

**17 IELTS
EXAMINERS
WERE ASKED TO
GIVE ONE TIP TO
SOMEONE
TAKING THE
EXAM.....**

**HERE'S WHAT
THEY SAID....**

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN ENGLISH

It is an English test first and foremost. The best students do something in English every day and they focus on their weaknesses. If you are not very good at reading, find an online magazine or blog. If you struggle with listening, listen to English radio or podcasts. It is only by surrounding yourself with English every day that you will improve. Even just 20 minutes a day is better than nothing.

Read how Mai from Vietnam jumped from 6 to 8 in her speaking in only a few months following this tip.

SATISFY ALL PARTS OF TASK 1

On the General paper, write a separate paragraph for each point in the question to make sure you clearly cover everything.

On the Academic paper you will often be given a graph or chart to describe. The question is always the same- 'report the main features.' The problem most students have is they don't understand that 'main features' means that you only talk about 2 or 3 of the most significant things in your overview paragraph.

Pretend that someone said to you 'Tell me about 3 things and 3 things only'. This will help you prioritise the most important information.

Check out our '20 Dos and Don'ts for Academic Task 1.'

USE FREE RESOURCES

Make sure you take advantage of free resources on the internet.

IELTS is an English test and the more English you know, the better you will do. The problem is that most people either don't have the time or the money to practice English every day. Luckily, there are hundreds of sites on the internet that allow you to practice your speaking, reading, listening and writing for free.

Check out our list of free online resources.

BE SMART IN SPEAKING PART 2

In Part 2 you will be given a cue card with a general topic and then a small LIST of things that you 'should' talk about related to that topic. After one minute planning you must then talk for between 1-2 minutes.

Most students worry about running out of things to say, but this should never be a problem because you don't have to just talk about the LIST; only the TOPIC.

This allows you to talk about the past, future, your opinion and give a description. More than enough for 2 minutes.

Read about all the functional language and grammar you need for Part 2 here.

ANSWER THE QUESTION

So many candidates in both the Speaking and Writing tests do not answer the questions they are asked.

In the Writing test they often write generally about the topic rather than actually answering the specific question on the paper. Look for the micro-keywords within the topic.

In the Speaking test candidates often answer the question they hoped they would hear, rather than the question the examiner asks. You should NEVER give a memorised answer.

Here's how to analyse and answer any Task 2 answer effectively.

USE A STRUCTURE FOR WRITING

There are a number of different structures you can use for both Task 1 and Task 2.

They show you sentence-by-sentence what to include in each essay. Each different essay type requires a different approach and these structures tell you what to include and make your writing clear and easy to read. This will increase your score for both Task Achievement and Coherence and Cohesion.

Access all the Task 2 structures here.

LEARN COMMON TASK 2 TOPICS

You could be asked to write about any topic in Task 2 and you should never prepare memorised answers, but there are 10 common topics that appear regularly.

Knowing these helps you prepare more effectively because you can do some background research. You can read online magazines about them, listen to some podcasts, blog about them and learn topic-specific vocabulary.

You should be reading and listening to English every day, so why not within these ten topics?

The 10 Task 2 common topics can be accessed [here](#).

START A VOCABULARY BOOK

Having a wide ranging vocabulary is not only essential for the Speaking and Writing tests, but also Listening and Reading. If you don't have a large vocabulary, you can't get a high score.

The best students record any new words they find in a book or on their phone. They also write the meaning, example sentences, synonyms, antonyms, collocations and pronunciation beside each word and then review these words regularly.

Here is an example of how my students record new words.

ACCENT DOES NOT MATTER

Lots of students think that in order to do well you need to have a British or American accent. There are hundreds of different British accents, so which one is correct?

This is a big misconception and lots of students get 8 or 9 using their own accents. It is about being clear and easy to understand, not having a particular accent.

Be careful when someone tells you what you 'must do' in the IELTS test; often it is unreliable information.

Here are 9 more common IELTS misconceptions.

READING = SYNONYMS

Nearly every question on the Reading test uses synonyms and paraphrasing.

These are words that have the same meaning but are different, such as 'university', 'third-level education' and 'tertiary education'.

It is essential that you consider these when trying to locate the correct part of the text and answering the questions. When you learn a new word always think about its synonyms.

Here are more examples of paraphrasing and synonyms.

EXTEND YOUR ANSWERS

When most students get to Part 3 of the Speaking test, they are very tired and want the test to be over as soon as possible. This results in them giving very short answers and lowers their score.

There is no fixed rule, but your answers should normally be around 3-4 sentences long in Part 3.

To help you extend your answers you can explain your main point, give an example, paraphrase the question and make concessions.

Check out our Part 3 Guide for examples.

COMPLEX SENTENCES ARE SIMPLE

There are two types of sentences- simple and complex.

Generally, simple sentences have just one idea or clause and complex sentences have more than one clause and combine ideas.

The higher band scores are normally given to students who use complex sentences effectively. Complex sentences are very easy to make when you know how.

Here is a simple guide and some examples for you.

24 HOUR ENGLISH WARM UP

The day before your test should be filled with nothing but English.

Just like an athlete, you need to warm up before a big race. How are you supposed to perform well in the IELTS test if you haven't spoken, read or listened to any English before the test?

For 24 hours before your test you should speak, write, listen and read English only. Your family and friends will think you're crazy, but it works.

Here are some suggestions for your English-only day.

LEARN QUESTION TYPES

Trying to memorise answers before the Speaking test is a very bad idea, but you can learn something else that will really help you.

There are certain question types, such as giving opinion, talking about the past and future, comparing and contrasting, explaining and evaluating someone else's opinion that come up very regularly on the speaking test.

Here is the grammar and functional language you need to answer these questions.

KNOW THE MARKING CRITERIA

There is a very specific mark scheme for both Writing and Speaking that examiners must use to mark your answers. These criteria are the same in every IELTS testing centre in the world. You should therefore take advantage of this and learn exactly what the examiners want you to say and write.

This is very powerful information that can mean the difference between getting the band score you deserve and having to repeat the exam.

Do you know the difference between bands 5 and 8 in IELTS Writing Task 2?

FIX YOUR COMMON MISTAKES

Every student has some kind of grammar mistake that they make all the time. Did you know that 50% of sentences need to be error free to get a band 7 or above for grammar?

These small mistakes can stop you getting the band score you need. Have a teacher or native speaker look at your writing and they will soon be able to tell you what your common mistakes are.

Check out our article '10 Most Common IELTS Grammar Mistakes and How to Fix Them.'

KEEP IT SIMPLE

One of the biggest mistakes students make is trying to use complicated vocabulary or grammar they don't know how to use.

They think that if they use some very advanced words they will impress the examiner and get a high mark.

Unfortunately, this normally leads to students making mistakes and this will really lower your mark.

It is better to use simple language and not make any mistakes than use complex language and make mistakes that stop you being understood.

If you are comfortable using high level vocabulary, then by all means use it, but unless you are 100% sure, keep it simple.

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