

Saturday, February 07, 2015

IELTS Vocabulary: future plans

Here are the band 7-9 phrases from yesterday's lesson. Remember that I'm not trying to use strange or difficult words; I'm trying to speak in a natural way, using 'native speaker' collocations and phrases.

- a future aim of mine
- the plot would be fictional
- influenced by some of my own experiences, ideas and views
- I might suddenly be inspired
- a vague objective
- time, commitment and passion
- to set a goal
- I've always wondered how
- create a work of fiction
- bringing a story to life
- follow in the footsteps of my favourite authors

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking, Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)

Friday, February 06, 2015

IELTS Speaking: 'future aim' answer

Last month I forgot to write a sample answer for the question below.

Describe an aim or goal that you hope to achieve in the future.

You should say

- ***what the aim is***
- ***when you hope to achieve it***
- ***what you need to do to reach your goal***
- ***and why this goal is important to you.***

Here's my answer. Can you find any 'less common vocabulary' in it?

- I'm going to describe a future aim of mine, which is to write a book. I'd like to write a novel, so the story or plot would be fictional, but it would probably be influenced by some of my own experiences, ideas and views.
- Unfortunately I have no idea where to start or what my novel would be about, so I can't imagine achieving this aim until later in my life. Maybe it will be something that I do as a hobby when I retire, or I might suddenly be inspired to start writing much sooner. It's just a vague objective at the moment.

- I think it must be extremely difficult to find the motivation to write a novel, so more than anything I would need time, commitment and the passion to keep working until I finished. I would probably need to set a goal of writing for a certain amount of time each day, and of course I'd need a good idea for a story in the first place.
- This goal interests me because I've always wondered how people manage to create a work of fiction from nothing; I've always wondered whether I could do the same, and whether I'd be capable of bringing a story to life. I've always enjoyed reading, and I'd like to follow in the footsteps of my favourite authors.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, January 30, 2015

IELTS Speaking: it's ok to lie!

Students often ask me whether it's ok to lie or invent an answer in the speaking test. My advice is that it's usually easier to tell the truth; however, sometimes your only option is to make something up (to lie). Take this part 2 question for example:

"Describe a team project that you worked on"

If your job involves working in a team, this might be an easy question. But if you're still a student, or you work alone, you might be stuck for ideas. You might need to invent something!

Here's how you could adapt to the question above:

- Talk about a project or piece of work that you did alone, and pretend that other people were involved.
- Go back to your school days and talk about something you studied, pretending that it was a group project.
- Talk about an English lesson - most English teachers put their students in groups from time to time.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Friday, January 23, 2015

IELTS Speaking: 'maps' answers

Here are my sample answers for last week's questions about maps. Remember that my answers are short and simple because this is what the examiner requires in part 1 of the test.

1. Do you ever use maps?

Yes. Whenever I go somewhere new, I plan my journey with the help of a map.

2. When do people usually need to use a map?

I imagine that some people use a map every day if they travel to different places for work. Others might only use a map when they're on holiday.

3. Do you prefer electronic or paper maps?

I still prefer paper maps for a long journey; I like being able to open the map out on a table and see the full journey ahead.

4. Do you ever ask people for directions instead of using a map?

Only if I'm really lost. Whenever I ask for directions, I find it difficult to remember what the person said. So I prefer to find my own way.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, January 16, 2015

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'maps' topic

A few students said they had this topic in a recent exam. How would you answer?

Let's talk about maps...

1. Do you ever use maps?
2. When do people usually need to use a map?
3. Do you prefer electronic or paper maps?
4. Do you ever ask people for directions instead of using a map?

Remember to keep your answers short and simple. This topic might surprise you, but it isn't difficult.

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Friday, January 09, 2015

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

The following sentences come from students' answers below last week's [lesson](#). Can you find and correct the mistakes?

1. My main goal is to assign as a doctor.
2. I hope to achieve this goal as soon as possible by hard working.
3. Although the steps are hard but I am looking forward to them.
4. I have to get a high score in order to apply scholarship.
5. Getting in to my profession comes always very first.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Friday, January 02, 2015

IELTS Speaking Part 2: future aim

Here's a question that I think is relevant at this time of year:

***Describe an aim or goal that you hope to achieve in the future.
You should say***

- *what the aim is*
- *when you hope to achieve it*
- *what you need to do to reach your goal*
- *and why this goal is important to you.*

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Friday, December 26, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: for example...

In part 3 of the speaking test, you should try to give longer, more detailed answers. A great way to do this is by giving an example.

However, I've noticed that students often forget to give an example, even when I've just told them to answer using the three steps: 1) direct answer 2) explain 3) give an example.

Here's the solution to this problem: when answering in part 3, force yourself to say the words "for example". When I force my students to say these words, they always manage to find an example, and the result is that they always give better answers. Try it: just force yourself to say the words "for example", and see what happens.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Saturday, December 13, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: from the 'parks' topic

As I said [yesterday](#), you don't need to 'show off' in part 1 of IELTS speaking. However, I did use some nice vocabulary in my answers:

- every city needs some green space
- people can escape from the crowds
- Parks are like an oasis
- get away from the hustle and bustle* of city life
- take some exercise
- forget about work for a while
- I can't imagine what I would do

*hustle and bustle = busy activity, usually when describing a city

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, December 12, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'parks' answers

Here are my sample answers for last week's questions. Remember that part 1 answers are supposed to be short and direct. You don't need to 'show off' in this part of the test!

1. Do you like parks? Why / why not?

Yes, I like parks because they're great places to relax or go for a walk. I think every city needs some green space where people can escape from the crowds.

2. How often do you visit parks?

There's a park very close to where I live, so I probably go there once or twice a week if the weather's nice.

3. Why are parks an important part of many towns and cities?

Parks are like an oasis where people get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. They are where people go to have lunch, to take some exercise, or to forget about work for a while.

4. What do you think could be done to make parks better?

The parks in big cities are already really good in my opinion. If I think about the famous parks in London, Paris or New York, I can't imagine what I would do to improve them.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Friday, December 05, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'parks' topic

Several students have had this topic recently. How would you answer?

1. Do you like parks? Why / why not?
2. How often do you visit parks?
3. Why are parks an important part of many towns and cities?
4. What do you think could be done to make parks better?

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Saturday, November 29, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: band 7-9 phrases

Let's review the vocabulary that I used in yesterday's speaking lesson. Here are the phrases that I think would impress an examiner:

- volunteer to run activity clubs
- help out (phrasal verb)
- residential homes for elderly people
- support people living below the poverty line
- there isn't a scale of importance when it comes to helping others
- all forms of help are positive
- experience difficult times
- run the risk of losing our jobs
- people help others because they empathise with them

- It's impossible to generalise about...
- from one generation to the next
- judge or compare how altruistic people are

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, November 28, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'community' answers

Here are my sample answers for the part 3 'community' topic:

1) What are some of the ways people can help others in the community? Which is the most important?

I think there are many ways to help others in our local communities. For example, where I live, some people volunteer to run activity clubs for children, or they help out in residential homes for elderly people. Others give money, food or clothes to organisations that support people living below the poverty line. In my opinion, there isn't a scale of importance when it comes to helping others; all forms of help are positive.

2) Why do you think some people like to help other people?

Most people get a good feeling when they help others, and they understand that we can all experience difficult times in our lives when we might need support. For example, we all grow old, and we all run the risk of losing our jobs or having a health problem that affects our ability to look after ourselves. So, I think people help others because they empathise with them.

3) Some people say that people help others in the community more now than they did in the past. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

I disagree with that kind of opinion. It's impossible to generalise about how much people help in their communities from one generation to the next, so I don't think we should try to judge or compare how altruistic people are now or were in the past. There have always been those who help others and those who don't.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, November 21, 2014

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

Here are some sentences that students wrote about the questions in last week's [lesson](#). Can you improve them by correcting the mistakes or by writing them in a more 'natural' way?

1. I think elderly frail single people's needs to be prioritised.
2. Helping people depends on situations and it can be done in vary ways.
3. I can mention two reasons in respond this question.
4. But now many people giving importance to community work.

5. I must admit that there is a high demand in life quality which causes people to focus on themselves rather than the others.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Friday, November 14, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'community' topic

The following questions come from Cambridge IELTS 9, page 103. Some of my students found the topic quite difficult, so I thought we could look at it here. How would you answer?

1. What are some of the ways people can help others in the community? Which is the most important?
2. Why do you think some people like to help other people?
3. Some people say that people help others in the community more now than they did in the past. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

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Friday, November 07, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: filling the 2 minutes

Many candidates struggle to speak for 2 minutes because they answer the first two or three points on the task card too quickly. They only give a detailed answer for the final point.

Look again at my sample answer in [last week's lesson](#). Notice how I answer each point on the topic card in detail. Instead of answering the first point with just one sentence (e.g. "I'm going to talk about chess"), I added three more sentences describing the game. I did the same for the questions about 'where' and 'who'.

The last point on the task card usually asks for your opinion (why?), and it's easy to say more about this. However, if you want to fill the 2 minutes, I suggest that you practise giving longer, more detailed answers to the first three points on the task card.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Friday, October 31, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'indoor game' answer

Describe an indoor game that you enjoyed as a child. You should say

- *what the game was*
- *where you played it*
- *who played this game with you*
- *and why you liked it*

- As a child I enjoyed playing chess. I think chess is probably the best known board game in the world. It's a game for two players, and the

aim is to defeat the other player by taking his or her pieces and eventually trapping his King. This final move is called checkmate.

- I remember that it was a classmate of mine at primary school who first taught me to play chess. He had a small, portable chess set, and once I knew how each piece moved, we started playing at break and lunch times; we played in our classroom or outside on the school playground. Later my parents bought me my own chess set as a birthday present so that I could play at home.
- I taught my younger brother to play, and at some point I joined the school chess club. There I had the chance to hone my skills against some of the older pupils, and in my final year of primary school I made it onto the school team. There were five of us on the team, and we competed against children from other primary schools in the same town.
- I liked playing chess because I enjoyed the challenge of thinking ahead and trying to outwit my opponent. I was probably seven or eight years old when I started playing, and it seemed like a very mysterious and intellectual game at that time. Also, although I loved winning, chess taught me to learn from my losses and to congratulate the person who had beaten me.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, October 24, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'indoor game' topic

In [this lesson](#) we saw some part 1 questions about 'games' and I mainly talked about outdoor sports in my answers.

Here's a recent part 2 question that forces you to talk about indoor games, rather than outdoor sports:

Describe an indoor game that you enjoyed as a child. You should say

- ***what the game was***
- ***where you played it***
- ***who played this game with you***
- ***and why you liked it***

What games do you think we could talk about?

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Sunday, October 19, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: less common alternatives

Let's look at some of the vocabulary from Friday's [speaking lesson](#), and some interesting alternatives. The alternatives on the right are a bit less common, and might impress the examiner if you used them.

1. **with three bedrooms** = a three-bedroomed house
2. **in a suburb of Manchester** = on the outskirts of Manchester
3. **relax** = unwind, put my feet up, wind down
4. **it needs a new kitchen** = it could do with a new kitchen

Note:

"could do with" is an informal way of saying "need" e.g. I could do with a drink, I could do with some help, I could do with another few days to finish this project.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, October 17, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: sample answers

Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and direct; the examiner will interrupt you if you don't. Here are my sample answers to the 'house or apartment' questions from two weeks ago:

1. Do you live in a house or an apartment?

I live in a semi-detached house with three bedrooms in a suburb of Manchester. I've lived there for just over a year.

2. Which is your favourite room in your home? Why?

I don't really have a favourite room. But if I had to choose, I'd say the living room because that's where I go to sit and relax.

3. Would you change anything about your home? Why / why not?

Yes, I've been meaning to redecorate it since I moved in last year. It needs a new kitchen, so that's what I'd change first.

4. Would you like to move to a different home in the future?

Yes, I'd definitely move again at some point if I could afford to. I'd like to live in the countryside, or maybe in a different city or country.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, October 10, 2014

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

Here are some sentences that students wrote below last week's [lesson](#). Can you correct the mistake(s) in each one?

1. I would want the walls to be painted in bright colors, arrange the furniture with some good interior designers.
2. If I am well off, I would like to move into much more bigger house.
3. If I had enough money, I will buy some more household appliances.
4. My favourite room is my living room because most of the time I spent in that room.

5. It goes without saying that I am quite passionate about my bedroom.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Friday, October 03, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: house or apartment?

Here are some very common questions from part 1 of the speaking test. How would you answer them?

1. Do you live in a house or an apartment?
2. Which is your favourite room in your home? Why?
3. Would you change anything about your home? Why / why not?
4. Would you like to move to a different home in the future?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

Friday, September 26, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: answer structure

Did you notice how I structured my answers in [last week's lesson](#)?

Answer 1

1. Answer the question - "it depends"
2. Explain one side
3. Explain the other side
4. Give an example

Answer 2

1. Firstly - first characteristic of a good listener
2. Secondly - second characteristic
3. Finally - third characteristic

Answer 3

1. Answer the question - "it's a mixture of both things"
2. Explain one side
3. Explain the other side

Basically, I'm using **Idea, Explain, (Example)** or **Firstly, Secondly, Finally**, just as I do when I'm writing main paragraphs for writing task 2. The more you practise using these two patterns, the easier it becomes to give longer, more coherent answers.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#)

Friday, September 19, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'advice' answers

Here are my sample answers for the 'advice' questions from [this](#) lesson:

1. Is it better to get advice from a friend or from a family member?

I think it depends on the kind of advice that you need. Parents and grandparents probably have more life experience than a friend, and so you might get a wiser or more sensible answer from them. On the other hand, friends are less likely to become too worried if you go to them with a problem. For example, I probably wouldn't want to burden my parents with a financial problem.

2. What would you say are the characteristics of a good adviser?

Well, firstly, a good adviser should be a good listener, someone who takes the time to understand the situation before offering advice. Secondly, an adviser should try to be objective, and avoid judging the person who is seeking help. Finally, I think the best advisers have the ability to ask the right questions and encourage others to find their own answers.

3. Should people make their own work and career decisions, or is it a good idea to ask for advice about this?

I'd say that it's a mixture of both things. Most of us talk to family, friends, teachers or colleagues before we make career choices. However, I believe that the final decision should rest with the individual; we all need to take ultimate responsibility for the big life choices that we make.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, September 12, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'school' phrases

In last week's description of a school, can you find the words or phrases that have the same meaning as those below?

1. not far from
2. came together
3. they created / promoted
4. happy memories
5. clear / lasting memories
6. stressful

Can you make your own sentences to practise using the vocabulary from my description?

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Friday, September 05, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'school' topic

Describe a school that you went to when you were a child. You should say

- where the school was***
- when you went there***

- ***what the school and the teachers were like***
- ***and explain whether you enjoyed your time there.***

Here's my sample (band 9) answer:

- I'm going to talk about my primary school. The school was called and it was in the town of The location of the school was great because it was within walking distance of our family home at the time. The route to school was all downhill, which made it an easy walk in the morning, but a tiring journey on the way home in the afternoon!
- I was a pupil at school between the ages of 5 and 11 - the full 6 years of primary education. From age 11 onwards, I went to a nearby secondary school.
- My primary school seemed like a big place at the time, but it was actually quite a small school, with only six classes. I remember there being a large room called the assembly hall, where the whole school gathered every morning to hear messages from the headmaster. I also remember spending a lot of time on the playground and on the sports field. I liked all of my teachers; they were caring but strict at the same time, and I think they fostered a positive and fun atmosphere in the school.
- I have really fond memories of my primary school years, mainly because of the friends I made and the fun I had. One of my most vivid memories is of performing in the school play in my final year. I had to learn lines and play the part of a character in a traditional children's story. It was a nerve-racking experience, but it felt like my first real achievement.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, August 29, 2014

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

Here are some sentences that students wrote about [last week's topic](#). Can you improve them?

1. I am going to discuss about my primary school namely...
2. The atmosphere at school was very reliable.
3. One of important things I love my childhood at that school because...
4. Some times I was played cricket with my friends.
5. Teachers and other staff were so much polite and generous to us.
6. The teachers were also very intelligent as well as they thought me how to learn.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(35\)](#)

Friday, August 22, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a school

Here's a recent question that a few students told me about:

Describe a school that you went to when you were a child. You should say

- *where the school was*
- *when you went there*
- *what the school and the teachers were like*
- *and explain whether you enjoyed your time there.*

Tip: try telling a story for the last point e.g. talk about a particularly enjoyable event that you remember.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, August 15, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: games

Here are my sample answers to last week's questions:

1. What games are popular in your country?

Well, if we can consider sports as games, then football is definitely the most popular game in my country, but we also love board games like chess.

2. Do you play any games?

Not regularly these days. I play the occasional game of tennis with my brother-in-law, and I recently played a bowling game on the Nintendo Wii with my nephew. I wasn't very good at it.

3. How do people learn to play games in your country?

I think children teach each other to play games. I remember a friend at primary school teaching me to play chess, for example.

4. Do you think it's important for people to play games?

Yes, it's really important, especially for children. I think research has shown that play can improve brain development, intelligence, creativity, and the ability to cooperate with others.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(25\)](#)

Friday, August 08, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'games' topic

I was asked recently about the questions below. Can you suggest any answers? Do you think it's acceptable to talk about sports, or should we only talk about games like chess?

1. What games are popular in your country?
2. Do you play any games?

3. How do people learn to play games in your country?

4. Do you think it's important for people to play games?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Saturday, July 26, 2014

IELTS Advice: topic research

If you're preparing for a writing or speaking topic, I recommend doing an Internet search for ideas first.

To find ideas for yesterday's speaking questions, I typed the phrase "what makes a good adviser" into Google, and found [this webpage](#). Look at some of the great language that we can steal from it:

- turning to an adviser
- a wise choice
- make decisions with more confidence
- the decision requires expertise
- use knowledge and experience
- make an informed decision
- some qualities are characteristic of good advisers
- trustworthy, someone you can trust
- possesses a strong base of knowledge

Remember: the key to high speaking and writing scores is good vocabulary, so topic research is a vital part of your IELTS preparation.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking, Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Friday, July 25, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'advice' topic

Here are some recent questions from part 3 of the speaking test:

1. Is it better to get advice from a friend or from a family member?
2. What would you say are the characteristics of a good adviser?
3. Should people make their own work and career decisions, or is it a good idea to ask for advice about this?

Try answering these questions using the 'paragraph' method in [this](#) lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Saturday, July 19, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: nice bits of language!

There were a few nice bits of language that you might have noticed in yesterday's speaking lesson:

- all sorts of things

- a certain amount of
- I pick up a newspaper most days
- I usually have a book on the go
- I couldn't put it down
- opens the door to all aspects of education

These phrases made my answers sound very natural and "native-speaker-like". Try using them in your own sentences.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking, Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Friday, July 18, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'reading' topic

Here are some part 1 questions with example answers. Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and simple.

1. Do you like reading?

Yes, I like reading a lot. I read all sorts of things, including novels, newspapers, magazines, and online articles.

2. Do you usually read for leisure or for work purposes?

Well, I have to do a certain amount of reading as part of my job, but I probably read more for enjoyment. I pick up a newspaper most days, and I usually have a book on the go.

3. What was your favourite book or story when you were a child?

The first book that I remember really enjoying was '.....'. It only took me a few days to read because I liked it so much that I couldn't put it down.

4. Do you think it's important that children read regularly?

Definitely. I think reading is possibly the most important skill that children learn. The ability to read opens the door to all aspects of education.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Saturday, July 12, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: for your notebook

Did you write the good vocabulary from yesterday's lesson in your notebook? Here are the words and phrases that I think you should have noted down:

- took place a few years ago
- where I grew up
- the marriage ceremony was held in a church
- the wedding reception
- members of my family

- the bride and groom
- my mother made sure that...
- we all dressed for the occasion
- and so on (instead of "etc.")
- her big day
- we had a fantastic time
- it's rare for me to see
- what made the day so memorable

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, July 11, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: family celebration

Describe a family celebration that you remember. You should say

- *what you were celebrating*
- *who was present*
- *what you and your family did to make the celebration special*
- *and why you enjoyed the occasion.*

Here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to describe my sister's wedding day, which took place a few years ago in the town where I grew up. For my sister it was the biggest and most important day of her life.
- I think there were around 100 people at the marriage ceremony, which was held in a church. Even more people came to the party, or the wedding reception as we call it, after the ceremony. Of course, most members of my family were there, as well as the groom's family and a collection of the bride and groom's friends and colleagues.
- To make the celebration special, we did what families normally do. My mother made sure that the church and the reception venue were nicely decorated - there were flowers everywhere! Obviously we all dressed for the occasion, and there were bridesmaids, gifts, a huge wedding cake, and so on.
- I enjoyed the occasion because it was great to see my sister so happy on her big day. The ceremony was perfect, and we all had a fantastic time at the reception. It's rare for me to see all of my family and friends together in one place, so that's probably what made the day so memorable for me.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Friday, July 04, 2014

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

Before I write my own sample answer to [last week's question](#), let's look at some sentences written by students. Can you suggest corrections or improvements?

