

Teacher's guide to IELTS

**IELTS essentials
to support learners
who are preparing
for the test**



IELTS



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Setting you and your learners up for success with IELTS

Your students take the IELTS test because they need to prove their English language proficiency to live, work, or study where English is spoken.

IELTS, the International English Language Testing System, is trusted by governments, employers, and thousands of universities around the world.

It is recognised and used for selection purposes by over 12,500 organisations in 140 countries.

We know that teachers play a valuable role in helping learners reach their goals so they can thrive in a new environment.

Your *Teacher's guide to IELTS* is designed to support you in guiding your learners as they prepare to take our IELTS test.

As experts in English language assessment, we can provide you with the tools you need to equip learners with the skills they need.

Supporting learners to prepare for the IELTS test can also provide new career opportunities for you.

We hope you find this guide useful.

“IELTS is based on how we actually use English in real life. You speak to a person, and you’re not just another person sitting in front of a computer being recorded, but using English for real human communication.”



Rory Reyes-Cobar
*Academic Development
Officer, Australia*

An overview of IELTS



Improving learners' English language skills through IELTS

Here's everything you need to know about our English language proficiency tests.

Whether you are teaching at a school, a university, or within a business, as you prepare students for our globally trusted IELTS test, you will be improving their general English skills at the same time.

IELTS is built with test takers in mind. It provides a fair, accurate, and relevant assessment of English language skills, based on well-established standards.

IELTS test questions are developed by English language specialists in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA. The questions are based on authentic materials sourced from all over the world.

Choosing an IELTS test

There are two IELTS tests. Each test assesses English language proficiency for specific purposes.

The choice of test will depend on the test taker's academic or professional aspirations, or the visa requirements of the country where they plan to study or work.

The tests are:

- IELTS Academic
- IELTS General Training.

IELTS for UKVI

If your learners need to take IELTS for UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements, they must take their test at an approved IELTS for UKVI test centre. Learn more:

[IELTS.org/UKVI](https://ielts.org/UKVI)

IELTS tests to suit your learners' needs

This information will help you guide your learners on which test to take and what they will be tested on.

IELTS Academic

If your learners are planning to study in a country where English is spoken, it's likely that the IELTS Academic test is the right choice for them.

The test assesses if learners are ready to begin studying at higher education level in English. It features vocabulary that is familiar within an academic setting. Learners can also take IELTS Academic for professional registration purposes.

Suitable for:

- University
- Higher education
- Professional registration

IELTS General Training

IELTS General Training is suitable for those planning to migrate to a country where English is spoken (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK), and for those wishing to train or study at below degree level.

The test assesses everyday English language skills that learners will need in social situations and in workplace environments.

Suitable for:

- Immigration
- Work experience
- Training
- School/college

What's in each IELTS test?

Both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training consist of four different sections to assess the four language skills: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking.

The content of the **Listening** and **Speaking** sections of IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training are the same.

The **Reading** sections of the two tests differ in the choice of texts including topic, genre, length, and number.

The level of difficulty of the 40 test items

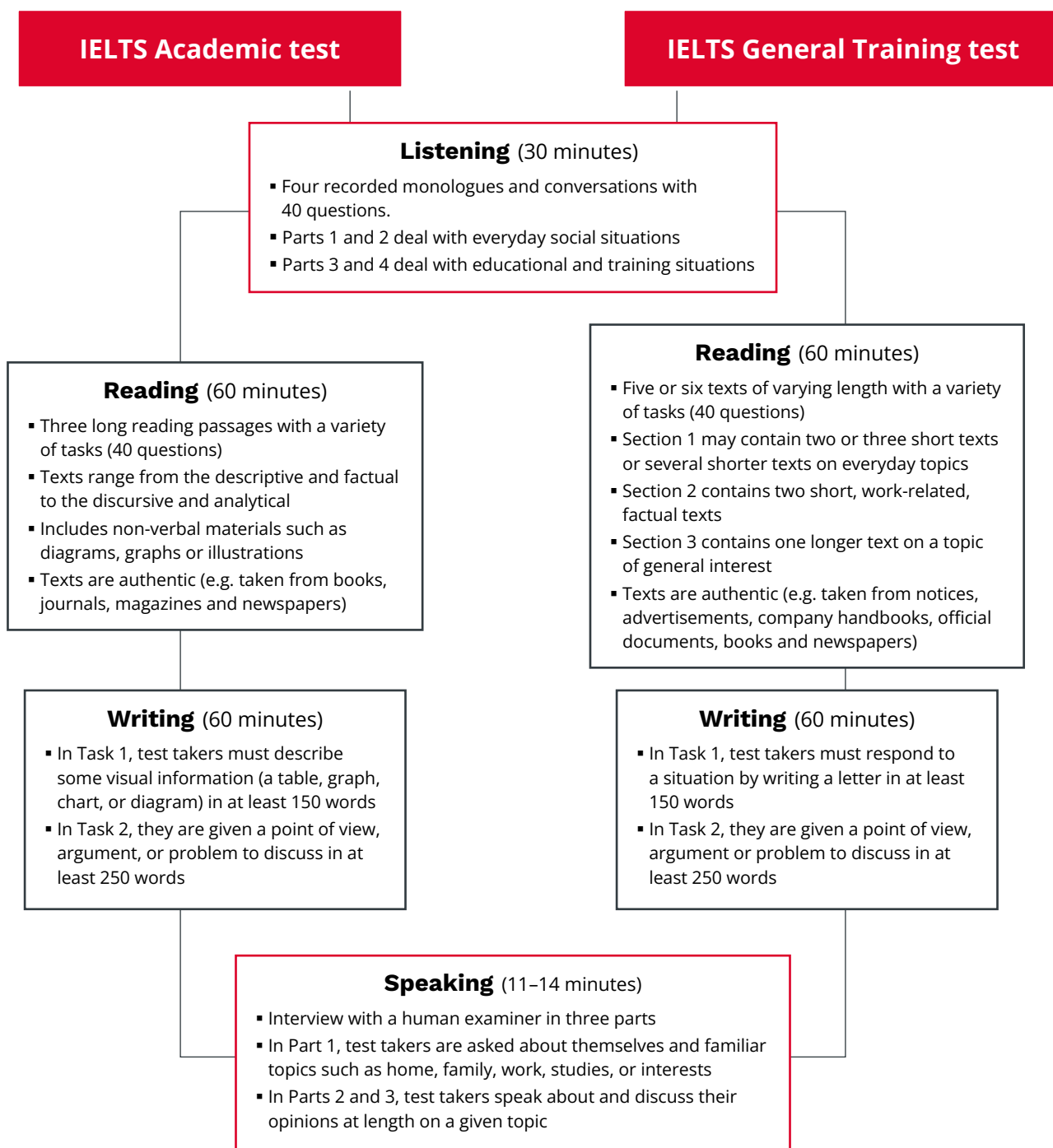
The Academic Reading section has more items pitched at bands 5–8, whereas the General Training Reading section has more items pitched at bands 3–6. This is a reflection of the different demands of Academic and General Training. For information about IELTS band scores see page 10.

