

IELTS FAQs

by

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Contents

General.....	1
Speaking.....	7
Listening.....	11
Reading.....	16
Writing.....	18
Proposed resources.....	30
Extra resources.....	33

About the booklet

This booklet, as the name implies, is meant to answer IELTS candidates' Frequently Asked Questions. It comes from the extensive experience of the author as a teacher rather than solid research in the area; the questions addressed are mostly those which are usually asked by the writer's students, and the rest are extracted out of verified sources such as the Official IELTS website. *The Language* used is friendly and personal, tailored to be understandable for intermediate language users.

General

1. What is IELTS?

IELTS, the International English Language Testing System, is designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is used as the language of communication. There are two versions of IELTS; academic and general, as the names imply the academic module is required for academic purposes such as entry to a university, and the general for the work-related purposes and immigration.

2. What is UKVI?

For those who wish to study in or migrate to UK, a UKVI is required. It is the same as IELTS, the only difference is the way in which it is administered. IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training for UKVI are designed to meet certain administrative requirements that are specified by the UK Home Office.

3. Which universities accept IELTS?

Most of the universities around the world (more than 10,000 institutes in 140 countries) accept IELTS.

4. Is IELTS acceptable for American Universities?

Yes, American universities accept IELTS.

5. What score is acceptable for Universities?

It depends, generally most of the universities accept a score of 6.5 with no component less than 6. However, it is recommended that you check the specific requirements for the university to which you are going to apply.

6. How many days does it take to get our results after the test day?

It usually takes 13 days for the results to be announced. However, in special cases there is the possibility that your results be withheld and announced by delay.

7. Can I cancel my registration?

If you cancel the test more than five weeks ahead of the test date, you will receive a full refund (less a 25% administrative fee), otherwise you will receive no refund. “Failure to appear for the test without notification is considered a cancellation, no refund will be issued, and you must register and pay again if you wish to take the test on another date. Candidates seeking cancellation or transfer within the 5-week period prior to the test date, or those who fail to appear for their scheduled test, can receive a refund (less a 25% administrative fee) if they can provide evidence within 5 days that their ability to sit for the test has been affected by serious illness or cause as bellow:

Serious Illness – hospital admission or serious injury
Loss or Bereavement –; death of a close family member;
Hardship/Trauma – victim of a crime, victim of a traffic accident; Military Service” (IDP)

8. Can I transfer the test?

It is possible for candidates to transfer their test online 37 days before the written test provided that the tests available on the schedule are vacant. Candidates are required to pay the transfer fee to have their test transferred. This procedure is to be followed in order to transfer either the test date or the test module. If a candidate is to change the type of the test (IELTS, UKVI or Life skills), he/she is required to pay the price difference in addition to the transferring cost.

9. How IELTS overall score is calculated?

“Overall band scores are calculated to the nearest whole or half band. If the average score across the four skills – Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking – ends in .25, it is rounded up to the next half band. If it ends in .75, it is rounded up to the next whole band.

Band score examples

A) You achieve 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.0 for Writing and 7.0 for Speaking, giving a total score of 25. The mean is then calculated ($25 \div 4 = 6.25$) and this is rounded up to 6.5. So you'll be awarded an overall band score of 6.5.

B) If you score an IELTS result of 4.0 for Listening, 3.5 for Reading, 4.0 for Writing and 4.0 for Speaking, your total score will be 15.5. The mean is calculated ($15.5 \div 4 = 3.875$) and this is rounded up. So your overall band score will be 4.0.

C) If you achieve 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.5 for Writing and 6.0 for Speaking, your total score will be 24.5. The mean will be calculated ($24.5 \div 4 = 6.125$). This is then rounded down, giving you an overall score of band 6.” (IELTS British Council)

10. What is the difference between IDP and British Council?

They are two different organizations which conduct the IELTS exam. IELTS is jointly owned by British Council, IDP Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment. The exam is set by the Cambridge English Language Assessment and the same question papers are circulated at IDP and British Council exam centers. Also the parameters for grading the students are the same. The answer key to be referred for marking the Reading and Listening module is the same for both IDP and British Council provided by the Cambridge English Language Assessment.

