steppers to burn fat, increase fitness, warm up.

Watch your favourite [18] while you exercise.

TWO-FOR-ONE SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP PLUS [19] TRIAL OFFER

ONLY \$110 each for a whole [20] months! Get ready for summer.

HURRY – OFFER ENDS SOON!

SECTION 3 Questions 21–30

Questions 21–25

Complete the notes below using **ONE WORD ONLY**.

THE CANADIAN FOOD MARKET

- Understanding subtle [21] between the Canadian and United States food sectors important for successful food marketing
- Canada has many different ethnic groups: e.g., Toronto has large [22] and Asian populations
- Growth of ethnic specialities of Mediterranean, Caribbean, South-East Asian and [23] foods
- Therefore, supermarkets now offering new [24] to prepare these foods, e.g., condiments and sauces
- 80% of Canadian market controlled by eight major national chains
- Seminar to compare Canadian food trends with [25] and UK

Questions 26–30

Complete the table below. Write **ONE WORD OR A NUMBER** for each answer.

TREND	COMMENTS
<p><i>INTEREST IN HEALTHY FOOD</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salads are the third most commonly eaten food in Canadian [26] • Most shoppers check [27] and nutritional information
<p><i>NEW WAY OF LABELLING MEAT</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labelled according to [28] technique, e.g., simmering steak
<p><i>'MOBILE MEALS'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More meals eaten away from home • [29] increase in sales of snacks projected over next three years • Growth in [30] snacks such as muesli bars

SECTION 4 Questions 31–40

Complete the lecture notes using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Public speaking means speaking to [31] people

Lack of confidence usually due to [32]

A. PLANNING

First part of public speaking is [33]

This includes [34] and length of talk

Make speech notes on small cards to talk from [35]
with the audience (very important)

B. VOICE

Speak slowly – this gives time for pronunciation and is easier for audience

– bigger audience requires [36] speech

Project your voice – rehearse and [37]

Check intonation: varied tone and rhythm gives [38]

C. BODY LANGUAGE

Lastly, think about your [39] and gestures

Show confidence by: head up, chin out, shoulders back

Avoid scratching and fiddling because this [40]
and irritates your audience

QUICK GUIDE ...

... TO A HIGHER IELTS SCORE

WHAT'S AHEAD ... IN THE QUICK GUIDE

- **Managing your test performance**
- **Quick Guide to a higher score in the 4 IELTS subtests:**

Listening

Reading

Writing

Speaking

QUICK GUIDE TO A HIGHER IELTS TEST SCORE

Managing your test performance

THE PROBLEM: IELTS test-takers often say *I need a higher score!*

Increasing numbers of IELTS candidates are taking the IELTS test for the second, third, fourth ... or even 10th time! They need a higher score but don't achieve it.

THE SOLUTION: Become your own 'professional test manager'

It is vital to create a many-sided role for yourself that involves becoming a 'professional test manager', not a frustrated and powerless 'test victim'.

To manage your test performance effectively:

- accept the responsibility for maximising your score.
- analyse your unique profile – your strengths and weaknesses in each subtest (e.g., time management, certain task types, relating to the interviewer).
- carry out targeted test practice to reduce your weaknesses.
- manage your performance systematically and professionally on test day.
- switch roles flexibly to maximise your performance – time-keeper, planner, editor, answer decision-maker, emergency officer, public relations manager, trainer, psychologist.
- manage your psychological state so that you remain focused and calm.
- look for opportunities to demonstrate your full language ability – for example, in the areas of Speaking and Writing (self-empowerment).

1) Quick Guide to a higher score in IELTS LISTENING

BEFORE Listening – Six tips for getting ready to listen

You are given some time (15 to 20 seconds) to look at each group of around four or five questions before listening to each corresponding part of the recording. Use this time well.

TIP 1

Identify the situation in which the speakers are talking and their relationship.

(Is it students in a classroom? ... someone talking to a colleague in an office? Are they strangers? ... friends? ... colleagues?). Relationship affects a speaker's choice of language (more formal or less formal), and being aware of this helps you to anticipate possible types of synonym (either a more conversational one or a more formal one).

TIP 2

Check the task.

Are you expected to: ... complete a form? ... fill in some missing words? ... choose from three multiple-choice options A/B/C? ... select words or items from a list? Be clear about the **rules of the task** – for example, the maximum number of words you can write; which box or column to focus on; kinds of word or information needed.

TIP 3

Look for **key words or headings** that might have a synonym on the recording (using different words of similar meaning is a very common way of writing test questions).

TIP 4

Be clear about **categories and headings** in any table, map or diagram. If it is a map, check where you are located at the start, before the recording tells you where to move to.

TIP 5

Look at **any examples** that may be given as sample answers and remind yourself not to choose the example answer for any of your own answers.

TIP 6

Note **any answers that look completely unlikely choices before listening** if the task is a multiple-choice type task or a task type with a list, for example.

To summarise, **your main management job in the time BEFORE listening** to each section is to **reduce uncertainty about each answer task type and its requirements**. This aids prediction, which reduces the likelihood of panic and helps good answer selection.

