



International English Language Testing System

Understanding the Speaking Test

- this test is as interactive and as close to a real life situation as a test can get
- a certified examiner in the IELTS Speaking test will interview the candidate
- the test will be recorded
- the content of the IELTS Speaking test is the same for both the IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training tests
- duration: the IELTS Speaking test takes approximately 11-14 minutes
(depending on the examiner - he/she may extend the duration)
- the examiner will guide the candidate throughout the test
(he/she will inform the candidate if Part 1 is done and proceed to Part 2 and so forth)
- the candidates are evaluated on their entire performance

Purpose of the Test

The examiner will want to see how well a candidate can:

- communicate opinions and information on everyday topics and common experiences
- speak at length on a given topic using appropriate language
- organize ideas coherently
- express and justify opinions
- analyze, discuss and speculate about issues
- relax and talk fluently
- speak naturally

3 Sections

- **Part 1** **Introduction and Interview** **Duration: 4-5 minutes**
 - ✓ The examiner will introduce him/herself
 - ✓ The examiner will ask the candidate to introduce him/herself
 - ✓ The examiner will ask general questions on familiar topics (*home, family, work and interests*)
 - ✓ The candidate should relax and talk naturally

- **Part 2** **Long Turn** **Duration: 3-4 minutes**
 - ✓ The examiner will give the candidate a task card
 - ✓ The candidate has 1 minute to prepare and make notes
 - ✓ The candidate must talk for 1-2 minutes on the given topic
(*he/she will not be interrupted, so he/she must keep talking*)
 - ✓ After the candidate is done talking, the examiner will ask the candidate 1 or 2 questions on the same topic

- **Part 3** **Two-Way Discussion** **Duration: 4-5 minutes:**
 - ✓ The examiner will ask more questions connected to the topic of PART 2
 - ✓ The questions are for the candidate to discuss more abstract issues and ideas

Band Score

Each of the four criteria counts equally. Around the beginning of Part 1, the examiner will write down a band score for each of the four criteria (*it means that the examiner already has an idea of what your band score more or less is*).

Then those numbers will be marked up or down during the test.

All the criteria count EQUALLY and are judged throughout all 3 parts of the speaking test.

The examiner then uses well defined criteria to assess your ability in the following areas:

Fluency and Coherence

Lexical Resource (*Vocabulary*)

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Pronunciation

At the end of the test, the interviewer calculates the average of the four scores and that number will represent your final speaking band score.

example:

Grammatical Range and Accuracy	7	
Lexical Resource (<i>Vocabulary</i>)	7	
Pronunciation	6	
Fluency and Coherence	4	= 24, which divided by 4
		equals 6
		Band Score 6

Improving Band Score

Fluency and Coherence

Mark Up for...	Mark Down for...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + speaking naturally <i>(try copying the speed of your examiner)</i> but ONLY if the pronunciation is good + expanding answers with relevant information/details and using correct tenses and connectors + answering the questions directly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long, awkward pauses (hesitating) - not answering the question completely/correctly

Band Score Descriptors

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually maintains the flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence

Lexical Resource (Vocabulary)

Mark Up for...	Mark Down for...
+ using a wide range of vocabulary	- using unfamiliar vocabulary words or using words incorrectly
+ using appropriate words	- always using common and simple vocabulary
+ correct usage of collocations and phrasal verbs	

Band Score Descriptors

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey a precise meaning skillfully uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary, with occasional inaccuracies uses paraphrase effectively, as required
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> flexibly uses vocabulary resources to discuss a variety of topics uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices uses paraphrase effectively
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and convey an opinion clearly generally paraphrases successfully
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice rarely attempts paraphrase

Grammar

Mark Up for...	Mark Down for...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + knowing how to use the basic verb tenses well + making complex sentences, using <u>conjunctions</u> and <u>connectors</u> + making complex structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inconsistent tenses - always using simple sentences - constructing compound and complex sentences incorrectly

Band Score Descriptors

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inaccuracies or basic/non-systematic errors
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures though these rarely cause comprehension problems
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding

Pronunciation

Mark Up for...	Mark Down for...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + easy to understand pronunciation + speaking CLEARLY so that every word can be understood + proper intonation to emphasize a certain meaning or idea + basic word pronunciation + linked sounds and connected speech <i>(not pronounced sound for sound)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - repeatedly mispronounced words - very fast or very long answers <i>(poor pronunciation or no coherence)</i>

NO NEED FOR "American" OR "British" ACCENT

Band Score Descriptors

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener

Examples of Band Scores

Speaking Band 5.0

The student tries to keep the speech flowing but their hesitation gets in the way. The responses are rather short, he/she tries to use linking words but they seem forced. Only simple sentences are fluent, in the more complex ones the coherence is much worse. There are repetitions of the same words and the same sentence structures. The student's pronunciation is not very good, which includes incorrect stress on words.

