Reddit PMP Posts and Comments

# IELTS Preparation Resources and Advice

You'll find the answers to these questions in this post:  
  
1. What are the best books to improve my proficiency level and IELTS band score?  
2. Are there any online official resources that I can use to practice?  
3. Where can I find some practice tests? What are the best books?  
4. What websites or YouTube channels can I use in my preparation?  
  
Before I get started, I should tell you that you don't have to go through all the following books and resources. Depending on your needs, you might need to use some of them in [\*\*your preparation\*\*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LVjD2psg2w&t=5s).  
  
\*\*Books for grammar, vocabulary, and language skills\*\*  
  
Grammar  
  
1. Cambridge Grammar for IELTS with answers by Paulin Cullen  
2. Cambridge Common Mistakes at IELTS Intermediate and Advanced by Julie Moore and Paulin Cullen  
  
Vocabulary  
  
1. Cambridge Vocabulary for IELTS Intermediate  
2. Cambridge Vocabulary for IELTS Advanced  
3. Cambridge Collocations in Use Intermediate  
4. Cambridge Collocations in Use Advanced  
5. Oxford Word Skills (idioms and phrasal verbs) Intermediate  
6. Oxford Word Skills (idioms and phrasal verbs) Advanced  
7. [Vocabulary for IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 by ESL Fluency](https://www.eslfluency.com/ielts-academic-writing-task-1-vocabulary-and-examples/)  
  
Reading and academic vocabulary  
  
\* Longman Focus on Vocabulary 1  
\* Longman Focus on Vocabulary 2  
  
These are not IELTS books, but you'll kill two birds with one stone going through these books. You'll improve your reading skills and learn the academic words in context.  
  
Listening skills  
  
\* Open Forum 1  
\* Open Forum 2  
\* Open Forum 3  
  
Again, these are not IELTS books, but if you want to improve your listening skills before doing the actual IELTS tests, you should start with these.  
  
Writing skills  
  
I would suggest Macmillan's "Improve Your Skills, Writing for IELTS series," but you also need personalized feedback on your work. This is where an expert should come in. If you receive bad advice from an inexperienced person, all your hard work will waste away.  
  
By the way, something I always tell every test taker is that they need to start reading non-IELTS materials like well-known website articles and magazines like [Scientific American](https://www.scientificamerican.com/) if they are aiming for band 8+.  
  
\*\*Links from the official sources\*\*  
  
Many students have been asking for free official online practice materials. You can find them here:  
  
IELTS on computer familiarization tests:  
  
[https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/computer-delivered-ielts](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/computer-delivered-ielts)  
  
and  
  
[https://ielts.idp.com/canada/prepare/article-get-familiar-ielts-on-computer](https://ielts.idp.com/canada/prepare/article-get-familiar-ielts-on-computer)  
  
IELTS on computer - how it works  
  
[IELTS on computer - how it works | Take IELTS (britishcouncil.org)](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/ielts-on-computer/how-it-works)  
  
Free online IELTS Writing practice tests:  
  
[Free online IELTS Writing practice tests | Take IELTS (britishcouncil.org)](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-ielts-practice-tests/writing)  
  
The British Council's free weekly IELTS webinars:  
  
[https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-webinars](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-webinars)  
  
IELTS test preparation materials paper and CD:  
  
[IELTS Test Preparation Materials - IDP](https://ielts.idp.com/prepare/ielts-test-preparation-material)  
  
Free IELTS sample test questions:  
  
[https://ielts.org/take-a-test/preparation-resources/sample-test-questions](https://ielts.org/take-a-test/preparation-resources/sample-test-questions)  
  
Free IELTS Preparation App (The British Council):  
  
[https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-apps](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-apps)  
  
IELTS Preparation App (IDP):  
  
[https://ielts.idp.com/lp/ielts-by-idp-app](https://ielts.idp.com/lp/ielts-by-idp-app)  
  
IELTS Ready by The British Council:  
  
[https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/ielts-ready](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/ielts-ready)  
  
The official resources mentioned above are great for online practice, but the level of personalized expert feedback you'll receive from them might not be enough.  
  
\*\*Books with practice tests\*\*  
  
1. Cambridge IELTS books starting from number 12  
2. Cambridge IELTS Trainer  
3. Collins Practice Tests for IELTS  
  
\*\*Websites or YouTube channels full of practical guides\*\*  
  
[\*\*eslfluency.com\*\*](https://www.eslfluency.com/)  
  
This website belongs to one of the moderators of this subreddit. You can find many detailed guides, articles, and [\*\*YouTube videos\*\*](https://www.youtube.com/c/eslfluency) on it.  
  
[\*\*IELTS Advantage YouTube channel\*\*](https://www.youtube.com/@Ieltsadvantage)  
  
Detailed and accurate are the two words you can use for this channel. This is one of the oldest and most reliable YouTube channels to follow for your IELTS preparation.  
  
[\*\*IELTS Simon\*\*](https://www.youtube.com/@IeltsSimon9)  
  
Simon Corcoran is an ex-examiner known for his reliable advice. You will definitely benefit from his amazing videos.  
  
[\*\*YouTube Speaking Simulators\*\*](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwKcPOoWwawyayaq8w8TVZ1oprCRonnCO)  
  
Sometimes students don't have anyone to speak English with, so they don't spend enough time on this skill. Anfisa's speaking videos are designed to help you simulate your IELTS speaking session. She's a CELTA-certified teacher.  
  