1. Each of us helped organised this event.
2. I promised myself to try and spend more time with them henceforth.
3. We were all happy that we had a chance to be next to each other.
4. Hundred of people came to her party to gave her special gift.
5. As for me, a celebration that I never forget is...
6. We arranged many things for enjoying.
7. Last month, my family hold a birthday party for my daddy.
8. We conduct party on our own house.
9. For celebrating this especial event all the family gathering together.
10. Going on my next point which is who was present and what I need to emphasize here is that there were quite a lot of people.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(29\)](#)

Friday, June 27, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: family celebration

Try preparing some ideas for this recent exam question:

Describe a family celebration that you remember. You should say

- ***what you were celebrating***
- ***who was present***
- ***what you and your family did to make the celebration special***
- ***and why you enjoyed the occasion.***

I'll share my ideas next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, June 20, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'paragraph' answers

Here are my answers to the questions in last week's lesson.

1) Do you think that it's important for people to go on holiday?

Answer using 'idea, explain, example'

Yes, I think we all need to go on holiday at least once or twice a year. It isn't healthy to work all year round without some time off to relax; we all need to take a break and recharge our batteries from time to time. Last summer, for example, I went on holiday to France for a couple of weeks, and it was great to leave all of my usual responsibilities behind me. I came home feeling really refreshed and reinvigorated.

2) Why do you think some people prefer not to go abroad on holiday?

Answer using 'firstly, secondly, finally'

I suppose there are different reasons why some people choose not to go abroad on holidays. Firstly, it's usually more expensive to travel abroad than it is to stay at home. A second reason could be that some people find it stressful to spend time in a foreign country where they don't speak the language, or where they feel that they can't easily integrate with the locals. Finally, many people just love where they live, and don't feel the need to travel abroad.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, June 13, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: think 'paragraph'

In part 3 of the speaking test, you should try to give longer, detailed answers. A good way to do this is to imagine that you are making a paragraph.

Remember the 'paragraph building' techniques that we use in writing task 2:

Idea, explain, example

Start with a direct answer to the question, like the 'topic sentence' in a written paragraph. Then explain your answer in more detail, and support your explanation with an example.

Try answering this question: Do you think that it's important for people to go on holiday?

Firstly, secondly, finally

Start with the direct answer, then explain it by giving two or three reasons, and maybe an example too.

Try answering this question: Why do you think some people prefer not to go abroad on holiday?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Sunday, June 08, 2014

IELTS Grammar: easy sentences

Here are my suggestions for the sentences in [Friday's lesson](#). Remember, the aim was to make the sentences as easy as possible.

1. I like learning languages because they help me to communicate with people from other countries.
2. I do lots of reading in my spare time.
3. If you can speak the local language, it's easier to make friends.
4. Knowing a foreign language can help you to get a better job.
5. The best time to learn another language is when you are young.
6. Learning a foreign language opens your mind and expands your horizons.
7. The more you practise, the easier it becomes to communicate in a new language.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Vocabulary/Grammar](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)
Friday, June 06, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: keep it simple

Instead of correcting the grammar mistakes in the sentences below, try rewriting the sentences in an easier way.

1. I admire learning languages as communication bridges.
2. I also do general readings in my spare time.
3. Moreover, learning foreign languages helps us talk friendly.
4. It open more avenues for getting a better job.
5. Young age is the right time to learn multiple languages.
6. You can break many hurdles and expand your horizons.
7. As our knowledge in language expands, the better we can communicate.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(41\)](#)
Friday, May 30, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'language learning' topic

Try answering the following 'part 1' questions. Remember to follow the rules in last week's [lesson](#).

1. Do you like learning languages?
2. How did you learn the languages that you know?
3. Why do people learn more than one language?
4. Do you think that all children should learn foreign languages at school?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)
Friday, May 23, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: five simple rules

Part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test is supposed to be easy. You don't need to give 'difficult' answers, and you should try to avoid making mistakes.

Here are five simple rules for Speaking Part 1:

1. Keep your answers short, then stop with confidence.
2. Answer the questions using full sentences.
3. Use words from the examiner's question in your answer.
4. If possible, give a reason for your answer.
5. Don't forget to say "yes" or "no" when necessary.

Here's an example to illustrate these points:

Do you like parks?

Yes, I like parks because they are great places to relax. If you live in a city, a park is often the only place where you can escape from the noise and the traffic.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Saturday, May 17, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: band 7-9 phrases

There was some good vocabulary in yesterday's [speaking lesson](#). Here's a list of the phrases that I think would impress an examiner:

- it was great to share that experience
- The positive experience wasn't confined to one particular place
- As far as I remember
- visits to various tourist attractions
- one of my first memories was
- a group of close friends
- which made the experience more enjoyable
- What really struck me about London was
- historic but modern and thriving at the same time
- a lively, fashionable and cosmopolitan place
- Coming from a relatively small town
- the experience made me keen to visit more capital cities

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Friday, May 16, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'positive experience' answer

Describe a positive experience that you had as a teenager. You should say

- ***what the positive experience was***
- ***where you were***
- ***who you were with***
- ***and explain why you found the experience positive.***

Here's my sample answer, taking some of the ideas from [this lesson](#).

- I'm going to describe the first time I visited England's capital city, London, on a school trip when I was a teenager. I had never been to London before, and it was great to share that experience with my school friends.
- The positive experience wasn't confined to one particular place in London. As far as I remember, I enjoyed the whole trip, from the

coach journey to the visits to various tourist attractions. We got off the coach near the Houses of Parliament, and so one of my first memories was seeing the famous 'Big Ben' clock tower. We also visited the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square.

- As I said earlier, it was a school trip, and I think there were around thirty of us, including two teachers. I was with a group of close friends, which made the experience more enjoyable.
- What really struck me about London was that it was historic but modern and thriving at the same time. It seemed to me to be a lively, fashionable and cosmopolitan place. Coming from a relatively small town, the experience made me keen to visit more capital cities in the future.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Friday, May 09, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: memorise and adapt

Memorising can be a good strategy for speaking part 2 because the same topics are often repeated. [Click here](#) to see the six main topic areas that I tell my students to prepare first.

But memorising can be a risky strategy unless you are able to **adapt** your answers to the specific question. For example, if you prepared a description of a holiday, would you be able to adapt it for [this question](#) about a positive experience you had as a teenager?

The smart way to study for part 2 is to prepare a few key topics, then spend lots of time practising ways to adapt what you prepared to other questions.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, May 02, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'teenager' topic

Describe a positive experience that you had as a teenager. You should say

- ***what the positive experience was***
- ***where you were***
- ***who you were with***
- ***and explain why you found the experience positive***

Try practising in the following way: First, note some ideas. Then record yourself speaking for two minutes. Next, listen to the recording and write down what you said. Finally, try to improve the written description.

Tip: choose an easy topic, like a new hobby or a holiday.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, April 25, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: home town

Here are some part 1 questions and answers on the topic of 'home town'. Try changing the answers to similar ones about your own town or city. Keep your answers short, simple and direct.

1. *Where are you from?*

I'm from Manchester, which is a city in the north west of England.

2. *Do you like your home town? (Why?)*

Yes, I like living in Manchester because it's where most of my friends live, and because there are plenty of things to do there. The only thing I don't like is the weather.

3. *Would you prefer to live somewhere else? (Why?)*

For the moment I'm happy living here, but at some point I'd like to live in a country with a warmer climate, and I'd like to live near a beach!

4. *Do you think your home town is a good place for young people? (Why?)*

Yes, Manchester has lots of things for young people, such as sports facilities, music and cinemas.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, April 18, 2014

IELTS Speaking: if you don't know what to say

In Sunday's [lesson](#) I suggested answering in the following way if you don't know what to say:

"Well, I don't really know much about... because..., but I suppose..."

In other words, you admit that you don't really know what to say, you explain why, then you invent an answer anyway. Let's try using the formula above with an example.

Question:

What kinds of jobs might stop when the season changes?

Answer:

Well, I don't really know much about seasonal jobs because everyone works all year round where I live, but I suppose that some jobs related to tourism must stop at the end of the summer holiday period.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, April 11, 2014

IELTS Speaking: if you don't understand

What should you do if you don't understand a question in the speaking test?
Here are my tips:

Part 1

In part 1, the examiner is not allowed to help you, but he/she can repeat the question. Just say: "Sorry, can you repeat the question please?" If you still don't understand the second time, try to say something related to the topic or any of the words that you heard. Try your best, then focus on the next question.

Part 2

You are given a task card with the question written on it, so you shouldn't have any problems in this part. If there is a word that you don't understand on the task card, don't ask the examiner - he/she is not allowed to help.

Part 3

In this part of the test, the examiner is allowed to rephrase the question. If you don't understand, just say something like: "Sorry, can you explain that question in a different way please?"

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, April 04, 2014

IELTS Speaking: a tip for each part

Here are three tips, one for each part of the speaking test.

Part 1: stop and smile

For part 1 of the speaking test, you need to get used to giving short answers. Many students find it difficult to stop speaking, and the examiner is forced to interrupt. My tip is to give your answer then stop and smile, showing the examiner that you are ready for the next question.

Part 2: tell a story

In the context of speaking part 2, a story is simply a long example to illustrate a point that you have made. If you're describing a person, for example, you could tell a story to illustrate why you like him/her. People find it easy to keep speaking for longer when they have a story to tell.

Part 3: include an 'if...' sentence

Look at technique number 2 in [this lesson](#). The 'alternatives' technique helps you to say more, and it also encourages you to add a conditional 'if...' sentence, which might help your grammar score.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Friday, March 28, 2014

IELTS Speaking: 'hospitality' topic

1. In your country, how do people treat visitors from abroad?

I think we treat visitors well. People in the UK are very open-minded and welcoming, and we enjoy the mix of cultures that immigration and tourism bring. Most UK cities, for example, are really cosmopolitan, and you can meet visitors from every part of the world.

2. Do you think hospitality towards visitors is less important than it was in the past?

In my city, maybe it's true that hospitality is less important nowadays, but that's only because we are so used to seeing visitors from different countries, so we treat it as a normal part of life and nothing too special.

3. What are the advantages of staying with a friend compared to staying in a hotel when visiting a foreign country?

If you stay with a friend, you benefit from someone with local knowledge of the best places to visit. You can also get to know the character and customs of the local people, and for me, this is one of the most interesting aspects of a visit to another country. On the other hand, if you stay in a hotel, you are forced to discover the new place on your own, so it's more of an adventure.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Friday, March 21, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'hospitality' topic

As I'm currently on a work trip in another country (China), I thought it would be appropriate to look at the following 'part 3' questions:

1. In your country, how do people treat visitors from abroad?
2. Do you think hospitality towards visitors is less important than it was in the past?
3. What are the advantages of staying with a friend compared to staying in a hotel when visiting a foreign country?

The advice in [this lesson](#) will help to make longer, better answers. I'll show you my example answers next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Friday, March 14, 2014

IELTS Speaking: 3 simple tips

Here are three simple tips that could make a difference to your score:

1. Be confident

Although you might be nervous, try to speak clearly and confidently. Smile and be friendly* with the examiner. As you go into the exam, tell yourself that you have prepared well and that you're going to enjoy the challenge.

2. Know that you are prepared

You will feel much more confident if you know that you have prepared and practised for the test. You should know exactly what to expect. For example, have you prepared some common topics (e.g. describe a place, a person, a hobby) for the short presentation? Are you ready for a past and a future question in part 3?

3. Speak naturally

Try to enjoy a normal conversation with the examiner. Instead of worrying about your grammar, listen carefully to the questions and try to give natural answers. Most of the questions are about you, your life and your opinions, so it's best to be open. I used to be an examiner, and I always found the job more interesting when students spoke openly about their opinions and experiences.

**Note:* You are not marked on body language, but I'd still recommend that you try to act in a friendly, confident manner.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, March 07, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: sample answer

Here's the question we've been looking at in recent weeks:

Describe a subject that you think should be removed from school education programmes. You should say

- what the subject is***
- why you think it is unnecessary for children to study it***
- and explain what you would replace it with.***

Here's my sample answer with band 7-9 vocabulary underlined:

- I'm going to suggest that art could be taken out of the school curriculum. In my experience, art lessons at school tend to include drawing, painting, and the making of collages using paper, fabric and other household materials.
- There are a few reasons why I think that school art lessons are unnecessary. Firstly, I don't believe that drawing and painting are essential skills that children will need when they leave school. Children might find these activities enjoyable, but it's unlikely that they will need them in the working world. Secondly, children can draw, paint and make collages in their own time at home; parents can encourage this, and they can even join in. Finally, remembering my own art lessons at school, I don't think we learnt any real art skills; the teachers left us to draw or create things, but they didn't provide much technical instruction.
- Instead of art lessons, children could do more work on core subjects like maths, science or language. These subjects are more

likely to help children in later life when they enter the job market, and I think both children and their teachers would benefit if more time were devoted to them.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Saturday, March 01, 2014

IELTS Speaking Advice: how to practise part 2

Here's this week's video lesson:

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Friday, February 28, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: at home and in the test

Is there a difference between the way you practise at home and what you do in the test? Take this question for example:

Describe a subject that you think should be removed from school education programmes. You should say

- what the subject is***
- why you think it is unnecessary for children to study it***
- and explain what you would replace it with.***

How would you plan and answer this question in the exam? What would you do to prepare and practise your answer at home?

I'll give you my suggestions in tomorrow's lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Friday, February 21, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: add more detail

In [this lesson](#) I mentioned 3 techniques to help you give longer answers: ask yourself why, explain the alternatives, give an example.

Most students have no problem with the first step (explaining why), but they aren't so good at giving alternatives or examples. Take the following question from last week's lesson for example.

Question:

In your opinion, are newspapers important?

Example student answer:

Yes, in my opinion newspapers are very important (***why?***) because they give us information about what is happening around the world. (***why?***) They are a vital source of knowledge about education, technology, medicine and many other fields.

This is a good start, but let's try to raise the answer to band 9 level.

Example answer with 'alternative' and 'example':

Yes, in my opinion newspapers are very important (*why?*) because they give us information about what is happening around the world. (*why?*) They are a vital source of knowledge about education, technology, medicine and many other fields. (*alternative?*) If newspapers didn't exist, I think the quality of news coverage would suffer because there would be fewer professional journalists. (*example?*) We would have to rely, for example, on unpaid bloggers who do not have the budgets to carry out detailed research before they write an article.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, February 14, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 3: long answers

Try using the advice in [this lesson](#) to give long answers (3 to 5 sentences) to the following questions.

- 1) In your opinion, are newspapers important?
- 2) Do you think that newspapers will disappear as a result of the Internet?
- 3) What negative consequences might there be if newspapers did disappear?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Friday, February 07, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'cooking' topic

Here are some recent part 1 questions, with my example answers.

1. Do you like cooking? Why / why not?

Sometimes. I like preparing a special meal for family or friends who visit, but everyday cooking is a bit boring; it's something that has to be done, but it's not really fun.

2. Who did the cooking in your family when you were a child?

My mother almost always did the cooking when I was young. I don't think she trusted my father to make a nice meal.

3. Do you think that it's important to know how to cook well?

I'm not sure whether it's important to cook *well*, but I do think that everyone should know the basics. It definitely isn't healthy to rely on pre-prepared meals or fast food.

4. Do you think that children should be taught cookery at school?

Yes, that's probably a good idea. If all children knew how to cook a few basic, healthy meals, that would surely be a good thing.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Friday, January 31, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'old object' example

Here's my example description for the [old object](#) question. You'll hear me speak for exactly 2 minutes until my alarm stops me.

[Click here to listen](#)

Notice that it doesn't sound like a perfect scripted presentation: you'll hear hesitations and moments where I seem unsure of what to say. This is normal for an unprepared speech; the examiner is not expecting perfection.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

[« Previous](#) | [Next »](#)

Saturday, January 25, 2014

IELTS Vocabulary: band 7-9 descriptions

Here are some suggestions for ways to improve the sentences in [yesterday's](#) exercise:

1. The clock is very old.
= The clock is an antique; it's probably a collector's item.
2. It is big and made of wood.
= It is housed in a large wooden cabinet that stands nearly two metres tall.

(The kind of clock I'm describing)

3. It has been in my family for a long time.
= It has been in my family for several generations.
4. Everyone in my family likes the clock.
= We've all become quite attached to the clock; it's like part of the family.
5. I hope my parents will give it to me one day.
= The clock is a real family heirloom, so hopefully I'll inherit it one day.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, January 24, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: band 7-9 descriptions

Today I'm going to reuse a video lesson that I made 3 years ago. Watch the video, then try the exercise below it.

If you can't see the video, listen to the recording below.

[Click here to listen](#)

The following sentences describing an 'old object' (last week's topic) are too simple. Use the technique described in the video to improve them.

1. The clock is very old.

2. It is big and made of wood.
3. It has been in my family for a long time.
4. Everyone in my family likes the clock.
5. I hope my parents will give it to me one day.

I'll share my examples of improved sentences in tomorrow's lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(40\)](#)

Friday, January 17, 2014

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

The following sentences were written by students about the [describe an old object](#) question from last week's lesson. Try to correct and improve them.

1. It has been kept since since the day of my parents got married.
2. Whenever my friend came to visit me I feel proud to explain the history of this sword.
3. In that time did not available any colour television.
4. About the how long time it was held in my family I have to say, it was almost forgotten for a while.
5. This old piece of item has been kept in my home for a long time.

PS. There are some really interesting descriptions in the comments below last week's lesson. Thanks to those of you who shared them!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(36\)](#)

Friday, January 10, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an old object

We've prepared for the [describe an object](#) question already, but it seems that the IELTS people have introduced a variation on this question:

Describe an old object which your family has kept for a long time.

You should say

- what the object is
- where it came from
- how long it has been in your family
- and why your family has kept it.

Unfortunately we can't use our 'mobile phone' description! I'll share my answer next week, but feel free to share your own ideas in the comments below.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(44\)](#)

Friday, January 03, 2014

IELTS Speaking Part 2: using 'old' ideas

You can often use 'old' ideas from a topic that you have already prepared to answer a new question. Take this question for example:

We haven't prepared for this question before, but I can think of a few previous topics that might help us. Maybe you could describe a visit from a family member during a [festival](#), or you could talk about a visit from a friend who is interested in the same [hobby](#) as you. Can you think of any other previous topics that we could use for ideas?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(44\)](#)

Friday, December 20, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'walking' topic

Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and 'to the point'. Here are my example answers for some questions about walking:

1. Do you like walking?

I'm not one for going on really long walks in the countryside, but I don't mind walking when I'm in a town or city, for example when I'm sightseeing in a new place.

2. Do you think walking is important?

Yes, I think it's important to be active, and walking is the most basic physical activity that we can do.

3. Do you think walking in the countryside is better than walking in the city?

Personally, no. As I said before, I like walking in the city, especially if it's somewhere with a lot of history like London or Paris. I've done quite a lot of walking in those cities.

4. What could be done to improve the experience of walking in cities?

I suppose the main issues are space and safety. Pavements need to be wide enough to accommodate lots of pedestrians, and we need safe places to cross the street.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Friday, December 13, 2013

IELTS Speaking: full test

Here's what a full test looks like. All of the questions below come from recent tests and have been shared by students here or on my Facebook page.