Speaking Band 5.5

The student gives short answers, and is not willing to talk at length. The responses serve as answers to exactly what he's/she's being asked. He/She hesitates a little and sometimes uses linking words incorrectly. His/Her vocabulary is simple but sufficient for him/her to talk on the subject and make himself/herself clear. The grammar of simple sentences is mostly accurate, but there are several errors in more complex sentences, many of which are left incomplete. There are many mispronounced words.

Speaking Band 6

The student is willing to talk at length, not always directly answering the question. The speech is mostly fluent with some hesitation and repetition. Usage of linking words (such as 'however', 'on the one hand', 'then again', etc.) is there, but they are not always used appropriately or accurately. The vocabulary is large enough for the student to speak on the given topic and he/she is easy to understand, even if there are some grammatical errors. The student uses both simple and complex sentence structures; but it is obvious that the grammar in the complex ones is harder for him/her to control. The pronunciation is mostly correct with occasional errors.

Speaking Band 6.5

The student can talk at length without much hesitation or repetition. His/her sentences are easy to follow, the information is provided in a clear sequence and he/she uses linking words to move smoothly from one idea to another. His/her vocabulary includes not only simple but also sophisticated words on the subject; even if sometimes the choice of a word is inappropriate, the meaning is perfectly clear. A strong accent gets in the way of a flawless pronunciation.

Speaking Band 7

The student speaks smoothly without much effort. The linking words are used naturally and in the right places. He/she doesn't cover the whole subject in his/her answers. His/her vocabulary is appropriate but not sophisticated and doesn't show variations; the language is fluent but relatively simple. He/She uses some idioms and sometimes does that inappropriately. The control of grammar is good, the mistakes are rare. His/Her pronunciation is good and the accent is hardly noticeable.

Criteria

Fluency and Coherence

Was your speech delivered clearly?

FLUENCY

- Did you speak too fast or too slow?
- Did you tell the teacher everything he/she needed to know?
- Did you have too many awkward pauses?
- Did you use a lot of fillers such as, "uhm...", "ah..."?

COHERENCE

- Did you explain or elaborate with ease?
- Did you really answer the question? Did you answer the question completely?
- Were all your added details relevant to the answer?
- Did your details support the answer?
- Did you construct correct sentences?
- Did you use the verb tenses consistently and appropriately?
- Did you use connectors (**and**, **but**, **or**, **nor**, **so**, **for**, **yet**) correctly?

Fluency and Coherence

Mark Up for...	Mark Down for...
<p>+ speaking naturally <i>(try copying the speed of your examiner)</i> but ONLY if the pronunciation is good</p>	<p>- long, awkward pauses</p>
<p>+ expanding answers with relevant information/details and using correct tenses and connectors</p>	<p>- not answering the question completely/correctly</p>
<p>+ answering the questions directly</p>	

Pronunciation

Was your pronunciation easy to understand?

- Did you say words that were obviously mispronounced?
- Were you pronouncing every sound in the words or phrases?
- Did you stress the appropriate words in the sentences to create emphasis?
- Did you have the right intonation?

Pronunciation

Mark Up for...	Mark Down for...
<p>+ easy to understand pronunciation</p>	<p>- repeatedly mispronounced words</p>
<p>+ speaking CLEARLY so that every word can be understood</p>	<p>- very fast or very long answers <i>(poor pronunciation or no coherence)</i></p>
<p>+ proper intonation to emphasize a certain meaning or idea</p>	
<p>+ basic word pronunciation</p>	
<p>+ linked sounds and connected speech <i>(not pronounced sound for sound)</i></p>	

NO NEED FOR "American" OR "British" ACCENT

Lexical Resource (*Vocabulary*)

Did you use enough words to express yourself clearly?

- Is your vocabulary rich enough to talk about different kinds of topics?
- Did you use all the words and expressions correctly and appropriately?
- Did you use long or sophisticated words that you weren't sure how to use?
- Were you able to convey the meaning you wanted when you could not find the right words?
- Were you able to paraphrase?

