

IELTS Speaking Success:

Skills Strategies
and Model Answers

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<http://www.ieltsanswers.com/speaking-test-book.html>

About the author

I have been teaching English as a second language for over fifteen years in Taiwan and Australia, in language centers and universities. My area of specialization is teaching students how to pass the IELTS exam. I particularly enjoy teaching IELTS because I find it challenging to teach students the necessary skills and strategies that they need to pass, and I also find that my students are highly motivated – this is a joy for a teacher!

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IELTS Task 2 Essay Writing

IELTS Task 1 Writing Academic Test

IELTS Task 1 Writing General Test

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Introduction

The IELTS speaking test lasts 11-14 minutes. The test is divided into three parts. The IELTS examiner will ask you different types of questions in each part as follows below.

Part 1: Short question and answers about familiar topics.

This part of the test lasts from 4 to 5 minutes and consists of questions about you and the country you are from. There is a maximum of three different sets of topics and each topic has a maximum of four questions. The first topic will be about whether you work or study, the place you are living in, or the place you are from. The other two topics are usually fairly straightforward topics such as hobbies, holidays, sports, and entertainment.

Part 2: Long Turn

You are given a card with a topic and then given 1 minute to prepare a 1 to 2 minute answer to this topic. You should try to talk for 2 minutes if you are able. Topics include describing or commenting on a person, place, object, activity, or experience. The topic also has sub-topics, which are provided to assist you to plan your response. The examiner may ask one or two rounding-off questions at the end of this part of the test. These should be answered briefly.

Part 3: Discussion

This part of the test lasts from 4 to 5 minutes and consists of questions roughly based on the topic area of the Part 2: Long Turn. Questions typically ask you to compare, analyze, speculate, or give your opinion on the given topic. In this part the examiner may push you hard to see the limits of your ability.

Overview of the three parts of the test

PART	REQUIREMENT
Part One General questions 4-5 Minutes	Answer up to four questions for three topics . Try to speak for about 2-4 sentences for each question.
Part Two Long Turn 3-4 Minutes	1. The examiner will hand you a card with a topic on it. 2. You have one minute to prepare for the topic. 3. Speak for one to two minutes. [Longer answers are need for higher scores!]
Part Three 4-5 Minutes	A discussion based on Part Two. This normally takes the form of the examiner asking a series of questions related to your topic in Part Two.

1.1 GRADING

Your speaking test is graded and marked from 1-9 in accordance with the four key criteria shown below:

The four criteria are explained in more detail in the sections following the tables. You can also refer to my YouTube videos for further explanation of the grading:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3uSntDcKTU>

Fluency and coherence:

6	7	8
Speaks at length, but some effort is required	Speaks at length without noticeable effort	speaks fluently; hesitation is usually to think of ideas and rarely to search for language
some loss of coherence due to repetition, self-correction, or hesitation	no loss of coherence due to repetition, self-correction, or hesitation	develops topics coherently and appropriately
some inappropriate linking words	wide range of linking words used	wide range of linking words used that assist to make information highly coherent

[Note that the criteria described in this section are based on the Public Version of the speaking band descriptors at: https://www.ielts.org/PDF/UOBDS_SpeakingFinal.pdf]

Pronunciation:

6	7	8
<p>uses a range of intonation, stress, rhythm; but with mixed control and it is not maintained</p> <p>can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times</p>	<p>Good usage of intonation, stress, rhythm; sustains flexible use of these features, with only occasional lapses</p> <p>easy to understand throughout; accent has minimal effect on intelligibility</p>	<p>uses a wide range of pronunciation features flexibly and appropriately</p> <p>easy to understand throughout; accent has no effect on intelligibility</p>

Vocabulary: [lexical resource]

6	7	8
<p>Vocabulary is <u>sufficient</u> to discuss topics at length and make the meaning clear in spite of some errors</p> <p>generally paraphrases successfully</p> <p>insufficient advanced language is used to award</p> <p>7</p>	<p>vocabulary used <u>flexibly</u> to discuss a variety of topics</p> <p>uses paraphrases effectively</p> <p>uses some less common and <u>idiomatic</u> vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and <u>collocation</u>, with some inappropriate choices</p>	<p>uses a <u>wide range of</u> vocabulary readily and flexibly to convey <u>precise meaning</u></p> <p>uses paraphrases effectively as required</p> <p>uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully, with rare inaccuracies</p>

Grammar: [grammatical range and accuracy]

6	7	8
<p>uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility</p> <p>may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems</p>	<p>flexibly uses a range of complex structures</p> <p>frequently produces error-free sentences</p>	<p>uses a wide range of structures</p> <p>most sentences are error-free with only very occasional errors that are not repeated</p>

Level 9 Grading Criteria

Fluency and coherence	<p>speaks fluently like a native speaker and any repetition or self-correction is extremely rare; and any hesitation is to think of ideas and not to think of vocabulary or grammar</p> <p>speaks coherently using a wide range of appropriate cohesive features</p> <p>responses to question are relevant and developed fully</p>
Pronunciation	<p>uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety</p> <p>sustains flexible use of pronunciation features throughout</p> <p>can be understood effortlessly</p>
Lexical resource	<p>uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision for all topics</p> <p>uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately</p>
Grammatical range and accuracy	<p>uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately</p> <p>produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech</p>

