

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

What is IELTS?

IELTS stands for the 'International English Language Testing System'. The Academic Test assesses the ability to use English language in all four communication skills - listening, reading, writing and speaking - for people who intend to study or work where English is the language of communication.

Listening for IELTS

(Time allowed: 40 minutes)

Listen to a tape non-stop for 30 minutes. Note answers on the test booklet. 10 minutes is given at the end of the test to transfer answers to the answer sheet.

The test is divided into 4 sections:

- Section 1: A conversation between two persons in a social or semi-formal context
- Section 2: A talk by a single person based on a non-academic situation
- Section 3: A conversation with up to four persons based on academic topics or course-related situations
- Section 4: A university style lecture or talk.

Question types include: short answers, gap fills, completing tables, diagrams and multiple-choice, etc

Speaking for IELTS

(Time allowed: 11-14 minutes)

You will have a one-to-one interview with examiner. The interview is recorded.

There are 3 parts to the speaking test:

- Part 1: talk about general topics related to the candidate
- Part 2: long turn: speak on a topic for 1-2 minutes. You have 1 minute for preparation on the spot. The examiner might ask 1 or 2 follow up questions
- Part 3: discuss more abstract questions related to the topic in stage 2

Writing for IELTS

(Time allowed: 60 minutes)

Complete two writing tasks within the time limit.

- Task 1 (20 minutes): Write a descriptive report of at least 150 words to describe the information provided. You may be asked to describe a graph and/or table, a pie chart, a diagram, a piece of equipment or a process
- Task 2 (40 minutes): Write a 250 word essay on a given topic. You are expected to give an opinion, agree/disagree (argue a point) and provide examples to support your points.

Reading for IELTS

(Time allowed: 60 minutes)

Read between 1500 and 2500 words and answer questions.

- Read 3 academic-style texts (20 minutes each is recommended)
- Answer 40 questions within the time limit

Question types include: short answers, completing tables, true/false/not mentioned, summaries, multiple-choice, inserting information into a text and labelling diagrams.

Please note that you have to sit the Listening, Reading and Writing papers in one session with no break given during the test. The Speaking Test is held either after the writing test on the same day or on the following day.

Marking scale

Each module is marked on a scale from 1 up to 9. These band scores are given according to highly detailed marking guidelines, and they correspond roughly to the following band descriptions:

9 Expert User

Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

8 Very Good User

Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

7 Good User

Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

6 Competent User

Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

5 Modest User

Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

4 Limited User

Basic competence is limited in familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

3 Extremely Limited User

Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

2 Intermittent User

No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

1 Non User

Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

(Sources : <http://www.ielts.org>)