Finally, I should also mention that [eslfluency.com](http://eslfluency.com) is an independent website run by an independent Cambridge-certified EFL teacher. It is not affiliated with any other websites or channels, nor does it represent any of the above-mentioned organizations.

## Comments

# How did you guys prepare for ielts exam with free/ cheap resources

My\_qualifications - graduate 12 months work ex   
  
I’m planning to take ielts in February mid. And trying to figure out a studying strategy. My English is decent, however I feel my aptitude can be much better. I can manage 4-6 hrs daily.   
  
Would love to know the study strategies that you all have used thus far and what are your resources. How’s leap scholar if anyone has used it?

## Comments

[Comment] "Hello u/Gatarmasti\_, Thanks for posting. [click here, if you are asking a question.](https://www.reddit.com/r/Indians\_StudyAbroad/wiki/prior\_reserch\_before\_posting\_a\_question)   
  
 \* 1] Have you done thorough [prior research](https://www.reddit.com/r/Indians\_StudyAbroad/wiki/prior\_reserch\_before\_posting\_a\_question)?  
   
 \* 2] Are your qualifications are mentioned in \*\*Post Title\*\*? (e.g. 10th/12th student, Mechanical BE student, working professional, etc.) Currently your post title is \*\*" How did you guys prepare for ielts exam with free/ cheap resources "\*\*  
  
 backup of your post content:   
  
 My\_qualifications - graduate 12 months work ex   
  
I’m planning to take ielts in February mid. And trying to figure out a studying strategy. My English is decent, however I feel my aptitude can be much better. I can manage 4-6 hrs daily.   
  
Would love to know the study strategies that you all have used thus far and what are your resources. How’s leap scholar if anyone has used it?  
  
 "  
  
  
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[Comment] Check out r/IELTS wiki for some free resources  
  
  
You will get a practice workbook by post from IDP when you book a slot  
  
  
There are lots of Youtube channels, but IELTS Liz is the best imo. I wasted a lot of time going through many channels, and I wish I had stuck to Liz only.  
  
  
Understand the exam pattern and the types of questions in each module. Take a couple of practice tests online and see what you find difficult and focus on getting better at it. Do a lot of speaking and writing practice.

[Comment] When you register for IELTS through IDP, you'll receive a book with all explanations. Plus check your email for credentials to a free online course on IELTS by Macquarie university. Just these got me 8.0/C1.

[Comment] I used to do mock test on ieltsonlinetest.com and I really helped. Especially for listening and reading, not so much for speaking and writing.

[Comment] I have this website where you can get 114-115 free recourse (from makkar to liz) for IELTS if you want I can give you the link

[Comment] IELTS is just English, there's no aptitude.   
  
IELTSLiz and E2 IELTS on YouTube, that's all you need.

[Comment] Ieltsweb acc to me is the best . It has cambridge tests. For essays refer ti Ielts Liz

[Comment] IDP websites or YouTube channels are the best  
Clear modules one after the other and make sure you have enough time for practice  
And practice talking to yourself on a day to day topic if possible in case you are not sure how to improve speaking  
I think you can avoid paid courses if you have sufficient English knowledge. IELTS will send practice workbook after you have booked your exam date. The book is actually awesome for revision.   
  
Incase you want to learn from scratch, you can go to paid courses ( I don't think I'm a good one to answer coz I have never taken one)   
  
For reading and listening I actually took a short test just to determine where I stand and where I actually needed to work on. U can try it too (only if you wish)

[Comment] I scored 8.5 in reading at both attempts of my ielts in 2017 and 2018. Studied only via watching YouTube. I still have my watch history for this preparation and can share if anyone is interested.  I think I prepared for a few weeks at the time. Can send dm to oaadegbola5997@gmail.com Cheers.

[Comment] Speaking and writing I would suggest teachers

[Comment] Used the official IELTS book. Found scanned copies of multiple official IELTS tests. Was already subscribed to gregmat for GRE, he had some content for IELTS on his site.

[Comment] Using yt and official Cambridge books

[Comment] I prepared from the website called [KeenIELTS.com](http://KeenIELTS.com) it is a nice free website, that provided me with scores and feedback. They have all 4 modules for free, I am not paying any money to any website for preparing IELTS.   
  
Leapscholar is only interested in taking my money, which is not helpful.  
  
   
I got 7.5 bands overall.

[Comment] I got coaching from an institute called Beyond Borders Learning. Scored L- 8.5, R- 8.5, W- 7.5, S-7.0, overall- 8.0

[Comment] [removed]

[Comment] i usd ieltswise, their reading compre is very close to the real exam and i got 8.5

[Comment] Hi everyone!  
  
I’ve built a tool called IELTS Productive that helps with IELTS Writing preparation, it might be useful for you!  
  
\*\*Try it here:\*\* [IELTS Productive](https://ielts-productive-bpddcngpd9fnagaw.centralus-01.azurewebsites.net/auth/register)  
  
As a teacher with 15+ years of IELTS experience, I know how hard it is to get good quality feedback on writing. This tool gives instant, detailed feedback on Writing Task 1 & 2, with multiple improved versions and specific examples to enhance your language.  
  
# Key Features:  
  
\* Real IELTS writing tasks (letters, reports, essays)  
\* Detailed mistake explanations   
\* Alternative ways to express ideas   
\* Vocabulary & grammar suggestions   
\* Band score estimation & progress tracking  
  
How It’s Different: Instant feedback, unlimited practice, and consistent, IELTS-specific guidance.  
  