PART 1

What is your full name? Can I see your ID? (this is **not** part of the test)

1. Where are you from?
2. Do you like the place where you live?

3. Do you work or are you a student?
4. What job do you do?
5. Do you like walking?
6. Do you think walking is important?
7. Do you think walking in the countryside is better than walking in the city?
8. What could be done to improve the experience of walking in cities?

PART 2

PART 3

1. In your country, how do people treat visitors?
2. Do you think hospitality is less important than it was in the past?
3. What are the benefits of staying with a friend when visiting a new place?
4. What are the advantages of staying in a hotel instead?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Saturday, December 07, 2013

IELTS Vocabulary: good phrases

Looking back at [yesterday's lesson](#), I'm surprised to see how many good phrases I used. Try making your own sentences with the phrases below. Check to see how I used them before you write anything.

- caught my eye
- out of curiosity
- I ended up (+ing)
- dedicated to
- I hadn't intended to.....
- approached me
- I wondered what..... were
- the various..... on show
- I found..... fascinating
- he had a passion for.....
- he didn't mind (+ing)
- I had made it clear that.....

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Friday, December 06, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a conversation

Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone you didn't know. You should say

- who the person was***
- where the conversation took place***

- ***what you talked about***
- ***and explain why you found the conversation interesting.***

Here's my sample (band 9) answer:

- I'm going to talk about an interesting conversation that I had a couple of weeks ago in a music shop. I was walking along one of the main shopping streets in the city centre, when a large window displaying all sorts of musical instruments caught my eye. Out of curiosity, I decided to go in and have a look around.
- The person I ended up speaking to was a shop assistant on the second floor, in the area of the shop dedicated to acoustic guitars. I hadn't intended to speak to anyone, but the assistant approached me in a friendly way and asked whether I had any questions.
- I explained to the assistant that I hadn't played the guitar for years, but that I wondered what the differences were between the various acoustic guitars on show. He talked to me about the different makes and models, whether they were factory or hand made, the woods and varnishes used, the variation in sound quality, and of course the price range.
- I found the conversation fascinating because the shop assistant was so knowledgeable. It was obvious that he had a passion for the guitar, and he didn't mind talking to me even though I had made it clear that I didn't intend to buy anything. He even picked up and played three or four of the instruments to demonstrate the differences in their sound.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, November 29, 2013

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

Here are some sentences that students wrote about last week's [describe a conversation](#) question. Try to correct and improve them.

1. It was very interesting for me to have a conversation foreigner first time.
2. Few years ago, when I was still a student, I and my friend meet a foreigner.
3. They asked me to have an interview that will broadcasted on TV, I felt so shy since I never had a one like before.
4. I am going to talk about my conversation with unknown people which I found it very interesting.
5. I was one of few passengers get on the bus.
6. Through our conversation, I knew that he is from the USA.

[Click here](#) to see my corrections.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, November 22, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a conversation

Here's a recent question that a few people told me about:

Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone you didn't know. You should say

- ***who the person was***
- ***where the conversation took place***
- ***what you talked about***
- ***and explain why you found the conversation interesting.***

Remember that you don't have to tell the truth. If you have a true story, that's great. If you don't, think about a conversation that you would like to have, or try to adapt a topic that you have already prepared.

Feel free to share your ideas in the comments area.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Friday, November 15, 2013

IELTS Speaking: is accent important?

People often ask whether their accent will affect their IELTS score. The simple answer is no. Your score for pronunciation depends on how clearly you speak and how intelligible (easy to understand) you are.

So if accent is not important, what are the factors that affect pronunciation? I really like the explanation on [this page](#) from the Warwick University website. They look at 5 key elements of pronunciation:

There are some great tips about improving your pronunciation near the bottom of the page, but my favourites are: work on your mistakes, copy good models of speech, record yourself, slow down, and try to sound interesting / interested!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Friday, November 08, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: noticing good language

A few weeks ago I wrote an example answer about a [future plan](#). Maybe you read it and understood it, but did you really notice the good language that I used? Did you note down the good vocabulary and try to use it yourself?

Good vocabulary:

- it has its limitations

- the bride and groom and their guests celebrating
- capture longer range photos
- photos in darker conditions
- capture a special occasion
- higher quality images
- depends on whether
- I'll achieve that goal by experimenting
- learning as I go along

Grammar and coherence:

- Variety of tenses and verb forms: I'm going to talk about, I'm using, I've realised, I thought, I'll talk, I did notice, I'd like to, before making, I'll achieve... if I can... (conditional)
- Linking and organising: which, at the moment, but, a few weeks ago, next time, obviously, this plan (referring back to a previous idea), also, in terms of
- No mistakes!

Read my [description](#) again and highlight the words and phrases above. Hopefully you'll see why an examiner would give it a band 9.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, November 01, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3, the examiner often asks a question about the past and a question about the future. For example:

1. Did people have more free time when your grandparents were young?
2. Do you think the hobbies people have will be different in the future?

In the first answer, the examiner wants to hear some past tense verbs. In the second answer, you will need to use a future tense:

1. When my grandparents were young, I think they had less leisure time. They didn't have the gadgets we use nowadays, so they probably spent more time doing simple things. For example, nowadays we can cook meals in a microwave in less than 5 minutes, whereas in the past people had to cook everything themselves.
2. No, I don't think hobbies will change much in the future. I'm sure people will still play games and sports. On the other hand, maybe the Internet is changing the way we spend our free time. In the future, more and more people might have online hobbies.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Friday, October 25, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: giving negative answers

It's fine to give negative answers in part 1 of the speaking test. Here are some example negative answers for people who don't like sport:

1. What sports or physical activities do you regularly do?

Unfortunately I don't have time to do any sports or physical activities because of my work commitments. I'd like to find more time for regular exercise.

2. Which sport or game would you like to be good at?

I'd like to be good at tennis. It must be great to be able to hit the ball as hard as you can and watch it land exactly where you wanted it to.

3. Do you prefer watching or playing sports?

I don't watch much sport on TV and I'm not a big sports fan, so I think I would probably enjoy doing sports more than watching them.

4. Do you think children should be encouraged to do more sport?

Yes, I think that sport is really important for children. Sports and games teach children to play together and try their best.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Friday, October 18, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'future plans' answer

Here's my answer to the [future plans](#) question:

- I'm going to talk about a future plan that I have, which is to buy a good camera and to become a better photographer. At the moment I'm just using the camera on my mobile phone, but I've realised that it has its limitations.
- I thought of this plan when I was at a friend's wedding a few weeks ago. I got some great pictures of the bride and groom and their guests celebrating, but I did notice that with my phone camera I wasn't able to capture longer range photos, or photos in darker conditions; the phone's zoom and flash aren't very good. Next time I'd like to be able to capture a special occasion in higher quality images.
- Obviously this plan depends on whether I can save enough money to buy the camera I'd like. Also, before making a decision about which camera to get, I'll probably talk to a friend who knows more about photography than I do.
- In terms of buying a camera, I'll achieve this plan if I can save some money! In terms of becoming a better photographer, I think I'll achieve that goal by experimenting with my new camera and by learning as I go along.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, October 11, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: adapt what you prepared

In last week's [lesson](#) I suggested using an easy topic that you have already prepared to answer a question about future plans.

Try the following task:

1. Read my description of a hobby by clicking [here](#).
2. Write your answer to the 'future plans' question below by adapting (changing) my hobby description. Use as much of the good vocabulary in my description as you can.

Describe a future plan. You should say

- *what the plan is*
- *when you thought of the plan*
- *who is involved in the plan*
- *and say how you think you will achieve the plan.*

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, October 04, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: future plans

Describe a future plan which is not related to work or study. You should say

- *what the plan is*
- *when you thought of the plan*
- *who is involved in the plan*
- *and say how you think you will achieve the plan.*

It's interesting that the question tells you not to talk about work or study. However, we can use other easy topics that we have already prepared. For example:

- A plan to go on holiday or visit another city / country
- A plan to buy a present for someone
- A plan to start a new hobby

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, September 27, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: longer answers

Do you remember my advice about how to give longer answers in part 3?

- Answer the question directly
- Ask yourself why or how (and explain in detail)

- Give an example
- Mention an alternative or opposite answer

Example question

Do you think the seasons still influence people's behaviour?

Example answer

Yes, I do think the seasons affect how we behave. **(how?)** We still wear different clothes depending on the weather, and clothes shops change what they sell according to the season. We also adapt our habits and daily routines according to the time of year. **(example)** For example, people in my country like to eat outside in their gardens in the summer, but we can't do that during the other seasons. **(opposite)** On the other hand, I don't think we notice the change in seasons when it comes to food; the big supermarkets import food from around the world, so most people don't buy seasonal fruit and vegetables any more.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Sunday, September 22, 2013

IELTS Vocabulary

Here are some band 7-9 phrases from [Friday's lesson](#):

- a typical winter would last...
- when I say..., I'm really thinking about...
- wintry months
- the temperature drops below zero
- we've had periods of quite heavy snowfall
- to the extent that...
- roads have been blocked and schools have had to close
- everything covered in a layer of white
- the snow is what differentiates winter from the other seasons
- the landscape looks beautiful

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Saturday, September 21, 2013

IELTS Advice: good writing looks easy

Yesterday's [description of a season](#) might seem easy when you first read it. But don't be fooled - it's full of great 'native speaker' phrases that mean it's easily at band 9 level. Can you spot the phrases that would surprise and impress the examiner? I'll answer this question myself tomorrow.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Friday, September 20, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: favourite season

Describe your favourite season in your country. You should say

- ***when that season is***
- ***what the weather is like at that time of year***
- ***how that season is different from other seasons***
- ***and why it is your favourite season.***

Here's my sample answer:

- My favourite season in England is winter. A typical English winter would last around 4 or 5 months between November and March, but when I say that I like the winter, I'm really thinking about the coldest month or two each year.
- During those really wintry months, the temperature drops below zero and it often snows. Over the last few years we've had periods of quite heavy snowfall, to the extent that roads have been blocked and schools have had to close. Last winter I remember looking out of the window one morning and seeing everything covered in a layer of white.
- Obviously the snow is what differentiates winter from the other seasons, but when it doesn't snow there isn't much difference between winter, autumn and spring; winter is just a bit colder.
- The reason I've chosen winter as my favourite season is because I like the snow. I live near the countryside, and the landscape looks beautiful when everything is covered in white. We also celebrate Christmas and New Year in the winter, and these are my favourite festivals.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(27\)](#)

Friday, September 13, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a season

Think about how you would answer this question:

Describe your favourite season in your country. You should say

- ***when that season is***
- ***what the weather is like at that time of year***
- ***how that season is different from other seasons***
- ***and why it is your favourite season.***

Tip: try to adapt ideas from other topics that you have already prepared e.g. holidays, hobbies, festivals etc.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, September 06, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'shopping' topic

Here are some questions and sample answers for the 'shopping' topic.

Remember that part 1 answers need to be short, direct and simple.

1) Who does most of the shopping in your household?

There isn't one person who does most of the shopping. I'd say it's a shared responsibility because we tend to go shopping together as a family.

2) What kind of shopping do you like doing?

I quite like shopping for presents for people's birthdays or for Christmas. My favourite type of shop would have to be a bookshop.

3) Is shopping a popular activity in your country?

Yes, it's very popular. Saturday is the busiest shopping day, and lots of people treat shopping as a kind of leisure activity, rather than something practical.

4) What types of shops do teenagers like best in your country?

I'm not an expert on teenage behaviour, but I guess they like buying clothes, music, gadgets... that kind of thing.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, August 30, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: strange questions

In part 1 of the speaking test, the examiner will ask around 10 easy questions. However, students have reported some strange questions, such as:

1. Do you like parks?
2. Do you think different colours can change our moods?
3. When do people give flowers in your country?

Don't be shocked by these questions. Just give a simple answer with a reason. Don't worry about using fantastic grammar or vocabulary; just try to answer without hesitating. For example:

1. Yes, I like parks because they are great places to relax. I think all cities need green areas.
2. Yes, I think bright colours, like red, can make you feel energetic. Some greens and blues can be more relaxing.
3. People give flowers on special occasions like birthdays or on Valentine's Day. In my country, giving flowers is seen as romantic.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Saturday, August 24, 2013

IELTS Speaking Advice: get to the point

Yesterday I wrote that you should avoid using long phrases to begin your answers. So what should you use instead? Native speakers say things like:

- I think...
- I guess...
- Well,...

These words/phrases might seem less impressive, but you have to remember that examiners are not impressed by the long phrases either! The important thing is to **get to the point** of your answer.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Friday, August 23, 2013

IELTS Speaking: avoid these phrases

In the speaking test, examiners don't like it when students use phrases like:

- That's a very interesting question...
- It is my personal opinion that...
- Personally, I would have to say that...
- I am of the opinion that it depends on...
- To be honest, I personally believe that...

These phrases sound unnatural, and it is obvious to the examiner that the student has memorised them.

So what should you do instead? My advice: just answer the question directly. Stop using memorised phrases, and just get straight to the point.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Friday, August 16, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: "it depends"

Many students answer questions in IELTS speaking part 3 by saying "it depends".

"It depends" is not a full answer. What does it depend on, and why?

Example question:

Do you think it's important to find a job that you love, or is it more important to earn a good salary?

Don't say:

"It depends. Some people prefer to find a job they love, but other people want to earn a good salary." (This answer just repeats the question)

Do say:

"Personally, I'd prefer to do a job that I really enjoy; as long as I earn enough to live comfortably, the salary is less important. However, I can see the benefits of doing a job that you don't like if it pays well. With a good salary, you can probably do more enjoyable things in your free time."

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Friday, August 09, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: recent topics

New question topics are added every now and then. Here are two recent examples that students have asked me about:

- Describe a picnic or a meal that you ate outdoors.
- Describe a situation when you were late.

Here are 2 tips to deal with new questions:

1. Try to adapt a topic that you have already prepared. For the 'picnic' topic, we could use ideas from the [birthday](#) topic or the [meal](#) topic.
2. Choose something that you know a lot about (e.g. your job, your studies). For the 'late' topic, you could describe arriving late for work or for a lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Friday, July 26, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3 of the speaking test, it's common to get questions about the past and future, as well as questions about 'now'. The examiner will be listening to your use of verb tenses:

What types of transport are there in your town?

In Manchester I think you can find every form of transport apart from an underground system. You can drive around the city by car or get on a bus; there are even free buses that take people between the train stations. Manchester also has a tram system, and of course there are taxis too.

How has transport changed since your grandparents were young?

Well, they had cars, trains and planes back then, and London already had the underground system, but I suppose the difference is that technology has moved on. Having said that, the transport system is not necessarily better nowadays; people travel a lot more, and I'm sure we spend more time stuck in traffic.

What types of transport do you think we will use in the future?

I'm not sure, but hopefully we'll have cars that drive themselves and never crash. I think we'll probably fly more, and it might become normal to have your own plane. On the other hand, many cities are building more bicycle lanes, so maybe we will use cars less for getting around towns and cities.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, July 19, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: correct the mistakes

There are some good descriptions of plants in the comments below last week's [lesson](#). But here are some sentences that need correcting:

1. It is the finest quality cotton all over the world as a result it is being exported in high prices.
2. As the result of mass planting of rice, it has more affordable price in market which every resident can enjoy rice foods.
3. I get used to drinking cafe in the early morning.
4. Most charming thing about crop is that it changes its color from green to yellow.
5. India is one of the country which grows wheat on large scale.
6. These plants very small till they year or two.
7. Since I am belong the farming family, I do like the cotton plants very much.
8. It is so favourite to me that I can't start my day without a cup of tea.
9. Interesting enough, nutritionists examine Fat Choy and confirm that it has no nutrition value at all.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

[« Previous](#) | [Next »](#)

Friday, July 12, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a plant

A student sent me this question from a recent test in Australia:

Describe a plant grown in your country. You should say

- what the plant is

- where it is grown

- why you like or dislike it

- and explain why it is important to your country.

If you haven't prepared for this question you might find it difficult, so let's prepare in advance. Do some research about plants in your country; my tip is to choose a plant that produces some kind of food (a [crop](#)).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Friday, July 05, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'toys' topic

I've already done lessons about 'toys' for [part 2](#) and [part 3](#) of the speaking test, so let's try some part 1 questions about this topic. Notice that my part 1 answers are always short and direct.

1) Did you play with toys when you were a child?

Yes, of course. I loved playing with toys when I was a child; I think all children do.

2) What kinds of toys did you like?

As far as I remember, I mostly played with toy cars, planes and action figures from films or cartoons. I also liked building things with Lego.

3) In your country, do boys and girls play with the same types of toys?

Not really. I think boys like the kinds of toys that I mentioned before, whereas girls play with dolls. My niece, for example, doesn't like toy cars; she prefers dressing dolls in different outfits.

4) Do you think that toys help children to learn?

Yes, I do. All toys encourage children to use their imagination and creativity. Even with simple toys, children imagine situations and invent games and rules.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, June 28, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: don't focus on linking

A student asked me whether it would be a good idea to use the phrases below to organise last week's [description](#) of a market:

1. I would like to start with the first point which is where the market is.
2. Going on to my next point which is what the market sells, well...
3. With reference to the question of how big the market is, well...
4. As a final point, I would like to explain why I enjoy visiting it.

Personally I do **not** recommend using phrases like these. While you won't lose marks for using them, you won't gain marks either. But here's the problem: the time you spend saying these linking phrases is time that you should be spending on the [real content](#) of your answer. Focus on answering, not linking!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, June 21, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a market

Describe an open-air or street market which you enjoyed visiting. You should say:

- where the market is***
- what the market sells***
- how big the market is***
- and explain why you enjoyed visiting it.***

Here's my description. It includes several examples of 'band 7-9' vocabulary that I took from the websites I listed in last week's lesson.

- I'm going to describe a street market that I've enjoyed visiting many times in Manchester. It's the Manchester Christmas Market, and it comes to the city for about a month from the end of November every

year. The market stalls are spread across several sites in the city centre, but the centrepiece is the large European market in Albert Square next to the Town Hall.

- The Christmas Market stalls sell an array of Christmas gifts and mouth-watering food and drink from all over Europe. It's a great place to find handmade crafts such as jewellery, ornaments, wooden toys and other souvenirs, but it's the food and drink that seem to be most popular. Probably the biggest seller is the 'Gluhwein', a hot, sweet wine which is sold in a souvenir mug.
- The market was originally quite small, occupying just one of the central squares in Manchester, but it's grown quickly in recent years, spilling over into maybe five other pedestrian streets and a few other squares. Apparently there are over 200 stalls now, so it's become a really big event attracting thousands of visitors.
- The main reason I've always enjoyed visiting the Christmas Market is the fantastic atmosphere. When I went there last December, it didn't matter how cold or wet the weather was, Manchester seemed to come alive when the market opened; the streets were bustling with people and there was a real festive feel to the city.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, June 14, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'street market' topic

The following question comes from Cambridge IELTS book 9.

Describe an open-air or street market which you enjoyed visiting. You should say:

- ***where the market is***
- ***what the market sells***
- ***how big the market is***
- ***and explain why you enjoyed visiting it.***

Task:

Let's imagine that you have visited the Christmas market in Manchester. Write your answer to the question above using information from the websites linked below. Try to 'steal' some good vocabulary from the sites. I'll share my answer next week.

1. [Official visitor website for Manchester Christmas market](#)
2. [Newspaper article about the market](#)
3. [Some reviews on a tourism website](#)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Friday, June 07, 2013

IELTS Speaking: complex structures?

Students often worry that they need to use "complex structures" in the speaking test. But what is a complex structure?

[This website](#) explains the difference between simple sentences, compound sentences and complex sentences. You'll notice that compound and complex sentences are ***much easier*** than they sound! I'm sure you use them all the time without realising it.

Here's my advice: stop worrying about the need for "complex" grammar. Instead, focus on expressing your ***ideas*** well. As you explain your ideas in detail, you will naturally produce longer sentences which contain a variety of grammatical features.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Friday, May 31, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: make it personal

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, it really helps if you give personal examples:

1. Do you think it's important for people to have hobbies? Why?

Yes, I think people need to have hobbies because we all need to do things we enjoy in our spare time. In my case, I find that playing football once a week with some friends helps me to relax, keep fit and forget about work. I think it's the same for everyone.