The **Writing** sections of the two tests have the same minimum word requirement, but the content and nature of the writing tasks are different.



The IELTS tests at a glance

The IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training tests are the same length.



i Find out more about the format of the IELTS tests:

[IELTS.org/Academic](https://ielts.org/Academic)

[IELTS.org/GeneralTraining](https://ielts.org/GeneralTraining)

A test of four skills

Each section of the IELTS test (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking) is carefully designed so that tasks focus on the particular skill that the section is testing.

Having targeted tasks in four separate sections makes it easier to control task difficulty across all the test versions we produce, and results in a fairer test design when compared with tests that assess multiple skills simultaneously. It also makes it clear and easy for organisations that accept IELTS to interpret the test results.

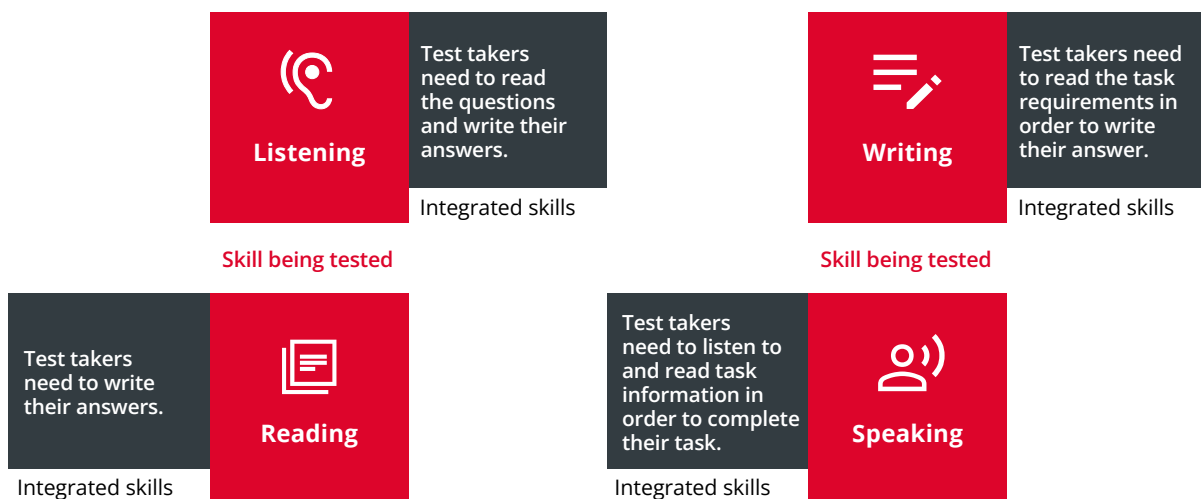
Using integrated skills

While IELTS focuses on testing the four skills individually, test tasks often require the test taker to use other skills to complete a section, as shown in the diagram.

For example, tasks in the Listening and Reading sections can involve note-taking, labelling, classification, and completion of tables or flow charts, but the task or test items are focused on the reading or listening skill being tested.

A task in the Writing or Speaking section includes information that is read or heard. However, this is carefully controlled to ensure that the input does not require extensive or complex reading and listening.

This element of integration in each section reflects the way that language skills are integrated in the real world.



This diagram shows how test tasks are integrated to some degree



“In my 25-plus years as a teacher, I have found that IELTS is a fantastic way for students to effectively prepare themselves to use the skills of English reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Students have consistently told me that IELTS helped them gain confidence in academic life or when immigrating to an English-speaking country. In my opinion, the lessons that they learned during IELTS training will last them a lifetime.”

*David Phillips
Professional Freelance Online English Teacher*

Ways to take IELTS



Choosing how and where to take IELTS

IELTS gives test takers the flexibility to take the test in different locations and formats.

IELTS is offered at over 4,000 test locations worldwide. The test can be taken at an official IELTS test centre or, in some cases, remotely via IELTS Online.

At a test centre

Learners take the Listening, Reading, and Writing sections either on paper or on computer.

The Speaking section is conducted in a face-to-face session or via a video call with a trained IELTS examiner.

IELTS for UKVI tests must be taken in an official IELTS for UKVI test centre.

Meeting test takers' needs

We have a wide range of services to make sure IELTS is fair for everyone. We can provide support for certain medical conditions, hearing and visual impairments, and specific learning difficulties.