I’m new to web development, so I’d really appreciate any thoughts or suggestions, especially any thought on how it could be improved. Hope this helps, and best of luck with your IELTS prep! 😊  
  
\*\*Try it out here:\*\* [IELTS Productive](https://ielts-productive-bpddcngpd9fnagaw.centralus-01.azurewebsites.net/auth/register)

[Comment] Hi OP, which resource did you use to prepare for IELTS? I'm planning to take IELTS in, like, 3-4 months time and I am curious as to what you used?

[Comment] This helps thanks!

[Comment] How much time did you take to prep?

[Comment] I think Ielts liz have changed the way contents use to be on her website. Before it use to be latest questions with their answers. Like It used to be the whole question paper of 40 questions. Now everything seems to be torn apart and uploaded as practice samples only. One paragraph at a time. When I do my mock test I like to stick with a whole of the test of 40 quetions at a time or practice the questions in order they were set in exam.   
  
Can you please clarify.

[Comment] Thank u so much😁

[Comment] Thanks!

[Comment] Thanks!

[Comment] Yes please send it to me as well

[Comment] please send me the link, test in less than a week

[Comment] Plz send the link to me as well.

[Comment] can you give the watch history here?

[Comment] Hey can you DM me the watch list please.

[Comment] Hey can you share your watchlist

[Comment] can you share your watchlist? Tks

[Comment] can u share me the watchlis pls

[Comment] How accurate is the KeenIELTS exams to the real exam? I’ve been practicing for a while on it now and I’m getting decent scores so I’m wondering if it will translate easily!   
  
Thank you

[Comment] I have been using this website for the past few months. However, given that one of my post was removed due to the fact that the website is deemed as problematic, I don't know if using it is sufficient.  
  
   
Moreover, I have been stuck on 6.5 for writing for a while now.

[Comment] "As far as possible, please add your response/answer to OP in the subreddit comment section itself. It will help many people if DMs are avoided and all discussion is in open. Thank you!"  
  
\*I am a bot, and this action was performed automatically. Please [contact the moderators of this subreddit](/message/compose/?to=/r/Indians\_StudyAbroad) if you have any questions or concerns.\*

[Comment] Hi, did u find any source ..?

[Comment] About 1.5 months. I got 8.

[Comment] While you can access all the books here even the cambridge module ,I would recommend going to telegram for that because you can get audios as well which this website doesn't provide.

[Comment] Hey can you send me the site link he was talking about?

[Comment] It is pretty accurate and useful. They have Cambridge books and a bunch of other books. Cambridge books are similar to real exams. I have a few friends who practiced on KeenIELTS, and they received +/- 0.5-1 bands.

[Comment] Hey, thanks! which telegram group are you referring to? And pls share the website link as well

[Comment] Is the link below not working?? It's from that website only and https://t.me/IELTS\_CAMBRIDGE1 telegram

[Comment] Hey can you send me the site link he was talking about?

[Comment] Please send me the link as well

# IELTS Resources, Strategies and Suggestions

Comprehensive post on my score, resources I used (and are considered the best), and strategies/suggestions. I gave my computer-based IELTS academic test on 4th April and got the results on 7th April.   
  
Preparation time: 2 weeks, 1st attempt.  
  
&#x200B;  
  
>Scores: Overall: 7.5 \[ L: 8.5, R: 8, W: 6.5, S: 7 \]  
  
I got the required scores, so I am satisfied.   
  
&#x200B;  
  
>Resources:   
  
\*\*Links/Videos:\*\*  
  
1. YouTube "IELTS Lizz" – for Reading (true/false) and writing.  
2. YouTube "IELTS Advantage": 11 hr video – super helpful!!! (I watched it on 1.5x speed).  
3. 100 band 7+ essays are available on IELTS advantage website which are mentioned in the video above.  
  
\*\*Books/practice tests I used:\*\*  
  
1. Cambridge IELTS books (including vocabulary book, official guide and test books)  
2. British council IELTS Premium mock tests.  
3. Barrons’ IELTS (DONT use - its useless). Use it \*only\* if you are very weak in R, L and require some confidence boost to start preparation.  
  
P.s: I did not buy any book, I issued everything from a local library for free so I had no option to choose which version I wanted to use. I tried using latest book versions available.  
  
&#x200B;  
  
>\*\*Strategy - Reading:\*\*  
  
I knew from the start that reading might be my weak point so I concentrated there more and it shows, I went from band 6 to 8 in practice sets!   
  
Practicing a lot won't help - don't mindlessly practice (as I did initially) thinking practice will make you perfect. Identify your weaknesses and work on them!! Solve a test, see which type of questions are you getting wrong, learn about those question and how to quickly and correctly answer them.  
  
Learn to scan, skim and read. Start un-timed and then start timing yourself. Pro-tip: solve 3 passages in 60 mins, instead of 1 passage in 20 mins and repeating it 3 times. Reason: You can use remaining time from passage 1 in passage 2 and so on. (I wasn't doing this earlier and timed tests were reducing my scores).  
  
Initially, I took some tests from Barron's IELTS books and got great scores in reading. But when I shifted to Cambridge (more accurate), my reading scores dropped to 6 and 6.5. Then i shifted to youtube and online resources (including Reddit) for help.  
  
