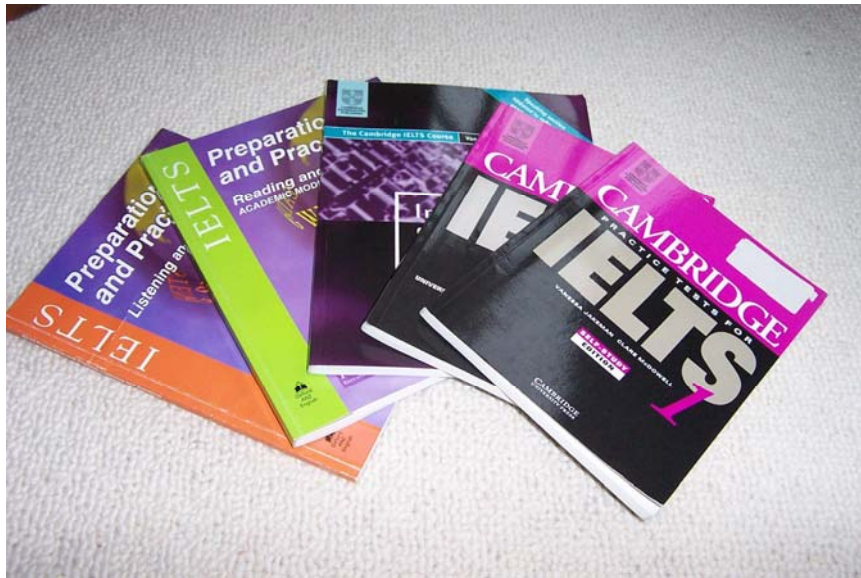




香港城市大學
City University
of Hong Kong

How to prepare for IELTS Speaking



English Language Centre

How to prepare for IELTS – Speaking

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Make sure you have a copy of the **How to prepare for IELTS – FAQs booklet** in addition to this booklet.

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Details of the Speaking Test

Structure of the test

The speaking test is the **last test** you do on the test day. You will be given a time slot between about 2pm and 6.30pm.

There are **three tasks** or parts to the test which takes the form of an interview lasting between 11 & 14 minutes:

- Part 1 Introduction & Interview (4-5 minutes)
- Part 2 Individual long turn (3-4 minutes)
- Part 3 Two-way discussion (4-5 minutes)

The tasks test your **ability** to perform the **following functions** in English:

- provide personal and non-personal information
- express & justify opinions
- make suggestions
- speculate
- express a preference
- make comparisons & discuss contrasts
- summarise
- relate personal experiences
- analyse
- repair conversation & paraphrase

Procedure of the test

The test is conducted by **one examiner**. He or she asks all the questions and assesses you. The test is recorded on audio cassette. You will be taken to the examiner's room where you will be asked to sit either opposite or at right angles to the examiner. The examiner will then switch on the cassette recorder and start the test.

Marking

Your performance will be **assessed on the criteria** below:

Fluency & Coherence

Being able to keep going, to talk at a normal rate without unnatural pauses and hesitations.

Being able to link ideas and language together clearly so the examiner understands you.

Lexical Resource

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Having the vocabulary which enables you to express yourself while talking about both familiar and unfamiliar topics or being able to get around any vocabulary gaps without hesitation.

Grammatical Range & Accuracy

Being able to use a variety of grammatical structures appropriately.

Making as few grammatical mistakes as possible.

Being understood despite making grammatical mistakes.

Pronunciation

Being able to use English pronunciation features like stress and intonation naturally.

Not causing the examiner any problems in understanding what you are saying.

The examiner will give you a score from 1 to 9 for each of these factors. They will be converted into one final score between 1 and 9.

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Part 1 Introduction & Interview (4-5 minutes)

The examiner will **introduce himself** or herself and **confirm your identity**. He or she will then **ask you a number of general questions** about yourself to try and make you feel relaxed. You may be asked about your **home or studies**. Then you will be asked **one or two more sets of questions on familiar topics** such as your interests, your country, your family or types of things you like in various categories such as food, clothes, holidays etc. The questions come from an **examiner ‘frame’** (pre-determined questions) so the examiner will not necessarily follow-up with questions based on what you say. The more questions that are asked on a specific topic the more difficult they tend to be. However, you **do not have to express a point of view or justify** it in this part.