If your learners need any access arrangements, such as extra time or a modified version of the test, please make sure they let their test centre know at least six weeks before their test.

i Learn more about access arrangements:
[IELTS.org/AccessArrangements](https://ielts.org/AccessArrangements)

Taking the test remotely

In some countries, the IELTS Academic test can be taken via IELTS Online. Test takers sit the Listening, Reading, and Writing sections at home or in a suitable private location that has a stable internet connection.

The Speaking section of IELTS Online is completed via an online video call with a trained IELTS examiner.

i Learn more about the ways to take IELTS:
[IELTS.org/WaysToTakeIELTS](https://ielts.org/WaysToTakeIELTS)

IELTS test results

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Understanding IELTS scores

Test results for IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training are reported on the same 9-band scale, with 1 representing the lowest score and 9 the highest.

IELTS band score	Skill level	Description
9	Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker has fully operational command of the language.Their use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and shows complete understanding.
8	Very good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage.They may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. They handle complex and detailed argumentation well.
7	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations.They generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.
6	Competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings.They can use and understand reasonably complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
5	Modest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker has a partial command of the language and copes with overall meaning in most situations, although they are likely to make many mistakes.They should be able to handle basic communication in their own field.
4	Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker's basic competence is limited to familiar situations.They frequently show problems in understanding and expression.
3	Extremely limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations.There are frequent breakdowns in communication.
2	Intermittent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
1	Non-user	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker has no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.
0	Did not attempt the test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The test taker did not answer the questions.

The IELTS 9-band scale

Calculating overall band scores

Test takers receive an overall IELTS band score, as well as individual scores for the four test sections: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking.

The IELTS 9-band scale has whole band scores and half band scores. The overall band score is an average of the four individual scores.

Rounding scores up or down

The overall score will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole or half band. If the average of the four sections ends in .25, the overall band score is rounded up to the next half band, and if it ends in .75, the overall band score is rounded up to the next whole band.

For example, a test taker achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.0 for Writing, and 7.0 for Speaking would be awarded an overall band score of 6.5 ($25 \div 4 = 6.25 = \text{band } 6.5$).

Alternatively, a test taker achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.5 for Writing, and 6.0 for Speaking would be awarded an overall band score of 6 ($24.5 \div 4 = 6.125 = \text{band } 6$).

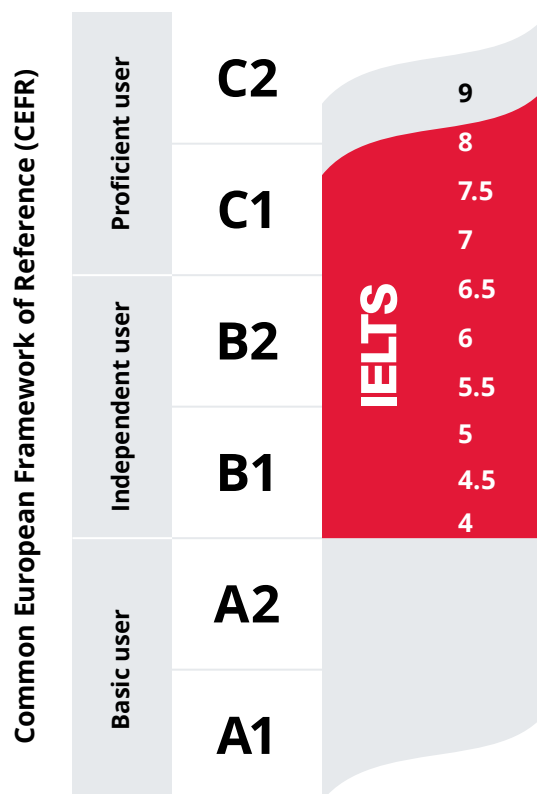
i Find out more about scoring
Get an indication of the number of marks required to achieve a particular band score:
[IELTS.org/Scoring](https://ielts.org/Scoring)

Mapping IELTS to CEFR

The diagram here shows how IELTS 9-band scores compare with the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels. IELTS and the CEFR are designed for different purposes and view language proficiency from different perspectives.

The four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking tested in IELTS and the four areas of reception, production, interaction and mediation described in the CEFR overlap rather than match, as do the nine IELTS bands and the six CEFR levels. However, our research shows this diagram provides useful comparisons.

i Learn more about IELTS and the CEFR:
[IELTS.org/CEFR](https://ielts.org/CEFR)



CEFR levels and IELTS overall band scores

It's easy and quick to receive results

Here's how test takers and organisations receive and share their IELTS test results.

Test takers won't have to wait long to receive their results. The timing depends on which type of test they took:

IELTS on paper	13 days
IELTS on computer	1–5 days
IELTS Online	6–8 days

Proof of their results

Test takers receive an IELTS Test Report Form as official confirmation and proof of their test results. It will either be a paper copy or a digital version (eTRF), and will look like the example shown.

Sharing IELTS test results

An IELTS test centre can send a Test Report Form directly to an organisation or institution by postal mail or as an electronic download, depending on how the organisation has specified that they would like to receive the results. Test takers can also choose to nominate their chosen organisation(s) during the booking process.

Encourage your test takers to check with their chosen organisation(s) prior to booking their test to confirm which tests and scores they accept.

Organisations can use the IELTS Results Service to verify a test taker's identity and score.

i Find out more about receiving and sharing results:
[IELTS.org/Results](https://www.ielts.org/Results)

IELTS
Test Report Form

GENERAL TRAINING

NOTE: Admission to undergraduate and post graduate courses should be based on the ACQUASAT Reading and Writing Modules. Candidates should check the requirements of the institution to which they are applying to ensure the full range of language skills required for academic purposes. It is recommended that the candidate's language ability as indicated on this Test Report Form be re-assessed after two years from the date of the test.

