



KRISTOF ABRATH · IELTS MASTERCLASS

IELTS Speaking Overview

Format, Timing & Assessment

Criteria



FORMAT

Face-to-Face Interview



DURATION

11-14 Minutes Total



EVALUATION

4 Scoring Criteria

What is the IELTS Speaking Test?



01

Identical Across Modules

Same questions, timing, and scoring criteria for both **Academic** and **General Training** candidates.



02

1-on-1 Certified Interview

Individual, face-to-face examination with a certified examiner (or via high-definition video call at test centers).



03

Strictly Timed (11–14 Mins)

The complete interview strictly runs between **11 and 14 minutes** without break or pause.



04

Recorded for Quality

Every interview is audio-recorded to ensure strict quality control, moderation, and re-marking accuracy.

Core Philosophy: Designed to mirror natural conversation, there are no "trick" questions or wrong opinions.

Three-Part Exam Breakdown

CONSECUTIVE SEQUENCE PROGRESSION: FAMILIAR → PERSONAL → GENERAL → ABSTRACT

Part	Timing	Format & Content	Core Focus
Part 1	4–5 MINUTES	Introduction & short questions on familiar everyday topics.	Spontaneity & personal experience
Part 2	3–4 MINUTES	Individual long turn using a prompt card (1 min prep + 2 min speak).	Sustained monologue & coherence
Part 3	4–5 MINUTES	Two-way in-depth discussion linked conceptually to Part 2 topic.	Abstract reasoning & debate

 **Difficulty Curve:** Content complexity and cognitive demand increase progressively across all three parts.

Part 1: Introduction & Interview

DURATION: 4–5 MINS

Test Mechanics

- Examiner introduces themselves & checks ID.
- Short questions on **2–3 familiar topics**.
- Expect ~3–4 questions per topic area.

🎯 Primary Goal

Answer naturally, give factual information, describe everyday routines, and express simple personal preferences.

☰ Typical Everyday Topics

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| • Hometown | • Work / Studies |
| • Home / Housing | • Daily Routines |
| • Hobbies & Leisure | • Food & Cooking |



Critical Strategy: Avoid one-word or simple "Yes/No" answers. Aim for **2–3 complete sentences** per question.

Part 2: Individual Long Turn (Cue Card)

STEP 01

Receive Task Card

1

Examiner hands you a topic card with 3–4 bullet points detailing what you should cover.

STEP 02 • 1 MIN PREP

Note-Taking

2

Jot down brief keywords only (names, dates, reasons, feelings). **Do NOT write full sentences!**

STEP 03 • 2 MIN SPEECH

Speak Continuous

3

Speak uninterrupted for up to 2 minutes.
Examiner may ask 1 brief follow-up question at the end.

Common Cue Card Prompt Types

You will be asked to describe a **Person** (a mentor), a **Place** (a memorable city), an **Object** (a useful item), an **Event** (a celebration), or an **Experience** (a challenge overcome).

Part 3: Two-Way Discussion



Abstract & Societal Focus

- Questions connect directly to the **Part 2 topic**, but move away from personal anecdotes.
- Shifts focus toward general trends, public opinion, and broader societal issues.
- Requires higher-level vocabulary and complex grammar.



Required Speaking Functions

- **Explain & Justify:** Support opinions with reasoning.
- **Compare & Contrast:** Past vs. present, or different groups.
- **Cause & Effect:** Analyze societal developments.
- **Speculate:** Predict future developments.

Key Expectation: Answers must be significantly more developed than in Part 1. Detailed explanations, examples, and structured logic are essential for high bands.

Developing a Strong Answer Formula

WEAK / TOO SHORT

Question: Do you enjoy cooking?

"Yes."

× Costs marks. Shows no fluency, range, or coherence.

STRONG / FULLY DEVELOPED

Question: Do you enjoy cooking?

"Yes, I really enjoy cooking, especially at weekends because I have more time to relax. I particularly like trying Italian recipes. So overall, cooking is something I look forward to."

The 4-Step Answer Architecture (A + R + E + L):

1. Direct Answer

State your position directly.

2. Reason

Explain *why* using 'because'.

3. Example

Give a concrete detail.

4. Loop Back

Summarize & conclude idea.

How You Are Evaluated

The examiner scores your performance across **four equally weighted criteria** (25% each):

25% WEIGHT



Fluency & Coherence

Flow, speed, hesitation, and logical connection of ideas.