Some **typical questions**/prompts might be:

- ❖ Where do you come from?
- ❖ What is your home like?
- ❖ Tell me about your family.
- ❖ Tell me about your job/studies.
- ❖ Is there anything you dislike about your job/studies?
- ❖ What type of transport do you use most?
- ❖ Do you like reading?
- ❖ What kind of television programmes do you watch?
- ❖ Tell me about a film you have seen recently.
- ❖ Do you have a pet?
- ❖ What kind of food do you like?
- ❖ How often do you go shopping?
- ❖ What’s your favourite festival? Why?
- ❖ How do people celebrate this festival?

How to do Part 1

- **Listen** to the questions **carefully**.
- **Give full answers** to the questions if possible but don’t anticipate related questions. For example, if you are asked where you live a suitable answer would be *‘I live in the new territories – in a village just outside Sai Kung, called Pak Tam.’*
NOT *‘I live in Sai Kung. It’s a really nice town with quite a large population and lots of seafood restaurants. It’s a lovely place to live as it’s in the countryside. I have lived there for ten years.’* as this sounds

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like a prepared answer and the examiner’s next question might be *‘What’s Sai Kung like?’*.

- **Don’t give one or two word answers** as the examiner can only rate you on what he or she hears.

- Make sure you relate what you say to what the examiner asks. For example,

Examiner: *Do you like reading?*

You: *Yes, I **do** but I don’t get much time to **read** these days.*

How to prepare for Part 1

- Make a **list of possible topics** you could be interviewed on e.g.
 - ❖ your home
 - ❖ your country
 - ❖ your job
 - ❖ your interests
 - ❖ your school
 - ❖ your family
 - ❖ food
 - ❖ festivals
 - ❖ clothes
 - ❖ books
 - ❖ films
 - ❖ transport etc.
- **Write questions** for each of your topics and get a family member or friend to ask you the questions or put them on an audio cassette and **test yourself** responding to them.
- **Record yourself** answering the questions and listen to see how you can improve your responses.
- Make sure you **know all the vocabulary necessary** to talk about these topics. Practice the pronunciation of any new vocabulary.
- **Think about the language** that will be **useful** e.g.
 - ❖ ways of expressing likes & dislikes
 - ❖ linkers like *‘even though’* and *‘unless’*
 - ❖ tenses to talk about the past and present and your experiences e.g. *‘I’ve never been to Europe.’* or *‘I went to London for a holiday in 1998.’*

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Practice for Part 1

Books in the SAC

Focus on IELTS: pp.30-31(your city/town), p.56 (music/language to express likes and dislikes), p.96 (school), p.147 (holidays).

Insight into IELTS: p.100 (linkers), p.101 (possible topics)

Focusing on IELTS: p.56-58 (possible topics & questions), p.70 (answering questions correctly)

IELTS Tutor: p.2-4 (sample topics & sample answers)

Cambridge IELTS 3: p.29, p.53, p.75, p.99

IELTS to Success: p.36 (sample questions)

Part 2 Individual Long Turn (3-4 minutes)

The examiner will ask you to **speak for 1-2 minutes** on a topic, which he or she will **give you on a card**. The card will give you an outline of what you need to talk about. You will be given **one minute to prepare** and you **can make notes**. The examiner will give you a piece of paper and a pen. He or she will invite you to start talking when your preparation time is up. The examiner will not say anything while you are speaking but will stop you, if you talk for more than two minutes. Then you **might be asked one or two short follow-up questions**.

The **topics** will be of a **general nature**. You will be asked to describe things such as a restaurant you enjoy eating in, a book you have read recently or a piece of equipment in your house you cannot live without. You will also be asked to relate what you are talking about, to yourself – e.g. *‘say why you choose to eat in this restaurant’* or *‘say what you enjoyed about the book’*.

For example:

Describe a restaurant you enjoy eating in.

You should say:

where this restaurant is
what kind of menu it has
what other features it has

and explain why you choose to eat there.

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This part gives you the opportunity to show that you can **speak at length without hesitation**. It is also important to show that you **can organize** your ideas coherently.