Centre Number: 1011H Date: 27/APR/2022 Candidate Number: 000200

Candidate Details

Family Name: COOPER
First Name(s): SHELDON
Candidate ID: AB12314

Date of Birth: 01/01/1995 Sex (M/F): M Scheme Code: Private Candidate

Country or Region of Origin:
Country of Nationality: ALBANIA
First Language: ARABIC

Test Results

Listening: 8.5 Reading: 8.5 Writing: 8.5 Speaking: 7.5 Overall Band Score: 8.5 CEFR Level: B1

Administrator Comments:
Recognising organisations must verify this score at [ielts.org/verify](https://www.ielts.org/verify)

Validation stamp:

Date: 05/05/2022 Test Report Form Number: 211000001DAVF1HA

BRITISH COUNCIL | idp | CAMBRIDGE English | IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council, IDP IELTS, and Cambridge University Press & Assessment

An IELTS Test Report Form

How long are IELTS results valid for?

IELTS recommends that an IELTS result demonstrates a test taker's English language ability for a maximum of two years.

This is based on the well-documented theory of second language loss or 'attrition'.

We recommend that an IELTS Test Report Form which is more than two years old should only be accepted if it is accompanied by proof that the test taker has actively maintained, or tried to improve, their English.



IELTS One Skill Retake

Retaking sections of the IELTS test

To help test takers feel confident going into their IELTS test, we've developed IELTS One Skill Retake.

If a learner didn't show their full potential in one of the four skills (listening, reading, writing, or speaking), IELTS One Skill Retake can help them get back on track.

This option allows learners to retake any one of the four sections within 60 days of their original test.

i Learn more about IELTS One Skill Retake:
[IELTS.org/OneSkillRetake](https://ielts.org/OneSkillRetake)

“I scored 5.5 in IELTS and didn't get into the school. However, it was a good thing because I don't think I would have succeeded with that score. By practising IELTS, when I applied for my graduate studies, I was already confident that my IELTS score reflected my skills. I can go and study and take advantage of the education that I'm going to get.”



*Gulnaz Kordanova
Graduate student at Harvard University and Founder of Connect-Ed*

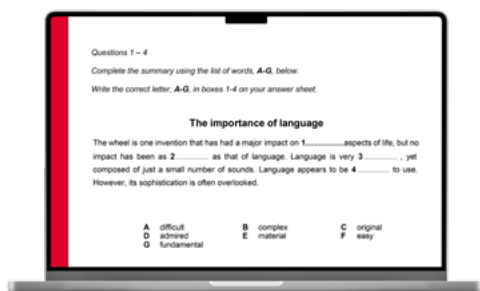


Resources to support you and your learners

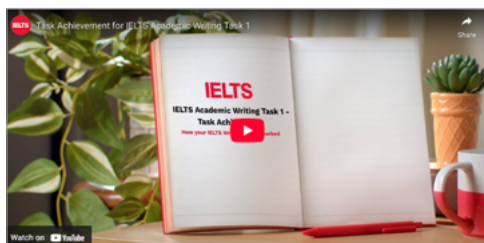
We offer a range of official resources to help you prepare your learners for their IELTS test.

Sample materials for learners

Learners can find sample questions and answers for the four different sections of the IELTS test on our website.



We have also produced a series of videos for test takers with tips on key areas to cover in their Writing test and how they will be assessed.



i Access IELTS resources for test takers:
[IELTS.org/SampleMaterials](https://www.ielts.org/SampleMaterials)

Resources for you

The IELTS Partners (the British Council, IDP IELTS, and Cambridge University Press & Assessment) provide a range of resources to help you prepare learners for success.

From courses and videos to sample materials and lesson plans, the IELTS Partners have everything you need to succeed.



i Discover IELTS resources:
[IELTS.org/TeacherResources](https://www.ielts.org/TeacherResources)

Understanding marking criteria for Writing and Speaking

Our key criteria and band descriptors for Writing and Speaking will help you prepare your learners for what they need to do to achieve their goals.

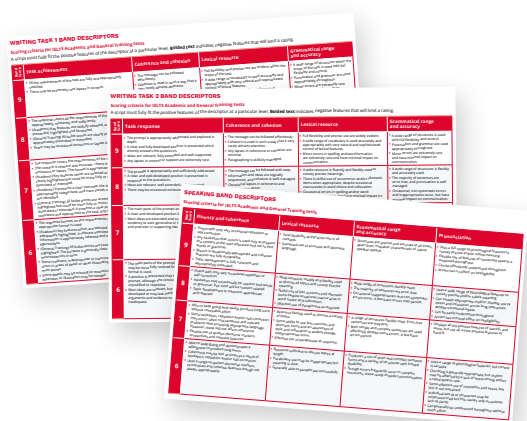
For the Writing and Speaking sections, our IELTS examiners award a score for each of four different criteria.

When they are marking these sections, they use detailed band descriptors.

What Writing and Speaking band descriptors tell you

The band descriptors will give you a better understanding of the level of performance your learners need in order to reach a particular band score for that section.

You can find these descriptors on the next few pages.



Key criteria for Writing

The Writing tasks are assessed according to these four criteria:

- Task Achievement (for Task 1) or Task Response (for Task 2)
- Coherence and Cohesion
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Key criteria for Speaking

Speaking is assessed according to these four criteria:

- Fluency and Coherence
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy
- Pronunciation

i Learn more about IELTS scoring and download the key criterias:
[IELTS.org/TestCriteria](https://www.ielts.org/TestCriteria)



WRITING TASK 1 BAND DESCRIPTORS

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Scoring criteria for IELTS Academic and General Training tests

A script must fully fit the positive features of the descriptor at a particular level. **Bolded text** indicates negative features that will limit a rating.

