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# IELTS JOURNAL



## Tips for IELTS Speaking

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 IELTSJOURNAL

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The **instagram** page contains lessons that show how to use the ideas from this book. You can keep in touch with the author there and ask your questions.

## What is IELTS Speaking?

The IELTS Speaking Test is the final part of the exam. Your test will usually be at some time between 1.30pm and 5.00pm. You can take only your ID document into the exam room.

The test lasts between 11 and 14 minutes. You will be interviewed by an examiner who will record your conversation. Timing is strictly controlled by the examiner, so do not be surprised if he or she interrupts you during an answer.

There are 3 parts to the Speaking Test:

1. Introduction/ interview: around 10 questions in 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Short presentation: talk for 2 minutes with 1 minute to prepare.
3. Discussion: around 5 questions in 4 to 5 minutes.

Preparation is the key to a good score in IELTS Speaking. Different skills are tested in each part, so you need to know exactly what to do.

We can predict the kinds of questions that the examiner will ask. We will prepare ideas, possible answers and good vocabulary for each part of the test.

## Which part is the most important?

Do the 3 parts of the speaking test carry equal weighting when your score is calculated, or is one part more important?

The simple answer is that the 3 parts are not scored separately; the examiner rates the student's performance as a whole. In this sense, neither part is more important. However, it's useful to think about the 3 parts like this:

- Part 1 is supposed to be quite easy (like a warm-up), so you won't get a high score if you **only** do well in this part.
- Part 2 is when the examiner really gets a chance to assess how good you are. He/she will now have an idea of what scores to give you.
- During part 3, the examiner is making his/her final decision. A good performance here can boost your score.

## **If you don't understand, ...**

What should you do if you don't understand a question in the speaking test?  
Here are my tips:

### **Part 1**

In part 1, the examiner is not allowed to help you, but he/she can repeat the question. Just say: "Sorry, can you repeat the question please?" If you still don't understand the second time, try to say something related to the topic or any of the words that you heard. Try your best, then focus on the next question.

### **Part 2**

You are given a task card with the question written on it, so you shouldn't have any problems in this part. If there is a word that you don't understand on the task card, don't ask the examiner - he/she is not allowed to help.

### **Part 3**

In this part of the test, the examiner is allowed to rephrase the question. If you don't understand, just say something like: "Sorry, can you explain that question in a different way please?"

## **Tips for the Speaking Test**

Many people agree that the secret of success in the Speaking test is being confident and creative person. Does it mean that others will fail? Not at all! This test is PREDICTABLE. Use the following tips to prepare yourself to what's coming and the confidence will come.

## **What are they looking for?**

If you know what is important to IELTS examiners, it improves your chances of success. These guidelines refer to every part of the Speaking test. Stick to them and you will satisfy your examiner.

- Speak without long pauses (when you are trying to think of something to say)
- Understand what the examiner asks you and confirm that by answering accordingly.
- Demonstrate how many "smart" words you know.

- Use all the tenses when you speak - past, present, future – and use them correctly.
- Pronounce the words correctly. For example the word “culture” should sound like “kolcher”, not “kultur”.
- Important! Accent has nothing to do with pronunciation, so it will not affect your score.

### **Keep it simple!**

This tip refers to the whole Speaking test. Don't start long and complicated sentences if you don't know how to finish them! Keep your sentences simple, and words - understandable. If you make grammatical error – it's ok to correct yourself, but don't overdo it, you must sound fluent.

When you hear a question, your mind automatically draws an image with the answer. You can describe this image in your own language, but when you start to describe it in English, suddenly you don't have enough words in your vocabulary. So try to think of what part of that image you can describe, do it and stop there. Don't let yourself show what words you don't know by saying incomplete sentences.

### **IELTS Speaking Part 1: Interview**

The first part of the Speaking test is the Interview. You enter the room, see the examiner, say “Good morning!” and smile. He or she asks to see your passport and to sit down. If he/she offers to shake your hand – do it, otherwise – don't.

Your body language is important here, it must show that you are relaxed and confident. When you are talking, try to make eye contact with the examiner as much as you can. During the interview the examiner asks you questions about yourself, your work, studies, parents, brothers/sisters, pets, etc. Your answer to each question should consist of one or two sentences; try not to answer with just “Yes” or “No”. After all it's your English they want to hear.

This is an easy task to prepare for. Read carefully the following questions and answers, and you will get a very clear picture of what will happen.

## Possible questions and answers

### **1. Where do you come from?**

I live in Panvilles village. It is a big small town located in the south of the Netherlands.

### **2. What is your home like?**

I rent an apartment. We have two bedrooms, one living room, one kitchen and of course one restroom. The apartment is not very big, about 70 square meters.

### **3. What the advantages and disadvantages your home has?**

The advantage is that my accommodation has lots of sunlight from the windows. And the disadvantage is that it is noisy because the centre of the city is nearby.

### **4. Tell me about your family.**

I have a mother, a father and a brother. My mother is a social worker, my father is a civil engineer and my brother is a student.

### **5. Tell me about your job.**

Well, I work for a small company named BananaSoft. It is located in Smallville. My job title is Software Designer.

### **6. Is there anything you dislike about your job?**

Normally, I enjoy my job very much. But sometimes my boss gives me boring assignments, which I don't like at all.

### **7. What are your plans for the future?**

I would like to improve my English first and then to find another job with better salary.

### **8. What type of transport do you use most?**

There are 2 types of transport that I use: I either drive my car or take the bus.

### **9. Do you like reading?**



Yes I do. I enjoy reading very much. Usually, I read every other day of the week.

**10. What do you like reading the best?**

I enjoy reading newspapers, magazines and of course my favorite fantasy books.

**11. What kind of television programs do you watch?**

Well, my favorite channel is Some TV Channel. I find it very interesting and educational.

**12. Tell me about a film you have seen recently**

I saw "Some New Movie" a week ago. It is a comedy and I like comedies. This one has some silly jokes but other than that I enjoyed it.

**13. Do you have a pet?**

Yes I do. I have a dog named Richy. He is 4 years old.

**14. What kind of food do you like?**

I prefer Asian cooking, mostly Chinese. My favorite dish is noodles with vegetables.

**15. How often do you go shopping?**

Well, I don't like shopping, so I do it only when I have to.

**16. What is your favorite festival and why?**

I like October Fest. It's a German festival that starts in late September and ends in October. People drink lots of beer at October Fest and that is why I like it.

**17. How do people celebrate this festival?**

Well, they build pavilions and stands that sell beer and all kinds of food, a lot of bands are playing there. People from all around Europe come to celebrate the October Fest dressed in German Traditional clothes.

## Giving short and simple answers

The first part of the IELTS Speaking Test lasts around 4 to 5 minutes. The examiner asks about 10 questions related to you, your daily life and your interests. Common topics are hobbies, family, friends, food, music etc.

Part 1 questions are supposed to be easy, and the examiner must get through all of the questions in 5 minutes or less. That's only about 30 seconds per question. If you try to give long answers, the examiner will interrupt you. My advice is to keep Part 1 answers very simple:

### ***Do you prefer home-cooked food or food from restaurants?***

I prefer home-cooked food because I think it's healthier and you know exactly what you're eating. I also enjoy cooking for family and friends.

You don't need to say any more than this. Just answer the question with a full sentence, give a reason, and maybe add one extra piece of information. Then stop speaking. *Stop with confidence and look at the examiner, ready for the next question.*

### **Do you work or are you a student?**

These are common questions at the start of the speaking test:

1. Do you work or are you a student?
2. Do you like your job / course? Why / why not?

Example answers:

1. Before I came to England I was working as an accountant, but at the moment I'm studying English because I hope to do a Master's here.
2. Yes, I really like my job because it's interesting and I work with a great team of people. **OR:** Yes, I enjoy studying English, but my real aim is to do a Master's and then find a job in an international company.

**Note:** Don't ask the examiner: "Do you mean in my country or here in England?" - it doesn't matter. Don't worry if you have a job and study at the same time - you can mention both.

Have a look at the answers below. It is a good example of how to do IELTS Speaking Part 1.

Remember, Part 1 is supposed to be easy. You should give short, simple answers. The speaker speaks clearly, answers the questions directly, and doesn't hesitate before answering. Her answers sound natural and she makes almost no mistakes.

Here are the first 4 questions and answers:

***Do you work or are you a student?***

I work and I'm studying English as well.

***And what's your job?***

I work in hairdressing and I do manicure, I do nails. I work part-time.

***How long have you done this job?***

I've been doing this job for almost one year.

***Do you like it?***

Actually, I don't like it very much. The part that I like is that I can communicate with people.

### **Answering the topics you are not interested in**

How do you answer questions about a topic that you are not interested in? For example, many people have no interest in dancing, so what should they say?

The best advice: just tell the truth. It's fine to say you don't like something. Read the examples below:

***1. Do you like dancing?***

No, I don't like dancing. I'm not a big music fan, and dancing just makes me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious.

***2. Has anyone ever taught you to dance?***

No, I've never been interested in learning to dance, so I've never taken any lessons or asked anyone to show me how to do it.

***3. Do you think that traditional dancing will be popular in the future?***

I'm afraid I have no idea because I don't follow what's happening in the dancing world! I suppose it will always be popular with some people.

## 5 Simple Rules

Part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test is supposed to be easy. You don't need to give 'difficult' answers, and you should try to avoid making mistakes.

### Here are five simple rules for Speaking Part 1:

1. Keep your answers short, then stop with confidence.
2. Answer the questions using full sentences.
3. Use words from the examiner's question in your answer.
4. If possible, give a reason for your answer.
5. Don't forget to say "yes" or "no" when necessary.

### Here's an example to illustrate these points:

Do you like parks?

Yes, I like parks because they are great places to relax. If you live in a city, a park is often the only place where you can escape from the noise and the traffic.

## Common Part 1 Topics

### 'Neighbors' topic

#### **1. How well do you know your next-door neighbours?**

I know my neighbours quite well. They're really nice people, and I always stop to talk whenever I see them. I think it's important to get on well with the people who live next door.

#### **2. How often do you see them?**

I see my neighbours at least a few times a week. We usually see each other when we're leaving for work in the morning or coming home in the evening.

#### **3. What problems do people sometimes have with their neighbours?**

I think the most common problem is probably noise. It's difficult to live next to people who have a dog that barks at night, or who play loud music or have too many parties.

### 'Houses and apartments' Topics

#### **1. Do you live in a house or an apartment?**

I live in a semi-detached house with three bedrooms in a suburb of Manchester. I've lived there for just over a year.

#### **2. Which is your favourite room in your home? Why?**

I don't really have a favourite room. But if I had to choose, I'd say the living room because that's where I go to sit and relax.

#### **3. Would you change anything about your home? Why / why not?**

Yes, I've been meaning to redecorate it since I moved in last year. It needs a new kitchen, so that's what I'd change first.

#### **4. Would you like to move to a different home in the future?**

Yes, I'd definitely move again at some point if I could afford to. I'd like to live in the countryside, or maybe in a different city or country.

## **'Numbers' Topic**

### **1. Do you have a favourite number or a number that is special to you?**

Yes, my favourite number is... because it's the day I was born on, and it's my lucky number.

### **2. Do any numbers have special importance in your country?**

Yes, certain ages are special. For example, your 18th birthday is important because it's when you are considered to become an adult.

### **3. Are you good at remembering numbers? Why / why not?**

No, I'm not very good at remembering numbers. I don't think it's necessary to learn them by heart; I just save them on my phone.

### **4. What numbers do people often have to memorise?**

The most important number to remember on a daily basis is the pin number for your bank card. Without this you can't pay for anything or get cash out.

## **'Hometown' Topics**

### **1. Where are you from?**

I'm from Manchester, which is a city in the north west of England.

### **2. Do you like your home town? (Why?)**

Yes, I like living in Manchester because it's where most of my friends live, and because there are plenty of things to do there. The only thing I don't like is the weather.

### **3. Would you prefer to live somewhere else? (Why?)**

For the moment I'm happy living here, but at some point I'd like to live in a country with a warmer climate, and I'd like to live near a beach!

### **4. Do you think your home town is a good place for young people? (Why?)**

Yes, Manchester has lots of things for young people, such as sports facilities, music and cinemas.

### **'Friends' Topic**

#### **1. Are your friends mostly your age or different ages?**

Most of my friends are about the same age as me because we met at school or university. I've got one or two friends who are older or younger than I met through work.

#### **2. Do you usually see your friends during the week or at weekends?**

I tend to meet up with my friends at weekends because everyone's too busy during the week.

#### **3. The last time you saw your friends, what did you do together?**

It was one of my friends' birthday last weekend. Six of us went out for a meal to celebrate.

#### **4. In what ways are your friends important to you?**

I think it's important to have friends that you can talk to and share experiences with. My friends make me laugh, but I know I can also rely on them whenever I need help or support.

### **'Reading' Topics**

#### **1. Do you like reading?**

Yes, I like reading a lot. I read all sorts of things, including novels, newspapers, magazines, and online articles.

#### **2. Do you usually read for leisure or for work purposes?**

Well, I have to do a certain amount of reading as part of my job, but I probably read more for enjoyment. I pick up a newspaper most days, and I usually have a book on the go.

#### **3. What was your favourite book or story when you were a child?**

The first book that I remember really enjoying was '.....'. It only took me a few days to read because I liked it so much that I couldn't put it down.

#### **4. Do you think it's important that children read regularly?**

Definitely. I think reading is possibly the most important skill that children learn. The ability to read opens the door to all aspects of education.

### **'Study' Topics**

#### **1. Do you like studying? Why / why not?**

Yes, I like studying because it's the best way to gain a deeper insight into any subject. I like reading, learning from others, and trying to understand difficult concepts.

#### **2. Do you prefer to study alone or with others? Why?**

I prefer to study alone because I need to be able to concentrate fully. Other people are a distraction.

#### **3. Where do you prefer to go when you need to study? Why?**

I like to find a quiet corner in my local library; being in an old building and surrounded by books seems to help me to focus on my work.

#### **4. How do you feel if someone disturbs you when you are studying?**

It frustrates me because it breaks my concentration. I prefer to avoid distractions by going somewhere where nobody will interrupt me.

