

*Ultimate IELTS Series Book 4*

# ***SPEAKING***

***for IELTS***

*Covering all 3 parts,  
with model answers*

*Written and developed by Impact Learning*

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## About the IELTS speaking test

### Timing and requirements

\*Note that the listening test is the same for the General Training and Academic Module test

There are three parts to the IELTS speaking test, with the whole test taking between 11 and 14 minutes. The test is recorded. At the beginning of the test (before the official test has begun) the examiner will read some details into the recorder

(date, name of test centre, candidates name etc.). Then the real test begins. Note, however, that it is human nature for the examiner to begin the assessment from the time you meet, so a brief ‘Hello’ or ‘Are you having a busy day?’ as you are walking to the test room will give a good first impression.



### Part 1 of the IELTS speaking test

In Part 1 of the test, your examiner will ask you questions about yourself. Topics include your hometown, newspaper, music, shopping etc. Within part three, the examiner will ask you questions related to three random topics – for example, the first topic could be about where you work, the second could be about holidays and the third could be about relaxing. Within each of the three categories, the examiner will ask you up to four questions.

In Part 1 of the speaking test, you can speak quite informally, but remember that if you are feeling nervous it can often help to say things that aren't true for you. For example, if you are asked ‘*Do you often read newspapers?*’ but in fact you never do, then think of someone you know who does read a newspaper and answer as though you that person.

### Part 2 of the IELTS speaking test

In Part 2 of the test, you will be given a topic card and will be expected to talk about it for two minutes. Note that the examiner will say 'one to two minutes', but higher scores are awarded if you can keep going. In an ideal part 2, the examiner will interrupt you and change the subject, which means you have reached the two minutes. Before you talk you will have one minute to prepare what you are going to say. The examiner will give you a paper and pencil to make notes during your preparation time. Remember that when you do start the two minute speech, you can refer to your notes, but don't keep your head down and simply 'read'.

Here's an example speaking topic card:

Describe a childhood friend

You should say:

- how you first met
- how long you were friends
- what you used to do together

and explain why you liked this person.

### **Part 3 of the IELTS speaking test**

In Part 3 of the test, the examiner will ask you to respond on a number of different topics that will be related to the topic card you spoken about in part 2. At this stage, it is important tat your level of vocabulary is raised so you are speaking more formally.

During the test, the examiner is marking your performance based on four scales:

1. Fluency and coherence
2. Lexical resource

- 3. Grammatical range and accuracy
  - 4. Pronunciation
- 

## Better pronunciation for IELTS speaking

### Connected speech

When you first hear an unfamiliar language, you don't really hear individual words but rather a flow of sound.

As you learn and become more familiar with the language, you begin to hear individual words, partly because your teacher and your learning materials are often slower than natural speech.

The problem is when you get better at speaking, you need to learn how to connect the words the way you hear native speakers doing so.

This is one of the easiest and most effective ways to 'neutralise' an accent as it can help you build the same speech patterns as native speakers.

Here are some tips to help you!

### Rule #1 for better pronunciation

If a word ends on a consonant and the next word begins on a vowel, the consonant moves on to the vowel of the 2nd word.

Example:

word ends	sounds like	wor dends
green apples		gree nappples

Here are some examples:

If a word > I fa word

Ends on a consonant > End-so-na consonant

Begins on a vowel > Begin-so-na vowel

### Rule #2 for better pronunciation

If a word ends on an 'ee' sound and is followed by a word beginning with a vowel sound, we put both words together and add the letter 'y' in the middle.

three eggs	sounds like	threeyeggs
He asked		Heeyasked

INCORRECT: The exam was very difficult

CORRECT: TheYexam was very difficult

### Rule #3 for better pronunciation

If a word ends on an 'oo' sound and is followed by a word beginning with a vowel sound, we put both words together and add the letter 'w' in the middle.

blue eyes	sounds like	blooweyes
Two onions		Toowonions

INCORRECT: Did you ask what his name was?

CORRECT: Did you **W**ask what his name was?

## 6 tips for making notes in Part 2 speaking

Here's an example of a topic card used in Part Two of the IELTS speaking test:

**Describe your favourite leisure activity. You should say:**

1. **what it is**
2. **how often you do it**
3. **when you first started doing it.**

**You should also say why it is important to you.**

### Using the preparation time

When the examiner hands you the topic card, you will also be given a piece of paper and a pen or pencil to make some notes before you begin talking. You have one minute to prepare what you are going to say. There are a number of common errors that candidates make in this preparation time, as shown below.

#### **Common error #1 – telling the examiner you are ready to begin**

The examiner will tell you when your 1 minute preparation time is up – you should NEVER tell the examiner you are ready before that time. You are wasting valuable time that you could use

thinking of relevant points or vocabulary, and most people that start early do not finish the full two minutes of speaking.

### **Common error #2 – writing sentences**

The one minute preparation time should be used to get ideas and make notes, not write complete sentences. With only 60 seconds to prepare, you do not have time to write complete sentences.

### **Common error #3 – making no notes**

Some candidates spend the whole 60 seconds simply reading the topic card and thinking about what they are going to say, not making any notes at all. The problem here is that as soon as you begin to start talking or if you become a little nervous, the good ideas that you had seem to disappear, leaving you with no backup.

### **Common error #4 – not pacing the notes**

As you can see from the topic card above, there are four sections – three bullet points and one final sentence. You are required to speak for two minutes, so divide that by the number of 'sections' on the topic card and you have 30 seconds per part. When making notes, try to add something for each of the 4 parts and do not move on to the next part until you think you have spoken for 30 seconds or you truly have nothing left to say.

### **Common error #5 – reading from your notes**

Don't be tempted to 'read' your answer directly from the note paper, and this will have an impact on your pronunciation (most people read differently to how they naturally speak). Keep your head up, looking at the examiner for the majority of the time, and only glance down to scan your notes.

### **Common error #6 – not being flexible with your notes**



Do not worry if you decide to change a little of what you have planned. It is much better to keep the conversation natural than stick rigidly to something that you are not so comfortable with. In addition, remember that the IELTS test is a communication test – it is not a memory test. If there is a fact you cannot remember, then tell the interviewer. You can show your English ability just as well by explaining that you do not know something. For example: 'I'm not really sure when I began doing this, but I'm sure I was very young' is just as good an answer as giving a date.

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### **Practice your note taking skills**

Now practice making notes on the topic cards below.

Describe a friend who is very important to you.

You should say:

1. who they are
2. how you met
3. what they are like

You should also say why they are important to you.

Describe a hotel you have stayed in.

You should say:

- where it is
- what facilities there are

- when you stayed there

and say whether you would recommend it to a friend

## Difficult Part 2 topic cards in IELTS

In Part 2 of the IELTS speaking test the examiner will give you a topic card that you will need to talk about for 2 minutes, after you have had 1 minute preparation time. But what happens if the examiner gives you a topic card that you have no ideas about and will not be able to talk about?

For example, if you have no interest in art or art galleries and really have no opinion on the subject, what would you do if this was your topic?

Describe a piece of art that you like

You should say:

- what it is
- where you saw it
- why you like it

You should also say whether you would recommend it to someone else.

Here are some tips that will help!

**Tip 1: Don't panic!**

It's hard to do when you're in the middle of your test, but it's important to remain calm. Remember you have 60 seconds to prepare an answer, so take a few seconds to read the topic card again to see if there's anything there that can you feel you could talk about.

**Tip 2: Be honest**

Although you cannot ask the examiner to give you another card and you cannot simply say 'I don't have anything to say about this', you can tell the examiner that this is not really your kind of subject. For example:

'Well, the topic card is asking about a piece of art that I like, but to be completely honest, I'm really not that interested in art in any form. However, I can tell you about.....'

**Tip 3: Focus on anything in the subject or the prompts that you can talk about**

In the example topic card above, you may have nothing to say about a piece of art you like, but can you talk about anything related? The second prompt on the card asks 'where you saw it' – can you say anything about local art galleries in your area or your hometown? Have you ever been to an art gallery? If so, did you like it? If you have never been to an art gallery, why not? You can talk about the lack of local facilities, or a general disinterest in art because no-one in your family is interested and you never went to galleries as a child. Even if you are only talking tangentially (not exactly or directly) about the topic, you will not lose points.

