



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations

TOP TIPS FOR IELTS

Academic

PRODUCED BY CAMBRIDGE ESOL IN COLLABORATION WITH THE BRITISH COUNCIL



Candidate
Support

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Includes interactive CD-ROM with
full practice test and Speaking test video

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Introduction

Top Tips for IELTS is an essential part of your revision for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test.

Each of the four main sections (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) follows the same structure and is based on a series of pieces of advice (the 'tips') which IELTS materials writers have collected from many years' experience of involvement in the production of IELTS tests. Each section starts with a tip at the top of the page. The tip is followed by an example taken from IELTS material and a clear explanation to help you understand exactly what it means. Each section ends with some more 'General tips' for that component.

There is also a handy section at the beginning of the book on how to revise for IELTS and a very important section at the back on what you should do on the day of the test.

There is a companion publication to this book, *Top Tips for IELTS General Training*. Please note that the Listening and Speaking sections are common to both books.

IELTS is jointly managed by British Council, University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) and IDP: IELTS Australia.

How to use *Top Tips for IELTS*

Take the *Top Tips for IELTS* book with you and read it when you have a few minutes during the day. Then use the CD-ROM to practise at home: it contains an IELTS practice test for you to try, together with the answers for Listening and Reading and some sample answers for the Writing. The CD-ROM also includes all the recordings for the Listening and a video of a candidate doing an example IELTS Speaking test, to show you exactly what you will have to do when you take the test. Practise with some classmates using the Speaking test material on the CD-ROM and compare your performance with the student on the video.

Top Tips for IELTS is flexible. You can look at a different tip from a different section every day, or you can start at the beginning with the tips for the Listening test and work through until you get to the end of the tips for the Speaking test. Whichever method you prefer, read the examples and the explanation carefully to make sure that you understand each tip. When you have understood all the tips for each section, try the test on the CD-ROM.

Guide to symbols



This symbol introduces the 'tip' which is at the top of the page. Each tip is some useful advice to help you find the right answer for Listening and Reading. For Writing, the tips show you how to write a better answer to the question, and for Speaking, they explain how you can give good answers which show your true level of English to the examiner.



This is an extra piece of advice which is important for this particular part of the test.



This symbol tells you to go to the CD-ROM, where you will find an IELTS practice test to try.

We hope that *Top Tips for IELTS* will help you with your preparation for taking the IELTS test.

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Guide to question types used in IELTS Reading and Listening

Multiple choice (*Listening and Reading*) You have to read a text or listen to a recording and answer some questions. In Listening multiple-choice tasks, you usually have to choose one of three possible answers (A, B or C) for each question; in Reading you usually choose one of four (A, B, C or D). In some multiple-choice tasks, you have to choose several options from a longer list.

Identifying information (*Reading*) You have to read a text and a series of statements and decide if the statement agrees with the information in the text ('true'), if the statement contradicts the information in the text ('false') or whether there is no information in the text to support the statement ('not given').

Identifying writer's views/claims (*Reading*) You read a text and a series of statements and say whether each statement agrees with the views/claims of the writer. For each statement, you answer 'yes' if the statement does, 'no' if the statement doesn't, or 'not given' if there is no view/claim in the text to support the statement.

Matching information (*Reading*) You have to locate specific information in a paragraph or section of a text.

Matching headings (*Reading*) You have to choose the correct headings for the paragraphs or sections of the text.

Matching features (*Reading*) You have to match numbered items to a set of features (e.g. people or dates) from the text.

Matching sentence endings (*Reading*) You are given the first half of a sentence based on a text and you choose the best way to complete it from a list of possible options.

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Sentence, Summary, Note, Table, Flow-chart completion (*Listening and Reading*) You listen to a recording, or read a text, and fill in the missing information. Sometimes you complete the task by choosing words from a box rather than words in a Listening/Reading text. There is a limit to the number of words you can use, so pay careful attention to this when you are deciding what your answer should be.

Form completion (*Listening*) You listen to a recording and fill in the missing information in a form. You must pay careful attention to the maximum number of words you can write for each answer.

Diagram label completion (*Reading*) You complete labels on a diagram which relate to a description contained in the text. You must pay careful attention to the maximum number of words you can write for each answer.

Short-answer questions (*Listening and Reading*) You listen to a recording, or read a text, and write short answers to questions. You must pay careful attention to the maximum number of words you can write for each answer.

Matching (*Listening*) You listen to a recording and match each numbered item to one of a list of options (A, B, C etc.) according to the information you hear.

Plan, Map, Diagram labelling (*Listening*) You listen to a recording and label the plan, map or diagram according to the information you hear.

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How to revise for IELTS

It is important to use the time you have to revise for IELTS effectively. Here are some general ideas to help you do this.

Make a plan

It is a good idea to make a plan for your last month's study before the test. Think about:

- what you need to do
- how much time you have
- how you can fit what you need to do into that time.

Try to be realistic when you make your plan. If you plan to do too much, then you may soon be disappointed when you fall behind.

Think about what you need to know

Most things that you do in English will help you to improve your language skills – reading an article or watching certain TV programmes may be as useful as doing a grammar exercise.

It is very important, however, that you know exactly what you will have to do in the test. Doing some practice tests will help you develop good exam techniques and this will help you a great deal in the exam room. But don't spend all your revision time doing practice papers.

Think about which skills you need to improve. If you are attending an IELTS preparation course, ask your English teacher what you need to work on – listening, reading, writing, or speaking.

Look back at your homework. What mistakes did you make? Do you understand where you went wrong? How can you improve?

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Have what you need to hand

In order to prepare for IELTS you probably need:

- a good learners' dictionary (one with examples of how words are actually used in English)
- some practice tests
- an IELTS preparation coursebook
- a good grammar book
- a vocabulary notebook
- notes or other materials from your English course (if you are doing one)
- a bilingual dictionary.

If you have access to the internet you can get some of these online – the dictionaries and samples of IELTS test materials, for instance. (See www.ielts.org and www.CambridgeESOL.org)

Also have a good supply of stationery such as pens, pencils, highlighters and paper. Some students find it convenient to write things like vocabulary on cards, which they then carry with them and look at when they have a spare moment on the bus or in a café.

Think about when and where you study

Most people find it best to study at regular times at a desk with a good light and everything they need beside them.

Some people find they work best in the early mornings, while others prefer the evenings. If possible, do most of your revision at the time of day which is best for you.

However, you may also find that there are other good times and places for you to study. Perhaps you could listen to some English on an mp3 player while you are doing other things. Or you could read something on your way to work or college.

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