



KRISTOF ABRATH · IELTS MASTERCLASS

IELTS Listening Overview

*Format, Question Types, Timing & Exam
Strategies*



FORMAT

4 Sections (40 Questions)



DURATION

30 Mins + Transfer Time



PLAYBACK

Played ONCE Only

What is the IELTS Listening Test?



01

100% Identical Across Modules

Both **Academic** and **General Training** candidates take the exact same Listening test with identical scoring.



02

40 Questions in 4 Parts

Divided into 4 distinct sections with 10 questions each, progressing from simple everyday scenarios to complex academic topics.



03

Single Audio Playback

The recording is played **once only**. Includes international native accents (British, Australian, New Zealand, American, Canadian).



04

30 Mins + Transfer Time

Audio runs ~30 minutes. Paper candidates get **10 minutes** extra to transfer answers; computer candidates get **2 minutes** to review.

Core Philosophy: Evaluates your ability to understand main ideas, specific factual information, speaker opinions, attitude, and purpose.

Four-Part Exam Breakdown

10 QUESTIONS PER SECTION PROGRESSION: SOCIAL EVERYDAY → ACADEMIC & TRAINING

Part	Context	Speakers	Typical Scenarios & Content
Part 1	Social Everyday	2 Speakers	Transaction or inquiry (e.g., booking hotel, enrolling in a club, renting a flat). Focus on names, dates, numbers.
Part 2	Social Everyday	1 Speaker	Informational speech to a general public (e.g., guided museum tour, local park opening, facility orientation). Maps/plans common.
Part 3	Academic / Training	2 to 4 Speakers	Educational discussion (e.g., university students and tutor reviewing research project, seminar feedback). Complex opinions.
Part 4	Academic Monologue	1 Speaker	University lecture or presentation on an academic topic (e.g., wildlife history, architecture, psychology). Monologue without interruption.

 **Difficulty Progression:** Vocabulary complexity, speaker speed, and depth of reasoning increase significantly from Part 1 to Part 4.

Part 1: Social Dialogue & Form Filling

CONTEXT: EVERYDAY SOCIAL

Test Mechanics

- Two speakers exchanging factual information.
- Short pause in the middle allows you to read questions 6–10.
- High accuracy is required here to secure a Band 7+.

🎯 Primary Focus Areas

Accurate capture of factual details: names spelled aloud, phone numbers, addresses, postcodes, prices, and calendar dates.

📄 Common Question Formats

- Form Completion (Customer Registration / Booking)
- Note & Table Completion
- Simple Multiple Choice

⚠️ **Watch Out For Self-Corrections:** Speakers often correct themselves! (e.g., "I'll meet you at 3:00... oh wait, let's make it 3:30.")

Part 2: Social Monologue & Spatial Orientation

FORMAT

Single Speaker

One person giving information about a local event, facility, festival, charity, or company orientation.

1

FREQUENT TASK

Map / Plan Labeling

Matching locations on a diagram or building layout (e.g., identifying rooms, park features, or exhibition stands).

2

KEY SKILL

Spatial Vocabulary

Recognizing directional cues: *"adjacent to," "opposite," "north-west corner," "at the far end of the corridor."*

3

Map Strategy Gold Rule

Always locate the **starting point** on the map before the audio begins (e.g., *"You are here"* or the main entrance). Keep your pencil on the map and trace the speaker's movement physically!

Part 3: Educational & Academic Discussion



Multiple Speakers (2–4 People)

- Typically 2 university students discussing an assignment with a tutor or professor.
- Fast-paced interaction with interrupting, agreeing, and disagreeing.
- Must distinguish between different voices and keep track of who holds which opinion.



Common Question Types

- **Multiple Choice:** Choosing 1 out of 3 options, or 2 out of 5 options.
- **Matching Options:** Pairing research methods, findings, or tasks to specific students.
- **Flow-Chart Completion:** Steps in a scientific or academic procedure.

Critical Trap: Distractors will mention options that a student suggests but that the group ultimately rejects or modifies later in the dialogue!

Part 4: Academic Monologue (Lecture)

NO MID-SECTION PAUSE!

Uninterrupted Monologue

- A continuous university lecture lasting 5–6 minutes.
- **NO break in the middle**—you must read all 10 questions in advance!
- Covers academic disciplines: history, ecology, business, technology, architecture.

💡 Strategic Key

Use sub-headings in note completion questions as visual anchors to track the lecturer's progress through the topic.

✍ Dominant Task Types

- Note Completion (Bullet points summarizing lecture)
- Summary / Sentence Completion
- Table & Diagrammatic Flows

🔑 **Signposting Language:** Listen for transition phrases (e.g., "*Turning now to...*", "*In contrast...*", "*The key finding was...*") to locate missing answers.

Complete Question Types Inventory



Forms & Notes

Filling in missing factual details like names, numbers, or bulleted summaries.



Multiple Choice

Selecting 1 of 3 options, or choosing multiple correct answers from a longer list.