WHILE Listening – Two KEY TIPS

TIP 1

Stay on task

As you listen to the recording for each section, **remain active but try to listen out for key expressions**; don't try to follow every word. Listening is always a process of selection and sampling of input; listening should mirror your listening purpose.

TIP 2

Don't get left behind.

This is a golden rule of the IELTS Listening test. Keep up with the recording!

How can you stop yourself from getting left behind?

- **Focus on what the questions require.** Practice before the test so that you get used to linking what you hear on the recording to typical task completions, and then you will become more and more confident to let some words pass by without getting anxious.
- **Find the 'rhythm' of the IELTS Listening test.** After one question's key information or word has been heard, there is usually some time before the next question's key input, so you know that words needed for two or three consecutive answers often occur after time gaps.
- **Don't leave an answer 'empty'.** Instead, leave a 'holding answer' on the question paper and mark the question for more attention later, then come back to it.

Transferring answers to the Answer Sheet

You have 10 minutes after the end of the Listening test to transfer your answers from the Question paper to an Answer Sheet. **Stay focused and manage this time systematically.**

WATCH OUT!

1) Avoid the 'worst disaster'!

The worst disaster is when you transfer your answers from the question paper to the Answer Sheet but put most of your answers next to the wrong question numbers without realising it! **So, always check that each answer is being transferred to the correct question number on the Answer Sheet.** An 'empty' answer can cause this problem of putting an answer in the wrong place, so an answer to each of the 40 questions is helpful.

What can you do if you have transferred all your answers and suddenly find that some of the answers are next to the wrong numbers?

- Don't panic! Don't start crossing things out and making a mess!
- Draw an arrow from the answer to the correct question number so that it is clear that the answer is pointing to the question number you want it to belong to.

2) 'Mind the Gaps'!

In IELTS Listening, we could reasonably say, 'Mind the Gaps'! This means that **during the transferring of answers you must finally fill in an answer to any question you left blank** while you were actually listening to the recording. Don't leave 'empty answers'. **Even a guess has more chance than an empty space.** Also, if you have left two possible answers on your question paper, you have to decide which one to choose. **Don't spend too long on these final choices** because you only have 10 minutes' total transfer time.

9 tips for transferring your answers accurately.

1

Write clearly.

Often, answers require letters of the alphabet. It can sometimes be difficult for markers to tell the difference, for example, between an 'A' and an 'H', or 'D' and 'O', or numbers like '1' and '7'.

2

Change answers cleanly and clearly

If you decide to change an answer, do it clearly. Erase the answer you no longer want and write the new answer clearly. Avoid any messy crossing out which may leave doubt.

3

Don't use abbreviations unless they are common ones

Nearly everybody knows *kg* or \$, but some abbreviated forms are not well known and may not be accepted as a correct answer. Be cautious and, if in doubt, use full forms.

4

Use correct word forms

It is very easy either to write a singular when a plural is needed in the answer or vice versa, or to write a verb form without the 's' at the end.

5

Use correct word order

With answers requiring two or more words, use correct order, as meaning can change. Example: *answer key* (list of answers) but *key answer* (main answer).

6

Check the maximum number of words you can use in an answer.

If the question says 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS', your answer should not have three words.

7

Spell correctly. Incorrect spelling can sometimes cause loss of marks. The good news is that both American and British forms of spelling are usually accepted.

8

Copy words accurately – especially words in your answer that are also in the question.

9

Keep an eye on the time. 10 minutes to transfer your answers seems generous, but if you are not systematic or focused then you may have a problem.

You can't escape PRACTICE – Six 'fitness' tips for the Listening test

The only real way to get better at IELTS Listening is to practise. You need to:

TIP 1

Practise every listening task type so that you know exactly how each task type operates and how to manage and respond to each type optimally and calmly.

TIP 2

Practise complete tests so that you learn how to be flexible and how to deal with unexpected situations calmly across a complete test event. **Panic is the enemy of performance in the Listening test!**

TIP 3

Do the same IELTS practice test several times with a day or two in between repeats. This repeating of tests reduces input pressure (i.e., pressure of the amount of all the new spoken input on the recording) and enables you to focus on other aspects of test performance. (e.g., task types and test tricks, building test-management strategies)

TIP 4

Practise IELTS 'trick-spotting'. The IELTS Listening test often contains little spoken 'tricks' to catch you out. A common example is the changing of address information. Practice enables you to identify the tricks quickly and learn how to manage them.

TIP 5

Practise to become sensitive to little changes in the speaker's voice tone, pitch or emphasis, as these can sometimes signal the use of answer information.

TIP 6

Practise building predictive skills. Listening usually involves predicting what might be said next, based on what you have already heard and what you have come to expect from your previous experience of what is said in similar situations.

2) Quick Guide to a higher score in IELTS READING

7 Tips for becoming a better manager of your Academic Reading test

TIP 1

BEFORE the test – make a time-management plan.

It's poor strategy to 'go with the flow' in the reading test. Have a time-management plan.

