

The IELTS Teacher presents...

Lecture 1

Mastering IELTS Speaking: Express Course

Welcome to the course!



Why should you listen to me?

A bit about me:

I've been running a website called The IELTS Teacher since 2013, and in that time I've given thousands of one-to-one Skype lessons to hundreds of students. I also run a team of brilliant teachers who provide these lessons too.

The majority of our students have gone on to achieve their IELTS goals, with many achieving band 7, band 7.5, band 8 and in some cases band 8.5 and band 9 in their Speaking tests.

Through my years of exclusively IELTS-focused lessons, I've learnt the most common mistakes students make in the Speaking test, and I've also formulated a number of strategies to help students nail the score they need.

An introduction to the course

- **Who is this course for?:** If you're aiming to achieve Band 7 or above in IELTS Speaking, this course is for you.
- **How the course is structured:** 5 sections designed to address each part of the Speaking test, helping you to produce confident, accurate answers by focusing on band descriptor requirements.
- **Why this course works:** This course works because it addresses the most common difficulties encountered when responding to IELTS Speaking questions. It offers a number of clear strategies for tackling the different parts of the Speaking test and gives you a foundation for practice moving forward.

How the course is structured

Section 1 - An Introduction to the Course

Areas covered:

- Course structure / aims
- An overview of the IELTS exam
- Focus on the Speaking test
- Band descriptors (Fluency/Coherence; Vocabulary, Grammar, Pronunciation)

How the course is structured

Section 2 - Part 1: The Interview

Areas covered:

- Getting started (Fluency and Coherence)
 - Paraphrasing (Lexical Resource)
 - Identifying the question (Grammatical Range and Accuracy)
 - Recognising your weaknesses (Pronunciation)
-

How the course is structured

Section 3 - Part 2: The Long Turn

Areas covered:

- Segmenting and the 'ACE' strategy (Fluency and Coherence)
 - Common vocabulary mistakes (Lexical Resource)
 - Common grammar mistakes (Grammatical Range and Accuracy)
 - Syllable stress (Pronunciation)
-

How the course is structured

Section 4 - Part 3: The Discussion

Areas covered:

- Discourse markers and listing (Fluency and Coherence)
 - Idioms and collocations (Lexical Resource)
 - Complex sentences (Grammatical Range and Accuracy)
 - Sentence stress and intonation (Pronunciation)
-

How the course is structured

Section 5 - Conclusion

Areas covered:

- Handling anxiety
- Getting guidance
- Secrets to success: Tips and techniques in IELTS Speaking
- **A model answer:** Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3

What this course is and is not

This course is not:

- a vocabulary booster. There are a number of other Udemy courses which aim to provide you with new vocabulary in specific topics
- a grammar fixer. We'll certainly look at important grammar points in this course, but other courses will look at these in more detail.
- a pronunciation coach. Again, there are other courses on Udemy which will help you here.

This course is:

- a 20-lecture crash course on how to improve your IELTS Speaking score as soon as possible by highlighting a number of helpful strategies you can use and revealing the most common mistakes students make. To make the most of this course, find a tutor to practice with!

How to approach this course

Recommendation: Complete within **2 weeks**. However, if you have responsibilities, take your time.

To make the most of this course, you should:

- Bring a focused and committed attitude to every lecture, taking notes as you listen
- Continue to practice alone by answering and recording IELTS Speaking questions frequently
- Listen to at least 2 podcasts or educational YouTube videos in English *every day*
- Find an IELTS Speaking tutor with whom you can practice
- Try to enjoy the process!

Contact:

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or suggestions. I read everything you send!

You can contact me via:

- Udemy. Just use the comment function at the side of the page.
- Email: matt@theieltsteacher.com
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/theieltsteacher
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/theieltsteacher
- My website: www.theieltsteacher.com



Lecture 2

An Introduction to IELTS

Walking you through the exam.



What is IELTS?

- IELTS is the **I**nternational **E**nglish **L**anguage **T**esting **S**ystem. **IELTS**.
- It is the most world's **most popular** English language proficiency test.
- Over 2 million tests taken per year.
- Assesses all skills - Listening, Reading, Writing & **Speaking**.
- Accepted by schools, universities, employers, and immigration authorities.

How IELTS is structured: Walkthrough

Academic

Universities / Academic Careers

General Training

Visa Applications / Non-academic Careers

2 modules

Academic Reading

- Each section = 1 long text
- Books, journals, magazines
- Non-specialist - academic

General Reading

- Section 1+2 = 2-3 short texts
- Section 3 = 1 long text
- Notices, magazines, newspapers, books, official/company docs

Academic Writing

- Task 1: Graph / Diagram
- Task 2: Essay

General Writing

- Task 1: Letter
- Task 2: Essay

Skill	Time	Sections/ questions	Important Points
Listening	30 mins (+10 for transferring answers)	4 sections x 10 questions = 40 questions	Pencil only. Audio played once only.
Reading	1 hour (save 10 mins for transferring answers)	3 sections / 40 questions	Pencil only.
Writing	1 hour (20 mins Task 1 / 40 mins Task 2)	2 Tasks, 2 questions	Task 1 word min = 150 Task 2 word min = 250
Speaking	11-14 minutes	3 parts - no set number of questions	Part 1 = interview Part 2 = long turn Part 3 = discussion

How IELTS is scored

- There is no 'pass' or 'fail' in IELTS
- You are graded in each component, and the average gives you your score
- $L = 6 / R = 7 / W = 6 / S = 7$:
Overall score = 6.5
- IELTS scores are valid for 2 years after certification

IELTS Band Score	CEFR Score	Ability Level
9	C2	Expert user
8	C1/C2	Very good user
7	C1	Good user
6	B2	Competent User
5	B1/B2	Modest User
4	B1	Limited User
3	A2/B1	Extremely Limited User
2	A2	Intermittent User
1	A1	Non-user

IELTS score requirements

- **5.5 - 6.0** = Entry to a university Foundation course
- **6.0 - 6.5** = Entry to a Bachelor's degree course
- **6.5 - 7.0** = Entry to a Master's degree course
- **7.0+** = Typically required to work in English-speaking countries in professions such as medicine, law, accounting and academic research

Make sure you check with each employer / university / immigration office exactly what score you need!

Lecture 3

Understanding IELTS Speaking

An in-depth look at the
IELTS Speaking test.



IELTS Speaking: Key points

- 3 parts
- 11-14 minutes all together
- Part 1: 4-5 minutes / Part 2: 3-4 minutes / Part 3: 4-5 minutes
- You will speak to a real-life examiner, not a machine
- You will be told when the test begins
- The test will be recorded

Part 1 Example Questions

The Interview

Part 1 of the Speaking test is called the 'Interview' stage.

The examiner will introduce themselves and ask you to introduce yourself and confirm your identity by providing your passport or identity card.

The examiner will then ask a few general questions on familiar topics like work, home, family etc. There is no set number of questions.

There is no need to create extended, developed answers here. This section should help you relax and talk naturally, as if to a friend.

Part 1 Example Questions

The Interview

What is your job?

Do you like your job?

What do you study?

Is it a popular subject in your country?

How do you spend your free time?

What do you do at weekends?

What does your home look like?

How long have you lived in your home?

How many people are in your family?

Do you have any pets?

Part 2 Example Questions

The Long Turn

In Part 2, the examiner will give you a task card which asks you to talk about a specific topic, with further prompts to help guide your talk.

You will be given one minute to prepare and make notes.

You will then be asked to talk for 1-2 minutes.

The examiner will stop you once the two minutes are up.

The examiner may ask you follow-up questions based on your talk.

Part 2 Example Questions

The Long Turn

Describe the person in your family who you most admire.

You should say:

- what their relationship is to you
- what they have done in their life
- what they do now

and explain why you admire them so much.

Describe an interesting historic place.

You should say:

- what it is
- where it is located
- what you can see there now

and explain why this place is interesting.

Describe an experience you had with animals.

You should say:

- where and when the experience took place
- why the experience happened
- what happened at the time

and explain how you felt about this experience.

Describe a piece of technology you find useful.

You should say:

- what it is
- what you can do with it
- how often you use it

and explain why you find it so useful.

Describe an important decision you had to make with money.

You should say:

- what the decision was
- how you made your choice
- what was the result of your choice

and explain how you now feel about the choice.

Describe a restaurant that you like to go to.

You should say:

- where the restaurant is
- what kind of food it serves
- how often you go there

and say why you like eating there so much.

Part 3 Example Questions

The Discussion

In Part 3, the examiner will ask you questions related to the topic in Part 2.

These questions are made to give you the chance to discuss more abstract issues and ideas. There is no set number of questions.

Answers to these questions should be longer and more developed than answers to Part 1 questions.

The examiner will tell you when the exam is over.

Part 3 Example Questions

The Discussion

What kinds of books are popular with children in your country? Why do you think that is?

Do you think people pay attention to advertising on television? Why is this?

Have relationships between parents and children changed in recent years in your country? Why?

What jobs can be affected by different weather conditions? Why?

Lecture 4

What Do You Want From Me?

The IELTS Speaking
marking criteria.



How IELTS Speaking is assessed

IELTS examiners assess your speaking performance by looking at **4** things...

Fluency and
Coherence

Lexical Resource

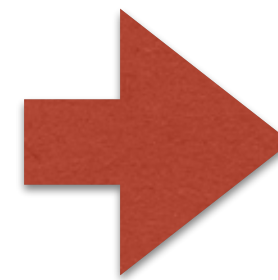
Grammatical Range
and Accuracy

Pronunciation

Fluency and Coherence

According to the official IELTS Speaking band descriptors, to achieve band 7 and above you:

- “must speak at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence”
- “may demonstrate language-related hesitation, or some repetition and/or self-correction”
- “must use a range of connectives and discourse markers with flexibility”



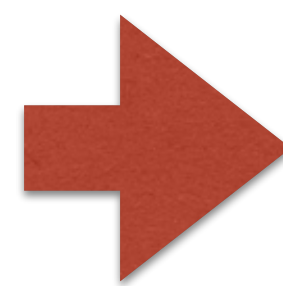
In other words:

- speak for a long time without struggling to find the right words
- don't worry too much if you occasionally hesitate, repeat words or correct yourself
- link your ideas with appropriate words and expressions, but try not to use the same expressions every time

Lexical Resource

According to the official IELTS Speaking band descriptors, to achieve band 7 and above you:

- “must use vocabulary flexibly to discuss a variety of topics”
- “must use less common and idiomatic vocabulary and show some awareness of style and collocation”
- “must use paraphrase effectively”



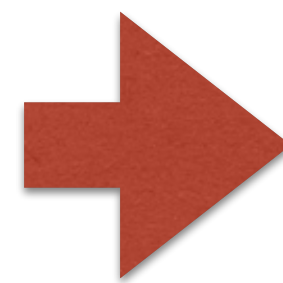
In other words:

- show that you can talk about a variety of different topics by using a range of topic-related vocabulary
- use a few idioms and less common expressions in your answers, and make sure to include collocations
- avoid repeating the same words throughout

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

According to the official IELTS Speaking band descriptors, to achieve band 7 and above you:

- “must use a range of complex structures with some flexibility”
- “must frequently produce error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes may persist”



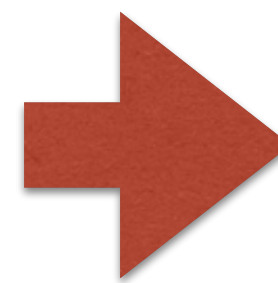
In other words:

- do not only speak in very simple sentences, but try to include more complex structures too
- try to avoid making grammatical mistakes, but don't worry if you make a few over the course of the test
- aim for a sentence accuracy rate of 50%+

Pronunciation

According to the official IELTS Speaking band descriptors, to achieve band 7 and above you:

- “must show all the positive features of Band 6, but not all of the positive features of Band 8”
- “must use a **wide** range of pronunciation features **with mixed control**”
- “should be generally understood (**Band 6**)” / “should be easy to understand throughout” (**Band 8**)



In other words:

- make sure all Band 6 band descriptors are met, and also meet a few of the Band 8 band descriptors
- show you can pronounce words accurately, both with stress and sound, and use appropriate intonation
- make sure you can be easily understood

Band descriptors: A summary

Fluency and Coherence

- Speak clearly at length
- Use a range of connectives
- Use discourse markers
- May show hesitation, but try to avoid too much of it

Lexical Resource

- Use vocabulary to discuss various topics
- Use less common/idiomatic vocabulary
- Show style and use collocations
- Paraphrase effectively

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

- Show a range of grammar, simple and complex
- Don't make too many grammatical mistakes
- May make some mistakes
- +50% sentence accuracy

Pronunciation

- Show control over a range of pronunciation features
- Effectively use intonation and stress
- Be understood
- Only occasional mistakes

Lecture 5

Getting Started

Getting off to a good start -
Fluency and Coherence



The importance of a strong start

Compare these two answers to the same question. Which answer do you think is stronger?