Maps & Diagrams

Labeling locations, rooms, or process stages using directional signals.



Matching Tasks

Pairing items from the audio to a list of options (e.g., features, opinions).



Sentence Completion

Filling gaps in sentences adhering strictly to specified word limits.



Flow-Charts & Tables

Tracing sequential stages in a system, experiment, or procedure.



Short Answer

Answering direct questions using exact words extracted from the text.

Universal Rule: Answers always appear in chronological order in the audio (except for matching tasks)!

📁 08 • TEST DELIVERY MODES

Paper-Based vs. Computer-Delivered

Feature	Paper-Based Test	Computer-Delivered Test
Listening Audio	Identical audio played via central speakers or headphones.	Identical audio delivered through individual high-quality headphones.
Answering Method	Write answers directly on question booklet while listening.	Type answers directly or click/drag onto the screen during audio.
End Transfer Time	10 Minutes Extra to transfer to official answer sheet.	2 Minutes Only to double-check answers on screen.
Navigation & Tools	Circle, underline, and write notes anywhere on question paper.	Highlight text and right-click to add notes on screen.

Key Advice: Choose computer mode if you type faster than you write by hand, but practice screen navigation in advance so you don't lose time!

Raw Score to Band Score Conversion

Band Score	Raw Score (out of 40)	Target Accuracy
Band 9.0	39 – 40	98% – 100%
Band 8.0	35 – 36	88% – 90%
Band 7.0	30 – 31	75% – 78%
Band 6.0	23 – 25	58% – 60%



1 Mark Per Correct Answer

There are no negative marks for wrong answers! Never leave any blank on your answer sheet.

Target Strategy

To secure Band 7.0+, target full marks in Part 1 (10/10) and Part 2 (8/10) to give yourself buffer room in difficult academic parts.

Strict Word & Number Rules

RULE 1

Exact Instructions

Read instructions carefully! "*NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER*" means writing 3 words results in zero points.

RULE 2

Numbers & Hyphens

Numbers can be written as figures (e.g. **25**) or words. Hyphenated words (e.g. **up-to-date**) count as ONE word.

RULE 3

Spelling Accuracy

Spelling must be **100% accurate**. Both British and American spellings are accepted (e.g. *color / colour*).

✖ **Common Penalty:** Including articles or prepositions that exceed word limits (e.g., writing "*in the morning*" when limit is 2 words) forfeits the entire mark!

The Top 4 IELTS Listening Traps



01

Self-Corrections & Mind Changes

The speaker gives information then changes their mind.
"We'll meet on Tuesday... actually no, let's make it Thursday."



02

Distractor Keywords

Hearing exact words from an option in the audio doesn't make it right!
Options often repeat audio words out of context.



03

Plurals & Singulars

Leaving off the plural 's' when the audio says *"students"* or *"books"* will mark your answer completely wrong.



04

Fast-Paced Transitions

Speakers moving quickly from one question to the next. Always keep your eyes on the **next question** so you never get lost.

Proven 4-Step Strategy Protocol

STEP 1

Predict & Highlight

1

Underline keywords before audio plays. Predict answer types (name, number, noun, adjective).

STEP 2

Listen for Synonyms

2

The audio rarely uses exact words from the paper. Train your brain to match synonyms and paraphrasing.

STEP 3

Track Two Questions

3

Always keep an eye on the current question AND the next one. If you miss one, move on immediately!

STEP 4

Grammar Audit

4

During transfer time, ensure your answers fit grammatically into sentence gaps (singular/plural, verb forms).

Golden Mindset: If you lose track, make an educated guess, let it go, and focus 100% on the upcoming question!

Accents & Connected Speech Features



Global Accent Mix

- 70–80% British Accent (RP)
 - 10–15% Australian & New Zealand
 - 5–10% North American (US/Canada)
- Expose yourself to all regional varieties.



Connected Speech

Native speakers blend words together:

- *"first of all"* sounds like *"firstoval"*
- *"next april"* sounds like *"nex tapril"*

Recognize elision and liaison patterns.



Number Sound-Alikes

Distinguishing teen vs. ty numbers:

- **15 (fifteen)**: Stress on *-teen*
- **50 (fifty)**: Stress on *fif-*

Pay strict attention to syllable stress.

Recommended Listening Sources: BBC Radio 4, ABC Australia, NPR Podcasts, and University Lecture series (TED Talks / TED Educational).

Masterclass Summary & Next Steps

MASTER FORMATS

1

Know Your Targets

Aim for 100% accuracy in Part 1. Build rapid keyword identification for Parts 2, 3, and 4.

AVOID TRAPS

2

Precision Execution

Strictly obey word limits, watch for self-corrections, and audit spelling/plurals during transfer time.

DAILY PRACTICE

3

Active Listening

Complete official Cambridge audio tests under timed conditions and review transcripts for missed keywords.

Ready to Start Your IELTS Preparation?

Access full practice tests, strategy modules, and feedback tools at kristof.abrath.com