To make a time-management plan, you need to decide on:

- a maximum time for quickly 'overviewing' the whole paper – two to three minutes perhaps
- a period of time to spend on each test section or on each passage. Some candidates prefer a 'sliding scale' of time allocation, such as:
15–16 minutes (Passage 1)
19–20 minutes (Passage 2)
22–24 minutes (Passage 3)

This sliding scale may suit the General Training Reading test a little more than the Academic Reading test, as the increase in difficulty is more marked.

- a time strategy for tricky questions. Perhaps no more than one to two minutes on any tricky question. (Remember, you may be able to come back to it.)
- an amount of time to save at the end to 'quick-check' the accuracy of your answers on the Answer Sheet (one to two minutes perhaps)
- an emergency strategy if you get into difficulties (for example, when you have only five minutes left but 10 questions still to answer)

TIP 2

DURING the test – first, overview the test contents (questions and passages).

'Overviewing' here means getting a general impression. It's part of the progressive build-up of meaning as you go from general understanding to specific meanings. It helps to know what the topics are for each passage, the subtopics of paragraphs and the type and focus of each question group. This is done by a form of quick reading called 'skimming & scanning' – letting your eyes run freely across particular locations in texts and questions.

TIP 3

Start with the questions, then move to the text – this helps focused searching.

As with the Listening test, you need to stay 'on task'. There is no time to read the whole passage slowly, so you need to know in advance what you are trying to find in the passage.

TIP 4

Analyse the structure of each passage. As you begin to move from question to text and back, you need to take control of the passage by analysing it or marking it. How?

- by dividing the passage into sections based on paragraphs and topic sentences (usually the first sentence in each paragraph)
- by circling people's names, numbers and key words
- scanning the passage for synonyms (remember that test questions are often created by using an expression in the question which is different from the one in the passage but is a synonym of it (has a similar meaning))

TIP 5

Remember common test patterns. Earlier questions often relate to material in the earlier paragraphs of the text; later test questions relate to material in the later parts of the text. Be aware of such patterns to save searching time.

TIP 6

Guess meaning from context. Guessing is necessary when reading complex texts. If you need to know the meaning of unknown words to help you choose particular answers, using the surrounding words helps you to make informed guesses.

TIP 7

Leave no empty answers even if you are running out of time and may not finish all the 40 questions. Leave a minute at the end to make quick guesses. Maximise your chances.

BUILD FITNESS for the Reading test – a weekly program for busy test-takers:

- Days 1, 2, 3** Choose one different passage from a full practice IELTS Academic test each day for three days.
- Answer all the questions and check the time it took each day (max. 20 minutes).
- Then check the answers each day and work out why any incorrect answer was wrong.
- Day 4** On Day 4, repeat the process using the same text from Day 1, but this time complete your answers in five minutes less time than the first time. This repeat practice helps you to get the feeling of doing a test section faster and more easily. This will motivate you and increase your confidence to manage and complete things under time pressure.
- Days 5, 6** On Days 5 and 6, repeat, using Passages 2 and 3 from Days 2 and 3.
- Day 7** Do the whole Reading test in 60 minutes maximum, using Passages 1, 2 and 3 of the Academic test that you used on Days 1–6.

The following week: Start a new sequence of practice with new test material and gradually remove the repeat element until finally you do a previously unseen complete Reading test in 60 minutes with no break. **Practise and understand all the major reading task types.** Test practice books like this one will include examples of most of these. Work out how each task type functions, what each task type demands and its difficult aspects. Take control and manage your IELTS 'fitness training'.

3) Quick Guide to a higher score in IELTS WRITING

A 'clock victim' is a writing test candidate who is always anxious about time.

What happens to a 'clock victim'? Candidates who spend too much time either counting words or clock-watching may lose focus and develop a sense of panic linked to time. You need to see yourself in a positive way and maximise your control of the situation.



Don't count words all the time.

Instead, work out the average number of words you seem to write on a line, count the number of lines written and multiply them together. A full IELTS Answer sheet page has 20 lines.

Create a suitable 'persona' for the IELTS writing test.

It is important for you to create a suitable 'persona' (a sort of test identity) with which both to manage your test performance, build confidence and make a positive impression on the assessor. **What might be a suitable 'persona'?**

A 'professional persona' is a suitable one for you to imagine yourself as. It helps to make a stronger relationship between the writer (you) and your writing assessor. Remember, everything you write to another person carries an impression of YOU within it. If, for example, your writing is disorganised, looks messy, is off the point or offers inaccurate information, then all of these features say something negative about you.

The reader starts to imagine what YOU are like from how and what you write. So, your writing has the power to influence the impression you make.

Plan before you write

Planning is essential to a professional approach in many jobs. The same is true in IELTS.

- Often, candidates receive their IELTS writing test paper and begin writing an answer almost immediately – **they are so scared of time.** A professional person, in contrast, learns how to manage time in the most effective way in order to achieve their goals. In IELTS, **planning time** (even just two to three minutes) **helps to create a more systematic and well-organised answer, which impresses the assessor.**
- Candidates who don't plan may stop to think or stop to cross something out more often during the 20 minutes than the candidate with a plan. **It may be an unhelpful form of panic to think that every second has to be used as writing time.** It's also a mistake to think that the best candidates are writing non-stop for 20 minutes.
- **Someone who organises well and is systematic cares about what they are writing and cares about the person who will be reading their work.** This important valuing of the reader-writer relationship is a worthwhile goal in IELTS.

IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING – Task 1

Seven tips for increasing your score

TIP 1

Write accurate information

Usually for Task 1 you are presented with some statistical information in the form of a graph, a table or a pie chart. Whatever the material, **study it carefully and look at each category carefully so that you report on it accurately.** (Accuracy creates a good impression of you as a professional report writer.)

TIP 2

Write about the most important patterns and trends, not about everything. (Good selection shows evaluation skills – again, more professional.)

TIP 3

Avoid overuse of ‘shopping lists’ (just listing information one fact after another). Instead, identify key trends and compare and contrast patterns (comparing/contrasting shows more mature evaluation of material). Use sentence connectors at the beginning of sentences to signal this evaluative type of writing.
Examples: *Similarly; Conversely; An exception to this trend is ...; This pattern changed from ...*

TIP 4

Don’t make personal comments about the statistical material. (Being professional and reporting on data requires you to be factual and objective.)

TIP 5

Use a systematic layout.

- Write an introduction to your report on the data and include in it perhaps a very general statement (overview) about the most dominant trend in the data.
- Create and arrange other paragraphs logically. In professional report writing, colleagues have limited time to read a report and need to access information easily.

TIP 6

Use a professional writing style and tone.

It is possible to shape the ‘tone’ (the feeling of your ‘voice’ that the reader gets from your words and how appropriate they are to the style of document).

To achieve an appropriate, formal, business-like tone, avoid:

- **lazy language expressions** – these are not professional, are used more in spoken language and suggest that the writer doesn’t care enough to finish a sentence properly.
Examples: *... etc., or ... and so on*
- **informal expressions** – such expressions are not professional enough for a formal report style.
Examples: *a lot; was OK*
- **repetition** – this is too boring and makes the writer sound very limited. To avoid repeating nouns, use appropriate synonyms or referencing language.
Examples: *this, it, the same trend ..., a similar pattern ...*
- **over-use of general expressions** that lack precision.
Examples: *thing, do, is, big, nice*

TIP 7

Reduce simple grammar mistakes

Of course, anyone taking the IELTS test is likely to make numerous grammar mistakes. **However, some mistakes create a more negative impression than others when read by a native speaker.** If you can reduce the number of these, you can spread a positive impression to other parts of your writing.

4 Grammar errors that really annoy an assessor in Writing Task 1

VERB TENSE mistakes

- **Talking about the data**
Usually IELTS Task 1s use data from particular year dates. You must use the PAST tense when describing information from the past; if the information is about the future, use appropriate FUTURE tense forms.
- **Talking about the visual/data you can see on the Writing task paper**
You use the PRESENT tense forms to say *The graph/chart/table shows .../... indicates .../... lists ...*

SUBJECT/VERB agreement errors

In English, we say *The graph shows ...* but *The data show ...*; *The population of the three Asian countries is changing ...*; *The number of people who sit IELTS is increasing ...* (head nouns *population* and *number* control the verb agreement).

WORD FORMS – Adjective/Noun/Adverb confusion

Candidates need to control and manage effectively the English word forms they use.

Look at these three examples:

- *There is some **doubtful** about the data.*
(Wrong – noun ‘**doubt**’ needed)
- *The accuracy of the figures is **doubt**.*
(Wrong – adjective ‘**doubtful**’ needed)
- *The population increased **rapid** during 2000.*
(Wrong – adverb ‘**rapidly**’ needed)

Errors from basic English grammar leave a more negative impression than other kinds of mistakes because it is assumed that you learnt about these basic rules when younger and have had time to master them and use them correctly.

SENTENCE BOUNDARY and SENTENCE OMISSION problems

Candidates need to build sentences carefully and respect what a sentence is and what the parts of a sentence are, otherwise the assessor has to keep reading and rereading the sentences to try to understand them. This leaves a negative impression.

Look at two inaccurate examples:

- 1) *The figures show the food preferences of men and women they are in two tables.*
- 2) *The table shows the population. In the Asian countries up a lot in the 10-year.*

It is difficult not to reread each of them because they don’t communicate clearly or effectively. Now look at these improved versions:

Example 1: *The two tables show the food preferences of men and women.*

Example 2: *According to the table, the population in the Asian countries rose significantly in the 10-year period.*

IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING – Task 2

The second task involves writing about a social issue. Again, adopt a 'professional persona' by imagining you are presenting a formal and reasoned viewpoint on the issue to an academic colleague. Don't view yourself negatively as just a person taking a difficult test.