**Tip 4: Be someone else**

Personally, I have no real interest in art, so if I had to speak for two minutes on the topic card above, I would have trouble – and I'm a native English speaker and IELTS instructor! However, I do have a friend who is interested in art, so for the two minutes I was talking, I would pretend to be him. Why does my friend like going to galleries? What does he get out of his visits? How does he feel about art? Has he ever said anything to you about traditional versus modern art? By thinking about a question from the perspective of someone with an interest in the subject, it becomes easier to talk about.

### **Tip 5: Redefine the question**

If you really feel that you will not be able to talk for the full two minutes of the subject, make sure that the examiner knows that you are modifying the question slightly. For example:

‘To tell the truth, I can’t talk much about art, but I am quite interested in museums. I think they are more important than art as they are a reflection of our past, and our history tells us more about who we are than art does – at least in my opinion.’

You have now told the examiner that you are moving the question away from the topic and on to something else. NOTE: try to make what you are going to talk about related to the topic in some way. For example, don’t start talking about a holiday you had or your favourite type of food!

### **Tip 6: Remember the focus of the speaking test**

Keep in mind that is a speaking test – you are being assessed not on how accurate your response is compared to the question, but on how well you can communicate your point of view. You are NOT penalised for an indirect or unrelated answer so long as what you are saying is clear and logical. To illustrate, did you know that there is NO penalty for not covering all of the prompts on the topic card?

### **Practice!**

Take a look at some of the more unusual topic cards below – how would you respond?

Talk about something you used to collect.

You should say:

- A** what you collected
- B** whether your collection grew over time

**C** why you collected them

You should also say whether you normally collect things.

Talk about a board game you have played.

You should say:

1. what type of game it is
2. how the game is played
3. when you started playing it

You should also say whether you still play this game.

Describe a sporting event you took part in recently.

You should say:

- why you were involved
- what you did
- how many people were with you

You should also say whether you would do this again

## Expanding your answers in the IELTS speaking test

One of the common errors in the speaking test is giving answers that are too short. For example:

**'Do you enjoy travelling?'**

'Yes, I do'.

It is essential that you give a full, extended answer when you reply. One way you can do this is to consider what follow-up question you could be asked, and answering it. For example:

**'Do you enjoy travelling?'**

'Yes, I do... (why?)...because I love to see new places and experience different cultures...(where have you been?)...I have visited a number of different countries in my life, and I have enjoyed at least some part of everywhere I have been...(what's your favourite place?)...My favourite place would have to be New Zealand though – it's such a beautiful country, and even though it is quite small there are some significant differences in the geography and weather depending on where you go.

Ideally, you should be aiming to speak for a minimum of 30 seconds on every question in Part One, and double that for Part Three.

## Facts about the IELTS speaking test

There are lots of websites, forums, blogs and postings on the internet giving advice about the speaking test, but so much of the information available is either incomplete or incorrect! To help, we have assembled some of the most common points below and listed them as true or false.

If you have a question or concern about the IELTS speaking test, then just put it in the comments area at the bottom of the page and we'll answer it and add it to our list!

### **1. The speaking test takes between 11 and 14 minutes.**

This is true. The test is tightly regulated between these times, so don't be surprised if the examiner stops you suddenly in your final answer!

### **2. There are three parts to the speaking test.**

This is also true. In Part 1, the examiner will ask you general questions about yourself. In Part 2 you need to speak for 2 minutes on a topic the examiner will give you. In Part 3, the examiner will ask you more in-depth questions relating to the topic card.

### **3. In Part 2, it's OK to stop speaking after one minute.**

No! This is false. Part of the speaking test is assessing your ability to be fluent and coherent, so you need to speak for the full two minutes. If you do run out of things to say and finish early, you can expect it to impact negatively on your results.

### **4. In Part 2, the topic card will have 4 points that you MUST talk about.**

This is also NOT TRUE – the points on the topic card are there to help you, but you are not required to cover everything on the card. So long as what you are talking about is on the same topic as the card, that's OK.

### **5. The examiner will take the topic card back after about a minute, while you are still talking.**

Absolutely NOT TRUE – the examiner will ask for the topic card back after you have completed Part 2, but not during your speaking.

### **6. You should give short answers for Part 1.**

NOT TRUE! You should extend your answers throughout the speaking test. If the examiner has heard enough, they will stop you and move to the next question, but you shouldn't intentionally make your answers short!

## Giving and justifying opinions for IELTS speaking

The IELTS speaking test is like most conversations. If you give an opinion, you should *justify* it, and if possible, offer **a reason, solution or speculation**.

For example:

I don't think people should automatically be entitled to three holidays a year. [END]

Saying only the statement above is NOT SUITABLE FOR IELTS. You need to expand your argument by supporting your opinions like this:

"I don't think people should automatically be entitled to three holidays a year, *because companies may need their labour*. **As I see it, two holidays a year is acceptable, with any additional days off acting as an incentive for overtime.**"

Whenever you state an opinion, either in the speaking or the writing test, ask yourself **why**. This will often lead you to thinking of how to justify what you have said.

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### Practice

Extend this candidate's answer, justifying the opinions and giving examples where you see an asterisk (\*)

<http://ieltsforfree.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/justifying-speaking.jpg> *New Zealand is a great place to study.\*1 There is so much to do.\*2 There are a lot of international students,*



*especially in the major cities like Auckland and Christchurch, which can sometimes make it difficult to practise your English.\* 3 My advice would be to live in a homestay – that’s the best way to improve. \*4 Some international students think that New Zealand is boring.\*5 Personally, I agree with something my friend told me years ago – only boring people get bored. After all, there’s no point in travelling abroad if everything is the same as in your home country.\*6 It can be quite exciting to discover some of the cultural differences between nations anyway.\* 7 I don’t really think much of the food though.\*8 I much prefer food from my own country. \*9 Overall, though, I’ve really enjoyed the experience here.\*10*

1 could have been expanded as **New Zealand is a great place to study. As an English-speaking country with some well-known universities, you can get a good education here.**

2 could have been expanded as **There is so much to do – it’s the home of so many extreme sports, such as bungy jumping and skydiving**

3 could have been expanded as **There are a lot of international students, especially in the major cities like Auckland and Christchurch, which can sometimes make it difficult to practise your English. I often find myself spending the evenings talking to friends in my language!**

4 could have been expanded as **My advice would be to live in a homestay – that’s the best way to improve. That way everything has to be in English, and you find yourself learning so much more because it’s almost 24 hours a day.**

5 could have been expanded as **Some international students think that New Zealand is boring. I think that’s probably because they are so used to cities where entertainment is laid on every night, they don’t really need to think about entertaining themselves.**

6 could have been expanded as **Personally, I agree with something my friend told me years ago – only boring people get bored. After all, there’s no point in travelling abroad if everything is the same as in your home country. The whole point of an international education is to learn something about the world, to see how about people live.**

7 could have been expanded as **It can be quite exciting to discover some of the cultural differences between nations anyway. For example, I've never heard of people cooking food under the earth before like they do with a hangi.**

8 could have been expanded as **I don't really think much of the food though – it's a little too greasy for me.**

9 could have been expanded as **I much prefer food from my own country, but I guess that's mostly because it's what I've grown up with, what I've become accustomed to.**

10 could have been expanded as **Overall, though, I've really enjoyed the experience here. Of course, I've learned better English from being here, but I also feel I've become more mature and have a more open-minded view of the world.**

## **Now practice!**

Respond to the following statements and expand your answer as much as possible.

***There are no model answers for these exercises.***

- There is no need to settle into a career until the age of 30.
  - Visa regulations should be relaxed for foreign students.
  - People who cause traffic accidents should not be allowed to drive again.
  - Single-sex classes make learning easier.
  - Nobody should eat meat.
-

## Giving longer answers in IELTS speaking

Consider the following question. How could you expand your answer?

**Do you think traditions are important?**

Now read the candidate's response below, and answer the questions that follow.

The formula for  
IELTS speaking:  
WHY? SO?  
BUT? THEN?

*Yes, I do because they give us a sense of connection with the past. This is important because it can bring people together and remind us of the history we share. However, I believe traditions should also be flexible. They should reflect not only the past but also the present. Only by doing this can any tradition continue to have relevance today.*

- A. Why does the speaker think traditions are important?
- B. Why is it important to have this connection?
- C. What qualification does the speaker make?
- D. Why is this qualification important?

Read the next section for the answers.

The answers for the four questions above give examples of the formula you can use to expand your topic.