How to do Part 2

- **Read** the topic **card carefully**.
- Use the preparation time wisely. Make sure you have understood what you need to talk about. **Jot down a few points** to answer the prompts on the topic card. Don't waste time writing sentences.
- **Don't write on the topic card**.
- Make sure you **answer both parts of the topic card** – description and explanation.
- Organise your talk by **following the order on the card**.
- Make your talk as **interesting and as lively** as possible.
- **Refer to your notes** as you talk, expanding each point you have.
- Make sure you **use examples from your own life**. It's much easier to talk more fluently about your own experiences.
- Try to **expand your sentences** using linking words like *‘however’* and *‘although’*. Don't use words like *‘moreover’* and *‘thus’* which are normally used for writing.
- **Don't hesitate for too long**. Talk about anything related to the question rather than nothing at all.
- **Try to relax** and enjoy talking about yourself!
- **Don't worry about the time**. The examiner will stop you when your time is up.
- Also, **don't worry if the examiner stops you** before you have finished. You will not be penalized for not concluding your talk.

How to prepare for Part 2

- **Using the topics** you have thought about for **Part 1** take them one at a time and time yourself **preparing for one minute** and **talking about them for one to two minutes**.
- **Record yourself talking** on these topics. Play the recordings back to see how easy you are to understand and how you could improve. **Use the checklist** on the next page to assess your performance:

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- ✓ Did I cover all the points?
- ✓ Did I elaborate the points?
- ✓ Did I vary my vocabulary?
- ✓ Did I organize my ideas logically?
- ✓ Would an examiner have understood me?
- ✓ Was my pronunciation clear?
- ✓ Were my notes useful?
- ✓ How long did I talk for?

- Spend some time **thinking about** how you will make **notes**. Mindmaps are quick and useful for this kind of activity.
- **Think about the language:**
 - ❖ to introduce your topic
 - ❖ to describe objects, people, events or places
 - ❖ to describe a sequence of events
 - ❖ to talk about experiences
 - ❖ to talk about how you feel or felt about something in the past
 - ❖ to talk about personal goals
- **Practice short answer questions** for the follow-up questions.

Practice for Part 2

Books in the SAC

Focus on IELTS: p.51 (mindmap notes in the context of interests), p.63 (describing objects), p.64 (experiences in the context of cultural events), p.70 (describing an event), p.86 (describing a sequence of events), p.94 (personal memories), p.96 (practice in the context of education), p.118 (practice in the context of books and letters), p.133 (practice/talking about future goals), p.148 (practice in the context of tourist attractions), p.158 (practice in the context of dress & performers)

Insight into IELTS: p. 103 (introducing the topic), p.103 (describing how you feel/felt), p.104 (practice in the context of jobs), p.105 (answering follow-up questions)

Focusing on IELTS: pp.58-62 (linking words, sample talk, possible topics)

IELTS Tutor: pp.5-7 (sample questions & a sample talk)

Cambridge IELTS 3: p.29, p.53, p.75, p.99.

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Part 3 Two-way discussion (4-5 minutes)

The examiner will invite you to participate in a **discussion of more abstract issues** linked to the topic of Part 2.

You could for example be asked to talk about people's eating habits, diets, fast food or genetically modified food as a thematic link to your talk on a restaurant in Part 2. The **examiner could start the discussion in several ways** e.g. *'Tell me what you think about ...'*; *'What in your opinion is ...'* or *'How would you compare ...'* etc.

You **may be asked to relate** the topic **to** a situation in **your own country** – that is Hong Kong.

You will be expected to be able to **express your opinions** and **give reasons** in this part and it is an opportunity to demonstrate your fluency as well as the range of your vocabulary and grammar.

You will also be expected to use language to **clarify your meaning** and **repair any breakdowns** in communication.

The **questions will increase in difficulty** slightly as this part of the test progresses. The examiner may begin by asking you to describe something and then move on to ask you to compare, evaluate or speculate.

