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# **Formular 1**

**Do you prefer X to Y?**

**Aims**

In this lesson you’ll master the Formular for do you prefer X to Y? type questions.

Do you prefer writing letters for sending emails?

Do you prefer talking on the phone or chatting online?

Do you prefer to travel by bike or on foot?

**The formular**

When the examiner asks you do you prefer X to Y? type questions, you must:

Answer order

1. State with one you prefer.
2. Compare the two things the examiner mentions.
3. Give reasons and examples to explain why.

**Language steps**

1. Master prefer + verb-ing

I prefer walking.

And prefer + to verb.

I prefer to walk.

1. Use comparatives of convenience or greater benefit like a native speaker.

Travelling by bus is faster than going by car.

**Model answer**

**Interview**: Do you prefer to travel by bike or by bus?

**Alice**: I prefer cycling to travelling by bus. Cycling is so much more convenient than talking the bus if you’re not travelling too far. Actually, it’s often faster to go by bike because you don’t get stuck in traffic jams! Cycling is also better for my health than all other means of transport, including buses.

**Interview**: Do you prefer chatting online or talking on the phone?

**David**: Generally, I prefer chatting online. I nearly always find that chatting online can be more sociable as you can speak to more than one person at the same time. Also, chatting online is often much more fun because you can send smileys, photos, and even videos!

**Language step 1 Prefer**

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use the verb prefer.

**Alice**: I prefer cycling to travelling by bus…

**David**: Generally, I prefer chatting online…

Obviously, the first thing you need to tell the examiner for this type of question is whether you prefer X or Y. Prefer can be followed by either verb-ing or to verb.

Notice in the examples below that prefer + verb-ing can be followed by either to or rather than, but prefer + to verb can only followed by rather than.

**Prefer + verb-ing + to/ rather than + verb-ing.**

I prefer cycling to talking the bus.

I prefer eating to cooking.

I prefer baking cakes at home rather than buying them in shops.

I prefer reading a newspaper rather than watching TV.

**Prefer + to verb + rather than + verb.**

I prefer to cycle rather than take the bus.

I prefer to eat rather than cook.

I prefer to bake cakes at home rather than buy them in shops.

I prefer to read a newspaper rather than watch TV.

Both these forms are correct, and mean exactly the same.

**Language step 2 Comparatives**

Let’s look again at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use the comparatives.

**Alice**: …Cycling is so much more convenient than taking the bus if you’re not travelling too far. Actually, it’s often faster to go by bike because you don’t get stuck in traffic jams! Cycling is also better for my health than all other means of transport, including buses.

**David**: … I nearly always find that chatting online can be more sociable as you can speak to more than one person at the same time. Also, chatting online is often much more fun because you can sen smileys, photos and even videos!

After you have told the examiner whether you prefer X or Y, you should compare them, so it’s very important to use comparatives correctly.

To form the comparative of an adjective, you should:

Add -er if the adjective is one syllable long.

Add -ier if the adjective has two syllables and ends in -y.

And more before tha adjective if it has two or more syllables.

When you compare X and Y, you should use one of the following comparative structures:

X + be + comparative + than + Y

Watching TV is more interesting than listening to the radio.

Cars are prettier than buses.

X + be + not as + adjective + as + Y.

Listening to the radio is not as interesting as watching TV.

Buses are not as pretty as cars.

**Extra language point Discourse Markers.**

Let’s take a look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use discourse markers in their answer.

**Alice**: …Cycling is so much more convenient than talking the bus if you’re not travelling too far. Actually, it’s often faster to go by bike because…

**David**… I nearly always find that chatting online can be more sociable as you can speak to more than one person at the same time. Also, chatting online is often much more fun because…

One reason why Alice’s and David’s answer are so good is that both candidates put extra little words (called discourse markers) into their answers in a very native way.

Try to use the following words and expressions more often when you speak English, as they will help make you sound like a native speaker:

Actually/ in fact.

Actually and in fact are very often used by native speakers to introduce something that may be surprising or that slightly changes what was being said before.

It is actually a lot cheaper to go to that supermarket.

In fact, public buses are a lot more environmentally friendly than many people think.

Needless to say

Needless to say is another way of saying obviously or everybody knows that … without sounding rude or arrogant.

I like eating lots of cakes, but needless to say, that will make me fat.

He’s done very badly in his exams, so needless to say, He won’t get into university this year.

Also/ in addition

Also and in addition are used to add extra or further information.

I’m a very sociable person. I prefer team sports such as basketball and football an in addition, I like going to English club with my friends.

I prefer cycling rather than driving a car because it helps me keep fit; in addition, it’s better for the environment and it’s also cheaper!

Besides

Besides at the beginning of a phrase means as well as, whereas at the beginning of a clause it means anyway.

Besides watching TV and talking to my friends, I can relax while travelling on the subway.

I like riding a bike as it’s very convenient way to travel. Besides, it’s cheap and I can’t afford a car.

# **Formular 2**

**What do you usually/ normally do?**

**Aims**

In this lesson you’ll master the formular for what do you usually/ normally do? Type questions.

What do you do on an average day?

What is your normal daily routine?

Can you describe your typical day?

What do you usually don on weekends?