### **'Walking' Topics**

#### **1. Do you like walking?**

I'm not one for going on really long walks in the countryside, but I don't mind walking when I'm in a town or city, for example when I'm sightseeing in a new place.



## **2. Do you think walking is important?**

Yes, I think it's important to be active, and walking is the most basic physical activity that we can do.

## **3. Do you think walking in the countryside is better than walking in the city?**

Personally, no. As I said before, I like walking in the city, especially if it's somewhere with a lot of history like London or Paris.

## **4. What could be done to improve the experience of walking in cities?**

I suppose the main issues are space and safety. Pavements need to be wide enough to accommodate lots of pedestrians, and we need safe places to cross the street.

## **'Parks' Topics**

### **1. Do you like parks? Why / why not?**

Yes, I like parks because they're great places to relax or go for a walk. I think every city needs some green space where people can escape from the crowds.

### **2. How often do you visit parks?**

There's a park very close to where I live, so I probably go there once or twice a week if the weather's nice.

### **3. Why are parks an important part of many towns and cities?**

Parks are like an oasis where people get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. They are where people go to have lunch, to take some exercise, or to forget about work for a while.

### **4. What do you think could be done to make parks better?**

The parks in big cities are already really good in my opinion. If I think about the famous parks in London, Paris or New York, I can't imagine what I would do to improve them.

## 'Maps' Topics

### **1. Do you ever use maps?**

Yes. Whenever I go somewhere new, I plan my journey with the help of a map.

### **2. When do people usually need to use a map?**

I imagine that some people use a map every day if they travel to different places for work. Others might only use a map when they're on holiday.

### **3. Do you prefer electronic or paper maps?**

I still prefer paper maps for a long journey; I like being able to open the map out on a table and see the full journey ahead.

### **4. Do you ever ask people for directions instead of using a map?**

Only if I'm really lost. Whenever I ask for directions, I find it difficult to remember what the person said. So I prefer to find my own way.

## 'Games' Topics

### **1. What games are popular in your country?**

Well, if we can consider sports as games, then football is definitely the most popular game in my country, but we also love board games like chess.

### **2. Do you play any games?**

Not regularly these days. I play the occasional game of tennis with my brother-in-law, and I recently played a bowling game on the Nintendo Wii with my nephew. I wasn't very good at it.

### **3. How do people learn to play games in your country?**

I think children teach each other to play games. I remember a friend at primary school teaching me to play chess, for example.

#### **4. Do you think it's important for people to play games?**

Yes, it's really important, especially for children. I think research has shown that play can improve brain development, intelligence, creativity, and the ability to cooperate with others.

### **'Travel' Topics**

#### **1. What form of transport do you prefer to use? Why?**

I prefer to travel by car because it means that I have my own space. Also, the buses and trains in my city are usually overcrowded; my car is much more comfortable.

#### **2. How much time do you spend travelling on a normal day?**

I probably spend about an hour and a half travelling to and from work. I travel during the rush hours, so there is quite a lot of traffic.

#### **3. What do you do while you are travelling?**

I usually listen to the radio or a CD. In the morning I like to listen to the news to find out what is happening in the world.

#### **4. Do you ever have problems with transport?**

Yes, as I said, I get stuck in traffic on my way to and from work. I used to get annoyed by traffic jams, but now I'm used to them.

### **'Work' topic**

#### **1. Do you work or are you a student?**

I'm a qualified doctor, but at the moment I'm studying English so that I can work in this country.

#### **2. Do you enjoy your job?**

Yes, I really enjoy my job. Ever since I was a child I have always wanted to be a doctor; I've always wanted to be able to help people.

### **3. What's the best thing about your job?**

The best thing about my job is that I can make a difference in people's lives. It's a great feeling to see someone recover after an illness because my colleagues and I were able to help.

### **4. Do you prefer working alone or with others? Why?**

In a hospital you have to work as part of a team. I've got used to working with others, and I think you can achieve a lot more as a team than you would alone.

## **'Collecting' Topics**

### **1. Have you ever collected anything as a hobby? (What?)**

Yes. When I was younger I used to collect keyrings. I remember that my favourite was a Lego man keyring that someone bought me as a present.

### **2. What kinds of thing do people often like collecting?**

Some people collect cheap items like stamps, keyrings or toys. Others collect expensive antiques, watches, jewellery or even cars.

### **3. Why do you think people collect certain objects?**

Maybe they like the constant search for a new item, or they want to remember past experiences. Others might like the feeling of organising and presenting what they own.

### **4. Is there anything that you would like to collect in the future?**

Yes. If I could afford it, I'd love to have a collection of guitars in different colours, shapes and sizes!

## **'Cooking' Topics**

### **1. Do you like cooking? Why / why not?**

Sometimes, I like preparing a special meal for family or friends who visit, but everyday cooking is a bit boring; it's something that has to be done, but it's not really fun.

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

My mother almost always did the cooking when I was young. I don't think she trusted my father to make a nice meal.

**3. Do you think that it's important to know how to cook well?**

I'm not sure whether it's important to cook *well*, but I do think that everyone should know the basics. It definitely isn't healthy to rely on pre-prepared meals or fast food.

**4. Do you think that children should be taught cookery at school?**

Yes, that's probably a good idea. If all children knew how to cook a few basic, healthy meals, that would surely be a good thing.

**'Laughing' Topic**

**1. What kinds of thing make you laugh?**

I laugh most when I'm with friends talking about funny things that have happened to us. I also like watching comedians and comedy films.

**2. Do you like making other people laugh?**

Yes, it's a nice feeling when you can make someone laugh because you can see that you've made them happy. It's great to share a funny moment with someone.

**3. Do you think it's important for people to laugh?**

Yes, of course. It's important to see the funny side of things; humour helps us not to take life too seriously. I think that laughter is good for our health.

**4. Is laughing the same as feeling happy?**

It's not exactly the same because you can be happy without laughing, and sometimes we laugh when something bad has happened; a sense of humour can help us to cope with difficult situations.

## **'Emails' topic**

### **1. At work or in your studies, do you often write things?**

Yes, I write a lot of emails as part of my job. I work for a company that has offices in several countries, so we use email to communicate.

### **2. How often do you send e-mails?**

I probably write between 5 and 10 work emails every day, and I send emails to friends or family a few times a week.

### **3. Do you prefer to write by hand or on a computer?**

It depends what I'm doing. I prefer the computer for most things because it's faster and you can save or copy things, but I still like making notes or writing ideas down by hand.

### **4. Do you think computers might one day replace handwriting?**

No, I think we will always write by hand as well. I think it's an important skill, and schools will continue to teach children to write by hand before they learn to type.

## **'Accommodation' Topic**

### **1. Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in.**

I live in a house that has a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom and a small garden. It's not a very big house, but it's just right for me.

### **2. How long have you lived there?**

I've lived there for about five years. It's the first house that I've owned; before that I was renting an apartment.

### **3. What do you like about living there?**

I like living there because I think the house reflects my personality: I decorated it myself, I chose all the furniture, and everything is where I want it to be.

#### **4. What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in?**

If I could, I'd buy a bigger house near a beach or in the mountains, preferably somewhere with a warm climate.

### **'Communication' Topics**

#### **1. How do you usually keep in touch with members of your family?**

I mostly keep in touch with my family by phone, and I've started using the Internet to make video calls. I also try to visit members of my family in person as often as I can.

#### **2. Do you prefer to speak to people by phone or by writing emails?**

It depends on the situation. I use email and text messages to communicate with friends, but my parents prefer it if I phone them.

#### **3. Do you ever write letters by hand? (Why / Why not?)**

No, I don't write letters by hand because it's so much easier to send an email that will arrive immediately.

#### **4. Is there anything you dislike about mobile phones?**

Well, I don't like listening to other people's conversations in public places, and I don't like it when someone's phone rings in the cinema or during a lesson.

### **'Clothes' Topics**

#### **1. Are clothes and clothing fashions important to you? (Why/Why not?)**

No, clothes and fashions are not really important to me. I tend to wear clothes that are comfortable and practical rather than fashionable.

#### **2. What different clothes do you wear for different situations?**

Well, I have to dress quite formally for work, so I wear a shirt and trousers. At home I prefer to wear jeans and a T-shirt, and on special occasions I might wear a suit.

**3. Do you wear different styles of clothes now compared to 10 years ago?**

No, not really, because I don't follow fashion. I think I have dressed in a similar way for the last 10 years.

**4. Do you think the clothes we wear say something about who we are?**

Yes, they probably do. Some people are really careful about what they wear because they want to be seen as stylish. Other people wear clothes that show wealth or status, such as clothes by famous designers.

**'Musical instruments' Topics**

**1. Which musical instrument do you like listening to most? (Why?)**

My favourite musical instrument to listen to is the guitar. I like the fact that there are different types of guitar, like classical, acoustic and electric. I love the variety of sounds a guitar can make.

**2. Have you ever learned to play a musical instrument?**

I took some guitar lessons when I was younger and still have a guitar at home. I don't play it much nowadays. I wish I had more time to practise.

**3. Do you think children should learn to play an instrument at school?**

Yes, I think it's a great skill and it's really enjoyable to be able to play a musical instrument. All children should be given this opportunity.

**4. How easy would it be to learn to play an instrument without a teacher?**

It would probably be more difficult without a teacher. You need someone to show you what to do and correct your mistakes. You need a lot of discipline to teach yourself.

**'Telephoning' Topics**

**1. How often do you make telephone calls?**

I probably make three or four phone calls every day, usually just to make arrangements with work colleagues or to speak to family and friends.

**2. Who do you spend most time talking to on the telephone?**



I think it would be one of my closest work colleagues. We often call each other rather than meeting face-to-face.

**3. When do you think you'll next make a telephone call?**

My family are expecting me to phone them as soon as I finish this exam. They'll want to know how it went.

**4. Do you sometimes prefer to send a text message instead of telephoning?**

Yes. I prefer to send a text message when I'm arranging something simple, like a time to meet someone. In those situations, a phone call isn't necessary.

**'Toys' Topics**

**1. Did you play with toys when you were a child?**

Yes, of course. I loved playing with toys when I was a child; I think all children do.

**2. What kinds of toys did you like?**

As far as I remember, I mostly played with toy cars, planes and action figures from films or cartoons. I also liked building things with Lego.

**3. In your country, do boys and girls play with the same types of toys?**

Not really. I think boys like the kinds of toys that I mentioned before, whereas girls play with dolls. My niece, for example, doesn't like toy cars; she prefers dressing dolls in different outfits.

**4. Do you think that toys help children to learn?**

Yes, I do. All toys encourage children to use their imagination and creativity. Even with simple toys, children imagine situations and invent games and rules.

**'Shopping' Topics**

**1. Who does most of the shopping in your household?**

There isn't one person who does most of the shopping. I'd say it's a shared responsibility because we tend to go shopping together as a family.

**2. What kind of shopping do you like doing?**

I quite like shopping for presents for people's birthdays or for Christmas. My favourite type of shop would have to be a bookshop.

**3. Is shopping a popular activity in your country?**

Yes, it's very popular. Saturday is the busiest shopping day, and lots of people treat shopping as a kind of leisure activity, rather than something practical.

**4. What types of shops do teenagers like best in your country?**

I'm not an expert on teenage behaviour, but I guess they like buying clothes, music, gadgets... that kind of thing.

**'Sports or games' Topics**

**1. What sports or physical activities do you regularly do?**

Unfortunately I don't have time to do any sports or physical activities because of my work commitments. I'd like to find more time for regular exercise.

**2. Which sport or game would you like to be good at?**

I'd like to be good at tennis. It must be great to be able to hit the ball as hard as you can and watch it land exactly where you wanted it to.

**3. Do you prefer watching or playing sports?**

I don't watch much sport on TV and I'm not a big sports fan, so I think I would probably enjoy doing sports more than watching them.

**4. Do you think children should be encouraged to do more sport?**

Yes, I think that sport is really important for children. Sports and games teach children to play together and try their best.

## Extra Examples for IELTS Speaking Part 1

### Hometown

I'd just like to ask you some questions about your hometown or city.

1. What type of place is it?
2. What was it like growing up there?
3. Has it changed much since you were a child?

### Studies

I'd just like to ask you some questions about your studies.

1. What are you studying?
2. Why did you choose that particular course?
3. What job would you like when you have completed all your studies?

### Work

I'd just like to ask you some questions about your work.

1. What work do you do?
2. What do you enjoy most about your work?
3. What are your main duties?
4. Is there any other work you would like to do in the future?

### Free Time

I'd like to move on and ask you some questions about your free time

1. What type of activities do you like to do in your free time?
2. How long have you been interested in these activities?
3. Do you like to do these activities alone or with other people? (Why)?
4. Do you think people have enough free time? (Why/why not)?

## Family

I'd like to move on and ask you some questions about your family.

1. How many people are there in your family?
2. Do you all live in the same house? (Why/why not)?
3. What things do you like doing together?
4. Who is your favorite family member?

## Timing

Let's move on and talk about being on time for appointments.

1. Is being late acceptable in your culture? (Why/why not)?
2. Are you ever late for appointments? (Why/why not)?
3. What type of excuses do you think are alright for lateness?
4. How do you feel when someone is late for an appointment with you?

## Neighbors

Let's change the topic and talk about your neighbors

1. Do you know the people who live next door to you?
2. How often do you see each other?
3. What kind of relationship do you have?
4. How can neighbors be helpful?
5. What kind of problems can people have with their neighbors in a big city?

## Food

Moving to a new topic, I'd like to discuss cooking and meals with you.

1. Do you enjoy cooking? (Why/why not)?
2. What type of things can you cook? (Why)?
3. What kinds of food are popular in your country?

4. Is it an important part of your culture to have dinner parties? (Why)?
5. Do you prefer to eat with other people or on your own? (Why)?

### **Dreams**

I'd now like to discuss your night time dreams with you.

1. Do you dream much at night?
2. Do you often remember your dreams?
3. Do you think we can learn anything from dreams? (Why)?
4. Do people in your country talk about their dreams? (Why)?
5. Do you think that dreams can come true?

### **Magazines and Newspapers**

Okay, let's move to a different topic and discuss magazines and newspapers.