If you are a habitual reader (novels, books, articles etc) then it would be comparatively easier for you. I am a frequent reader for my research purposes only and do not read as a hobby, so I required more work. Key strategies I used and found effective for myself are:  
  
\* Solve \*\*headings\*\* or paragraph matching questions at the end - since they consume more time and by doing so, by the time you answer other questions you have an idea where the content is. (IELTS advantage said otherwise, however this strategy suited me best).  
\* For headings, you have to read properly to match.  
\* \*\*True/False:\*\* If the statement says EXACTLY what the passage says, then its TRUE/YES. If OPPOSITE, then FALSE/NO and if not much info is provided: NG. For false/no, it HAS to be the opposite!!!  
\* For True/False kind of questions, skim through passage to find required info (might be paraphrased)  
\* \*\*Multiple choice\*\*: I used elimination method more naturally.  
  
&#x200B;  
  
>\*\*Strategy - Listening:\*\*  
  
Honestly, I didn't spend much time on listening practice since my first practice test attempt on Cambridge book gave me 8 and second attempt on British Council Premium gave me 8.5 (one week apart, with no focus on listening). It is fairly easy to get good bands here. If possible, practice on maps questions on listening since I got such a question in exam and I think I messed up in that.  
  
&#x200B;  
  
>\*\*Strategy - Writing:\*\*  
  
I was expecting a much higher band for writing since I responded to task 2 very well and task 1 was answered appropriately too. However, I am not sure what went wrong. Still, got the required minimum score so I am happy.   
  
For writing, consult a good writer friend or experts in IELTS writing (usually paid) if you need serious help. Had I known my band would be low, I would have gotten some help.   
  
P.s: There are no quick online resources to check your writing. A person evaluates your essays in IELTS tests, so getting a real person to work with would be great. AI is not very accurate and different websites give you different results. ChatGPT consistently gave me 7 or 7.5. So, don't rely on any AI app.  
  
&#x200B;  
  
>\*\*Strategy - Speaking:\*\*  
  
Again, I expected much more from speaking. I spoke well and a lot, and I am a frequent English speaker too. The only problem was I had a bit too many ideas and was excited to talk so probably I jumped between ideas. Sometimes it got messy but I tried to reiterate and talk.   
  
I was asked about what I do, why I chose what I do, if I like shopping, why do I like shopping (which was a weird question lol), do I prefer shopping alone or with someone, then part 2 included if I helped someone, who was it, how it felt etc..., part 3 was discussion if mobile phones will be used a lot in the future and what impact does govt have in helping people.  
  
>\*\*Test experience:\*\*  
  
It was good. However, I was called 1.5 hr earlier and when i arrived no-one was there (including the staff), I was questioned why I came so early lol. My test was at 8:30pm but it started at 9pm. All personal belongings, except for passport, were asked to keep in the lockers right before the tests (10 mins before max) and till then we were seated in a waiting area where registration started. The software is updated as compared to what is available on British Council guides with some minor changes, its much easier in the actual test.  
  
&#x200B;  
  
Hope it helps!  
  
&#x200B;

## Comments

[Comment] thank you a lot! my exam is in 8 days and I need to score 8, and I'll take advantage of all you've written above  
ty

[Comment] Remember that everyone is different and will need more or less time to prepare to get the score they need. We recommend that you read this advice, ask questions, and develop your own personal study plan.  
  
\*I am a bot, and this action was performed automatically. Please [contact the moderators of this subreddit](/message/compose/?to=/r/IELTS) if you have any questions or concerns.\*

[Comment] What do you suggest, IDP or British?

[Comment] I'm so glad you got what you needed, congrats!! And thank you for posting such useful advice, too! 😄

[Comment] so chatgpt was scoring you higher?

[Comment] Grateful for your commitment in writing this

[Comment] Which book should I use for my preparation The official Cambridge guide to IELTS or IELTS academic 18 by Cambridge.  
I am going to appear for IELTS UKV1 academic

[Comment] I am glad it helped, good luck !! 💫

[Comment] I don't know much about IDP to compare, unfortunately :(

[Comment] Thank you! I am glad if this could help anyone :)

[Comment] Yes! I would suggest still using it to evaluate your essays but DON'T rely on the band. It gave me good suggestions to make certain sentences less weird and told me about my grammatical errors etc. It even told me my strong points when i asked. So use it strategically to improve writing overall. But the score it gives isn't accurate so don't rely on it :)

[Comment] My pleasure, hope it helps :)

[Comment] I think you should go for both! All cambridge books are pretty good for prep, so the more you solve them, the better it is. I used some of their basic books (vocab etc) just for practice tests as well.

[Comment] 😎

[Comment] that might mean that its scoring me lower😭

[Comment] Thanks man

[Comment] or... higher, we never know lol. I would strongly suggest use ChatGPT's suggestion to strengthen your writing and compare them writings to higher band's submissions (in the resource description). You can always go for paid reviews, if your pocket permits. I unfortunately couldn't do that.

# Sharing my IELTS experience (8.0 overall)

Not a native speaker, have never received formal English education at any point nor have I studied school in English, but I always followed Western media, listened to English music, read English books, participated in English speaking boards, blogs, gaming voice chats and whatnot. This was my first IELTS test.  
  
I’m employed as a software engineer in a third world country and I’m looking for a job abroad so I took the test. I booked it on a whim after one week, had an unfortunate funeral in the first few days and realistically only had two to three days to prepare.  
  
I told myself ‘I’m tight on time’ (completely self-inflicted) and I’m obviously not going to improve my overall English levels in this timeframe, the most I could do was ‘familiarize myself with the exam.’  
  
