



香港城市大學
City University
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How to prepare for IELTS FAQs



English Language Centre

How to prepare for IELTS - FAQs

What is IELTS?

IELTS is the International English Language Testing System examination which tests the four skills - listening, reading writing and speaking.

What does the exam consist of?

There are four tests done in the following order: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

Listening 4 sections, 40 questions 30 minutes + 10 minutes transfer time
Academic Reading 3 sections, 40 questions 60 minutes
Academic Writing 2 tasks (150 & 250 words) 60 minutes
Speaking 11 to 14 minutes
Total exam time 2 hours 55 minutes

If you would like some more detailed information. Look at the following books in the SAC:

Insight into IELTS: p.6, p.7, p.28, p.66, p.96 & p.97.

Cambridge IELTS 2: pp.1-6.

Focus on IELTS: pp. 5-7.

What should I do to prepare for the exam?

The first thing you must do to prepare for this exam is to become familiar with what you are expected to do. See how many of the FAQs you can answer on the next page before reading the information on pages 3 and 4. Then focus on one skill at a time and work your way through the **booklets in the SAC – How to prepare for IELTS – Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.**

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What do you know about the tests?

See how many of the questions you can answer. Then read the information on the next four pages. The answers are on the last page.

Listening

1. How many times is the tape played?
2. What kind of texts do we listen to?
3. How many questions are there?
4. What kinds of questions are there? Are there multiple choice questions?
5. Are we given any time to read the questions?
6. Are we given any time when the tape is switched off?

Reading

7. How much reading do we have to do?
8. How many questions are there?
9. What kinds of texts are they?
10. Where do the texts come from?
11. What kinds of questions are there?

Writing

12. How many pieces of writing do we do?
13. How long should we spend writing each one?
14. How many words do we have to write for each one?
15. Do we get the same percentage of marks for each one?

Speaking

16. How many people are in the room at the same time?
17. What are the different parts of the test?
18. Can we make notes during the test?
19. Do we have time to prepare during the test?

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LISTENING

- The tape is played once only.
- There are four sections.
- The first two sections are concerned with social needs.
- The last two sections are related to educational contexts.
- There are 40 questions. 10 questions per section.
- The texts and the tasks increase in difficulty as the test progresses.
- There are a variety of text types – monologues and dialogues between two or more people.
- There are a variety of task types including multiple choice, short-answer questions, notes/chart/table completion, sentence completion, labeling a diagram, classification and matching. *(See worksheets 3 to 8 for more details).*
- There will be more than one task type in each section.
- You are given about 30 seconds before each section to read the questions.
- You are given about 30 seconds at the end of each section to look over your answers.
- You are given an additional 10 minutes at the end of the test to transfer your answers from the question booklet to the answer sheet.

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READING

- There are three sections with three reading passages.
- Each reading passage is between 700 and 1000 words long.
- There are 40 questions. 13 to 14 questions per section.
- The texts are academic in style but of general interest.
- There may be a text with diagrams, graphs or tables.
- There will be one text with a detailed logical argument.
- The texts and tasks increase in difficulty as the test progresses.
- The types of texts include descriptions, critical reviews, discussions of theories and data, case studies, narratives etc.
- The texts come from books, academic papers, magazines and journals.
- There are a variety of task types including multiple choice, short-answer questions, notes/chart/table completion, sentence completion, labeling a diagram, classification, matching lists/phrases, choosing suitable paragraph headings from a list, identification of writer's views/attitudes & summary completion. *(See worksheets 9 – 16 for details).*
- There will be more than one task type in each section.
- You are not given any extra time to transfer your answers from the question booklet to the answer sheet.

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WRITING

- There are two tasks.
- You have to write at least 150 words for Task 1.
- You have to write at least 250 words for Task 2.
- You should take about 20 minutes over Task 1 and 40 minutes over Task 2.
- In Task 1 you have to look at the information in a table or diagram and present the information in your own words.
- You are assessed on how you describe data, describe the stages of a process, describe an object or event or explain how something works. *(See worksheets 17-21 for more details.)*
- In Task 2 you are given an opinion, an argument or a problem and you have to write an essay in response.
- You are assessed on how you present a solution to a problem, present and justify an opinion, compare and contrast evidence and opinions, evaluate and challenge ideas and give evidence and argue your case.
- Task 2 carries more weight than task 1.

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SPEAKING

- There is one examiner who asks all the questions and also assesses you.
- There are 3 main parts.
- Part 1 is the introduction and interview and lasts about 4 to 5 minutes.
- In Part 1 you are asked general questions about yourself.
- Part 2 is the individual long turn and lasts about 3 to 4 minutes.
- Part 2 you are asked to talk for one to two minutes on a topic the examiner gives you.
- You are given one minute to prepare to speak in Part 2.
- You can make notes on paper provided by the examiner.
- Part 3 is the two-way discussion and lasts about 4 to 5 minutes.
- Part 3 is a discussion of more abstract issues related to the topic in Part 2.

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Answer Key

1. The tape is played once only.
2. You listen to monologues and dialogues in social contexts and educational contexts.
3. There are 40 questions. 10 in each of the 4 sections.
4. There are lots of different types of questions. Multiple choice is only one of them.
5. You are given 30 seconds before each section.
6. You are given 10 minutes at the end to transfer your answers from the question booklet to the answer booklet.
7. You have to read three texts in three sections. They are 750 to 1000 words long.
8. There are 40 questions.
9. They are of general interest. One will be a logical argument and one may have diagrams, graphs or tables.
10. They come from books, academic papers, journals and magazines.
11. There are a variety of question types from multiple choice to matching.
12. You have to do 2 writing tasks.
13. You should spend 20 minutes on the first task and 40 minutes on the second.
14. You have to write at least 150 words for the first task and 250 words for the second task.
15. The second task carries more weight than the first.
16. You and one examiner are the only people in the room.
17. There are three parts to the test. Part 1 – interview; Part 2 – 1-2 minute talk; Part 3 – discussion.
18. Yes, during Part 2 the examiner will give you some paper and a pen.
19. The only preparation time you have is before Part 2 – 1 minute only.

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Books available in the SAC & referred to in the How to Prepare for IELTS booklets

Adams, G., & Peck, T. (2000). **101 Helpful hints for IELTS**. Sydney: Adams & Austen Press.

Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C. (2000). **Cambridge practice tests for IELTS 1**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C. (2001). **Insight into IELTS**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connell, S. (2002). **Focus on IELTS**. Harlow: Longman.

Sahanaya, W., & Lindeck, J. (1997). **Preparation & practice: Listening & speaking**. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Sahanaya, W., Lindeck, J & Stewart, R. (2000). **Preparation & practice: Reading & writing academic module**. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

UCLES. (2000). **Cambridge IELTS 2**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

UCLES. (2000). **Cambridge IELTS 3**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wiley, J., & Sons. (2002). **IELTS to success**. Melbourne: Melbourne Enterprises Int. Ltd.