1. Which do you prefer reading, newspapers or magazines? (Why)?
2. What type of stories do you like to read about? (Why)?
3. Do you think reading a magazine or a newspaper can help you learn a language? (Why)?
4. Why do you think some people prefer magazines to newspapers?

### **Humor**

Let's change the topic and talk about comedy and humor.

1. What type of programs do you find funny on TV?
2. Which types of programs are most popular in your country? (Why)?
3. What kind of things make you laugh? (Why)?
4. Do you like to make people laugh? (How)?
5. Do you think it is important to have a sense of humor? (Why)?

## IELTS Speaking Part 2: Solo Speech & the Cue Card

After you have finished the Interview, the examiner will hand you a card with 3 or 4 questions on. Usually the card asks you to describe a place, an event or a situation from your experience. You have 1 minute to prepare a little speech that answers all of the questions on a card. You also receive a paper sheet and a pen to write your notes.

The speech should take from one to two minutes. In the end the examiner might ask you a couple of additional questions. The tricky part here is to know when 2 minutes have passed. You need to get a feeling what is it like to talk for 2 minutes. My suggestion is to practice at home with a clock, recording yourself while you are speaking on a particular topic. You can use MP3 players that can record. This way you can evaluate your own speech without any help from other people.

### How to use your 1-minute preparation time

Here is some advice:

1. One minute is a very short amount of time! I found it just as difficult as my students did.
2. A simple list is probably faster and easier than a diagram or mind map.
3. You need to decide on your topic as quickly as possible. Then spend most of your time making notes.
4. Try to write at least one key idea for each part of the question.
5. Don't write sentences, and don't waste time erasing "mistakes".
6. Try to use a topic you have already prepared.
7. Forget about grammar. Focus on answering the question.
8. Finally, fast preparation is a skill that you can practise. Why not train yourself by making notes for a few different questions every day?

### Example:

*Describe a film you saw recently.*

*You should say:*

- *What kind of film it was*
- *When you saw it*
- *What it was about*
- *and why you liked or didn't like it*

### Notes (1 minute)

1. The Social Network
2. True story
3. 2 weeks ago
4. Creator of Facebook
5. Simple idea
6. Global branding and fame

### Part 2 Main Topics

For part 2 of IELTS speaking, I encourage my students in Manchester to prepare ideas for 6 main topic areas:

1. Describe an object (a gift, something you use etc.)
2. Describe a person (someone you admire, a family member etc.)
3. Describe an event (a festival, celebration etc.)
4. Describe an activity (e.g. a hobby)
5. Describe a place (somewhere you visited, a holiday etc.)
6. Describe your favourite (book/film/advertisement/website)

Most questions fit into one of these topics. For example, "**Describe a river, lake or sea which you like**" is number 5 - you could describe a holiday by the sea, or a city with a river.

Don't take the test without preparing some ideas for these topics first!

## Essential Preparation

It's impossible to prepare for **every** question that you might get in the speaking test, but what are the **essential** things to prepare for?

Here's a list of essentials:

1. **Favourites:** Don't go into the test without knowing what your favourites are. Prepare to talk about your favourite book, film, music, and website.
2. **People:** Be ready to talk about a famous person and a member of your family.
3. **Activities:** Have you prepared some ideas about a hobby? Can you describe a typical day in your life? Try to remember some special moments in your life, such as birthdays, festivals and weddings.
4. **Places:** You need to be able to talk about where you live. Also, think about the places you have visited, what you did there, and why you liked or didn't like them.
5. **Things:** Can you talk about the things you use every day, something you would like to buy, or a present that you received?

Remember that in part 2 you are always asked to "**describe**". Make sure you prepare some good adjectives for each topic, make sure you can talk about your opinions and feelings, and think about some examples or stories to make your descriptions more interesting.

## How to talk for 2 minutes

Students often ask whether it's necessary to speak for the full 2 minutes in part 2 of the speaking test. The instruction is: **speak for between 1 and 2 minutes**, so it's not strictly necessary to speak for the full 2 minutes. However, the best advice is that you should **try** to keep speaking until the examiner stops you.

Here are some tips to help you keep talking:

1. Go through the bullet points on the task card in order.
2. Try to develop each point, even easy ones. For example, if the first bullet point for the topic "describe a person" is "who is it?", don't just say "I'm going to describe my father". Add more information, such as your father's name, age, what he looks like, where he is now, how often you speak to him...
3. Give examples and tell stories.



## Use real examples

To improve your IELTS speaking score, use good examples to extend your answers. Real examples or stories about yourself are the best.

Use examples in part 2 when you need to make your presentation longer. Use them in part 3 to support your opinions.

### Here's an example that helps me to extend a part 2 presentation about my mobile phone:

"For example, yesterday I used my phone to call some friends to arrange a get-together this weekend. Some of them didn't answer, so I either left a message in their voicemail or I sent them a text. I also replied to a few emails while I was waiting in a queue at the bank."

## Use the right tense

- Can you use the past tense when describing a person who is still alive?
- Which tense should you use when describing a person?

The answer to the first question is **yes**. You can say: "My father was always a good role model for me when I was growing up." This doesn't mean that your father is no longer alive; it just means that you are no longer growing up!

The answer to the second question is **it depends**. As we saw above, you can use the past tense, but it would also be easy to add the present and/or future tense: "My father was always kind to me when I was a child, and he still helps me whenever I need something. I'm sure he will always be there for me."

## 3 important tips

Here are three quick tips for IELTS speaking part 2:

### 1. Use the 1 minute preparation time well

Think about how you would answer the question in your own language, then write down as many ideas as possible in English.

### 2. Give real examples

Say what you really think, talk about your real life, and give real examples. Examples are really important; whenever you don't know what to say, give an example from your own experience.

### 3. Don't worry about grammar

You haven't got time to think about passives or conditionals. Focus on answering the question - ideas and vocabulary.

### Forget about the eye-contact

Many students worry that they need to maintain eye contact with the examiner. This is a good idea in part 1 and part 3, but not necessarily in part 2.

In part 2 of the speaking test, you don't need to worry about eye contact. It's more important to look at the question and the notes you made.

- Use the question to organise what you are saying. Answer the question point by point, and make sure you cover all parts of the task.
- You should also look at your notes. Hopefully you wrote down some good ideas during the preparation time.

Remember: the examiner **will not** reduce your score for lack of eye contact, but he or she **will** reduce your score if you don't answer the question well.

### Take ideas from other topics

If don't need to prepare for all possible topics. Instead, try to take and use the ideas you have already thought about from other similar topics. Look at the example below.

***Describe a time when you received some money as a gift. You should say:***

- ***who gave it to you***
- ***what the occasion was***
- ***how you felt***
- ***and explain what you did with the money.***

If you think about some of the topics you have already prepared, the question above should be quite easy.

Some ideas:

1. You could say that you received money for your birthday and took your friends out for a meal.
2. You could say that you bought yourself a new phone.
3. You could say that you used the money to pay for a holiday or trip.

**Note:** We are not recommending that you learn my answers word-for-word. Just try to take some of these ideas and adapt them to your own answers.

### **Don't use formula phrases**

Students often ask whether the following formula is useful for speaking part 2:

- I guess I could begin by saying something about (point 1) and I think I would have to choose...
- Going on to my next point which is (point 2), I really need to emphasise that (explain point 2).
- And now with reference to (point 3), the point I want to make here is that (explain point 3).
- And so finally, if I have time, in answer to the question of (point 4), really I should mention that...

So, are these 'formula phrases' a good idea? The answer is **no!**

IELTS examiners will find these phrases annoying. It's obvious that they are memorised, and they do not address the question topic. Please don't expect the examiner to be impressed by this kind of thing.

There are a couple of benefits to learning a formula: it gives your answer some structure, and it might make you feel more confident during the test. However, the disadvantages are greater:

1. Your focus is on the phrases you have memorised, when it should be on answering the question with relevant ideas.
2. The examiner thinks that you are using memorised phrases because you are unable to produce good language spontaneously. In other words, your use of long formula phrases suggests that your level of English is lower.

## How to score higher? Record, transcribe and analyse

Here are some steps that you could follow when practising for the speaking test:

1. Choose a real speaking test from one of the Cambridge books.
2. Record yourself answering one or all of the parts of the test.
3. Listen to the recording and transcribe it (write down everything you said).
4. Analyse the transcript. How could your answers be improved?
5. Take some time to prepare better answers for the same questions.
6. Try the same questions again! Record yourself, transcribe and analyse.
7. Repeat the process a few times until you are happy.

Imagine if you did this kind of hard work every day for a month. You'd definitely be more confident and better prepared than you are now.

## Useful speaking strategies

1. Try to develop each bullet point in detail. If you don't say enough for the first two or three points, you'll find yourself with too much time for the last point.
2. Tell a story! My second point tells the story of how I was given the chair by a friend, and I could probably speak for 2 minutes about this point alone. When you tell a story about something real that happened, you'll find it easy to keep talking. Stories are also interesting for the listener (the examiner).
3. Add examples. In point 3, you can see that I added an example at the end ("last night I fell asleep in my armchair while I was watching a film"). I could easily take this example and develop it into another short story.
4. When describing an object, don't forget the simple things like size, colour (I forgot that one!), shape, material, position ("just under my living room window").

## Don't worry about the examiner's attitude

Some students feel worried that their examiner seemed rude or angry in the speaking exam. Maybe the examiner didn't smile or make much eye contact, interrupted a lot, or kept looking at his or her watch. Does this mean that you will get a low score, or that you should complain?

The answer is no! Don't worry, and don't think that you need to complain. The examiner's attitude is not important at all, and you should ignore all of the things I mentioned above. Focus only on answering the examiner's questions as well as you can.

Remember: it's possible to have a very nice, smiling examiner who gives you a low score. On the other hand, an examiner who seems impolite or disinterested might give you a higher score than you expected!

## How to feel more confident

Here are some tips to help you feel more confident when you go for your IELTS speaking test:

- Be prepared: you should know exactly what to expect in the 3 parts of the speaking test, and you should have read the suggestions on this website about how to answer.
- Lots of practice: a student who has practised answering all of the questions in all eight Cambridge books, as well as the questions on this site, will feel much more confident than a student who hasn't.
- Write it down: when studying at home, you have time to prepare 'perfect' answers to practice questions; write your answers down, and ask someone to help you check and improve them.
- Speak aloud: start by reading the answers you wrote down (like an actor uses a script), then gradually stop using the script.
- Record yourself: this allows you to analyse the quality of your answers, as well as your pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.
- Focus on ideas: it's difficult to think about grammar when you are speaking, so I advise students to stop worrying about grammatical structures, and focus on expressing good ideas (which means good vocabulary).

## The importance of pronunciation

In the IELTS speaking test, 25% of your score is for pronunciation. Many students confuse 'pronunciation' with 'accent'. These are **not** the same thing!

Nobody expects you to speak with a perfect British English or American English accent. In fact, the examiner will not judge your accent at all.

Your pronunciation score is based on these things:

- clarity (speaking clearly)
- speed (not too fast, not too slow)
- word stress
- sentence stress
- intonation (the rise and fall of your voice)

It's not easy to improve these things quickly or through deliberate practice. Good pronunciation is usually the result of lots of listening and copying. The best tip is: stop worrying about your accent, and focus on speaking clearly.

## The importance of grammar and vocabulary

It's difficult to think about grammar when you're trying to speak. It's much easier to improve your vocabulary score than your grammar score.

### Remember:

- Grammar is only 25% of your speaking score.
- If you are thinking too much about grammar, you will lose fluency.
- If you try to use memorised grammatical structures, your speech will not sound 'natural'.
- You will not avoid small grammar mistakes unless you have lived in an English speaking country for many years.

**Note:** You can easily get high scores if you focus on *vocabulary, ideas, opinions* and *fluency*.

## Describing things and objects

In IELTS speaking part 2, you might be asked to describe an object. For example:

- Describe something you bought recently.
- Describe a gift you gave or received.
- Describe something you own which is important to you.

***Choose something easy, like a mobile phone:***

I'm going to describe my mobile phone. I bought it online / in a mobile phone shop / it was a present from...

I use the phone to keep in touch with friends and family, for communication by voice, text and email. It has various features like video, MP3 player, wireless Internet, digital camera and games. It's easy to share photos and music. I use it for almost everything, it even has a calendar that reminds me about appointments.

My phone is an essential part of my life. It holds my contacts, my photos, my music collection. I've got instant access to my favourite websites. It's like having my whole life in my pocket. I couldn't live without it.

**Note:** The best phrases for IELTS band 7 or higher have been underlined.

## Describing a person

***Describe a person you admire.***

***You should say:***

- ***who the person is***
- ***what he or she is like***
- ***and why you admire him or her.***

Here are some ideas. The best band 7 vocabulary items and collocations have been underlined.

I'm going to talk about my father because he has been a major influence in my life. My father was always a good role model for me as I was growing up. He's

hard-working, patient and understanding; he's also got a good sense of humour and seems to get on well with everybody. Hopefully I've inherited some of these traits. I admire my father because I think he brought me and my brothers/sisters up well; he was quite strict but always fair, and he has always been someone I can turn to for advice. I think my father set a good example by working hard and having a positive outlook on life. I remember that he used to leave for work early and come home quite late, but he always made time for me and my brothers/sisters.

## Describing a website

*Describe a website that you often use. You should say:*

- *what type of website it is*
- *how you found out about it*
- *what it allows you to do, and why you find it useful.*

Here are some ideas, with some of the band 7-9 vocabulary underlined:

Facebook is a social networking website. It's a free website that allows you to keep in contact with friends or find people you've lost touch with. It's one of the most popular websites in the world, with millions of users in different countries. All of my friends use Facebook. One of my friends sent me an email inviting me to join. I signed up and I've been using it ever since. Facebook allows you to keep up to date with what friends are doing. You have a profile page with information and status updates so that you can tell everyone what you're doing. You can post messages to other people's pages. You can upload photos and videos. I find Facebook most useful for organising my life, keeping in touch with friends and storing photos. I think social networking websites have become part of everyday life.