Do you enjoy your job? Why / Why not?

Answer 1: Well, umm, that's a difficult question. I mean, it depends on, uhh, a lot of things. Um, I like meeting lots of different people.

Answer 2: Yes, I do, I enjoy it a lot. I love my work because it gives me a chance to meet people from a huge range of different cultures.

The importance of a strong start

Compare these two answers to the same question. Which answer do you think is stronger?

Do you enjoy your job? Why / Why not?

Answer 1: Well, umm, that's a difficult question. I mean, it depends on, uhh, a lot of things. Um, I like meeting lots of different people.

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Do you enjoy your job? Why / Why not?

Answer: Yes, I do, I enjoy it a lot. I love my work because it gives me a chance to meet people from a huge range of different cultures.

The importance of a strong start

Compare these two answers to the same question. Which answer do you think is stronger?

*Do you **enjoy** your job? Why / Why not?*

Answer: Yes, I **do**, I **enjoy** it a lot. I love my work because it gives me a chance to meet people from a huge range of different cultures.

1: Use the **language** and **grammar** in the **question** to help you make a strong start. Do not worry about repetition, at least not when starting.

2: Answer the question directly, and then **develop** it with **one or two points**.

Example questions

- *Do you like to travel?*
- *How long have you lived in your home?*
- *Who did the cooking in your family when you were a child?*
- *How popular are bicycles in your town?*
- *What are you studying at the moment?*
- *Do you like to spend your free time alone or with other people?*

Bad starts

- *Do you like to travel?*

THE OVERCOMPLICATED: *The question of whether I am a fan of travelling or prefer staying homebound is not a simple one to which I can respond. Journeying to exotic nations is*

- *How long have you lived in your home?*

THE GET-TO-THE-POINT: *Hmm, well, that's a very good question. So, well, actually, I guess it would be, around about, more or less...*

- *Who did the cooking in your family when you were a child?*

THE OVERLY BRIEF: *My mother cooked.*

Bad starts

- *How popular are bicycles in your town?*

THE IRRELEVANT: *Well, the most popular form of transport is cars. There are cars everywhere in my city, they cause so much traffic.*

- *What are you studying at the moment?*

THE REPETITIVE: *English is the subject I am studying at the moment, so I am studying English at the present time.*

- *Do you like to spend your free time alone or with other people?*

THE 'EXAM VOICE': *It is my firm belief that spending free time alone is most pleasurable. This is a consequence of ...*

Example questions

- *Do you like to travel?*
- *How long have you lived in your home?*
- *Who did the cooking in your family when you were a child?*
- *How popular are bicycles in your town?*
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- *How popular are bicycles in your town?*
- *What are you studying at the moment?*
- *Do you like to spend your free time alone or with other people?*

Good starts

- *Do you like to travel?*

I **do**, yes. I love **travelling** because I'm really curious about the world and I think going out and seeing new places is the only way for me to satisfy this curiosity.

- *How long have you lived in your home?*

I've lived in my current home for about the last three years. I moved to this place from London, the capital, when I was in my late twenties because I was getting tired of city life.

- *Who did the cooking in your family when you were a child?*

My mum did the cooking when I was a child. I've never really thought about why, but I guess at the time it was just traditional gender roles for mums to cook and dads to work, rather than the other way around.

Good starts

- *How popular are bicycles in your town?*

Bicycles are fairly popular where I live, but cars are still more common by far. I think bikes are gaining more popularity though, and I've certainly noticed that many more bicycle lanes have been built recently.

- *What are you studying at the moment?*

I'm studying English Language and Literature at the moment, over at King's College in London. I started my studies two and a half years ago.

- *Do you like to spend your free time alone or with other people?*

Personally, I prefer to spend my free time on my own. For example, last week I was given the night off work, and I chose to spend the time unwinding with a book instead of meeting with friends.

Continuing your answer

- I **do**, yes. I love **travelling** because I'm really curious about the world and I think going out and seeing new places is the only way for me to satisfy this curiosity.
- I've **lived** in my current **home** for about **the last three years**. I moved to this place from London, the capital, when I was in my late twenties because I was getting tired of city life.
- **My mum did the cooking when I was a child**. I've never really thought about why, but I guess at the time it was just traditional gender roles for mums to cook and dads to work, rather than the other way around.
- **Bicycles** are **fairly popular where I live**, but cars are still more common by far. I think bikes are gaining more popularity though, and I've certainly noticed that many more bicycle lanes have been built recently.
- I'm **studying** English Language and Literature **at the moment**, over at King's College in London. I **started** my studies two and a half years ago.
- Personally, I prefer to **spend** my **free time on my own**. For example, last week I was given the night off work, and I chose to spend the time unwinding with a book instead of meeting with friends.

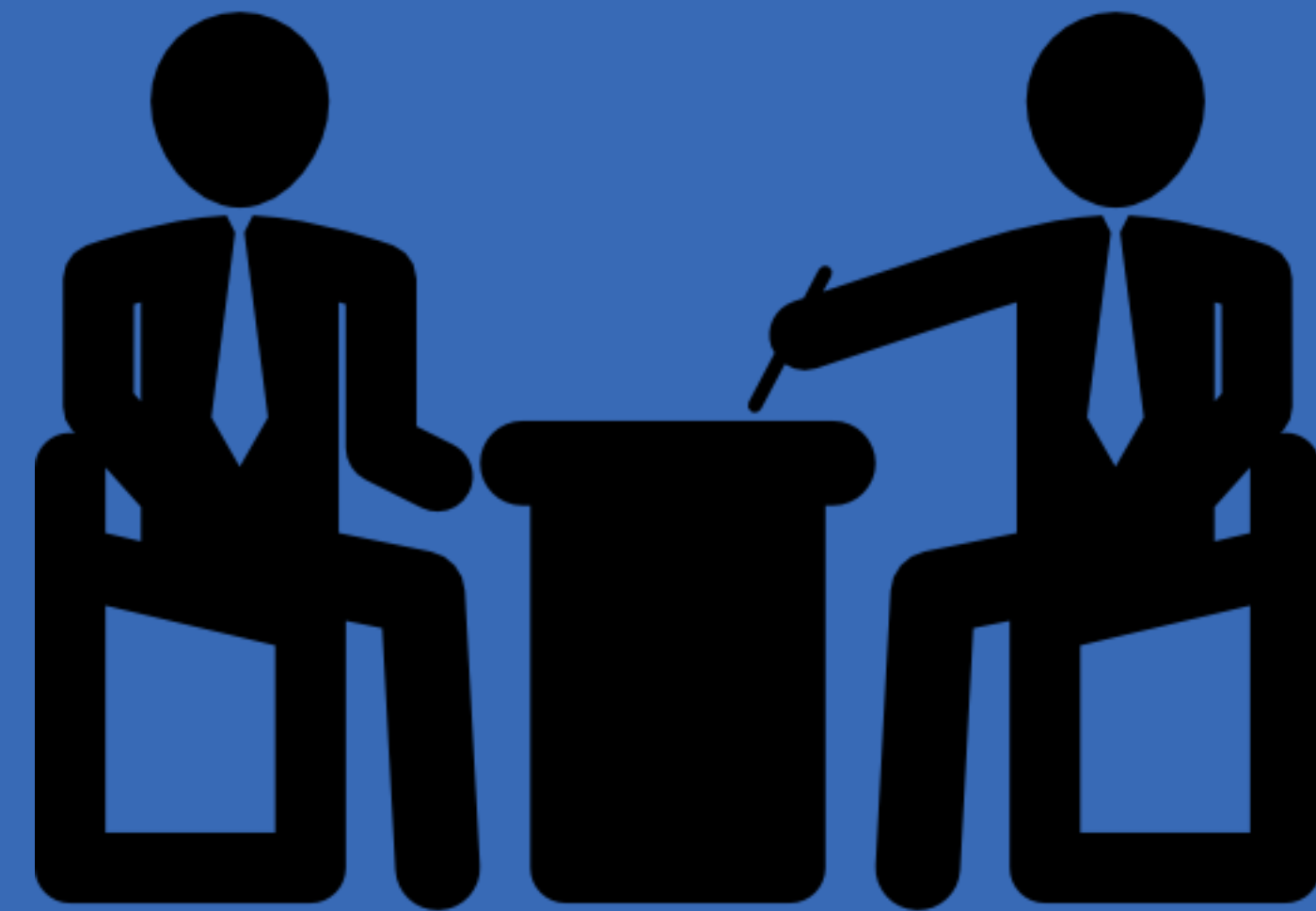
Continuing your answer

- I **do**, yes. I love **travelling** because I'm really curious about the world and I think going out and seeing new places is the only way for me to satisfy this curiosity. reason
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- **Bicycles** are **fairly popular where I live**, but cars are still more common by far. I think bikes are gaining more popularity though, and I've certainly noticed that many more bicycle lanes have been built recently. comparison
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- Personally, I prefer to **spend** my **free time on my own**. For example, last week I was given the night off work, and I chose to spend the time unwinding with a book instead of meeting with friends. example

Lecture 6

Avoiding Repetition

Preparing for paraphrasing -
Lexical Resource



Why paraphrasing is important

In the previous lecture, we looked at how we can use the language in the question to help us get started.

However, once you're into the answer, you should try to avoid repeating the same vocabulary. Repetition demonstrates a lack of flexibility with language.

Band 7: "Uses vocabulary flexibly to discuss a variety of topics."

Band 6: "Has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies."

Two examples

- **Would you rather live in a hot place or a cold place?**

I think I would rather live in a hot place. I like hot weather, so a hot place would suit me. It's quite hot where I live, so I like where I live.

Personally, I'd rather live in a hot place. I'm happiest when I'm in warm weather, I can go to the beach and enjoy sunbathing. The temperature gets pretty high where I live, so I'd be happy staying here.

Two examples

- **Would you rather live in a hot place or a cold place?**

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Two examples

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I think I would **rather live** in a **hot** place. I like **hot** weather, so a **hot** place would suit me. It's quite **hot** where I live, so I'd **rather live** here.

Personally, I'd **rather live** in a **hot** place. I'm happiest when I'm in **warm** weather, I can go to the beach and enjoy sunbathing. The **temperature gets pretty high** where I live, so **I'd be happy staying** here.

Working on paraphrasing

Paraphrasing in the Speaking test is different to paraphrasing in the Writing test: when you're speaking, you don't have time to go through all the synonyms you know! It's all about **preparation**.

So here are the dos and do nots of paraphrase practice in Speaking.

DO: Play the IELTS word association game. Play the 'one minute topic' card game. Have conversations in English. Listen to talks on a variety of topics (ted.com is a great resource). Read, read, read. And, of course, practice regularly!

DO NOT: Try too hard to demonstrate your range. Take really long pauses when trying to find the perfect word. Repeat the same words over and over.

Play the IELTS word association game

Play the IELTS word association game

This game should ideally be played with 2+ people, but can be played alone for practice purposes.

Choose a word from your IELTS question (e.g. **hot** in ‘would you rather live in a **hot** place or a cold place?’). Now, take it in turns to say the first word that comes to your head (or just keep saying new words if you’re playing alone).

For **IELTS** practice, the twist on this game is that you should **write down** every word that is said.

Then, look at the first 5-10 words and turn those words into a sentence.

Example #1

HOT - *Would you rather live in a **hot** place or a cold place?*

- warm
- high temperature
- summer
- beach
- sunshine
- sunbathing
- swimming
- ocean

I'd rather live in a warm place, I love the high temperatures in summer. Some of my favourite things are sunbathing at the beach, swimming in the ocean, and enjoying the sunshine.

Example #2

SHOPPING - *Do you enjoy **shopping**? Why / Why not?*

- stores
- credit card
- shopping bags
- clothes
- fashion
- sales

I do, I love going around to lots of different stores with my credit card and coming out with loads of shopping bags! I'm really into fashion so I'm always buying clothes, particularly when they're on sale.

Example #3

SCHOOL SUBJECTS - *What **school subject** did you enjoy most at school?*

- mathematics
- equations
- sums
- logic
- teacher
- homework
- calculator

Your answers don't need to be as long as this in Part 1, but this is a great way to practice using varied vocabulary when speaking about a range of topics.

The subject I enjoyed most was probably mathematics, maybe because working out equations and sums with logic was simple for me, and we had a great teacher too. And the homework was usually easy because you could just use your calculator!

