



ثانوية التكنولوجيا التطبيقية  
Applied Technology High School

**IELTS  
Listening**

**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)**

### **What aspects of listening are tested in IELTS Listening?**

Sections 1 and 2 of IELTS Listening test the types of listening skills needed for survival in an English-speaking country in situations relating to accommodation, transport, entertainment, health, shopping etc. The main focus is on understanding key points of factual information. Sections 3 and 4 focus on the types of academic situations likely to be encountered by students following a training or study course in an English speaking country, including lectures, tutorials, seminars, and discussions with other students on academic matters. Here the student must be able to identify key points as well as detail, and also to cope with the negotiation of meaning and follow a line of academic argument.

### **Do the different sections use different task types?**

No. Any section may include any of the task types listed in the Overview. However, there will not generally be more than three different task types in any section, and in some cases the whole section may consist of just one task type.

### **Are all the sections equally difficult?**

No. IELTS Listening tests a wide range of abilities, and in order to allow this, the sections gradually get more difficult from Section 1 to Section 4.

### **How do candidates record their answers?**

Candidates write their answers on the Listening Question Paper during the test. At the end of the recording they are given 10 minutes to transfer their answers onto the Listening Answer Sheet.

**When the instructions state that the candidate should answer in, for example, NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS, would they lose marks by writing an answer with more than three words, even if one is 'a' or 'the'?**

Yes. Answers which exceed the word limit will be marked incorrect.

### **Do answers in IELTS Listening have to be correctly spelled?**

Yes. Incorrect spelling and grammar are penalised. However, words which the candidates have to write will generally be high-frequency words. Both UK and US varieties of spelling are accepted. Proper names may be spelled out in the recording.

### **Does IELTS Listening always include all the different task types listed in the Overview?**

No. Each test version will contain a different combination of task types.

### **How is the band score for IELTS Listening calculated?**

One mark is awarded for each of the 40 questions. A Band Score conversion table is produced for each version of IELTS Listening which translates scores out of 40 onto the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported as a whole band or a half band.

### **How does the Listening band score relate to the overall band score?**

The overall score is worked out based on the band scores for each of the four Modules; the final score may be reported as a whole band or a half band.

**Will studying for IELTS Listening help students to improve their general listening skills?**

Yes. Students will be encouraged to listen in different ways for different purposes and to become more aware of the strategies that English speakers use to communicate in speech.

**What information are candidates given before each section?**

At the beginning of each section candidates hear a short description of the situation they are about to listen to. This may give information about who the speakers are, where they are and what the general topic is. This description is **not** written on the Question Paper, so it is important for candidates to listen carefully.

**Will candidates have time to look at the questions before they listen?**

Yes, there is time for candidates to look at the questions before each section. They are told which questions to look at.

**Will there be a break during the recording?**

There is one break during each of Sections 1, 2 and 3 to allow candidates time to look at the following questions. However, there is NOT a break in Section 4.

**Will there be an example at the beginning?**

There is usually an example at the beginning of Section 1, and for this section **only**, the recording relating to the example is played twice.

**How many times do candidates hear the recording?**

Each recording is heard ONCE only.

**Do the questions follow the order in which the information occurs in the recording?**

Yes. This is the case for all task types in IELTS Listening.

**Will candidates have time to check their answers at the end of each section?**

Yes, candidates have half a minute to check their answers at the end of each section.

## An Overview of IELTS Listening

### Module format

IELTS Listening has four sections, each with 10 items (or questions). Each item is worth one mark. The items are designed so that the answers appear in order in the listening passage. During the test, time is given for candidates to read the questions and write down and check their answers. Answers are written on the Question Paper as candidates listen. When the tape ends, ten minutes are allowed for candidates to transfer their answers onto an Answer Sheet. The table below provides a summary of IELTS Listening.

SECTION	Topic Area	Input	Main Skill Focus	Number of Questions
1	Social needs	Conversation with a transactional purpose e.g. finding out about travel services	Listening for and noting specific factual information	10
2	Social needs	Monologue or prompted monologue with a transactional purpose e.g. giving information about a public event	Listening for and noting specific factual information	10
3	Education and training	Discussion between 2 – 4 people in an academic context, e.g. tutorial or seminar	Following a conversation which involves negotiation of meaning. Listening for specific information, attitudes, and speakers' opinions	10
4	Education and training	Monologue in an academic context e.g. lecture	Following an academic argument. Listening for main ideas, specific information, attitude and speaker's opinion	10

### Answer format

Candidates write their answers on an answer sheet.

### Timing

Approximately 30 minutes plus 10 minutes transfer time.

### Marks

Each question carries one mark, giving a total of 40 marks.

### Listening texts

The first two sections are concerned with social needs. There is a dialogue between two speakers, for example a conversation about travel arrangements, and then a monologue, for example a recording about museum opening times.