I focused on tips and tricks videos with general advice (IELTS Advantage on YouTube was extremely helpful) and past exams on ieltsonlinetests (used ChatGPT for writing help). In the end I got 8.5 listening, 8.0 reading, 7.5 each for writing and speaking.  
  
It was an overall misplanned yet successful   
endeavor. But let’s get to the important part:  
- Writing, I read a lot of sample articles that contained safe phrases like ‘in this essay we will discuss’ and whatnot, overall guidelines on formatting, filler phrases to reach the 250 word count. I did not use any of these, I wrote like how I would argue a point on an Internet forum. In the end I even submitted around 330 words for Task 2.  
- Speaking, I talked too much and talked fast. I treated the examiner like they were my buddy. I cracked a lot of jokes. I was super honest and informal. I even made them laugh a few times. I think I also just agreed with everything the examiner said because I was honestly a little nervous, I thought I could just argue from the perspective of whatever they presented me.  
  
The reason why I am writing this post is I felt like a lot of the advice and samples online are just unhelpful. The moment I read the formal grading criteria I ended up disregarding many and yoloing things a little. It worked out.  
  
I feel like some of them dilute the point of the exam, which is helping the examiners evaluate your grasp of English. Ultimately, what you want is to show them who you are on a normal day. If you’ve been using English for a while, if you rely on your natural instinct and expression you \*can\* get scores like mine. It doesn’t have to be all prepared and 100% calculated.  
  
Thats all, good luck everyone.

## Comments

[Comment] Hi! It looks like you are looking for tips, guides, or resources for your IELTS preparation. For more information, please take a look at [this thread.](https://www.reddit.com/r/IELTS\_Guide/comments/ubekzu/ielts\_preparation\_resources\_and\_advice/)  
  
  
\*I am a bot, and this action was performed automatically. Please [contact the moderators of this subreddit](/message/compose/?to=/r/IELTS) if you have any questions or concerns.\*

[Comment] Just by reading this post of yours I can make out that your command over the language is really good. Congrats OP!

[Comment] What band usually chatgpt grade you with for your essay? I keep getting 6-7 constantly.  
  
I tried submitting IELTS Advantage’s essays and ask chatgpt to grade it and to my suprise some of them graded as band 6.  
  
You think chatgpt gave appropriate grade?  
  
Also I am in the same ship as you, from third world country, rn i have secured a job in europe, but planning to go to a master in cs because why not, job market is shit and i the losses from opportunity cost is not that significant imho.

[Comment] Remember that everyone is different and will need more or less time to prepare to get the score they need. We recommend that you read this advice, ask questions, and develop your own personal study plan.  
  
\*I am a bot, and this action was performed automatically. Please [contact the moderators of this subreddit](/message/compose/?to=/r/IELTS) if you have any questions or concerns.\*

[Comment] Hey! Congratulations! Can I know how much score did you use to get in writing evaluation by chatGPT, I am also using it currently and am a bit skeptical about its scoring.

[Comment] I keep getting a 7 in writing any tips?

[Comment] I can’t say for sure, I definitely wasn’t looking deeply into it. I mostly used GPT to isolate my mistakes (grammar etc) and awkward phrases. I didn’t pay that much attention to the scores for sure. I was getting ‘7 to 8’ in Task 2 and ‘6’ in Task 1.

[Comment] Thanks! I’d advise against using chatGPT to help with writing tasks with the scoring in mind. I mostly used it for feedback, it showed me my errors. It even showed very obviously incorrect errors and has problems figuring out context of ownership sometimes, but some of its comments were completely on point. It’s worth going through if you have no accessible person to review your writing.  
  
For the writing tasks I did (all on ieltsonlinetests) chatGPT scored me anywhere from 6 to 8 and consistently gave higher scores in task 2 than task 1. I attributed it to the nature of how I learned English. It is probably what happened in the real test too.

[Comment] I struggled with Task 1 more than Task 2 because it felt more unnatural, the concept of ‘unbiased reporting’ is a journalistic and scientific skill for a reason (my exam was Academic). This one definitely needs intentional preparation and I used a lot of samples/videos for it, even then I don’t think I got it completely right in the exam.  
  
For Task 2, learn to formulate arguments. Task 2 by nature of being an opinion essay requires you to be mindful of your arguments and write well-constructed content. This is what I focused on doing.  
  
Of course it’s an English level evaluation and not a debate where ‘what you’re saying’ matters. Just the overall structure of an argument needs to be coherent and on-point. This is I believe what worked for me. Honestly? Go online and argue with people more. I think a lifetime of doing that is what prepared me for Task 2 lol.

# Scored an 8.0 on IELTS with 3 Weeks of Preparation! Here's how I Did It

Finally, I have passed my IELTS test (UKVI academic-computer based) with an overall band score of 8. I am satisfied with my overall score since this score is good enough to clear the admission requirements for any post-graduate program in the USA. My subsection scores are as follows:  
  
- Speaking- 7.0,  
- Reading- 8.5,  
- Listening- 9.0,  
- Writing- 7.0  
  
I am happy with the reading and listening scores, however, scores could be slightly higher for the other two- especially for writing. But I won't really beat myself up over it, since I gave myself only about 3 weeks to prepare. I am writing this post today so that others can learn from my experiences, and get an understanding of the preparation strategies. I feel I should contribute to this group, since I myself have taken so much help from it during my preparations!  
  