25% WEIGHT



Lexical Resource

Vocabulary range, precision, collocations, and paraphrasing.

25% WEIGHT



Grammar Range

Sentence variety, tense accuracy, and complex structures.

25% WEIGHT



Pronunciation

Clarity, word stress, rhythm, and natural intonation.

The Real Question: The examiner is NOT asking "Do you sound like a native speaker?" — the question is: **"How effectively and clearly can you communicate in English?"**

Criterion 1: Fluency & Coherence

Speaking at Length

01

Ability to maintain continuous speech without long, unnatural pauses, silent hesitation, or frequent restarts.

Logical Flow

02

Organizing thoughts logically so the examiner can effortlessly follow your argument from start to finish.

Linking Words

03

Natural use of cohesive markers (e.g., *"However," "In addition," "Consequently," "Having said that"*).

💡 Essential Speed Myth

Fluency does **NOT** mean speaking as fast as possible! Rushing leads to slurred pronunciation and grammatical slips. Fluency is maintaining a natural, steady rhythm.

Criterion 2: Lexical Resource (Vocabulary)

Range & Precision

01

Using topic-specific vocabulary accurately rather than repeating generic words like "good," "bad," or "thing."

Paraphrasing Ability

02

Smoothly rephrasing ideas when you cannot recall a specific term, preventing speech breakdown.

Natural Collocations

03

Using natural word pairings and idiomatic expressions naturally (without sounding forced or scripted).

Examiner Insight: High marks are awarded for **precision, appropriateness, and flexibility**, not simply throwing in obscure or complicated words incorrectly.

Criterion 3: Grammatical Range & Accuracy

Structural Variety

01

Mixing simple sentences with compound, complex, conditional ("If..."), and relative clause structures.

Grammatical Accuracy

02

Frequency of error-free sentences. Tense accuracy, subject-verb agreement, and correct article usage.

Natural Self-Correction

03

Ability to correct minor slips calmly without losing control of the sentence structure.

Golden Rule: It is better to use a variety of sentence structures accurately than to force overly complex grammar filled with errors.

Criterion 4: Pronunciation

Clarity & Intelligibility

01

Can the examiner understand your speech effortlessly throughout the test without strain?

Phonological Features

02

Effective use of word stress, sentence stress, rhythm, chunking, and natural intonation patterns.

Accents Are Accepted

03

Having a regional or foreign accent is **100% acceptable** as long as speech remains perfectly clear.

Key Question: Does your pronunciation enable smooth, effortless understanding, or does the examiner have to work hard to decipher your words?

Band Score Breakdown (Bands 5 to 7)

The Speaking test is scored on a **0–9 scale** (including whole and half bands, e.g., 6.5).

BAND 5 · MODEST USER

- Frequent hesitation & slow speech.
- Limited vocabulary; relies on basic words.
- Noticeable grammatical errors that cause misunderstandings.

BAND 6 · COMPETENT USER

- Willing to speak at length despite pauses.
- Wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics.
- Mix of simple and complex grammar with some errors.

BAND 7 · GOOD USER

- Speaks easily with rare hesitation.
- Flexible vocabulary & idiomatic language.
- Frequent error-free sentences; high accuracy rate.

Common Mistakes vs. Proven Strategy

✗WHAT TO AVOID

- Memorizing rehearsed scripts or pre-prepared answers.
- Giving abrupt one-word or simple "Yes/No" answers.
- Rushing speech out of nervousness.
- Forcing complex vocabulary or idioms incorrectly.

✓WHAT TO DO

- Answer questions directly and naturally.
- Develop every point with clear reasons and examples.
- Ask the examiner to repeat a question if missed.
- Self-correct smoothly and keep moving forward.

Remember: Communication matters far more than perfection. Examiners are trained to spot memorized answers immediately.

Summary & Key Takeaways



3-Part Progression

11–14 minutes moving seamlessly from personal topics to abstract societal reasoning.



4 Equal Criteria

Fluency, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Pronunciation each account for 25% of your band.



Always Develop

Use the formula: **Answer → Reason → Example → Loop Back** to maximize score.

🔑 Your Immediate Next Step

Practice speaking daily, time your Part 2 responses, and **record your answers** to evaluate your fluency, vocabulary flexibility, and grammar accuracy!