Band Score	Task achievement	Coherence and cohesion	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the requirements of the task are fully and appropriately satisfied. There may be extremely rare lapses in content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The message can be followed effortlessly. Cohesion is used in such a way that it very rarely attracts attention. Any lapses in coherence or cohesion are minimal. Paragraphing is skilfully managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full flexibility and precise use are evident within the scope of the task. A wide range of vocabulary is used accurately and appropriately with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features. Minor errors in spelling and word formation are extremely rare and have minimal impact on communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide range of structures within the scope of the task is used with full flexibility and control. Punctuation and grammar are used appropriately throughout. Minor errors are extremely rare and have minimal impact on communication.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response covers all the requirements of the task appropriately, relevantly and sufficiently. (Academic) Key features are skilfully selected, and clearly presented, highlighted and illustrated. (General Training) All bullet points are clearly presented, and appropriately illustrated or extended. There may be occasional omissions or lapses in content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The message can be followed with ease. Information and ideas are logically sequenced, and cohesion is well managed. Occasional lapses in coherence or cohesion may occur. Paragraphing is used sufficiently and appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide resource is fluently and flexibly used to convey precise meanings within the scope of the task. There is skilful use of uncommon and/or idiomatic items when appropriate, despite occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation. Occasional errors in spelling and/or word formation may occur, but have minimal impact on communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide range of structures within the scope of the task is flexibly and accurately used. The majority of sentences are error-free, and punctuation is well managed. Occasional, non-systematic errors and inappropriacies occur, but have minimal impact on communication.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response covers the requirements of the task. The content is relevant and accurate – there may be a few omissions or lapses. The format is appropriate. (Academic) Key features which are selected are covered and clearly highlighted but could be more fully or more appropriately illustrated or extended. (Academic) It presents a clear overview, the data are appropriately categorised, and main trends or differences are identified. (General Training) All bullet points are covered and clearly highlighted but could be more fully or more appropriately illustrated or extended. It presents a clear purpose. The tone is consistent and appropriate to the task. Any lapses are minimal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are logically organised and there is a clear progression throughout the response. A few lapses may occur. A range of cohesive devices including reference and substitution is used flexibly but with some inaccuracies or some over/under use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is sufficient to allow some flexibility and precision. There is some ability to use less common and/or idiomatic items. An awareness of style and collocation is evident, though inappropriacies occur. There are only a few errors in spelling and/or word formation, and they do not detract from overall clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of complex structures is used with some flexibility and accuracy. Grammar and punctuation are generally well controlled, and error-free sentences are frequent. A few errors in grammar may persist, but these do not impede communication.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response focuses on the requirements of the task and an appropriate format is used. (Academic) Key features which are selected are covered and adequately highlighted. A relevant overview is attempted. Information is appropriately selected and supported using figures/data. (General Training) All bullet points are covered and adequately highlighted. The purpose is generally clear. There may be minor inconsistencies in tone. Some irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate information may occur in areas of detail or when illustrating or extending the main points. Some details may be missing (or excessive) and further extension or illustration may be needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are generally arranged coherently and there is a clear overall progression. Cohesive devices are used to some good effect but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical due to misuse, overuse or omission. The use of reference and substitution may lack flexibility or clarity and result in some repetition or error. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is generally adequate and appropriate for the task. The meaning is generally clear in spite of a rather restricted range or a lack of precision in word choice. If the writer is a risk-taker, there will be a wider range of vocabulary used but higher degrees of inaccuracy or inappropriacy. There are some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but these do not impede communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mix of simple and complex sentence forms is used but flexibility is limited. Examples of more complex structures are not marked by the same level of accuracy as in simple structures. Errors in grammar and punctuation occur, but rarely impede communication.

WRITING TASK 1 BAND DESCRIPTORS

Band Score	Task achievement	Coherence and cohesion	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response generally addresses the requirements of the task. The format may be inappropriate in places. (Academic) Key features which are selected are not adequately covered. The recounting of detail is mainly mechanical. There may be no data to support the description. (General Training) All bullet points are presented but one or more may not be adequately covered. The purpose may be unclear at times. The tone may be variable and sometimes inappropriate. There may be a tendency to focus on details (without referring to the bigger picture). The inclusion of irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate material in key areas detracts from the task achievement. There is limited detail when extending and illustrating the main points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation is evident but is not wholly logical and there may be a lack of overall progression. Nevertheless, there is a sense of underlying coherence to the response. The relationship of ideas can be followed but the sentences are not fluently linked to each other. There may be limited/overuse of cohesive devices with some inaccuracy. The writing may be repetitive due to inadequate and/or inaccurate use of reference and substitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is limited but minimally adequate for the task. Simple vocabulary may be used accurately but the range does not permit much variation in expression. There may be frequent lapses in the appropriacy of word choice, and a lack of flexibility is apparent in frequent simplifications and/or repetitions. Errors in spelling and/or word formation may be noticeable and may cause some difficulty for the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of structures is limited and rather repetitive. Although complex sentences are attempted, they tend to be faulty, and the greatest accuracy is achieved on simple sentences. Grammatical errors may be frequent and cause some difficulty for the reader. Punctuation may be faulty.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response is an attempt to address the task. (Academic) Few key features have been selected. (General Training) Not all bullet points are presented. (General Training) The purpose of the letter is not clearly explained and may be confused. The tone may be inappropriate. The format may be inappropriate. Key features/bullet points which are presented may be irrelevant, repetitive, inaccurate or inappropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are evident but not arranged coherently, and there is no clear progression within the response. Relationships between ideas can be unclear and/or inadequately marked. There is some use of basic cohesive devices, which may be inaccurate or repetitive. There is inaccurate use or a lack of substitution or referencing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is limited and inadequate for or unrelated to the task. Vocabulary is basic and may be used repetitively. There may be inappropriate use of lexical chunks (e.g. memorised phrases, formulaic language and/or language from the input material). Inappropriate word choice and/or errors in word formation and/or in spelling may impede meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A very limited range of structures is used. Subordinate clauses are rare and simple sentences predominate. Some structures are produced accurately but grammatical errors are frequent and may impede meaning. Punctuation is often faulty or inadequate.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response does not address the requirements of the task (possibly because of misunderstanding of the data/diagram/situation). Key features/bullet points which are presented may be largely irrelevant. Limited information is presented, and this may be used repetitively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no apparent logical organisation. Ideas are discernible but difficult to relate to each other. Minimal use of sequencers or cohesive devices. Those used do not necessarily indicate a logical relationship between ideas. There is difficulty in identifying referencing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is inadequate (which may be due to the response being significantly underlength). Possible over-dependence on input material or memorised language. Control of word choice and/or spelling is very limited, and errors predominate. These errors may severely impede meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence forms are attempted, but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate (except in memorised phrases or those taken from the input material). This prevents most meaning from coming through. Length may be insufficient to provide evidence of control of sentence forms.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The content barely relates to the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is little relevant message, or the entire response may be off topic. There is little evidence of control of organisational features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is extremely limited with few recognisable strings, apart from memorised phrases. There is no apparent control of word formation and/or spelling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is little or no evidence of sentence forms (except in memorised phrases).
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. The content is wholly unrelated to the task. Any copied rubric must be discounted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. The writing fails to communicate any message and appears to be by a virtual non-writer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. No resource is apparent, except for a few isolated words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. No rateable language is evident.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should only be used where a candidate did not attend or attempt the question in any way, used a language other than English throughout, or where there is proof that a candidate's answer has been totally memorised. 			