**The formula**

When the examiner asks you what do you usually/ normally do? Type questions, you must:

**Answer order:**

1. Say what you do at the time the examiner asks you about.
2. Say how often you do these things.

**Language steps**

1. Use adverbs of frequency like a native speaker to show how frequently or infrequently you do things.

I often meet up with my classmates.

I sometimes go shopping.

1. Use the present simple tense and times of day correctly for general habits.

I ride my bike every day at 2 o’clock.

We have dinner together in the evening.

1. Show that you can use one or two common sequence markers.

Before class starts we talk.

We then go to bed.

**Model answer.**

**Interview:** Tell me about your usually daily routine.

**Alice:** Well, usually I wake up around 8 a.m. I always have a cup of coffee while I review my study notes over breakfast. Then I normally ride my bike to school, apart from in winter, when it’s way too cold. Before class starts, I often meet up with my classmates in the corridor and we gossip a bit about life and school. After school, I always go straight home and then start on my homework while my mum cooks me dinner; I usually go to bed at about 10 p.m.

**Interview:** do you do the same thing at the same time every day?

**David:** During the week, I have a very regular schedule because of my job. I always wake up just after 7 in the morning, then eat my breakfast on the ay to the subway station. I get to work at 8 o’clock sharp, and usually work until 5, sometimes I work overtime until 7 or 8. After I get home, I normally eat dinner with my wife and after that either hang out with friends or watch TV before going to bed at about 11.

**Language step 1 Adverbs of Frequency**

You must use adverbs of frequency well in your test, and if you can master using a variety of different adverbs of frequency, it will make your English more interesting and much more like a native speaker.

Let’s look at two different kinds of adverbs of frequency.

Adverbs that go after the subject and before the verb.

Always

I always go out partying every night when I’m on holiday.

Often

She often goes running after class.

Never

She never rides her bike in winter.

Almost never

We almost never go out dancing.

Rarely

He rarely eats rice.

Hardly ever

She hardly ever exercises.

Adverbs that can go before or after the subject.

Usually

Usually I wake up around 8 a.m.

I usually wake up around 8 a.m.

Normally

Normally I help my mum with the cooking.

I normally help my mum with the cooking.

Sometimes

We sometimes go shopping.

Sometimes we go shopping.

**Hint:** *almost never, hardly ever and rarely mean almost the same thing.*

**Language step 2 The present simple and times of day.**

Let’s look again at Alice’s and David’s answers to see how they use the present simple tense and times of day.

**Interview:** Tell me about your usually daily routine.

**Alice:** Well, usually I wake up around 8 a.m. I always have a cup of coffee while I review my study notes over breakfast. Then I normally ride my bike to school, apart from in winter, when it’s way too cold. Before class starts, I often meet up with my classmates in the corridor and we gossip a bit about life and school. After school, I always go straight home and then start on my homework while my mum cooks me dinner; I usually go to bed at about 10 p.m.

**Interview:** do you do the same thing at the same time every day?

**David:** During the week, I have a very regular schedule because of my job. I always wake up just after 7 in the morning, then eat my breakfast on the ay to the subway station. I get to work at 8 o’clock sharp, and usually work until 5, sometimes I work overtime until 7 or 8. After I get home, I normally eat dinner with my wife and after that either hang out with friends or watch TV before going to bed at about 11.

The present simple is used to describe what we do every day or very frequently:

I get up at 7:30 in the morning.

She often goes to the moves.

They eat noodles for lunch.

**Hint:** *do not overlook the usage of present simple tense as many students have lost their points on basis tense errors.*

The present simple is often used together with times of day, so make sure you are aware of the following:

At + hour + o’clock.

My mum makes me go to bet at 10 o’clock.

I get up at 6 o’clock.

At + dawn/ noon/ midnight.

I never get up at dawn.

I always eat lunch at noon.

At + hour + a.m./ in the morning.

I usually wake up at 8 a.m.

I usually wake up at 8 in the morning.

At + hour + p.m. / in the afternoon/ evening.

My father often comes home at 9 p.m.

My father often comes home at 9 in the evening.

At/ on the weekend.

I normally just relax at the weekend.

I normally just relax on the weekend.

**Hint:** *make sure that you can use time expressions accurately. Common mistakes such as at 8 a.m. o’clock, in noon, on weekend… should be avoided.*

In everyday English, the 12 hour clock system is the most commonly used time notation. Therefore, with 23:00 you should say 11 o’clock or 11 p.m. not 23 o’clock.

**Extra language point Sequence markers.**

Let’s take a look at how Alice and David use sequence markers in their answers.

**Interview:** Tell me about your usually daily routine.

**Alice:** Well, usually I wake up around 8 a.m. I always have a cup of coffee while I review my study notes over breakfast. Then I normally ride my bike to school, apart from in winter, when it’s way too cold. Before class starts, I often meet up with my classmates in the corridor and we gossip a bit about life and school. After school, I always go straight home and then start on my homework while my mum cooks me dinner; I usually go to bed at about 10 p.m.

**Interview:** do you do the same thing at the same time every day?

**David:** During the week, I have a very regular schedule because of my job. I always wake up just after 7 in the morning, then eat my breakfast on the ay to the subway station. I get to work at 8 o’clock sharp, and usually work until 5, sometimes I work overtime until 7 or 8. After I get home, I normally eat dinner with my wife and after that either hang out with friends or watch TV before going to bed at about 11.