## Describing a season

*Describe your favourite season in your country. You should say*

- *when that season is*
- *what the weather is like at that time of year*
- *how that season is different from other seasons*
- *and why it is your favourite season.*

My favourite season in England is winter. A typical English winter would last around 4 or 5 months between November and March, but when I say that I like the winter, I'm really thinking about the coldest month or two each year. During those really wintry months, the temperature drops below zero and it often snows. Over the last few years we've had periods of quite heavy snowfall, to the extent that roads have been blocked and schools have had to close. Last winter I remember looking out of the window one morning and seeing everything covered in a layer of white. Obviously the snow is what differentiates winter from the other seasons, but when it doesn't snow there isn't much difference between winter, autumn and spring; winter is just a bit colder. The reason I've chosen winter as my favourite season is because I like the snow. I live near the countryside, and the landscape looks beautiful when everything is covered in white. We also celebrate Christmas and New Year in the winter, and these are my favourite festivals.

## Describing a plan

*Describe a future plan. You should say*

- *what the plan is*
- *when you thought of the plan*
- *who is involved in the plan*
- *and say how you think you will achieve the plan.*

I'm going to talk about a future plan that I have, which is to buy a good camera and to become a better photographer. At the moment I'm just using the camera on my mobile phone, but I've realised that it has its limitations. I thought of this plan when I was at a friend's wedding a few weeks ago. I got some great pictures of the bride and groom and their guests celebrating, but I did notice that with my phone camera I wasn't able to capture longer range

photos, or photos in darker conditions; the phone's zoom and flash aren't very good. Next time I'd like to be able to capture a special occasion in higher quality images. Obviously this plan depends on whether I can save enough money to buy the camera I'd like. Also, before making a decision about which camera to get, I'll probably talk to a friend who knows more about photography than I do. In terms of buying a camera, I'll achieve this plan if I can save some money! In terms of becoming a better photographer, I think I'll achieve that goal by experimenting with my new camera and by learning as I go along.

### **Describing a journey**

*Describe a journey you went on. You should include in your answer:*

- *Where you went on your journey*
- *Why you went to this particular place*
- *What did you do and with whom*
- *Why you enjoyed your journey or not*

I would like to tell you about a journey I went on a year ago. My wife and I took a trip to Holland. Both of us wanted to visit Amsterdam very much because we saw pictures and heard stories of friends about how beautiful and wonderful it is. So finally we bought plane tickets, booked a hotel, packed our bags and our trip began. We spent a lot of time before our holiday in research of all the interesting places to visit and all the sights to see. So we went to Amstell Beer museum, took a romantic sunset cruise in the water channels, drove to Volendam, a small prettiest fisherman village, visited a cheese farm. Every evening we took long walks along the channels, resting in small gardens, which Amsterdam has a lot of. Street artists were performing everywhere and a lot of people came to watch their show. We enjoyed very much everything we did and especially being together in such a beautiful country. Having my wife by my side on this trip made it even more fun.

## Describing a conversation

***Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone you didn't know. You should say***

- ***who the person was***
- ***where the conversation took place***
- ***what you talked about***
- ***and explain why you found the conversation interesting.***

I'm going to talk about an interesting conversation that I had a couple of weeks ago in a music shop. I was walking along one of the main shopping streets in the city centre, when a large window displaying all sorts of musical instruments caught my eye. Out of curiosity, I decided to go in and have a look around. The person I ended up speaking to was a shop assistant on the second floor, in the area of the shop dedicated to acoustic guitars. I hadn't intended to speak to anyone, but the assistant approached me in a friendly way and asked whether I had any questions. I explained to the assistant that I hadn't played the guitar for years, but that I wondered what the differences were between the various acoustic guitars on show. He talked to me about the different makes and models, whether they were factory or handmade, the woods and varnishes used, the variation in sound quality, and of course the price range. I found the conversation fascinating because the shop assistant was so knowledgeable. It was obvious that he had a passion for the guitar, and he didn't mind talking to me even though I had made it clear that I didn't intend to buy anything. He even picked up and played three or four of the instruments to demonstrate the differences in their sound.

## Describing a subject

***Describe a subject that you think should be removed from school education programmes. You should say***

- ***what the subject is***
- ***why you think it is unnecessary for children to study it***
- ***and explain what you would replace it with.***

Here's a sample answer with band 7-9 vocabulary underlined:

I'm going to suggest that art could be taken out of the school curriculum. In my experience, art lessons at school tend to include drawing, painting, and the making of collages using paper, fabric and other household materials. There are a few reasons why I think that school art lessons are unnecessary. Firstly, I don't believe that drawing and painting are essential skills that children will need when they leave school. Children might find these activities enjoyable, but it's unlikely that they will need them in the working world. Secondly, children can draw, paint and make collages in their own time at home; parents can encourage this, and they can even join in. Finally, remembering my own art lessons at school, I don't think we learnt any real art skills; the teachers left us to draw or create things, but they didn't provide much technical instruction. Instead of art lessons, children could do more work on core subjects like maths, science or language. These subjects are more likely to help children in later life when they enter the job market, and I think both children and their teachers would benefit if more time were devoted to them.

### Describing a festival

A common topic for the short presentation (IELTS Speaking Part 2) is "describe an important festival in your country".

My advice is to look for a description of your festival on Wikipedia. Copy the best parts of the description and make small changes if necessary. As an example, I've copied a short description of Christmas from Wikipedia.

### Sample Answer:

Christmas is an annual holiday that, in Christianity, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

Popular customs of the holiday include gift-giving, music, an exchange of greeting cards, church celebrations, a special meal, and the display of various decorations; including Christmas trees, lights, nativity scenes, and holly. In addition, Father Christmas (known as Santa Claus in some areas) is a popular figure in many countries, associated with the bringing of gifts for children.

Over the Christmas period, people decorate their homes and exchange gifts. In some countries, children perform plays re-telling the events of the Nativity, or

sing carols that reference the event. Christmas, along with Easter, is the period of highest annual church attendance.

A special Christmas family meal is an important part of the celebration for many, and what is served varies greatly from country to country. In England and countries influenced by its traditions, a standard Christmas meal includes turkey, potatoes, vegetables, sausages and gravy, followed by Christmas pudding, mince pies and fruit cake.

### **Describing a piece of furniture**

*Describe a piece of furniture that you own. You should say*

- *what it is*
- *where you bought it*
- *how you use it*
- *and explain why you like it.*

I'm going to talk about my favourite chair. It's a big, leather armchair that sits in my living room at home, just under my living room window. I didn't actually buy the armchair. One of my friends was moving house and was going to buy some new furniture. I had always liked his leather armchair, so he said I could have it if I managed to move it. The chair wouldn't fit in my car, and it was tricky to get it out of my friend's apartment. I had to hire a small van to take the armchair home. Obviously I use the armchair for sitting! It's my favourite place in the house to relax, read a book, watch TV or even do some work; the chair's arms are quite wide and flat, so my laptop fits nicely on either of them. Last night I fell asleep in my armchair while I was watching a film. The main reasons why I like this piece of furniture are that it's comfortable and it's in the perfect position in my living room. The only drawback might be that I enjoy sitting in the armchair too much, and sometimes I think it makes me lazy!

## Describing something that made you laugh

*Describe a funny situation that made you laugh. You should say*

- *when this situation took place*
- *what happened*
- *how you reacted and why you found the situation funny.*

I'm going to talk about a funny thing that happened to me a couple of weeks ago. I think it was a Saturday morning, and I was sitting having a coffee in a café near where I live. I was on my own so I decided to read the newspaper while drinking my coffee. I must have been quite engrossed in what I was reading because the time passed quickly, and I suddenly realised that I needed to get going. What I didn't realise was that I had been sitting with my legs crossed, and one of my legs had completely gone to sleep. As I stood up to leave the café, I quickly became aware that my left leg was 'dead', but it was too late; I started to fall. I thought I could catch myself on the table, but the table tipped over and I fell to the floor in front of everyone in the café! I can remember being on my knees in the middle of the café, looking up at the staff and customers around me. I felt really embarrassed and I expected the other people to find it funny, but to my surprise nobody was laughing. They were all worried that something really bad had happened to me! As I got up from the floor, I had to explain to the whole café that I was fine. I was embarrassed at the time, but I laughed about it later!

## Describing an advertisement

*Describe an interesting advertisement that you have seen. You should say:*

- *where you saw it*
- *what it was about*
- *why you think it was an interesting advertisement.*

Choose something simple. Here's an example with the "band 7" vocabulary underlined:

I'm going to talk about an advertisement for Coca-Cola, which is one of the biggest brands in the world. I've seen Coke advertised everywhere, on posters and TV commercials. The advert shows a picture of Santa Claus smiling and

holding a bottle of Coke. I think the aim is to target children and associate (link/connect) the brand with Christmas time. The advert is interesting because the company is deliberately trying to influence and attract children. The marketers are trying to capture young customers. They are presenting the drink as something special, a gift for Christmas. However, Coca-Cola is not necessarily a healthy drink for children; it contains a lot of sugar. Maybe this kind of advertising manipulates children and encourages them to pester their parents.

## Describing a vehicle

*Describe a vehicle you would like to buy in the future. You should say*

- *what kind of vehicle it is*
- *what you would use it for*
- *and why you would like to buy it.*

If I had the money, I'd like to buy my own helicopter. I recently saw a TV programme about someone who flew around in his own helicopter, and I remember thinking that it would be great to have one. The helicopter on the programme was a small, blue, two-seater and it seemed quite easy to fly - that's the kind of thing I'd like to buy. Ideally, I'd use my helicopter instead of a car. First, I'd need to learn to fly it, but then I'd use it to go on short trips or holidays. It would be fantastic to be able to avoid traffic jams, and get everywhere in a fraction of the time it normally takes. I'd take friends and family sightseeing, over cities or mountain tops, and maybe I could even use it to do the shopping! The reason I'd like to buy a helicopter is that you can park one almost anywhere. You don't need to find a runway or an airport like you would for a plane. So I'd be able to park my helicopter in my garden - if I had a bigger garden. Also, I've always been intrigued by those helipads on the tops of tall buildings - I think it would be fun to land on top of a building. A helicopter probably isn't a realistic choice of vehicle, but you never know - I might win the lottery!

## Describing a TV programme or channel

*Describe a TV programme or channel that you enjoy watching regularly.*

- *What it is called and what is it about?*
- *When do you usually watch it ?*
- *Why do you prefer it to other programmes or channels?*

Here's a sample description with the best vocabulary underlined:

I rarely watch traditional television channels nowadays; I much prefer searching for interesting programmes or videos online. So, although it's not a normal TV channel or programme, I'd like to talk about a website which I think is kind of a modern version of a TV channel. It's called TED, which stands for 'Technology, Entertainment, Design', and it's a great place to watch short talks and presentations about all sorts of interesting topics. The good thing about the videos on TED is that I can watch them whenever I want. I have ted.com saved as one of my favourites on my laptop, and I tend to visit the website every few days to check whether there is anything new. I often watch TED videos on my phone while I'm travelling to work on the train. The reason I like watching online videos on TED is that I learn something new every time I watch one. The tagline for the TED website is 'ideas worth spreading', and this really sums up the appeal of the site for me. Instead of watching meaningless soap operas and talk shows on TV, I'd much rather spend 10 minutes watching someone talk about a breakthrough in technology, science or healthcare.

## Describing something that made you angry

*Describe a situation that made you angry. You should say*

- *when it happened*
- *what happened*
- *how you felt*

A recent situation that made me angry was getting stuck in a traffic jam on the way to meet some friends. It was last Sunday lunchtime, and I didn't expect there to be much traffic; people don't work on Sundays, so the roads aren't usually very busy.



Everything was going well until suddenly I saw a queue of cars on the road in front of me. I had no choice but to join the queue and wait to get past whatever was causing the delay. It turned out that it was caused by some roadworks, and it took me an extra 30 minutes to get past them.

Getting stuck in traffic congestion doesn't usually make me angry, but this time it did, mainly because I wasn't expecting it and I knew that my friends were waiting to meet me for lunch. I felt frustrated and powerless because there was nothing I could do to change the situation, and I had no idea how long I would be sitting there waiting. When I finally saw the reason for the congestion, I was relieved that I was close to getting past the roadworks, but I still felt a bit stressed knowing that I was half an hour late.

## **Describing a foreign culture**

***Describe a foreign culture that you like. You should say***

- ***what culture it is and how you know about it***
- ***what differences there are between that culture and your own***
- ***and why you like that foreign culture.***

I'm going to talk about France and French culture. I know France quite well because it was the first foreign country that I visited as a child. I've been on several family holidays there, and I lived and worked in Paris for a while after finishing university. The first thing that comes to mind when I think about France is the bread! I love the fact that French people buy fresh baguettes every morning, usually from small local bakeries or 'patisseries'; it makes a change from the loaves of sliced bread that most of us buy from the supermarket here in the UK. One slightly negative difference I noticed in Paris is that Parisians don't seem to make friends with their work colleagues to the same extent as we do here. I really like the café culture in France. You can always find somewhere interesting to sit and have a coffee and chat to friends or just watch the world go by. I actually put on a bit of weight when I lived in France because I got into a habit of having a croissant or a cake in every nice café that I found. Another thing I could mention is that the last time I went to France on holiday, I played a game called 'boules' every day. The game consists in throwing metal balls as close to a target ball as possible. It's the perfect game for a relaxing afternoon when the weather's hot.

## Describing a toy

*Describe a toy that was special to you when you were a child.*

*You should say:*

- *when you got it*
- *what it looked like*
- *who gave it to you*
- *and how you used it or played with it.*

One special toy that I remember getting was a Lego car. It was a birthday present from my parents. I can't remember exactly how old I was, but I was probably about 10 or 11.

The special thing about this car was that I had to build it myself out of hundreds of pieces of Lego. The pieces came in a box with a picture of the finished car on the front, and I had to follow step-by-step instructions to put all the pieces together in the correct way. This wasn't an easy task because the car even had an engine, movable seats and gears. It took me a day or two to make, and required a lot of concentration.

When the car was finished it looked great, and I felt a sense of accomplishment. I seem to remember that I didn't play with the car very much; the fun part had been the process of building it.

***Don't just read this description once. Spend some time analysing it:***

- Is the description well-organised and easy to follow?
- Can you find any good 'band 7' words or phrases?
- Could you write a similar description for a different toy?

