

IELTS

Speaking Band Descriptors

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IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors

Scoring criteria for Academic and General Training tests

Band Score	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	Fluent with only very occasional repetition or self-correction. Any hesitation that occurs is used only to prepare the content of the next utterance and not to find words or grammar. Speech is situationally appropriate and cohesive features are fully acceptable. Topic development is fully coherent and appropriately extended.	Total flexibility and precise use in all contexts. Sustained use of accurate and idiomatic language.	Structures are precise and accurate at all times, apart from 'mistakes' characteristic of native speaker speech.	Uses a full range of phonological features to convey precise and/or subtle meaning. Flexible use of features of connected speech is sustained throughout. Can be effortlessly understood throughout. Accent has no effect on intelligibility.
8	Fluent with only very occasional repetition or self-correction. Hesitation may occasionally be used to find words or grammar, but most will be content related. Topic development is coherent, appropriate and relevant.	Wide resource, readily and flexibly used to discuss all topics and convey precise meaning. Skilful use of less common and idiomatic items despite occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation. Effective use of paraphrase as required.	Wide range of structures, flexibly used. The majority of sentences are error free. Occasional inappropriacies and non-systematic errors occur. A few basic errors may persist.	Uses a wide range of phonological features to convey precise and/or subtle meaning. Can sustain appropriate rhythm. Flexible use of stress and intonation across long utterances, despite occasional lapses. Can be easily understood throughout. Accent has minimal effect on intelligibility.
7	Able to keep going and readily produce long turns without noticeable effort. Some hesitation, repetition and/or self-correction may occur, often mid-sentence and indicate problems with accessing appropriate language. However, these will not affect coherence. Flexible use of spoken discourse markers, connectives and cohesive features.	Resource flexibly used to discuss a variety of topics. Some ability to use less common and idiomatic items and an awareness of style and collocation is evident though inappropriacies occur. Effective use of paraphrase as required.	A range of structures flexibly used. Error-free sentences are frequent. Both simple and complex sentences are used effectively despite some errors. A few basic errors persist.	Displays all the positive features of band 6, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 8.

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6	Able to keep going and demonstrates a willingness to produce long turns. Coherence may be lost at times as a result of hesitation, repetition and/or self-correction. Uses a range of spoken discourse markers, connectives and cohesive features though not always appropriately.	Resource sufficient to discuss topics at length. Vocabulary use may be inappropriate but meaning is clear. Generally able to paraphrase successfully.	Produces a mix of short and complex sentence forms and a variety of structures with limited flexibility. Though errors frequently occur in complex structures, these rarely impede communication.	Uses a range of phonological features, but control is variable. Chunking is generally appropriate, but rhythm may be affected by a lack of stress-timing and/or a rapid speech rate. Some effective use of intonation and stress, but this is not sustained. Individual words or phonemes may be mispronounced but this causes only occasional lack of clarity. Can generally be understood throughout without much effort.
5	Usually able to keep going, but relies on repetition and self-correction to do so and/or on slow speech. Hesitations are often associated with mid-sentence searches for fairly basic lexis and grammar. Overuse of certain discourse markers, connectives and other cohesive features. More complex speech usually causes disfluency but simpler language may be produced fluently.	Resource sufficient to discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics but there is limited flexibility. Attempts paraphrase but not always with success.	Basic sentence forms are fairly well controlled for accuracy. Complex structures are attempted but these are limited in range, nearly always contain errors and may lead to the need for reformulation.	Displays all the positive features of band 4, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 6.
4	Unable to keep going without noticeable pauses. Speech may be slow with frequent repetition. Often self-corrects. Can link simple sentences but often with repetitious use of connectives. Some breakdowns in coherence.	Resource sufficient for familiar topics but only basic meaning can be conveyed on unfamiliar topics. Frequent inappropriacies and errors in word choice. Rarely attempts paraphrase.	Can produce basic sentence forms and some short utterances are error-free. Subordinate clauses are rare and, overall, turns are short, structures are repetitive and errors are frequent.	Uses some acceptable phonological features, but the range is limited. Produces some acceptable chunking, but there are frequent lapses in overall rhythm. Attempts to use intonation and stress, but control is limited. Individual words or phonemes are frequently mispronounced, causing lack of clarity. Understanding requires some effort and there may be patches of speech that cannot be understood.

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3	Frequent, sometimes long, pauses occur while candidate searches for words. Limited ability to link simple sentences and go beyond simple responses to questions. Frequently unable to convey basic message.	Resource limited to simple vocabulary used primarily to convey personal information. Vocabulary inadequate for unfamiliar topics.	Basic sentence forms are attempted but grammatical errors are numerous except in apparently memorised utterances.	Displays some features of band 2, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 4.
2	Lengthy pauses before nearly every word. Isolated words may be recognisable but speech is of virtually no communicative significance.	Very limited resource. Utterances consist of isolated words or memorised utterances. Little communication possible without the support of mime or gesture.	No evidence of basic sentence forms.	Uses few acceptable phonological features (possibly because sample is insufficient). Overall problems with delivery impair attempts at connected speech. Individual words and phonemes are mainly mispronounced and little meaning is conveyed. Often unintelligible.
1	Essentially none. Speech is totally incoherent.	No resource bar a few isolated words. No communication possible.	No rateable language unless memorised.	Can produce occasional individual words and phonemes that are recognisable, but no overall meaning is conveyed. Unintelligible.
0	Does not attend / Does not complete the test			

Notes:

- (i) A candidate must fully fit the positive features of the descriptor at a particular level.
- (ii) A candidate will be rated on their average performance across all parts of the test.