Play the 'one minute topic' game

Again, this game should ideally be played with 2+ people, but can be played alone if necessary.

Take a number of cue cards and on each card write down a topic (e.g. 'sport'). Shuffle the cards and place them face down on the table.

Set a one minute timer on your phone or watch.

Turn over the first card and then start the timer. Now **speak!** The aim here is to talk about that topic for one whole minute without any preparation.

Have your friend take notes, or if you are alone, record yourself and note what you talked about. Note which words you repeated a lot and try to think of alternatives.

Some Examples



Home

Some Examples



Home

Some Examples



Television

Some Examples



Television

Some Examples



Sports

Some Examples



Sports

Some Examples

TOO EASY? Increase the difficulty by adding an extra minute for each topic!



Colours

Resources for improving vocabulary

This course is designed for those who are looking to improve their IELTS speaking scores quickly. As such, we do not have time to look at long lists of vocabulary for different topics.

However, if you would like to learn new vocabulary for specific topics, I recommend these resources:

Check Your English Vocabulary for IELTS by Rawdon Wyatt

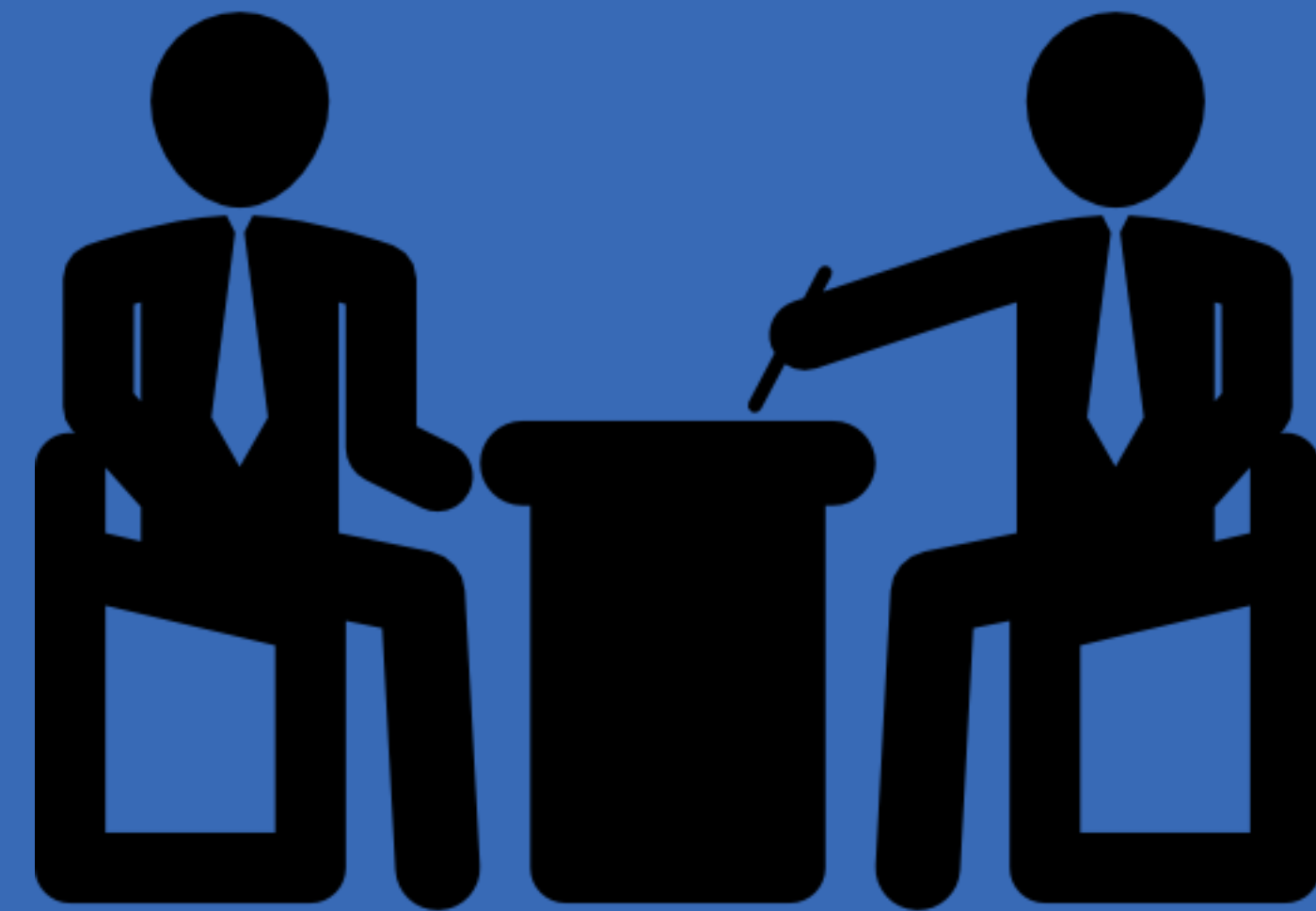
Vocabulary for IELTS Advanced by Pauline Cullen

Udemy courses!

Lecture 7

Identifying the Question

Answering in the correct tense -
Grammatical Range and Accuracy



Listening for grammar

As we've seen, thinking about the examiner's choice of *vocabulary* is very important.

But it's also vital to listen to the examiner's *grammar*.

Notice the difference between these two questions:

Do you enjoy travelling?

Have you done much travelling recently?

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Notice the difference between these two questions:

Do you enjoy travelling?

Present simple

Have you done much travelling recently?

Present perfect

Listening for grammar

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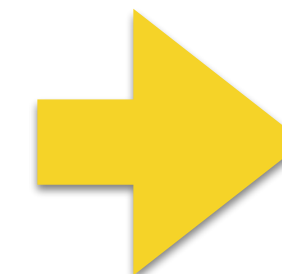
Notice the difference between these two questions:

Do you enjoy travelling?

Present simple

Have you done much travelling recently?

Present perfect



Yes, I do / No, I don't

Yes, I have / No, I haven't

Grammar in practice

Try to fill in the gaps of the model answer using the verbs below in their appropriate form.

- *Did you enjoy your time at school?*

Yes, I _____. My teachers _____ fantastic, really helpful, and I _____ a lot of enthusiasm for my subjects. Looking back, I _____ grateful that I _____ to a school where students and teachers _____ one another.

have

be

do

go

feel

respect

Grammar in practice

Try to fill in the gaps of the model answer using the verbs below in their appropriate form.

- *Did you enjoy your time at school?*

*Yes, I **did**. My teachers _____ fantastic, really helpful, and I _____ a lot of enthusiasm for my subjects. Looking back, I _____ grateful that I _____ to a school where students and teachers _____ one another.*

have

be

go

feel

respect

Grammar in practice

Try to fill in the gaps of the model answer using the verbs below in their appropriate form.

- *Did you enjoy your time at school?*

*Yes, I **did**. My teachers **were** fantastic, really helpful, and I _____ a lot of enthusiasm for my subjects. Looking back, I _____ grateful that I _____ to a school where students and teachers _____ one another.*

have

go

feel

respect

Grammar in practice

Try to fill in the gaps of the model answer using the verbs below in their appropriate form.

- *Did you enjoy your time at school?*

*Yes, I **did**. My teachers **were** fantastic, really helpful, and I **had** a lot of enthusiasm for my subjects. Looking back, I _____ grateful that I _____ to a school where students and teachers _____ one another.*

go

feel

respect

Grammar in practice

Try to fill in the gaps of the model answer using the verbs below in their appropriate form.

- *Did you enjoy your time at school?*

*Yes, I **did**. My teachers **were** fantastic, really helpful, and I **had** a lot of enthusiasm for my subjects. Looking back, I **feel** grateful that I _____ to a school where students and teachers _____ one another.*

go

respect

Grammar in practice

Try to fill in the gaps of the model answer using the verbs below in their appropriate form.

- *Did you enjoy your time at school?*

*Yes, I **did**. My teachers **were** fantastic, really helpful, and I **had** a lot of enthusiasm for my subjects. Looking back, I **feel** grateful that I **went** to a school where students and teachers _____ one another.*

respect

Grammar in practice

Try to fill in the gaps of the model answer using the verbs below in their appropriate form.

- *Did you enjoy your time at school?*

*Yes, I **did**. My teachers **were** fantastic, really helpful, and I **had** a lot of enthusiasm for my subjects. Looking back, I **feel** grateful that I **went** to a school where students and teachers **respected** one another.*

For grammatical **accuracy**, respond to the question in the appropriate tense.
For grammatical **range**, look for opportunities to include a different tense.

The wonders of time travel

Sometimes, changing tenses is the natural and obvious approach, such as with this question.

- Have you ever been to an art gallery?

Yes, I **have**, I've **been** to a few. I last **went** to an art gallery a few months ago, when I **visited** London to do some sightseeing. The gallery **was running** an exhibition on Russian art, which I **found** quite fascinating.

After using the **present perfect** to answer the initial yes/no question, we naturally moved into the **past simple** to offer more detail. Notice how we found an opportunity to include the **past continuous** too.

The wonders of time travel

Other times, you may need to think outside the box for an opportunity to include another tense (or two, or three).

- *What types of music do you listen to?*

Oh, it's hard to say. I like lots of different genres of music: rock; classical; hip-hop; pop. I used to listen to country, but I'm not really a fan of that anymore. Right now, I'm listening to a lot of classical music.

Here, we moved from the question tense, which is present simple, into the 'used to' past and then the present continuous. This is better than staying in the present simple (e.g. ..., but I don't like ...).

The dangers of time travel

However, you need to be careful to avoid changing tenses at **inappropriate times** or in an **inaccurate way**. Make sure the context fits; don't just change tenses with no purpose.

- Do you prefer to have one particular friend or a group of friends?

*Personally, I prefer to have one friend. I **used to have had** loads of friends, but we weren't very close, and that was tiring. Now I have just a couple of really good friends, which **has been** much better.*

The used to form here is inaccurate and should be: **I used to have**.

The present perfect is used inappropriately here because of the use of 'now', which means we should use the present simple: **which is much better**.

The dangers of time travel

The most common tense mistake I see in Part 1 is that candidates will use the present tense when they are being asked a question about the past.

- *Has your fashion changed since you were a child?*

Yes, I think it has changed. When I was young, I always wear baggy jeans and bright and colourful t-shirts, but these days I am wearing more form-fitting clothes with muted colours.

Where are the errors here?

The dangers of time travel

The most common tense mistake I see in Part 1 is that candidates will use the present tense when they are being asked a question about the past.

- *Has your fashion changed since you were a child?*

*Yes, I think it has changed. When I was young, I always **wore** baggy jeans and bright and colourful t-shirts, but these days I **wear** more form-fitting clothes with muted colours.*

Where are the errors here?

Practice

Here's a question where you should be able to use what we've learnt. Firstly, identify the tense. Answer in that tense. Then see if you can bring in one or two other tenses.

Have a go first, and then see if it's similar to mine.

- *Has anyone ever taught you to dance?*

No, they haven't, I don't think I've ever had formal lessons. Having said that, I was dancing just last week at my friend's wedding! Though I'm a terrible dancer as my balance is awful!

Practice

Here's a question where you should be able to use what we've learnt. Firstly, identify the tense. Answer in that tense. Then see if you can bring in one or two other tenses.

Have a go first, and then see if it's similar to mine.

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Here's a question where you should be able to use what we've learnt. Firstly, identify the tense. Answer in that tense. Then see if you can bring in one or two other tenses.

Have a go first, and then see if it's similar to mine.

- ***Has anyone ever taught you to dance?***

No, they haven't, I don't think I've ever had formal lessons. Having said that, I was dancing just last week at my friend's wedding! Though I'm a terrible dancer as my balance is awful!

Lecture 8

Recognising Weaknesses

Targeting your problem spots -
Pronunciation



The importance of pronunciation

It's very important that you speak as clearly as possible in the Speaking test. The clarity of your speech is the essence of your pronunciation score.

However, bear in mind that you are **not** being tested on your accent. Your accent will not have an impact on your score. What will?

- The pronunciation of individual sounds
- Word stress
- Speed
- Sentence stress
- Intonation

The pronunciation of individual sounds

This is a tricky topic to cover as there are so many individual sounds in English. It's important for you to try and identify which ones you struggle with.

From my experience, here are the most common problem areas, with advice on how to fix these issues.

BEFORE WE BEGIN:

- exaggerate your sounds
- pronounce very slowly
- notice the changes in tension, mouth shape, tongue position etc.
- give your jaw a massage when it's over!