Firstly, I think I should provide an indication of my proficiency levels before I started taking any preparation for IELTS. I will also include some background details so that the readers here can figure out if they can relate to me. In my opinion, IELTS preparation depends a lot on the test taker's initial proficiency levels, and you might/ might not require a lot of time to preapre based on how good you already are.  
  
For me, I am a working professional taking the test from Bangladesh- though English is not my native language, I have been using it as a medium for both my undergraduate studies and my professional work. I love reading books, and watching movies/ TV series in English. I am also somewhat comfortable with giving presentations in English, or using it in everyday situations. Although there is no issues with comprehension, my speaking is not very fluent and I can't really think in English while speaking. If you think that your proficiency level is at par with me, the following advice should be helpful to you, otherwise it might not. Here I have discussed the strategies that I have followed for IELTS preparations, which might not work for you if you are at a beghing stage. I have tried to compile here all the resources that I have used, as well.  
  
Before I started taking my preparations, I set an overall target for myself as to in which areas I should have a good score. For me it was the writing section, since I heard from a friend that a good writing score (>=6.5) can help you get an RA-ship in US universities. So, I focused a lot of my efforts on improving my writing skills- as I genuinely lacked in that area. Later, I also heard that some US universities prefer students with at or above 7.5 in speaking for TA-ships, which you can also keep in mind while setting the target for yourself. However, I scored below 7.5 in speaking, maybe I should have put in more effort for speaking practice- I practiced speaking only for a day before the exam. This was partly beacuse I overeatimated my impromptu speaking skills, and only identified my lackings after taking a mock test. However, speaking and writing score requirements that I mentioned above- are not very well researched facts and I would be glad if someone could shed more light on this topic.  
  
Another topic I would like to get a clearer understanding is the IELTS vs TOEFL debate- I will just share my take on it. My purpose for taking this exam is to clear the requirements for US grad school applications, and also secure any indirect benefits it might have towards TA/RA-ship applications. As per general perception, the TOEFL test is more popular in the US. But I decided on taking the IELTS since I think TOEFL /IELTS are somewhat equally accepted in the US, whereas IELTS gives you more flexibility with other countries like the UK and Canada. There might also be some advantages with UK Visa applications with the IELTS score, but I'm not sure about this. I'm pursuing this line of thought beacuse although my primary target is applying for the US, I would like to keep my options open for other countries as well. Though these discussions are irrelevant after taking the test, I'm just curious to know if I have any gap in understanding.   
  
Firstly, if you are just starting out and don't know anything about the test format, I would suggest you to watch the following video on youtube, where you will get an overview, with descriptions of different sections of the test, time and score distributions:  
  
https://youtu.be/VaAvJ6iEibk?si=ogOQVn1g5rQm6DWz  
  
For a deeper understanding, you should watch a more detailed video from The Urban Fight youtube channel which shows you different question types that will appear on the test, along with some gereral tips for the reading and listening sections:  
  
https://youtu.be/HDhlXPBXwFA?si=QtsNla4Wp0sSpu9c  
  
Watching these two videos should give you a good understanding of the test. For further intimation, you should go for a full-length IELTS mock test. If you have registered through British Council, you will have access to some free online mock tests on the GEL IELTS website (which comes free with the BC registration). I will talk more about GEL IELTS while advising you for preparations.  
  
If you register for the exam through them, British Council offers a free subscription to GEL IELTS- an IELTS preparation website, which has a lot of both timed and untimed mock-tests. You can take full mock tests, or shorter mocks for separate sections of the test, or you can just practice single questions instead of a mock. I found the website particularly useful when practicing for Listening and Speaking sections. You should start taking these mocks after a few days through your preparations.   
  
While I was starting out, the first challenge was to compile a list of resources from where I would take help. I chose to follow video/ interactive resources for my preparations, since I didn't have a lot of time on my hand. Since this is a language proficiency test, you might find the books/ written material a bit lengthy and hard to focus on. There are a lot of free video classes and tutorials available on youtube, but most of them are hour-long videos with long QA sessions, or provides too much rudimentary explanations intended for mass level audience. Also, these tutorials are often not organized and comprehensive. So, it took a lot of time and effort figuring out suitable resources for my preparations. Following are the resources that I used for different sections of the test.   
  
1. Writing Section:  
  
Even before starting my preparations, I knew that the writing section was going to be my Achilles' Heel. I knew I had shortcomings in writing, so I have to train hardest for this section. However, writing tutorials on youtube are extremely lengthy and the playlists usually consist of a number of hour-long videos. The only exception I could find was the IELTS Simon youtube channel. To me, this channel was a life-saver. The writing section on the test comprises of two tasks: Task-1 and Task-2. IELTS Simon channel has two playlists dedicated to these two tasks, each playlist consists of 8-10 videos which are 10-15 mins long each. The videos are precise and contain a lot of useful tips and tricks with practical guide for writing practice. I highly recommend this channel if you are short on time like me, and looking for a compact preparation on this section. I treated the playlists on IELTS Simon as a syllabus for theoretical learning on writing methods, which I planned to complement with an ample number of mock tests. Link to the IELTS Simon playlists are given below. Simon also has a blog site which I found to be interesting, which contains byte size content on interesting usages of the language- it can be an enjoyable read, as well as, additional learning material for you. I have attached below links to the IELTS Simon playlists and the blog website:  
  
1. Task-1: https://youtu.be/\_EKODdnjUK0?si=U2-F0WuUq85uPu3o  
2. Task-2: https://youtu.be/aWQBKN8\_ycY?si=g9Sep6EKMRa5HoNG  
3. Website: https://www.ielts-simon.com/  
  
I would suggest you to complete these playlists first, then take as many writing mock tests as you can to solidify your learnings.   
  