2. Can hobbies have any negative effects?

Yes, if you spend too much time on your hobby, it can affect other parts of your life. I remember that one of my friends spent most of his time at university playing computer games instead of studying. In the end, he failed most of his exams.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, May 24, 2013

IELTS Speaking: prepare by writing your answers

Although this is a speaking test, a good way to prepare and practise is by writing your answers down. Here's a quick example:

Describe a recent journey.

I'm going to talk about a recent journey to London. It was a couple of weekends ago, and I decided to visit the capital with some friends. I had never been before, so I wanted to go there to do some sightseeing. I don't have a car, but my friend does, so he volunteered to drive. He had done the trip a few times before, so he knew the way. Maybe it was a bad idea to travel by car because the traffic between Manchester and London was terrible. We spent a lot of time sitting in traffic jams, which were due to roadworks and minor accidents, and it took us the best part of an afternoon to get there...

Note:

The description above is easy to understand, but it contains enough 'less common vocabulary' (underlined) to impress the examiner.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(29\)](#)

Friday, May 17, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'telephoning' topic

Here are some part 1 questions and sample answers from Cambridge IELTS book 9. Remember to make your part 1 answers short and simple. Just give a direct answer, followed by a reason or one extra piece of information.

1. How often do you make telephone calls?

I probably make three or four phone calls every day, usually just to make arrangements with work colleagues or to speak to family and friends.

2. Who do you spend most time talking to on the telephone?

I think it would be one of my closest work colleagues. We often call each other rather than meeting face-to-face.

3. When do you think you'll next make a telephone call?

My family are expecting me to phone them as soon as I finish this exam. They'll want to know how it went.

4. Do you sometimes prefer to send a text message instead of telephoning?

Yes. I prefer to send a text message when I'm arranging something simple, like a time to meet someone. In those situations, a phone call isn't necessary.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, May 10, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'library' topic

Several students shared their descriptions of a library below [this lesson](#). Here are some sentences that contain mistakes. Can you correct them?

1. There was no any room to stay here for reading borrowed books.
2. I am going to talk about a library, where I used to go there every day during my graduation years.
3. I was accustomed to be there always because I found it very useful.
4. It is one of the biggest library in my country.
5. I used to went there when I was the student as it was at a walking distance from my campus.

PS. It's worth reading the descriptions by 'Librarian' and Martin below last week's lesson. Both are really good.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, May 03, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a library

Has anyone had the following question recently?

Describe a library that you visited? You should say

- ***where the library was***
- ***what facilities it had***
- ***why you went there***
- ***and explain whether you found the library useful or not.***

This question might surprise you if you're not ready for it. However, I think it's actually quite an easy topic. The easiest way to answer would be to talk about a school or university library where you went to study for an assignment or exam.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(48\)](#)

Friday, April 26, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: band 9 answer

When I wrote my [funny situation](#) description last week, I wasn't trying to use 'difficult' grammar or vocabulary. Maybe you read it and thought that it was too 'easy' to get a band 9. If you thought that, you would be wrong!

Here's why my description would get a band 9 (according to the IELTS criteria):

1. Fluency and coherence

The fact that I told a story made my answer really coherent (clear and logically organised). In terms of fluency, my description was written rather than spoken, so of course there are no pauses or hesitations.

2. Lexical resource (vocabulary)

The description might seem simple, but it isn't. A wide resource of vocabulary is used naturally and accurately. There are definitely some 'less common' and idiomatic phrases (e.g. engrossed, the time passed, I suddenly realised, get going, my leg was dead, tipped over, to my surprise).

3. Grammatical range and accuracy

Unless you can find any mistakes, it would be difficult to give my description anything less than 9 for accuracy. The range of structures used is also easily good enough to impress the examiner.

4. Pronunciation

Hopefully this wouldn't be a problem as I'm a native speaker!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Sunday, April 21, 2013

IELTS Advice: storytelling

In Friday's [speaking lesson](#) I described a funny thing that happened to me. I found it really easy to write my description because I told a true story. I wasn't worrying about grammar or vocabulary; I just told my story in a natural way.

The key to a high speaking score *isn't* your use of 'complex' grammar structures, big words or idiomatic phrases. The key is to speak as naturally as possible, and real examples or stories help you to do this.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Friday, April 19, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: funny situation

Describe a funny situation that made you laugh. You should say

- when this situation took place***
- what happened***
- how you reacted and why you found the situation funny.***

Here's my example answer. It's a true story!

- I'm going to talk about a funny thing that happened to me a couple of weeks ago. I think it was a Saturday morning, and I was sitting having a coffee in a café near where I live.
- I was on my own so I decided to read the newspaper while drinking my coffee. I must have been quite engrossed in what I was reading because the time passed quickly, and I suddenly realised that I needed to get going. What I didn't realise was that I had been sitting with my legs crossed, and one of my legs had completely gone to sleep. As I stood up to leave the café, I quickly became aware that my left leg was 'dead', but it was too late; I started to fall. I thought I could catch myself on the table, but the table tipped over and I fell to the floor in front of everyone in the café!
- I can remember being on my knees in the middle of the café, looking up at the staff and customers around me. I felt really embarrassed and I expected the other people to find it funny, but to my surprise nobody was laughing. They were all worried that something really bad had happened to me! As I got up from the floor, I had to explain to the whole café that I was fine. I was embarrassed at the time, but I laughed about it later!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Friday, April 12, 2013

IELTS Speaking: correct the mistakes

Here are some sentences that students wrote about last week's [describe a funny situation](#) question. Try to find and correct the mistakes in each sentence.

1. Every person make happy at a one point or the other.
2. It was first time to go to the centre of the town from my village.
3. Nobody who were there stopped laughing include and me.
4. I'm going to talk about a funny but also embarrassed thing that I met.
5. As a child I was keen on the plays between the children with similar ages.
6. I could not held back laughter.

Tip:

Often, the best way to deal with grammar problems is by finding a completely different (and simpler) way to express the same idea.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Friday, April 05, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: a funny situation

Think about this question and prepare some ideas:

Describe a funny situation that made you laugh. You should say

- ***when this situation took place***
- ***what happened***
- ***how you reacted and why you found the situation funny.***

Tip: The best way to answer this question is to tell a story. If you can't think of a real situation, make one up!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, March 29, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'friends' topic

In part 1 of the IELTS speaking test, remember to keep your answers short and simple. Here are some example questions and short answers:

1. Are your friends mostly your age or different ages?

Most of my friends are about the same age as me because we met at school or university. I've got one or two friends who are older or younger that I met through work.

2. Do you usually see your friends during the week or at weekends?

I tend to meet up with my friends at weekends because everyone's too busy during the week.

3. The last time you saw your friends, what did you do together?

It was one of my friends' birthday last weekend. Six of us went out for a meal to celebrate.

4. In what ways are your friends important to you?

I think it's important to have friends that you can talk to and share experiences with. My friends make me laugh, but I know I can also rely on them whenever I need help or support.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Friday, March 22, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: more long answers

Here are two more answers using the techniques I explained [last week](#):

What do you think are the most important qualities for friends to have?

Maybe the most important things are that friends need to share common interests and be honest with each other. **(why?)** Friends are people we spend a lot of time with, so it definitely helps if they enjoy doing the same activities or talking about the same topics as we do, and of course we need to be able to trust our friends, so honesty is vital for a good friendship. **(alternatives / example?)** I think I would struggle to become friends with someone who didn't have anything in common with me, or who wasn't reliable or trustworthy.

How important do you think it is for a person to spend some time alone?

I'd say that it's essential to spend a bit of time alone, even if it's just a few minutes a day. **(why?)** When you have a few minutes to yourself, it's a chance to take stock and reflect on things. **(why?)** Most of us live such busy lives that our brains need time to catch up every now and then. **(example / alternatives?)** Personally, I try to have a bit of "me time" every day; I'll go for a coffee or find a quiet place to sit and read the newspaper. If I never had any time alone, I think I'd go mad!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, March 15, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: longer answers

Here are 3 techniques to help you give longer, more detailed answers:

1. Keep asking yourself "why?"
2. Explain the alternatives
3. Give an example

Question:

Do you think that school children should be encouraged to have their own ideas, or is it more important for them to learn what their teachers give them?

Answer:

I think that we should definitely allow children to be creative and have their own ideas. **(why?)** Children need to develop the ability to think for themselves and solve problems **(why?)** because as adults they will not always have somebody to guide them or tell them what to do. **(alternatives?)** If we don't allow children to have their own ideas, they will be less successful in the adult world; they will

be too reliant on others. **(example?)** A doctor, for example, might encounter a situation that he or she hasn't been trained for, but will still be expected to make a decision that could save someone's life.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Friday, March 08, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: team project

Describe a team project that you worked on. You should say:

- ***what it was***
- ***what you did***
- ***and how you felt about it.***

Example answer (band 9):

I'd like to talk about a team project that I was involved in during my final term at business school. There were four of us on the team, and our task was to work with a local company to research a new market, in a European country, for one of their products or services. Our objective was to produce a report and give a presentation.

The first thing we did was split into two groups of two. We had been assigned a company that produced a range of bicycle accessories, so two of us spent some time getting to know the company while the other two researched the market and the competitors in the target country, which was Germany. In the end, I think it was a successful project because we managed to identify a possible gap in the market in Germany for one of the company's products. Our group presentation also went really well.

Until that point, the course had been all about business theory, so it was quite a learning experience to work with a real company. I felt a real sense of accomplishment when we handed in our report and delivered our presentation, and I think all of us were proud of what we had done.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Friday, March 01, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'team project' topic

I decided to do some research for last week's ***Describe a team project*** question. I typed "it was a team project" into Google.

Here are 3 links to project descriptions that I found:

- 1) [Project about software failures](#)
- 2) [Student robotics project](#)
- 3) [Barack Obama's speech](#)

You won't be able to use everything you read in these descriptions, but you should find some good vocabulary ideas that you can copy:

- a team project with 3 members on each team
- It was quite a learning experience
- In the end, I think it was a successful project
- Our task was to...
- We had to collaborate
- The challenges were intense but fun
- a real sense of accomplishment
- It was more rewarding than I could have imagined
- They were proud of what we had done
- Success is a team project
- share the burden

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)
 Friday, February 15, 2013

IELTS Speaking: if you don't know the answer

How do you answer a question when you don't know anything about the topic?
 There are 2 things you can do:

1. Be honest and explain why you don't know
2. Guess, and tell the examiner that you are guessing

Example question:

How has technology affected the kinds of music that young people listen to?

My answer, using both tips above:

(1) To be honest I don't really know the answer to that because I'm completely out of touch with what young people are listening to, and I'm not a fan of pop music.

(2) However, I suppose that technology must have affected music. Maybe young people are listening to music that has been made using computer software instead of real musical instruments like the piano or guitar.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)
 Friday, February 08, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 3: questions about the future

When the examiner asks a question like the one below, you know that you are being tested on your ability to express ideas in the future tense.

How do you think the design of homes will change in the future?

Example answer:

I don't think there will be much change in terms of what houses look like from the outside. In this country, people still like traditional brick or stone houses.

Having said that, the design of apartment blocks will probably continue to develop, with more and more experimental or futuristic buildings made of glass and metal. Imagine that it will be the insides of homes that change the most; houses will no doubt be full of technological devices to make our lives easier. Maybe we'll have things like voice-controlled doors, lights and appliances.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Friday, February 01, 2013

IELTS Speaking: a preparation technique

A good way to prepare for IELTS speaking is to take one topic area and practise possible questions for all 3 parts. Here are some examples:

'Home' topic

Part 1 - give short answers

1. Do you live in a house or a flat?
2. What's your favourite room in your home? Why?
3. What would you like to change about your home? Why?
4. Would you like to move house in the future?

Part 2 - speak for 2 minutes

Describe an interesting home that you have visited.

Part 3 - give longer answers

1. What factors do you think are important when choosing where to live?
2. Compare life in a city with life in the countryside.
3. How do you think the design of homes will change in the future?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Friday, January 25, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 1: musical instruments

For IELTS speaking part 1, remember to give short, simple answers. Answer the question with a full sentence and give a reason for your answer. Here are some example questions and answers about musical instruments (from Cambridge IELTS book 6):

1. Which musical instrument do you like listening to most? (Why?)

My favourite musical instrument to listen to is the guitar. I like the fact that there are different types of guitar, like classical, acoustic and electric. I love the variety of sounds a guitar can make.

2. Have you ever learned to play a musical instrument?

I took some guitar lessons when I was younger and still have a guitar at home. I don't play it much nowadays. I wish I had more time to practise.

3. Do you think children should learn to play an instrument at school?

Yes, I think it's a great skill and it's really enjoyable to be able to play a musical instrument. All children should be given this opportunity.

4. How easy would it be to learn to play an instrument without a teacher?

It would probably be more difficult without a teacher. You need someone to show you what to do and correct your mistakes. You need a lot of discipline to teach yourself.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Saturday, January 19, 2013

IELTS Advice: speaking strategies

Here are some of the strategies that I used in [yesterday's description](#):

1. Try to develop each bullet point in detail. If you don't say enough for the first two or three points, you'll find yourself with too much time for the last point.
2. Tell a story! My second point tells the story of how I was given the chair by a friend, and I could probably speak for 2 minutes about this point alone. When you tell a story about something real that happened, you'll find it easy to keep talking. Stories are also interesting for the listener (the examiner).
3. Add examples. In point 3, you can see that I added an example at the end ("last night I fell asleep in my armchair while I was watching a film"). I could easily take this example and develop it into another short story.
4. When describing an object, don't forget the simple things like size, colour (I forgot that one!), shape, material, position ("just under my living room window").

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Friday, January 18, 2013

IELTS Speaking: describe a piece of furniture

Here are some ideas for [last week's question](#):

- I'm going to talk about my favourite chair. It's a big, leather armchair that sits in my living room at home, just under my living room window.
- I didn't actually buy the armchair. One of my friends was moving house and was going to buy some new furniture. I had always liked his leather armchair, so he said I could have it if I managed to move it. The chair wouldn't fit in my car, and it was tricky to get it out of my friend's apartment. I had to hire a small van to take the armchair home.
- Obviously I use the armchair for sitting! It's my favourite place in the house to relax, read a book, watch TV or even do some work; the

chair's arms are quite wide and flat, so my laptop fits nicely on either of them. Last night I fell asleep in my armchair while I was watching a film.

- The main reasons why I like this piece of furniture are that it's comfortable and it's in the perfect position in my living room. The only drawback might be that I enjoy sitting in the armchair too much, and sometimes I think it makes me lazy!

Remember to highlight any useful words or phrases that you found in my description. Also, did you notice some of the strategies that I used to make the answer more interesting?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Friday, January 11, 2013

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'furniture' topic

Think about what you would say for the following question. I'll share my ideas in next week's lesson.

Describe a piece of furniture that you own. You should say

- ***what it is***
- ***where you bought it***
- ***how you use it***
- ***and explain why you like it.***

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, January 04, 2013

IELTS Speaking: the importance of part 2

A few people have asked me what will happen if they do badly in part 2 of the speaking test. Is it still possible to get a high score?

In theory, it is still possible to get a reasonably high score (maybe band 7) if you do badly in part 2, but you would need to give excellent answers in part 3. In practice, candidates rarely recover from a bad part 2; I don't remember anyone who made a mess of part 2 but suddenly did a fantastic part 3.

My advice: You should consider part 2 as the core of your speaking test. It's your best chance to show how good your English is, and it's the examiner's best chance to listen carefully to your use of language (so it's probably the point at which most examiners get a clear idea of what score to give you).

The good news is that you can prepare for part 2. [Click here](#) to get started!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Friday, December 21, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 1: clothes

1. Are clothes and clothing fashions important to you? (Why/Why not?)

No, clothes and fashions are not really important to me. I tend to wear clothes that are comfortable and practical rather than fashionable.

2. What different clothes do you wear for different situations?

Well, I have to dress quite formally for work, so I wear a shirt and trousers. At home I prefer to wear jeans and a T-shirt, and on special occasions I might wear a suit.

3. Do you wear different styles of clothes now compared to 10 years ago?

No, not really, because I don't follow fashion. I think I have dressed in a similar way for the last 10 years.

4. Do you think the clothes we wear say something about who we are?

Yes, they probably do. Some people are really careful about what they wear because they want to be seen as stylish. Other people wear clothes that show wealth or status, such as clothes by famous designers.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Friday, December 14, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: ideal home

Several people shared their descriptions of an ideal home in the comments below last week's [lesson](#). If you do some research online, you'll find lots of websites with pictures and descriptions of interesting homes. [Click here](#) to see my favourite.

"Perched on the edges of daunting precipices, these cliff and mountain homes are some of the scariest places you could possibly think to live. Some have survived for centuries while others are (quite literally) on the brink of destruction."

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

[« Previous](#) | [Next »](#)

Friday, December 07, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: ideal home

Describe the ideal home that you would like to live in. You should say

- **what your ideal home would look like**
- **where it would be**
- **and why you would like to live there.**

My advice for this topic is similar to the advice I gave for the [vehicle](#) topic:

1. Make a quick decision about the type of home you will describe.

2. Talk about each bullet point in as much detail as you can.
3. Maybe choose something adventurous like a castle or an apartment on the top floor of a skyscraper, even if it's not really your ideal home. You might find it easier to talk for 2 minutes about something more imaginative.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Friday, November 30, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'communication' topic

Here are some more examples for IELTS speaking part 1. Remember to give short, easy, direct answers.

1. How do you usually keep in touch with members of your family?

I mostly keep in touch with my family by phone, and I've started using the Internet to make video calls. I also try to visit members of my family in person as often as I can.

2. Do you prefer to speak to people by phone or by writing emails?

It depends on the situation. I use email and text messages to communicate with friends, but my parents prefer it if I phone them.

3. Do you ever write letters by hand? (Why / Why not?)

No, I don't write letters by hand because it's so much easier to send an email that will arrive immediately.

4. Is there anything you dislike about mobile phones?

Well, I don't like listening to other people's conversations in public places, and I don't like it when someone's phone rings in the cinema or during a lesson.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Friday, November 23, 2012

IELTS Speaking: useful expressions

In this lesson I want to draw your attention to a few useful expressions that I used in [last week's answers](#). Maybe you could try using them in your own answers.

1. An alternative way to say "and":

- Just as individuals can learn from their mistakes, societies can (also)...
- Just as we need to exercise the body, we also need to exercise the mind.

2. A nice way to introduce a personal example or opinion:

- From what I've read in the newspapers,...
- From what I've heard / seen / experienced,...

3. Giving an opinion when you're not sure:

- If I had to guess what might happen in the future, I'd like to think that...
- If I had to give my opinion, I'd say...

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#)

Friday, November 16, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'history' topic

Questions in part 3 of the speaking test follow on from the topic you were given in part 2. So, after last week's [historic event](#) question, you might be asked some further questions about history and events. For example:

1. What do you think we can learn by studying events of the past?

I think we can learn a lot by studying history. Just as individual people learn from their mistakes, societies can learn from the mistakes made by previous governments or leaders. For example, from what I've read in the newspapers, many economists are looking back to the time of the Great Depression, around 80 years ago, in order to understand the financial crisis that is currently affecting many countries around the world. Even if we don't always learn from mistakes, I think it's fascinating to study history because it gives us an insight into who we are and where we come from.

2. What important events do you think might take place in the future?

It's really difficult to predict what will happen in the future; most of the big, historic events of the past would have been impossible to foresee. For example, I don't think that anyone living 100 years ago could have imagined that people would one day walk on the moon! If I had to guess what might happen in the future, I'd like to think that scientists will invent cures for diseases like cancer, and we'll all live longer.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, November 09, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: event in history

A student sent me this question from a recent IELTS test:

Describe an important event in history. You should say

- ***when it happened***
- ***what the event was***
- ***and what effect you think this event had.***

I think this is a really nice question. If you choose the right event, it should be easy to talk for 2 minutes. Here are some suggestions:

- Don't talk about a personal event - that would be considered 'off topic'.

- Choose something that you know about - a recent event might be easier. For example, you could choose the invention of the [World Wide Web](#) or the election of [Barack Obama](#).
- Prepare this topic before your exam. If you like the two examples mentioned above, click on the links and do some research.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, November 02, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: old building description

Describe an old building that you like. You should say:

- ***where it is***
- ***what it is used for***
- ***and why you like it.***

The answer below is adapted from the [modern building](#) description I wrote last year. Can you spot some of the vocabulary that I've recycled?