The pronunciation of consonants

- **θ** (this is the unvoiced 'th' sound in 'thing', 'thief' and 'both')

The most common mispronunciation here is to pronounce this sound as a 'd', or 't', e.g. *ting* (for 'thing'), *baht* (for 'bath') and *dief* (for 'thief'). The trick here is the **position of your tongue** and how you **use your breath**.

Stick your tongue far out. Now hold your tongue between your teeth. Breathe through your teeth. This should be creating the unvoiced 'th' sound already. Now say the word: *thank you*.

- **ð** (this is the voiced 'th' sound in 'those', 'there' and 'although')

This is a voiced 'th', which means you should feel some vibration in your throat. The same problems with 'd' and 't' sounds appear when attempting this sound.

Instead of sticking your tongue *far* out, stick it out *just a little*. Try to make the sound of a buzzing bee (vibrate the tongue). Now say the word: *There*. Try to exaggerate the buzzing bee sound for practice.

Tongue twister: Although they thought of these things here, they gathered both of those things there.

The pronunciation of consonants

- **l** (this is the 'l' sound in 'long', 'light' and 'belly')

This pronunciation feature is most challenging for East Asian speakers as there is often no distinction between the sound 'l' and the sound 'r' seen below.

To make the 'l' sound, press the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Push air through your mouth and flick the tip of your tongue forward. Your lips should not move with this sound. Try the word: *click*. Pronounce it very slowly.

- **r** (this is the 'r' sound in 'wrong', 'right' and 'berry')

To make this sound, keep the tip of your tongue down, not up. It should not be touching anything. Press the mid/back of your tongue against the insides of the top teeth. Round your lips (think, the word 'round' begins with a round-lip shape) and push air through your mouth: *round*.

Tongue twister: Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry (ad infinitum)

The pronunciation of consonants

- **w** (this is the 'w' sound in 'west', 'worse' and 'rowing')

This pronunciation feature is often difficult for German, Eastern European and Indian speakers, commonly confused with the 'v' sound below.

With this sound, you need to shape your lips into a kissing gesture. Don't worry, there are other Udemmy courses to teach you those skills... The trick here is to push air through your mouth while making this gesture. Now say the word: *weird*. Make sure your top teeth are **not** touching your bottom lip.

- **v** (this is the 'v' sound in 'vest', 'verse' and 'roving')

Often, this sound is confused in the opposite direction, with the sound above.

The trick here is simply to stick your front teeth out over your bottom lip, like Bugs Bunny. Breathe through your mouth with your teeth in this position and say the word: *very*. There is no need to purse your lips here.

Tongue twister: She had very weird vicious wishes that the worst would happen to the versed men; these very weird vicious wishes made the versed men very wary that the worst would happen.

The pronunciation of vowels

- **iː** (this is the 'ee' sound in 'beat', 'sheep' and 'reach')

To make this sound, you need to put on your widest smile. Not a weak, yearbook photo smile, but a wide, cheesy grin. Tense your facial muscles (lips, teeth, tongue, and chin) and say: *cheese*.

A good way to check if you're getting this right is to place your finger under your chin. Your muscles there should feel tense.

- **ɪ** (this is the 'ih' sound in 'bit', 'ship' and 'rich')

Now relax. Release the tension in your facial muscles, open your mouth slightly, and place the tip of your tongue behind your bottom teeth. Now say the word: *win*. Now: *winning at speaking*.

Tongue twister: Strict vegans eat beet chips with bean dip, and keep meat and fish dishes out of reach.

Moving forward

Pronunciation is an essential part of your score in IELTS speaking, so it's vital that you first **recognise your weaknesses** and then **turn them into strengths**.

To help you with the first part, record yourself speaking for one minute (an extract from a book is fine) and then pass the recording to an English teacher or a native friend or acquaintance. Ask them to point out any pronunciation difficulties.

Once you have identified your weak spots, the following tools will be very useful in helping you to improve in these areas.

- 'Sounds' - a pronunciation app from Macmillan
- YouTube - a good way to actually see the shape / movement of the mouth
- Personal tuition / pronunciation coaching

Lecture 9

Segmenting Your Talk

Dividing and organising Part 2 -
Fluency and Coherence



What is segmenting?

Segmenting is the act of breaking something up into smaller, more manageable parts.

Think of an orange. Could you fit a whole one in your mouth? That would be impressive, but probably not. Hence, orange segments.

The same idea applies to our talk in Part 2.

It is hard for the examiner to digest what we're saying when we don't break up our talk. But if we do break up our talk, if we segment, we appear much more fluent and coherent.

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 1

Locate any parts of the topic card that are quite 'black-and-white'.

In this case, **who the child is** (Leah, my niece) and **how old the child is** (7 years old).

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

who this child is and how often you
see him or her

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 1

Locate any parts of the topic card that are quite 'black-and-white'.

In this case, **who the child is** (Leah, my niece) and **how old the child is** (7 years old).

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 1

These parts of the talk will come first as they are too small to form their own segments.*

I'm going to talk about my niece. Her name is Leah, she's 7 years old and my older sister's second child.

*It is not important for the talk to run in the order of the card.

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 2

Write down three points for each of the remaining prompts on the topic card.

If possible, follow the **idea, support, example (ISE)** strategy to give you a clear sense of progression.

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 2

How often

- Once a week
- Sundays - family meal
- Saw her last Sunday

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 2

What she's like

- Intelligent / naughty
- Takes after her mum
- Helped bro with math HW; didn't do hers!

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 2

How you feel

- **Protective**
- **Can be quite clumsy**
- **Watched her like hawk
at park**

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 3

Consider how you will introduce each segment.

Always begin your talk with “I’m going to talk about...”.

After, you have options.

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 3

DIRECT:

“I see her about once a week.”

INTRO:

“With regards to how often I see her, I’d say it’s about once a week.”

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 3

DIRECT:

“She’s a very intelligent child, but quite naughty.”

INTRO:

“As for what she’s like, I’d describe her as intelligent but quite naughty.”

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 3

DIRECT:

*“I tend to feel quite
protective over her.”*

INTRO:

*“If I think about how I feel
about her, I’d say I’m
quite protective.”*

How to segment

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Step 3

Write a '**D**' or an '**I**' next to each of your columns with their three points.

This way, you won't stumble over your words worrying about how to begin your segment.

Planning

PLAN

INTRO: Niece, Leah, 7 y/o, sister's 2nd child.

D

How often

I. Once a week
S. Sundays - fam meal
E. Last week

I

What she's like

I. Intel* / naughty
S. Takes after mum
E. Bro's math HW

D

How I feel about her

I. Protective
S. Can be clumsy
E. Park - hawk idiom

One minute!?

It may seem unrealistic to get this kind of planning done in 1 minute, but it can be done with practice! Try replacing the titles with letters (e.g. 'WSL' for 'what she's like').

Model answer

Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

**who this child is and how often you
see him or her**

how old this child is

what he or she is like

and explain how you feel about this child.

Model answer

I'm going to talk about my niece. Her name is Leah, she's 7 years old and she's my older sister's second child.

I see her about once a week. She goes to school during the week, but all our family usually get together on Sundays for a family meal. In fact, I saw her just a few days ago for our Sunday lunch, along with her two brothers, and we all had a lovely time together.

As for what she's like as a person, I'd describe her as very intelligent, but a bit naughty. I think she takes after her mum in that way, who was just like that when we were kids. For instance, just the other day Leah was helping her older brother with his math homework, but when it came to doing her own, she refused and had a tantrum! I can remember my sister doing something very similar when she was that age!

I guess I tend to feel quite protective over her, which is probably because she's prone to being quite clumsy. She's already had quite a few accidents in her time, so it's important to keep a close eye on her. I took her to the park a few weeks ago, for example, and had to watch her like a hawk while she was on the swings to make sure she didn't fall off! Still, she's a really fun child to be around and she always makes me laugh.

Lecture 10

Common Vocabulary Errors

Avoiding typical vocabulary mistakes -
Lexical Resource



It's not just about range

One of the most common worries I hear from my students is that they feel they don't have enough vocabulary.

This is often not the case. The lexical range of most students at this level is quite wide, but we all sometimes feel (even us natives) like we need more vocabulary to communicate ourselves with more clarity.

By all means, continue adding to your vocabulary set. But at the same time, do not forget the importance of **accuracy** when it comes to vocabulary.

Let's look at some of the most common lexical errors made in Speaking, and how we can avoid making these mistakes ourselves.

Word formation

Word formation relates to whether words are formed accurately. There are a few things that can go wrong with word formation.

There can be mistakes with prefixes (un-, in-, de-, im-, pre-, anti-, etc.)

There can be mistakes with suffixes (-less, -ful, -ation, -ify-, -itis, -ion, etc.)

When we change from one suffix to another, we often change to a different **word class**.

Here are some mistakes I hear frequently in terms of word class.

Word formation

I hate doing my homework, it's so bored.

I need to fill my weekend with lots of activities, otherwise I'm really boring.

EEK, no! In the second sentence, you're telling everyone you're no fun!

Word formation

I hate doing my homework, it's so boring.

I need to fill my weekend with lots of activities, otherwise I'm really bored.

EEK, no! In the second sentence, you're telling everyone you're no fun!

This is a problem of *suffixes*, as we looked at earlier.

You describe **SOMETHING** as bor-**ING**.

You **FEEL** bor-**ED**.

Word formation

Can you find the mistakes in these sentences? Can you fix these mistakes?

I'm really interesting in archaeology, I love the idea of digging up the past and learning about how people from the past lived. I find that completely fascinated.

My husband and I have just booked a holiday to the Caribbean for next summer, so I'm really exciting as work has been so stressed recently. I can't wait to feel more relaxing.

One thing I find really annoyed is the way that children these days spend all their time on their phones. No wonder they're so boring!

I didn't do that well in my exams last year, which was a little disappointed. I hope to do better this year as I'm a lot more engaging than I was last year.

I love IELTS! It's so enjoying!

Word formation

Can you find the mistakes in these sentences? Can you fix these mistakes?

I'm really interest**ed** in archaeology, I love the idea of digging up the past and learning about how people from the past lived. I find that completely fascinat**ing**.

My husband and I have just booked a holiday to the Caribbean for next summer, so I'm really excit**ed** as work has been so stress**ful** recently. I can't wait to feel more relax**ed**.

One thing I find really annoy**ing** is the way that children these days spend all their time on their phones. No wonder they're so bor**ed**!

I didn't do that well in my exams last year, which was a little disappoint**ing**. I hope to do better this year as I'm a lot more engag**ed** than I was last year.

I love IELTS! It's so enjoy**able**!

A lack of precision

Another problem is when vocabulary does not communicate an idea precisely enough. To score a band 8, the speaker must “use vocabulary... to convey precise meanings.”

What does this really mean?

Compare these two sentences:

I don't think my secondary school was very good because of the teachers and facilities there.

I think that my secondary school was quite disappointing, which could be down to the lack of passionate teachers and high-quality facilities.

A lack of precision

Another problem is when vocabulary does not communicate an idea precisely enough. To score a band 8, the speaker must “use vocabulary... to convey precise meanings.”

What does this really mean?

Compare these two sentences:

I don't think my secondary school was very good because of the teachers and facilities there.

I think that my secondary school was quite disappointing, which could be down to the lack of passionate teachers and high-quality facilities.

A lack of precision

There are a couple of ways we can fix this issue when it comes to defining things (the area where we need most precision).

First, we can round up all the adjectives we are too dependent on. Here are some of the most common, though you may have some of your own:

*good, nice, lovely, beautiful, bad, funny, interesting, important, fine, boring,
happy, sad, big, small, strong, weak*

It's important to mention that **these words are okay!** If you worry too much about paraphrasing, you'll sound unnatural. However, if we want to be more *precise*, we may need to think about explaining *further*.

A lack of precision

Check out these sentences and consider how you could make them more precise.

The last holiday I took was to Tenerife. It was nice, we had very good weather.

My favourite film is probably 'Titanic'. I think it's great, it's very exciting and I love the characters.

My least favourite subject at school was definitely maths. It was just too hard. I'm really not very good at maths.

A lack of precision

Check out these sentences and consider how you could make them more precise.

The last holiday I took was to Tenerife. It was nice, we had very good weather.

My favourite film is probably 'Titanic'. I think it's great, it's very exciting and I love the characters.

My least favourite subject at school was definitely maths. It was just too hard. I'm really not very good at maths.

A lack of precision

Check out these sentences and consider how you could make them more precise.

The last holiday I took was to Tenerife. We had a brilliant time there thanks to the sun shining down on us all week. I don't think I saw a single cloud.

My favourite film is probably 'Titanic'. I think it does a tremendous job of bringing a real historical story to life, and the characters are so believable.

