



ثانوية التكنولوجيا التطبيقية  
Applied Technology High School

# **IELTS Speaking Overview**

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***\*Note – All materials in this document originate from the IELTS.org website. The information was made freely available to teachers and students.***

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Are the questions the same for every candidate?**

No. A wide choice of questions and topics is possible, so no two tests will be the same.

### **What can a candidate take into the test room?**

S/He can only take his/her identity document. Everything needed in the test will be provided by the examiner.

### **Why is IELTS Speaking recorded?**

The recording is needed in case the candidate's performance needs to be re-marked.

### **What if a candidate doesn't know anything about the topic in Part 2?**

The topics are carefully chosen to reflect common experiences, so candidates don't need special knowledge to talk about them. It is extremely unlikely that a candidate would be unable to talk about the topic given.

### **Can a candidate start speaking before the 1 minute preparation time is over?**

Yes. If a candidate doesn't need the whole minute, s/he can begin speaking when s/he is ready. It is advisable, though, for candidates to make full use of the preparation time.

### **How long should the candidate talk for in Part 2?**

Every candidate is given the opportunity to talk for 2 minutes. S/He should aim to talk for the full 2 minutes to provide the examiner with a good sample of language for rating.

### **What should a candidate do if s/he doesn't understand a question or the Part 2 task?**

The candidate should tell the examiner. S/He should say s/he doesn't understand. In Part 1 or 2 the examiner will be able to repeat the question. In Part 2 the candidate should look carefully at the task card because the prompts may help them guess the meaning of a word they have not understood. In Part 3 the examiner will be able to reformulate the question, or may be able to offer further clarification, depending on the particular difficulty.

### **Does the candidate have to write notes in Part 2?**

No, making notes is an option available to the candidate. Some candidates prefer just to think about what to say whereas others find making notes helps them to organise their ideas and to keep talking.

### **Can the candidate write on the task card?**

No, this is not allowed. The examiner gives the candidate paper to make notes on.

### **Is it a good idea for a candidate to learn short speeches about his/her town or job by heart?**

No, s/he should listen carefully to the examiner and just respond to the question. Learnt speeches usually miss the point of the question, and may adversely affect pronunciation.

### **Can the result of Speaking be a half band, as in Reading or Listening?**

Yes, Speaking scores are reported in whole bands or half bands so a candidate could get 5.5 as well as 5 or 6.

**Will the examiner give the candidate any feedback?**

No, the examiner is not permitted to give feedback, and the candidate should not ask him/her to do so.

## An Overview of IELTS Speaking

### Module Format

IELTS Speaking is a one-to-one interaction between the candidate and an examiner. The three parts give the candidate the opportunity to use a range of different speaking skills.

IELTS Speaking is recorded.

### Timing

11 – 14 minutes

### Marks

Candidates are assessed on their performance throughout the test.

Part	Nature of Interaction	Timing
1	Introduction and interview  After introductions and identity check, the examiner asks the candidate questions about familiar topics.	4 – 5 minutes
2	Long turn  The candidate receives a task card with a topic. S/He then has 1 minute to prepare and make notes before speaking about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes.	3 – 4 minutes
3	Discussion  The examiner discusses with the candidate more abstract aspects of the topic in Part 2.	4 – 5 minutes

## Developing General Speaking Skills

Briefly, it is very important to do regular speaking activities in class to develop general speaking skills.

Students must be made aware that speaking is as important for their final band as the other skills, and involves skills that can be both practised and improved.

- If your students are reluctant speakers, get them involved in a 5-minute discussion in pairs or groups at the beginning or end of every lesson on a current event or issue. When they are used to doing this, you can slowly introduce other longer and more directed speaking activities and tasks.
- Most coursebooks have sections on speaking skills which are especially useful if your students don't give due importance to their speaking ability.
- For pronunciation, coursebooks are also particularly useful – if your students are not very strong in this area, it is worth spending time doing the activities in them, which are usually both fun and useful in raising students' awareness of common difficulties and giving them practice. Accompanying cassettes provide good models for sounds, stress and intonation patterns, which contribute to intelligibility.
- Be aware yourself of how much and how often your students are speaking to each other in the classroom, especially when this is not a specific 'speaking activity'. Where appropriate, give feedback or pick up on any good or weak aspects you notice. This will help your students to recognise the value of speaking in class. Look at the section on [Correction and Giving Feedback](#) for ideas.
- Remember that students can also practise speaking on their own. Even though there is no response or feedback, simply speaking gives the opportunity to try different ways of saying things, which can help to increase confidence. Describing what you see around you and what is happening in the street when you walk or drive somewhere, predicting the events of the day in the morning and then remembering them at night, even telling yourself what you need, and why, as you walk around the supermarket: all these give additional practice in expressing ideas in English and 'loosening the tongue'.