Further explanation of the grading criteria and how to maximize your score is included in the complete version of this speaking book

1.2 PREPARING FOR YOUR TEST

To improve your score in the IELTS speaking section, you should focus on the following areas:

1. Understanding how the speaking test is graded
2. Preparing for and practicing common questions that are asked
3. Learning ways of structuring your answers to extend your answers and to improve your coherence
4. Learning to paraphrase, which is when you use a phrase to explain a word you can't think of
5. Improving your pronunciation, and ensuring you can make all sounds correctly (th, l, r, long vowel sounds) and also getting natural sounding stress, intonation, and connected speech.
6. Improving spoken grammar by correcting any frequent errors, and learning to use a couple of complex sentence structures such as conditional phrases or relative pronouns.
7. Broadening your vocabulary especially by building common phrases that can be used for a variety of responses, such as connectives and linking words and idiomatic language.

2. GENERAL STRATEGIES

This section introduces strategies that can be used in all three parts of the test. The strategies will be briefly introduced in this section, and then the way to use these strategies will be explained under each part of the test.

BAD EXAMPLE OF A SPEAKING TEST:

Do you like to watch movies: **yes**
What sort? **Drama**
Do you have a particular favorite? **no**
Do you have a favorite actor? **no**

It is really important to produce language in the test to get a good score for all four grading criteria. The example above fails to do this. It is very short so the examiner is not able to see any fluency. Very few words have been spoken so it is difficult to assess pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

The strategies outlined below can be used in all three parts of the test to extend your answer. You may also like to see my YouTube video on this topic. It is my most popular video with hundreds of thousands of viewers!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4VYB-hXNkw>

Extend your answers

The strategies below are used to answer the question:

"What kind of food do you like?"

1. DIVIDE INTO 2 OR 3 PARTS:

This strategy involves giving 2 or 3 reasons for your answer, as follows:

Well, there are three kinds of food that I'm really keen on.

The one I like best is *Italian food* because...

I also really like to eat *Korean food* as it's very...

I'm also kind of partial to *Mexican food* because it is...

Well, there are three kinds of food that I'm really keen on. The one I like best is Italian food because I am a big fan of pasta. I also really like to eat Korean food as it's very healthy and flavorsome. I'm also kind of partial to Mexican food because it is so hot and spicy.

2. GENERAL TO SPECIFIC

This strategy involves giving a general reason for your answer, and then explaining it more specifically, and even giving an example as follows:

Well, I'd have to say that I'm a big fan of seafood. **In particular**, I really like to eat Japanese seafood because it's always so fresh. **For instance**, sashimi is delicious because the raw fish is so flavorsome.

general = seafood

specific = Japanese seafood

example = sashimi

3 more strategies to extend your answer are given in the full-version of this speaking book

Speak at a variable speed rate

Your grade for fluency requires that you speak at a good speed. You must demonstrate this to the examiner, but you do NOT need to speak quickly throughout the entire exam. Vary your speed as follows:

Slow down when you...

1. reach a difficult area or are unsure of what you will say
2. want to emphasize something
3. are using high level language to make the examiner notice it

Speed-up when you...

1. are comfortable with the topic and what you are saying
2. are giving less important information

Use redundant language

Redundant language is words that don't have any real meaning such as: **oh, well, actually**. Research shows that native speakers use lots of redundant language, but non-native speakers rarely use it. So use it to be more native-like!

Use punctuation

When we speak we use punctuation. Spoken punctuation takes the form of pauses and these pauses act like punctuation in writing. They guide the listener. A short pause signals a new clause. A longer pause with a breath of air signals a new idea. And, an even longer pause signals a change of topic.

comma = short pause

full-stop = longer pause with a breath of air

paragraph= even longer pause

Additional strategies are given in the full-version of this speaking book

3. PART ONE: QUESTIONS ON FAMILIAR TOPICS

Part One	Requirement	Suggestions
4-5 Minutes	<p>Answer up to 4 questions about 3 different topics.</p> <p>The examiner can repeat the question one time.</p> <p>You can ask the meaning of a word but the examiner cannot rephrase the whole question.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Full response – not just yes/no2. Try to speak for about 2 or 4 sentences for each question.3. Focus on language not ideas or real opinions.

Requirement

This part of the test lasts from 4 to 5 minutes and consists of questions about you and the country you are from. In this part of the test the examiners read questions directly from their examiner's book. There is a maximum of three different sets of topics and each topic has a maximum of four questions. The first topic will be about whether you work or study, the place you are living in, or the place you are from. The other two topics are usually fairly straightforward topics such as hobbies, holidays, sports, or entertainment.

Procedure

1. After checking your ID the examiner will start Part One of the test.

2. The examiner will say: *"Now, I am going to ask you a few general questions"*

3. The examiner will ask three or four questions according to different topics. The examiner will then introduce the topic by saying something like:

"Now, let's talk about where you live"

Make sure you pay attention to the keywords the examiner uses to introduce the topic. This is because you will have three or four questions based on this topic and you want to be clear what the topic is about.