My least favourite subject at school was definitely maths. I found that subject really difficult; anything related to logic, algorithms and sums has always been a struggle for me.

A lack of precision

The second thing we can do is avoid describing things with *negations*.

*The film **wasn't** very good.*

*My home **isn't** that big.*

*The experience **wasn't** very interesting.*

*The shirt **wasn't** very expensive.*

*The holiday **isn't** going to be that long.*

A lack of precision

The second thing we can do is avoid describing things with *negations*.

*The film **was pretty terrible**, with lifeless characters and a boring plot.*

*My home **is quite small**, though it feels cosy and homely to me.*

*The experience **was really dull**; I could barely keep my eyes open.*

*The shirt **was pretty affordable**. It was on sale so I got it for a bargain.*

*The holiday **is going to be quite short** as we only have time for a city break.*

When you don't know a word

Forgetting or not knowing a word is a common occurrence in the Speaking test.

If this happens, don't panic! As long as you can accurately, naturally and fluently communicate this problem, you can still save your marks.

*“When I was younger, I used to do a sport called hockey, which involves two teams with hockey sticks trying to put a, a, ... **I'm sorry, the word seems to have escaped me / sorry, I seem to have forgotten the word** ..., but it involves putting a **flat, round, black object** into the opposing team's net by hitting the object with their hockey sticks”.*

Lecture 11

Common Grammar Errors

Avoiding grammar mistakes in Part 2 -
Grammatical Range and Accuracy



Grammatical Accuracy

In the last grammar section, we looked at the importance of responding to the questions in Part 1 in an appropriate tense.

We also looked at the potential for bringing in a variety of tenses to our answers.

Both of these points also apply to Part 2.

Accuracy is important from the moment you open your mouth to speak! Make sure you give the examiner a good first impression...

Getting Started

One area you really shouldn't be messing up is your introduction.

Do **NOT** try to start with some fancy-worded, complicated opening line. Keep things simple and accurate. Steady your nerves with a grammatically solid introduction.

Two options:

I'm going to talk about ...

I'd like to talk about ...

Getting Started

*I'm going to talk about **my dog** ...*

*I'd like to talk about **my holiday to Spain** ...*

*I'm going to talk about **my best friend** ...*

*I'd like to talk about **a competition I took part in last year** ...*

*I'm going to talk about **my first job** ...*

*I'd like to talk about **my favourite book** ...*

Now add a relative clause

I'm going to talk about my dog, whose name is Ellie.

I'd like to talk about my holiday to Spain, which we took last April.

I'm going to talk about my best friend, whose name is Jack.

I'd like to talk about a competition I took part in last year, which was for all the math majors at my university.

I'm going to talk about my first job, which was as a retail assistant.

I'd like to talk about my favourite book, which is called 'Great Expectations' and was written by Charles Dickens.

Now add a relative clause

I'm going to talk about my dog, whose name is Ellie.  Name

I'd like to talk about my holiday to Spain, which we took last April.

I'm going to talk about my best friend, whose name is Jack.  Name

I'd like to talk about a competition I took part in last year, which was for all the math majors at my university.

I'm going to talk about my first job, which was as a retail assistant.

I'd like to talk about my favourite book, which is called 'Great Expectations' and was written by Charles Dickens.  Name

Tense mistakes

Probably the most common mistake made in Part 2 is using the wrong tense when speaking. This is most apparent when we need to move away from the present. Check out this talk and see if you can find any tense mistakes.

Describe a sport you used to do.

You should say:

**when and where you did it
how often you did this sport
who you did this sport with
and explain what you liked and/or
disliked about this sport.**

Tense mistakes

I'm going to talk about football, which is a sport I used to play around ten years ago.

In fact, I still play it now when I have the opportunity, but not competitively. As a kid, I play football all the time. I was part of a local football team, and every Saturday we go to the sports centre to compete with kids from other local teams.

It was just once a week we play football, but I wish it was more. I used to look forward to the games every week. I still sometimes think about joining a competitive team as an adult.

My teammates were all my friends, and we all get along well. Sometimes there were fights and arguments, but these are rare. I remember our last game together; I score an own goal and my friends were so angry, but then I score at the right end and all that anger disappear!

I guess I liked football so much because I have quite a competitive spirit, I've always had a lot of drive to win. Football gives me the chance to tap into that drive, it gives me a huge adrenaline rush.

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*My teammates were all my friends, and we all **get** along well. Sometimes there were fights and arguments, but these **are** rare. I remember our last game together; I **score** an own goal and my friends were so angry, but then I **score** at the right end and all that anger **disappears**!*

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Tense range

I'm going to talk about football, which is a sport I used to play around ten years ago.

*In fact, I still play it now when I have the opportunity, but not competitively. As a kid, I played football all the time. I was part of a local football team, and every Saturday we went to the sports centre to compete with kids from other local teams. **I'd been playing for six years by the time I stopped.***

*It was just once a week we played football, but I wish it was more. I used to look forward to the games every week. I still sometimes think about joining a competitive team as an adult. **I think I probably will someday.***

*My teammates were all my friends, and we all got along well. Sometimes there were fights and arguments, but these were rare. I remember our last game together; I scored an own goal **when I was panicking** and my friends were so angry, but then I scored at the right end and all that anger disappeared!*

*I guess I liked football so much because I **have** quite a competitive spirit, **I've always had** a lot of drive to win. Football gave me the chance to tap into that drive, it gave me a huge adrenaline rush.*

Article Errors

There are a number of rules behind articles, more than can be covered quickly here. However, here are the rules behind the most common mistakes I hear in the speaking test:

Definite article ('the')

We use this article when we believe the listener **knows exactly** to whom or what we are referring.

- with superlative adjectives: **The** best film I have ever seen is *The Godfather*.
- when mentioning something again. *When I was younger, we went to a park near our house everyday. **The** park was so great because ...*
- when talking about inventions (countable nouns only) : **The** steam engine was a major turning point.
- when talking about groups of people: **the** elderly, **the** poor, **the** privileged, **the** super-rich.
- when the first noun in '[noun] of [noun]' is specific: **the** distribution of wealth is quite imbalanced these days.

Article Errors

Indefinite article ('a/an')

We use this article with singular countable nouns

- when the listener **does not know exactly** to whom or what we are referring:
- When showing someone/something is part of a group: *There is **a** reason why teachers encourage their students with prizes* (one reason out of several).
- When we want to say something about all things of that kind: ***A** student cannot be expected to be well-behaved all the time* (not a specific student).
- We **do not** use articles when referring to plurals or uncountable nouns: *There are many reasons**s** why ... / Information on the internet can sometimes be unreliable...*
- When the first noun in '[noun] of [noun]' is NOT specific: *I drink **a** cup of tea every morning* (a different cup of tea each time).

Countable/Uncountable Nouns

So, indefinite articles apply to non-specific countable nouns, but should never be used with uncountable nouns.

However, it can be difficult know which nouns are countable and which nouns are uncountable. Most mistakes here apply to uncountable nouns being treated like countable nouns.

Here follows a list of the most commonly confused uncountable nouns.

Are you guilty of making these errors?

Countable/Uncountable Nouns

Advice

Uncountable noun. Always.

My dad gave me some great advice when I was younger.

Her advice was awful.

The man is good at giving advice.

We can use the noun 'piece' to turn this into a countable form via a '[noun] of [noun]' unit:

When I was young, my dad gave me two pieces of advice which I've never forgotten.

Only use this when you are giving a specific number. It sounds unnatural to say ~~He gave me lots of pieces of advice.~~

Countable/Uncountable Nouns

Training

Uncountable noun. Most of the time.

I had to go through a lot of training to get my job.

We need to attend training most afternoons in my office.

Training is an essential part of any job.

We can use the noun 'course' to turn this into a countable form via a compound noun:

We have to attend two training courses every month.

Technically, 'training' (when referred to in 'course' form) is a countable noun. But it is very rare to see it spoken of this way. The examiner may raise his eyebrows at ~~We have to go to two trainings per month.~~

Countable/Uncountable Nouns

Research

Uncountable noun. Always.

My university course requires me to do a lot of research.

Research is an essential part of being an academic.

According to research from Oxford University,

We can use the noun 'piece' to turn this into a countable form via a '[noun] of [noun]' unit:

Every piece of research I do brings me closer to finally qualifying for my PhD.

You may have done a lot of work on your university course, but I can assure you that you did not do any researches.

Countable/Uncountable Nouns

News

Uncountable. Always. (Try to forget about the 's' when considering the grammar.)

The news is nothing but negative these days.

You know the saying: no news is good news.

Most people get their news from the internet now; I think many people have stopped watching the news on TV.

We can use the noun 'piece' to turn this into a countable form via a compound noun **or** a '[noun] of [noun]' unit:

I want to share two pieces of news with you. ///// I read a news piece yesterday which was very interesting.

The first option mostly applies to information related to our lives, whereas the second option above is used mostly in terms of 'the news' (in journalism).

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*I want to share **two pieces of news** with you. ///// I read **a news piece** yesterday which was very interesting.*

The first option mostly applies to **information related to our lives**, whereas the second option above is used mostly in terms of **'the news'** (in journalism).

Find the errors

Describe a writer you would like to meet.

You should say:

who the writer is

what you know about this writer already

**what you would like to find out about
him/her**

**and explain why you would like to meet this
writer.**

Find the errors

I'm going to talk about Stephen King, who is the writer of horror books and is one of my favourite authors.

I knew a few things about Stephen King already. Firstly, I know he came from a very humble beginnings. He grows up quite poor and his dad left home when he is a kid. He wrote prolifically until a time of his breakthrough short story, Carrie, which is written in his trailer on an old typewriter.

If I can meet Stephen King, I'd ask him how he comes up with the new ideas after all this time. He must have wrote over fifty books by now. That takes a lot of commitment to works, and probably a lot of researches. I'd also ask him what is his favourite book.

I guessed I'd like to meet Stephen King because he seems like the kind of guy you could learn a lot from. I think he'd have a lot of good advices after all that life experience.

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I guess I'd like to meet Stephen King because he seems like the kind of guy you could learn a lot from. I think he'd have a lot of good advice after all that life experience.

Lecture 12

Syllable Stress

Natural stress in individual words -
Pronunciation



What is syllable stress?

First off, what are syllables?

Place your left hand in front of you, and with the second and third fingers of your right hand, tap out a beat on your left hand. Tap, tap, tap.

Now, say the word: *pedestrianisation*. Tap your right fingers for every 'beat' you can hear.

Peh-des-tree-un-eye-zay-shun. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7.

Each one of these beats is a syllable. And one (sometimes two) of these syllables are 'stressed' more than others.

What is syllable stress?

Let's pick out a shorter word.

Banana.

Now, what happens if we pronounce it like this?

BA-nana.

Or how about

Bana-NA.

Sounds strange, right? This is the essence of syllable stress. It is the first 'NAR' and second syllable in *banana*.

Why syllable stress is important

See if you can make sense of these sentences:

1. a) *I cah'**reed** the wuh'**tehr** to the puh'**tee** of eluv'**en** peh'**pell**.*

b) *I **carried** the **water** to the **party** of **eleven** **people**.*

2. a) *I am ab**solu**tely **con**vinced that all child**ren** should learn **guitar**.*

b) *I am absol**ute**ly con**vinced** that all **child**ren should learn **guitar**.*

We firstly need correct syllable stress to help people understand us!

Why syllable stress is important

The second reason syllable stress is important is that *incorrect stress* can actually *change a word's meaning and/or class*. This is true of homographs (words spelt the same but with different pronunciations and meanings).

Let's look at an example:

*I have to **contest** whether this beauty **contest** is necessary.*

Where is the stress in 'contest'? Remember, there are two uses here.

*I have to con**test** whether this beauty **con**test is necessary.*

Nouns tend to place their stress on the **first syllable**, whereas **verbs** tend to place their stress on the **second syllable**.

More patterns in syllable stress

Stress pattern is a huge area in English, too large for us to fully cover here. However, there are a few more common patterns for us to look at.