WRITING TASK 2 BAND DESCRIPTORS

Scoring criteria for IELTS Academic and General Training tests

A script must fully fit the positive features of the descriptor at a particular level. **Bolded text** indicates negative features that will limit a rating.

Band Score	Task response	Coherence and cohesion	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prompt is appropriately addressed and explored in depth. A clear and fully developed position is presented which directly answers the question/s. Ideas are relevant, fully extended and well supported. Any lapses in content or support are extremely rare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The message can be followed effortlessly. Cohesion is used in such a way that it very rarely attracts attention. Any lapses in coherence or cohesion are minimal. Paragraphing is skilfully managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full flexibility and precise use are widely evident. A wide range of vocabulary is used accurately and appropriately with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features. Minor errors in spelling and word formation are extremely rare and have minimal impact on communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide range of structures is used with full flexibility and control. Punctuation and grammar are used appropriately throughout. Minor errors are extremely rare and have minimal impact on communication.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prompt is appropriately and sufficiently addressed. A clear and well-developed position is presented in response to the question/s. Ideas are relevant, well extended and supported. There may be occasional omissions or lapses in content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The message can be followed with ease. Information and ideas are logically sequenced, and cohesion is well managed. Occasional lapses in coherence and cohesion may occur. Paragraphing is used sufficiently and appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide resource is fluently and flexibly used to convey precise meanings. There is skilful use of uncommon and/or idiomatic items when appropriate, despite occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation. Occasional errors in spelling and/or word formation may occur, but have minimal impact on communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide range of structures is flexibly and accurately used. The majority of sentences are error-free, and punctuation is well managed. Occasional, non-systematic errors and inappropriacies occur, but have minimal impact on communication.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main parts of the prompt are appropriately addressed. A clear and developed position is presented. Main ideas are extended and supported but there may be a tendency to over-generalise or there may be a lack of focus and precision in supporting ideas/material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are logically organised, and there is a clear progression throughout the response. (A few lapses may occur, but these are minor.) A range of cohesive devices including reference and substitution is used flexibly but with some inaccuracies or some over/under use. Paragraphing is generally used effectively to support overall coherence, and the sequencing of ideas within a paragraph is generally logical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is sufficient to allow some flexibility and precision. There is some ability to use less common and/or idiomatic items. An awareness of style and collocation is evident, though inappropriacies occur. There are only a few errors in spelling and/or word formation and they do not detract from overall clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of complex structures is used with some flexibility and accuracy. Grammar and punctuation are generally well controlled, and error-free sentences are frequent. A few errors in grammar may persist, but these do not impede communication.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main parts of the prompt are addressed (though some may be more fully covered than others). An appropriate format is used. A position is presented that is directly relevant to the prompt, although the conclusions drawn may be unclear, unjustified or repetitive. Main ideas are relevant, but some may be insufficiently developed or may lack clarity, while some supporting arguments and evidence may be less relevant or inadequate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are generally arranged coherently and there is a clear overall progression. Cohesive devices are used to some good effect but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical due to misuse, overuse or omission. The use of reference and substitution may lack flexibility or clarity and result in some repetition or error. Paragraphing may not always be logical and/or the central topic may not always be clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is generally adequate and appropriate for the task. The meaning is generally clear in spite of a rather restricted range or a lack of precision in word choice. If the writer is a risk-taker, there will be a wider range of vocabulary used but higher degrees of inaccuracy or inappropriacy. There are some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but these do not impede communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mix of simple and complex sentence forms is used but flexibility is limited. Examples of more complex structures are not marked by the same level of accuracy as in simple structures. Errors in grammar and punctuation occur, but rarely impede communication.