To talk about your usual or normal routine, you should use sequence markers. These help you logically link the different activities that you do together and also make things much clearer for the listener.

Remind yourself of the following sequence markers:

Before

Then

After(activity)

After that.

**Hint:** *besides then and after that, Alice and David use other sequence markers to indicate the other of their actions. This is typical of native speaker’s speech.*

# **Formula 3**

**What do you like to do (in your spare time)?**

**Aims**

In this lesson you’ll master the formula for what do you like to do (in your spare time)?

Type question.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

What do you like to do when you are on holiday?

What do you like to do when you are not working?

**The formula**

When the examiner asks you what do you like to do (in your spare time)? Type questions, you must:

Answer order

1. Identify a couple of things you like doing.
2. Describe why you like them.

**Language steps**

1. Use either enjoy/ like + verb-ing or like + to verb.

I like studying English.

I like to study English.

1. Use one or two native speaker ways to say I like.

I’m quite into playing guitar.

I’m really keen on studying English.

1. Use some adjectives of positive feeling to show the degrees of your interest.

I like playing football. It’s exciting.

I’m quite into learning new languages. I find it fascinating.

Model Answer

Read the model answer from two **IELTS** candidates, **Alice** and **David**.

Interviewer: what do you like to do in your spare time?

Alice: Well, I have lots of hobbies I like to do in my spare time. I’m very interested in studying English and I’m also quite into movies – sometimes I combine these two interests by watching British or America films. What I particularly enjoy doing, though, is playing football – it’s so exciting!

Interviewer: What do you like to do in the evening?

David: I work really hard during the day so in the evening, I like to relax and unwind. I’m a big fan of hip-hop and rock music, and I like hanging out with friends and watching gigs. I’m also keen on reading novels and short stories. I’m involved in a reading group at my university and every so often we get together and discuss the latest books we’ve read over dinner – it’s so stimulating to talk and hear different views about the books we’ve all read.

Language step1 Like and Enjoy.

Like and enjoy are two very common verbs that you need to master to do well in your IELTS test.

Like

Notice that David uses like in two different ways to say the same thing.

Like + to verb

I like to relax.

Like + verb-ing

I like hanging out with friends.

Enjoy

Enjoy + verb-ing.

I really enjoy playing tennis.

Hint: After enjoy the verb should take an -ing form. For example, we can say I enjoy practicing the guitar for a couple of hours every day, not I enjoy practice.

If you or the interviewer has already mentioned an activity, and you continue to discuss that activity, you can refer to that activity as it. For example:

I really enjoy studying English. It is fun.

In the second sentence, it refers back to studying English. Use it when you are sure that both you and the person you are speaking to are talking about the same thing. Remember, if what you were talking about before was plural, you must say they instead of it. For example:

I like watching football matches – they are so exciting.

Language step 2 Native speaker ways to say I like.

Let’s look at the structures for these native speaker ways to say you like something:

I’m quite into + activity/ hobby.

I’m quite into playing tennis – I get very excited about it.

I’m a big fan of + activity/ hobby.

I’m a big fan of guitar music – I often go to concerts.

I’m keen on + activity/ hobby.

I’m really keen on going to eat in Thai Restaurants. I love Thai food.

I’m interested in + activity/ hobby.

I’m very interested in law; I’m always readying about the latest laws and legal cases.

Hint: Be careful to use correct prepositions in idiomatic expressions. For example: quite into, a fan of, keen on, interested in.

Language step 3 Adjectives of Positive feeling.

To explain why you like doing something, you should use adjectives of positive feeling. It is often difficult for non-native speaker to use them correctly, and candidates frequently lose marks in the IELTS test because of this type of mistake.

Adjective of positive feeling come from stative verbs such as satisfy, bore and excite.

There are two ways to turn this type of verb into adjectives of positive feeling.

Use be + verb -ed when talking about the person who is experiencing the emotion:

He is bored when he has nothing to do.

She is fascinated by music.

They are interested in playing football.

I am satisfied with my lessons.

The boy is excited when I give him food.

Use be + verb-ing when talking about the thing that is causing the emotion:

Football is boring.

Music is fascinating.

Studying English is interesting.

Seeing a concert is exciting.

Eating a big dinner is satisfying.

# **Formula 9**

**Why do some people like X**

**Aim**

In this lesson you’ll master the formula for way do some people like X? type questions.

Why do some people like cooking?

Why do some people enjoy reading?

Why do some people like gardening?

The formula

When the examiner asks you why do some people like X? type questions, you must.

Answer order

1. Describe why some people enjoy X or doing X.
2. Say which types of people or personalities enjoy it.
3. Explain why it’s good for them and why they might like it.

Language steps

1. Use native speaker words to talk about types of people.

Most teenagers enjoy listening to pop music.

1. Use native speaker personality adjectives.

Creative people tend to enjoy going to the theatre and art museums.

1. Use native speaker activity adjectives.

Volunteering at the hospital is very rewarding.

**Language step 1 Types of People.**

Let’s look at how the two IELTs candidates, Alice and David, mention different types of people.

Alice: I think people of all ages enjoy cooking, especially creative people….