1. I'm going to describe a very famous building in New York: the Empire State Building. People might not think of it as an old building, but the Empire State Building was built in 1931, so I don't think it can be classed as new. It's located on Manhattan island and it's probably the most distinctive and recognisable building when you look at New York's skyline.
2. As far as I know, the Empire State Building is an office building, but visitors can go up to an observation deck on the top floor, which is the 102nd floor. There's also a 360-degree observation area on the 86th floor. Apparently, the building makes more money from the sale of tickets to the observation floors than it does from office rentals.
3. I think the Empire State Building is still one of the most impressive skyscrapers in the world. It's such an iconic structure, and it's amazing to think that it was built around 80 years ago. The best thing about the building is the viewing deck on the top floor, which offers spectacular views of the city; it's definitely the best vantage point in New York. I'd recommend anyone who visits the city to go there and experience the view.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, October 26, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: old building

I've already done a description of a modern building [here](#), but the examiner might ask you to describe an old building. How can we adapt the 'modern building' description?

Looking at the vocabulary I used to describe the modern building (famous landmark, spectacular views, best vantage point etc.), it seems that we should choose an old building which is tall or has great views of a city.

One possibility that comes to mind is the [Empire State Building](#) in New York. It was built in 1931, so I think that would be old enough.

Can you think of any other examples? If you choose a famous building, it will probably have its own Wikipedia page. Do some research, and plan your description.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Friday, October 19, 2012

IELTS Speaking: part 1, 2 or 3?

It's important to know exactly what to expect in each part of the exam.

The following questions come from part 1, part 2 and part 3 of the speaking test.

Can you tell which part each question is from?

1. How often do you watch television?
2. How have television programmes changed since you were a child?
3. Describe a television programme that you enjoyed.
4. Which TV channel or channels do you prefer to watch? Why?
5. Do you think governments should control what TV programmes show?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Friday, October 12, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'difficult' questions

Students tend to worry about 'difficult questions', but questions are often much easier than they seem. For example:

Describe a law in your country.

Many students think they don't know anything about laws. However, there are some easy examples that they could choose:

1. In many countries it is now illegal to use a mobile phone while driving. You could start by talking about the popularity and benefits of mobile phones, and explain that people want to be able to answer calls wherever they are. Then you could explain the dangers of being distracted while driving; this law could reduce the number of road accidents, and therefore save lives.

2. If you feel confident talking about the 'education' topic, you could choose the 'compulsory education' law. This is the legal requirement that children up to a certain age must attend school. In the UK, for example, children are required by law to continue in education until they are 16 years old. This is a good topic because you can talk about the benefits of education.

Of course, you could choose a more obvious law (it is illegal to steal, carry a gun etc.) but you might have more ideas and good vocabulary if you choose a typical IELTS topic like number 2 above.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, October 05, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 1: negative answers

How do you answer questions about a topic that you are not interested in? For example, many people have no interest in dancing, so what should they say?

My advice: just tell the truth. It's fine to say you don't like something. Read my examples below:

1. Do you like dancing?

No, I don't like dancing. I'm not a big music fan, and dancing just makes me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious.

2. Has anyone ever taught you to dance?

No, I've never been interested in learning to dance, so I've never taken any lessons or asked anyone to show me how to do it.

3. Do you think that traditional dancing will be popular in the future?

I'm afraid I have no idea because I don't follow what's happening in the dancing world! I suppose it will always be popular with some people.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Sunday, September 30, 2012

IELTS Advice: preparing speaking topics

On Friday I suggested preparing [six main topics](#) for IELTS Speaking Part 2. But how should you prepare these topics? Where can you find good ideas?

I recommend doing two things. First, have a look through the speaking lessons on this site. Second, use the Internet to do some further research. For example, if you want a good description of a famous person, look him/her up on Wikipedia and note down the best vocabulary ideas.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Friday, September 28, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: main topics

For part 2 of IELTS speaking, I encourage my students in Manchester to prepare ideas for 6 main topic areas:

1. Describe an object (a gift, something you use etc.)
2. Describe a person (someone you admire, a family member etc.)
3. Describe an event (a festival, celebration etc.)
4. Describe an activity (e.g. a hobby)
5. Describe a place (somewhere you visited, a holiday etc.)
6. Describe your favourite (book/film/advertisement/website)

Most questions fit into one of these topics. For example, **"Describe a river, lake or sea which you like"** is number 5 - you could describe a holiday by the sea, or a city with a river.

Don't take the test without preparing some ideas for these topics first!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(38\)](#)

Friday, September 21, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: TV channel

Last week we looked at this question:

Describe a TV programme or channel that you enjoy watching regularly.

- ***What it is called and what is it about?***
- ***When do you usually watch it ?***
- ***Why do you prefer it to other programmes or channels?***

Here's a sample description with the best vocabulary underlined:

- I rarely watch traditional television channels nowadays; I much prefer searching for interesting programmes or videos online. So, although it's not a normal TV channel or programme, I'd like to talk about a website which I think is kind of a modern version of a TV channel. It's called TED, which stands for 'Technology, Entertainment, Design', and it's a great place to watch short talks and presentations about all sorts of interesting topics.
- The good thing about the videos on TED is that I can watch them whenever I want. I have ted.com saved as one of my favourites on my laptop, and I tend to visit the website every few days to check whether there is anything new. I often watch TED videos on my phone while I'm travelling to work on the train.
- The reason I like watching online videos on TED is that I learn something new every time I watch one. The tagline for the TED website is 'ideas worth spreading', and this really sums up the appeal of the site for me. Instead of watching meaningless soap operas and talk shows on TV, I'd much rather spend 10 minutes

watching someone talk about a breakthrough in technology, science or healthcare.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, September 14, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: TV programme or channel

Yap asked me about the following question:

Describe a TV programme or channel that you enjoy watching regularly.

- ***What it is called and what is it about?***
- ***When do you usually watch it ?***
- ***Why do you prefer it to other programmes or channels?***

Yap asked whether it would be acceptable to talk about ted.com as a TV channel. I think it would definitely be acceptable - just say that it's an online TV channel. TED would be a great choice for this topic.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, September 07, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a vehicle

Describe a vehicle you would like to buy in the future. You should say

- ***what kind of vehicle it is***
- ***what you would use it for***
- ***and why you would like to buy it.***

Here's my sample answer:

- If I had the money, I'd like to buy my own helicopter. I recently saw a TV programme about someone who flew around in his own helicopter, and I remember thinking that it would be great to have one. The helicopter on the programme was a small, blue, two-seater and it seemed quite easy to fly - that's the kind of thing I'd like to buy.
- Ideally, I'd use my helicopter instead of a car. First, I'd need to learn to fly it, but then I'd use it to go on short trips or holidays. It would be fantastic to be able to avoid traffic jams, and get everywhere in a fraction of the time it normally takes. I'd take friends and family sightseeing, over cities or mountain tops, and maybe I could even use it to do the shopping!
- The reason I'd like to buy a helicopter is that you can park one almost anywhere. You don't need to find a runway or an airport like you would for a plane. So I'd be able to park my helicopter in my garden - if I had a bigger garden. Also, I've always been intrigued by those helipads on the tops of tall buildings - I think it would be fun to land

on top of a building. A helicopter probably isn't a realistic choice of vehicle, but you never know - I might win the lottery!

PS. You should also have a look at Martin's sample answers in the comments area below [this lesson](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Friday, August 31, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a vehicle

Describe a vehicle you would like to buy in the future. You should say

- ***what kind of vehicle it is***
- ***what you would use it for***
- ***and why you would like to buy it.***

Here's some advice (I'll give you my model answer next week):

1. Make your decision quickly. Most people will choose to describe a car, but if you're feeling adventurous, it might be fun to choose an aeroplane (airplane) or a helicopter. It doesn't matter if your choice isn't realistic.
2. Develop each point in detail. For the first bullet point, tell the examiner as much as you can about the vehicle e.g. the make of the car, its colour, what it looks like outside and inside, the gadgets it has inside etc.
3. Stories are the best type of example: imagine where you would go in your new vehicle, and what you would use it for. The benefit of choosing something adventurous, like the aeroplane or helicopter, is that you are more likely to be creative and imaginative in the rest of your answer.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, August 24, 2012

IELTS Speaking: how to feel more confident

Here are some tips to help you feel more confident when you go for your IELTS speaking test:

- Be prepared: you should know exactly what to expect in the 3 parts of the speaking test, and you should have read the suggestions on this website about how to answer.
- Lots of practice: a student who has practised answering all of the questions in all eight Cambridge books, as well as the questions on this site, will feel much more confident than a student who hasn't.
- Write it down: when studying at home, you have time to prepare 'perfect' answers to practice questions; write your answers down, and ask someone to help you check and improve them.

- Speak aloud: start by reading the answers you wrote down (like an actor uses a script), then gradually stop using the script.
- Record yourself: this allows you to analyse the quality of your answers, as well as your pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.
- Focus on ideas: it's difficult to think about grammar when you are speaking, so I advise students to stop worrying about grammatical structures, and focus on expressing good ideas (which means good vocabulary).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Friday, August 03, 2012

IELTS Speaking: the examiner's attitude

I sometimes hear from students who are worried that their examiner seemed rude or angry in the speaking exam. Maybe the examiner didn't smile or make much eye contact, interrupted a lot, or kept looking at his/her watch. Does this mean that you will get a low score, or that you should complain?

The answer is no! Don't worry, and don't think that you need to complain. The examiner's attitude is not important at all, and you should ignore all of the things I mentioned above. Focus only on answering the examiner's questions as well as you can.

Remember: it's possible to have a very nice, smiling examiner who gives you a low score. On the other hand, an examiner who seems impolite or disinterested might give you a higher score than you expected!

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(59\)](#)

Friday, July 27, 2012

IELTS Speaking: add detail

Many students worry too much about grammar. For speaking parts 2 and 3, it's more important to worry about the quality of your answers. The best way to improve the quality of your answers is by adding detail.

Example:

Describe your best friend. Say when you met him/her.

Short answer about when we met:

I met my best friend at school when I was 11 years old.

Detailed answer about when we met:

I met my best friend at school when I was 11 years old, so we've known each other for ... years. I remember we sat next to each other in my first science lesson at secondary school, and we had to work together to do an experiment. We got on straight away, and we've been friends ever since.

Notice that by adding more information I've also used more/better vocabulary and grammar.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Friday, July 20, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: use what you know

Don't worry if you get a question that you haven't prepared for. You can usually use ideas that you prepared for a different topic. For example:

Describe a piece of advice that you gave (or that someone gave you)

Why not say that you advised your friend to visit London? Then you could use all the good vocabulary from [this lesson](#). Or you could use [this lesson](#) to talk about advice that your father gave you. For example, say that your father told you to work hard. Then you could use great vocabulary such as 'major influence', 'hard-working', 'role model', 'set a good example', 'positive outlook on life'.

Think quickly during the one-minute preparation time: What can I use that I've already prepared?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, July 13, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'politeness' topic

Two weeks ago I showed you a part 2 question about [a situation in which you were polite](#). Let's have a look at some related questions for part 3 of the test:

In your country's culture, how do you show that you are being polite?

We really value politeness and good manners in the UK, and there are many types of polite behaviour. One of the first things we learn as children is to say "please" and "thank you". As adults, I think we are careful not to be too direct in the language we use. For example, we would never say "Bring me the bill" in a restaurant because this kind of direct instruction would sound rude. It would be much more polite to say "Could we have the bill, please?".

Are we less polite with members of our families than with people we don't know?

I suppose it's normal to be a bit more relaxed about politeness with family members. Most people tend to speak in a more informal way at home; in the UK, we still say "please" and "thanks", but it's fine to use colloquial language and things like nicknames that you would never use with someone you didn't know.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, July 06, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 3: comparing past and present

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, you might be asked to compare the past with the present. The examiner will be listening to your use tenses. For example:

Are there any differences between the types of people who were seen as celebrities in the past and those who are celebrities nowadays?

Yes, I think there have been some big changes in the types of people who become famous. In the past, before the invention of television, I suppose there were very few national or international celebrities; maybe kings and queens, military, political and religious leaders were the only household names. With the advent of TV and radio, performers such as actors and musicians became more well-known. However, we now seem to have a completely new breed of celebrity as a result of 'reality' television programmes; these are people who don't really have any special skills as performers, but who are famous for just being themselves.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(6\)](#)

Friday, June 29, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: choose your topic quickly!

One of the most important things to practise for IELTS speaking part 2 is choosing your topic quickly. Take this question for example:

Describe a situation in which you were very polite. You should explain

- ***where the situation took place***
- ***how you showed that you were polite***
- ***and why you needed to be so polite.***

It would be easy to waste your one-minute preparation time worrying about what situation to choose. If you still haven't decided what to talk about when the examiner asks you to start speaking, you'll be in real trouble!

Task:

Give yourself just 10 seconds to choose your polite situation. It doesn't really matter what situation you choose; the key is to give yourself enough time to prepare some ideas.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

Friday, June 22, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'work' topic

Here are some example questions with short, direct answers. Remember that part 1 is like a warm-up; you are not expected to give long, complex answers for this part.

1. Do you work or are you a student?

I'm a qualified doctor, but at the moment I'm studying English so that I can work in this country.

2. Do you enjoy your job?

Yes, I really enjoy my job. Ever since I was a child I have always wanted to be a doctor; I've always wanted to be able to help people.

3. What's the best thing about your job?

The best thing about my job is that I can make a difference in people's lives. It's a great feeling to see someone recover after an illness because my colleagues and I were able to help.

4. Do you prefer working alone or with others? Why?

In a hospital you have to work as part of a team. I've got used to working with others, and I think you can achieve a lot more as a team than you would alone.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(29\)](#)

Friday, June 15, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 3: explain, alternative, example

In part 3 of the speaking test, you need to give longer, detailed answers. A good way to do this is by organising your answers according to the following steps:

1. Idea: answer the question directly.
2. Explain: give a reason or explain your answer in more detail.
3. Alternative: explain an alternative (e.g. the opposite) to your answer.
4. Example: give an example to support your answer.
5. Another idea: sometimes you think of another idea while you are speaking. Just add it on the end of your answer.

You can give a really good answer without including all five steps, but you might find it useful to practise including all five, as I've done here:

Why do you think some people prefer to buy products from their own countries rather than imported items?

(idea) I suppose it's because those people want to support the economy of the country they live in. **(explain)** If they buy something that was made in their own country, they know that they are contributing to the salaries of workers within the same country, **(alternative)** whereas if they buy imported items, a foreign company and its employees will benefit. **(example)** For example, if I buy some meat that originates from a local farm rather than a farm in another country, I'm helping one of my fellow citizens to carry on in business. **(another idea)** Also, I think that trust is an issue; people might feel that they can trust domestically produced items more than imported ones.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, June 08, 2012

IELTS Speaking Advice: record, transcribe, analyse

Here are some steps that you could follow when practising for the speaking test:

1. Choose a real speaking test from one of the Cambridge books.
2. Record yourself answering one or all of the parts of the test.
3. Listen to the recording and transcribe it (write down everything you said).
4. Analyse the transcript. How could your answers be improved?
5. Take some time to prepare better answers for the same questions.
6. Try the same questions again! Record yourself, transcribe and analyse.
7. Repeat the process a few times until you are happy.

Imagine if you did this kind of hard work every day for a month. I'm sure you'd be more confident and better prepared than you are now.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Friday, June 01, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: formula phrases

A student asked me whether the following formula is useful for speaking part 2:

- I guess I could begin by saying something about (point 1) and I think I would have to choose...
- Going on to my next point which is (point 2), I really need to emphasise that (explain point 2).
- And now with reference to (point 3), the point I want to make here is that (explain point 3).
- And so finally, if I have time, in answer to the question of (point 4), really I should mention that...

So, are these 'formula phrases' a good idea? My answer is **no!**

As an English speaker and ex-examiner, I find these phrases annoying. It's obvious that they are memorised, and they do not address the question topic. Please don't expect the examiner to be impressed by this kind of thing.

There are a couple of benefits to learning a formula: it gives your answer some structure, and it might make you feel more confident during the test. However, the disadvantages are greater:

1. Your focus is on the phrases you have memorised, when it should be on [answering the question](#) with relevant ideas.
2. The examiner thinks that you are using memorised phrases because you are unable to produce good language spontaneously. In other words, your use of long formula phrases suggests that your level of English is lower.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, May 25, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: foreign culture

Here are some ideas for [last week's question](#).

1. Which culture and how I know about it

I'm going to talk about France and French culture. I know France quite well because it was the first foreign country that I visited as a child. I've been on several family holidays there, and I lived and worked in Paris for a while after finishing university.

2. Cultural differences

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about France is the bread! I love the fact that French people buy fresh baguettes every morning, usually from small local bakeries or 'patisseries'; it makes a change from the loaves of sliced bread that most of us buy from the supermarket here in the UK. One slightly negative difference I noticed in Paris is that Parisians don't seem to make friends with their work colleagues to the same extent as we do here.

3. What I like about it

I really like the café culture in France. You can always find somewhere interesting to sit and have a coffee and chat to friends or just watch the world go by. I actually put on a bit of weight when I lived in France because I got into a habit of having a croissant or a cake in every nice café that I found. Another thing I could mention is that the last time I went to France on holiday, I played a game called 'boules' every day. The game consists in throwing metal balls as close to a target ball as possible. It's the perfect game for a relaxing afternoon when the weather's hot.

Tip:

Notice that I included personal examples or experiences in my answers. It's easy to talk for 2 minutes if you can tell a story or two.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Friday, May 18, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'foreign culture' topic

Describe a foreign culture that you like. You should say

- ***what culture it is and how you know about it***
- ***what differences there are between that culture and your own***
- ***and why you like that foreign culture.***

For this question, you don't need to discuss 'deep' cultural issues. Just choose a foreign country that you have visited, and talk about anything that is different from your own culture (language, food, customs, behaviour, typical activities etc.).

Feel free to share your descriptions in the comments area below this lesson. I'll post my description (or I'll use the best one of yours) next week.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(35\)](#)

Friday, May 11, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'accommodation' topic

Here are some questions that I found on the official IELTS website, ielts.org. The answers below are my examples. Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and simple. You don't need to show off in part 1.

1. Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in.

I live in a house that has a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom and a small garden. It's not a very big house, but it's just right for me.

2. How long have you lived there?

I've lived there for about five years. It's the first house that I've owned; before that I was renting an apartment.

3. What do you like about living there?

I like living there because I think the house reflects my personality: I decorated it myself, I chose all the furniture, and everything is where I want it to be.

4. What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in?

If I could, I'd buy a bigger house near a beach or in the mountains, preferably somewhere with a warm climate.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, May 04, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: take ideas from other topics

Describe a time when you received some money as a gift. You should say:

- ***who gave it to you***
- ***what the occasion was***
- ***how you felt***
- ***and explain what you did with the money.***

If you think about some of the topics we have already prepared, the question above should be quite easy.

Some ideas:

1. You could say that you received money for your birthday and took your friends out for a meal. Take some ideas from [this lesson](#).
2. You could say that you bought yourself a new phone (see [this lesson](#)).

3. You could say that you used the money to pay for a holiday or trip, and use ideas from [this lesson](#).

Note:

I'm not recommending that you learn my answers word-for-word. Just try to take some of my ideas and adapt them to your own answers.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

[« Previous](#) | [Next »](#)

Friday, April 27, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a website

In Part 2 of IELTS Speaking, you might be asked to describe a website that you use:

Describe a website that you often use. You should say:

- ***what type of website it is***
- ***how you found out about it***
- ***what it allows you to do, and why you find it useful.***

Here are some ideas, with some of the band 7-9 vocabulary underlined:

1. Facebook is a social networking website. It's a free website that allows you to keep in contact with friends or find people you've lost touch with. It's one of the most popular websites in the world, with millions of users in different countries.
2. All of my friends use Facebook. One of my friends sent me an email inviting me to join. I signed up and I've been using it ever since.
3. Facebook allows you to keep up to date with what friends are doing. You have a profile page with information and status updates so that you can tell everyone what you're doing. You can post messages to other people's pages. You can upload photos and videos. I find Facebook most useful for organising my life, keeping in touch with friends and storing photos. I think social networking websites have become part of everyday life.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Friday, April 20, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: three tips

Here are three quick tips for IELTS speaking part 2 (the short speech):

1. Use the 1 minute preparation time well

Think about how you would answer the question in your own language, then write down as many ideas as possible in English.