How to do Part 3

- Remember there is **no right or wrong answer**. Don't be afraid to say what you think about a topic.
- Try to **give interesting responses** to the examiner's prompts.
- **Show your ability to express abstract ideas** and support your opinions.
- Demonstrate a willingness to **give extended responses**. Don't give one-word answers.
- Try to **repair any breakdowns in communication** by getting around a word you can't think of or don't know by using other words to express your meaning.
- **Give yourself time to think** by using expressions like *'I've not really thought about this before but ...'*. See *Helpful Hints for IELTS*, p.77.

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How to prepare for Part 3

- **Think about abstract issues** related to the topics you have for Part 1 & 2. For example - school/teachers – qualities of a good teacher; learning styles; qualifications versus experience; face-to-face tuition versus on-line courses etc.
- Make it a habit to **read English language newspapers** – even the Metro News in the MTR is better than nothing! and **watch the news reports** and listen to the radio to keep up to date on everyday topics.
- Try to **listen to or watch current affairs programmes** e.g. *Pearl Watch*.
- **Think about the language** which will be useful e.g.
 - ❖ language of comparison and contrast
 - ❖ language to express opinions and give reasons
 - ❖ language to speculate about the future
 - ❖ language to discuss the hypothetical e.g. conditional sentences
- Try to **take a current affairs issue every day and list all the vocabulary** you would need to talk about it. Think about your opinion on the issue and think about opposing views.
- **Find someone else doing the test** and practice discussing current affairs topics, especially in relation to Hong Kong.

Practice for Part 3

Books in the SAC

Focus on IELTS:

- p.15 (comparison & contrast in the context of sports),
 - p.73 (discussion on water),
 - p.86 (expressing opinions/giving reasons in the context of natural disasters), p.99 (discussion on teachers),
 - p.111 (comparison in the context of communication – note the coursebook suggests this is practice for part 2 but it is better practice for part 3),
 - p.113 (discussion in the context of communication),
 - p.123 (discussion in the context of living in space),
 - p.129 (speculating about the future/discussion in the context of the future of our planet),
 - pp.140-141 (discussion about cars/driving),
 - p.145 (discussion about tourism),
 - p.153 (discussion about facial expression & communication),
 - p.159 (discussions about clothes & performers)
- Insight into IELTS: pp.106-108

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Focusing on IELTS:

- p. 64 (extending answers),
 - p.65 (clarification strategies and checking meaning),
 - p.66 (thinking time techniques)
 - p.68 (using other words to express meaning),
 - p.72-3 (expressing opinions)
- IELTS Tutor:
- p.9-10 (language for expressing & justifying opinion, giving suggestions, expressing preferences etc.)
- Helpful Hints for IELTS: p.82 (lots of topics)
- Cambridge IELTS 3: p.29, p.53, p.75, p.99

Practice for all three parts together

Books in the SAC

Focus on IELTS: pp.164-165**, p.183

Helpful Hints for IELTS: p.105-106, p.126-127

Websites

<http://international.holmesglen.vic.edu.au/IELTS01.htm>

From homepage go to Speaking & download the Speaking Booklet. You will see task descriptions, suggested questions & strategies for approach.

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General tips for Speaking

Before the test

- Try and **talk in English** as much as possible.
- Go to the **Informal Activity meetings** organized by the Self Access Centre (SAC) in the ELC. Ask in the SAC for details.
- Remember the more **familiar** you are with **everyday social English** the more fluent you will sound.
- Make sure you are **familiar with the structure of the test**.
- **Listen** to as much English as you can – **watch English TV** channels, listen to English radio - RTHK (567AM) & BBC (675 AM), and **watch films** in the SAC.
- **Talk aloud to yourself** and **tape yourself**.

During the test

- Your appearance may have an unconscious effect on the examiner, so **dress neatly**.
- **Arrive early**. Sometimes examiners get ahead of their schedule.
- Try to **look confident**. Don't fold your arms.
- **Keep eye contact with the examiner**, especially in parts 1 and 3. Don't speak to the cassette recorder.
- Don't worry if the examiner does not look at you in part 2. He or she will be listening and checking the criteria for assessing you.
- **Don't worry about being nervous**. Everyone is nervous doing these tests. Don't say to the examiner 'I'm nervous'!
- Remember speaking 'fluently', does not mean speaking 'quickly'.
- **Don't be afraid to correct** yourself if you make a grammatical mistake.