Lexical Resource (*Vocabulary*)

Mark Up for...	Mark Down for...
+ using a wide range of vocabulary	- using unfamiliar vocabulary words or using words incorrectly
+ using appropriate words	- always using common and simple vocabulary
+ correct usage of collocations and phrasal verbs	

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Did you use the tenses correctly and consistently?

- Were you able to make complex and compound sentences, and not just simple sentences?
- Did you use the same tense every time?
- Did your subjects and verbs agree?

Grammar

Mark Up for...

- + knowing how to use the basic verb tenses well

- + making complex sentences, using conjunctions and connectors

- + making complex structures

Mark Down for...

- inconsistent tenses

- always using simple sentences

- constructing complex sentences incorrectly

Speaking Tips

PART 1

- Try to not 'fill up' your answer by repeating the question back. Use synonyms or expressions related to the question to show off your skills.

for Example:

QUESTION: "What's the most interesting thing about your city?"

Don't say: "The most interesting thing about my city is..."

Just say: "It's..."

Then, elaborate and expand your answers, by adding something like:

"Most people find this interesting because..."

You should use synonyms of the words from the question.

Instead of **interesting** say something like:

"Most people find our city enchanting/fascinating/great..."

- Speak clearly. The examiner will not remind you to speak up. Don't speak softly or mumble the words.
- Practice with your teacher creating sentences that express different ideas. Remember to supply examples and sufficient details.
- Simply saying "I don't know" or "That's all", will result in you getting a very low band score.

PART 2

- During that 1 minute when you're making notes for the question, write down NOTES not sentences. Remember you need to write down as many ideas as you can.
- Keywords and phrases should help you save time during your 1-minute preparation.
- Your notes should outline the content of your talk. They should serve as guidelines.
- Try talking for two minutes. Your speech should not be too short.
- It's fine if you go over the two minutes' period. The examiner will stop you. Don't worry, you will not be penalized.
- After your 2-minute talk, the examiner will ask you a question or two about your speech.
- Remember to structure your speech based on the order of the given questions.
- Remember to formulate an introduction for the topic you will talk about. Then, elaborate the topic and explain it in detail. End the speech with a conclusion (present the reason why the topic is important or restate the main point or idea).
- Try to make a good introduction.

for example:

Talk about your favorite book.

Normal Answer:

"My favorite book is..."

"I am going to talk about my favorite book..."

Even Better:

"I truly love the book..."

"The book I'll never get tired of reading is (title of book)"

- When the examiner tells you to begin talking, start talking right away. Every second counts. Hesitating is a waste time. It will also be marked down.

PART 3

- This is the part where you and the examiner will discuss abstract ideas. Do not talk too much about your personal experiences. You must be able to add supporting facts.
- In this part, examiners will check your ability to speculate, predict and express your opinions on both sides of the question.
- Make sure that your elaborated answers are appropriately supported by details and examples.
- If you are still thinking about how to answer the question, try to rephrase and reformulate in order to comment on the question.

for example:

"During my free time? Let me see..."

"That's not something I've thought about before. It's an interesting question."

- If you are aware that you made a mistake, correct yourself right away!
This shows that you are aware and have control over the language. However, if you are not sure how to do it correctly, move on.
- If you do not understand the question, ask the examiner. You will not be marked down for it. But do this sparingly. (ONLY for PART 3)
- Try to use other expressions than "I think..." when expressing opinions.
- Watch your grammar. Listen carefully to the question. If the verb in the question is in future tense, then answer in future tense.
- Do NOT use slang or "clever words" to impress the examiner. You might end up using them wrongly or even worse, they may affect your fluency. Besides, this is an exam, so you should use formal language.
- If you are having difficulties explaining things or if you tend to give short answers, giving examples is a great way of explaining and elaborating ideas.
- Try to use higher level descriptive words.

for example:

happy	⇒	thrilled
sad	⇒	depressed
excited	⇒	eager
mad	⇒	furious

- Speak up. It's okay to be nervous, but don't let it affect your speech.
- Don't forget to explain names or words from your native language. For instance, if you are asked to speak about a festival, which involves using words in your language, say the words clearly and explain them afterwards, so the examiner will understand your explanation.
- Stay on topic. If you don't, the examiner will have the impression that you either did not understand the question or do not have anything better to say.

Building Words and Expressions

Beginnings:

(if you need time to think)

- That's an interesting question...
- Let me see...
- I haven't thought about that question before...
- Where should I start... well, I guess/think/suppose...
- There are a variety of different things I could say...
- Oh, that's a tough question to answer.
- I would need a couple of seconds to think about that but (I think I can say that)...
- I'm not quite sure what to say here...