3 STEPS BEFORE writing

1. Study the words in your IELTS Writing Task 2

The same issues apply to Task 2 as to Task 1. You need to read the task carefully, know clearly what the topic is and what precise aspect of the topic you have to give your view on. **This will help your answer to be relevant.**

EXAMPLE: Imagine this is an IELTS Task 2 question. *'Many people keep pets in small apartments. To what extent is this cruel?'*

The topic is **keeping pets**. To be relevant, you would **focus your discussion** of pets on:

- **types of pet** (the expression *pets* covers many types of living creature)
- **where the pets are kept** (specifically in this essay, in small apartments)
- **how cruel this is** (you need to offer a clear, precise point of view)

2. Decide upon a clear, precise and relevant point of view

This can be achieved by offering enough detail to explain why you have that opinion.

In the Task 2 essay, **having a clear and precise point of view on the task topic enables the assessor to feel more connected** to the strength of your writing 'voice'.

Example A: **An unclear and not very precise point of view might be:**

It is sometimes cruel to keep pets in apartments but sometimes it is not cruel.

This point of view sounds as though the writer doesn't clearly know what their point of view is about cruelty and so it is less convincing, less powerful.

Example B: **A clearer and more precise point of view might be:**

It is cruel to keep pets in small apartments if the pets are large and need more space, more attention or a different environment in order to be happy and healthy.

This point of view is clearer because it gives the precise conditions in which the writer thinks it is cruel (that is, the writer says it is cruel if pets are large and if they can't be healthy and happy in small apartments).

3. Make a quick plan of the paragraphs and the topic of each paragraph.

Remember that the first sentence in each paragraph (often called the topic sentence) tells the reader what the paragraph is about, so **if the topic sentence is clear, it gives a positive impression to the assessor because it means the assessor can predict the content of the rest of the paragraph more easily**. An important aspect of reading an essay easily is predicting what will come next.

In your Task 2 plan:

- show an introduction which contains a relevant viewpoint on the essay task
- list two or three paragraph headings, each with a key reason connected to your own viewpoint, plus one or two examples to support that reason
- show a concluding paragraph that will summarise what your essay has shown

NOTE: If you write the plan in the IELTS Answer book, just put a line through it and underline it to show that it is not your actual answer. Then begin the actual essay.

What was said about Task 1 is also important here. **A few minutes spent planning your Task 2 response** helps you to write systematically and smoothly, and in clear paragraphs – it is not wasted time.

WHILE Writing – Organising paragraphs and sentences for a higher score

1. Develop each paragraph by linking each supporting point to the next point.

Don't just state one point and then move on to an entirely new point, as this seems mechanical and prevents you from developing your opinion in more detail.

2. Use a variety of linking words between sentences, rather than just the simpler, 'shopping list' style links, such as: *firstly, secondly, thirdly, finally*.

Read this mini-paragraph:

*Keeping pets such as large dogs in small apartments can easily lead to unintended cruelty. **An obvious example of this is that limited space makes large animals frustrated because they can't use enough of their physical energy. This may result in possible aggression. Linked to this lack of exercise is the issue of health. A dog that has insufficient space and lacks exercise can easily become obese which, in turn, may shorten the pet's life.***

The linking words in bold type show how writers can direct their thoughts and express relationships between the content as they move from sentence to sentence. This also helps the assessor to connect with the point of view that is developing. Test candidates who list one point after another without any development and without relevant, considered linking expressions may seem less natural and less mature writers in the mind of the assessor.

3. Leave a line between each of your paragraphs when you write your essay so that the assessor can easily see the way your essay is organised.

EIGHT KEY GUIDELINES for language use to achieve a higher score in Task 2

1

1. Avoid generalisations that are simplistic and thus too strong (simple generalisations seem unsubtle or strong and often don't reflect a mature viewpoint).

Example: Compare these two generalisations:

- 1) *All dogs like people.*
- 2) *Most dogs are sociable and seem to enjoy human companionship.*

Which example above seems less simplistic and more considered? ANSWER: No. 2

A more considered general view usually needs to be expressed in a sentence that is:

- longer
- more grammatically complex
- more detailed and therefore more precise
- written using 'cautious' language forms (e.g., *may, possibly, perhaps, seem*)

2

2. Avoid using idioms or sayings which state the obvious or seem out of place in an essay where a formal viewpoint is being systematically developed.

Examples: *Every coin has two sides. Every cloud has a silver lining.*

3

3. Avoid using clichés as they can communicate too much informality.

Example: *With most pets, what you see is what you get.*

4

4. Avoid using informal expressions in this formal type of writing.

Examples:

Less formal

Keeping pets is a very hot topic.

Petrol-driven cars are past their sell-by date.

More formal

Keeping pets is a significant issue.

... are fast becoming obsolete.

5

5. Avoid using lazy or vague expressions to complete sentences, especially ones that belong more to spoken conversation. Examples: *... etc. ... etc; ... and so on; ... and things like that; ... that sort of thing*

6

6. Avoid imprecise, general expressions that make views sound too simple.

Example: Compare these expressions in a) and b):

- a) *Walking a dog is a good thing and ...*
- b) *Walking a dog is a necessary, daily activity and ...*

Example b) offers more precision (*necessary, daily*) than example a) (*good*).

7

7. In the final paragraph, come to a conclusion about the point of view in your essay.

This helps to round off your answer. Here are one or two examples of how to begin: *Overall then, the point of view developed in this response is that ...*

Or, for a different type of essay question:

To sum up, the solution to this problem might best involve ...

