

WHAT IS THE IELTS TEST?

IELTS is the world's most popular high-stakes English test, with over 2 million tests taken in the last year and it is the only major English language test giving you a two-way face to face language speaking assessment. This gives you confidence knowing you are better equipped for real life situations.

IELTS is recognised by over 9,000 organisations worldwide, including educational institutions, employers, governments, immigration authorities and professional bodies. The test format has not changed significantly for over 20 years.

Almost all UK universities and higher education institutions accept IELTS for proof of proficiency in the English Language. **Most IELTS requirements by universities fall between 5.5 and 7.0. However, Oxbridge and Russell Group universities, for example, may require a higher score depending upon the nature of the course to be studied.** Students should approach universities individually in order to establish the precise IELTS scores needed. Increasingly, where there is strong competition for places universities are **sometimes specifying certain scores for each paper, rather than an overall score.**

There have been numerous major changes in testing procedures recently and if you are considering doing a **Foundation or Pre-Sessional course** you will need to sit this test in a **special CELT approved centre.**

There are **2 different IELTS tests: General Training and Academic.** The **Academic** is the one necessary for university entry.

The IELTS test gives an accurate reflection of your ability to understand, read, write and speak English. This is because some of the world's leading experts in English language assessment have developed IELTS.

The IELTS test assesses your abilities in all **four skills - listening, reading, writing and speaking - in under three hours.**

You will take the Listening, Reading and Writing tests all on the same day one after the other, with no breaks in between them. They are always taken in this order. Your Speaking test will either be after a break on the same day as the other three tests, or up to seven days before or after that. This will depend on your test centre.

A range of native-speaker accents (North American, Australian, New Zealand and British) is used in the Listening test, and all standard varieties of English are accepted in responses in all parts of the test.

IELTS scores have a recommended validity period of two years.

THE FORMAT OF THE IELTS PAPERS

Listening
30 minutes

You will listen to four recorded texts, monologues and conversations by a range of native speakers, and write your answers to a series of questions.

These include questions which test your ability to understand main ideas and detailed factual information, ability to understand the opinions and attitudes of speakers, ability to understand the purpose of an utterance and the ability to follow the development of ideas.

A variety of voices and native-speaker accents are used and each section is heard only once.

Section 1

A conversation between two people set in an everyday social context.

Section 2

A monologue set in an everyday social context e.g. a speech about local facilities.

Section 3

A conversation between up to four people set in an educational or training context, e.g. a university tutor and a student discussing an assignment.

Section 4

A monologue on an academic subject e.g. a university lecture.

Reading

60 minutes

The Reading component consists of 40 questions. A variety of question types is used in order to test a wide range of reading skills. These including reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical argument, recognising writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose.

IELTS Academic

The Academic version includes three long texts which range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. The texts are authentic and are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. These have been selected for a non-specialist audience but are appropriate for candidates entering university courses or seeking professional registration.

Writing

60 minutes

IELTS Academic

The Writing component of IELTS Academic includes two tasks. Topics are of general

interest to, and suitable for candidates entering undergraduate and postgraduate studies or seeking professional registration.

Task 1

You will be presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram and asked to describe, summarise or explain the information in your own words. You may be asked to describe and explain data, describe the stages of a process, how something works or describe an object or event.

Task 2

You will be asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. Responses to both tasks must be in a formal style.

Speaking

11 to 14 minutes

The Speaking component assesses your use of spoken English, and takes between 11 and 14 minutes to complete. Every test is recorded. The Speaking component is delivered in such a way that it does not allow candidates to rehearse set responses beforehand.

Part 1

The Examiner will ask you general questions about yourself and a range of familiar topics, such as home, family, work, studies and interests. This part lasts between four and five minutes.

Part 2

You will be given a card which asks you to talk about a particular topic. You will have one minute to prepare before speaking for up to two minutes. The examiner will then ask one or two questions on the same topic to finish this part of the test.

Part 3

You will be asked further questions connected to the topic in Part 2. These questions will give you the opportunity to discuss more abstract ideas and issue. The part of the test lasts between four and five minutes.

THE IELTS 9 BAND SCALE

Each band corresponds to a level of English competence. All parts of the test and the Overall Band Score can be reported in whole and half bands, eg 6.5, 7.0, 7.5, 8.0.

Band 9: Expert user: has fully operational command of the language: appropriate,

accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

Band 8: Very good user: has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

Band 7: Good user: has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

Band 6: Competent user: has generally effective command of the language despite some

inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

Band 5: Modest user: has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

Band 4: Limited user: basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

Band 3: Extremely limited user: conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

Band 2: Intermittent user: no real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

Band 1: Non-user: essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

Band 0: Did not attempt the test: No assessable information provided.