

01 · EXAM OVERVIEW

IELTS Speaking Part 1

A Comprehensive Strategy Deck for Band 6.5–8.5 Candidates

4–5

MINUTES DURATION

3

DISTINCT TOPICS

10–12

TOTAL QUESTIONS

How the Test Works

01

ID Check

The examiner checks your identity. No marks are awarded during this stage.

02

Questions Start

Short, direct questions are asked across 3 distinct everyday topics.

03

Examiner Control

They select all topics and may politely interrupt to move to the next item.

04

Instant Response

There is zero preparation time. You hear the prompt and respond immediately.

Core Mindset:

This is a natural conversation, not a formal presentation. Do not attempt to deliver a rehearsed speech — answer concisely and comfortably.

How Are You Scored?

Fluency & Coherence

25%

- Speak smoothly without long, unnatural pauses.
- Connect ideas logically using basic cohesive markers.

Lexical Resource

25%

- Use a variety of vocabulary flexible for each topic.
- Choose natural word combinations and precise terms.

Grammatical Range

25%

- Mix simple, compound, and complex sentence structures.
- Maintain high accuracy in basic and intermediate grammar.

Pronunciation

25%

- Speak clearly so the examiner understands effortlessly.
- Use natural sentence stress, rhythm, and intonation.

Key Insight: Your ideas do not need to be profound or innovative. The examiner only evaluates the quality of your English language execution.

What Part 1 Is NOT

✗ Part 1 is NOT:

- ✗ A general knowledge or intelligence test.
- ✗ A chance to give a long monologue.
- ✗ A formal test of your political or deep opinions.
- ✗ A competition to squeeze in obscure, complex words.

✓ Part 1 IS:

- ✓ A demonstration of natural, spoken everyday English.
- ✓ An opportunity to communicate simple ideas clearly.
- ✓ A warm-up conversation establishing your baseline.
- ✓ A personal chat about familiar topics.

The Golden Rule of Part 1:

A simple idea communicated in natural, accurate English will always score higher than a complex idea expressed in broken, unnatural English.

Answer Length & Depth

TOO SHORT (BAND 5)

Q: Do you like cooking?

"Yes, I do."

Provides zero evidence of grammar, vocabulary, or fluency for scoring.

TOO LONG (PROBLEMATIC)

A 1-minute detailed lecture...

Rambling speech

Increases grammatical errors, risks going off-topic, and causes examiner interruptions.

JUST RIGHT (BAND 7+)

Q: Do you like cooking?

"Yes, I do, especially on weekends. I usually make simple pasta dishes because it helps me unwind."

Direct answer + detail + reason.

Target Benchmark: 2 to 4 Sentences Per Answer

Answer + Develop Strategy

LAYER 1: DIRECT ANSWER

"Yes, definitely."

LAYER 2: REASON OR DETAIL

"I love hiking because it helps me switch off from work."

LAYER 3: EXTRA DETAIL (OPTIONAL)

"I usually go with a close friend at the weekend."

Expansion Prompts to Use:

- **Why?** → "...because it keeps me energized."
- **When?** → "...typically on Sunday mornings."
- **Who with?** → "...I normally go with my sister."
- **Example?** → "...for instance, last week we..."
- **Contrast?** → "...although it can get quite busy."

Note: You do not need all three layers for every single answer. Simply ensure you extend beyond a bare 1-sentence statement.

Avoid Memorised Answers

Why Memorising Is High Risk:

- ✗ Rhythm and intonation sound robotic and artificial.
- ✗ Examiners quickly spot and penalize memorized scripts.
- ✗ Fails to adapt when the question format varies slightly.
- ✗ Causes severe hesitation when asked follow-up prompts.

MEMORISED (UNNATURAL)

"Well, this is truly a fascinating question that many people in modern society have debated for decades..."

NATURAL (HIGH SCORE)

"Hmm, good question. I used to hate cooking when I was younger, but actually I really enjoy it now."

Strategic Action: Learn functional structures, vocabulary chunks, and grammar flexibilities — never full paragraphs.

Extending Your Answers

Question Prompt: "Do you like your hometown?"

BASIC (BAND 5.5)

"Yes, I do."

BETTER (BAND 6.5)

"Yes, I do. It's quite small, but everything is close by."

BAND 7.5+ MASTER PATTERN

"Yes, I do. It's pretty small, but everything is close by. There's also plenty of green space, which I love because I enjoy outdoor walks. The only downside is that there isn't much to do at night."