It also provides a set of band descriptors to the examiners of IDP and British Council to mark the writing and speaking modules.

In Iran, only IDP administers the exam, and the writing component is scored by IDP examiners outside Iran.

Speaking

1. How many parts are there?

There are three parts; part 1 usually contains questions about you, your opinions and familiar topics. Part 2: you have one minute to get prepared to talk about one to two minutes on a topic given by the examiner. Part 3: more abstract questions usually thematically related to part 2 are asked.

2. How long does the speaking test take?

4-5 minutes part 1, 3-4 minutes part 2, and 4-5 minutes part 3; in total, it takes 11-14 minutes.

3. What points are taken into account for marking the speaking test?

Fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

4. How many questions will be asked?

In part 1 you will be asked a number of questions (probably up to 12), remember they do not require very long answers, but as for part 3 try to provide long and detailed answers. In this part, the number of questions depends on the way you

answer them, the longer you talk in response to a certain question, if relevant, fewer questions would be asked.

5. Is it necessary to talk for two minutes in part 2?

You can speak for one to two minutes, however it is recommended that you speak at length and show your fluency.

6. What happens if my answer is not finished, and I keep talking past two minutes (in part 2)?

The examiner will stop you and move on to part 3.

7. Do I need to follow the prompts on the cue card starting from the first question/prompt and ending up with the last one?

No, you can answer them the way you wish.

8. What should I do if I do not understand a question?

In part 1 ask for repetition, it is OK. In part 2 you can not ask for any explanation or clarification. However, in part 3 you may ask for repetition or even clarification if needed.

9. Does asking for repetition reduce my score?

No, there is no penalty for that, however try not to overdo it.

10. If I have an accent, do I lose marks?

If your accent does not interfere with the examiner's understanding, it will not affect your score. So do not worry! You are not supposed to speak like a native.

11. What if the examiner interrupts my answer?

This is something quite probable for a number of reasons, no need to explain here, however, you do not need to worry. That is OK, follow the examiner.

12. Should I correct my mistakes I realize when I am speaking?

You can correct yourself, however it should be done in a balanced way not interfering with your fluency.

13. Should I use body language or gestures to impress the examiner?

The examiner is only interested in the way you speak. You are not going to propose to someone or give a motivational speech! So, try to be as natural as possible.

14. Should I try to use a British or American accent?

No, my dear. Try to be yourself speaking with your own developed accent (for instance the Shirazi version of

English), it may also appeal to the examiner more! Kidding aside, it is too demanding for you to focus on your accent when speaking especially if you are not an advanced language user, so speak normally as if to a friend.

Listening

1. How many sections are there?

There are four sections in Listening part of which section 1 and 2 are about social and general situations while section 3 and 4 are related to academic situations.

2. How many question are there?

A total of 40 questions; each part contains 10 questions.

3. How long is the listening part?

It takes 30 minutes to listen to the audio and answer the questions, and at the end you are given 10 minutes to transfer your answers to the answer sheet.

4. How many times the audio is played?

Just once.

5. How is listening scored?

It is scored in this way:

Listening Test - Raw Score Conversion

Raw Score	Band Score	Raw Score	Band Score
39-40	9	18-22	5.5
37-38	8.5	16-17	5
35-36	8	13-15	4.5
32-34	7.5	11-12	4
30-31	7	8-10	3.5
26-29	6.5	6-7	3
23-25	6	4-5	2.5

6. Is there any negative points for wrong answers?

No, it is not that accurate and standard as our KonKour exam to take into account such delicate points! So do not worry, try to answer all the questions and guess those you are not sure about.

7. Before I start listening, do I have time to go through the questions?

Yes, you will be given some time to look at the questions in each part, and at the end of each section you have 30 minutes to check your answers.

8. Can I write on the question paper?

Yes, you can. But, remember you need to complete the answer sheet, and the answers on the paper is not taken into account for scoring.

9. Are capital letters important?

No, whether you follow the rule of capital letters or not, you are not going to lose marks.

10. Can I write with a pen?

No, only in pencil.

11. In multiple choice questions, can I write words, or I just need to write the letters?

You must follow the instructions, if it is stated that you choose a letter, you will have to write letters not words.