8

8. Make a quick check of your grammar and spelling.

In the last minute or two, read your essay quickly and try to **find those elementary grammar or spelling mistakes which do not impress assessors.**

Examples: *Pet are ...* (should be *Pets are ...*) or *Keep pets in small apartments is sometime cruelty.* (**Keeping** pets in small apartments is **sometimes** cruel.)

4) Quick Guide to a higher score in IELTS SPEAKING

The main social task in the IELTS speaking test is to bring both the assessor and candidate closer together in a sense of 'cooperative connection'. This means that each helps the other to make the situation friendly and mutually successful.

Music: The assessor will feel comfortable the more your spoken English echoes the music of the language that native speakers are used to hearing, which means:

- appropriate rises and falls in your voice
- good stress on the right sounds
- not too fast, not too slow
- appropriate pausing
- very little hesitation or self-correction
- neither too loud nor too soft
- good rhythm and flow of sound
- clear and accurate, individual sounds
- good grouping of 'chunks' of meaning.

Silence is NOT golden!

In the IELTS Speaking test, silence is NOT golden. Why?

- Natural pauses are fine, but long silences cause strain for the assessor and break flow and connection.
- It is a sign of either trouble finding the right word, or trouble trying to understand what is required, or trouble trying to explain something successfully.
- In Western cultures, silence is often experienced as more threatening than it is in some other cultures.
- Silence takes up a lot of time and puts pressure on the assessor to fit the many questions into a small amount of remaining time, especially in Part 1 of the test.
- In the Speaking test, you can't get a good score for what you don't say! BUT variety is more rewarded than monotony or repetition. Quality beats quantity!

The 'dance' of the Speaking test

The interviewer knows the three-section 'dance' of the Speaking test better than you do, but you can help your assessor by being a 'good dance partner'. How?

- moving through each section or question in the test in an appropriate time
- being sensitive to your assessor as they lead you through the dance's moves
- showing yourself in a positive, cooperative light, thus ...
- making your assessor happy to have you as their 11- to 14-minute dance partner.

As a 'dance partner', you need to be responsive, which means not trying to dominate your partner by talking too much or too repetitively. Instead, be a cooperative equal. Aim for balance. 'Dance' in step with the test's rhythm, timing and structure.

Finding the appropriate way to relate to your assessor

Another important aspect of 'cooperative connection' in this short Speaking test is to feed the brief relationship between yourself and the assessor so that it is friendly, balanced, productive, mutually appropriate and mutually respectful. How?

For your 11–14 minutes with the assessor, act like 'an equal' who is:

- offering yourself as a memorable, unique and interesting person
- informing a new friend about your life and culture, with a real interest in doing so
- using body language and eye contact to communicate interest and connection but not frustration, aggression or tiredness
- treating the relationship with sensitivity, charm, pride, respect and friendliness
- trying to make the assessor's task easier
- using language that is not too distant (too formal) or too familiar (too informal) – your aim is to use language that is polite but friendly at all times
- listening carefully and politely to everything the assessor tells you or asks you
- reacting and responding with good energy and motivation

How to connect with the assessor at each stage of the Speaking Test

1) Connecting during the Introduction

- When the assessor invites you into the room, it's useful to put your passport or test ID on the table so that it is ready.
- **Don't try to say much while getting seated**, just smile and look pleasant and respond to anything the assessor asks or says. (Sometimes, test candidates try to chat to the assessor by saying things like *How are you today?* at this point, but really the assessor just wants to get on with the interview efficiently.)
- The assessor isn't a police officer, so **say your name in a friendly way**. If your name is really difficult for assessors to identify or repeat properly, give them a short or simple first name to call you during the interview.
- While seated, **look interested and connected**, not nervous or tired. **Make friendly eye contact, smile** and be polite when asked for your passport or other ID.

2) Connecting in PART 1 of the Speaking test

Keep in step and keep in time with the first 12 questions (3 topics).

On average, about 15 seconds is an appropriate length for each of your answers in order to 'keep in step' with the rhythm of this section.

- If you take a long time answering (either because of hesitation or going into too much detail), then the assessor feels pressure because there is not enough time to ask all the other questions.
- Similarly, if your answers are too short, the assessor will get to the end of the questions before the minimum time is up for the three topics (4 minutes).

So keep in step with the time boundaries and make the assessor more comfortable.

Don't use memorised answers or memorised material at any stage. Why not?

It is very easy for the assessor to recognise memorised answers and they:

- often take up too much time
- frustrate the assessor
- create a bad impression – you are not conversing in a real way, you are being false!

Don't be frightened to ask for a question to be repeated.

The assessor has to read the questions from a printed page, so if you don't understand the question the assessor can't explain it to you. You can ask for the question to be repeated, however. This is much better than remaining silent.

You can say:

Sorry, I didn't quite catch that. Could you repeat the question, please?

If you still don't understand the question after it is read to you again, just say:

I'm sorry, but I still don't quite follow the question.

Try to extend your answers a little to use the 15 seconds or so.