EXPANSION FORMULA: ANSWER → REASON → POSITIVE DETAIL → SMALL CONTRAST

Keep It Personal

APPROPRIATE FOR PART 1

Q: Do you enjoy reading?

"Yes, especially crime novels. I usually read a chapter before going to sleep because it helps me unwind after work."

Personal, conversational, authentic daily life focus.

TOO ACADEMIC / FORMAL

Q: Do you enjoy reading?

"Reading plays a fundamental role in cultivating critical thinking and cognitive expansion in modern society..."

Sounds like a Part 3 societal commentary or essay intro.

Part 1 Focus: Personal experience, routine, personal preference.

Part 3 Focus: Societal trends, global views, abstract analysis.

Handling Tough Questions

IF YOUR ANSWER IS "NO"

Don't just say 'No'. Pivot gracefully to a related preference.

"Not really. I'm not big on team sports, but I do enjoy solo swimming."

ZERO EXPERIENCE

Be honest, then express hypothetical interest or future intent.

"I've never travelled abroad solo, so I can't say for sure, but I'd love to try it one day."

NEED TIME TO THINK

Use natural filler phrases rather than dead silence or panicking.

"Hmm, let me think... I haven't thought about that before, but I suppose..."

Remember: A short, natural pause while thinking is completely normal native behavior. Avoid panicking or forcing artificial answers.

Natural Vocabulary

Instead of basic "I like..."

- ✓ **I'm quite into...** ("I'm quite into indie rock.")
- ✓ **I'm a big fan of...** ("I'm a big fan of cooking.")
- ✓ **I really enjoy...** ("I really enjoy photography.")
- ✓ **I have a soft spot for...** ("I have a soft spot for sci-fi movies.")

Instead of "I don't like..." / Common Upgrades

- ✓ **It's not really my thing.**
- ✓ **It's not really my cup of tea.**
- ✓ **Very busy** → "Pushed for time" / "Packed schedule"
- ✓ **Very good** → "Top-notch" / "Really enjoyable"

Rule of Usage: Only deploy vocabulary items that you can pronounce naturally and accurately in context. Natural phrasing always beats forced high-level words.

Grammar: Show Your Range

1. Present Perfect

"I've lived in Prague for about three years now..."

2. Used To (Habits)

"I used to play tennis, but now I prefer swimming."

3. Comparatives

"It's significantly quieter than my previous city."

4. 2nd Conditional

"If I had more leisure time, I'd probably learn guitar."

5. Complex Clauses

"Although it gets crowded, I still love the vibe."

6. Present Simple

"I usually head to the gym on Tuesday nights."

Execution Tip: Do not attempt to force every structure into a single response. Naturally vary your tenses based on the question prompt.

Fluency & Natural Fillers

✗ Avoid Awkward Hesitation

"Umm... er... like... you know... umm... I don't know..."

Disrupts speech flow and penalizes Fluency & Coherence scores.

✓ Use Natural Discourse Markers

WELL...

ACTUALLY...

TO BE HONEST...

LET ME SEE...

I'D SAY...

IT DEPENDS...

IN PRACTICE EXAMPLE:

"Q: What kind of music do you listen to?"

*A: **Hmm, I'd say** mostly pop music. I usually listen to it when I'm working because it helps me maintain focus."*

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Common Mistake	Strategic Fix
One-word or single-sentence replies	Always extend with a reason, example, or extra detail.
Reciting memorized response scripts	Learn versatile vocabulary chunks and grammar flexible for any question.
Overusing obscure "fancy" words incorrectly	Prioritize clear, natural, and collocate-accurate vocabulary.
Giving long academic lectures (like Part 3)	Keep responses personal, conversational, and lighthearted.
Panicking when you mishear a question	Simply ask: "Sorry, could you repeat that please?"

Your Part 1 Game Plan

Before Test Day

- Practise common topics without memorising full answers.
- Record yourself and analyze pauses and repeated words.
- Master extending 1-sentence ideas into 3-sentence answers.

During the Exam

- Listen carefully and answer the exact prompt directly.
- Develop naturally using the **Answer → Extend → Stop** formula.
- Maintain a friendly, confident, and relaxed demeanor.

ANSWER → DEVELOP → SOUND NATURAL

You don't need to be perfect — focus on sounding clear, coherent, and confident.