David: Gardening is most popular with middle-aged and elderly people, probably because gardening is a very therapeutic and relaxing activity. Members of the older generation are generally more patient and often prefer less energetic activities…

Notice that Alice and David do not talk about themselves and whether they like cooking and gardening, but talk about the different types of people in society and say whether they like cooking and gardening.

Remind yourself of some useful words to talk about types of people:

Married couples.

Single parents

Teenagers

Adolescents

The elderly

The older generation

Retired people

Rich people

Poor people

**Language step 2 Personality Adjectives.**

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use personality adjectives.

Alice: I think people of all ages enjoy cooking, especially creative people… even quite conservative people like cooking…

David: Members of the older generation are generally more patient and often prefer less energetic activities…

Notice that Alice and David use different personality adjectives to help them say why different groups of people enjoy doing X – you should too.

Look at the following useful native speaker personality adjectives:

Energetic, apathetic, curious, studious, social, family-oriented, patient, creative.

**Language step 3 Activity Adjectives**

Let’s have a look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use activity adjectives.

Alice: … For those who love to creative new things, cooking provide a great way to express themselves as they can experiment with different dishes and ingredients… it can be very satisfying to successfully cook a whole meal from start to finish.

David: Gardening is most popular with middle-aged and elderly people, probably because gardening is a very therapeutic and relaxing activity. Members of the older generation are generally more patient and often prefer less energetic activities-gardening is a good way to unwind whilst making their home more beautiful.

Notice that Alice and David talk about the benefits people get from doing cooking and gardening – this helps them explain why people like to do these activities.

Therapeutic – gardening, cooking, yoga, tai chi, meditation.

Relaxing – gardening, watching TV, listening to the radio, knitting, reading.

Healthy – going to the gym, doing physical exercise, running.

Good (for the mind) – the news, blogs, reading books.

Inspiring - looking at art, watching live music, going to the theatre or cinema.

Rewarding – doing charity work, studying, raising money for a cause.

Fun – sports, games, car games, travelling

Satisfying – painting, drawing, cooking, gardening.

# **Formula 10**

**When was the first/ last time you did X?**

**Aims**

In this lesson you’ll master the formula for when was the first/ last time you did X? type questions.

When was the first time you used a computer?

When was the last time you went on holiday?

When was the last time visitors came to your house?

The formula

When the examiner asks you when was the first/ last time you did X? type questions, you must.

Answer order.

1. Say when you first/ last did it.
2. Say why you did it.
3. Describe what the experience was like.

Language steps

1. User prepositions and adverbs of time correctly.

The last time I went fishing was about three years ago.

The first time I used a computer was in high school in 1984.

1. Have greet control of the past simple to talk about completed events.

I went on holiday last May.

My father bought me a computer when I was 10.

1. Use varied adjectives of experience to sound more like a native.

Camping in the USA was so boring.

I thought acting was so intriguing.

Language step 1 Prepositions and adverbs of Time.

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use prepositions and adverbs of time.

Alice: The last time I went on holiday was about three years ago… in July 2008…

David: The last time visitors came to my house was just last week.

When talking about something that happened in the past, you need to use prepositions and adverbs of time to say when it happened.

Look at the following prepositions and adverbs of time, and how they are used.

Around (months, occasions, festivals, special days).

… around Christmas…

… around my 10th birthday…

Last (weeks, weekends, months, years, festivals)

… last weekend…

… last month…

In (months, seasons, years)

… in December…

… in 1989…

During (months, seasons, long festivals)

… during the Tet holiday…

… during the spring…

On (days, special days)

… on the 5th of November 2005…

… on my parent’s 25th wedding anniversary…

You should also master using the following useful expressions:

About + time period + ago

I last played a computer game about two years ago.

They visited the summer Palace about three days ago.

The last/ first time I + past verb + was…

The last time I went swimming was a few hours ago.

The first time I ate insects was in the summer of 2008.

**Language step 2 the past simple.**

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates Alice and David, use the past simple tense.

**Alice**: *the last time I went on holiday was about three years ago… in July 2008. My family and I went to Sa Pa for two weeks during the summer holiday… my family and I drove out to the mountains there and trekked in the Fansipan…*

**David**: *the last time visitors came to my house was just last week. It was my wife’s birthday, and so I secretly arranged for a few close friends to come over for diner and drinks. Although it was difficult to keep my wife from finding out. It was quite exciting in a way and certainly a bit of challenge! In the end, everything went to plan and we all had a great time – it was definitely a really enjoyable evening.*

A lot of students, especially when they are nervous in speaking tests, forget to get their past tenses right, especially for irregular verbs. They only way to get it right is to practice.

**Language step 3 adjectives of experience.**

Let’s take a look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use adjectives of experience.

Alice: … Sa Pa is an intriguing place to visit because of the Dao minority culture..

David … Although it was difficult to keep my wife from finding out, it was quite exciting in a way and certainly a bit of challenge! In the end, everything wen to plan and we all had a great time – it was definitely a really enjoyable evening.

After saying when you first/ last did X, and using prepositions and adverbs of time and past simple verbs correctly, you should add a few details to describe what the activity was like.

Here are some useful adjectives of experience:

Difficult, challenging – for things you learned to do that were not easy but you enjoyed learning.