Suffixes with stress on suffix itself

Some suffixes are always stressed as the final syllable in a word:

engineer, mountaineer, auctioneer, profiteer, pioneer, puppeteer

Portuguese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Viennese, Lebanese

refugee, employee, addressee, guarantee, referee, absentee, devotee

cigarette, etiquette, brunette, bachelorette, Smurfette

Patterns in syllable stress

Suffixes with stress before the suffix itself

Here, the stress falls on the syllable *before* the suffix.

decision, application, recommendation, expansion, implementation, cohesion, station

simplicity, audacity, immunity, modernity, divinity, actuality, urbanity, intrepidity, sanctity

extensive, massive, inventive, creative, expressive, explosive, inexpensive, conclusive

biology, physiology, astrology, analogy, archeology, genealogy, ideology, eulogy

fantastic, animalistic, sarcastic, journalistic, egotistic, hedonistic, optimistic, pessimistic, enthusiastic

Patterns in syllable stress

Stress with compound nouns

If the first part of a compound noun operates like a noun, stress the first word:

suitcase, typewriter, tea cup, headphones, water bottle, dog lead, armchair, sunlight, beauty contest, air conditioning, handshake, pocket watch

If the first part of a compound noun operates like an adjective, stress the second word:

black market, young learner, full moon, mobile phone (both), heavy heart, bad blood, good tidings, old fogey, spare change, soft touch, blank space

Exceptions!

Unfortunately, there are quite a few exceptions to all of these patterns.

There are verb/noun homonyms where the verb stresses the first syllable (*process, benefit, figure*).

There are verb/noun homonyms where the noun stresses the second syllable (*dissent, concern*).

There are compound nouns which start with adjectives and yet the stress will be on the first syllable (*loudspeaker, blackboard*).

There are compound nouns which start with nouns and yet the stress is on the second syllable (*worldwide, world leader*).

Don't stress (pun intended)! Try to notice and record these exceptions when they appear in your everyday listening. It's okay to mess up a bit on exam day!

Practice

Record yourself saying these sentences, and then play this video to check how accurate you were.

1. I would object to the view that people are more productive with headphones on.
2. Personally, I feel those who benefit most from simplicity in education are young learners.
3. I suspect that world leaders have concerns about the increase of global warming.
4. The president's egoistic exploits have gained him worldwide attention in journalistic circles.
5. Many people protested the validity and acceptability of the protests against refugees.
6. In order to decrease cancer rates, there needs to be a decrease in cigarette sales.

Lecture 13

Discourse Markers and Listing

Creating a sense of 'progression' when speaking-
Fluency and Coherence



How to create 'fluency'

Fluency is about flow. It's about smooth transitions between ideas. It's about the examiner being able to follow you without any effort.

How can we improve our ability to create fluency?

By using discourse markers.

We use discourse markers to connect, organise and manage what we say and what attitude we want to convey.

Let's have a look at which discourse markers will be most helpful for our purposes in IELTS Speaking.

An example

Have a look at this answer to a Part 3 question and consider how easy it is to follow and how natural it sounds.

Do you agree that there is a right age for children to stop living with their parents? Why is that?

I do agree with that. Children eventually get to an age where they need to live independently. Then they can reach their goals. Many of my achievements in life have been possible because I moved out of home once I reached adulthood. Children who don't move out once they reach adulthood are setting themselves up to be overly reliant on their parents. Anxiety and entitlement follows. They shouldn't be pushed out as this can harm their development.

An example

Have a look at this answer to a Part 3 question and consider how easy it is to follow and how natural it sounds.

Do you agree that there is a right age for children to stop living with their parents? Why is that?

Well yes, I do agree with that. **The way I see it,** children eventually get to an age where they need to live independently **because** then they can reach their goals. **In fact,** many of my achievements in life have been possible because I moved out of home once I reached adulthood. Children who don't move out once they reach adulthood, **in contrast,** are setting themselves up to be overly reliant on their parents. **After that,** anxiety and entitlement follows. They shouldn't be pushed out, **though,** as this can harm their development.

Do and Don't...

You can see that discourse markers are not that tricky. In fact, they're very simple to use. That's the point. They make language easy to follow.

DO: Notice *how* native speakers use discourse markers, and notice *how often* they use them. Remember your daily listening practice!

DO: Use discourse markers to link ideas together that may be difficult to follow without them.

DON'T: Overuse this language. *Well, I mean, if I think about it, it's like, um, you know, really, yeah, well, I suppose education should finish at 18.*

DON'T: Be too repetitive in the locations of your discourse markers. You aren't restricted to just using DMs at the beginnings of sentences. Some can be used in the middle or even at the end of your sentences: *We need to tackle economic disparity, **I feel**. We can't do it unless everybody is on board, **though**.*

Listing

Much of the time, answers in Part 3 are scattered, disorganised and full of errors due to the exhaustion of the candidates. Discourse markers help us to *present* organisation, but do not exactly *do the organising*.

Using a strategy which is easy to follow can help to fix this. 'Listing' is one such strategy, and it also takes advantage of DMs. And it's as easy as ...

1.

2.

3.

Listing

1. Start with an introduction to your list, using the language from the question to help you.

What skills and abilities do people most want to have today?

There are a couple of skills which people most want to have today.

There are a number of skills which are sought after by people nowadays.

There are a number of abilities which people really want these days.

Listing

2. Introduce your first idea, preceded by a ‘listing’ discourse marker (e.g. *firstly; first of all; to begin with; first and foremost*).

What skills and abilities do people most want to have today?

First of all, programming skills are in very high demand in our current world.

Firstly, one of the most sought after skills today is programming.

To begin with, programming skills are hugely popular nowadays.

Listing

3. Support your idea with an explanation, example, result or alternative sentence.

What skills and abilities do people most want to have today?

This is probably because so much of what we do is online these days.

For example, almost everyone in the modern world uses the internet.

This skill underwent a huge surge in popularity with the spread of the internet.

Listing

Now repeat steps **2** and **3** with a second (and potentially third) point. Remember to change the 'listing' discourse marker!

What skills and abilities do people most want to have today?

Secondly, many people today want to learn marketing skills.

This might be due to the marketing world being unaffected by the growth of the internet, unlike other industries.

Finally, many people would like the ability to play a music instrument, though this is likely due to leisure rather than professional reasons.

An example

Try your own 'listing' answer, complete with discourse markers, to this question.

How do you think children can be encouraged to read more?

Personally, I can think of a number of ways that children can be encouraged to read more. First and foremost, we need to challenge the idea of reading being boring. We can do this by letting them read the books they *want* to read, rather than the ones we want them to. Second, we can reward them for reading. Kids could be given a little more pocket money, for instance, if they meet a monthly reading target. Lastly, we can take advantage of the numerous mediums we have available for reading. Don't restrict kids to paper books, but let them use, say, iPads, Kindles and their phones too.

An example

Try your own 'listing' answer, complete with discourse markers, to this question.

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Personally, I can think of a number of ways that children can be encouraged to read more. **First and foremost**, we need to challenge the idea of reading being boring. **We can do this by** letting them read the books they *want* to read, rather than the ones we want them to. **Second**, we can reward them for reading. Kids could be given a little more pocket money, **for instance**, if they meet a monthly reading target. **Lastly**, we can take advantage of the numerous mediums we have available for reading. Don't restrict kids to paper books, but let them use, **say**, iPads, Kindles and their phones too.

Lecture 14

The Art of Using Idioms

Becoming a 'natural' in vocabulary -
Lexical Resource



A look at the band descriptors

A few of my students have told me that previous teachers had told them not to use idioms.

There is a good reason for this, which we look at in a moment.

However, whenever uncertainty arises, it's best to look at the band descriptors.

In order to score a band 7 for Lexical Resource, a candidate must:

*“use some less common and **idiomatic** vocabulary and show some awareness of style and collocation”*

As we can see, using idioms is an essential part of achieving a 7+ band score.

The dangers of idioms

So why are some teachers so worried about their students using idioms in the IELTS exam?

Two reasons:

1. Inaccuracy.
2. Shoehorning.

The dangers of idioms

So why are some teachers so worried about their students using idioms in the IELTS exam?

Two reasons:

1. Inaccuracy. **Solution: don't use long idioms!**
2. Shoehorning. **Solution: don't try to anticipate!**

With idioms, keep everything as simple and natural as you can.

Don't use long idioms

What happens when we try to use longer idioms?

Take the following:

Don't count your chickens before the eggs have hatched.



This idiom is used to express the idea that you shouldn't make plans for something that hasn't happened yet. Quite useful. But **the longer the idiom, the more chance there is of an inaccuracy.**

“Don't count your eggs before the chickens have hatched... I mean, don't count your chickens before hatching your eggs..., umm, uhhh... chickens.. eggs... uhh...”

Don't try to anticipate

What we mean here is that you shouldn't learn idioms with the *express purpose* of using it in the exam. You shouldn't try to *anticipate* opportunities to use your idioms. They should appear naturally.

What happens if we anticipate too much? Say I learnt the idiom '*piece of cake*', which means a job or activity that is easy to do. If I learn this idiom with the *express purpose* of using it in the exam, this is what can happen:

How does technology help you in your daily life?

Oh, technology makes my life a piece of cake // With technology, everything I do is a piece of cake // Daily life is a piece of cake with technology.

This **makes sense**, but it is **not natural**. You need to particularly watch your pronunciation here; don't *overemphasise*.

Using idioms in the exam

So how should we use idioms in the exam?

Sparingly and judiciously.

You really only need to use two or three idioms over the course of the whole speaking exam. Anything more than that can sound forced.

As for when to use them, **listen to other native / near-native speakers.**

Watch movies. Watch TV shows. Listen to the radio. Listen to podcasts. Listen to audiobooks. Do all these things with a notepad, and mark down every idiom you hear. Notice the pronunciation and repeat the whole sentence.

Some useful idioms

With that in mind, it's hard to tell you how to use idioms...

There's not much point in sharing examples, because you shouldn't force any idioms in, and examples may encourage you to do so.

However, here are a few idioms which I feel can be used quite easily/naturally and which express quite common feelings.

Please note that you need to see/hear *a number of examples* of these idioms in context, rather than just the examples I show you.

Go out and try to find your own favourites! And remember, keep them short!

Some useful idioms

- *the best of both worlds*
- *a blessing in disguise*
- *a far cry from*
- *open one's eyes to*
- *the last straw*
- *miss the boat*
- *on the fence*

Some useful idioms

- ***the best of both worlds*** Meaning: the advantages of both situations.
 - *a blessing in disguise*
 - *a far cry from*
 - *open one's eyes to*
 - *the last straw*
 - *miss the boat*
 - *on the fence*
- Example: *Do you think that reading novels is more interesting than reading factual books?*
- Personally, I love reading both fiction and non-fiction. When reading novels, I get to immerse myself in another world and it's nice to have that sort of escapism, but with non-fiction I feel like I'm broadening my horizons and the experience is quite nourishing. Neither is more interesting; reading fiction and non-fiction gives me the best of both worlds.

Some useful idioms

- *the best of both worlds*

Meaning: an apparent problem that has good results.

- ***a blessing in disguise***

Example: *Do you agree there is a right age for children to stop living with their parents?*

- *a far cry from*

- *open one's eyes to*

- *the last straw*

- *miss the boat*

- *on the fence*

Yes, I'd say so. I don't think children should rely on their parents to house them forever, and they need to learn to stand on their own two feet. If they don't, they could really struggle to form their own independence. I can remember when I left home; it was difficult at first, but that difficult time was a blessing in disguise as I became stronger as a result.

Some useful idioms

- *the best of both worlds*

Meaning: very different to...

- *a blessing in disguise*

Example: *Which source of news do you think is best: TV, newspaper, internet, or something else?*

- ***a far cry from***

- *open one's eyes to*

- *the last straw*

- *miss the boat*

- *on the fence*

Well, I'd say the best source of news is probably TV news, but it's not my preferred choice. I get most of my news updates from the internet, but that's only because it's the most convenient. I think TV news is better because it is much more accurate; anyone can write an article on the internet, which is a far cry from the strict media regulations of TV.

Some useful idioms

- *the best of both worlds*
- *a blessing in disguise*
- *a far cry from*
- ***open one's eyes to***
- *the last straw*
- *miss the boat*
- *on the fence*

Meaning: cause someone to realise something...

Example: *Why do you think some people are not concerned by environmental issues?*

I think this happens for a couple a reasons. Firstly, many people might feel they are too small to make a difference. They might think their carbon footprint is not going to make a dent in global warming overall. Secondly, the environment is too large a subject to comprehend. Only local change will open some people's eyes to the dangers of climate change.

Some useful idioms

- *the best of both worlds*
- *a blessing in disguise*
- *a far cry from*
- *open one's eyes to*
- ***the last straw***
- *miss the boat*
- *on the fence*

Meaning: the final problem that ends one's patience.

Example: *What reasons might people have for not wanting to give their opinions in surveys?*

Speaking from experience, I can think of one important reason. Sometimes, telephone companies call you up and ask you to take part in a survey, and that's okay. But once is enough. I got called four times by the same company last week, and the fifth was the final straw. I blacklisted their number after that. Also, some people are just quite private about their views.

Some useful idioms

- *the best of both worlds*

Meaning: too slow to make use of an opportunity.