## Part 1 - Tips for Teachers

- Train students to identify key words in questions so that their answers are as relevant as possible.
- Give students practice in answering questions about a wide range of common topics using a range of language structures.
- Make sure students are able to ask for clarification if necessary but that they also understand that in much of IELTS Speaking the examiner must follow a scripted frame, so will not be able to give the kind of help a teacher can although they will always be able to repeat the question.
- Make sure students understand that they should not ask the examiner to confirm or correct their accuracy.
- Train students to expand *yes/no* answers, e.g. by adding *because* ...
- Encourage students to monitor their language and to have the confidence to correct their own mistakes when they hear them.
- Train students in circumlocution and paraphrase to deal with gaps in vocabulary.
- Train students in the use of stress and intonation to communicate meaning more effectively.
- Make sure students don't learn answers off by heart.

## Part 1 - Tips for Students

- Practise asking and answering questions, so that you get better at understanding them properly and answering them relevantly.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help when you don't understand. However, remember that in most of IELTS Speaking the examiner is not allowed to change the words of a question, so s/he may just repeat the same question again. Don't expect the examiner to explain things in the way your teachers do in class.
- Don't ask the examiner whether what you say is correct – that's a question for your teacher, not your examiner.
- Remember that *yes* or *no* is not enough – practise ways of making your answers longer, for example by giving your reasons.
- When you talk, listen to what you say, and if you make a mistake, try to correct it, but don't worry if you can't.
- Don't worry if you can't remember the exact word for something – try to express the idea in another way.
- Remember that in English, stress and intonation are important in getting ideas across clearly. Try to get as much practice as you can in using them naturally.
- Get used to talking about your life and everyday topics.
- Don't learn answers off by heart.



## **Part 2 - Tips for Teachers**

- Give students practice in speaking for 2 minutes on a variety of topics.
- Train students to make good use of the preparation time in Part 2.
- Encourage students to try different ways of making notes, to find what helps them most.
- Make sure students understand that the long turn is not a conversation – provide practice in talking to a person who listens but doesn't join in.
- Train students to identify the most appropriate tense to use.
- Train students to use all the prompts on the task card to structure their long turn and stay on topic.
- Train students to accept interruptions to their long turn calmly. Make sure students know that the examiner is the time-keeper and may interrupt them.

## **Part 2 - Tips for Students**

- Practise speaking for 2 minutes about lots of different things. Write down topics on separate cards, with some questions as prompts. Then pull one out without looking first and time yourself talking.
- Use the 1-minute preparation time sensibly – read the information on the card carefully, so that you concentrate on relevant information.
- Try different ways of making notes, to find what helps you most.
- Remember the long turn is not a conversation – the examiner won't join in but s/he listens and is interested in what you say.
- Make sure you remember which tenses are best to talk about different topics – reading the task card carefully will help you with this too.
- Try to say something about each of the points on the task card because this will help you to organise what you say and stay on the topic.
- Don't be surprised if you're interrupted – remember the examiner is the time-keeper.

### **Part 3 - Tips for Teachers**

- Make sure students understand that Part 3 questions are likely to be about ideas or about people in general rather than about their own experience.
- Give students practice in using the language of discussion.
- Encourage students to use a range of structures rather than sticking only to language they feel safe with.
- Encourage students to take an active part in the discussion rather than simply answering questions.
- Encourage students to read widely in English on current world issues and listen to English language broadcasting as much as they can.

### **Part 3 - Tips for Students**

- Remember that in Part 3 you talk more about general ideas and not just about your own life.
- Practise discussing different topics.
- Try to use grammar you're not so sure about as well as grammar you're sure you can get right.
- When you discuss things in class, don't just respond to other people's ideas but make them think about yours too.
- Try to read and listen to news in English outside class to learn more about world issues.

## **Focus on Assessment**

### **Assessment Criteria**

The four criteria used in IELTS Speaking to assess candidates are as follows:

- Fluency and Coherence
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy
- Pronunciation

The criteria have equal weighting in their contribution to the final band, which is currently given as a whole band. From 1 July 2007, speaking Scores will be reported on a scale including half bands.

#### **Fluency and Coherence**

This refers to the candidate's ability to talk with normal levels of continuity, speech rate and effort, and to link ideas and language together in coherent, connected speech.

#### **Lexical Resource**

This refers to the range of vocabulary the candidate can use and how clearly meanings and attitudes can be expressed. This includes the variety of words used and the ability to get round a vocabulary gap by expressing the idea in a different way.