Exciting, thrilling, exhilarating, stimulating, enjoyable – for things that you really enjoyed and that were a lot of fun as well as being interesting.

Fascinating, intriguing, surprising – for things or experiences that were new and you felt very curious about them before/ while doing them.

Depressing, upsetting, unpleasant – for things that made you feel sad, very uncomfortable.

Embarrassing, humiliating – for things that made you feel very uncomfortable because other people were watching or because you felt silly.

Irritating, annoying, frustrating – for things that you did not enjoy because you thought they were stupid, a waste of time or far too difficult.

Look at some examples of these words in context:

The party I attended was really exciting. I am not used to going to parties with people from lots of different countries, so it was fascinating to see how everyone behaved. It was surprising to see so many people having different conversations at the same time!

The last time I went on holiday was really depressing, if I am honest, it rained the whole time and my mother got sick. It was upsetting and frustrating because I don’t have much time off work and rarely get holidays.

I used a computer for the first time when I was in middle school. I found it really embarrassing because my classmates all knew how to use one but I didn’t.

**Formula 11**

**Did you ever learn to do X?**

**In this lesson you’ll master the formula for did you ever lean to do X? type questions.**

**Did you learn how to ride a bike when you were a child?**

**Did you learn to play a musical instrument in school?**

**Did you learn how to swim when you were young?**

**The formula**

When the examiner asks you did you ever learn to do X? type questions, you must:

Answer order:

1. **Say if you did learn to do X and when you learned to do it.**
2. **Say who taught you to do X.**
3. **Say what their personality was like as a teacher.**

**Language steps**

1. **Say past tenses accurately with times in life phrases.**

I bought a flute when I was in university.

My parents gave me a computer on my 11th birthday.

1. Say who taught you with the preposition by.

I was taught by my grandmother.

I was introduced to the guitar by my friend Stephen.

1. Use non-defining relative clauses and adjectives of personality to describe the person who taught you.

He was a patient and kind teacher.

Miss Clark, who taught me Maths, was a strict teacher!

Model answers

Interviewer: Did you ever lean to ride a bike as a child?

Alice: Yes, I did! Hmmm. Let me think. It was during the Tet holiday. My parents bought me a really wonderful new bike. I was taught to ride by my uncle, who was incredibly encouraging but quite strict because he was determined to teach me to ride before the end of the holiday.

Interviewer: Di you learn to swim when you were in school?

David: I did not learn to swim at school because my school did not have any swimming classes, but I leaned to swim for a few months one summer when my parents took me to classes at the local swimming pool. I went every other day with a small group of friends. We were taught by a really friendly and supportive man, who was a semi-professional swimmer.

Language step 1: The past simple and times in life phrases

David and Alice use past tenses accurately. The pas simple can be used here in two different ways:

Using the past simple to talk about something that finished in the past:

I learned to swim…

I did not learn to swim because…

Using the past simple to talk about habitual actions in the past:

I went every other day…

I practiced playing the guitar three evenings a week….

It’s important to tell the examiner when you did or did not learn to do X using the following times in life phrases:

When I was + age

When I was 10 years old, my grandfather showed me how to make…

On my + birthday

On my 8th birthday, I found out how to…

During + holiday

During the Tet holiday, my father taught me to…

About + number + year(s) ago

About two years ago, I learned how to play…

One day

One cold, wet day in December, my sister taught me that…

And for habitual actions, remember these adverbs of frequency:

Every day/ every other day/ every week/ every month

I went to the swimming pool every other day until I could swim.

About twice a week/ month

I had classes with my trumpet teacher about twice a week,

# 

# **Formula 13**

**How would you improve X?**

**Aims**

In this lesson you’ll master the formula for how would you improve X? type questions.

How would you improve your apartment?

How would you change the place where you study to make it better?

If you could, how would you improve your university/ workplace?

**The formula**

When the examiner asks you how would you improve X? type questions, you must:

Answer order

1. Identify problems with X.
2. Talk about what you would do to solve them/ make them better.
3. Say what the positive results of these changes would be.

Language steps

1. Use changing X phrases to talk about changes you would like to make.

I would improve my apartment by buying new furniture.

I suggest that they make it better by employing more cleaners.

1. Use the “would have something done” passive to talk about things you’d get professionals/ other people to do for you to improve X.

I would have the walls painted a new color.

1. Use comparatives of convenience to speculate about how these changes would make X better.

Having a bigger bed would be more comfortable.

**Language step 1 Changing X phrases.**

Let’s have a look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use the changing X phrases.

Alice: To start with, the place I’m living in now is quite small and crowded… So, firstly, I would make more space by getting rid of some of my things…

David: My university campus is quite scruffy and run-down. I suggest the authorities improve it by spending more money on up-keeping the grounds and modernizing the classrooms…

Notice how both Alice and David start by identifying the problem, then go on to use the structure improve X + by + verb-ing / make X + comparative + by + ver-ing to talk about changes they would make or they suggest others make.

For changes you would make.

Would improve X + by + verb-ing / would make X + comparative + by + verb-ing.

I would improve my bedroom by putting posters on the walls.

I would make my living room cozier by buying a new sofa.

I would improve my flat by getting a new wardrobe.

For changes you suggest others make.

Suggest someone improve X + by + verb-ing/ suggest someone make X + comparative + by + verb-ing.