2. Give real examples

Say what you really think, talk about your real life, and give real examples.

Examples are really important; whenever you don't know what to say, give an example from your own experience.

3. Don't worry about grammar

You haven't got time to think about passives or conditionals. Focus on answering the question - ideas and vocabulary.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Friday, April 13, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 3: common question types

Here are 3 common question types that the examiner could ask you:

1. Compare and contrast.
2. Give an opinion.
3. Imagine.

If the topic is 'cities', the examiner could ask:

1. How is life different in cities compared to rural areas?
2. How do you think life in big cities could be made easier?
3. What do you think cities will be like in 50 years time?

In my answers below I've underlined a few 'markers' that show comparisons, opinions and future predictions.

1. Firstly, the cost of living in cities is much higher. Housing is much more expensive in cities compared to rural areas; everything costs more. I think life in cities is more difficult. There are more people, so there's more competition for jobs. Life is a lot slower in rural areas, everyone knows each other and there's a sense of community. I don't think rural areas experience the social problems that you find in cities, like crime and homelessness.
2. In my opinion cities need to be well-planned. Good public transport can definitely make life easier because there are so many people and it can be really stressful just to move around. Public areas like parks are also important because people need space to relax, and I think cities should be made into healthier places to live and work.
3. I imagine cities will be less polluted because we'll have electric cars and better public transport. More people might work from home so maybe cities won't be so busy. But I think there will probably still be problems because more and more people are migrating to cities. So I'm not so optimistic about issues like crime, homelessness and unemployment.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, March 30, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: which tense?

- Can you use the past tense when describing a person who is still alive?
- Which tense should you use when describing a person?

The answer to the first question is **yes**. You can say: "My father was always a good role model for me when I was growing up." This doesn't mean that your father is no longer alive; it just means that you are no longer growing up!

The answer to the second question is **it depends**. As we saw above, you can use the past tense, but it would also be easy to add the present and/or future tense: "My father was always kind to me when I was a child, and he still helps me whenever I need something. I'm sure he will always be there for me."

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, March 23, 2012

IELTS Speaking: use real examples!

To improve your IELTS speaking score, use good examples to extend your answers. Real examples or stories about yourself are the best.

Use examples in part 2 when you need to make your presentation longer. Use them in part 3 to support your opinions.

Here's an example that helps me to extend a part 2 presentation about my mobile phone:

"For example, yesterday I used my phone to call some friends to arrange a get-together this weekend. Some of them didn't answer, so I either left a message in their voicemail or I sent them a text. I also replied to a few emails while I was waiting in a queue at the bank."

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(9\)](#)

Friday, March 16, 2012

IELTS Speaking: which part is the most important?

Do the 3 parts of the speaking test carry equal weighting when your score is calculated, or is one part more important?

The simple answer is that the 3 parts are not scored separately; the examiner rates the student's performance as a whole. In this sense, neither part is more important.

However, it's useful to think about the 3 parts like this:

- Part 1 is supposed to be quite easy (like a warm-up), so you won't get a high score if you **only** do well in this part.
- Part 2 is when the examiner really gets a chance assess how good you are. He/she will now have an idea of what scores to give you.

- During part 3, the examiner is making his/her final decision. A good performance here can boost your score.

When preparing for the exam, my advice is to spend most of your time on part 2. This is the part that you can really work on in terms of topics and techniques.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(34\)](#)

Friday, March 09, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 1: short, simple answers

The first part of the IELTS Speaking Test lasts around 4 to 5 minutes. The examiner asks about 10 questions related to you, your daily life and your interests. Common topics are hobbies, family, friends, food, music etc.

Part 1 questions are supposed to be easy, and the examiner must get through all of the questions in 5 minutes or less. That's only about 30 seconds per question. If you try to give long answers, the examiner will interrupt you. My advice is to keep Part 1 answers very simple:

Do you prefer home-cooked food or food from restaurants?

I prefer home-cooked food because I think it's healthier and you know exactly what you're eating. I also enjoy cooking for family and friends.

You don't need to say any more than this. Just answer the question with a full sentence, give a reason, and maybe add one extra piece of information. Then stop speaking. *Stop with confidence and look at the examiner, ready for the next question.*

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Friday, March 02, 2012

IELTS Speaking: how to talk for 2 minutes

Students often ask whether it's necessary to speak for the full 2 minutes in part 2 of the speaking test. The instruction is: **speak for between 1 and 2 minutes**, so it's not strictly necessary to speak for the full 2 minutes. However, my advice is that you should **try** to keep speaking until the examiner stops you.

Here are some tips to help you keep talking:

1. Go through the bullet points on the task card in order.
2. Try to develop each point, even easy ones. For example, if the first bullet point for the topic "describe a person" is "who is it?", don't just say "I'm going to describe my father". Add more information, such as your father's name, age, what he looks like, where he is now, how often you speak to him...
3. Give examples and tell stories ([click here](#) for more advice about this).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Friday, February 24, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: easier than you think

Sometimes a question seems difficult, but you might be able to turn it into a different topic. Take these questions for example:

1. Describe a photo that you like.
2. Describe an important letter you received.

Many students panic when I ask them these two questions, but they are much easier than you think. Here are some ideas:

1. You could describe a photo of your family on a special occasion (e.g. a birthday party). This would allow you to talk about the members of your family and tell the story of what happened at the party when the photo was taken. Alternatively, you could describe a holiday photo of a place you visited. Then you can talk about the place and what you did there.
2. If you have a job, you could describe the letter you received telling you that you got the job. You could talk about the job interview, how you felt when you received the letter, and what you now do in your job. On the other hand, if you are a student, you could say that you received a letter confirming your place on your degree course.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Saturday, February 18, 2012

IELTS Speaking Advice: tell stories

At the end of yesterday's lesson I mentioned that you could prepare some examples or stories to make your descriptions more interesting (for speaking part 2, and maybe part 3).

When speaking in our own languages, we tell stories all the time. For example, you might tell a member of your family about what happened at work today, or you might tell your friends about a film you saw last night.

The ability to tell a story in English is a sign that you are becoming a proficient user of the language. Test yourself: try telling a story in English now! Start with something easy, like "what I did yesterday".

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, February 17, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: essential preparation

It's impossible to prepare for **every** question that you might get in the speaking test, but what are the **essential** things to prepare for?

Here's my list of essentials:

1. Favourites: Don't go into the test without knowing what your favourites are. Prepare to talk about your favourite book, film, music, and website.
2. People: Be ready to talk about a famous person and a member of your family.
3. Activities: Have you prepared some ideas about a hobby? Can you describe a typical day in your life? Try to remember some special moments in your life, such as birthdays, festivals and weddings.
4. Places: You need to be able to talk about where you live. Also, think about the places you have visited, what you did there, and why you liked or didn't like them.
5. Things: Can you talk about the things you use every day, something you would like to buy, or a present that you received?

Remember that in part 2 you are always asked to **"describe"**. Make sure you prepare some good adjectives for each topic, make sure you can talk about your opinions and feelings, and think about some examples or stories to make your descriptions more interesting.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(28\)](#)

Friday, February 10, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a business

It would be a good idea to prepare some ideas for this question:

Describe a business that you would like to own or set up.

It doesn't matter what business you choose, and you don't need to tell the truth. Here are some ideas:

- Choose something that you know about. For example, if you like buying clothes, say that you would like to own a clothes shop. If you're a football fan, say that you'd like to own a football club!
- Do some online research. Find the websites of companies you like, and take some notes about what they do and why they are successful.
- Imagine what a typical day would be like if you worked in the business you have chosen. What would you do in the morning, during the day, and in the evening? Telling a story is a great way to extend your answer.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Friday, February 03, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 1: emails and handwriting

At work or in your studies, do you often write things?

Yes, I write a lot of emails as part of my job. I work for a company that has offices in several countries, so we use email to communicate.

How often do you send e-mails?

I probably write between 5 and 10 work emails every day, and I send emails to friends or family a few times a week.

Do you prefer to write by hand or on a computer?

It depends what I'm doing. I prefer the computer for most things because it's faster and you can save or copy things, but I still like making notes or writing ideas down by hand.

Do you think computers might one day replace handwriting?

No, I think we will always write by hand as well. I think it's an important skill, and schools will continue to teach children to write by hand before they learn to type.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Friday, January 27, 2012

IELTS Speaking part 3: rivers, lakes, sea

1. What do you think are the functions of rivers nowadays?

Rivers have various functions. In the UK, they were probably more important in the past because they were used for the transportation of goods, but I suppose this is still the case in many parts of the world. Rivers can be used as a source of renewable energy in the production of hydro-electric power, and they are also a source of fresh water for drinking and irrigation. Leisure activities are another function: fishing, canoeing, swimming, bathing... I'm sure there are many other things I haven't thought of.

2. What do you think of boats and ships as forms of transportation?

I'm not really a fan of boats and ships. If I'm going abroad, I like to get to my destination quickly, so I prefer travelling by plane. Of course, ships are vital for the transportation of oil and other heavy cargo.

3. Why do some people like to live near rivers, lakes or the sea?

Well, the view is probably a major factor; most people like to look out to sea, or across a river or lake. I'd much prefer to look out of my window onto a natural landscape than an apartment building in a city. Then there's the lifestyle: if you live by the sea, for example, you can lie on the beach, go for a swim, or do water sports like surfing or waterskiing. I definitely wouldn't mind living near a beach at some point in my life!

Note:

These answers are less formal than the essays I write for the writing test, and I say things like "probably" or "I suppose" when I'm not sure about the facts.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, January 20, 2012

IELTS Speaking: linking phrases don't impress

A student asked me a really useful (and common) question the other day.

Student's question:

I've gone through your speaking answers, and I rarely found linking phrases like "*I suppose I should begin by highlighting the fact that...*" or "*the point I'd like to begin with is that...*". Don't you think such phrases are the sign of a high score?

Here's my answer:

Good question. No, I don't use those phrases because examiners are not impressed by them. Even a beginner can learn linking phrases, and if it were that easy, everyone would get band 9. The sign of a high score is 'real content' ([topic-specific vocabulary](#)), not memorised phrases.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, January 13, 2012

IELTS Speaking: another garden description

Last week I described a famous garden. Martin, an IELTS teacher who often contributes to the comments on this site, sent me a description of his own garden. You might find it more useful than my famous garden description!

Martin's description:

Today I'd like to describe my home garden, which I think is a beautiful one and which I like very much. The garden is part of my home's backyard, and my house is located in the suburbs, about a 1-hour drive from the city of San Francisco. There is a big tree right in the middle of my garden, which is surrounded by a hot tub, a small water fountain, several bushes, a section for vegetables, and different kinds of flowers.

This garden was actually one of the reasons why my wife and I chose to buy our house because it had been beautifully maintained by the previous owner's gardener and landscaper. It's been only 1 year since we bought the house and now we are taking care of the garden ourselves. Even though we are not experts in gardening, we still try our best to plant things that we like, such as roses and tulips, and we even grow our own tomatoes.

Whenever family and friends come to visit us, we invite them to have a relaxing time in our hot tub, and enjoy the view. So in other words, our garden has also become a kind of resort! It definitely requires lots of hard work to properly maintain the garden, but it gives us a great sense of accomplishment to "decorate" it the way we like.

All in all, the garden is one of the best features of my home and it is a place where I can relax after a long day of work or during the weekends.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Friday, January 06, 2012

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a garden

Describe a beautiful garden that you like. You should say

- where it is

- what you can see there

- what people do there

and explain why you like it.

Here are some ideas:



1. The garden I'm going to describe is famous because it belonged to the French painter Claude Monet. It's in a place called Giverny, which is in northern France, about an hour away from Paris in the province of Normandy.
2. There are actually two gardens at the Monet house in Giverny: a flower garden, and a Japanese inspired water garden. Apparently, Monet designed the gardens himself; he even had the pond and the famous Japanese bridge made. After creating the gardens, Monet painted some of the most well-known paintings in the world, such as those of the waterlilies below the bridge on his pond.
3. Thousands of people visit the gardens at Giverny to see the magnificent scenes that inspired Monet's paintings. Visitors can walk around the gardens and take pictures, which is what I did when I went there.
4. I like Monet's gardens because they are such beautiful creations, and it's amazing to see the 'real thing' having seen the famous paintings so many times.

To learn more about Monet's gardens, have a look at [this site](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Friday, December 23, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a meal

Describe a popular meal from your country that you like to eat.

You should say

- what the meal is***
- why it's popular in your country***
- and why you like it.***

Here's some advice:

1. Your choice of meal is important because you need to be able to say a lot about it. For example, you could choose a dish that people eat during a particular festival.
2. Spend some time on each of the 3 parts of the question. For the first part, don't just give the name of the meal; explain what it consists of and how it is made.
3. For the last part (why you like it), use some good adjectives, then tell astory about when you last ate that meal. Explain where you were and what the occasion was.

Prepare some ideas and try recording yourself. Keep practising until you are confident that you would be able to answer this question in an exam situation.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, December 09, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: competitions

The following questions come from Cambridge IELTS 7. I've underlined some of the good words and phrases in my answers.

1. Why do you think some school teachers use competitions as class activities?

I think teachers use competitions to motivate the children in their classes. I'm sure that teachers try all kinds of activities to engage their pupils, and competitions might be one of the best ways to keep children interested or get them excited. Children love winning things.

2. Is it a good thing to give prizes to children who do well at school? Why?

It might be a good idea to encourage children to do well in games or sports, but I don't think we should give children prizes for their academic work. Children need to learn that the reason for studying is to learn useful things that will help them in their lives. I don't like the idea of children thinking that they will only work hard if there is a prize.

3. Would you say that schools for young children have become more or less competitive since you were that age? Why?

I'd say that they have become more competitive since I was young. Children now have to take exams from a much younger age, so I think there is more of a focus on doing well in tests. Parents also seem to be getting more competitive; I think that many parents push their children to do extra homework rather than letting them play with friends.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Friday, December 02, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a film/movie

In part 2 of the IELTS Speaking test, you might have to describe your favourite film ('movie' is American English). My advice is to look for your film on amazon.com. You will find reviews of almost any film, from [The Godfather](#) to [Titanic](#).

The only problem is that the reviews are often quite difficult or too detailed. I recommend stealing a few ideas or a few bits of good vocabulary.

For example, here is some good vocabulary from a review of *The Godfather*:

- one of the greatest films ever made
- a masterpiece
- a brilliant story
- the actors' performances are outstanding
- it's compelling to watch

Make sure you can summarise the film's plot (the story). Try to remember where and when you first saw the film. Explain how it made you feel and why you like it.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Friday, November 25, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'emotions' topic

The following questions follow on from [this topic](#).

Do you think it's good to show your emotions when you're angry?

I think it depends on the situation and how you show your emotions. I find that if I'm angry with a friend or someone in my family, it's best to tell them what the problem is and try to express how I feel. However, I don't think it helps to argue with people when you're angry; it's better to control the anger and explain what's wrong.

In your opinion, do women show their emotions more than men?

The stereotypical view is that women are more emotional, and in my experience there is some truth in this; my mother, for example, tends to show

her feelings much more readily than my father. However, I'm sure that there are exceptions to the stereotype.

Why do you think men tend to show their emotions less than women?

Maybe it's because of the way we are brought up. I think that boys are often taught from an early age not to cry. Also, boys are aware that their friends might see it as a sign of weakness if they show their feelings. Perhaps girls are brought up to be more sensitive to their friends' feelings.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, November 18, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3 of the IELTS speaking test, you will probably get some questions about the past and the future. The examiner will be listening carefully to make sure you use the correct tense.

- If the examiner mentions "50 years ago", "when your parents were young" or "when you were a child", you should answer using the past simple.
- If the question asks you to predict, or if it mentions "in 50 years" or "in the future", use a future tense (will + infinitive).

Do you think people had easier lives 50 years ago?

Yes, maybe life was simpler and less stressful 50 years ago. The mobile phone didn't exist, so I suppose it was easier to forget about work at the end of the day because people couldn't contact you so easily.

Do you think life will be more stressful in the future?

Yes, it probably will be more stressful. As the world gets smaller, employees will probably have to travel to different countries more often and stay in touch with colleagues and clients all over the world. There will also be more competition for jobs and the cost of living will keep going up.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, November 11, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: leisure activities

Here are some questions that a student sent me, with example answers below.

1. What is the relationship between leisure and the economy?

Well, people spend a lot of money on all sorts of leisure activities nowadays, so I think leisure is a very important part of the economy of most countries. Leisure could be anything that people do in their free time, such as eating out, going to the cinema, watching a football match, or staying in a hotel. Millions of people are employed in these areas.

2. How does the economy benefit from people's leisure activities?

The leisure industry makes a huge contribution to the economy. As I said before, it keeps millions of people in employment, and all of these employees pay their taxes and have money to spend on other goods and services. At the same time, most people spend some of their earnings on leisure activities, and this money therefore goes back into the economy.

3. Do men and women enjoy the same type of leisure activities?

Yes and no. I think both men and women enjoy things like eating in restaurants or going to the cinema, but I'm sure there are other activities that are more popular with one gender. For example, I think more men than women go to football matches.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(24\)](#)

Friday, November 04, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a hobby

"Describe a hobby" seems like an easy topic. However, students often have difficulty speaking for 2 minutes when the topic is easy.

Here are 3 pieces of advice to help you to speak for 2 minutes:

1. Think about question words: What, when, where, why, who with:

One of my hobbies is photography. I've got two digital cameras: one small pocket-sized camera that I carry around with me, and one bigger, more expensive camera that I use on special occasions. I take photos so that I have a record of the things I've seen or done. Most of my photos are of friends and family, but I also take pictures of interesting things that I see.

2. Describe opinions and feelings:

I like photography because it's a creative hobby and it makes you notice the world around you. I love capturing special moments or unusual or beautiful images, and it's a great feeling to be able to look back through my pictures and relive different experiences.

3. Tell a story related to the topic:

The last time I took photos on a special occasion was at my friend's wedding a few weeks ago. I got some great pictures of the bride and groom and their guests celebrating. After the wedding I made an album of all the best pictures and sent it to my friend as a present.

Note:

You don't need to tell the truth (I exaggerated my interest in photography) but it's usually easier to tell a story if it's real.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

Friday, October 28, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: something that made you angry

Describe a situation that made you angry. You should say

- when it happened***
- what happened***
- how you felt***

Here are some ideas. Notice that I answer by telling a story, and that my ideas are not 'academic' or 'formal' because it isn't an academic topic. Study my answer carefully - it's full of good words and phrases.

Band 9 answer:

A recent situation that made me angry was getting stuck in a traffic jam on the way to meet some friends. It was last Sunday lunchtime, and I didn't expect there to be much traffic; people don't work on Sundays, so the roads aren't usually very busy.

Everything was going well until suddenly I saw a queue of cars on the road in front of me. I had no choice but to join the queue and wait to get past whatever was causing the delay. It turned out that it was caused by some roadworks, and it took me an extra 30 minutes to get past them.

Getting stuck in traffic congestion doesn't usually make me angry, but this time it did, mainly because I wasn't expecting it and I knew that my friends were waiting to meet me for lunch. I felt frustrated and powerless because there was nothing I could do to change the situation, and I had no idea how long I would be sitting there waiting. When I finally saw the reason for the congestion, I was relieved that I was close to getting past the roadworks, but I still felt a bit stressed knowing that I was half an hour late.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(31\)](#)

Friday, October 21, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 1: laughing

The following questions are taken from Cambridge IELTS 7, page 55. The aim in part 1 is to give *short, simple* answers. Don't worry about using 'difficult' grammar.

1. What kinds of thing make you laugh?

I laugh most when I'm with friends talking about funny things that have happened to us. I also like watching comedians and comedy films.