### **FORMULA + Why + So + But + Then**

In the exercise above, this is:

- **Why?** connection with the past
- **So?** brings people together
- **But?** should be flexible
- **Then?** continue to be relevant

Looking at this formula in more detail, you can break your answer down into these sections:

**Why?** Why do you feel that way about the question? Why is this your opinion?

**So?** This can also be thought of as *So what?* Maybe the opinion presented in the first step (why?) is true, but what impact does it have? What's the positive result of your opinion that makes you believe it?

**But?** Are there any parts of your opinion that could be considered wrong by other people, or anything that needs to be taken into account?

**Then?** If the point you raised in the previous section happened, what would be the effect?

### **Now let's apply the formula to another question**

#### **Example 1:**

*Do you think smoking should be banned?*

Yes I do (**WHY?** why do you think that?) because of the significant health risks cigarettes present (**SO?** so what if they have health risks?) This can have an effect on not only the smoker, but also those people in the nearby area who then suffer from passive smoking, as well as on tax payers in general when smokers require additional medical treatment. (**BUT?** is there anything that needs to be considered from another point of view?) Of course there is the issue of having the freedom to act how you wish, and banning cigarettes could create an illegal trade (**THEN?** What would happen if the 'but' section occurred?) This could then potentially lead to rising crime and more pressure on the police.

#### **Example 2:**

*Because we are now in a digital age, do you think we should therefore stop following traditional customs?*

It can be argued that traditional customs can co-exist alongside more modern culture (**WHY?** why do you think that?) Both traditional and modern cultures are important as a reflection of history and society (**SO?** so what if they are important?) We should find ways that the two forms can support each other. (**BUT?** is there anything that needs to be considered from another point of view?) There are times when modern and traditional cultures are in conflict. (**THEN?** What would happen if there was conflict?) Digital culture must be considered paramount as traditional culture should not be a handicap to development.

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## If you don't understand the examiner in the speaking test

What do you do if you don't understand what the examiner has just said in the IELTS speaking test? Saying 'Errr...what?' is a sure shortcut to getting a low mark, so here are some alternatives:

### The examiner says:

*Can you suggest ways we could be more \*\*\*\*\* of the environment?*

### The problem:

*You don't know what \*\*\*\*\* means.*

### The solution:

*Sorry, I'm not too sure what you mean by (\*\*\*\*\* )*

### Why?



It is common in any language when speaking on any topic to occasionally need clarification of something someone has said. You will NOT lose points for this, and could actually be awarded positive points for responding calmly and accurately.

**The examiner says:**

*Do you think there are any ways the older generation can educate people about environmental issues?*

**The problem:**

*You've no idea what to say about this topic.*

**The solution:**

*Well, that's not something I've ever really thought about, but I suppose...*

**Why?**

It gives you time to think about a response, even if what you say is not a direct answer to the question. You could refer to education or the environment in general, or simply talk about what older people can offer in the way of education generally.

**The examiner says:**

*Do you think environmental protection groups should be \*\*\*\*\* by the government*

**The problem:**

*You think \*\*\*\*\* means 'supported' but you're not 100% sure.*

**The solution:**

*If by \*\*\*\*\* you mean supported, then...*

**Why?**

If you tell the examiner what you think the word means before starting to reply, even if you are wrong about the word the examiner will still be able to follow the logic of what you are talking about.

**The examiner says:**

*Tell me about your family.*

**The problem:**

*You've just made a mistake. You said 'my family has four people'.*

**The solution:**

*Sorry, I mean there are four people in my family.*

**Why?**

Being able to self-correct is considered as a positive aspect of your speaking, so don't ignore mistakes you've made – go back, fix them, then move on.

**The examiner says:**

Whatdoyouthinkabout \*\*\*\*\*?

**The problem:**

That was so fast you didn't understand any of it!

**The solution:**

I'm sorry, could you say that again?

**Why?**

The speaking test is only assessing your speaking, not your listening – you will not lose marks for asking the examiner to speak more clearly or to repeat something you didn't follow.

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## Meaning and intonation

In the speaking test, you are being assessed on four different criteria, one of which is pronunciation. Pronunciation refers to how clear you are when you speak, and can be broken into different sub-categories:

- enunciation (how clearly do you say each word; not mumbling or slurring)
- intonation (is the sound of your voice suitable for what you are saying)

This post will focus on the second aspect of pronunciation – intonation. Here are some examples of intonation in specific circumstances.

### **Your friend has just invited you to a party they are having, and you are accepting.**

Your intonation should be positive, with a rising sound a lot of movement and stress on some words.

### **Your friend has just invited you to a party they are having, but you can't come.**

Your intonation should have a falling sound, with less movement.

In the speaking test, the examiner will ask you questions about things you like or enjoy, as well as things you dislike or find annoying. You have an opportunity here to show your intonation as your tone of voice should change depending on the context of what you are saying.

Here are some example questions that you could expect in the IELTS speaking test. Practice by responding using a suitable intonation.

- Is there anything you dislike about using mobile phones?
- Tell me about a country you would like to visit.
- What's your favourite part of the day?
- How do you feel about people being impolite?



## Intonation in the listening test

Intonation is very important in the speaking test, but can also be a useful skill for the listening test. Practice your understanding of intonation by matching the correct statement to the audio recording. Decide which sentence best matches the intonation you hear.

*Play **Meaning and intonation audio file #1***

Question 1:

- A Lyn likes the shirt
- B Lyn does not like the shirt

Question 2:

- A. The speaker should have booked
- B. There is plenty of seating available

Question 3:

- A. Steven doesn't agree with the first speaker
- B. Steven agrees with the first speaker

Question 4:

- A He is happy with their travel arrangements
- B He is not happy with their travel arrangements

Question 5:

- A He feels the advertising was misleading
- B He is satisfied with the product

Question 6:

- A The speaker is annoyed
- B The speaker was misheard the first time she spoke

Question 7:

- A The food was good
- B The food wasn't very good

Answers:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B	B	A	B	A	A	B

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## Speaking fluently in the IELTS test

### Six tips for better fluency

For many people preparing for the IELTS speaking test, it can be difficult to improve your fluency unless you have an opportunity to speak with people in English regularly. However, here are 6 tips that will help you speak more fluently in the IELTS speaking test:

#### Tip 1: Don't be afraid of mistakes



The first rule of fluency is that you are able to communicate the main message of what you are trying to say. Don't overly worry about whether you have chosen the best grammar or vocabulary to express yourself – so long as the person you are talking to understands what you mean! If you feel that you have made a mistake, then stop, go back and repair the sentence, then continue. For example,

*“My brother are a doctor, so he has always recommended eating well. Sorry, I mean by brother IS a doctor. Anyway, he suggests eating fruit and vegetables every day...”*

### **Tip 2: Don't focus too much on studying grammar**

We all know that good grammar is important in order to accurately express yourself. However, make sure that you don't become so preoccupied with the grammatical structure of your sentence that your speaking becomes irregular, too slow or disjointed. As mentioned in Tip 1 – don't be afraid of mistakes! If you find that when speaking fluently you tend to make repeated errors with a particular grammar area (for example, using the present continuous when it should be the present simple) then spend some time alone reading and taking practice exercises – there are lots on this site!

### **Tip 3: Don't translate your sentence in your head first**

This is a difficult skill to master, but when you have a basic understanding of English (or any other foreign language) you need to start thinking in that language when constructing sentences. Not only will there be a loss of fluency as you delay the conversation to translate,

but you will also find that words, phrases and sentence constructions become harder to directly translate into your own language.

**Tip 4: Take every opportunity to speak**

Although it is convenient to break English into different skills such as reading, writing, grammar and speaking, it is important that you make whatever you are studying into an opportunity to speak. If you are reading an article – or even this page! – then read it aloud. If you read the same 100 or so words a few times, you will find that you have a much better chance of improving your fluency as you are training your tongue, mouth and vocal chords to move in a particular pattern, and that pattern will help when you are later in conversation. If you are listening to something and have the chance to pause whatever is playing, then listen to a sentence or two, stop it, you say it, then you play the recording again. This will help with your intonation (the sound of your voice) making you better able to pronounce words clearly and thus improving your fluency.

**Tip 5: When learning new vocabulary, learn it as part of a useful phrase or sentence**

Studying word lists might help you improve your understanding of individual words, but learning a few relevant phrases or sentences including the new word will make it a lot easier for you to fluently use the word in conversation. For example, if you learn the word ‘optimistic’ (meaning that you focus on the positive things, not the negative), then think of and learn a few phrases or sentences. E.g. My uncle always has hopes for the future because he’s a very optimistic person or The weather forecast said it wouldn’t rain, but judging by those clouds I’m not so optimistic.