## Describing a project

*Describe a team project that you worked on. You should say:*

- *what it was*
- *what you did*
- *and how you felt about it.*

I'd like to talk about a team project that I was involved in during my final term at business school. There were four of us on the team, and our task was to work with a local company to research a new market, in a European country, for one of their products or services. Our objective was to produce a report and give a presentation. The first thing we did was split into two groups of two. We had been assigned a company that produced a range of bicycle accessories, so two of us spent some time getting to know the company while the other two researched the market and the competitors in the target country, which was Germany. In the end, I think it was a successful project because we managed to identify a possible gap in the market in Germany for one of the company's products. Our group presentation also went really well. Until that point, the course had been all about business theory, so it was quite a learning experience to work with a real company. I felt a real sense of accomplishment when we handed in our report and delivered our presentation, and I think all of us were proud of what we had done.

## Describing an animal

*Describe a wild animal from your country.*

*You should say*

- *what the animal is and what it looks like*
- *where it lives*
- *and explain how people in your country (or you) feel about this animal.*

The description below will give you some ideas.

I'm going to describe the 'robin' which is a wild bird that is common in the UK. The robin is a small bird with brown and white feathers and an area of bright red colour on its face and on the front of its body. The area of red colour makes robins very easy to distinguish from other birds. Robins are common

garden birds. Many houses in the UK have a garden, and you can often see this bird sitting in a tree. They make their nests in trees and go looking for food. You might also see a robin if you go for a walk in the countryside or in a park. Robins have a special place in British culture. They are considered to be christmas birds, and are often used on christmas cards. Many people leave food in their gardens for robins and other small birds to eat.

## **Describing a building**

***Describe a modern building. You should say:***

- ***where it is***
- ***what it is used for***
- ***and why you like/dislike it.***

Here's an example description of a building:

I'm going to describe a modern building in Manchester. It's called the Beetham Tower, and it's the tallest building in the city, with about 50 floors. Although it's called the Beetham Tower, most people know this building as the Hilton Hotel. In fact, the bottom half of the tower is the hotel and the top half is apartments. The apartments are expensive because the location and views make them very desirable. I'm not sure if I like the design of the building, it's just a huge glass tower, but it definitely stands out. It has become a famous landmark in the city. You can see it as you approach Manchester, and it's an easy place to meet people because it's so distinctive and easy to find. The most interesting thing about the Beetham Tower is that there is a bar/restaurant on the 23rd floor which has spectacular views of the city; it's definitely the best vantage point in Manchester because there are no walls, only huge windows, so you can look out over the city in any direction. I'd recommend anyone who visits Manchester to go there and experience the view.

## ***Describing an experience***

***Describe a positive experience that you had as a teenager. You should say***

- ***what the positive experience was***
- ***where you were***
- ***who you were with***
- ***and explain why you found the experience positive.***

I'm going to describe the first time I visited England's capital city, London, on a school trip when I was a teenager. I had never been to London before, and it was great to share that experience with my school friends. The positive experience wasn't confined to one particular place in London. As far as I remember, I enjoyed the whole trip, from the coach journey to the visits to various tourist attractions. We got off the coach near the Houses of Parliament, and so one of my first memories was seeing the famous 'Big Ben' clock tower. We also visited the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square. As I said earlier, it was a school trip, and I think there were around thirty of us, including two teachers. I was with a group of close friends, which made the experience more enjoyable. What really struck me about London was that it was historic but modern and thriving at the same time. It seemed to me to be a lively, fashionable and cosmopolitan place. Coming from a relatively small town, the experience made me keen to visit more capital cities in the future.

## ***Describing a lesson***

***Describe an interesting lesson that you attended.***

***You should say***

- ***where you attended this lesson***
- ***what it was about***
- ***and why you found it interesting***

Here are some ideas for a description of a science lesson:

I'm going to talk about an interesting science lesson that I attended at secondary school when I was 14 or 15 years old. It was quite a long time ago, so I can't remember every detail, but the lesson was about respiration. We

learnt about how the lungs work, how we breathe, and how oxygen passes into the blood. The science teacher also talked to us about the effects of smoking on the lungs. I found this lesson interesting because my science teacher, Dr. Smith, always introduced new topics by showing us a video. We watched a short film about how respiration works, and I found this much easier to understand than a science textbook. The film showed diagrams of the lungs to explain the breathing process. Later in the lesson we saw real photos of healthy lungs and lungs that had been damaged as a result of smoking; they had turned black. I think the image of a smoker's lungs is the reason why I remember this lesson.

**Note:** We can also give more information about the teacher, his or her personality and why we liked him. The key is to **tell a story** and add details until the time runs out.

### **Describing an artist or an entertainer**

*Describe an artist or entertainer you admire*

*You should say*

- *who they are and what they do*
- *how they became successful*
- *how you found out about them*
- *and why you admire them*

Here are some good ideas. In your description you **must** give the name of the person.

I'm going to talk about a musician that I admire, called... He's a singer who also plays the guitar and writes his own songs. I think he recorded his first album about 10 years ago, and he's released several other CDs since then. He became successful after many years of writing songs and performing live in small venues all over the country. Gradually he built a following of people who liked his music. I think the key to his success was one of his songs that was used on a TV advertisement. This meant that more people became aware of his music. I found out about... because one of my friends got tickets to see him in concert. I hadn't heard any of his music before, but I went along to the gig and really enjoyed it. After that I bought the first CD, and now I've got all of them. The reason I admire... is that he has worked hard for his success: it takes years of

practice to become a good singer and guitarist, and he spent several years playing to very small audiences before he became successful. I also like the fact that he writes his own music. I admire people who have worked hard to get where they are.

**Note:** The best band 7 vocabulary items and collocations have been underlined. 'Gig' is an informal word for concert or performance, but it is fine to use it in this context.

### Describing a garden

*Describe a beautiful garden that you like. You should say*

*- where it is*

*- what you can see there*

*- what people do there*

*and explain why you like it.*

The garden I'm going to describe is famous because it belonged to the French painter Claude Monet. It's in a place called Giverny, which is in northern France, about an hour away from Paris in the province of Normandy. There are actually two gardens at the Monet house in Giverny: a flower garden, and a Japanese inspired water garden. Apparently, Monet designed the gardens himself; he even had the pond and the famous Japanese bridge made. After creating the gardens, Monet painted some of the most well-known paintings in the world, such as those of the waterlilies below the bridge on his pond. Thousands of people visit the gardens at Giverny to see the magnificent scenes that inspired Monet's paintings. Visitors can walk around the gardens and take pictures, which is what I did when I went there. I like Monet's gardens because they are such beautiful creations, and it's amazing to see the 'real thing' having seen the famous paintings so many times.

## Describing an old building

*Describe an old building that you like. You should say:*

- *where it is*
- *what it is used for*
- *and why you like it.*

I'm going to describe a very famous building in New York: the Empire State Building. People might not think of it as an old building, but the Empire State Building was built in 1931, so I don't think it can be classed as new. It's located on Manhattan island and it's probably the most distinctive and recognisable building when you look at New York's skyline. As far as I know, the Empire State Building is an office building, but visitors can go up to an observation deck on the top floor, which is the 102nd floor. There's also a 360-degree observation area on the 86th floor. Apparently, the building makes more money from the sale of tickets to the observation floors than it does from office rentals. I think the Empire State Building is still one of the most impressive skyscrapers in the world. It's such an iconic structure, and it's amazing to think that it was built around 80 years ago. The best thing about the building is the viewing deck on the top floor, which offers spectacular views of the city; it's definitely the best vantage point in New York. I'd recommend anyone who visits the city to go there and experience the view.

## Describing an open-air market

*Describe an open-air or street market which you enjoyed visiting. You should say:*

- *where the market is*
- *what the market sells*
- *how big the market is*
- *and explain why you enjoyed visiting it.*

I'm going to describe a street market that I've enjoyed visiting many times in Manchester. It's the Manchester Christmas Market, and it comes to the city for about a month from the end of November every year. The market stalls are spread across several sites in the city centre, but the centrepiece is the large European market in Albert Square next to the Town Hall. The Christmas



Market stalls sell an array of Christmas gifts and mouth-watering food and drink from all over Europe. It's a great place to find handmade crafts such as jewellery, ornaments, wooden toys and other souvenirs, but it's the food and drink that seem to be most popular. Probably the biggest seller is the 'Gluhwein', a hot, sweet wine which is sold in a souvenir mug. The market was originally quite small, occupying just one of the central squares in Manchester, but it's grown quickly in recent years, spilling over into maybe five other pedestrian streets and a few other squares. Apparently there are over 200 stalls now, so it's become a really big event attracting thousands of visitors. The main reason I've always enjoyed visiting the Christmas Market is the fantastic atmosphere. When I went there last December, it didn't matter how cold or wet the weather was, Manchester seemed to come alive when the market opened; the streets were bustling with people and there was a real festive feel to the city.

### **Describing a celebration**

***Describe a family celebration that you remember. You should say***

- ***what you were celebrating***
- ***who was present***
- ***what you and your family did to make the celebration special***
- ***and why you enjoyed the occasion.***

I'm going to describe my sister's wedding day, which took place a few years ago in the town where I grew up. For my sister it was the biggest and most important day of her life. I think there were around 100 people at the marriage ceremony, which was held in a church. Even more people came to the party, or the wedding reception as we call it, after the ceremony. Of course, most members of my family were there, as well as the groom's family and a collection of the bride and groom's friends and colleagues. To make the celebration special, we did what families normally do. My mother made sure that the church and the reception venue were nicely decorated - there were flowers everywhere! Obviously we all dressed for the occasion, and there were bridesmaids, gifts, a huge wedding cake, and so on. I enjoyed the occasion because it was great to see my sister so happy on her big day. The ceremony was perfect, and we all had a fantastic time at the reception. It's rare for me to see all of my family and friends together in one place, so that's probably what made the day so memorable for me.

## Describing a school

*Describe a school that you went to when you were a child. You should say*

- *where the school was*
- *when you went there*
- *what the school and the teachers were like*
- *and explain whether you enjoyed your time there.*

I'm going to talk about my primary school. The school was called ..... and it was in the town of ..... . The location of the school was great because it was within walking distance of our family home at the time. The route to school was all downhill, which made it an easy walk in the morning, but a tiring journey on the way home in the afternoon! I was a pupil at ..... school between the ages of 5 and 11 - the full 6 years of primary education. From age 11 onwards, I went to a nearby secondary school. My primary school seemed like a big place at the time, but it was actually quite a small school, with only six classes. I remember there being a large room called the assembly hall, where the whole school gathered every morning to hear messages from the headmaster. I also remember spending a lot of time on the playground and on the sports field. I liked all of my teachers; they were caring but strict at the same time, and I think they fostered a positive and fun atmosphere in the school. I have really fond memories of my primary school years, mainly because of the friends I made and the fun I had. One of my most vivid memories is of performing in the school play in my final year. I had to learn lines and play the part of a character in a traditional children's story. It was a nerve-racking experience, but it felt like my first real achievement.

## Describing an indoor game

*Describe an indoor game that you enjoyed as a child. You should say*

- *what the game was*
- *where you played it*
- *who played this game with you*
- *and why you liked it*

As a child I enjoyed playing chess. I think chess is probably the best known board game in the world. It's a game for two players, and the aim is to defeat

the other player by taking his or her pieces and eventually trapping his King. This final move is called checkmate. I remember that it was a classmate of mine at primary school who first taught me to play chess. He had a small, portable chess set, and once I knew how each piece moved, we started playing at break and lunch times; we played in our classroom or outside on the school playground. Later my parents bought me my own chess set as a birthday present so that I could play at home. I taught my younger brother to play, and at some point I joined the school chess club. There I had the chance to hone my skills against some of the older pupils, and in my final year of primary school I made it onto the school team. There were five of us on the team, and we competed against children from other primary schools in the same town. I liked playing chess because I enjoyed the challenge of thinking ahead and trying to outwit my opponent. I was probably seven or eight years old when I started playing, and it seemed like a very mysterious and intellectual game at that time. Also, although I loved winning, chess taught me to learn from my losses and to congratulate the person who had beaten me.

### **Describing a local area**

***Describe a change that you would like to see in your local area.***

***You should say***

- ***what the change would be***
- ***who would be involved in making the change***
- ***how it would be done***
- ***and why you would like to see the change happen.***

The change that I'd like to see in my local neighbourhood is the pedestrianisation of the main shopping street in the town centre. I'd like to see traffic diverted around this area in order to make it safer and more attractive for visitors and shoppers. Most of the traffic that clogs up the main street is just passing through the town, but it's the local people who have to put up with the congestion, noise and pollution. It's the job of the local council to make changes like the one I'm suggesting. But before the council does anything, there usually needs to be some pressure from local people to bring a problem to light. So, perhaps we need a campaign by local residents who want to see this change. Then the council might contract a town planner or an architect to come up with some possible designs for a new road system. I'm not sure how exactly the process of creating a pedestrian street would work,

but I imagine that it would require detailed planning. Perhaps a bypass would need to be built around the town centre first. This would give drivers a faster alternative to driving through the town, and it would allow the main shopping street to be blocked off and pedestrianised. I'd like to see this change because it would really improve the quality of life of residents in the town where I live. I can imagine the new pedestrian street having cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating. It would be a safer and more pleasant place for families to go shopping, and I'm sure this would have a positive knock-on effect on local shops and businesses.

## Describing a prize

*Describe a prize that you would like to win. You should explain*

- *what the prize is for*
- *how you know about it*
- *what you would have to do to win it*
- *and why you would like to win this prize.*

I'm going to talk about a prize that I would like to win, which is the 'employee of the year' award at the company where I work. At the end of December each year, the company directors give this award to a member of staff who has made an outstanding contribution to the business over the previous twelve months. I first heard about this prize during my training and orientation period just after I got the job three years ago. It was early December and some of my colleagues were discussing who might be awarded 'employee of the year' later that month. I was intrigued, and asked them to tell me more about the award. As I said, the prize is given for 'outstanding contribution to the business'. We don't have an exact definition of what this means, but we assume that you have to achieve certain standards, such as 100% attendance, good punctuality, meeting targets and deadlines, good teamwork, and so on. I think the winner also needs to have done something especially creative. For example, last year's winner created a completely new service for our clients. I'd like to win 'employee of the year' because it would mean that my work had been recognised by the company directors, and this would definitely help me to progress in my career. It would also give me a great sense of personal achievement.