I suggest the government improve the air quality by restricting the amount of cars in the city.

I suggest the school authorities improve security by building a wall around the playground.

I suggest they make the city more attractive by planting more trees and flowerbeds.

**Language step 2 The “Would have something done” passive.**

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use the structure would have something done.

Alice: … I would have the windows make bigger and lighter curtains make and fitted…

David: … If I were in authority, I would have new classrooms build, I would have the sports facilities repaired…

Notice how Alice and David use the structure would have + something + past participle to talk about what they would get others to do.

First look at the difference between the active (what you would do) and the passive (what you would get others to do):

I would make the windows bigger. = I would do it myself.

I would have the windows make bigger. = I would get someone else to come and do it for me.

Look at these further examples of the passive:

I would have a new kitchen installed.

I would have the walls painted different colours.

I would have my motorbike fixed.

I would have a brand-new bath fitted.

**Language step 3 Comparative of convenience.**

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use the comparatives of convenience.

Alice: …Then my flat would be much cosier.

David: … Having a more modern campus would make life more pleasant for us, and the place more appealing to visitors.

To say how the changes you propose would make life better, you should use the following structures:

**… then X would be + comparative**

… then my university campus would be warmer.

… then my dorm would be more attractive.

…then life would be more convenient.

…then my living room would be more comfortable.

**Doing X/ having X done + would make (something/ place) + comparative.**

Having a carpet fitted would make my room more beautiful and warmer.

Putting up a few pictures on the wall would make my dorm more attractive.

Installing a new kitchen would make life more convenient for me.

Buying a new sofa would make my living room much more comfortable.

Formula 14

How important is X?

Aims

In this lesson you’ll master the formula for how important is X? type questions.

How important is art in life?

How Important is music for people in your country?

How important is physical exercise?

Answer order

1. Say whether X is important or not.
2. Say how important X is.
3. Say why it is important or unimportant.

Language steps

1. Use words and expressions to express degrees of importance.

Music is especially important in today’s society, but I don’t think art is very important.

1. Use positive expressions.

It is essential for all children to learn to draw.

It its very beneficial to do exercise.

1. Use adjectives of positive and negative feeling to describe feelings about art and culture.

I find art and music really inspiring and stimulating.

Model answers

Interviewer: How important is art in life?

Alice: I think art is exceedingly important in life, especially today. People spend most of their lives worrying about working, studying or earning money – and it is easy to forget the value of art – paintings, sculptures and even contemporary architecture. People need to see beauty in their lives… art is really fascinating and can inspire us to think ore deeply and reflect on life.

Interviewer: How important is music for people in your country?

David: Well, it really depends on the types of people you are talking about. IN general, music is especially important for young people, in particular, university students from big cities. Personally, I believe that some types of music are good for helping people calm down and relax, and other types are excellent for energizing people. Going to live concerts, for example, can be a really stimulating experience.

Language step 1 Expressing degrees of importance

Alice: I think art is exceedingly important in life…

David: Well, it really depends on the types of people you are talking about. In general, music is especially important for young people…

Rather than saying art is important and music is important, Alice and David use different adverbs of degree to say how important art/ music is.

Moderately important

Art is fairly important in life.

To some extent art is important.

Art is important to a point, but…

Very important

Mathematics is considerably important.

Learning to swim is incredibly important.

Eating fresh fruit and vegetables is very important.

I think that art is very important in life.

I don’t think art is terribly important for young people.

Art is especially/ particularly important in today’s society.

Note: With especially important and particularly important, we can use for or in in the following ways:

For + groups/ types of people

Art is especially important for children.

In + society / place/ country

A good education is particularly important in modern society.

Unimportant

Following fashion is not important at all.

Having a camera on mobile phone is completely unimportant.

W can not say completely important because in English, completely is normally used with adjectives expressing a negative feeling; for example;

It is completely ridiculous!

I think art is completely unimportant!

He is completely mad!

Language step 2 Positive expressions

After stating whether something is important or not, native speakers often say what X is important for, what it is good for or what it is useful for.

Look at these different positive expressions:

X+ is + important for / excellent for / good for + verb-ing

Gardening is important for helping people relax.

Working out in a gym is important for keeping fit.

Having messages is good for helping people calm down.

Drinking hot milk is excellent for solving sleep problems.

X + is + a good way to + verb

Listening to music a good way to help people calm down after a stressful day.

Doing physical exercise is a good way to keep fit and healthy and happy.

Swimming is an excellent way to release a lot of energy and maintain a good figure.

X + helps us / helps people/ can help us + (to) verb.

Spending weekends out in the countryside helps us (to) wind down.

Taking part in team quizzes can help people sharpen their minds.

Lifting weights can help us develop strong muscles.

Language step 3 Adjectives of Positive & Negative Feeling.

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use adjectives of positive and negative feeling.

Alice: …art is really fascinating…

David: … going to love concerts, for example, can be a really stimulating experience.

It’s good to complete your answer with just one or two adjectives of positive or negative feeling to explain why you think X is important or not.

Look at the following native speaker adjectives of positive and negative feeling:

Inspiring

Creative

Beneficial

Philosophical

Enriching

Educational

Expressive

Pretentious

Tedious

Frivolous

Here are some examples in context:

Adjectives of positive feeling

Art is so inspiring.