WRITING TASK 2 BAND DESCRIPTORS

Band Score	Task response	Coherence and cohesion	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main parts of the prompt are incompletely addressed. The format may be inappropriate in places. The writer expresses a position, but the development is not always clear. Some main ideas are put forward, but they are limited and are not sufficiently developed and/or there may be irrelevant detail. There may be some repetition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation is evident but is not wholly logical and there may be a lack of overall progression. Nevertheless, there is a sense of underlying coherence to the response. The relationship of ideas can be followed but the sentences are not fluently linked to each other. There may be limited/overuse of cohesive devices with some inaccuracy. The writing may be repetitive due to inadequate and/or inaccurate use of reference and substitution. Paragraphing may be inadequate or missing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is limited but minimally adequate for the task. Simple vocabulary may be used accurately but the range does not permit much variation in expression. There may be frequent lapses in the appropriacy of word choice and a lack of flexibility is apparent in frequent simplifications and/or repetitions. Errors in spelling and/or word formation may be noticeable and may cause some difficulty for the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of structures is limited and rather repetitive. Although complex sentences are attempted, they tend to be faulty, and the greatest accuracy is achieved on simple sentences. Grammatical errors may be frequent and cause some difficulty for the reader. Punctuation may be faulty.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prompt is tackled in a minimal way, or the answer is tangential, possibly due to some misunderstanding of the prompt. The format may be inappropriate. A position is discernible, but the reader has to read carefully to find it. Main ideas are difficult to identify and such ideas that are identifiable may lack relevance, clarity and/or support. Large parts of the response may be repetitive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and ideas are evident but not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression within the response. Relationships between ideas can be unclear and/or inadequately marked. There is some use of basic cohesive devices, which may be inaccurate or repetitive. There is inaccurate use or a lack of substitution or referencing. There may be no paragraphing and/or no clear main topic within paragraphs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is limited and inadequate for or unrelated to the task. Vocabulary is basic and may be used repetitively. There may be inappropriate use of lexical chunks (e.g. memorised phrases, formulaic language and/or language from the input material). Inappropriate word choice and/or errors in word formation and/or in spelling may impede meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A very limited range of structures is used. Subordinate clauses are rare and simple sentences predominate. Some structures are produced accurately but grammatical errors are frequent and may impede meaning. Punctuation is often faulty or inadequate.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No part of the prompt is adequately addressed, or the prompt has been misunderstood. No relevant position can be identified, and/or there is little direct response to the question/s. There are few ideas, and these may be irrelevant or insufficiently developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no apparent logical organisation. Ideas are discernible but difficult to relate to each other. There is minimal use of sequencers or cohesive devices. Those used do not necessarily indicate a logical relationship between ideas. There is difficulty in identifying referencing. Any attempts at paragraphing are unhelpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is inadequate (which may be due to the response being significantly underlength). Possible over-dependence on input material or memorised language. Control of word choice and/or spelling is very limited, and errors predominate. These errors may severely impede meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence forms are attempted, but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate (except in memorised phrases or those taken from the input material). This prevents most meaning from coming through. Length may be insufficient to provide evidence of control of sentence forms.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The content is barely related to the prompt. No position can be identified. There may be glimpses of one or two ideas without development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is little relevant message, or the entire response may be off topic. There is little evidence of control of organisational features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource is extremely limited with few recognisable strings, apart from memorised phrases. There is no apparent control of word formation and/or spelling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is little or no evidence of sentence forms (except in memorised phrases).
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. The content is wholly unrelated to the prompt. Any copied rubric must be discounted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. The writing fails to communicate any message and appears to be by a virtual non-writer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. No resource is apparent, except for a few isolated words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses of 20 words or fewer are rated at Band 1. No rateable language is evident.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should only be used where a candidate did not attend or attempt the question in any way, used a language other than English throughout, or where there is proof that a candidate's answer has been totally memorised. 			

SPEAKING BAND DESCRIPTORS

20 Scoring criteria for IELTS Academic and General Training tests

Band Score	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total flexibility and precise use in all contexts. Sustained use of accurate and idiomatic language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures are precise and accurate at all times, apart from 'mistakes' characteristic of native speaker speech. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays all the positive features of band 6, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 8.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource sufficient to discuss topics at length. Vocabulary use may be inappropriate but meaning is clear. Generally able to paraphrase successfully. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

SPEAKING BAND DESCRIPTORS

Band Score	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource sufficient to discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics but there is limited flexibility. Attempts paraphrase but not always with success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays all the positive features of band 4, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 6.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource limited to simple vocabulary used primarily to convey personal information. Vocabulary inadequate for unfamiliar topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic sentence forms are attempted but grammatical errors are numerous except in apparently memorised utterances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays some features of band 2, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 4.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lengthy pauses before nearly every word. Isolated words may be recognisable but speech is of virtually no communicative significance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited resource. Utterances consist of isolated words or memorised utterances. Little communication possible without the support of mime or gesture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of basic sentence forms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essentially none. Speech is totally incoherent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No resource bar a few isolated words. No communication possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No rateable language unless memorised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can produce occasional individual words and phonemes that are recognisable, but no overall meaning is conveyed. Unintelligible.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not attend 			

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.

Teacher tips

5

6 classroom tips for you and your learners

Ideas to help your learners prepare for their IELTS test.



1. Use targeted study materials

Make sure learners have access to study materials that are suitable for their current level of understanding.



2. Learn from mistakes

Use IELTS sample questions and analyse learners' answers to identify weaknesses. This will help test takers learn from them and improve.



3. Develop good study habits

Using practice tests in class gives you the chance to demonstrate techniques to help learners with self-study habits.



4. Become familiar with test formats

It's important that your learners understand the format and types of tasks for the different test sections so that they know how best to approach the questions and tasks. These might be adaptable to wider curricular or communicative learning goals.



5. Concentrate on learning

Familiarise learners with the IELTS band descriptors but also encourage them to approach test practice as being more about learning and improvement than scores.



6. Set timed tests

Make sure learners are aware of the time allowed for each test section. When you think your learners are ready, include timed practice in class.

IELTS preparation section by section

Try these tips to help your learners get ready for the different sections of their IELTS test.



Listening and Reading



Learners should be exposed to a variety of materials and not just IELTS textbooks. This allows them to choose content that aligns with their interests, making learning more engaging and meaningful.