Why? This makes you seem more interesting, more friendly and less robotic.

Example:

Assessor's question: *Were you a good student at school?*

Answer A: *Yes, I was a good student at school.* (too brief, repeats question words)

Answer B: *Most of the time I was, yes, ... especially at primary school, ... but at high school ... I had a period when I was a bit rebellious ... and occasionally I got into trouble for not doing my homework and arriving late.*

(Much better, as it sounds natural, is extended fluently, is personalised, is in 'chunks', that is, 'blocks of meaning' each with a tiny pause before the next block, is in polite, conversational style and is about 15 seconds long.)

- **'Sing the same song.'**

As native speakers, assessors will probably 'sing the song' of English by using rising and falling intonation to add interest and show a positive attitude.

- **Remember to try to mirror or echo this by using rising and falling intonation** in a natural and appropriate way to show how you feel about the answers you are offering. If you are talking about something exciting or interesting, let your intonation show this. If you are surprised, show this.
- **Add 'personality' to your language.** Flatness of spoken English suggests to the assessor that you are not interested and maybe not interesting!
- **Don't speak too quietly nor too loudly.** Try to 'engage' the assessor when you speak both by voice and gentle eye contact (this means keeping the assessor's attention and interest in what you are saying).

- **Be yourself.**

The interview is testing your ability at spoken English, but that English is spoken by YOU, **so don't forget to be yourself and not be too frightened or too 'hidden'.**

3) Connecting in PART 2 of the Speaking test

As Part 1 finishes, your assessor gives you a topic card and you have one minute to plan a one- to two-minute talk on the topic.

- During the one-minute planning/note-making time, make sure you **go through ALL the points listed on the topic card. Use the listed points to structure your notes or thoughts.**
- **If you want to start before the one minute has finished, just politely say:**
I think I'm ready to start now, if that's OK.
- During your talk, **talk about each of the points on the topic card** - many talks lack structure and are disorganised; the candidate ends up trying to fill the time and is often repetitive or goes off the point. Plan systematically to avoid this. Being systematic connects with the assessor's expectations.
- **Make your talk fluent, personal and varied.** Your talk is a chance for connection, not just for using English. Connection is improved by adding variety and personal comment. Use your voice's 'music' to add interest and for extra connection with the assessor.
- **Use eye contact to connect with the assessor.** The little talk is a great opportunity to connect with your eyes and to build the relationship with the assessor. Don't stare at your notes - it seems a bit rude or shy.
- **Signal to the assessor** if you finish before the two-minute period ends with a simple phrase like *I think that's all.* Don't let silence create doubt.
- The assessor will ask a **'rounding-off' question connected to your talk. Just answer this fairly briefly**, as the assessor will want to move into the final part of the interview. Don't go on for too long or the assessor may get a little impatient.

4) Connecting in PART 3 of the Speaking test

The assessor will move the test into the final stage using general questions connected to the topic of your talk.

- **You should see this part as a more natural type of interaction**, because the assessor may react to your responses and share the discussion a little, not just move from one question to the next like in Part 1 of the Speaking test; however, the assessor will be careful not to take up too much time talking, as the aim is to assess your spoken abilities in this part.
- **Remember, you are an 'equal'.** Imagine you are having a discussion in a coffee shop with a colleague who is interested in your detailed views on certain things.
- **Develop your answers using varied sentence connectors to build flow; don't talk in short, staccato sentences**, as this gives the impression that you don't want to engage in or enjoy a discussion, but just want to finish the test quickly.

Example:

Assessor's question: *Do you think weddings are really necessary?*

Answer A: (too short, not flowing) *Weddings are necessary. Weddings are a tradition; they make parents happy.*

Answer B (longer, but still too staccato) *Yes. They are necessary. Your family needs to follow traditions. It is a bad thing not to get married. It brings shame. It shows you are not serious about your life. You need to please your parents. Weddings help you do this.*

Answer C (longer and more fluent) *They seem to be important **even though** they may not be completely necessary, **because, for a start,** they enable a couple to show a public commitment to each other in front of their family and friends, **which** helps them to feel supported **when** making a big decision, **and besides that,** the couple can feel they are part of a long and honourable tradition in their society, **while at the same time** pleasing their parents.*

- If you can't quickly think of a response to a question, **there are various strategies** you can use to **give yourself more thinking time:**
 - you can use **'holding' expressions:**
Examples: *Mm, that's an interesting question but not easy to answer quickly ...* or *There are different ways of responding to that question; it depends on how you ...*
 - you can **ask the assessor to paraphrase the question** by seeking clarification:
Example: *Do you mean, are weddings legally necessary or just socially necessary? I'm not sure exactly what that question is getting at.*
- **It can be useful and adds variety to give examples from your own life occasionally if that makes it easier for you to communicate your viewpoint.**
Example: *I'll give you an example from my own experience. One of my close friends and his partner are not married and have never had a wedding, and because of this, I don't think they feel as connected to their family.*

- **Don't be either too formal or too informal** during this part of the interview. You should be a little more relaxed now because you know the assessor just a little better. It's the part of the test in which you can be a little friendlier and allow your fluency and intonation to communicate this. **Avoid long silences or long hesitations.**
- **Build precision into your explanations of words or ideas. How?**
 - Put some **variety** into your **choice of sentence types and vocabulary use.**
 - **Avoid repetition**, as this rarely adds anything new and doesn't build variety.
 - Build precision by using expressions which enable you to **paraphrase and extend** an idea or viewpoint.