#### **Grammatical Range and Accuracy**

This refers to the range of structures available to the candidate and how accurately and appropriately s/he can use them. Assessment takes into account the length and complexity of utterances as well as the effect of grammatical errors on communication.

#### **Pronunciation**

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances and to use a range of pronunciation features to communicate meaning. Assessment takes into account the amount of strain caused to the listener, and the noticeability of L1 influence.

# Speaking Band Descriptors

## High Level

IELTS Speaking band descriptors (public version)



Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar</li> <li>speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features</li> <li>develops topics fully and appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics</li> <li>uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately</li> <li>produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech</li> </ul>	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language</li> <li>develops topics coherently and appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning</li> <li>uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully with occasional inaccuracies</li> <li>uses paraphrase effectively as required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a wide range of structures flexibly</li> <li>produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is easy to understand throughout, with L1 accent having minimal effect on intelligibility</li> <li>uses a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence</li> <li>uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility</li> <li>may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics</li> <li>uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation with some inappropriate choices</li> <li>uses paraphrase effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility</li> <li>frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist</li> </ul>	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation</li> <li>uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies</li> <li>generally paraphrases successfully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility</li> <li>may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be understood throughout, though mispronunciation may occasionally cause momentary strain for the listener</li> </ul>

## Low Level

IELTS Speaking band descriptors (public version)



Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going</li> <li>may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers</li> <li>produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility</li> <li>attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy</li> <li>uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems</li> </ul>	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction</li> <li>links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice</li> <li>rarely attempts paraphrase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare</li> <li>errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produces some acceptable features of English pronunciation but overall control is limited and there can be severe strain for the listener</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>speaks with long pauses</li> <li>has limited ability to link simple sentences</li> <li>gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information</li> <li>has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances</li> <li>makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions</li> </ul>	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pauses lengthily before most words</li> <li>little communication possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>only produces isolated words or memorised utterances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannot produce basic sentence forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>speech is often unintelligible</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no communication possible</li> <li>no rateable language</li> </ul>			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not attend</li> </ul>			

## Developing General Speaking Skills

Briefly, it is very important to do regular speaking activities in class to develop general speaking skills.

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- If your students are reluctant speakers, get them involved in a 5-minute discussion in pairs or groups at the beginning or end of every lesson on a current event or issue. When they are used to doing this, you can slowly introduce other longer and more directed speaking activities and tasks.
- Most coursebooks have sections on speaking skills which are especially useful if your students don't give due importance to their speaking ability.
- For pronunciation, coursebooks are also particularly useful – if your students are not very strong in this area, it is worth spending time doing the activities in them, which are usually both fun and useful in raising students' awareness of common difficulties and giving them practice. Accompanying cassettes provide good models for sounds, stress and intonation patterns, which contribute to intelligibility.
- Be aware yourself of how much and how often your students are speaking to each other in the classroom, especially when this is not a specific 'speaking activity'. Where appropriate, give feedback or pick up on any good or weak aspects you notice. This will help your students to recognise the value of speaking in class. Look at the section on [Correction and Giving Feedback](#) for ideas.
- Remember that students can also practise speaking on their own. Even though there is no response or feedback, simply speaking gives the opportunity to try different ways of saying things, which can help to increase confidence. Describing what you see around you and what is happening in the street when you walk or drive somewhere, predicting the events of the day in the morning and then remembering them at night, even telling yourself what you need, and why, as you walk around the supermarket: all these give additional practice in expressing ideas in English and 'loosening the tongue'.

## **Integrating Speaking Skills Development**

Integrating speaking skills development is important for various reasons such as improving students' confidence and 'loosening their tongues', not to mention giving them practice in using their grammatical and lexical knowledge in context. It is very different knowing a structure or a word and having to produce it orally when needed.

- Make sure your students always speak English in the classroom, and as much as possible outside it.
- Use English yourself at all times with your students, outside the class, before and after, etc. as well as during class.
- Unless there is a good reason for doing an activity in the first language, for example, in order to gain insights into one of the parts of IELTS Speaking, do all discussion activities in English, including checking answers for listening activities, and so on. Linked with feedback, this makes valuable practice.
- Use topics and lexis from reading and listening texts to set up discussions or related tasks, so that you give your students opportunities to practise new vocabulary.
- Encourage students to follow news and current events by reading English language newspapers and magazines, or listening to English language broadcasting. The internet too is a good source of material. The information gained can be used in different ways to develop all four skills.