The final two sections are concerned with situations related more closely to educational or training contexts. There is a conversation between up to four people, for example a conversation between a tutor and a student about an assignment, and then a further monologue, for example a lecture of general academic interest.

## Task types

A variety of task types is used. The principal task types are:

Task Type 1	Forms/Notes/Table/Flow-chart/Summary Completion
Task Type 2	Multiple Choice
Task Type 3	Short-answer Questions
Task Type 4	Sentence Completion
Task Type 5	Labelling a Diagram/Plan/Map
Task Type 6	Classification
Task Type 7	Matching

## Recordings

Each section is played ONCE only. The recordings include a range of accents, including British, Australian, New Zealand and American.

## **Developing General and Academic Listening Skills**

### **Expectations of students at IELTS level**

IELTS Listening is taken by both General Training and Academic candidates and is designed to cover the full range of ability from non-user to expert user. It covers the basic survival skills in a broad social and educational context, as well as the skills required for academic purposes.

### **How we listen in our own language**

Listening involves both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Linguistic knowledge includes understanding of lexis, grammar, phonology and discourse. Non-linguistic knowledge may include understanding of the context or situation, the topic and the purpose of the interaction.

When we listen in our first language we apply both types of knowledge at the same time to make sense of what we hear. We can use our existing knowledge to predict what might come next, and check each prediction in the light of the information we receive.

By using these skills, we can make sense of input in which individual sounds may be unclear, either because of background noise or because they are affected by other sounds in the stream of speech. We can also understand the meaning carried by stress and intonation, and we can hold pieces of information in our short-term memory long enough to relate it to further information given later on. In addition, we are able to interpret not just the surface meaning of the information conveyed but the underlying attitudes and opinions.

### **Developing listening skills in a foreign language**

Students may develop listening skills in the classroom through listening to and interacting with the teacher and other students. In this case the context and purpose of the interaction is usually clear, and the student can let the speaker know if he or she has not understood what was said.

Listening skills are also developed more formally through listening to recorded materials via a variety of media. In this case the context and purpose may not be apparent, so students may need to be provided with this information before they start listening. Specific listening tasks are usually given in order to focus the students. Such tasks are likely to involve a degree of reading and writing.

Outside the classroom there is an increasing number of opportunities for students of English to listen to different varieties of English through leisure and educational activities on video and TV, through songs or computer and internet activities, as well as through interaction with other speakers of English.

### **The difference between general and academic spoken English**

IELTS Listening tests understanding of both general English in transactional situations, such as making arrangements for transport, accommodation and leisure activities, and academic situations, such as taking part in a seminar or listening to a lecture. In addition, candidates listen to both conversations and monologues. In each case the context, purpose and relationship between speakers will affect the language used.

## **IELTS Listening Section 1 (conversation with a transactional purpose)**

The conversation may be between two friends. In this case the speakers may use fillers, phrasal verbs and colloquial expressions, they may leave sentences unfinished or interrupt one another. If the conversation is between two people who do not know one another well (e.g. a conversation between a shopkeeper and customer) the language is likely to be more formal with phrases typical of this type of interaction (e.g. *'What I was hoping is that you could give me some sort of a refund.'*)

## **IELTS Listening Section 2 (monologue with a transactional purpose)**

The speaker may be addressing the listeners directly – e.g. a speech by a tour guide. In this case, the language may be quite informal. Alternatively, this section may present information in the form of a recorded message or a radio broadcast directed at an unseen audience. In this case the language may be more formal and with longer sentences and more complex syntax.

## **IELTS Listening Section 3 (conversation in an academic context)**

The conversation may display similar features of speech to those in Section 1, depending on the relationship between the speakers, but the lexis and structures are likely to reflect those more often heard in an academic context. The range of vocabulary is likely to be wider than that of Section 1 conversations, and there is likely to be more negotiation of meaning.

## **IELTS Listening Section 4 (monologue in an academic context)**

A monologue in an academic context is likely to have been carefully prepared and the speaker may be referring to notes as he/she gives the talk or lecture. This section is likely to be the closest to written language, with dense information and complex sentences with subordinate clauses. However, the speaker will also usually use signposting language to help the listener follow the argument

## **IELTS Preparation – Teaching or Testing?**

Teachers can train and support their students in IELTS preparation classes by

- selecting listening tasks on topics related to the students' knowledge and interests
- providing activities to remind students of what they already know about the topic and the related language before they listen making sure that students are quite clear about what they have to do for each task type, and the type of listening required
- pausing the tape or replaying when necessary in practice activities
- allowing plenty of time for checking and discussion of answers, and giving students access to tapescripts at this stage
- providing additional opportunities for listening in a range of non-exam formats – e.g. songs, videos, news broadcasts, real-life speakers – with tasks aimed at developing confidence and motivation