Listening

Tell learners to read each question and think about the context before they listen to help them identify the type of information they will need to listen for.



Reading

Use reading as an opportunity for your learners to expand their vocabulary and grammar. Practise reading skills such as skimming and scanning – they will need to use these skills to answer all the questions in an hour.



Writing

Remind learners to think about the reader and the purpose of their writing. Get them to practise structuring their writing logically and clearly.



Speaking

Encourage learners to develop interactional practices which allow them to frame their thoughts before answering (e.g. 'That's an interesting question', 'Well ...'). Make sure they have plenty of opportunity to practise pronunciation as this will make up 25 percent of a test taker's score for this section.



Find your learner's nearest test centre and book a test:

[IELTS.org/BookNow](https://www.ielts.org/BookNow)

Your IELTS pre-test checklist

As the date of the test approaches, use this checklist to remind learners what to do on the day of the test.

IELTS test checklist

- ✓ Read the instructions carefully and follow them.
- ✓ If you are completing the test on paper, transfer your answers to the answer sheet within the time allowed.
- ✓ For Reading, focus on understanding the context and gist of the text rather than trying to understand every single word.
- ✓ For a Writing task, analyse the question carefully and plan the answer before starting to write.
- ✓ In the Speaking section, listen carefully to the questions. Relax and try to enjoy the conversation with the examiner. Remember it is your language level that is being evaluated and not your opinions.

i Get some more tips for the day of the test:
[IELTS.org/TestDay](https://www.ielts.org/TestDay)



6

Career opportunities

Teaching IELTS can facilitate professional development opportunities

Here's how you can become an IELTS examiner or apply for an award or scholarship.

Become an IELTS examiner

Becoming an IELTS examiner is a practical and flexible way to supplement income from teaching. The training and support provided to IELTS examiners can also have a positive impact on classroom practice.

IELTS examiners are qualified to examine for IELTS all over the world.

IELTS examiner requirements

Applicants must have:

- an undergraduate degree or equivalent
- a TEFL/TESOL qualification
- 3–5 years of teaching experience.

i Read more about becoming an IELTS examiner:
[IELTS.org/BecomeAnExaminer](https://ielts.org/BecomeAnExaminer)

Awards and scholarships

The IELTS Partners offer several awards and scholarships to support individuals and organisations doing valuable work in the field of English language learning and assessment. These include:

- the **IELTS Morgan Terry Memorial IATEFL Scholarship**, which recognises those who develop educational activities or learning resources that could help prospective IELTS test takers prepare for their tests
- the **English Australia IELTS Award for Academic Leadership**, which recognises outstanding academic leadership in delivering English-language courses (ELICOS)
- the **Caroline Clapham IELTS Masters Award**, which is a £1000 prize awarded annually to the Master's-level dissertation or thesis in English that makes the most significant contribution to the field of language testing.

i Find out more about IELTS awards and scholarships:
[IELTS.org/AwardsAndScholarships](https://ielts.org/AwardsAndScholarships)

Research

IELTS is committed to remaining at the forefront of developments in English language testing

The IELTS test is constantly being informed by research into advances in assessment and language learning. This includes internal and external research activities.

Our own research

Our internal research activities are managed by our cross-partner IELTS Research Group, which brings together specialists in testing and assessment, statistical analysis and item-banking, applied linguistics, corpus linguistics and language learning/pedagogy.

The group also provides rigorous quality assurance for IELTS tests at every stage of development.

Funding and awards

IELTS also funds academic study that helps to continually improve our tests. These studies are carried out by researchers from across the globe. The funding focuses on three key areas of English language learning and assessment:

- technology and innovation
- fairness, impact, and validation
- test preparation and contexts of use.



Read more about the latest available research on English language testing:

[IELTS.org/Research](https://ielts.org/Research)

Frequently asked questions

Want to know more? Here we answer some questions you might have.

Who are the IELTS Partners?

IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council, IDP IELTS, and Cambridge University Press & Assessment. Our combined global presence and commitment to research makes us ideal providers of international English testing.

How has IELTS been developed?

IELTS has been developed in close consultation with academics, professional bodies, and immigration authorities around the world.

Is the content of the IELTS test international?

Yes. IELTS is recognised by academics and admissions professionals as being fair, reliable, and valid to all test takers, whatever their nationality and cultural background.

IELTS recognises both British and American English in terms of spelling, grammar, and choice of words.

The Listening section uses a mix of accents from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA.

Why do organisations set different band score requirements?

The level of English needed for a test taker to perform effectively in study, work, or training varies from one situation to another.

Each individual organisation therefore sets its own minimum IELTS test scores for applicants. Admissions professionals may take into account whether their organisation provides ongoing language support for students or employees to improve their English.

Can different types of tests be compared?

Making comparisons between scores on different tests is challenging because tests may differ in their design, purpose, and format.

It is important to understand the differences in test purpose, test format, test populations, and measurement scales.

i Find out more about comparing tests in our IELTS Research Report

Benchmarking English standards across professions and professional university degrees

[IELTS.org/BenchmarkingResearch](https://ielts.org/BenchmarkingResearch)



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Our global partnership

British Council

1 Redman Place
Stratford
London, E20 1JQ
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)161 884 0291
ielts@britishcouncil.org

IDP Education Ltd

Two Melbourne Quarter
Level 10, 697 Collins Street
Docklands, Victoria
Australia 3008
Tel: +61 3 9612 4400
ielts@idp.com

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge, CB2 8EA
United Kingdom
[cambridgeenglish.org/
helpdesk](https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/helpdesk)

IELTS USA

570 Broad Street
Suite 1003
Newark, NJ 07102
USA
Tel: +1 323 255 2771
ielts@ieltsusa.org

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