2. Do you like making other people laugh?

Yes, it's a nice feeling when you can make someone laugh because you can see that you've made them happy. It's great to share a funny moment with someone.

3. Do you think it's important for people to laugh?

Yes, of course. It's important to see the funny side of things; humour helps us not to take life too seriously. I think that laughter is good for our health.

4. Is laughing the same as feeling happy?

It's not exactly the same because you can be happy without laughing, and sometimes we laugh when something bad has happened; a sense of humour can help us to cope with difficult situations.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, October 14, 2011

IELTS Speaking: advice about grammar and vocabulary

It's difficult to think about grammar when you're trying to speak. I think it's much easier to improve your vocabulary score than your grammar score.

Remember:

- Grammar is only 25% of your speaking score.
- If you are thinking too much about grammar, you will lose fluency.
- If you try to use memorised grammatical structures, your speech will not sound 'natural'.
- You will not avoid small grammar mistakes unless you have lived in an English speaking country for many years.

I've taught many students who have achieved a score of 7 or higher, and they all made small grammar mistakes. They got their high scores because we focused on *vocabulary, ideas, opinions* and *fluency*.

Have a look through my speaking lessons, and you'll notice that the focus is usually on vocabulary.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(17\)](#)

Friday, October 07, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'parties' topic

In part 2 of the speaking test you might be asked to [describe a party](#). Here are some part 3 questions that could follow that topic:

1. What types of party do people have, and why are parties important?

People have parties to celebrate special occasions like birthdays, weddings, or the beginning of a new year. I think it's important to celebrate these things because they are landmarks in our lives. Parties are a good way to bring people together, and they're an opportunity to [let off some steam](#).

2. Why do you think some people like parties but others hate them?

Most people like parties because they have a good time at them - eating a nice meal, chatting to friends, or having a dance. People who don't like them

might find social situations difficult because they are shy, or maybe they don't enjoy having to make small talk with people they don't know.

3. Do you think parties will become more popular in the future?

No, I don't think anything will change. People have always had parties, and I'm sure they always will in the future. Humans need to socialise and enjoy themselves, and parties are one of the best ways to do that.

PS. I've underlined the band 7-9 phrases.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Friday, September 30, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: opinions

Having opinions is really important for IELTS Speaking Part 3. Even if your grammar is excellent, you will not get a high score if you don't know what to say.

For example, do you have an opinion about whether governments should protect old buildings?

Here are some possible opinions:

- Historic buildings are part of a country's heritage.
- Old buildings are often considered to be works of art.
- They give character to cities, and attract tourists.
- We identify countries by architectural symbols, like the pyramids in Egypt.
- Governments should spend money on looking after historic buildings.
- They need regular repairs and maintenance.

These opinions come from my '[Ideas for IELTS Topics' ebook](#). The sentences above are what a native speaker might say (i.e. band 7-9).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Friday, September 23, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 1: travel habits

Remember that Part 1 questions are supposed to be easy. Just give a simple answer and a reason.

1. What form of transport do you prefer to use? Why?

I prefer to travel by car because it means that I have my own space. Also, the buses and trains in my city are usually overcrowded; my car is much more comfortable.

2. How much time do you spend travelling on a normal day?

I probably spend about an hour and a half travelling to and from work. I travel during the rush hours, so there is quite a lot of traffic.

3. What do you do while you are travelling?

I usually listen to the radio or a CD. In the morning I like to listen to the news to find out what is happening in the world.

4. Do you ever have problems with transport?

Yes, as I said, I get stuck in traffic on my way to and from work. I used to get annoyed by traffic jams, but now I'm used to them.

A few important points:

- In the answer to question 4, can you see the difference between "I used to" and "I'm used to"?
- Notice the good vocabulary: 'have my own space', 'overcrowded', 'to and from work', 'rush hour', 'find out what is happening in the world', 'get stuck in traffic'.
- If the examiner asks a question that you have already answered, just say "as I said" and repeat your answer.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Friday, September 16, 2011

IELTS Speaking: pronunciation

In the IELTS speaking test, 25% of your score is for pronunciation. Many students confuse 'pronunciation' with 'accent'. These are **not** the same thing!

Nobody expects you to speak with a perfect British English accent. In fact, the examiner will not judge your accent at all.

Your pronunciation score is based on these things:

- clarity (speaking clearly)
- speed (not too fast, not too slow)
- [word stress](#)
- [sentence stress](#)
- intonation (the rise and fall of your voice)

It's not easy to improve these things quickly or through deliberate practice.

Good pronunciation is usually the result of lots of listening and copying. My tip is: stop worrying about your accent, and focus on speaking clearly.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

[« Previous](#) | [Next »](#)

Friday, September 09, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: forget about eye contact

Many students worry that they need to maintain eye contact with the examiner. This is a good idea in part 1 and part 3, but not necessarily in part 2.

In part 2 of the speaking test, you don't need to worry about eye contact. It's more important to look at the question and the notes you made.

- Use the question to organise what you are saying. Answer the question point by point, and make sure you cover all parts of the task.
- You should also look at your notes. Hopefully you wrote down some good ideas during the preparation time.

Remember: the examiner **will not** reduce your score for lack of eye contact, but he/she **will** reduce your score if you don't answer the question well.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Friday, September 02, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'wildlife' topic

Here are some Part 3 questions and band 9 answers for this topic. I've underlined the 'band 7-9' vocabulary.

What effects do you think humans have on wild animals?

Humans have a huge impact on wild animals. We have destroyed a lot of natural habitats, and many animals are in danger of extinction. Tigers and rhinos, for example, are endangered species because of humans. The pollution and waste that we produce also have an effect on animals. In some places there are no fish in the rivers.

What measures could we take to protect wildlife?

I think we need stricter rules to protect natural areas and the wild animals that live there. For example, we should stop cutting down trees in the rain forest. National parks are a good idea because they attract tourists while protecting wildlife.

Is it the responsibility of schools to teach children about protecting wildlife?

Yes, schools can play a big part in educating children about this issue. Children should learn how to look after the natural environment. I think schools already teach children about endangered species and the destruction of rain forests, so hopefully future generations will do a better job of protecting wildlife.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Friday, August 26, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: sports

In the example answers below, I've underlined some of the phrases that examiners would like. They might seem easy to understand, but they are the kind of natural phrases that native speakers use. My answers are at band 9 level.

1. Why do you think sport is important?

I think sport is important for different reasons. For me, doing a sport is about having fun. When I play football, for example, I forget about everything else and just enjoy myself. Also, doing a sport helps you to keep fit and healthy, and it's a good way to socialise and make friends.

2. Do you think famous sportspeople are good role models for children?

I think that sportspeople should be good role models. Children look up to their favourite football players, like David Beckham for example, so I think that these people have an enormous responsibility. They should try to be a good influence, and behave in the right way.

3. Do you agree that sports stars earn too much money?

In my opinion, it's fair that the best sportspeople earn a lot of money. Being a top sportsperson requires hours of practice, and there are millions of sports fans who are willing to pay to see them play. If we don't want sportspeople to earn so much money, we shouldn't go to watch them.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(7\)](#)

Friday, August 19, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: environment problem

Describe a problem that affects the environment in the area where you live.

You should say

- what the problem is***
- what causes it***
- and explain what you think could be done to solve it***

Remember, the question asks you to talk about a problem in your local area, so don't choose 'global warming'. These topics would be better:

- Air pollution caused by traffic and factories.
- Building new roads, houses, factories etc. destroys natural areas.
- Increasing amounts of litter and household waste.

Try searching for these topics on the Internet. I did a quick search for "litter on streets" and found [this article](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Friday, July 29, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: artist or entertainer

The following question is a variation on the "describe a person" topic.

Describe an artist or entertainer you admire

You should say

- ***who they are and what they do***
- ***how they became successful***
- ***how you found out about them***
- ***and why you admire them***

I've tried to write a general example description that might help you with some ideas. In your description you **must** give the name of the person.

- I'm going to talk about a musician that I admire, called... He's a singer who also plays the guitar and writes his own songs. I think he recorded his first album about 10 years ago, and he's released several other CDs since then.
- He became successful after many years of writing songs and performing live in small venues all over the country. Gradually he built a following of people who liked his music. I think the key to his success was one of his songs that was used on a TV advertisement. This meant that more people became aware of his music.
- I found out about... because one of my friends got tickets to see him in concert. I hadn't heard any of his music before, but I went along to the gig and really enjoyed it. After that I bought the first CD, and now I've got all of them.
- The reason I admire... is that he has worked hard for his success: it takes years of practice to become a good singer and guitarist, and he spent several years playing to very small audiences before he became successful. I also like the fact that he writes his own music. I admire people who have worked hard to get where they are.

Note: I've underlined the best vocabulary. 'Gig' is an informal word for concert or performance, but it's fine to use it in this context.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)

Saturday, July 16, 2011

IELTS Advice: describe your favourite...

More advice about describing your favourite book, film or piece of music:

1. You can talk about any type of book (textbook, biography etc.). You only need to describe a story if the question asks you to describe a 'novel'.
2. Many books are also films. It would be a good idea to prepare one description that you can use for both.

3. [Amazon.com](#) is great for reviews of books, films and music. Just search for a title, then go down the page to find the reviews.
4. "Steal" the best vocabulary from the reviews that you find.
5. Use Google. I searched for "my favourite film is" on Google and found this '[My Favourite Films' website](#). It's full of good ideas.
6. Try this Google search: "my favourite piece of music is"
7. You can describe a book, film or piece of music from your country.
8. You can invent a story if necessary, but it's easier to tell the truth.
9. If you don't like books, pretend that your favourite film is a book (and vice versa).
10. Remember to include adjectives to describe your feelings/opinions. Tell the story of when you first read the book, saw the film or listened to the song, who recommended it, why you like it etc.

NB. 'Piece of music' just means a song.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(16\)](#)

Friday, July 15, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a film

A student asked me this question:

"If the question asks me to describe a film, can I ask for a different question because I don't like films and I never watch them?"

Here's my answer:

If the part 2 question is about something you don't like, you should try your best. The examiner is not allowed to change the task card.

You probably have family, children or friends who watch films. You could say: "I don't really like watching films, but my children love watching" Then describe the film that your children like, say why they like it, and explain why you think it's a nice film for children.

Choose a film now so that you are ready for this question. Search for a review of the film on [Amazon](#). Write down the ideas you find, and practise with a friend.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, July 08, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: adding details

These are the 3 techniques I use to create longer, more detailed answers:

1. Explain why
2. Give an example
3. Explain the alternatives

Question:

Why do you think friendship is important?

Answer:

I think friendship is important for all sorts of reasons. **(why?)** We need friends to share experiences with, to talk to, and for support. **(example?)** In my case, I like to meet up with friends at the weekend to do something enjoyable, like see a film or go out for dinner. I like chatting with my friends about what we've been doing during the week, or about what's happening in the world. **(alternatives?)** Without friends to talk to, life would be dull and boring; we would only have our families to talk to.

For another example of this technique, [click here](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(8\)](#)

Friday, July 01, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'lessons' topic

The following answers are at 'band 9' level. Which words and phrases help my answers to get such a high score?

1. What do you think makes a good lesson?

I think a good lesson is one that is interesting and engaging. By 'engaging' I mean that the students should feel involved in the lesson; they should feel that they are learning something new that is relevant to them. In my opinion, a lot depends on how the teacher delivers the content of the lesson in a way that students like. My favourite teacher at university used to involve the students by making us teach some of the lessons ourselves.

2. Do you think it's better to have a teacher or to teach yourself?

Well, there's no substitute for a good teacher. I think you can teach yourself, but you can learn a lot more quickly with the guidance of a teacher. For example, when learning a language, you really need someone to correct your mistakes; you can get the grammar and vocabulary from books, but books can't tell you where you're going wrong.

3. Do you think the traditional classroom will disappear in the future?

I don't think it will disappear, but it might become less common. I think more people will study independently, using different technologies rather than sitting in a classroom. Maybe students will attend a lesson just once a week, and spend the rest of their time following online courses or watching video lessons.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Friday, June 24, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a lesson

Speak for 2 minutes about the following topic.

Describe an interesting lesson that you attended.

You should say

- ***where you attended this lesson***
- ***what it was about***
- ***and why you found it interesting***

Here are some ideas for a description of a science lesson:

1. I'm going to talk about an interesting science lesson that I attended at secondary school when I was 14 or 15 years old.
2. It was quite a long time ago, so I can't remember every detail, but the lesson was about respiration. We learnt about how the lungs work, how we breathe, and how oxygen passes into the blood. The science teacher also talked to us about the effects of smoking on the lungs.
3. I found this lesson interesting because my science teacher, Dr. Smith, always introduced new topics by showing us a video. We watched a short film about how respiration works, and I found this much easier to understand than a science textbook. The film showed diagrams of the lungs to explain the breathing process. Later in the lesson we saw real photos of healthy lungs and lungs that had been damaged as a result of smoking; they had turned black. I think the image of a smoker's lungs is the reason why I remember this lesson.

I could also give more information about the teacher, his personality and why I liked him. The key is to ***tell a story*** and add details until the time runs out.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, June 17, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'numbers' topic

One of my students had these questions in her exam last week. I've put an example answer below each one.

1) Do you have a favourite number or a number that is special to you?

Yes, my favourite number is... because it's the day I was born on, and it's my lucky number.

2) Do any numbers have special importance in your country?

Yes, certain ages are special. For example, your 18th birthday is important because it's when you are considered to become an adult.

3) Are you good at remembering numbers? Why / why not?

No, I'm not very good at remembering numbers. I don't think it's necessary to learn them by heart; I just save them on my phone.

4) What numbers do people often have to memorise?

The most important number to remember on a daily basis is the pin number for your bank card. Without this you can't pay for anything or get cash out.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(22\)](#)

Friday, June 10, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: choosing a 'strong topic'

Most people are good at talking about their studies, work, hobbies, health etc. I call these "*strong topics*".

For the question below you can choose any topic you want, so choose something that you find easy to talk about.

Describe something that was recently reported in the news.

You should say:

- ***what happened***
- ***who was involved***
- ***and why you found this news interesting***

Example topic choices for the question above:

1. My strong topic could be "education", so I'd say that I read a news article about universities using the Internet. [Click here](#) to see a recent article about this topic.
2. If you like football, you could talk about the news that Barcelona won the Champions League.
3. If you have studied the "health" topic for IELTS writing, you could talk about schools banning junk food. I did a quick search and found [this article](#) about schools in Dubai.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(21\)](#)

Saturday, June 04, 2011

IELTS Speaking: 'band 9' example

Here's my 'band 9' example for yesterday's IELTS speaking question:

[click here to listen](#)

These are some of the best words and phrases that I used. Look them up in a dictionary if you're not sure what they mean:

- desirable location
- it stands out
- a famous landmark
- it's distinctive
- spectacular views

- the best vantage point

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, June 03, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a building

Describe a modern building. You should say:

- *where it is*
- *what it is used for*
- *and why you like/dislike it.*

Here's my example description of a building in Manchester:

1. I'm going to describe a modern building in Manchester. It's called the Beetham Tower, and it's the tallest building in the city, with about 50 floors.
2. Although it's called the Beetham Tower, most people know this building as the Hilton Hotel. In fact, the bottom half of the tower is the hotel and the top half is apartments. The apartments are expensive because the location and views make them very desirable.



3. I'm not sure if I like the design of the building, it's just a huge glass tower, but it definitely stands out. It has become a famous landmark in the city. You can see it as you approach Manchester, and it's an easy place to meet people because it's so distinctive and easy to find. The most interesting thing about the Beetham Tower is that there is a bar/restaurant on the 23rd floor which has spectacular views of the city; it's definitely the best vantage point in Manchester because there are no walls, only huge windows, so you can look out over the city in any direction. I'd recommend anyone who visits Manchester to go there and experience the view.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Friday, May 20, 2011

IELTS Speaking: 'questionnaires' topic

IELTS speaking part 2:

Describe a time when you were asked to give your opinion in a questionnaire.

Advice: Say that you were given a questionnaire at the end of one of your school or university courses. Say that the questions asked for your opinions about the teaching, materials, facilities, level of difficulty, how much you enjoyed the course etc.

IELTS speaking part 3:

What kinds of organisation regularly conduct questionnaires?

All kinds of organisations and companies use questionnaires to find out what people think about them. For example, university lecturers often ask their students to answer questions about their courses. Someone from a Starbucks cafe stopped me in the street yesterday to ask me about my coffee drinking habits.

Do you think schools should ask children for their opinions about lessons?

On the one hand, it might be useful for teachers to get feedback from children about how much they learnt and how enjoyable they found the lessons. However, children don't necessarily know what's best for them, and it might do more harm than good to allow them to give opinions about their teachers.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(14\)](#)

Friday, May 13, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'neighbours' topic

I've recently bought Cambridge IELTS book 8. Below are some questions and example answers from the first speaking test in the book. Remember that part 1 is supposed to be easy, so you should give short, direct answers.

1. How well do you know your next-door neighbours?

I know my neighbours quite well. They're really nice people, and I always stop to talk whenever I see them. I think it's important to get on well with the people who live next door.

2. How often do you see them?

I see my neighbours at least a few times a week. We usually see each other when we're leaving for work in the morning or coming home in the evening.

3. What problems do people sometimes have with their neighbours?

I think the most common problem is probably noise. It's difficult to live next to people who have a dog that barks at night, or who play loud music or have too many parties.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, April 29, 2011

IELTS Speaking: an important conversation

IELTS Speaking Part 2:

Describe an important conversation you had.

IELTS Speaking Part 3:

What are the differences between men's and women's conversations?

What do you think are the characteristics of a good speaker?

For the part 2 question:

My advice is to speak about a conversation you had with your father or mother about your education or career. If you are studying in a different country, describe a conversation about the decision to study abroad. Then you can use ideas from the 'study abroad' topic and the 'higher education' topic (you can find these topics in my Writing Task 2 lessons).

For the first question in part 3, my advice is to use 'stereotypes':

"I think it depends on the people who are having the conversation, and it depends on the situation, but most people would say that men talk more about sport or cars, whereas women talk about their friends, family and relationships. Women are supposed to be better at expressing their feelings, while men prefer not to talk about themselves."

For the second question in part 3, use adjectives and examples:

"I think good speakers are confident and passionate about the subject of their speech. They need to be interesting and engaging. I think a speaker's body language is also really important. A famous example of a great speaker is Barack Obama; he seems to be a naturally inspiring speaker, but I'm sure that practice and preparation are more important than natural talent."

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(23\)](#)

Friday, April 22, 2011

IELTS Speaking: use what you know

In parts 2 and 3 of the IELTS speaking test, you need to make quick decisions about what to talk about. Always try to talk about a topic you have prepared or something you know about. Here are some examples:

Part 2: ***Describe a law in your country.***

Advice: Choose a typical IELTS topic like "guns". Explain why people in your country can/can't own a gun, and talk about the pros and cons of this law. There is a chapter on this topic in my ebook.

Part 3: ***What new law would you introduce to improve life in your country?***

Advice: Choose an easy topic like "environment". Explain that the government could introduce new laws to reduce pollution from factories, cars etc. Explain how this would improve people's lives.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(37\)](#)

Friday, April 15, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: something naughty you did

This has been a recent question in part 2 of IELTS speaking:

Describe something naughty you did when you were a child. Say

- ***what you did***
- ***when you did it***
- ***why you did it***
- ***and explain how your parents felt about it.***

This is a difficult topic for most people, so it's a good idea to prepare for it before your test. If you can remember a real situation, use that. If you can't remember being naughty, invent an easy story like my example below.

Example ideas:

1. I cheated in a test at primary school by looking at the answers in my book under the table.
2. I was about ... years old, it was a ... lesson. Give some more background about the lesson, the test, the teacher etc.
3. I hadn't studied for the test, I didn't want to fail and have to retake the test at lunchtime. Give reasons why you didn't have time to study.
4. The teacher caught me and told my parents. Explain their feelings: disappointed, angry, embarrassed. Explain the punishment e.g. they 'grounded' me for a week (informal expression, meaning 'they didn't allow me to go out or see friends').