## Describing an event

*Describe a recent event that made you happy.*

*You should say:*

- *when and where it was*
- *who was involved*
- *what happened*
- *and explain why it made you happy.*

The following description contains the kind of phrases that native speakers really use. The best band 7 vocabulary items and collocations have been underlined.

1. **When and where:** my friend's birthday party, last Saturday evening, we went for a meal in an Italian restaurant.
2. **Who:** there were about 10 of us, he invited some close friends and work colleagues, most of them were people I've known since university.
3. **What happened:** we met at the restaurant, I gave my friend a present and a birthday card, we ordered some food, while we ate dinner everyone chatted, after the main course the waiter brought out a cake and we sang 'Happy Birthday', everyone went home quite late.
4. **Why it made me happy:** it was great to get together with old friends, I had some interesting conversations, it was a good opportunity to catch up with what my friends had been up to, it was a nice way to wind down after a hard week at work, the food was delicious, I went home feeling full after a fantastic meal.

## Describing a place

In part 2 of the speaking test, you might have to describe a place. There are several possible questions about places. For example:

1. Describe a place you have visited.
2. Describe a historic place.
3. Describe a holiday.
4. Describe a place you would like to visit.
5. Describe somewhere you have lived or would like to live.

My advice is to prepare a description of one place that you could use to answer all of these questions. Then search the Internet for some good vocabulary.

For example, here are some ideas I found to describe London:

- **Adjectives:** it's exciting, busy, hectic, cosmopolitan, multicultural, unique. It's historic but modern at the same time, it's a thriving, prosperous city, it's fashionable, lively, fun...
- **Activities:** London is famous for its history, culture, art, museums. Tourists go there to see Big Ben, The Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square etc. You can get a fantastic view of the city from the 'London Eye'. It's also famous for its theatres and shows in the West End, its shops, restaurants and nightlife. There are endless things to see and do.
- **Negatives:** London is expensive, crowded, stressful, polluted. The underground system is dirty, travel is overpriced and unpleasant. The cost of living is high (shopping, house prices etc.), the locals are always in a hurry and can be unfriendly, there are social problems (like you can find in most big cities).

## Describing a skill

Describe a practical skill that you have learnt (e.g. cooking, driving).

You should say

- what the skill is
- how you learnt it
- why you learnt it
- and how this skill has helped you.

### Advice:

You need to make a quick decision, so I'd choose one of the given examples (cooking or driving). Then try to expand on each point.

1. I'm going to talk about driving, which is a practical skill that I use almost every day.
2. I learnt to drive a car by taking lessons when I was 17. My parents paid for me to have lessons with a professional driving instructor. I learnt by practising: first I had to get used to steering, changing gears and using the mirrors, then we practised things like reversing and parking. I also had to learn the highway code.
3. As a 17-year-old, I wanted to have the experience of driving a car, and I was fed up with having to walk or take the bus or train whenever I wanted to go somewhere. I also knew that driving would be an extremely useful skill.
4. Being able to drive has helped me in so many ways. The public transport where I live isn't very good, so I travel to work by car most days. Having a car makes my life much easier when it comes to things like shopping or visiting family and friends. (Last week, for example,...)

**Note:** If you need to keep speaking, give examples for point 4.

## Describing something naughty you did

This has been a recent question in part 2 of IELTS speaking:

***Describe something naughty you did when you were a child. Say***

- *what you did*
- *when you did it*
- *why you did it*
- *and explain how your parents felt about it.*

This is a difficult topic for most people, so it's a good idea to prepare for it before your test. If you can remember a real situation, use that. If you can't remember being naughty, invent an easy story like my example below.

### Example ideas:

1. I cheated in a test at primary school by looking at the answers in my book under the table.
2. I was about ... years old, it was a ... lesson. Give some more background about the lesson, the test, the teacher etc.
3. I hadn't studied for the test, I didn't want to fail and have to retake the test at lunchtime. Give reasons why you didn't have time to study.
4. The teacher caught me and told my parents. Explain their feelings: disappointed, angry, embarrassed. Explain the punishment e.g. they 'grounded' me for a week (informal expression, meaning 'they didn't allow me to go out or see friends').



## Describing your favorite ...

More advice about describing your favourite book, film or piece of music:

1. You can talk about any type of book (textbook, biography etc.). You only need to describe a story if the question asks you to describe a 'novel'.
2. Many books are also films. It would be a good idea to prepare one description that you can use for both.
3. Amazon.com is great for reviews of books, films and music. Just search for a title, then go down the page to find the reviews.
4. "Steal" the best vocabulary from the reviews that you find.
5. Use Google. I searched for "my favourite film is" on Google and found this 'My Favourite Films' website. It's full of good ideas.
6. Try this Google search: "my favourite piece of music is"
7. You can describe a book, film or piece of music from your country.
8. You can invent a story if necessary, but it's easier to tell the truth.
9. If you don't like books, pretend that your favourite film is a book (and vice versa).
10. Remember to include adjectives to describe your feelings/opinions. Tell the story of when you first read the book, saw the film or listened to the song, who recommended it, why you like it etc.

**Note:** 'Piece of music' just means a song.

## Extra Examples for IELTS Speaking Part 2

1. Describe a child that you know.

You should say:

- Who the child is
- How you know the child
- When you see the child
- Explain why you like/dislike this child.

2. Describe someone who has had an important influence on your life.

You should say:

- Who the person is
- How long you have known him/her
- What qualities this person has
- Explain why they have had such an influence on you.

3. Describe an old person that you know.

You should say:

- What your relationship is to this person
- How often you see them
- What people think about this person
- Explain why you like them.

Describe a lake, a river or a sea you have visited.

4. You should say:

- Where the lake is
- How often you have visited it
- What activities you do there
- Explain why you like this particular place.

**5. Describe a present you have given someone.**

**You should say:**

- *Who you gave it to*
- *What kind of present it was*
- *How it compared to other presents you have given*
- *Explain why you decided to give this particular gift.*

**6. Describe a sporting event you attended.**

**You should say:**

- *What kind of sport it was*
- *How it compared to other events you've been to*
- *How often it takes place*
- *Explain why you consider this event to be of interest.*

**7. Describe a TV show that you enjoy.**

**You should say:**

- *What type of show it is*
- *How often it is on*
- *How popular it is with other people in your country*
- *Explain why you like it.*

**8. Describe a happy childhood event.**

**You should say:**

- *When it happened*
- *Who was involved*
- *How you felt at the time*
- *Explain why you remember this particular occasion.*

**9. Describe something you own which is very important to you.**

**You should say:**

- *where you got it from*
- *how long you have had it*
- *what you use it for; and*
- *explain why it is important to you.*

**Rounding off questions:**

**Tell me**

- *Is it valuable in terms of money?*
- *Would it be easy to replace?*

**10. Describe a museum**

- *How often do you visit the museum?*
- *Which type of museum is popular in your country?*
- *Why do you want to visit the museum?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What do you think of the importance of museums in history?*
- *How do you think of the heritage of a country?*
- *Compare the museums nowadays and in the past*

**11. Describe your favorite photograph**

- *Where was the photo taken?*
- *Who took the photo?*
- *What can be seen from the photo?*
- *Explain why it is the favorite photograph for you.*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *How to take good photo?*
- *When do people use camera?*
- *How can the new technology put cinema's skill advanced?*

**12. Describe an important historic place**

- *What is the place?*
- *Where is it located?*
- *Why do you think it is important?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What do you think of the historic place in the future?*
- *Will the government increase or decrease the safety guard?*
- *What are the changes to the local people and economy?*
- *What is the impact on the historic place by tourists?*

**13. Describe a party**

- *What is the party?*
- *Why was the party held?*
- *Who attended the party?*
- *What did you do for that party?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What's the difference between serious party and friendly party?*
- *Why are some people late for parties intentionally?*
- *Why do some people like party while others hate it?*
- *What would you do if the guests feel bored?*
- *Will there be more and more people to attend parties?*

**14. Describe a subject taught in your school?**

- *Who teaches it?*
- *How is it taught?*
- *What do you learn from the class?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *Is there any difference between the traditional and modern educational systems?*
- *What are the pros and cons of the current educational system in your country?*
- *Do you think it is necessary to give comment or criticism to teachers?*

**15. What is the important invention before the age of computer?**

- *What is the invention?*
- *Why do you think it is very important?*
- *What are the advantages and disadvantages of the invention?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What is the significant impact of modern inventions on life?*
- *Which skills do you want to study in the future?*
- *Do you think it's necessary to develop modern invention in the countryside?*

**16. Describe a foreign country you have never been to**

- *Where is the country?*
- *When will you go there?*
- *Why would you like to go there?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *Say something about the tourism development in China, facility, services and the effect on environment.*
- *What is the importance of travel and tourism industry?*
- *What do you think the function of tourist guides?*

**17. Describe your favourite movie**

- *What's the name of the film?*
- *What's the theme of the film?*
- *Why do you like it?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *Describe a type of movie you like.*
- *What's the difference between Chinese and American movies?*
- *What do you think of the violent films (Hollywood films)?*
- *Which parts of cinema are the most important and how to improve it?*

**18. Describe a newspaper or magazine**

- *What's your habit for reading?*
- *What are the benefits of reading?*
- *What's the main difference between newspaper and magazine?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What do you think the important qualities for a news reporter?*
- *What's the function of a report to the society?*
- *What kinds of books/newspapers/magazines do Chinese adolescents read?*
- *With the popularity of Internet, do you think newspapers and magazines will disappear?*

**19. Describe a children's game (sports not suggested)**

- *How is it played?*
- *What can you learn from the game?*
- *What impact does it bring on your growth?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What do you think of the benefits of children's games?*
- *Nowadays children have less and less time for game, what do you think about it?*
- *What do you think the difference between games nowadays and in the past?*
- *What's the negative aspect of games?*

**20. Describe a happy event in your life?**

- *When did it happen?*
- *Where did it happen?*
- *What was it?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *Tell me how you organize your study time?*
- *What do you think is important in achieving happiness?*
- *How do Chinese celebrate some happy events?*
- *What do the camera and video play in celebrating?*

**21. Describe a thing which is important to you**

- *Who gave it to you?*
- *What is the thing?*
- *What does the thing mean to you?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What are the changes of city between now and past?*
- *Does money represent happiness and why?*
- *How do you regard as the things people want to earn?*

**22. Describe one of your neighbours**

- *When did you become neighbours?*
- *Do you often meet?*
- *Explain whether your neighbour is a good one*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What is the difference between neighbours and friends?*
- *Why do people like to watch TV serials in their houses?*
- *How do you think of the relationship in the city?*
- *How to improve the neighbourhood?*

**23. Describe one of the shopping centers you often go to**

- *Where is the shopping center?*
- *How often do you go to the center?*
- *Why do you often go to it and its characteristics?*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *Will smaller shops survive in the current business system?*
- *What are the characteristics of shopping malls and smaller shops and their difference?*
- *What is the trend of future shopping centers?*
- *Talk about Internet shopping*

**24. Describe your favourite animal**

- *What kind of animal is it?*
- *Describe it briefly*
- *Why do you like the animal?*



***Rounding off questions:***

- *What do you need to do to take care of it?*
- *What's the future trend of the animal?*
- *How do you think of the poaching of some precious animals such as pandas?*

***25. Describe a historical place***

- *What is the place?*
- *Where is it located?*
- *What is the historical meaning of the place?*

***Rounding off questions:***

- *What do you think of the future trend of historic places?*
- *Will government strengthen its protection toward historic places?*
- *What are the changes brought about by the historic place in local economy, people, etc.?*
- *What is the effect of tourists on the place?*

***26. Describe an important letter***

- *When did you receive the letter?*
- *From whom did you receive the letter?*
- *Explain the reasons why it is important*

***Rounding off questions:***

- *What is the significance of handwriting?*
- *Does your country have handwriting lesson now?*
- *Compare the handwriting now and past*
- *With the popularity of computers and Internet, will people lose their ability to write letters?*

***27. Describe the best present you have received***

- *Who sent it to you?*
- *When did you receive it?*
- *Detailed information about the present*

***Rounding off questions:***

- *Do you think that present giving will play an important role in Chinese daily life? Why?*

- *Do you think that the brand name is very important for sales?*
- *In terms of the media, which do you think will play a main role in present giving, television, newspaper or Internet?*

**28. Describe your holidays**

- *Where do you go for the holidays and how long do they last?*
- *Who do you go with?*
- *Talk about any interesting things happening during your holidays*

**Rounding off questions:**

- *What do the Chinese people mostly do in their leisure time?*
- *What's the difference between holidays today and 5 years ago and the reasons for the change?*
- *Do you think people will spend more time on leisure or working in the future?*

### IELTS Speaking Part 3: Discussion

In the third sub-part of the test you have a discussion with examiner. The topic is somehow related to the one from section two, but it is about more abstract ideas. Your job is to express and justify an opinion. It is called a discussion, but in reality you are the one who does most of the talking. To give you an idea what it will be like, here is a card you might get in part 2 of Speaking test cue card:

***Describe a good friend of yours. You should say***

- ***Where and when did you meet***
- ***What did you do together***
- ***What do you like about him/her***
- ***Why is he/she a good friend of yours***

Then in third sub-part of the Speaking test the examiner may ask you these kinds of questions:

1. Who cannot be a good friend of yours? Tell the properties of such a person
2. What do you value and not value in people?
3. Can people, opposite in personality, be good friends?
4. What do the children think about friendship? What about the adults? Compare them.
5. What do you think of friendship through internet? What good and bad sides does it have?

### Common question types

Here are 3 common question types that the examiner could ask you:

1. Compare and contrast.
2. Give an opinion.
3. Imagine.

If the topic is 'cities', the examiner could ask:

1. How is life different in cities compared to rural areas?
2. How do you think life in big cities could be made easier?
3. What do you think cities will be like in 50 years time?

In my answers below I've underlined a few 'markers' that show comparisons, opinions and future predictions.