Visiting art galleries is very enriching.

Learning to play musical instruments is educational and creative.

Painting and drawing can teach children to be more expressive.

Adjectives of negative feeling

Most art is also very pretentious.

I think history is a tedious subject.

Learning about modern art in school in frivolous and unnecessary.

For me, drama is a pathetic activity that is incredibly wasteful of school time.

# **Formula 15**

**What do you want/ hope to do (in the future)?**

Aims

In this lesson you’ll master the formula for what do you want/ hope to do (in the future)?

Type questions.

Do you hope to do the same job in the future?

What do you want to do when you finish university?

What kind of job would you like to do when you finish your studies?

The formula

When the examiner asks you what do you want/ hope to do (in the future)? Type questions.

You must:

Answer order:

1. Say what your ambition for the future is.
2. Say why you want to achieve it.
3. Say how you hope to achieve it.

Language steps

1. Use hope and would like like a native.

This is something I really hope to do.

I would like to be a really successful businesswoman.

1. Use future ambition phrases to say what you want to achieve.

I would like to achieve this ambition because it would be so rewarding!

If I succeeded in doing this, I would gain an enormous sense of security.

1. Use the first conditional accurately.

If I work really hard and save up enough money, I will go to Europe and gat a master’s.

**Language step 1 Hope & would like**

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use hope and would like.

Alice: What I really hope to do is work for an NGO here in HCMC. I would like to find a purpose in life…

David: What I’d really like to do in the future is pretty simple: I’d like to find a good job… I hope to be able to afford a nice apartment…

There are different ways we can use hope to talk about the future:

I hope to be able to + verb

I hope to be able to go abroad after my studies.

I hope to be able to work in an international hospital.

I hope I can + verb.

I hope I can pass my driving test.

I hope I can convince my parents to buy me a car.

What I really hop to do is + verb.

What I really hope to do is travel around the world.

What I really hope to do is learn to speak Greek.

You’ll notice that Alice and David also use I would like to, which is used in the following way:

I would like to + verb

I would like to marry the girl I met in the cake shop.

I’d like to become the best pool player in Asia.

You can also use these two useful phrases:

I would like (to have) the opportunity to study overseas.

I would like (to have) the chance to fly an aeroplane.

I hope to have the fortune to be able to go to Australia.

I hope to have the chance to go to diving in Thailand.

Language step 2 Future Ambition phrases

Let’s have a look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use the future ambition phrases.

Alice: What I really hope to do is work for an NGO here in HCM. I would like to find a purpose in life…

David: What I’d really like to do in the future is pretty simple. I’d like to find a good job… I hope to be able to afford a nice apartment….

It’s a always useful to learn a few phrase to talk about future ambition and why you want to achieve them.

When talking about future ambitions, native speakers will often use common collocations (words that almost always go together when native speakers talk) such as the following:

To achieve an ambition

To fulfil a dream

To succeed in doing something

To manage to do something

Now look at these collocations in the context of the following future ambition phrases:

I would like to achieve this ambition because it would be so rewarding.

I’d love to fulfil this dream because it would give me a great sense of achievement.

It’s my dream to succeed in learning Japanese.

I would love to manage to get into art college.

You can use these phrases after almost any ambition you mention to tell the examiner what you want to do.

**Language step 3 The first conditional.**

Let’s look at how the two IELTS candidates, Alice and David, use the first conditional.

Alice: …If I work really hard and save up enough money, then I will go to Europe and get a master’s.

David …If I strive hard, I think I can achieve this in less than 10 years.

We use the first conditional to talk about things that will possibly come true in the future if we make sure we do certain things. Remind yourself of the structure of the first conditional.

If + present simple + will + verb

If I work hard, then I will be top of the class.

If I train every day, then I will become the best player in the team.

If I make sure I have the discipline to study more, I will pass the exam.

If I party too much, then I will certainly anger my parents.

Don’t forget there are two possible orders:

If + present simple + will + verb.

If I save enough money, I will travel abroad.

If I give my friend enough help, he will overcome this difficulty.

Will + verb + if + present simple

I will travel abroad if I save enough money.

I will win the race if I train as hard as I can.

# **Formula 25**

**Giving and supporting opinions.**

In the following lessons you’ll learn how to give good discussion answers to IELTS Part three questions.

In this lesson you’ll master the formula for giving and supporting opinions. This is a skill that you will need to use in all part three lessons. It is a basic native speaker discussion skill.

Do you think children should be made to wear a uniform to school?

Do you believe it is acceptable that animals are used for cosmetics testing?

Do you feel that city life is suitable for elderly people?

What do you think about there being a single international language?

**The formula**

To give and support opinions, you should:

Answer order

1. Introduce and state your opinions clearly.
2. Support your opinions with reasons or examples.

**Language steps.**

1. Use native speaker expressions for giving and supporting opinions.

I believe that…

I feel that…

I hold the opinion that…

1. Use native speaker expressions for introducing opinions.

I think that…

I don’t think that…

I am convinced that…

1. Use native speaker expression for supporting your opinions

It is good for…

It is essential for…

It has a positive effect on…

**Language step 1 Giving and supporting opinions.**

Interview: Do you think that children should wear a uniform to school?