## Correction and Giving Feedback

### Why give feedback?

Although getting your students to talk can often be half the battle, they also need to be helped as much as possible to improve their speaking ability. This means giving feedback of some kind every time they do a speaking activity, and as often as appropriate when they are speaking during any activity, even though speaking isn't the primary focus. There are many reasons for this:

- a speaking activity is like a writing activity – your students would probably complain if you didn't correct their writing, so why should speaking be different?
- your students will feel that they are not wasting time when they speak because they get feedback
- it shows your students how and where they are improving, as well as what they need to work on
- you can focus on lexis or grammatical structures you have been working on, and so recycle them

### How can you organise giving feedback?

There are many ways that you can give feedback to your students, and many aspects that you can focus on. Here are some ideas.

- Feedback should be positive as well as negative – tell your students what they do well, as well as what they are getting wrong.
- You can give feedback to the whole class, to small groups or pairs or to individuals. Vary how you do it.

Feedback to the **whole class** is good:

- 1) if you want to keep it short
- 2) if there are mistakes common to several students
- 3) if you want to focus on a recently studied structures or lexical items

Feedback to **small groups** is good:

- 1) when students have been working in groups
- 2) if you want students to work out what the mistake is, or what the correct way of saying it is
- 3) if you are focusing on interaction

Feedback to **individuals** is good:

- 1) if you have the time in class to listen to each student
- 2) when each student is speaking in turn, for example if you are practising Part 2
- 3) if you want students to correct their mistakes for homework

This can also be done in **individual tutorials**:

- 1) if you want to focus on individuals' problems and don't feel you can appropriately spend time on it in class
- 2) if you want to give praise and set individual targets

## How can you give feedback?

Clearly, the way in which you deal with these different groupings will vary. Sometimes you will want to give feedback on the board, other times it may be oral: the way you choose will depend on how much time you want to spend on it, how serious you feel the point is, what you are correcting, and so on.

Here are some **general ideas** for giving feedback.

- Always have paper and pen in hand when monitoring, so you can note things down. Make 2 columns, one for things your students are doing well and the other for mistakes.
- Try not to write when your students are looking at you – it will put them off and they will start to focus more on your pen than on what they are talking about.
- Don't feel you always have to be up close to monitor – once your students know that you are going to give feedback, they won't mind where you are in the room. They know you are listening!
- Make sure you always give positive feedback as well as negative. Sometimes, you may only have positive feedback, or may want to focus mainly on the positive – for example, if the Speaking test date is very close or if there has been real improvement in an area that has previously caused trouble.
- There is no need to mention which student made a mistake or did the good thing, unless you want to. It is amazing how students can often recognise what they said.
- Make sure your feedback focuses on the different assessment criteria used in IELTS Speaking, for example by using the criteria categories to structure your feedback.
- Sometimes you will want to let students do the activity and to focus in general on how they perform.
- Sometimes, you can choose one or two criteria and focus just on your students' performance in these areas. You can tell them this before they begin the activity, or only when they have finished. Vary how you do it.
- Sometimes you may want to focus on your students' use of a specific structure or lexical set they have recently studied. Again, you can tell them this before they begin the activity, or when they have finished. Vary how you do it.

Here are some ideas for giving feedback to the **whole class**.

- Don't just give all the correct answers; elicit them from your students too.
- Some correction needs to be shown on the board, but you can also elicit correction orally.
- Most students like to write down the corrections, so make sure you put them on the board clearly. Try to avoid the risk of your students writing down the mistakes.
- If you give or elicit corrections orally, also write them on the board for students to copy.
- Keep the pace up – change the way you correct or elicit corrections. Don't do it all on the board, or all orally.

Here are some ideas for giving feedback to **small groups**.

- Have a sheet of paper for each group and write mistakes directly onto these sheets. Then you can just give them to the group to work on.
- Divide the sheets into sections, either those used in the assessment criteria or others you choose, and write the positive aspects and mistakes in the appropriate section. This will help your students to know what they need to look at.
- Put the positive points first.
- Don't write down everything that is wrong – be selective and limit yourself to a predetermined number. With practice, you will get better at selecting what to note down.

- Don't expect students to be able to correct everything, especially complex points. It is better to do these together as a whole group.
- Monitor and help the groups to correct their mistakes.

Here are some ideas for giving feedback to **individuals**.

- Use small slips of paper, one for each student with their name on.
- Write positive points first.
- Limit the number of mistakes you note down and try to focus on things that are really affecting your students' communication.
- Use this type of feedback to praise and correct items that are really individual. It's especially useful for multilingual groups.

Organise weekly individual tutorials, where you can discuss strengths and weaknesses more discreetly, and set objectives for the student to work on, reviewing and praising progress in subsequent weeks, as well as setting new targets.