1. Firstly, the cost of living in cities is much higher. Housing is much more expensive in cities compared to rural areas; everything costs more. I think life in cities is more difficult. There are more people, so there's more competition for jobs. Life is a lot slower in rural areas, everyone knows each other and there's a sense of community. I don't think rural areas experience the social problems that you find in cities, like crime and homelessness.
2. In my opinion cities need to be well-planned. Good public transport can definitely make life easier because there are so many people and it can be really stressful just to move around. Public areas like parks are also important because people need space to relax, and I think cities should be made into healthier places to live and work.
3. I imagine cities will be less polluted because we'll have electric cars and better public transport. More people might work from home so maybe cities won't be so busy. But I think there will probably still be problems because more and more people are migrating to cities. So I'm not so optimistic about issues like crime, homelessness and unemployment.

## Comparing past and present

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, you might be asked to compare the past with the present. The examiner will be listening to your use tenses. For example:

***Are there any differences between the types of people who were seen as celebrities in the past and those who are celebrities nowadays?***

Yes, I think there have been some big changes in the types of people who become famous. In the past, before the invention of television, I suppose there were very few national or international celebrities; maybe kings and queens, military, political and religious leaders were the only household names. With the advent of TV and radio, performers such as actors and musicians became more well-known. However, we now seem to have a completely new breed of celebrity as a result of 'reality' television programmes; these are people who don't really have any special skills as performers, but who are famous for just being themselves.

## Giving longer answers

Here are 3 techniques to help you give longer, more detailed answers:

1. Keep asking yourself "why?"
2. Explain the alternatives
3. Give an example

### **Question:**

Do you think that school children should be encouraged to have their own ideas, or is it more important for them to learn what their teachers give them?

### **Answer:**

I think that we should definitely allow children to be creative and have their own ideas. **(why?)** Children need to develop the ability to think for themselves and solve problems **(why?)** because as adults they will not always have somebody to guide them or tell them what to do. **(alternatives?)** If we don't allow children to have their own ideas, they will be less successful in the adult world; they will be too reliant on others. **(example?)** A doctor, for example, might encounter a situation that he or she hasn't been trained for, but will still be expected to make a decision that could save someone's life.

## Adding details

These are the 3 techniques you can use to create longer, more detailed answers:

1. Explain why
2. Give an example
3. Explain the alternatives

### **Question:**

Why do you think friendship is important?

### **Answer:**

I think friendship is important for all sorts of reasons. **(why?)** We need friends to share experiences with, to talk to, and for support. **(example?)** In my case, I like to meet up with friends at the weekend to do something enjoyable, like see a film or go out for dinner. I like chatting with my friends about what we've been doing during the week, or about what's happening in the world.

**(alternatives?)** Without friends to talk to, life would be dull and boring; we would only have our families to talk to.

## Using what you already know well

In parts 2 and 3 of the IELTS speaking test, you need to make quick decisions about what to talk about. Always try to talk about a topic you have prepared or something you know about. Here are some examples:

Part 2: ***Describe a law in your country.***

Advice: Choose a typical IELTS topic like "guns". Explain why people in your country can/can't own a gun, and talk about the pros and cons of this law. There is a chapter on this topic in my ebook.

Part 3: ***What new law would you introduce to improve life in your country?***

Advice: Choose an easy topic like "environment". Explain that the government could introduce new laws to reduce pollution from factories, cars etc. Explain how this would improve people's lives.

## The importance of verb tenses

In part 3 of the IELTS speaking test, you will probably get some questions about the past and the future. The examiner will be listening carefully to make sure you use the correct tense.

- If the examiner mentions “50 years ago”, “when your parents were young” or “when you were a child”, you should answer using the past simple.
- If the question asks you to predict, or if it mentions “in 50 years” or “in the future”, use a future tense (will + infinitive).

### ***Do you think people had easier lives 50 years ago?***

Yes, maybe life was simpler and less stressful 50 years ago. The mobile phone didn't exist, so I suppose it was easier to forget about work at the end of the day because people couldn't contact you so easily.

### ***Do you think life will be more stressful in the future?***

Yes, it probably will be more stressful. As the world gets smaller, employees will probably have to travel to different countries more often and stay in touch with colleagues and clients all over the world. There will also be more competition for jobs and the cost of living will keep going up.

## Questions about the future

When the examiner asks a question like the one below, you know that you are being tested on your ability to express ideas in the future tense.

*How do you think the design of homes will change in the future?*

### **Example answer:**

I don't think there will be much change in terms of what houses look like from the outside. In this country, people still like traditional brick or stone houses. Having said that, the design of apartment blocks will probably continue to develop, with more and more experimental or futuristic buildings made of glass and metal. I imagine that it will be the insides of homes that change the most; houses will no doubt be full of technological devices to make our lives easier. Maybe we'll have things like voice-controlled doors, lights and appliances.

## If you don't know the answer

How do you answer a question when you don't know anything about the topic?

There are 2 things you can do:

1. Be honest and explain why you don't know
2. Guess, and tell the examiner that you are guessing

## Example question:

How has technology affected the kinds of music that young people listen to?

## The best answer, using both tips above:

**(1)** To be honest I don't really know the answer to that because I'm completely out of touch with what young people are listening to, and I'm not a fan of pop music.

**(2)** However, I suppose that technology must have affected music. Maybe young people are listening to music that has been made using computer software instead of real musical instruments like the piano or guitar.

## Make your answer personal

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, it really helps if you give personal examples:

### 1. Do you think it's important for people to have hobbies? Why?

Yes, I think people need to have hobbies because we all need to do things we enjoy in our spare time. In my case, I find that playing football once a week with some friends helps me to relax, keep fit and forget about work. I think it's the same for everyone.

### 2. Can hobbies have any negative effects?

Yes, if you spend too much time on your hobby, it can affect other parts of your life. I remember that one of my friends spent most of his time at university playing computer games instead of studying. In the end, he failed most of his exams.



### 3 Simple Tips

Here are three simple tips that could make a difference to your score:

#### 1. Be confident

Although you might be nervous, try to speak clearly and confidently. Smile and be friendly\* with the examiner. As you go into the exam, tell yourself that you have prepared well and that you're going to enjoy the challenge.

#### 2. Know that you are prepared

You will feel much more confident if you know that you have prepared and practised for the test. You should know exactly what to expect. For example, have you prepared some common topics (e.g. describe a place, a person, a hobby) for the short presentation? Are you ready for a past and a future question in part 3?

#### 3. Speak naturally

Try to enjoy a normal conversation with the examiner. Instead of worrying about your grammar, listen carefully to the questions and try to give natural answers. Most of the questions are about you, your life and your opinions, so it's best to be open. I used to be an examiner, and I always found the job more interesting when students spoke openly about their opinions and experiences.

## Think it is like a paragraph

In part 3 of the speaking test, you should try to give longer, detailed answers. A good way to do this is to imagine that you are making a paragraph.

### Idea, explain, example

Start with a direct answer to the question, like the 'topic sentence' in a written paragraph. Then explain your answer in more detail, and support your explanation with an example.

**Try answering this question:** Do you think that it's important for people to go on holiday?

### Firstly, secondly, finally

Start with the direct answer, then explain it by giving two or three reasons, and maybe an example too.

### **Exercise:**

**Try answering this question:** Why do you think some people prefer not to go abroad on holiday?

## Now look at the sample answers below.

### **1) Do you think that it's important for people to go on holiday?**

#### Answer using 'idea, explain, example'

Yes, I think we all need to go on holiday at least once or twice a year. It isn't healthy to work all year round without some time off to relax; we all need to take a break and recharge our batteries from time to time. Last summer, for example, I went on holiday to France for a couple of weeks, and it was great to leave all of my usual responsibilities behind me. I came home feeling really refreshed and reinvigorated.

### **2) Why do you think some people prefer not to go abroad on holiday?**

#### Answer using 'firstly, secondly, finally'

I suppose there are different reasons why some people choose not to go abroad on holidays. Firstly, it's usually more expensive to travel abroad than it is to stay at home. A second reason could be that some people find it stressful to spend time in a foreign country where they don't speak the language, or where they feel that they can't easily integrate with the locals. Finally, many people just love where they live, and don't feel the need to travel abroad.

## Your Part 3 Answer Structure

Here is suggested structure to answer your Part 3 questions more systematically:

### Answer 1

1. Answer the question - "it depends"
2. Explain one side
3. Explain the other side
4. Give an example

### Answer 2

1. Firstly - first characteristic of a good listener
2. Secondly - second characteristic
3. Finally - third characteristic

### Answer 3

1. Answer the question - "it's a mixture of both things"
2. Explain one side
3. Explain the other side

Basically, I'm using ***Idea, Explain, (Example)*** or ***Firstly, Secondly, Finally***, just as I do when I'm writing main paragraphs for writing task 2. The more you practise using these two patterns, the easier it becomes to give longer, more coherent answers.

## Common Part 3 Questions with sample answers

### Talking about the internet

#### How will the Internet affect our lives?

The "perspectives technique" for generating ideas (see 6th October) can also be useful in the IELTS speaking test. Here's an example:

#### *How do you think the Internet will affect our lives in the future?*

##### **Personal perspective:**

I think the Internet will have a huge impact on our lives. More and more people are using social websites to keep in touch with friends. I think the Internet will probably replace TV because most channels are already available online.

##### **Economic perspective:**

Also, I think we'll do more online shopping. Web-based companies like Amazon are already really successful. In the future, there will probably be more companies that only sell via the Internet, and I expect we'll spend more money online than in traditional shops.

##### **Educational perspective:**

Schools and universities might also use the Internet to provide courses, so online learning will probably become a normal part of life.

## Talking about politeness

***In your country's culture, how do you show that you are being polite?***

We really value politeness and good manners in the UK, and there are many types of polite behaviour. One of the first things we learn as children is to say "please" and "thank you". As adults, I think we are careful not to be too direct in the language we use. For example, we would never say "Bring me the bill" in a restaurant because this kind of direct instruction would sound rude. It would be much more polite to say "Could we have the bill, please?".

***Are we less polite with members of our families than with people we don't know?***

I suppose it's normal to be a bit more relaxed about politeness with family members. Most people tend to speak in a more informal way at home; in the UK, we still say "please" and "thanks", but it's fine to use colloquial language and things like nicknames that you would never use with someone you didn't know.

## Talking about status symbols

***In your country, what possessions show a higher status or position in society?***

In my country, people who are wealthy tend to buy big houses and cars. Certain makes of car such as Mercedes or Ferrari are status symbols. They let other people know that you are important or powerful. People who want to give this impression often wear expensive designer clothes, or watches by brands like Rolex.

***Do you think we place too much importance on possessions?***

Probably, yes. Some people are obsessed with showing off their new mobile phone or wearing the latest fashions. I think it's a problem for teenagers because there's a lot of peer pressure to follow fashion or buy the latest gadget that their friends have got.

***Do you think things were different 50 years ago?***

Yes, maybe people were less materialistic. I think they bought things that lasted longer; my grandparents talk about how they repaired things rather than throwing them away. Maybe brands and advertising weren't as powerful as they are now.

### **Talking about toys**

#### **1. Do you think it's important for boys to play with "boys' toys" and for girls to only play with "girls' toys"?**

I think boys naturally seem to prefer playing with "boys' toys" and girls with "girls' toys". When I was young I had toy cars, trucks, guns and things like that, whereas my sister always wanted to play with dolls. I don't suppose it really matters if a boy plays with a doll or a girl plays with a toy car, but children learn quickly what toys are supposed to be for boys and for girls.

#### **2. Do you think it's good if parents only buy "educational" toys for their children?**

No, I don't agree with only giving children educational toys. In my opinion, children learn by playing with whatever interests them. Children invent their own games, even if they don't have any toys at all. It's important for children just to have fun; there will be plenty of time for parents to worry about education when their children get older.

## Talking about Technology at work

1. What technology or equipment is used in most workplaces nowadays?
2. Does technology help workers, or does it make their lives more difficult?
3. What effect does new technology have on employment?

### 1. Advice: give a list of different technologies, then talk about one in detail:

In most workplaces people use equipment such as computers, phones, printers, fax machines and photocopiers. I think the computer is probably the most essential piece of equipment because we rely on it for almost everything: communicating by email, writing reports, organising data, and finding information on the Internet.

### 2. Advice: talk about the positives AND the negatives:

Technology definitely helps workers because it makes many tasks so much easier. For example, email is such a useful tool for communication between employees in different offices, or even in different countries. On the other hand, technology can make life more difficult, especially when it goes wrong. It causes a lot of stress when the Internet is down or a computer crashes.

### 3. Advice: give the good effects AND the bad effects:

I think technology is often responsible for people losing their jobs. Machines have replaced people in areas like manufacturing and agriculture, and whenever a new technology is introduced, there are redundancies. At the same time, jobs might be created thanks to a new technology; there would be no computer programmers if the computer hadn't been invented.

## Talking about lessons

### 1. What do you think makes a good lesson?

I think a good lesson is one that is interesting and engaging. By 'engaging' I mean that the students should feel involved in the lesson; they should feel that they are learning something new that is relevant to them. In my opinion, a lot depends on how the teacher delivers the content of the lesson in a way that students like. My favourite teacher at university used to involve the students by making us teach some of the lessons ourselves.

## **2. Do you think it's better to have a teacher or to teach yourself?**

Well, there's no substitute for a good teacher. I think you can teach yourself, but you can learn a lot more quickly with the guidance of a teacher. For example, when learning a language, you really need someone to correct your mistakes; you can get the grammar and vocabulary from books, but books can't tell you where you're going wrong.

## **3. Do you think the traditional classroom will disappear in the future?**

I don't think it will disappear, but it might become less common. I think more people will study independently, using different technologies rather than sitting in a classroom. Maybe students will attend a lesson just once a week, and spend the rest of their time following online courses or watching video lessons.

## **Talking about sports**

In the example answers below, some of the phrases that examiners would like to hear have been underlined. They might seem easy to understand, but they are the kind of natural phrases that native speakers use.

### **1. Why do you think sport is important?**

I think sport is important for different reasons. For me, doing a sport is about having fun. When I play football, for example, I forget about everything else and just enjoy myself. Also, doing a sport helps you to keep fit and healthy, and it's a good way to socialise and make friends.

