

IELTS — 2025-compliant Study Guide

Basics

Full name: International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

Purpose: Standardised English proficiency test for people who are non-native speakers of English.

Owners / Organisations: IELTS is jointly owned and managed by the British Council, IDP (IELTS Australia / IDP IELTS) and Cambridge University Press & Assessment. (See official sources for full details.)

Requirement to sit the test: You must bring the same valid identification document (passport or national identity card where accepted) that you used when you booked the test. The exact document type depends on your local test centre and registration; always follow the booking confirmation instructions.

Ways to take the test:

- Book through IDP or the British Council (or other authorised local partner).
- Test delivery options: paper-based, computer-delivered (on computer) and IELTS Online in some regions.

Two main modules / versions:

- **IELTS Academic** — for higher education and professional registration.
- **IELTS General Training** — for work, training, or migration purposes.

Test structure & timing (official, 2025)

There are **four skills tested**: Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking.

- **Listening** — 40 questions, approximately **30 minutes** of audio **plus 10 minutes** (paper test) to transfer answers to the answer sheet. *Computer tests include typing answers directly.* citeturn0search3turn0search10

- **Reading** — 40 questions, **60 minutes** (including any transfer time instructed).
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- **Writing** — **60 minutes** total. Academic Task 1: minimum **150 words**. Task 2: minimum **250 words**. You are penalised for writing fewer than the minimum; there is no strict penalty for being longer, but manage time: Task 2 has greater weighting.
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- **Speaking** — a face-to-face interview **11–14 minutes** (three parts). Depending on the test format and test centre, the Speaking test can be scheduled on the same day or within a seven-day window before or after the Listening/Reading/Writing tests. For computer-delivered tests the Speaking test is usually on the same day.
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Total (typical): Listening + Reading + Writing = about **2 hours 45 minutes** for the three modules taken together (paper/computer depending on format). Speaking adds the 11–14 minute interview on its scheduled day. citeturn0search0

Note on test order: the order of Listening/Reading/Writing differs by test delivery mode and local arrangements. Read your booking instructions carefully. citeturn3search1

Availability / frequency:

- Availability varies by country and test centre. Computer-delivered IELTS can be available many days a week (often up to 7 days in many locations) and multiple sessions per day; paper-based tests are offered according to local demand and can be scheduled several times a month (centres may offer up to ~48 paper dates in a year depending on demand). Always check your local test centre for exact dates.
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Scoring & assessment criteria (summary)

IELTS band scores range from 0–9 (whole and half bands). The four key criteria used by examiners (for Writing and Speaking) are:

- **GRA** — Grammatical Range & Accuracy
- **TR / TA** — Task Response (Task 2) / Task Achievement (Task 1)
- **LR** — Lexical Resource
- **CC** — Coherence & Cohesion

(These criteria are described in official examiner guidance and preparation materials.)
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ID & test-day rules (short checklist)

- Bring the **same valid ID** (passport or national ID) used at booking. If you bring a different or invalid ID you may be refused entry. Test centres may also take a photograph and, in some countries, fingerprints. citeturn0search4turn0search1
 - Mobile phones, smartwatches, and electronic devices are not allowed in the exam room.
 - Follow the invigilator's instructions strictly.
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Listening — structure & practical rules

- **Format:** 4 sections; 40 questions; approx. 30 minutes of recordings.
- **Question types:** multiple choice, sentence completion, short answer, form/diagram/map/plan/label completion, matching, summary completion, etc.
- **Word limits:** the *instructions* for each question say the permitted length (e.g. "NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER" or "NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS"). This varies by question and you should follow the instructions exactly — writing more words than allowed will be marked incorrect. Hyphenated words count as one word; contracted forms are not tested in the way you might expect. citeturn2search0turn2search1
- **Transfer time:** paper tests give **10 minutes** after the recording to transfer answers to the answer sheet. Computer tests do not require transfer time. citeturn0search3
- **Accents:** recordings may feature a range of native-speaker accents (British, Australian, New Zealand, North American, etc.). Do not assume only a single accent. citeturn0search10

Practical advice: read instructions carefully (underlining allowed word limits), keep moving if you miss an answer (audio is played once), practise skimming question options before audio begins, practise map/diagram vocabulary (left/right, north/south, near/adjacent etc.).

Reading — structure & tips

- **40 questions | 60 minutes**
- **Formats differ** for Academic and General Training (Academic uses longer texts from academic publications; General Training uses workplace and social-context texts). citeturn0search13

- Common question types: MCQ, matching headings/features, sentence completion, summary/table/note completion, TRUE/FALSE/NOT GIVEN (Academic) or YES/NO/NOT GIVEN (General), multiple matching, short answer.

Key techniques: read instructions, read questions first, skim for gist, scan for keywords and synonyms, paraphrase, keep answer order in mind, do easy questions first, manage time. Remember: TRUE/YES requires explicit support in the text; NOT GIVEN means there is no information.

Writing — structure & examiner expectations

Time: 60 minutes total for Tasks 1 and 2.