Sophia: Yes, I think that children in middle, school and high school should wear a uniform to school. *I strongly believe that it is essential for giving children a sense of identity and unity. Young children can be very snobbish about fashion and often ridicule and pick on children who won’t wear expensive or designer clothes…*

Interviewer: Do you believe that children can learn a lot from team sports?

Mike: Yes, I do.  *Children need to learn to work in groups and co-operate as well as build leadership skills. Sport is also good for children to learn to be competitive in a mature manner. It’s also very important that children keep fit and healthy. For example, it’s been proven that children who learn to play team sports grow up to be more understanding and co-operative adults.*

Giving and supporting opinions is a basic skill you’ll need for any type of IELTS Part III answer. You should use this skill in every one of your Part III lessons and consider it as a basic requirement for all native speaker discussion.

Notice how Sophia and Mike both follow their introduction of opinion with reason and examples. Sophia says that she believes that children in middle school and high school should wear a school uniform because:

… it is essential for giving children a sense of identity and unity.

…children can be very snobbish about fashion and often ridicule and pic on children who don’t wear expensive or designer clothes.

When asked whether university students should wear a uniform, Sophia says that she thinks they certainly should not and gives her reason:

We are all adults… we should have the freedom to choose what we want to wear…

Remember to state your option and then give a reason or example to back it up. It’s a simple formula:

Opinion

Reasons/ examples.

**Language step 2 Introducing Opinions.**

Let’s see how the two IELTS candidates, Sophia and Mike, introduce their opinions.

Interviewer: Do you think that children should wear a uniform to school?

Sophia: Yes, I think that children in middle school and high school should wear a uniform to school. I strongly believe that it is essential for giving children a sense of identity and unity…

Interviewer: What about in university? Should university students all wear a uniform?

Sophia Certainly not! We are all adults by the time we get to university, so I believe that we should have the freedom to choose what we want to wear and when we want to wear it…

Interviewer: Do you thin that young people should do more sport in schools today?

Mike: I certainly do. I think that young people today are getting quite lazy and this is bad for their health. I’m convinced that schools put too much emphasis on academic subjects, so I firmly believe that good sports classes and sport facilities are very important.

Interviewer: Do you believe that children can learn a lot from team sports?

Mike: Yes, I do. Children need to learn to work in groups and co-operate as well as build leadership skills…

Notice how Sophia and Mike both use native speaker expressions to introduce their opinions.

Expressing agreement or disagreement with the question

Yes, I do.

Sure.

Certainly.

Certainly not!

Absolutely not!

Not really.

I’m not sure I agree.

Introducing opinion expressions.

I believe that… / I think that…

I don’t believe that…/ I don’t think that…

I really think that…

I strongly believe that…

I am of the opinion that…

For me…

The way I see it…

Example:

A: Do you think that vegetables are an important part of a diet?

B: Sure. I think that they give people a lot of vitamins.

A: Do you believe people should pay to enter public parks?

B: No, absolutely not! The way I see it, all public parts should be free for everyone.

**Language step 3 Supporting your opinion**

Let’s look at how the IELTS candidate Sophia explains why students should wear a uniform.

Sophia… I strongly believe that it is essential for giving children a sense of identity and unity…

Supporting a positive opinion

Look at these other positive expressions to say why something is a good thing:

It’s good for + verb-ing

It’s essential for + verb-ing

It’s vital for + verb-ing

It’s very important for + verb-ing/ that + clause.

People should all + verb.

It gives us the opportunity/ freedom to + verb.

People should make an effort to + verb.

Examples:

I really thing that people should all try and eat healthily.

A solid education is essential for finding a good job.

Better public transport gives us the opportunity to stop using private vehicles which hurt the environment.

Look at how Sophia expresses why making students in university wear a uniform would be bad.

Sophia … It would certainly be inappropriate to make university students wear a uniform, and incredibly patronizing too!

Supporting a negative opinion

Look at these other negative expressions to say why something is a bad thing:

It would be inappropriate to + verb/ for + noun

It could have a bad effect on…

It’s not good for society if people…

It’s unfair to + verb / somebody…

It’s not necessary to + verb.

It’s unethical to + verb

It’s unreasonable to + verb.

Examples:

I’m convinced that it would be inappropriate to make children under the age of 12 work for a living.

I feel that it’s unfair to deny people health care just because they are poor.

For me, it’s not necessary to make education free because it’s already extremely cheap.

Extra language point Techniques for supporting your opinions.

Here are some useful techniques for supporting your opinions.

Example

For example…

For instance…

Let me give an example…

Example:

For example, whenever I go to a bar there are always people smoking and I breathe in their smoke. This makes me a smoker even though I don’t want to be.

**Common sense**

Everyone knows…

It’s common knowledge that…

Example:

It’s common knowledge that birds do not enjoy being trapped in cages!

**Statistics**

Use numbers.

User figures to support an argument.

You don’t have to know lots of complicated statistics, but if you do know some very general figures to back up what you want to say, then use them.

Example:

Traffic should be reduced in Ho Chi Minh City. Over 1.000 new cars go onto the roads every day. This is becoming a major problem.

**Expert opinion**

According to…

To quote…

The book says…

I heard/ read/ saw somewhere that…

Example:

According to many experts, global warming is not actually scientifically proven to exist.