**Tip 6: Use appropriate resources**

For many people learning English, the BBC is considered to be the best form of ‘pure’ English, with clear pronunciation and intonation. However, it is also important to spend some time with more ‘common’ English, such as listening and copying the patterns of speech you might hear on a TV show, movie or radio or radio programme. For some people the only way of practicing

your speaking and fluency is by talking to another person who is also learning English. Although this can be effective, make sure that you do not pick up each other's bad habits!

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## Speaking more formally in Part 3

As you probably know, there are three parts in the IELTS speaking test. In Part One, the examiner will ask you questions about yourself. In Part Two, you will have one minute to prepare and then need to talk for two minutes based on a topic card (also called a 'cue card'). In Part Three, the examiner will ask you extended questions related to topic in Part Two.

It is very important to keep in mind that the examiner is looking for you to adjust the level of formality as you progress through the test. Here's a brief summary:

Part One: informal, friendly – consider this to be like two friends chatting over lunch.

Part Two: semi formal, informational – consider this to be like you making a presentation to colleagues you work with.

Part Three: formal, academic – consider this to be like a job interview, where you are using your most formal language, sentence construction and grammar.

Here are some expressions that would fit in each of the three sections:

### **Part One:**

Yeah, I love travelling – don't get much time for it though, what with having to work all week and then take the kids out at the weekend.

I don't take a lot of photos, but I do check out what my friends put on Facebook. Most of them

are pretty bad though – none of us are very good at it!

**Part Two (the topic card was about a friend you know well):**

I've known him for about 5 years now, and although I didn't imagine we'd become friends at the time, we've actually become quite close. I enjoy his company because we have very similar tastes in movies and music, so it can be a lot of fun going out at the weekend with him.

**Part Three:**

Many companies are interested in promoting their products, and with the increasing use of technology and social media, this means that the audience has in many respects become much wider than traditional forms such as television or radio. Having said that, a significant percentage of advertising budgets are still directed at these areas.

You should be able to see from the examples above that the language has become more formal at each step of the speaking test.

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## Talking about hobbies

In the IELTS speaking test, the examiner could ask you to talk about your hobbies. Here's a bad example of a response to a question about hobbies:

**Examiner:** What sports do you like?

**Candidate:** Football.

The main problem with the example above is that it is too short. In order to extend your answer, you could begin by describing how you feel about the sport by using adjectives. Here's a slightly improved answer:

**Examiner:** What sports do you like?

**Candidate:** I think football is *really exciting*, both to watch and to play.

Here are some other adjectives that you can use:

- breath-taking
- physical
- slow
- aggressive
- uneventful
- terrifying
- boring

You can then further extend your answer by giving reasons why you feel the way you do about certain hobbies:

**Examiner:** What sports do you like?

**Candidate:** I think football is really exciting, both to watch and to play, *because there's often a lot of action – players run up and down the pitch and there's much more to get involved in compared to a sport like golf, which I find quite boring.*

Practice by considering how you would answer the following questions:

- Do you have a favourite pastime?
- What do you do most in your free time?
- Do you prefer watching or playing sports?
- What hobbies are popular for people in your country?
- Are there any hobbies you wouldn't be interested in trying?

Remember that when you are practising for your IELTS speaking test, get into the habit of recording yourself as you speak – most mobile phones or computers have a voice recording option, and recording then listening to yourself speak can give you the opportunity to identify

your own errors. Don't worry – most people don't like the sound of their own recorded voice, but after a few tries, you'll get more comfortable hearing yourself speak!

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## Talking about likes & dislikes in IELTS

In Part One of the IELTS speaking test, it is common to be asked questions about what you like or don't like, and you may have to talk about your preferences. Here are some possible questions you may be asked:

Likes –

- Do you enjoy travelling?
- Do you like playing computer games?
- What hobbies do you enjoy doing?
- What's your favourite food?
- What do you do to relax?

Dislikes –

- A. Is there anything you dislike about mobile phones?
- B. Is there any food you don't like eating?

Preferences –

- Do you prefer to go out with friends or spend time at home?
- Would you rather a home cooked meal or a meal in a restaurant?
- Is it better to spend time in a hot or cold place?



It is important (as with any question in the IELTS test) that you give a full, extended answer to the question using a range of vocabulary, so here is some vocabulary that you can use when talking about likes, dislikes and preferences.

#### Likes:

- I'm fond of (X)
- I'm into (X)
- I'm keen on (X)
- I adore (X)
- (X) is stunning
- (X) is excellent

#### Dislikes

- I'm not keen on (X)
- I detest (X)
- I can't bear (X)
- I loathe (X)
- I can't stand (X)
- I hate (X)

#### Preferences

- (X) is better
- I like (X) more
- I'd rather (X)
- (X) is far superior
- I'd sooner (X)

### Tip 1: *Concession* words

When expressing preferences, it is common to use *concession* words. A concession word allows the speaker or writer to express another point of view that is opposite to their first point. For example:

*Do you prefer to study with other people or in a private class?*

I much prefer a group class. **Admittedly**, you do get more personal attention in a one to one class, but you can also learn from other students when you study together.

*Do you enjoy trying new foods?*

Yes, I'm keen on experiencing anything new and I love going to restaurants where you can try a little of lots of different things. **Having said that, though**, I do have some favourite meals that I really enjoy no matter how many times I've had them.

### Tip 2: Change of focus with +ing or to...

You can use *like*, *love*, *hate* and *prefer* with an *-ing* form or with a *to*-infinitive. However, there is a slight difference in meaning.

For example:

*I like to study every day* – this is something that is a habit for the speaker, something they think is a good idea

*I like studying in the morning* – this is something that the speaker actively enjoys studying.

## Talking about people in the IELTS speaking test (Part 1)

Before you start this exercise, check that you know the meaning of the following words:

- naughty
- anxious
- greedy
- disappointed
- polite
- diligent
- cheerful
- depressed
- messy
- adventurous

Once you have checked the meaning of the words in the list above, complete each sentence using one of the words.

1. My friend Tom loves activities like mountain climbing, abseiling, white water rafting, bungee jumping and sky diving. In fact, it seems like dangerous situations excite him! Sometimes I wish I could have no fear like him. He is a very ..... person.

Show the answer

Adventurous

2. My friend has a very important job interview today. He is really worried about it. He keeps biting his nails and seems so nervous. I told him to calm down and try to relax but he said he feels too .....

Show the answer

Anxious

3. My friend just lost his job and his girlfriend broke up with him. He is feeling very down and..... I'm not sure how to cheer him up.

Show the answer

Depressed

4. My friend's dog never does what it's told. It always runs in the house and breaks things. It is very..... They need to learn how to discipline it better.

Show the answer

Naughty

5. My friend's niece always smiles and laughs. She seems so happy. In fact, I don't think I have ever seen her in a bad mood. She's a very ..... person.

Show the answer

Cheerful

6. My friend is so untidy. He almost never cleans his room. You should see it! It's so .....! I told him he will never get a girlfriend if he doesn't become a cleaner person.

Show the answer

Messy

7. My friend didn't like what his girlfriend got him for his birthday. He looked so .....! But I told him he should stop being so picky and just appreciate the gift. I think he really hurt her feelings.

Show the answer

Disappointed

8. My friend studies so hard. She always gets her assignments done on time and gets great results. She's so..... I think I should try and be more like her.

Show the answer

Diligent

9. Ever since my friend got his new job, all he has cared about is money-money-money!! In the past he was so generous and money and possessions didn't seem important to him. Now he is a very selfish and ..... person.

Show the answer

Greedy

10. My friend is a waitress. The job is perfect for her personality because she is always so kind and ..... Even when the customers are rude to her she keeps smiling and acts very professional.

Show the answer

Polite

## Talking about people in the IELTS speaking test (Part 2)

When talking about people, you will almost certainly need adjectives describing personality.

Are the following adjectives positive, neutral or negative?

- indecisive
- open-minded
- impatient
- careful
- trustworthy
- selfish
- optimistic
- sociable
- attentive
- cheerful
- ambitious
- spontaneous
- sensitive
- hardworking
- reserved
- aggressive
- impolite
- moody
- lazy
- generous
- caring

Be careful though! Some words can be positive, negative or neutral depending on context.

Now practice – use the words above to complete the sentences below:

He's so (1)\_\_\_\_\_ – it can take him ages to make up his mind, but he loves parties and meeting people. He's much more (2)\_\_\_\_\_ than me.