Academic:

- **Task 1:** write a report describing visual information (graph, chart, table, process/diagram, map). **Minimum 150 words.** Provide an overview of the main trends/features. Avoid copying the task prompt. Examiners look for clear summary and accurate reporting. [citeturn2search6](#)
- **Task 2:** essay of **minimum 250 words**. This carries more weight — spend more time here.

General Training:

- **Task 1:** a letter (formal / semi-formal / informal as directed). **Minimum 150 words.**
- **Task 2:** an essay of **minimum 250 words**.

Assessment criteria: Task Achievement/Response, Coherence & Cohesion, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy. Use paragraphing, a clear thesis/position, topic sentences, supporting examples, and linkers to show progression. Avoid introducing new ideas in the conclusion.

Notes / common misconceptions:

- There is **no strict ban** on using numbers in an overview; the examiner expects a clear overview of main trends — don't invent data; you can include numbers when they support the overview. The advice to *avoid* giving values in the overview is a stylistic strategy used by some teachers, not a formal rule.
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Speaking — structure & tips

Format: face-to-face (or video in some regions), recorded, three parts: 1) introduction & interview; 2) cue card / one-minute preparation + ~2 minutes speaking; 3) follow-up discussion (related questions). **Total 11–14 minutes.** citeturn0search7

Scheduling: may be the same day or up to seven days before/after the other tests depending on local arrangements (computer tests normally schedule Speaking on the same day). Expect to be notified by email/SMS from your test centre with the exact speaking appointment. citeturn3search1turn3search10

Assessment: Fluency & Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy, Pronunciation.

Advice: speak at length, expand answers, use complex and compound sentences, use relevant examples, paraphrase, don't worry about small mistakes — keep going. Pronunciation matters more than accent; you are not required to use a single accent, but avoid unnatural switching.

Grammar topics to revise

- Parts of speech
- Sentence structure (simple, compound, complex)
- Active & passive voice
- Collocations
- Tenses and subject-verb agreement

Abbreviations / scoring shorthand used in notes

- **GRA:** Grammatical Range & Accuracy
- **TA / TR:** Task Achievement / Task Response
- **LR:** Lexical Resource
- **CC:** Coherence & Cohesion

Useful official & high-quality practice links

- IDP: practice & test info — <https://ielts.idp.com/prepare/ielts-test-preparation-practice-tests-material>
- British Council: free practice tests — <https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-ielts-english-practice-tests>

- IELTS official sample questions & format — <https://ielts.org/take-a-test/test-types>
 - Cambridge resources — <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org>
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Proofreading & organisation changes made (summary)

1. Fixed spelling, capitalization, punctuation and many typographical errors.
 2. Removed duplicated blocks and consolidated repeated sections (e.g., two copies of the same 'Basics' chunk).
 3. Corrected factual inaccuracies and added nuance where official rules vary by test centre or format.
 4. Reordered the document into a clear study guide structure: Basics → Test Structure → Module details → Exam day rules → Study tips → Vocab.
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Basic vocabulary list (106 items)

1. Borderline
2. Adopted the idea
3. Mandatory
4. Prosperous
5. Reach the heights / reach new heights
6. Correlated
7. Avenues
8. Constraint
9. Ethnicities
10. Acquisition
11. Crucible
12. Prospective
13. Self-actualisation
14. Aspirant
15. Thrive
16. Mere
17. Niche
18. Consciousness
19. Revered
20. Threshold
21. Benevolence
22. Anticipate
23. Overemphasised
24. Statistically rare

25. Overwhelming
26. Affirmative
27. Unfounded
28. Empathise
29. Emphasise
30. Undeniable
31. Vantage point
32. Urbanisation
33. Unsurprising
34. Alteration
35. Vigorously
36. Contemporary
37. Dismal
38. Ethical
39. Re-evaluation
40. Counterparts
41. Workmanship
42. Toxicity
43. Draw upon
44. Phenomenon
45. Controversy
46. Liberal
47. Traditionalist
48. Precedence
49. Pivotal
50. At a cost
51. Self-reinforcing
52. Vulnerable
53. Well off
54. Congestion
55. Lavishness
56. Endeavours
57. Speculated
58. Uphold
59. Converging
60. Ranging from
61. Incur
62. Reigned
63. Holistic
64. Counterproductive
65. Opine
66. Enforcement
67. Innate
68. Intrinsic

69. Optimum
70. Evermore
71. Geopolitical
72. Assimilate
73. Undermine
74. Stockpiles
75. Depleted
76. Outrageous
77. Shedding
78. Convicted
79. Authoritarian(s)
80. Outlook
81. Thin line
82. Heir
83. Undergo
84. Integrate
85. Reassure
86. Dreaded
87. Alter
88. Objectively
89. Altar
90. Wary
91. Instill
92. Curb
93. Pessimist
94. Quest
95. Profound
96. Fatigue
97. Whereas
98. Vibes
99. Intellect
100. Enlightened
101. Eavesdrop
102. Jumbled
103. Theorise
104. Relevance
105. Imparting
106. Shallowness