ChatGPT can also help you prepare for the writing section. One useful trick that I can teach you: combine ChatGPT with your mock tests for identifying improvement areas. After taking a mock test, you can input your 'asnwer writeups' into ChatGPT and provide prompts like: "please revise the following answer for IELTS writing task- 1/2, rewrite it after correcting all the mistakes and prepare a table comparing each sentence in my writeup with corresponding sentences in your revised writeup." This prompt will provide a comparison table- which should give you a lot of insights on your error-making patterns and how you should correct those errors. However, I would suggest against using ChatGPT to rate your answers, because it tends to give you a rather 'pessimistic' rating- which will just hurt your motivations. It's better to focus on the improvement areas, instead of focusing on the ratings. Also, human examiners tend to score more leniently than AI.   
  
  
2. Speaking Section:  
  
My suggestion would be to start taking Speaking mock tests from Day-1, this will help you get an idea of the skill-level you are starting with and how much you need to improve. On GEL IELTS website, the speaking mock tests consist of recorded questions in video format. For me, I took my first Speaking mock on GEL IELTS the day before the Exam- and it was kind of a reality check for me. I spent the day practicing speaking mostly, but if I had started doing it earlier- probably I could have done better on the speaking section. My suggestion would be to take as many mocks as you can- especially for speaking, there's no alternative to that.  
  
In the Speaking test, there are three sections:  
- 1st: Introductory section. Here, the examiner asks you questions about yourself, like- where do you live? What is your favorite color? etc. You are expected to give short answers to the questions.   
- 2nd: a 2-min-speech. The examiner will give you a topic and ask you to speak on it for 2 mins without interruption.  
- 3rd: a discussion. Here, the examiner will ask you questions related to the topic given to you in the 2nd section. He will also make counter questions based on your answers, or on other relevant topics. It is expected to be a discussion between the examiner and the candidate, so the answer are expected to be a bit longer than section-1. You can get a detailed overview of the speaking test format from the below video:  
  
https://youtu.be/MowXdaxK0fQ?si=dlS1WqS4sK212MEQ  
  
So, as you can see- section 1 and section 3 are like everyday conversations that you may have with a friend or a colleague. I practiced these questions by taking mocks on the GEL IELTS website. While practicing, you can listen to a question, take your time organizing the answer in your head, then say it out loud. The platform will record your answer, and you can play it back later. These recordings can help you identify many awkward filler words or noises that you are probably using during your conversations. These fillers really take the charm away from your speaking, and impact your speaking score. You can gradually train yourself to avoid using these fillers, but it will take some time and practice. You may use ChatGPT to give yourself some "keywords" to use, which are suitable for answering on any given topic. For example: suppose you encounter a question on the mock: "What is your favorite physical exercise and why?" You may ask ChatGPT to give you some keywords suitable for describing different types of physical exercises.  
  
Many people might feel nervous about taking an in-person speaking test. But in my experience, the examiner always tries to make the candidate comfortable and relaxed. You might feel nauseous during the recorded video mock tests, but you will likely be at ease in front of the real examiner. My interview was conducted via zoom call, the examiner connected through a laptop in the examination room.   
  
For the second section: that is the uninterrupted speech section, you need to practice differently. Within a very short period of time (1 min), you will have to come up with some points so that you can talk about a topic for 2 mins straight. If this doesn't come to you naturally, you can follow some techniques. One such technique is the "PPF method" that I myself used. PPF stands for Past, Present, Future. The idea is to take any topic, and then think about it's past, present and future. For example- a topic can be: A person who inspires you. You can talk about where or how you met this person (past), how is he/she currently inspiring your actions (present), what do you plan to do taking inspiration from them (future). Hence, PPF technique can be applied to a wide range of topics. You can learn more about this and other techniques from the following video:  
  
https://youtu.be/MowXdaxK0fQ?si=dlS1WqS4sK212MEQ  
  
  
3. Reading section:  
  
For the reading section of the test, having an above average reading speed really helps. Those who are in the habit of reading English books daily will have an advantage here. For me, although I don't find the time to read everyday- I try to read regularly during the weekends. I am really into non-fiction and I try to complete at least one book each month. Hence I would suggest you to read everyday before the test: English newspapers, magazines, novels- whatever you can get your hands on, at least a few pages each day. Also, try to improve your reading speed. The goal should be to strive towards reading a bit faster than yesterday. I have read "The Speed Reading Book" by Tony Buzan which gave me some basic idea on speed reading techniques. it's an interesting read if you want to try it.  
  
I'd say that the IELTS reading test is more of a test of endurance before anything. The reading section is 1 hour long- reading through and analyzing long passages for 1 hour straight drains all your energy, which increases the chance of making mistakes. So, you need to manage your energy well for doing good in this section- I'll discuss more on this topic later. You can also build your endurance by taking a lot of full-length mock exams. However, if you are really short on time like me- my advice would be to focus more on other sections for practice (like- speaking and writing) than the reading section. Taking one or two mocks should give you a comprehensive idea of the reading test, after that you need to decide which area you want to focus on preparations on.  
  