Endings:

(for you to conclude or end your talk)

- So my answer to your question is...
- And I suppose that that's my main point...
- And finally, I'd say that...
- My personal conclusion would be...
- So all this boils down to...
- Bottom line is...

Middle parts:

(if you have just thought of a better idea)

- And I should add that...
- Another point would be that...
- I almost forgot to say that...
- But there's also something else to consider...

(if what you have just said didn't make sense)

- Let me try and rephrase that...
- What I'm trying to say is...
- Or to put it another way...
- So the main point is...

(if you forgot the word or what you wanted to say)

- Sorry, it's on the tip of my tongue...
- Right now, I can't think of the right way to put this...
- Sorry, I've forgotten the word in English...
- I'm not sure if this is the right way to put it but...

Signposting

- "after" or "before"

After we did that, we...

Before we can finish that job, we must...

After that, I went to...

Before that, I was working in an office.

- "although" or "even though"

Although I don't remember much of my childhood, I'll never forget the times I went to the beach.

Even though my hometown is very crowded and noisy, I like living there very much.

- "another"

Another good thing about my hometown is...

Another way to solve the problem would be to...

- "as with" or "just like"

As with the first question, it's a little tricky. There's a lot to consider.

Just like Romeo and Juliet, my wife and I fell in love almost immediately.

- "at the same time"

At the same time, I should have made a decision about it.

We were checking the hotels, and at the same time, trying to find a place to eat.

- "besides" or "in addition to"

Besides that fact, here is another interesting point...

In addition to that law, there are many other laws to prevent traffic accidents.

- "but"

This is usually true, but...

In most cases that is true, but...

- "because"

Many people believe that is true. I disagree because...

The reason I believe that is because...

- "except for"

Except for that one case, I do not know of any other problems.

Except for the main character, all the others were bad people.

- "for example"

I believe... is true. For example...

I believe that... is the best way. Let me give you an example...

- "however" or "yet"

I basically agree with you. However, I don't know if that will be true in the future.

That is what I have thought most of my life. Yet I now wonder if I am not wrong.

- "rather than"

Rather than repeating that process, the hero of the story decided to do something different.

Rather than just accepting the decision, I decided to change my job.

- "the reason why is"

I don't agree with that at all. The reason why is...

The reason why I doubt that is...

- "this" or "that"

Some people say that... and I have to agree with them...

That was good too, but not as good as...

It was good, but this was better...

Not only is that interesting, but... is also quite fascinating.

- "when" or "whenever"

When I think about such a topic, I think about...

When I remember how I grew up, I realize...

Whenever I think about my studies, I wonder how I survived!

More Signposts

- Expressing a Preference
 - I would much rather...*
 - I think ... is more (interesting, appealing, etc.) than ...*
 - I'd choose ... over ...*

- Narrating
 - When I was...*
 - A couple ... ago...*
 - To begin/start with...*

- Comparing and Contrasting
 - A is not quite... as B*
 - On the contrary, A is... than B*
 - On the other hand, A is... than B*

- Suggesting Possibilities
 - I can think of...*
 - I guess A should...*
 - Why don't A...*

- Justifying Opinions
 - The reason I believe this is...*
 - The way I see it...*
 - Because of...*

- Speculating
 - It's hard to predict, but...*
 - Probably later on...*
 - In the future...*

- Analyzing
 - There are several points to consider...*
 - As a result of...*
 - This is why...*

- Summarizing
 - In conclusion...*
 - In short...*
 - All in all...*

- Conversation Repair
 - What I mean to say is...*
 - Let me make myself clear...*
 - What I'm really trying to say is...*

Final Review

Short List of what the examiner is looking for:

Fluency & Coherence

- Being able to talk at a natural speed without unnatural pauses.
- Being able to link ideas and language together clearly.

Lexical Resource

- Having sufficient vocabulary on familiar and unfamiliar topics.
- Being able to deal with unknown or difficult vocabulary.

Pronunciation

- Being able to use stress and intonation naturally.
- Pronouncing the words correctly.

Grammatical Range & Accuracy

- Making as few grammatical mistakes as possible.
- Being understood despite grammatical mistakes.
- Being able to use a variety of grammatical structures appropriately.

Listen for "mirroring"

- Using part of the question in the answer.

Watch out for "hesitation"

- Searching for the right idea or the right word. Not knowing how to continue.

Check the contents of the answer

- Following the introduction-main body-conclusion pattern,
- Providing reasons and examples.