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(18\)](#)

Friday, April 08, 2011

IELTS Speaking: work or study

These are common questions at the start of the speaking test:

1. Do you work or are you a student?
2. Do you like your job / course? Why / why not?

Example answers:

1. Before I came to England I was working as an accountant, but at the moment I'm studying English because I hope to do a Master's here.
2. Yes, I really like my job because it's interesting and I work with a great team of people. **OR:** Yes, I enjoy studying English, but my real aim is to do a Master's and then find a job in an international company.

Note:

Don't ask the examiner: "Do you mean in my country or here in England?" - it doesn't matter. Don't worry if you have a job and study at the same time - you can mention both.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(30\)](#)

Friday, April 01, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a skill

Describe a practical skill that you have learnt (e.g. cooking, driving).

You should say

- what the skill is
- how you learnt it
- why you learnt it
- and how this skill has helped you.

Advice:

You need to make a quick decision, so I'd choose one of the given examples (cooking or driving). Then try to expand on each point.

1. I'm going to talk about driving, which is a practical skill that I use almost every day.
2. I learnt to drive a car by taking lessons when I was 17. My parents paid for me to have lessons with a professional driving instructor. I learnt by practising: first I had to get used to steering, changing gears and using the mirrors, then we practised things like reversing and parking. I also had to learn the highway code.
3. As a 17-year-old, I wanted to have the experience of driving a car, and I was fed up with having to walk or take the bus or train whenever I wanted to go somewhere. I also knew that driving would be an extremely useful skill.
4. Being able to drive has helped me in so many ways. The public transport where I live isn't very good, so I travel to work by car most days. Having a car makes my life much easier when it comes to things like shopping or visiting family and friends. (Last week, for example,...)

Note:

If you need to keep speaking, give examples for point 4.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Friday, March 11, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 1-minute preparation

This week I've been thinking about different ways to use the 1-minute preparation time. Here's what I've learnt:

1. One minute is a very short amount of time! I found it just as difficult as my students did.
2. A simple list is probably faster and easier than a diagram or mind map.
3. You need to decide on your topic as quickly as possible. Then spend most of your time making notes.
4. Try to write at least one key idea for each part of the question.
5. Don't write sentences, and don't waste time erasing "mistakes".
6. Try to use a topic you have already prepared.
7. Forget about grammar. Focus on answering the question.
8. Finally, fast preparation is a skill that you can practise. Why not train yourself by making notes for a few different questions every day?

The following photo shows a part 2 question with my notes below. As you can see, I couldn't write much in 1 minute, but I followed the advice above.

Describe a film you saw

You should say:

- what kind of film
- when you saw it
- what it was about
- and why you like it

Notes (1 minute)

1. The Social Network
2. true story
3. 2 weeks ago
4. creator of Facebook
- 5.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Sunday, March 06, 2011

IELTS Speaking: using the 1-minute preparation time

Martin asked a great question: "What's the best way to use the 1-minute preparation time in part 2 of the speaking test?"

I must admit, I don't have a good answer to this question (yet). I'm going to try some different approaches with my students this week - hopefully I'll find some answers.

If anyone has any suggestions, feel free to share them in the "comments" area. I'll share my ideas on Friday.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#), [Questions/Advice](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#)

Friday, February 25, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'difficult' questions

Last week I wrote about 'using what you know'. Here are some more quick examples of how you can make a 'difficult' question much easier:

1) Describe something that you collect.

Most students panic because they don't collect anything. But this question is easier than you think. If your hobby is listening to music or reading books, just tell the examiner that you collect CDs or novels. You could talk about your "collection" of clothes or shoes. Everyone has a collection of something, even if you don't call yourself a collector.

2) Describe an important decision that you made.

Easy. Just talk about the subject you chose to study or the career you decided to pursue. If you moved to live/study in a different country, you could talk about that.

3) Describe an important letter you received.

Use the answer you gave for number 2 (with a few small changes). Talk about the letter you received confirming your place on a university course, or confirming a successful job application.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

Friday, February 11, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a foreign person

Jay sent me this interesting IELTS question:

Describe a foreign person that you like. You should say:

- where you met him/her***
- why you like him/her***
- and explain what you learnt from him/her***

Some advice:

1. The easy choice would be to describe an English teacher. You could then talk about your lessons and easily explain what you learnt.

2. I think it would be acceptable to describe someone you have never met. Just say "I've never met the person I'm going to describe, but I hope to meet him/her one day".
3. If you do number 2 above, choose your hero. It's best to choose someone you know a lot about. Give as much real information as possible. Do some Google research to get ideas.

Finally, remember that this is a "describe a person" question. Hopefully you can use some of the ideas from [this lesson](#).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(10\)](#)

Saturday, January 29, 2011

IELTS Speaking: recorded example

Describe an interesting place you have visited.

You should say:

- where it is
- what you can do there
- and why you think it's an interesting place.

Here's an example description of a place I've visited. I've used the vocabulary from yesterday's lesson to describe London.

Listen to the recording while following the vocabulary (see yesterday's lesson). Then you could practise your own description of London using the same vocabulary. Keep practising until you're happy.

[click here to listen](#)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, January 28, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a place

In part 2 of the speaking test, you might have to describe a place. There are several possible questions about places. For example:

1. Describe a place you have visited.
2. Describe a historic place.
3. Describe a holiday.
4. Describe a place you would like to visit.
5. Describe somewhere you have lived or would like to live.

My advice is to prepare a description of one place that you could use to answer all of these questions. Then search the Internet for some good vocabulary.

For example, here are some ideas I found to describe London:

- **Adjectives:** it's exciting, busy, hectic, cosmopolitan, multicultural, unique. It's historic but modern at the same time, it's a thriving, prosperous city, it's fashionable, lively, fun...
- **Activities:** London is famous for its history, culture, art, museums. Tourists go there to see Big Ben, The Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square etc. You can get a fantastic view of the city from the 'London Eye'. It's also famous for its theatres and shows in the West End, its shops, restaurants and nightlife. There are endless things to see and do.
- **Negatives:** London is expensive, crowded, stressful, polluted. The underground system is dirty, travel is overpriced and unpleasant. The cost of living is high (shopping, house prices etc.), the locals are always in a hurry and can be unfriendly, there are social problems (like you can find in most big cities).

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(29\)](#)

Saturday, January 08, 2011

IELTS Speaking: informal expressions

Yesterday I wrote about 'an event' for IELTS Speaking Part 2. Some of the expressions I used were informal:

- we chatted (talked)
- to get together with (meet)
- to catch up with (talk to someone you haven't seen for a while)
- what my friends had been up to (had been doing)
- to wind down (relax after something tiring)

The examiner would consider these phrases to be "less common vocabulary". In other words, a few phrasal verbs or informal expressions can help you to get a high score in IELTS Speaking.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(13\)](#)

Friday, January 07, 2011

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an event

Describe a recent event that made you happy.

You should say:

- **when and where it was**
- **who was involved**
- **what happened**
- **and explain why it made you happy.**

The following description contains the kind of phrases that native speakers (like me) really use. I've underlined the best vocabulary.

1. **When and where:** my friend's birthday party, last Saturday evening, we went for a meal in an Italian restaurant.
2. **Who:** there were about 10 of us, he invited some close friends and work colleagues, most of them were people I've known since university.
3. **What happened:** we met at the restaurant, I gave my friend a present and a birthday card, we ordered some food, while we ate dinner everyone chatted, after the main course the waiter brought out a cake and we sang 'Happy Birthday', everyone went home quite late.
4. **Why it made me happy:** it was great to get together with old friends, I had some interesting conversations, it was a good opportunity to catch up with what my friends had been up to, it was a nice way to wind down after a hard week at work, the food was delicious, I went home feeling full after a fantastic meal.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(45\)](#)

Friday, November 26, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 3: technology at work

1. What technology or equipment is used in most workplaces nowadays?
2. Does technology help workers, or does it make their lives more difficult?
3. What effect does new technology have on employment?

1. Advice: give a list of different technologies, then talk about one in detail:

In most workplaces people use equipment such as computers, phones, printers, fax machines and photocopiers. I think the computer is probably the most essential piece of equipment because we rely on it for almost everything: communicating by email, writing reports, organising data, and finding information on the Internet.

2. Advice: talk about the positives AND the negatives:

Technology definitely helps workers because it makes many tasks so much easier. For example, email is such a useful tool for communication between employees in different offices, or even in different countries. On the other hand, technology can make life more difficult, especially when it goes wrong. It causes a lot of stress when the Internet is down or a computer crashes.

3. Advice: give the good effects AND the bad effects:

I think technology is often responsible for people losing their jobs. Machines have replaced people in areas like manufacturing and agriculture, and whenever a new technology is introduced, there are redundancies. At the same time, jobs might be created thanks to a new technology; there would be no computer programmers if the computer hadn't been invented.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#)

Friday, November 19, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a person

Describe a person you admire.

You should say:

- ***who the person is***
- ***what he or she is like***
- ***and why you admire him or her.***

Here are some ideas. I've underlined the best vocabulary.

- I'm going to talk about my father because he has been a major influence in my life.
- My father was always a good role model for me as I was growing up. He's hard-working, patient and understanding; he's also got a goodsense of humour and seems to get on well with everybody. Hopefully I've inherited some of these traits.
- I admire my father because I think he brought me and my brothers/sisters up well; he was quite strict but always fair, and he has always been someone I can turn to for advice. I think my father set a good example by working hard and having a positive outlook on life. I remember that he used to leave for work early and come home quite late, but he always made time for me and my brothers/sisters.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(50\)](#)

[« Previous](#) | [Next »](#)

Friday, November 12, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a festival

A common topic for the short presentation (IELTS Speaking Part 2) is "describe an important festival in your country".

My advice is to look for a description of your festival on Wikipedia. Copy the best parts of the description and make small changes if necessary. As an example, I've copied a short description of Christmas from Wikipedia.

Describe a festival: Christmas

Christmas is an annual holiday that, in Christianity, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

Popular customs of the holiday include gift-giving, music, an exchange of greeting cards, church celebrations, a special meal, and the display of various decorations; including Christmas trees, lights, nativity scenes, and holly. In addition, Father Christmas (known as Santa Claus in some areas) is a popular figure in many countries, associated with the bringing of gifts for children.

Over the Christmas period, people decorate their homes and exchange gifts. In some countries, children perform plays re-telling the events of the Nativity, or sing carols that reference the event. Christmas, along with Easter, is the period of highest annual church attendance.

A special Christmas family meal is an important part of the celebration for many, and what is served varies greatly from country to country. In England and countries influenced by its traditions, a standard Christmas meal includes turkey, potatoes, vegetables, sausages and gravy, followed by Christmas pudding, mince pies and fruit cake.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(15\)](#)

Friday, October 29, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 2: example presentation

Watch this YouTube video of a student doing IELTS speaking part 2.

These are his good points:

- He speaks clearly. His pronunciation is good.
- He answers the questions.
- He sometimes corrects his own small mistakes.

These are some of the sentences he uses:

- When I was very young she told me to smile to people (should be 'atpeople').
- She treat everyone equally. (should be 'treats')
- I was really shy when I was young and I rarely talked to strangers, so she gave me this advice to teach me how to deal with people.
- It can increase my confidence and people will have a good impressionon me. (should be 'impression of me')

As you can see, there are some small mistakes but also some good words and phrases (treat equally, I rarely talked, gave me advice, deal with people, increase my confidence, have a good impression).

What score do you think he deserves?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(26\)](#)

Friday, October 22, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 1: a good example

Have a look at this video, taken from YouTube. I think it's a good example of how to do IELTS Speaking Part 1.

Remember, Part 1 is supposed to be easy. You should give short, simple answers. I think the student in the video does this well: she speaks clearly, answers the questions directly, and doesn't hesitate before answering. Her answers sound natural and she makes almost no mistakes.

Here are the first 4 questions and answers:

Do you work or are you a student?

I work and I'm studying English as well.

And what's your job?

I work in hairdressing and I do manicure, I do nails. I work part-time.

How long have you done this job?

I've been doing this job for almost one year.

Do you like it?

Actually, I don't like it very much. The part that I like is that I can communicate with people.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, October 08, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 3: How will the Internet affect our lives?

The "perspectives technique" for generating ideas (see 6th October) can also be useful in the IELTS speaking test. Here's an example:

How do you think the Internet will affect our lives in the future?

Personal perspective:

I think the Internet will have a huge impact on our lives. More and more people are using social websites to keep in touch with friends. I think the Internet will probably replace TV because most channels are already available online.

Economic perspective:

Also, I think we'll do more online shopping. Web-based companies like Amazon are already really successful. In the future, there will probably be more companies that only sell via the Internet, and I expect we'll spend more money online than in traditional shops.

Educational perspective:

Schools and universities might also use the Internet to provide courses, so online learning will probably become a normal part of life.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)

Friday, September 24, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an advertisement

Describe an interesting advertisement that you have seen. You should say:

- **where you saw it**
- **what it was about**
- **why you think it was an interesting advertisement.**

Choose something simple. Here's an example with the "band 7" vocabulary underlined:



1. I'm going to talk about an advertisement for Coca-Cola, which is one of the biggest brands in the world. I've seen Coke advertised everywhere, on posters and TV commercials.
2. The advert shows a picture of Santa Claus smiling and holding a bottle of Coke. I think the aim is to target children and associate (link/connect) the brand with Christmas time.
3. The advert is interesting because the company is deliberately trying to influence and attract children. The marketers are trying to capture young customers. They are presenting the drink as something special, a gift for Christmas. However, Coca-Cola is not necessarily a healthy drink for children; it contains a lot of sugar. Maybe this kind of advertising manipulates children and encourages them to pester their parents.

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Friday, August 20, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 3: status symbols

In part 3 of the IELTS speaking test you should try to give longer answers with opinions, reasons, comparisons and examples. Here are some example questions and answers related to last week's part 2 topic:

In your country, what possessions show a higher status or position in society?

In my country, people who are wealthy tend to buy big houses and cars. Certain makes of car such as Mercedes or Ferrari are status symbols. They let

other people know that you are important or powerful. People who want to give this impression often wear expensive designer clothes, or watches by brands like Rolex.

Do you think we place too much importance on possessions?

Probably, yes. Some people are obsessed with showing off their new mobile phone or wearing the latest fashions. I think it's a problem for teenagers because there's a lot of peer pressure to follow fashion or buy the latest gadget that their friends have got.

Do you think things were different 50 years ago?

Yes, maybe people were less materialistic. I think they bought things that lasted longer; my grandparents talk about how they repaired things rather than throwing them away. Maybe brands and advertising weren't as powerful as they are now.

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Friday, August 13, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an object

In IELTS speaking part 2, you might be asked to describe an object. For example:

- Describe something you bought recently.
- Describe a gift you gave or received.
- Describe something you own which is important to you.

Choose something easy, like a mobile phone:

I'm going to describe my mobile phone. I bought it online / in a mobile phone shop / it was a present from...

I use the phone to keep in touch with friends and family, for communication by voice, text and email. It has various features like video, MP3 player, wireless Internet, digital camera and games. It's easy to share photos and music. I use it for almost everything, it even has a calendar that reminds me about appointments.

My phone is an essential part of my life. It holds my contacts, my photos, my music collection. I've got instant access to my favourite websites. It's like having my whole life in my pocket. I couldn't live without it.

Note:

I've underlined the best phrases for IELTS band 7 or higher.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(34\)](#)

Tuesday, August 03, 2010

IELTS Listening/Speaking: describe a city

I've used the following video with some of my classes. Try the gap-fill exercise for IELTS listening practice.

The topic of the video, a description of a city, is useful for IELTS speaking. Try using words or phrases from the video to describe a place you have visited.

Listen and fill the gaps:

1. Copenhagen is stylish, _____ and frequently cloudy or rainy.
2. Its location is _____. It's the bridge between Europe and Scandinavia.
3. The locals _____ to be bike-riding, taciturn and very good-looking.
4. My best piece of _____ for travellers is to wear comfortable shoes.
5. If you can get a _____ point, the views over the city are _____.
6. Learning the language is an exercise in _____.
7. It's _____ of people who are helpful and practical.
8. Travellers should take a _____ of humour and a _____ mind.

If you can't see the video, listen to the recording below:

[Click here to listen](#)

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Listening](#), [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(29\)](#)

Friday, July 30, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 3: children's toys

Here are some questions related to last week's part 2 topic:

1. Do you think it's important for boys to play with "boys' toys" and for girls to only play with "girls' toys"?

I think boys naturally seem to prefer playing with "boys' toys" and girls with "girls' toys". When I was young I had toy cars, trucks, guns and things like that, whereas my sister always wanted to play with dolls. I don't suppose it really matters if a boy plays with a doll or a girl plays with a toy car, but children learn quickly what toys are supposed to be for boys and for girls.

2. Do you think it's good if parents only buy "educational" toys for their children?

No, I don't agree with only giving children educational toys. In my opinion, children learn by playing with whatever interests them. Children invent their own games, even if they don't have any toys at all. It's important for children just to have fun; there will be plenty of time for parents to worry about education when their children get older.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(4\)](#)

Saturday, July 24, 2010

IELTS Speaking: describe a toy

Below, you can read an example description of a toy (for IELTS speaking part 2). See yesterday's lesson for the full question.

Lego Car Description:

One special toy that I remember getting was a Lego car. It was a birthday present from my parents. I can't remember exactly how old I was, but I was probably about 10 or 11.

The special thing about this car was that I had to build it myself out of hundreds of pieces of Lego. The pieces came in a box with a picture of the finished car on the front, and I had to follow step-by-step instructions to put all the pieces



together in the correct way. This wasn't an easy task

because the car even had an engine, movable seats and gears. It took me a day or two to make, and required a lot of concentration.

When the car was finished it looked great, and I felt a sense of accomplishment. I seem to remember that I didn't play with the car very much; the fun part had been the process of building it.

Don't just read this description once. Spend some time analysing it:

- Is the description well-organised and easy to follow?
- Can you find any good 'band 7' words or phrases?
- Could you write a similar description for a different toy?

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

Friday, July 23, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a toy

Aida sent me this difficult speaking question:

Describe a toy that was special to you when you were a child.

You should say:

- ***when you got it***
- ***what it looked like***
- ***who gave it to you***
- ***and how you used it or played with it.***

If you can't remember a real toy that you had, choose something simple like a toy car (typical boy's toy) or a doll (typical girl's toy). Both of these toys are easy to describe.

I'll write some example ideas about this topic tomorrow. If you have any suggestions, please share them in the "comments" area below.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(20\)](#)

Friday, April 30, 2010

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an animal

Several students have asked me about this question:

Describe a wild animal from your country.

You should say

- ***what the animal is and what it looks like***
- ***where it lives***
- ***and explain how people in your country (or you) feel about this animal.***

You might not be able to copy my example because I've described an animal that is common in the UK. However, hopefully my description will give you some ideas.

1. I'm going to describe the 'robin' which is a wild bird that is common in the UK. The robin is a small bird with brown and white feathers and an area of bright red colour on its face and on the front of its body. The area of red colour makes robins very easy to distinguish from



other birds.

2. Robins are common garden birds. Many houses in the UK have a garden, and you can often see this bird sitting in a tree. They make their nests in trees and go looking for food. You might also see a robin if you go for a walk in the countryside or in a park.
3. Robins have a special place in British culture. They are considered to be Christmas birds, and are often used on Christmas cards. Many people leave food in their gardens for robins and other small birds to eat.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(32\)](#)

Friday, September 25, 2009

IELTS Speaking: Basic Information

The IELTS Speaking Test is the final part of the exam. Your test will be at some time between 1.30pm and 5.00pm. You can take only your ID document into the exam room.

The test lasts between 11 and 14 minutes. You will be interviewed by an examiner who will record your conversation. Timing is strictly controlled by the examiner, so don't be surprised if he or she interrupts you during an answer.

There are 3 parts to the Speaking Test:

1. Introduction/ interview: around 10 questions in 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Short presentation: talk for 2 minutes with 1 minute to prepare.
3. Discussion: around 5 questions in 4 to 5 minutes.

Preparation is the key to a good score in IELTS Speaking. Different skills are tested in each part, so you need to know exactly what to do.

We can predict the kinds of questions that the examiner will ask. We'll prepare ideas, possible answers and good vocabulary for each part of the test.

Posted by [Simon](#) in [About the exam](#), [IELTS Speaking](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(33\)](#)