However, there was a video on the "Lillie IELTS" youtube channel that I found useful. This video discusses some strategies for efficiently using your time during the reading test. If you want to check it out, the link is down below:  
  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KyxTcL-0ZM&t=675s  
  
4. Listening section  
  
The central focus of my preparations was probably on the listening test. When I first started taking my mocks, I scored pretty low on the listening section- which freaked me out. Hence, I immediately started working on improving my listening skills. It paid off as well- since I got a perfect score in the listening section. To get a good score in this section, you have to take as many listening mocks as you can. And to be honest, taking listening mocks can be fun as well- there's a chance you might get hooked on it, which happened in my case. But it eats away at the time that you are supposed to give for other sections.   
  
There are a number of question types that you might face on the listening test. For example:   
- MCQ  
- Matching  
- Map/ Diagram Labelling  
- Table/ Flow Chart/ Summary Completion  
- Sentence Completion  
- Short answer (in 1/2/3 words)   
  
While practicing, I developed some personal techniques to tackle these questions, which I'm going to discuss now. I would suggest you to read the following section after you have started taking your preparations and you are fully familiarized with all the question types- otherwise it might not make much sense to you.   
  
Before getting into that, I would like to talk about "The Art of Letting Go". This is the most important skill you can develop to score well on the listening test. The most common pitfall that can destroy your scores- is getting hooked on a certain question. The listening test consists of an audio that keeps playing in the background, while you answer questions on the screen. The audio keeps on playing in it's usual pace- if you get hooked on one question, you might miss the answer to the next one.   
  
The main challenge of this section is to hold your attention for the entire 30-mins duration. You should be comfortable with the pace of the audio after some practice. But chances are- if you lose your attention even for 10 seconds, you might miss the answer to a question. What people tend to do is panic over it- listening to the audio intently with the intention of finding answer to the missed questions. What they fail to realize is that the audio will not repeat the answer to a missed question. I understand this is a reflex action but as a consequence- they miss the answer to the next question as well, as their mind is still hooked on the previous one. Hence, you need to master 'The Art of Letting Go'. This is kind of like achieving Nirvana (xD)- it's not easy to develop and you might need to undertake multiple 'wasted' listening mocks until you can fully accept- "What is lotted cannot be blotted!"  
  
That being said, I can move on to some technical advice. Out of my own imagination, I classified the question types of the test under three categories and devised different strategies to deal with them. You should not probe much about the definitions, as these are more like rules of thumb that I personally developed and found to be helpful. The categories are:  
  
- A. Questions for Scanning: MCQ questions.  
- B. Questions to Answer Immediately: Table/ Flow Chart/ Sentence/ Summary completion, short answer.  
- C. Questions to take note of: Map/ Diagram labelling, matching etc.   
  
There is a subtle difference in strategic approach that you can take for solving each of these questions. However, I think you can only relate to these strategies once you have been practicing for some time now. So, if you are just starting out- maybe you should skip this section and revert back to this later on:  
  
A. Questions for Scanning: For MCQ questions, the answer options are in front of your eyes when you are listening to the audio. So, you can quickly go through the answer options over and over again with quick movements of the eye. Your approach should be to read the options repeatedly and identify 'keywords' within them- so that you can instantaneously identify the correct answer option while listening to the audio.  
  
B. Questions to Write Down Immediately: For Table/ Flow Chart/ Sentence Completion questions, you have to write down the answers as soon as you feel that it has been expressed in the audio- it is because you won't have the time later to revert back to that question/ think it over before putting in the answer. If you feel like you have figured out the answer- write it down, but if you are not so sure- just let it go and move on to the next question, because there is no time you can afford to get stuck on one question.   
  
C. Questions to Take Note Of: Matching and Map Labelling fall under this category. This is the only question type that I think allows you some time to reconsider your answer options. Let me give you an example from Map Labelling questions. For these questions, usually there's a map with different areas marked with different letters of the alphabet, and you need to match these letters with different answer options given in the question- you already know what I'm talking about if you are familiar with this question type. My suggestion would be to make use of the pencil and paper given to you in the exam hall. Write down on the paper the letters A to J (or whatever that is marked on the map) at the beginning, and as you progress through the audio- write down the names of different parts of the map next to each letter as they are mentioned by the speaker. Once the audio finishes playing, you can easily match these letters with the answer options given in the question.  
  
You have to READ THROUGH the answer options for each question thoroughly and repeatedly during the breaks in between different sections of the listening test. Your success in identifying the correct answer options will depend largely on how thoroughly you have read the answers beforehand. So, in reality, the listening test also ends up evaluating your reading speed- the faster you can go through the answer options within limited time, the higher your probability of answering correctly is.  
  
The whole journey of IELTS preparation can be a fun experience if you take up some ussful habits that are both interesting and educative. For example, reading newspapers/ novels/ articles regualry, listening to podcasts on your topics of interest, listening to audiobooks or, debates on current affairs etc. These habits will enrich your general knowledge, as well as, help you with your IELTS reading and listening skills. You can also read the blogs on IELTS Simon's old website- I have given the link above. Most importantly, these will help you develop the habit of thinking in English- which will in turn help with your speaking skills. These activities are enjoyable and will help keep your motivations up in the long run.  
  
On an ending note, these are all the learnings from my experience of taking the exam. This basically is a note on taking a very compact preparation within a short period of time. Such short preparations may not be suitable for everyone, and hence, many people may not find this post useful. But even if only a handful of people find this useful, my purpose would be served. Please correct me if there's any error in informatiom that I've provided. Also, please let me know in the comments section if it helps you even a little bit in your IELTS journey. Good luck and God bless your IELTS preparations!

## Comments

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