### **2. Do you think famous sportspeople are good role models for children?**

I think that sportspeople should be good role models. Children look up to their favourite football players, like David Beckham for example, so I think that these people have an enormous responsibility. They should try to be a good influence, and behave in the right way.

### **3. Do you agree that sports stars earn too much money?**

In my opinion, it's fair that the best sportspeople earn a lot of money. Being a top sportsperson requires hours of practice, and there are millions of sports



fans who are willing to pay to see them play. If we don't want sportspeople to earn so much money, we shouldn't go to watch them.

### Talking about wildlife

The band 7 vocabulary items and collocations have been underlined.

#### ***What effects do you think humans have on wild animals?***

Humans have a huge impact on wild animals. We have destroyed a lot of natural habitats, and many animals are in danger of extinction. Tigers and rhinos, for example, are endangered species because of humans. The pollution and waste that we produce also have an effect on animals. In some places there are no fish in the rivers.

#### ***What measures could we take to protect wildlife?***

I think we need stricter rules to protect natural areas and the wild animals that live there. For example, we should stop cutting down trees in the rain forest. National parks are a good idea because they attract tourists while protecting wildlife.

#### ***Is it the responsibility of schools to teach children about protecting wildlife?***

Yes, schools can play a big part in educating children about this issue. Children should learn how to look after the natural environment. I think schools already teach children about endangered species and the destruction of rain forests, so hopefully future generations will do a better job of protecting wildlife.

## Talking about parties

### **1. What types of party do people have, and why are parties important?**

People have parties to celebrate special occasions like birthdays, weddings, or the beginning of a new year. I think it's important to celebrate these things because they are landmarks in our lives. Parties are a good way to bring people together, and they're an opportunity to let off some steam.

### **2. Why do you think some people like parties but others hate them?**

Most people like parties because they have a good time at them - eating a nice meal, chatting to friends, or having a dance. People who don't like them might find social situations difficult because they are shy, or maybe they don't enjoy having to make small talk with people they don't know.

### **3. Do you think parties will become more popular in the future?**

No, I don't think anything will change. People have always had parties, and I'm sure they always will in the future. Humans need to socialise and enjoy themselves, and parties are one of the best ways to do that.

## Talking about leisure activities

### **1. What is the relationship between leisure and the economy?**

Well, people spend a lot of money on all sorts of leisure activities nowadays, so I think leisure is a very important part of the economy of most countries. Leisure could be anything that people do in their free time, such as eating out, going to the cinema, watching a football match, or staying in a hotel. Millions of people are employed in these areas.

### **2. How does the economy benefit from people's leisure activities?**

The leisure industry makes a huge contribution to the economy. As I said before, it keeps millions of people in employment, and all of these employees pay their taxes and have money to spend on other goods and services. At the same time, most people spend some of their earnings on leisure activities, and this money therefore goes back into the economy.

### **3. Do men and women enjoy the same type of leisure activities?**

Yes and no. I think both men and women enjoy things like eating in restaurants or going to the cinema, but I'm sure there are other activities that are more popular with one gender. For example, I think more men than women go to football matches.

### **Talking about emotions**

#### ***Do you think it's good to show your emotions when you're angry?***

I think it depends on the situation and how you show your emotions. I find that if I'm angry with a friend or someone in my family, it's best to tell them what the problem is and try to express how I feel. However, I don't think it helps to argue with people when you're angry; it's better to control the anger and explain what's wrong.

#### ***In your opinion, do women show their emotions more than men?***

The stereotypical view is that women are more emotional, and in my experience there is some truth in this; my mother, for example, tends to show her feelings much more readily than my father. However, I'm sure that there are exceptions to the stereotype.

#### ***Why do you think men tend to show their emotions less than women?***

Maybe it's because of the way we are brought up. I think that boys are often taught from an early age not to cry. Also, boys are aware that their friends might see it as a sign of weakness if they show their feelings. Perhaps girls are brought up to be more sensitive to their friends' feelings.

## Talking about transportation

### ***What types of transport are there in your town?***

In Manchester I think you can find every form of transport apart from an underground system. You can drive around the city by car or get on a bus; there are even free buses that take people between the train stations. Manchester also has a tram system, and of course there are taxis too.

### ***How has transport changed since your grandparents were young?***

Well, they had cars, trains and planes back then, and London already had the underground system, but I suppose the difference is that technology has moved on. Having said that, the transport system is not necessarily better nowadays; people travel a lot more, and I'm sure we spend more time stuck in traffic.

### ***What types of transport do you think we will use in the future?***

I'm not sure, but hopefully we'll have cars that drive themselves and never crash. I think we'll probably fly more, and it might become normal to have your own plane. On the other hand, many cities are building more bicycle lanes, so maybe we will use cars less for getting around towns and cities.

## Talking about advice

### ***1. Is it better to get advice from a friend or from a family member?***

I think it depends on the kind of advice that you need. Parents and grandparents probably have more life experience than a friend, and so you might get a wiser or more sensible answer from them. On the other hand, friends are less likely to become too worried if you go to them with a problem. For example, I probably wouldn't want to burden my parents with a financial problem.

### ***2. What would you say are the characteristics of a good adviser?***

Well, firstly, a good adviser should be a good listener, someone who takes the time to understand the situation before offering advice. Secondly, an adviser should try to be objective, and avoid judging the person who is seeking help.

Finally, I think the best advisers have the ability to ask the right questions and encourage others to find their own answers.

**3. Should people make their own work and career decisions, or is it a good idea to ask for advice about this?**

I'd say that it's a mixture of both things. Most of us talk to family, friends, teachers or colleagues before we make career choices. However, I believe that the final decision should rest with the individual; we all need to take ultimate responsibility for the big life choices that we make.

**Talking about community**

**1) What are some of the ways people can help others in the community? Which is the most important?**

I think there are many ways to help others in our local communities. For example, where I live, some people volunteer to run activity clubs for children, or they help out in residential homes for elderly people. Others give money, food or clothes to organisations that support people living below the poverty line. In my opinion, there isn't a scale of importance when it comes to helping others; all forms of help are positive.

**2) Why do you think some people like to help other people?**

Most people get a good feeling when they help others, and they understand that we can all experience difficult times in our lives when we might need support. For example, we all grow old, and we all run the risk of losing our jobs or having a health problem that affects our ability to look after ourselves. So, I think people help others because they empathise with them.

**3) Some people say that people help others in the community more now than they did in the past. Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

I disagree with that kind of opinion. It's impossible to generalise about how much people help in their communities from one generation to the next, so I don't think we should try to judge or compare how altruistic people are now or were in the past. There have always been those who help others and those who don't.

## Talking about history

### **1. What do you think we can learn by studying events of the past?**

I think we can learn a lot by studying history. Just as individual people learn from their mistakes, societies can learn from the mistakes made by previous governments or leaders. For example, from what I've read in the newspapers, many economists are looking back to the time of the Great Depression, around 80 years ago, in order to understand the financial crisis that is currently affecting many countries around the world. Even if we don't always learn from mistakes, I think it's fascinating to study history because it gives us an insight into who we are and where we come from.

### **2. What important events do you think might take place in the future?**

It's really difficult to predict what will happen in the future; most of the big, historic events of the past would have been impossible to foresee. For example, I don't think that anyone living 100 years ago could have imagined that people would one day walk on the moon! If I had to guess what might happen in the future, I'd like to think that scientists will invent cures for diseases like cancer, and we'll all live longer.

## Talking about competitions

### **1. Why do you think some school teachers use competitions as class activities?**

I think teachers use competitions to motivate the children in their classes. I'm sure that teachers try all kinds of activities to engage their pupils, and competitions might be one of the best ways to keep children interested or get them excited. Children love winning things.

### **2. Is it a good thing to give prizes to children who do well at school? Why?**

It might be a good idea to encourage children to do well in games or sports, but I don't think we should give children prizes for their academic work. Children need to learn that the reason for studying is to learn useful things that

will help them in their lives. I don't like the idea of children thinking that they will only work hard if there is a prize.

**3. *Would you say that schools for young children have become more or less competitive since you were that age? Why?***

I'd say that they have become more competitive since I was young. Children now have to take exams from a much younger age, so I think there is more of a focus on doing well in tests. Parents also seem to be getting more competitive; I think that many parents push their children to do extra homework rather than letting them play with friends.

**Talking about rivers, lakes and seas**

**1. *What do you think are the functions of rivers nowadays?***

Rivers have various functions. In the UK, they were probably more important in the past because they were used for the transportation of goods, but I suppose this is still the case in many parts of the world. Rivers can be used as a source of renewable energy in the production of hydro-electric power, and they are also a source of fresh water for drinking and irrigation. Leisure activities are another function: fishing, canoeing, swimming, bathing... I'm sure there are many other things I haven't thought of.

**2. *What do you think of boats and ships as forms of transportation?***

I'm not really a fan of boats and ships. If I'm going abroad, I like to get to my destination quickly, so I prefer travelling by plane. Of course, ships are vital for the transportation of oil and other heavy cargo.

**3. *Why do some people like to live near rivers, lakes or the sea?***

Well, the view is probably a major factor; most people like to look out to sea, or across a river or lake. I'd much prefer to look out of my window onto a natural landscape than an apartment building in a city. Then there's the lifestyle: if you live by the sea, for example, you can lie on the beach, go for a swim, or do water sports like surfing or waterskiing. I definitely wouldn't mind living near a beach at some point in my life!

## Have an opinion!

Now, when you get the idea, how do you prepare for this kind of test? Well, you need to have an opinion on wide range of different topics. Here is a list of most common topics for you to think about. Just go over them, think of what do you have to say on those issues, think of which words you will use. Then record yourself saying a couple of sentences on each of those topics and listen to what comes out. Think of what you could have done better. This should get you ready for the Discussion part.

So think about:

### General topics

- Main industry in your country now, how it will develop in the future
- Pollution affecting ecology
- Popular transportation in your country
- How to have better public transport
- How your country has been improved
- City you are living in, it's advantages and disadvantages
- Your country's weather, main season
- Your country's animals, in what ways are they used.
- Piece of equipment that you consider very important, why, how did you start to use it.
- Computers - their advantages and disadvantages, whether people of different genders and ages use them more or less
- Food in restaurants, why and when we eat there, what are pros and cons of eating in a restaurant
- Celebrities in your country
- Idols - who chooses them, why copy them, etc.
- Favorite holiday in your country



## Household

- Who does the shopping
- Where do you like to shop and when
- What do you shop for
- Who does house works, which work in the most important, why

## About yourself

- How do you like spending your time
- Favorite movies (films), do you watch them on TV or in cinema?  
Would you like to act in movies? Why not?
- Where you like to spend your vacation
- Study or work, where, what do you like most about your job, what do you dislike about your job
- Your future plans
- Your hobbies
- Do you think free time is important and why
- What did you study at university
- Which subject is your favorite
- Which subject you don't like
- What do you want to do in the future
- Your favorite food
- Greatest success in your life
- Design of your apartment, like, dislike, why
- What room do you like most, what you do there most, what it looks like
- Your favorite sportsmen
- Favorite TV program
- Most interesting time in your life
- Things that were important in your life
- Your favorite song or piece of music
- Book - what about, how did it influence you
- Doll or some other toy, who gave it to you, on what occasion, what did you do with it

## Friends

- Who is your best friend
- Where and when did you meet
- What do you like the best about him/her
- What have you done together? Explain the reasons of your good friendship
- What do the children think about friendship? What about the adults? Compare them.
- Who cannot be a good friend of yours? Tell the properties of such a person
- Can people, opposite in personality, be good friends?
- What do you value and not value in people
- Friendship through internet, good and bad sides

## Traveling

- How can a visitor travel in my country
- How did my grandparents travel in the past
- Will the travel method change in the future
- Traveling in group compared single traveling
- What kinds of holidays exist
- Where people prefer to go on vacation
- Applications that have positive effect on growth of tourism

## Toys

- Why boys and girls chose different toys
- Why toys are good for kids
- Negative influence of toys, educational side of toys

## Music

- What kind of music do you like,
- Why we should teach music to our kids

## Extra Examples for IELTS Speaking Part 3

### Eating habits

1. Tell me about the types of food that people eat in your country.
2. How are the eating habits now in your country different from eating habits in the past?
3. How healthy is your country's food?
4. Why do you think different cultures have different table manners?
5. How may eating habits change in coming decades?

### Education

1. How are education priorities today different from those in the past?
2. What is your opinion on the way languages are taught in schools?
3. How can the type of school you go to affect career success?
4. What changes do you think will happen in the classroom in the near future?

### Environment

1. Is water pollution a problem in your country?
2. What are some of the causes of water pollution?
3. What can individuals do to try and ensure water is kept clean?
4. Do you think problems with the cleanliness of water will improve in the future?

### Influence of television

1. How popular is watching television in your country?
2. Tell me about the types of programme that are generally on television in your country.
3. Why do people like watching television?
4. Do you think state or private television is better?
5. What effects can watching television have on children?

### Influences on the young

1. What type of people influence the young in your country?
2. Why it is important to have role models?
3. Do you think the education system in your country influences young people's behavior?

4. What type of people (parents, teachers, friends etc.) are best to influence young people's behavior?
5. What do you think young people will be most influenced by in the future?

### **Leisure activities**

1. What types of leisure activities are popular in your country?
2. Why is it important for people to have time for leisure activities?
3. Why are some activities more popular than others?
4. Are the types of leisure activities that are popular today the same as those that were popular when your parents were young?
5. What types of leisure activities may become more popular in the future?

### **Shopping**

1. Is shopping a popular activity in your country?
2. How have shopping habits changed over recent years?
3. To what extent do you think advertising affects the way people shop?
4. Do you think shopping habits are likely to change in the future?

### **Sports**

1. What types of sports are popular in your country?
2. What are the benefits of playing a sport?
3. Do you think the types of sport that are popular will change in the future?
4. How can sports bring people from different countries closer together?

### **Transport**

1. How do most people travel long distances in your country?
2. Have the types of transport people use changed much over the last few decades?
3. What kinds of improvement have there been in transport in your country in recent years?
4. Do you think transport is likely to continue to improve in the future?

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# Tips for IELTS Speaking

Academic/General Training Module by Adam Smith

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