He has good qualities, but sometimes he can be a little boring. He always has to consider things carefully before doing them. I'm a lot more (3)\_\_\_\_\_ – I just go ahead and do things and think about the consequences later.

I think we first became friends because he's so (4)\_\_\_\_\_. You know, one of those people that always smiles no matter what. I can't stand (5)\_\_\_\_\_ people – you never know what they are going to be like from one day to the next.

If I was talking about someone who had a great impact on me, it would probably be my father. He doesn't like to be the centre of attention – it's not that he's shy, just a little (6)\_\_\_\_\_, but he's so (7)\_\_\_\_\_. I can't remember the last time he took a long holiday.

I liked the job, but I didn't like my boss. He would never listen to any new ideas or consider new ways of doing things, and I think someone in his position should have been a lot more (8)\_\_\_\_\_.

Since moving to another country, my character has changed quite a lot. I am an only child, so I suppose I was a little bit (9)\_\_\_\_\_, but since living in a flat with others, I've learned to share and think a little more about other people. That's something I've learned from one of my flatmates – she's a really (10)\_\_\_\_\_ person who always asks if I've had a good day and has time to talk if I'm feeling down.

I recently met an old friend of mine, someone I had known at school, and we decided to go for lunch. Well, he spent the whole time telling me about his business plans, and how he was going to become more successful than anyone else. I suppose he's just (11)\_\_\_\_\_ but he seemed really (12)\_\_\_\_\_, talking about how he was going to dominate the market and there was no room for anyone with a conscience. I don't think I'll meet up with him again.

## Answers

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| (1) indecisive  | (7) hardworking |
| (2) sociable    | (8) open-minded |
| (3) spontaneous | (9) selfish     |
| (4) optimistic  | (10) caring     |
| (5) moody       | (11) ambitious  |
| (6) reserved    | (12) aggressive |

### **Here's a complete answer from a Part Two topic card about someone the speaker has known for a long time:**

“Well, I’d like to talk about someone I’ve known for a long time. He actually used to be my next-door neighbour, but I didn’t really get to know him until we went to school together.

We used to study in the same English class when I was at high school, so I guess I’ve known him for about...it must be seven years now. He was always a much better student than me – he let me copy his homework quite a few times, but that’s not really how we became friends.

To be honest, it’s hard to say exactly why we are friends – we don’t share the same interests, apart from basketball. He’s happy to spend his evenings in front of a computer playing games while I’d rather watch a movie. Sometimes I think I’m a television addict! Anyway, despite our differences, he’s a very genuine person. I mean, he’s honest and direct, and that means we can have some very interesting conversations on all types of subjects.

As I mentioned, he was always a better student than me and he seems to know a lot about the world, so we can spend hours just chatting. I think that’s important in a friend, but to add another reason, I would have to say that he is very generous.

I don’t necessarily mean with money, I mean that he’s a very giving person who goes out of his way to make people feel comfortable. I think that’s mainly why I feel he is important to me.

Either way, I imagine we'll be friends for a long time."

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## Talking about people in the IELTS speaking test (Part 3)

Learning synonyms is a good way to enrich your English vocabulary, and this will help you achieve a higher IELTS band score. The two columns below contain two lists of adjectives.

Try to match up a word from column one with a synonym in column two, in ten minutes or less.

### Column One

- 1 amusing
- 2 diligent
- 3 easy-going
- 4 fearless
- 5 generous
- 6 intelligent
- 7 loyal
- 8 optimistic
- 9 passionate

### Column Two

- a dedicated
- b idealistic
- c funny
- d kind
- e enthusiastic
- f inventive
- g faithful
- h relaxed
- i logical



10 creative

j intrepid

11 rational

k positive

12 utopian

l clever

### Answers

- amusing = funny
- diligent = dedicated
- easy-going = relaxed
- fearless = intrepid
- generous = kind
- intelligent = clever
- loyal = faithful
- optimistic = positive
- passionate = enthusiastic
- creative = inventive
- rational = logical
- utopian = idealistic

### Now practice in a complete sentence.

Finish the sentences below with an appropriate adjective from the previous exercise.

1. In order to be a successful artist you need to be \_\_\_\_\_.
2. John is such a \_\_\_\_\_ student, he studies for four or five hours every night.
3. Dogs are man's best friend because they are so \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Sandra's grandfather is really \_\_\_\_\_, he bought her a car for her birthday.

5. In an \_\_\_\_\_ world there wouldn't be any suffering or unhappiness.
6. Sharks are naturally \_\_\_\_\_ , they have no predators and killing is instinctive.
7. Maxine is so \_\_\_\_\_ about Italian movies, she's decided to study Italian.
8. Mathematics requires a \_\_\_\_\_ process of thinking.
9. In New Zealand you can enjoy an \_\_\_\_\_ lifestyle.
10. It is better to be an \_\_\_\_\_ person – it is a much happier outlook on life.
11. We watched a very \_\_\_\_\_ comedian on TV last night.
12. Albert Einstein was an extremely \_\_\_\_\_ scientist and mathematician.

#### Answers

1. creative/inventive
2. diligent/dedicated
3. loyal/faithful
4. generous/kind
5. idealistic/utopian
6. fearless/intrepid
7. passionate/enthusiastic
8. rational/logical
9. easy-going/relaxed
10. optimistic/positive
11. amusing/funny
12. intelligent/clever

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## Talking about places in the IELTS speaking test

A topic that has recently been used a few times in Part 2 of the speaking test asks you to describe a place, so this short exercise will give you some practice in extending a description of a place using adjectives.

Complete the text using words from the list:

tropical | peaceful | amazing | breathtaking | humid | serene | rugged | lively | packed | mountainous | friendly | clear | spectacular | hilly | green | sun-drenched

“Well, one place I love in New Zealand is Tongariro National Park. You can do the Tongariro circuit – you walk right around the mountains, staying in huts. It takes about three days. The views are absolutely (a)\_\_\_\_\_ – on a (b)\_\_\_\_\_ day you can see all the way to Mount Taranaki in the west. It can be extremely hot, yet as with any (c)\_\_\_\_\_ environment, the temperature can drop incredibly quickly, so you have to be prepared. At weekends or holidays, it can get a little crowded, and some nights the huts are (d)\_\_\_\_\_, but everyone is so (e)\_\_\_\_\_. I must have said ‘Hello’ a hundred times a day when I was there!”

The full answer:

Well, one place I love in New Zealand is Tongariro National Park. You can do the Tongariro circuit – you walk right around the mountains, staying in huts. It takes about three days. The views are absolutely (a) breathtaking – on a (b) clear day you can see all the way to Mount Taranaki in the west. It can be extremely hot, yet as with any (c) tropical environment, the temperature can drop incredibly quickly, so you have to be prepared. At weekends or holidays, it can get a little crowded, and some nights the huts are (d) packed, but everyone is so (e) friendly. I must have said ‘Hello’ a hundred times a day when I was there!

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## Talking about special days and celebrations

It is common in the IELTS speaking test to be asked to talk about special days or celebrations, so here are some model answers that will give you a guideline for a good result. The list below is based on special days or celebrations in New Zealand, but this is where we'd love your help – if you post a paragraph below about a special day or celebration in your country, we will read it, make any changes if required to the grammar or structure and post it on this page.

### **ANZAC Day (New Zealand and Australia)**

Well, it's a special day but it's not really a celebration – it's more of a ceremony. Anyway, it's in late April, on the 25<sup>th</sup>. It's the same day in both Australia and New Zealand. It starts early in the morning when all the ex-service people walk to the nearest war memorial. They often wear all their old medals and their best suits. It can look really impressive.

### **LABOUR DAY (New Zealand)**

This holiday was first celebrated in 1890, but wasn't officially recognised until 1900. It marked the beginning of new conditions for employees – working hours were reduced, unions were formed and working conditions slowly improved. People don't really do anything special to celebrate the day, but it gives you time to think about how hard life must have been then.

### **WAITANGI DAY (New Zealand)**

It's one of the most controversial public holidays in New Zealand. It commemorates the time when the British government signed a treaty with most of the Maori chiefs over 150 years ago. I don't know much about it but I do know that a lot of people still argue about it. Actually, in the 1970s it became known as New Zealand Day but soon changed back to its original name.

### **CHRISTMAS DAY (New Zealand and many other countries)**

Version 1:

In New Zealand, the most important holiday is probably Christmas. It's the time of the year when families try to get together, or at least send cards to say hello. On Christmas Day a lot of people have barbecues, either on the beach or in their gardens. Most places are closed for the day, and most people have their longest holiday of the year around this time. Office workers, for example, often don't go back to work until the beginning of the New Year.