- *a blessing in disguise*

Example: *What are the advantages and disadvantages of intensive training for sports people?*

- *a far cry from*

- *open one's eyes to*

- *the last straw*

- ***miss the boat***

- *on the fence*

On the one hand, intensive training can help sports people to achieve their sporting dreams at huge events. If Usain Bolt hadn't trained intensively week in, week out, he might have missed the boat on the Olympics. On the other hand, intensive training forces athletes to miss out on time with family and friends, and the psychological pressure can be a burden.

Some useful idioms

- *the best of both worlds*

Meaning: to be unable to decide on something.

- *a blessing in disguise*

Example: *Some people think national celebrations are a waste of money. Do you agree? Why?*

- *a far cry from*

- *open one's eyes to*

- *the last straw*

- *miss the boat*

- ***on the fence***

I'm on the fence on this one. On the one hand, I feel like these celebrations are important in that they help to develop a sense of unity and togetherness among citizens. But on the other hand, this money might be much better spent on helping the poor and improving the quality of our education. I guess we should still have these events, but not spend so much on them.

Final points

- Study idioms by the topic.
- Don't use idioms which are very long.
- Don't over-anticipate.
- Check idioms in a number of settings.
- Practice with a native.
- Don't use too many idioms in the exam.

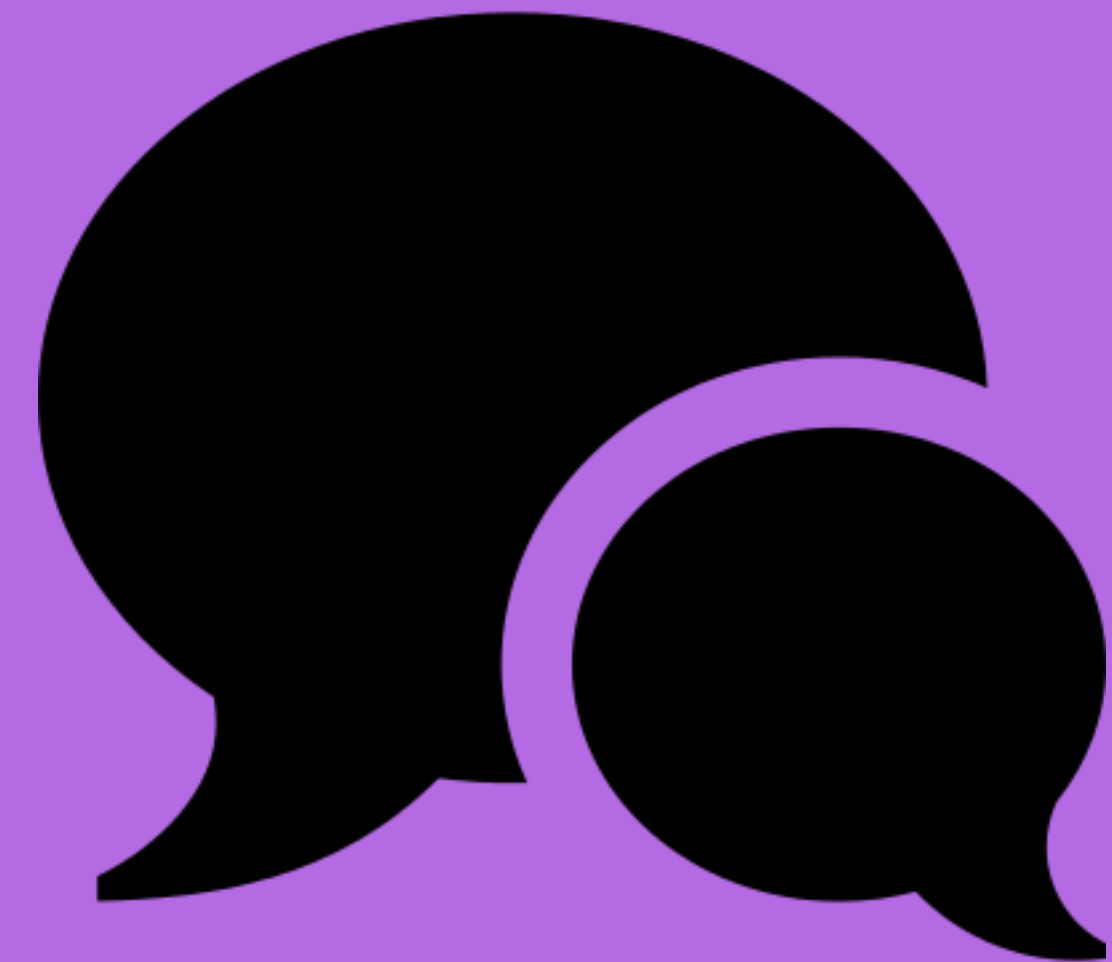
Collocations

Collocations are another important feature of your vocabulary. To learn about collocations, you can watch the video I created for this topic in my Mastering IELTS Writing Task 2 course. It's free!

Lecture 15

Complex Sentences

Boosting your grammatical range -
Grammatical Range and Accuracy



Why complex is crucial

To remind ourselves of the band descriptors, here is what we need to do to achieve a band 7 in Grammatical Range and Accuracy:

*“use a range of **complex structures** with some flexibility.”*

Complex sentences are a vital component of achieving a band 7 or above in IELTS Speaking.

Part 3 is the best part of the test for you to show your ability in this area. Let's look at how.

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions are the 'linking' words that join up a dependent clause to an independent clause in a complex sentence.

Independent clause: *All children should learn to play an instrument.*

Dependent clause: *Although they shouldn't be pressured too much into doing so.*

Subordinating conjunction: *Although*

Although they shouldn't be pressured too much into doing so, all children should learn to play a musical instrument.

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions are so important to us because they are key to consistently offering complex sentences.

Look at the following sentences:

People should care more about the environment. The polar ice caps are melting and the planet is warming up. This will lead to serious consequences.

Because *the polar ice caps are melting and the planet is warming up, people should care more about the environment. If they don't start taking the environment seriously, there will be serious consequences.*

Subordinating conjunctions

The trick here is to *start* one sentence in your answer with one of these conjunctions. The rest should follow naturally; don't overthink it.

Do you think it's possible to be too competitive in sport? In what way?

Yes, I think it's possible.

Even though ,

Whereas ,

As long as ,

Subordinating conjunctions

The trick here is to *start* one sentence in your answer with one of these conjunctions. The rest should follow naturally; don't overthink it.

Do you think it's possible to be too competitive in sport? In what way?

Yes, I think it's possible.

Even though being competitive can give you an edge over your opponents, winning isn't everything and you can become too obsessed with victory.

Whereas some athletes do whatever it takes to win and end up taking steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs, the best athletes understand that there is more to life.

As long as athletes remember that sport is just sport and that it's supposed to be fun, they can stay competitive in a safe and healthy way and there should be no risk involved.

Conditional sentences

A great way to boost your grammatical range while developing your answer at the same time is to use *'if/then'* sentences. These are conditionals.

The **zero** conditional expresses what *always/regularly* happens when a particular action or event takes place.

*If it **is** sunny at the weekend, I **go** biking.* (**'present simple' + 'present simple'**)

The **first** conditional expresses what *is likely* to happen as a result of an event.

*If we **don't learn** from the past, we **will suffer** in the future.* (**'present simple' + 'will (not) + inf.'**)

Conditional sentences

The **second** conditional is used to talk about the results of impossible, imaginary or unlikely events in the present or future.

*If the country **closed** its borders to tourists, the economy **would not survive**.* (**'past simple' + 'would (not) + inf.'**)

The **third** conditional is used to talk about an imaginary result of a situation in the past which did not happen.

*If I **had learnt** another language as a kid, I **would have travelled** a lot more than I have.* (**'past perfect' + 'would (not) + have + past participle'**)

Using conditionals in answers

Some people say that parents should encourage their children to be competitive at all times. Do you agree with this? Why?

- Personally, I don't agree with this. Encouraging children to be competitive all the time may lead them to believe that winning is the only important thing in life. **If, instead, parents teach** their children the value of hard work and learning from one's mistakes, then their **children will still work** just as hard but **will not lose** self-esteem when facing failure.

FIRST CONDITIONAL

Using conditionals in answers

Some people say that parents should encourage their children to be competitive at all times. Do you agree with this? Why?

- Personally, I don't agree with this. Encouraging children to be competitive all the time may lead them to believe that winning is the only important thing in life. **If, instead, parents taught** their children the value of hard work and learning from one's mistakes, then their **children would still work** just as hard but **would not lose** self-esteem when facing failure.

Using conditionals in answers

Some people say that parents should encourage their children to be competitive at all times. Do you agree with this? Why?

- Personally, I don't agree with this. Encouraging children to be competitive all the time may lead them to believe that winning is the only important thing in life. **If, instead, parents taught** their children the value of hard work and learning from one's mistakes, then their **children would still work** just as hard but **would not lose** self-esteem when facing failure.

SECOND CONDITIONAL

Using conditionals in answers

Do you think it is better to buy or to rent a place to live in? Why?

Without a doubt, it's better to buy a place to live in because, in the long run, even with a mortgage, it's so much cheaper. However, the problem is that you need to have a lot of money to begin with, which most people don't have. In my case, **if I had bought** a house instead of rented, **I would have been** able to save enough money to make home improvements. As it is, I have to leave a lot of things unfixed.

THIRD CONDITIONAL

Lecture 16

Intonation and Sentence Stress

How tone can change what we mean -
Pronunciation



How pronunciation changes meaning

Have a look at the following sentences and read them out loud, stressing the bold and underlined words.

I don't think there's anything individuals can do about climate change...

*I don't **think** there's anything individuals can do about climate change...*

*I don't think there's **anything** individuals can do about climate change...*

*I don't think there's anything **individuals** can do about climate change...*

*I don't think there's anything individuals can do about **climate change**...*

How pronunciation changes meaning

Have a look at the following sentences and read them out loud, stressing the bold and underlined words.

*I don't think there's anything individuals can do about climate change...
... but others might disagree.*

How pronunciation changes meaning

Have a look at the following sentences and read them out loud, stressing the bold and underlined words.

*I don't **think** there's anything individuals can do about climate change...
... but I haven't researched it enough to know.*

How pronunciation changes meaning

Have a look at the following sentences and read them out loud, stressing the bold and underlined words.

*I don't think there's **anything** individuals can do about climate change...
... we just have to accept that there's nothing we can do.*

How pronunciation changes meaning

Have a look at the following sentences and read them out loud, stressing the bold and underlined words.

*I don't think there's anything **individuals** can do about climate change...
... but organisations can have a huge impact on the environment.*

How pronunciation changes meaning

Have a look at the following sentences and read them out loud, stressing the bold and underlined words.

*I don't think there's anything individuals can do about **climate change**...
... but that doesn't mean people should neglect other aspects of the world.*

Commonly stressed word classes

Where you place the stress in your sentence is **important**. The most heavily stressed word or words will signify the purpose of your sentence.

There is no right or wrong word to stress; it really depends on your meaning. However, it is rare to hear certain types of word stressed, so make sure you really need to stress these before doing so:

prepositions / articles / pronouns / conjunctions / modal verbs

Most sentences will stress these types of words instead:

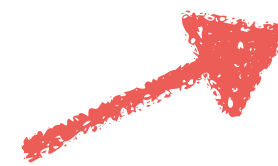
verbs / nouns / adjectives / adverbs

How intonation differs from stress

Many people confuse intonation and stress, but, while similar, they are not the same thing.

Intonation refers to the *pitch* of your voice as you pronounce a word or sentence. Think about the way we ask questions versus the way we make statements.

Is this the way to the train station?



It's this way to the train station.



Intonation in IELTS Speaking

Although we are unlikely to be asking any questions in our exam (that's the examiner's job!), it's still important to intonate in a natural way in order to secure a high pronunciation score.

There are a number of different tones that can help us to differentiate meaning when we intonate. Here are the most important for us:

- Down tone
- Across-up tone
- Down-up tone
- Up-down tone

Down tone

We use this rhythm in our voice to indicate we are giving information. This will likely be the most common tone you use.

The most important thing is that children get a good education.

One of the main reasons why we need more sports facilities is that this will improve public health.

For example, last week I was asked for my opinion in a questionnaire about local business.

Across-up tone

We use this rhythm in our voice to indicate we are reeling off items on a list. This is useful when using multiple adjectives or giving multiple quick reasons for something.

In my opinion, this was a cruel, thoughtless and irredeemably awful decision.

Teaching children to play a musical instrument is important because it improves cognition, increases hand-eye coordination, and develops their appreciation for the arts.