Example: *I'm a bit anti-weddings. **By this, I suppose I mean that** I've seen many of my friends' marriages fail, so I'm a little pessimistic about expensive, 'showy' ceremonies and what they seem to represent. **In other words,** today there seems to be too much emphasis on display and perhaps not enough attention to deep meaning.*

- **Use 'vague' language occasionally**, as this can sound more natural.

Examples:

i) *... that sort of thing; ... and things like that*
(These are used at the end of spoken sentences very occasionally.)

ii) *She's some sort of ...; I'm not sure exactly, but I think he's ...; I have a feeling that it's something to do with*
(These are used at the front end of sentences perhaps a little more often.)

- **If your assessor offers a comment, respond to it naturally.** This increases the sense of mutual connection. Here's an example:
Assessor: *It sounds as though the idea of marriage is changing in your society.*
Candidate: ***Does it? Maybe you're right.** I think it's definitely true that marriage seems more risky these days, as in many societies people appear to be more selfish, more independent and perhaps less respectful of traditional commitment ...*

Disconnecting at the end of the Speaking test

- **When the interview ends, just thank the assessor and say goodbye politely and briefly. Don't be 'too polite.'** The interviewer may sense that you are trying to leave a favourable impression and are being false. So be polite but genuine.
Be brief. Assessors are busy and under pressure to complete their candidate list.
- **Don't ask questions about your performance after the interview has finished.** The assessor cannot discuss this and will not be impressed by your question, but embarrassed, as it seems inappropriate. It may damage the cooperative connection you have built up in the previous 11–14 minutes.



APPENDIX

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ANSWER KEY

LISTENING

Each question answered correctly scores 1 mark.

Note: Slash '/' indicates alternative answers. Brackets '(...)' indicate optional details.

Test 1

Section 1

- B
- C
- C
- C
- A
- advertise
- donate
- (a) quote
- charity
- sell

Section 2

- corner
- 6
- 2
- classes
- swimming/swim
- learn
- program/-amme(designed)
- (music) videos
- free
- 6

Section 3

- differences
- Italian
- Mexican
- ingredients
- Australia
- restaurants
- fat
- cooking
- 40%
- healthy

Section 4

- 10 or more
- lack of practice
- preparation
- topic
- eye contact
- slower
- record yourself
- meaning
- posture
- distracts

Test 2

Section 1

- Johnstone
- 126
- 0414 847 749
- (about) 10
- (Uncle's) shop (work)
- C
- B
- C
- A
- E
- C

Section 2

- C
- B
- A
- yes
- 9.15 am
- C
- umbrella/backpack/
camera/snacks/drinks
(any three sing. or pl.)
- (on) noticeboard/(in)
mail box
- first iron bridge
- C D H (all 3 required)

Section 3

- no change
- Monday 12th March
- (Wednesday)
afternoons
- no change
- Wednesday mornings
(21st March)
- 9 (and) 1
- company (first)
(then college)
- 30%
- diagrams (and) flow
charts

Section 4

- T
- F
- T
- F
- A
- C
- C
- boiling water
- rub
- excess

Test 3

Section 1

- 3
- brakes
- (owner) going overseas
- \$1,500
- 6.30
- 88 Princess/Prince's
St/street
- B
- C
- C
- A

Section 2

- 3 hours
- grey (gray) whales
- hot springs
- swim (very)
fast/playful/curious
- black and white
- 14m/metres/meters
- in the middle
- (bright) orange
- can't swim
- on your arm/
(at the) wrist

Section 3

- 200
- 4-week
- 8
- 10-minute
video/documentary
- film-making/film
making
- travel plan(s)
- C
- B
- April
- course/flights/travel/
cameras/accommodation (any two)

Section 4

- A
- C
- B
- keyboard/layout
- 70%/per cent
- 50 words
- accuracy (in typing)
- speed
- 12 to 20 miles
- C

Test 4

Section 1

- C
- 533 East/E 67 (th)
- 93014269
- CX/Cathay Pacific 912
- C
- B
- A
- clear customs
- passport, key, ticket,
- baggage claim number
(any two for 2 marks)

Section 2

- 10 (a.m.) to 5 (p.m.)
- www.ATSTIX.com
(correct spelling required)
- 3
- 4
- 2
- 10th-14th
- \$35
- \$299
- 7.30
- \$2.50

Section 3

- G
- A
- C
- C
- A
- B
- B
- A
- select films
- design program

Section 4

- clay/plastic
- reeds
- underground
- tested
- compost/soil
- (healthy, natural)
home/habitat
- labour/labor
- increases
- unions/manufacturers
- efficiency/winter/cold
weather/mosquitoes

A score of around 22-24 means that you are probably getting on track for a 6.0 in the real IELTS test.