Version 2

My favourite special day is Christmas, which is on the 25th of December every year. I love this day for a whole lot of reasons. Firstly, I don't have to go to work but I still get paid!! Also, I live in a very busy city but by Christmas day most people have traveled out of town, thereby reducing traffic by over 90%. This in turn makes driving around town on a day like this so much more enjoyable, especially as I get to do a lot of visiting. Not only is it easy to get to where I'm going, but there is always lots of exotic food in my friends and family houses.

### **BIRTHDAYS (Almost everywhere on the planet!)**

Well, people in New Zealand, as in most Western countries, like to celebrate birthdays, but often only for younger people. Once you start getting older you don't want to be reminded of another passing year! Anyway, a lot of people go out to the pub, or stay at home and have a party. Sometimes a surprise party is organised. People send cards for your birthday, but normally just close friends or family give gifts. It's common to have a birthday cake with a candle for every year – you have to blow the candles out in one breath if you want to make a wish!

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## **Talking about your hometown in IELTS speaking**

Once of the more common questions in Part One of the IELTS test is to talk about your hometown. A common student error is to give short answers which do not show the examiner your real abilities, especially with regards fluency.

Here are three examples of points you could make about your hometown. All of the places below are describing areas in New Zealand!

### **Talking about your hometown #1**

I'm from Henderson, a suburb to the west of Auckland. Although it can be a little quiet, it's only 20 minutes from the city centre. There are a couple of interesting things about Henderson. UNITEC College has a building there, although it's not their main campus. It is also one of the places in the North Island where a lot of movies are shot – in fact, some sections of the Lord of the Rings were filmed only a few minutes away from my house!

### **Talking about your hometown #2**

I'm from Invercargill, the southernmost city of New Zealand. It's an interesting place because there's so much history there. The area was first settled by sheep farmers driving sheep from Dunedin. It was actually named after William Cargill, a Scotsman involved in the administration and settlement of the local region. When it was first constructed, the city was famous for wide streets and beautiful buildings such as the railway hotel and the water tower.

### **Talking about your hometown #3**

Wellington, where I'm from, is the capital city of New Zealand, although a lot of people think it is Auckland. It is set between a magnificent harbour and rolling green hills – the city itself is very hilly. There are four different areas within the city, but my favourite is the Lambton quarter, which has the most concentrated shopping area in New Zealand. There are lots of things to do and see when you visit, but it can sometimes depend on the weather. In fact, the area is famous for being very windy and is often called 'Windy Wellington'.

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## **Tips for the day of your IELTS speaking test**

So the day has finally arrived – it's test day! Depending on the test centre you are taking your test in, you might have the speaking on a different day to the other parts of the test or

at the beginning or end of the same day. Whenever your speaking assessment is, here are some useful tips for the day of your IELTS speaking test.

### **Tip 1: Know the procedure on test day**

You can make the whole test a lot less stressful by knowing in advance what you will be required to do. As the format will be slightly different depending on your test centre, you should always ask first, but here is a common breakdown of the speaking test section.

- You will arrive at the test centre and be registered using your ID (passport, ID card etc).
- The test administrator will check your identification, take a photo and scan your fingerprint.
- You will be given a piece of paper with your candidate number on. Keep this safe as you will need it a few times throughout the day.
- You will be escorted to a waiting area.
- In *SOME* test centres, you will be given an approximate time for your speaking assessment. In other test centres, you simply need to wait until your name or candidate number is called.
- The examiner will call you out of the waiting room. Your fingerprint will be checked again, as well as your ID.
- Your personal belongings (bags, mobile phones – even watches!) will be locked in a separate room. You will keep only your ID and the piece of paper you were given when you first registered.
- The examiner will take you to the testing room and conduct the test.
- After the test, you will be escorted back to collect your belongings, and then escorted away from the other candidates (you will not be allowed to talk to other candidates until they have also finished their test)

As mentioned, there will be slight differences depending on your test centre – if you have anything to add, please post it in the comments section below!

### **Tip 2: Get your brain thinking in English before you start!**

As soon as the day begins when you have your speaking test, you need to get your brain thinking and responding in English. That means avoiding conversations with people in your native language if possible – take some English music or a podcast in English with you and put headphones in when you're waiting, unless there is an opportunity to speak English to other people.

### **Tip 3: Don't study IELTS textbooks while you wait**

Trying to cram as much as you can in the last few minutes before the test very rarely helps, and often leaves you more panicked and nervous. Ideally, take your own note book with some vocabulary, or even just an English novel or non-IELTS related book.

### **Tip 4: Talk to the examiner when you are first called for your test**

Don't wait until you are in the exam room to break the ice with the examiner (*break the ice* means to get the conversation started between two people when they first meet). The examiner might not say much to – they have to think of the administration steps to get you ready for the test – but saying a quick hello and asking the examiner how they're day is going is a great way to help you start building a relationship with the examiner, and helping you when it comes to starting the test.

### **Tip 5: Dress comfortably**

You will get no extra points for wearing a suit or formal dress and you certainly don't lose points for wearing your favourite old jeans, so dress in clothes that you feel comfortable in. Keep in mind that test day can be quite long, and you don't know the temperature of each of the rooms you will be in (the waiting room, the test room, the queue to register) so make sure you have something to keep you warm that's easy to hold or put in a bag if it's too warm.

### **Tip 6: Take a snack**

From the time you queue up to register to the time you have finished the speaking test, you could have been on the go for up to 5 hours, so although you might not be hungry as you head to the test centre, it's important to take a snack with you keep you going. Ideally this



should be something healthy (some fruit, for example) and plenty of water to keep your brain hydrated. Although there may be a vending machine of something similar at the test centre, you can't rely on it!

### **Tip 7: Remember why you are there**

It is common to get nervous and stressed on test day, but just remember why you are taking the test. You are NOT there to make the examiner like you or to pass a job interview. You are just there to demonstrate your level of English, so be prepared to talk and be realistic about making mistakes (even in your native language, you are likely to hesitate or express yourself a little poorly at times during a 14 minute conversation with a stranger in a formal situation!).

### **Tip 8: Remember why the examiner is there**

Let's be honest – if the examiner wasn't being paid, they wouldn't be in the exam room asking you questions. For examiners, it is a paid job and absolutely nothing personal. And where does the examiner get paid from? Your test fees, which makes you the employer! Also keep in mind that within 10 minutes of your test, once you have left the room and the examiner has decided on your level, he or she will likely never think about you again. So don't worry about 'making a fool of yourself' or making 'embarrassing mistakes' – the examiner will talk to at least half a dozen candidates that day.

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## **Tips for the IELTS speaking test**

### **Start demonstrating your English straight away**

When the examiner collects you from the waiting room and takes you to the test room, the test hasn't officially started. However, it is human nature for the examiner to begin the assessment from the time you meet, so a brief 'Hello' or 'Are you having a busy day?' as you are walking to the test room will give a good first impression.

### **Self correction**

If you realise you have made a mistake with something you have said, don't ignore it – stop, correct yourself and move on. For example: 'My friend have visited...sorry, I mean my friend has visited...this place a number of times, and he....'. You don't lose points for errors that you self correct.

## Changing levels of formality

One of the areas that the examiner will be assessing you on is your ability to change the level of formal language you use from Part One to Part Three. To help, think of the sections of the test in this way and use vocabulary and structures appropriate to the situation:

- Part One: a conversation between two old friends – informal, relaxed, friendly
- Part Two: a presentation to work colleagues you know – semi formal, relaxed but also professional
- Part Three: a job interview – present yourself very formally, avoiding informal structures and use a wide range of academic grammar.

## Finding opportunities to speak English

One of the hardest sections of IELTS to practice is the speaking, often because you may have limited or no opportunities to speak. The other problem is that you may work or live in an English speaking environment but end up having the same conversations that don't really help for the more formal sections of the test.

- **Speak to yourself:** One of the best methods to practice speaking is – surprise surprise! – to speak aloud. It doesn't matter if there is anyone listening, and ideally you can record yourself and play it back, listening to the pronunciation and intonation and improving where you can.
- **Call freephone numbers:** In many countries, there are companies that have freephone numbers. Give them a call and ask questions about their product. The advantage of this method is that you cannot really predict what you may be asked, so it helps you to think on your feet. Of course, if it all starts going wrong you can always hang up the phone!