Down-up tone

We use this rhythm in our voice to indicate we have reservations. This is a really useful tone when we want to go in a different direction in our answer, such as when using the words 'However' or 'Nevertheless', or following a dependent clause with a contrasting independent clause.

I feel that it's a good thing for countries to focus on their tourism industries. Nevertheless, they need to be careful to prioritise their own citizens ahead of tourists coming from other countries.

Despite the importance of a decent income when it comes to quality of life, people need to also remember that there are some things money can't buy.

Up-down tone

We use this rhythm in our voice to express a lot of emotion. This comes in very useful when we want to emphasise a particular point, suggesting we feel very strongly about it.

Personally, I'm really against those who argue that art should be removed from high school curriculums.

It is of critical importance that we learn how to curtail our use of credit cards. We must destroy our dependence on plastic.

Payday loans are, by some distance, the worst thing to happen to responsible spending in this country for years.

Model answer

Try to notice the stressed (and unstressed!) words in this answer, as well as the different types of intonation used. Can you identify all of them?

Some people say that food in an expensive restaurant is always better than food in a cheap restaurant - would you agree?

Absolutely not, no. In fact, some of the best food I've ever eaten has come from what you might call 'cheap' restaurants, usually smallish mom-and-pop eateries where the food all has that home-cooked feel and there's nothing fancy about it. Having said that, I must admit that I've rarely had *bad* food at an expensive restaurant, but I've had a few unpleasant experiences at cheaper ones. But if you're careful and use your instinct wisely, you can get delicious, warm, high-quality food at very low prices and in very large portions.

Model answer

Try to notice the stressed (and unstressed!) words in this answer, as well as the different types of intonation used. Can you identify all of them?

Some people say that food in an expensive restaurant is always better than food in a cheap restaurant - would you agree?

Absolutely not, no. In **fact**, **some** of the **best** food I've **ever eaten** has come from what you **might** call '**cheap**' restaurants, usually **smallish mom-and-pop eateries** where the **food all** has that **home-cooked feel** and there's **nothing fancy** about it. Having **said** that, I **must** admit that I've rarely had **bad** food at an **expensive** restaurant, but I've **had** a few **unpleasant experiences** at **cheaper** ones. But if you're **careful** and **use** your instinct **wisely**, you can get **delicious, warm, high-quality** food at **very low prices** and in **very large portions**.

Lecture 17

Handling Anxiety in IELTS

How to manage the nervous feelings that can damage your IELTS Speaking score.



A universal problem

Almost everybody experiences nerves. The first thing to recognise is that you are not alone, no matter how many times you've taken the exam.

Anxiety is normal. Thinking otherwise only makes it worse.

Our problem is that anxiety can also have an impact on our speaking performance. It can slow us down, speed us up, make us stumble over our words, or make all our words disappear.

This just doesn't happen to us when we're relaxed! So how can we get to this relaxed place?

How to manage nerves

Anxiety is about mindset. It's about a perceived threat. We need to change this mindset, making the brain and body see no threat. How?

- **Preparation**
- **Breathing exercises**
- **Perception - friendly chat**
- **One thing at a time**
- **Recognise your anxiety - feet on the ground**

Use your anxiety to improve your score

One common result of anxiety is that it causes us to forget our words, and sometimes even forget the question. In this case, we can actually use idioms to express our anxiety, thus demonstrating another layer to our English command.

If you feel this kind of anxiety when answering, instead of stalling for time and using *umm* and *uhh*, try these idioms:

(Before starting) *“I’m sorry, can you give me a moment? **My mind just went blank.**”*

(Forgetting a word) *“One moment, **it’s on the tip of my tongue.**”*

(Forgetting the question) *“Could I please have the question again? **My mind went offline for a moment there.**”*

(In a Part 2 segment) *“Sorry, I’ll just start that bit again, **I just lost my train of thought.**”*

Lecture 18

Getting Guidance in Speaking

How and where to find help with your IELTS
speaking to unlock your full potential



Why you need guidance

Practicing alone is better than not practicing at all, but the benefits of getting guidance are important:

- Error correction
- Fluency practice
- Pronunciation help
- Consistency
- Encouragement
- New vocabulary
- More fun!

Guidance options

There are a number of options for those who wish to get guidance in their speaking preparation.

- Language exchange sites
- Language exchange apps
- Study buddies
- Native speakers
- Professional IELTS Tutors

Professional IELTS Tutors

For those who wish to have the best preparation possible, it is my firm belief that a professional tutor is the way to go.

There are a number of IELTS teachers online at sites like www.italki.com, www.cafetalk.com, www.verbling.com and more.

However, there are not many sites which **only** offer **IELTS** lessons. Not General English, not Business English, not TOEFL. Just IELTS.

www.theieltsteacher.com is one such site. Everything you have learnt about in this course has come from my experience **exclusively** teaching IELTS over the last few years.

Professional IELTS Tutors

The IELTS Teacher now contains a number of hugely **experienced**, highly **qualified** and **super-friendly** teachers.

All teachers on The IELTS Teacher have been selected based on their deep understanding of IELTS and their unrivalled knowledge about what it takes to succeed in the exam. We don't do big business contracts; we focus exclusively on **personal 1-on-1 lessons** with people like you!

These teachers pride themselves on their **fun, engaging** and **interactive** speaking lessons. These lessons will analyse your weaknesses in speaking, targeting these areas and turning them into strengths.

Get in touch today for a **free** 20-minute demo lesson at www.theieltsteacher.com!

Lecture 19

Secrets to Success in Speaking

4 tips and techniques that can boost your score in
IELTS Speaking



Secret #1: Slow down!

People who speak really fast can be very difficult to understand, regardless of whether the speaker and/or the listener is a native.

In the exam, speaking very quickly is not going to improve your score. It is more likely to damage it.

Compare the first sentence I read to this sentence I'm reading now. Which sentence would the examiner be more likely to understand?

Increasing speed doesn't just happen to those who are taught to do so. It also happens to those who are anxious. If you notice yourself speaking more quickly as a result of nerves, take a deep breath and bring the pace down.

Secret #2: Body paragraphs

We've already discussed the strategy of 'listing' that you can use in Part 3 answers to develop your idea.

'Listing' is also a way of developing an initial idea when writing a body paragraph in a writing task 2 essay. Try to treat your Part 3 answers like body paragraphs.

Think about all the other ways you can develop an idea in a body paragraph in the essay (e.g. **idea->support->example->alternative->result.**)

Considering your Part 3 speaking answers in the same way will give you a clear sense of organisation in your answers, a great opportunity to use discourse markers, and lots of room for developing the original idea.

Secret #3: Avoid trousers and shoes

If you have to answer a question about one piece of clothing (e.g. a Part 2 question asking for 'the last piece of clothing' you bought), avoid choosing trousers, shoes, boots, pants, socks or **any garment that will cause confusion with singular/plural forms**.

If you choose the word 'shoes', not only will there be confusing regarding whether to refer to them as 'shoes' or 'a pair of shoes', but there will be confusion about whether to use 'it' or 'they/them'.

Keep it simple. Choose a shirt, jacket, dress, coat, hat, or any other simply singular noun.



Secret #4: Question tags

Part 3 of the Speaking test is referred to as the 'Discussion' stage... but there's not much of a discussion here!

We can change that a little. Bringing in question tags to emphasise our points can make it seem as though the examiner is a bit more involved, and can give us a much stronger sense of command over the language.

*Although this is called the discussion stage, there isn't much of a discussion here, **is there?*** 

*It's not fair for those in developing countries to pay the price for our environmental mistakes, **is it?*** 

Lecture 20

A Model IELTS Speaking Answer

A band 9 level answer for Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3
of the IELTS Speaking test



Part 1 - The Interview Stage

Q: Did you go to secondary school near to where you lived? Why/Why not?

A: Yes, I did. Well, sort of near. We lived a couple of kilometres from school, so it only took about 20 minutes to get there on foot, a few minutes by car.

Q: What did you like about your secondary school?

A: The thing I liked most about my secondary school was probably my friends. To be honest, I think the quality of education was quite poor though, but I enjoyed playing football with my mates at lunchtimes and they've stayed my friends for life.

Part 1 - The Interview Stage

Q: Can you tell me about anything you didn't like at your school?

A: Yes, as I mentioned, I didn't think the quality of education was very good. The teachers there seemed to lack motivation, they weren't very good at connecting with the kids. With science in particular, I remember feeling very disinterested in the subject.

Q: How do you think your school be improved?

A: Well, as I've said, the teaching staff could have been better, though maybe they've hired all new staff by now. Perhaps if the old teachers had been trained more in classroom management, students would have been more engaged.

Part 1 - The Interview Stage

Q: Did you continue studying after you finished school?

A: Yes, I did. I continued my studies at Plymouth University, down in the south-west of England, where I enrolled in a Bachelor's degree course in English Language. I went there straight after secondary school, and I was there for three years.

Q: In what ways is higher education different to school?

A: Well, firstly, I found that the experience of independent study was totally different to secondary school. You're given much less guidance and have to work out a lot on your own, and that transition can be pretty difficult. Secondly, another big difference is the social side. You're meeting new people all the time, which is another world to that of secondary school, where you know all your friends.

Part 2 - The Long Turn

**Describe something you don't have now
but would really like to own in the future.**

You should say:

what this thing is

how long you have wanted to own it

where you first saw it

and explain why you would like to own it.

Part 2 - The Long Turn

PLAN

INTRO: Bike, Surly Disc Trucker, touring bike w/ disc brakes.

D

How long

- I. A few years
- S. Back at uni
- S. Researching tours

|

Where first saw

- I. Bike website
- S. Top 10 list
- S. Mine from eBay

|

Why own it

- I. Great breaking
- S. Own non-disc
- E. A few near misses

Part 2 - The Long Turn

I'm going to talk about a bike I'd like to have in the future. This is a touring bike, which means it's made for long trips, and it's called the Surly Disc Trucker.

I've wanted to own this bike for a few years now, ever since I first became interested in bike touring back when I was in my third year at university. I remember seeing a particular documentary on bike touring, and although the bike in question wasn't being ridden, I ended up doing a lot of research and quickly came across this special bike.

As for where I first saw it, as I just mentioned, I was researching bike touring at the time, checking out a lot of magazines, websites and forums. My first sight of the bike was in a top 10 list of the best bikes for touring. It was love at first sight, though I knew I couldn't afford it! I ended up getting the cheaper version, without disc brakes, second hand off of eBay. My brother and I drove three hours to pick it up, and it was too big for me but I just had to get used to it. I ended up calling it 'The Horse'.

Thinking about why I'd like to own it, there is one main reason. As I already have the non-disc brake version, I can already enjoy most of the benefits the bike offers, but I can't benefit from the superior braking power of this bike. My bike's brakes are a bit squidgy and if I'd had the Disc Trucker, I would have felt a fair bit safer. For instance, I've had a few near misses already on my second-hand bike, and there's nothing more important than safety.

Part 3 - The Discussion Stage

Q: Do you think televisions and films can make people want to get new possessions? Why do they have this effect?

A: Yes, I do. Speaking from experience, there have been a number of times when I've been influenced by television and films in this way, and I'm sure other people are no different. For example, the new bike I was talking about earlier, that all came through the result of watching a TV documentary on bike touring. Although the show wasn't advertising a particular bike, I still became hooked on the idea of going bike touring, and of course I needed a new bike to do that. I guess TV and films do this by tapping into people's inner desires, but I'm not sure it's always intentional. Celebrities are another important part of it, though I've never really been interested in celebrity lives.

Part 3 - The Discussion Stage

Q: Are there any benefits to society of people wanting to get new possessions? Why do you think this is?

A: Yes, I can think of a few benefits for society. First of all, when people go shopping and buy new things, this generates profits for businesses. These profits are then taxed and society, ideally, reaps the spoils from these taxes, such as through greater healthcare and welfare spending. Secondly, such consumerist desires may inspire innovation. For example, many of the products we own today - our laptops, tablets and iPhones - are the result of our demand for something new and original. If people didn't want to buy new things, these products might have never been invented.

Part 3 - The Discussion Stage

Q: Do you think people will consider that having lots of possessions is a sign of success in the future? Why?

A: I'm not sure about this one. I certainly think it's true that many people today consider this a sign of success, but equally there are more and more people who are moving towards a more minimal lifestyle. What I hope will happen is that people will consider values like family, friendship and charity more important barometers of success than material possessions, but my outlook is a bit more pessimistic. I think people, even more than today, will probably consider material possessions a sign of success, and I think this because I believe advertising will become ever more aggressive and the gap between rich and poor will grow ever wider. I know the future in my view looks bleak, but I hope I'm wrong!