- **Join online groups:** There are lots of online groups where people arrange to speak together (generally via Skype). It's a good idea to join in, but make sure you have set rules. Here are some pointers if you are arranging a Skype conversation with someone to practice your English:
    - have fixed times to start and finish – 10 minutes is a good length, at least at first.
    - have a set topic to talk about before you start the conversation (use an IELTS style topic – Task II writing topics make for good discussion!)
    - share the speaking time – don't dominate the speaking and don't let anyone else do so either. Agree on a set number of seconds or minutes that someone will speak for before you start the conversation.
    - Don't share any overly personal details – it's good to meet people online especially if there is a good purpose, but there's no reason why someone you have just spoken to would need a phone number or email address.
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## Unexpected questions in the speaking test

The interviewer has just asked you about a subject you have never thought about and you have no real ideas. What can you say?

If this situation occurs during your speaking test, the most important first step is not to panic. Avoid responding with 'I don't know' by using an alternative expression. There are a number of phrases you can learn that will give you some time to think of an idea.

- 1 Well, it's difficult to say, but ...
- 2 I don't have any personal opinions, but I suppose ...
- 3 That's an interesting point and I think I would have to say that ...
- 4 Mmm ... I'm not really sure, but ...
- 5 Actually, that's not something I've really thought about, but ...
- 6 I don't really know much about that, but ...

For example, imagine the interviewer asks the following question (don't panic – it's an unlikely question!):

*What impact do you think power steering has had in reducing traffic accidents?*

Now read the candidates response below:

*Well, it's difficult to say but ... umm ... in my opinion the most effective factor in the reduction of traffic accidents is a result of stiffer punishments for poor driving. Although speeding is still a serious issue, other traffic offences such as drink driving have fallen because of the risk of heavy fines and even imprisonment. This has been reinforced by hard-hitting television advertisements highlighting driving while under the influence of alcohol.*

Useful tip:

If you still cannot think of anything to say after a few seconds, you should focus on an aspect of the question you do know and move your answer onto related but more familiar topics. This is not ideal, but better than saying nothing at all!

Practice!

Here are some other topics to practice with – they are NOT questions you would be asked in the IELTS test, but they will help you practice the skills from this lesson!

See what you could say about....

1. the British Royal Family
  2. Postage stamps
  3. Woodland insects
  4. Donating blood
  5. Learning via video conferences
  6. Aeroplane safety checks
  7. Video piracy in the 1990s
- 
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## IELTS speaking model answers

**NOTE:** It is good practice to read the model answer aloud, ideally while recording yourself. Then play back the recording, listening closely to your pronunciation (particularly your intonation) and the speed at which you are speaking.

### Model answer 1

**Describe something you enjoyed doing as a child.**

**You should say:**

- **what you did**
- **when you did it**
- **if you still do it.**

**You should also say why you enjoyed doing it.**

Model answer:

*Well the thing I probably enjoyed doing more than anything else as a child, or at least from when I was about 6, was riding bikes. I had a new or secondhand bike every year or so and they always got faster and bigger as I grew. I remember my first bike had training wheels on the side so I didn't fall over while I was learning!*

*As I got a little older – about 10 or so – I used to go out on my bike with some friends most weekends and evenings. I used to get to school on my bike as well, and we would call in at each others houses and ride in a group to school. The most exciting time was when I was 14, when three of my closest friends and I all went away overnight cycling with a tent on the back of the bicycles. It seemed like such an adventure, and we must have cycled over 60 kilometres that weekend! We had a great time just cycling around and then we set up the tent in the field and spent the night. The only problem was my friend had an accident and destroyed his bike, so his parents had to come and pick him up.*

*For my 15th birthday I had a bike with 15 gears, which, at the time, was very unusual. It was much faster than any of my friends' bikes so I started to go out a lot on my own and later on I got a job delivering newspapers where again I used my bike a lot.*

*I stopped cycling when I was about 18 and I haven't really gone back to it although I probably should. It's very good for health and fitness. The only problem is the other road users don't always watch out for bikes and it can be a little dangerous especially on busy roads. I'm not sure it would be so easy to have fun with a bicycle now as it was when I was a child because of the traffic on the roads these days.*

*Mostly I enjoyed it because it was a chance for me to get out of the house and be a little bit independent. It was a lot of fun playing with friends who also had bikes, so there was a very social side to it as well.*

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## **Model answer 2**

**Describe your favourite way to relax.**

**You should say:**

- **what it is**
- **when you started doing it**
- **how often you do it.**

**You should also say how it relaxes you.**

Model answer:

*Without doubt, the way I prefer to relax is by playing computer games. Well, not so much computer games as my Xbox. I've always loved that kind of thing, but I bought my Xbox about six or seven months ago and I've hardly stopped playing it – I think it's almost an addiction! The games can be quite expensive, so you need to save up, but the graphics are so good and some of the best games can take weeks to finish, so I suppose it doesn't work out to be too bad.*

Anyway, I normally rent games from the video shop. I get a couple of games a week, but if I really like it then I'll go to the games shop and buy it rather than keep renting it. I play most nights unless I'm going out with friends, or have a lot of homework. Even then, I try to squeeze in a half an hour after my studies. Some nights though, especially at the weekend, I can play for hours at a time. It's probably not good for my eyes focusing on the television too long.

For anybody watching me play, they would probably be surprised to hear me say it relaxes me because I can get pretty angry if I keep failing at some part of a game. The reason it relaxes me is a little different though – it allows me for a short time to be somewhere else, to forget about my studies or this IELTS test or anything serious.

After playing games for a while, I often find things like my homework are a lot less complicated than I thought. I think it's important to have some time to yourself, away from everything and everyone else.

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### Model answer 3

Describe a place you would love to visit.

You should say:

- where it is
- what you can do there
- what is special about it.

You should also say why you would like to go there more than anywhere else.

Model answer: <http://ieltsforfree.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/speaking-topic-place-to-visit.jpg>

Well, I love travelling so there are many places I would really like to go to, but perhaps the place I would love to go to most is the South Island. I've been in New Zealand for nearly two years and I still haven't been. The only time I could have gone was last Christmas, but it's

more expensive at that time of year. As for the things you can do there, the list is endless. There are the Sounds – you know, Milford Sound, Marlborough Sound. You can go on a boat tour across quite a few of them. Then there are all the extreme sports. I think the South Island is the first place bungee jumping was set up commercially.

Ideally, I'd love to rent a car and just drive around, stopping to do some of those sports. I much prefer to drive rather than go by bus because you can decide where you want to stay and how long for. As for what makes it special, that's easy if you've seen The Lord of the Rings movies – the scenery! It must be one of the last remaining unspoilt areas on earth! I hope that doesn't change.

I suppose that's why it would be the place I want to visit more than anywhere else – because it probably won't stay like that forever.

Just to take a tent and some food, drive around and then camp when it gets dark – that sounds like a perfect place to visit to me.

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#### **Model answer 4**

**Describe a sporting event you have been to.**

**You should say:**

- **what it was**
- **why you went there**
- **who you went with.**

**You should also say whether you enjoyed it.**

Model answer:

*I'm not actually very interested in sport, but there was an occasion a few years ago when I went to see a football match in a town about half an hour from where I live. It was a charity match – I think they were collecting funds for the local school – and it was very well*



*attended. I think there must have been over 5,000 people there, which isn't bad considering there aren't any 'star' players.*

*I only went because a friend of mine really wanted to go but didn't want to watch it on his own, so in the end there were a small group of us. One of the other people we went with was going anyway because his brother was in one of the teams, so it made it a lot more fun to have a team to support, otherwise I wouldn't have really minded either way who won!*

*Although I did enjoy it, it hasn't made me want to go back and see another game – it was good fun mostly because of the people I was with – we were only half focused on the game and spent the rest of the time just chatting or eating – we'd taken a picnic with us and it was a beautiful day! After the match, we met a lot of new people in the park – most people stayed for at least a few hours after the game just enjoying the sunshine.*

*As I mentioned, I'm not that interested in sport, but I do watch some of the World Cup games when they are on television – it's a lot more fun than just following a local or national team, and there's a lot more going on in the crowd. When Germany won the world cup not too long ago, there was a small group of German people in my town that had a 24 hour party and invited everyone – it was such a good atmosphere!*

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### **Model answer 5**

**Describe a subject you enjoyed at school.**

**You should say:**

- **what it was**
- **when you studied it**
- **who taught you**

**You should also say why you enjoyed it.**

Model answer:

*Well, I was never very fond of school so it's difficult to say. I was never very strong academically, so I enjoyed sport more than anything. I didn't do very well in formal exams, and the sports classes never seemed to have too many formal tests! I liked most things we did in the sport classes, but I preferred the outside ball games – especially soccer. In my school you had to join in at least once a week, normally on Friday afternoons. I did that right up to the end of high school, and I don't think I ever missed a game, although a lot of my friends left early so they could have a longer weekend.*

*In our school, there were three sports teachers. Mrs Brownslow mostly took classes for the girls, but the boys either had Mr Hendricks or Mr Smith. I suppose it was Mr Smith that I liked best – he was the soccer teacher. He was always encouraging of anyone that made an effort, but he wasn't very friendly to those students that just stood around doing nothing.*

*There are quite a few reasons why I enjoyed it, apart from not having to worry about academic exams on a Friday afternoon. I suppose the main reason is that I was good at it, and I think it's easier to enjoy something you have ability in. There was normally a good atmosphere in the class and we had quite a good soccer team – I remember we won the annual competition against other local schools three times while I was in the team! Another reason I looked forward to those lessons was that after an hour or so of running around I always felt refreshed, and I seemed to have more energy. I guess that's why I'm still quite active now, although I don't play soccer.*

*These days I just go jogging in the mornings, but it still helps give me the energy I need for the day. I can't imagine not doing any exercise – I think it's a great way to start the day and of course it's good for your overall health to do something like that as often as possible.*

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### **Model answer 6**

**Talk about a teacher that inspired you**

**You should say:**

- **who it was**

- **when it was**
- **what they taught you**

### **You should also say why they inspired you**

Model answer:

*It might sound strange, but the teacher that really gave me something to aim for was my language school teacher. I've only been in New Zealand for four months, and when I first came I was very nervous about everything. He was my first teacher, and he made the whole environment welcoming just by doing simple little things. For example, there were 14 of us in his class and by the end of the first lesson he had remembered all of our names. I thought that was quite impressive considering there were students from lots of different nationalities, and that meant lots of different pronunciations of names!*

*He taught me general English at first, covering all the normal parts of learning a new language, and he had a great way of explaining difficult grammar points in a way that made it easy to remember, and he used a lot of very clear examples. When I went to the IELTS class he taught me writing skills, which I found very difficult at first. I improved quickly though, because he encouraged us to work hard. Actually, he was quite strict – he didn't tolerate lazy students.*

*I'm not that interested in the subject of teaching and wouldn't really consider becoming a teacher, but he's certainly a good role model for anyone who is thinking of following it as a career. He was always well prepared and had a clear topic for every lesson, so we left the room feeling that we'd achieved something every day.*

*When he was teaching the writing class, preparing us for IELTS, he made the whole process much clearer than I had imagined it could be. He broke the lessons down into individual sections, such as how to write a good introduction or conclusion, and the importance sections of a sentence.*

*One of the most inspiring aspects of his teaching style would definitely be the way he made us appreciate that it was only by practising that you could hope to become more proficient. I*

*suppose it was because of him that I was inspired to take this test, because I want to prove both to myself and to my teacher that I have been able to improve.*

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## **Model answer 7**

### **Describe a piece of equipment**

**You should say:**

- **what it is**
- **what you use it for**
- **how often you use it.**

**You should also explain how to use it**

*Well, I've been asked to talk about how to use some equipment, so I'm going to talk about something you may well be familiar with – a laptop computer. I use mine mostly for e-mails but also for word processing, especially when I'm writing reports or something for work. I find I can organise my ideas more clearly than with the traditional pen and paper. Although I do take it with me most days, I don't actually use it for very long at a time because the power doesn't last for more than a few hours if it's not plugged in. Like most people, I use my phone for most smaller tasks so although I have my laptop, it's not always on.*

*Now, the first step in using a laptop is quite obvious – you have to turn it on. This can take quite a while depending on the model. What you do next depends on your particular reason for using it, but I'm going to talk about connecting to the Internet. After making sure that the laptop is on, you need to click the wifi signal icon to connect to a wireless network. Of course, you don't need to do this if you have already connected to that network before as your computer will remember and automatically connect you. If it's your first time connecting, most places will then ask for a password. Once you've entered that, it can take up to a minute to connect, but then you should see a small notice on the screen telling you that you are now online – you know, connected to the Internet. Finally, simply type in the*

website address you want, or if you are just surfing then type the word or words in the search bar.

*It's not at all difficult to use, but some people still have difficulty.*

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## **Model answer 8**

### **Describe how to cook a meal you like**

**You should say:**

- **what it is**
- **when you eat it**
- **what you need to make it.**

**You should also explain how to make it.**

*Well, I'm not actually a very good cook so I can only manage basic dishes like eggs and bacon, but the one thing I do like to make is called Welsh Rarebit. It's a traditional snack made by people in my hometown, but I think there are different recipes for it in a lot of different towns in Wales and even in other countries.*

*There are two reasons I like cooking this dish – it's fairly simple to create and only takes a few minutes before it's ready to eat! A lot of people I know have it for lunch, especially in the winter when you can eat it with a stew or thick soup, but it's actually one of those dishes that you can eat at any time of the day. I often have it for breakfast, especially in the colder months, because it gets you warm quickly!*

*Basically, Welsh Rarebit is cheese on toast, but with a few modifications that really make the difference. The main ingredients I use are flour and eggs, mixed in with the melted cheese. The trick is to make sure that the mixture of flour and egg is mixed well but not for too long. When it's mixed through, put it on the stove and start heating it, slowly adding the grated cheese. You can add as much cheese as you like – personally, I like to have a lot, so that the egg and flour mix is about 50% of the total and the cheese is the other 50%.*

*At this point, you need to toast your bread. You can add a few spices to the mix. I use a lot of black pepper and a little paprika – I really like the taste of paprika, but as I said, I don't cook often so rarely use it. When the toast is ready, pour the mixture on to the toast and grill it for a few minutes until the top turns brown. You can also add some more cheese to the top too – I always do!*

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### **Model answer 9**

**Describe the best holiday you have ever had.**

**You should say**

- **where it was**
- **when you went**
- **who you went with.**

**You should also say why it was your best holiday.**

Model answer:

*Well, definitely the best holiday that I can remember was actually only a few months ago, not long after I arrived in New Zealand. I went camping at Mangawhai Heads a couple of hours north of Auckland. We went there for the Labour weekend holiday, so it was quite busy, but the atmosphere was great.*

*The lady at the campsite told us about a beach we could go to – it wasn't signposted, but it was down a dirt road with lots of potholes. When we got to the beach I was amazed – the sand was stunningly white and there was hardly anyone there at all! I've always loved going to the beach – I used to go most weekends in the summer when I was a child – but this beach was so much cleaner.*

*Anyway, on this trip I went with a couple of friends from my language school. We're from different countries but all in the same class, so we all speak about the same level of English.*

*There are quite a few reasons why I think it was the best holiday I have ever had. As I mentioned, I love the beach and this beach was just perfect. And then there was the opportunity to get out of the city and see some of the rest of New Zealand.*

*The people we met there were so friendly! There was a Kiwi family camping next to us and they invited us to come to their barbecue. We weren't very prepared, but they seemed to have everything. On top of that, it was the perfect opportunity to practise my English, which is always good.*

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### **Model answer 10**

#### **Describe a friend who is important to you**

**You should say:**

- **where you met**
- **how long you have known him / her**
- **why you are friends**

**You should also say why he or she is important to you**

Model answer:

*Well, I'd like to talk about someone I've known for a long time. He actually used to be my next-door neighbour, but I didn't really get to know him until we went to school together. We used to study in the same English class when I was at high school, so I guess I've know him for about...it must be seven years now.*

*He was always a much better student than me – he let me copy his homework quite a few times, but that's not really how we became friends. To be honest, it's hard to say exactly why we are friends – we don't share the same interests, apart from basketball. He's happy to spend his evenings in front of a computer playing games while I'd rather watch a movie. Sometimes I think I'm a television addict!*

*Anyway, despite our differences, he's a very genuine person. I mean, he's honest and direct, and that means we can have some very interesting conversations on all types of subjects.*

*As I mentioned, he was always a better student than me and he seems to know a lot about the world, so we can spend hours just chatting. I think that's important in a friend, but to add another reason, I would have to say that he is very generous. I don't necessarily mean with money, I mean that he's a very giving person who goes out of his way to make people feel comfortable. I think that's mainly why I feel he is important to me.*

*Anyway, I imagine we'll be friends for a long time.*

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