4. The examiner will ask you three or four questions based on the topic, such as:

Do you live in a house or an apartment?

Which room do you like the most in your home?

In the future, what sort of home would you like to live in?

5. When the examiner has finished asking you 3 or 4 questions based on the topic, the examiner will move onto the next topic, by saying something like:

"Now let's talk about your hobbies and interests"

6. After three sets of topics [each with three or four questions] the examiner will finish Part One and move onto Part Two of the test. Note that Part One of the test lasts 4 to 5 minutes. If you give longer answers, it is possible that you may only get two topics.

This could be an advantage because there is less chance of getting an unfamiliar topic!

3.1 STRATEGIES

1: Expansion

Expansion is making something bigger. In IELTS it is good to give expanded answers to questions. This shows that you understand the question, and gives you more chance to show your language ability and get a higher score. This is illustrated below:

QUESTION: Do you like riding bicycles?

BAD RESPONSE: "Yes"

BETTER RESPONSE: *"Yes, because it's fun, good for health, and doesn't cost a lot."*

GREAT RESPONSE:

Well, I like to ride bikes for a few reasons. **The main reason** I like to cycle is that I think it is really fun and it is a good way to go sightseeing. **I'd also like to point-out** that riding a bike is very good for my health because it can help me to lose weight. **I would also like to add** that recently I haven't been riding my bike much, as I am quite busy at work.

You should refer back to Chapter 2 about the different ways to expand your answers which include:

1. Dividing your response into two or three parts:
2. Explaining something from general terms to specific and maybe giving an example
3. Depends: describing different situations
4. Concession: making a main argument and then giving a concession to it
5. Avoidance: not directly answering the question at first and then answering it

2: Show language

QUESTION: What colors do you like?

BAD RESPONSE: *"I like green and blue."*
[This answer has no advanced vocabulary.]

BETTER RESPONSE: *"My favorite colors are **light green** and **navy blue**."*
[This answer is more precise and precision increases your score for vocabulary.]

EVEN BETTER RESPONSE:

Well, My favorite color is **magenta**, I guess that's because I'm really into bright and bold colors. I also like **turquoise**, I find that a very relaxing peaceful color that reminds me of the ocean.

This answer uses some less common colors, and can impress the examiner with your vocabulary about colors. It also includes the idiomatic expression *"I'm really into."* This means to like something.

3. Buy time to think

There are a few ways to buy some time to think of your answer. Note that you shouldn't use any particular method too often! Use a range of these methods below:

Repeat the question: One way to do this is to rephrase the words of the question *"Oh, so you're asking about my favorite color."*

Ask the examiner to repeat the question: In Part One of the test the examiner is permitted to repeat the question one time. Note that the question cannot be repeated a second time and the examiner is not supposed to rephrase the question. You could ask the question to be repeated just so that you can have time to think of how to

respond to it. Essentially, while the examiner is repeating the question you are thinking of what you can say. Doing this once won't lower your score, but obviously if you do it often it will lower it!

You can use language like: *"I'm sorry I didn't quite catch that...could you please repeat the question."*

Use some memorized phrases to start your answer: if you memorize a few phrases, while you are saying these phrases you can be thinking of how you will actually respond to the question. Some phrases could be:

"Well, that's a really interesting question"

"Oh I'm not too sure about that... Let me think for a minute...Oh yes it is...."

"With regards to your question, I guess I would have to say that....."

4. If you don't understand the question

If you do not hear or understand the question, the examiner can repeat each question one time. If you do not understand the meaning of a word you can ask the examiner to explain that word. However, the examiner is not able to rephrase the whole question if you are not able to understand it, except in Part Three. If you didn't answer the question it doesn't mean you've failed your exam, but you wouldn't want to do this more than once or twice. If you can't understand the question then tell the examiner. The worst situation is that you stay silent and make the examiner unsure about whether you will give an answer or not. This makes both you and the examiner uncomfortable. Another choice is to listen out carefully for key words in the question and then try to give some sort of response to the question. This is a bit of a gamble! Do you feel lucky?

3.2 TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Note that this section will use the general strategies outlined in Chapter 2. More than one of the strategies could be used for any particular question. The purpose of this section is to show you how to actually use these strategies to answer questions.

The following types of questions are outlined below:

Question Type	Strategy
description	divide into 2 or 3 parts
types of	divide into 2 or 3 parts
liking	general to specific
disliking	general to specific
habits	depends
yes/no	depends
"Wh" questions	concession
when you were a child	concession
in the future	avoidance
comparing	avoidance

1. DESCRIPTION QUESTIONS

STRATEGY: divide your response into two or three parts

STRUCTURE: point 1 + point 2 + point 3

SAMPLE QUESTION: *"Tell me something about your hometown?"*

Well, I come from Taipei and I have lived here all my life. **I'd like to begin by saying that** it's the capital of Taiwan and also the cultural center. **On top of that I can also add that** It's very crowded, maybe even one of most congested cities in Asia I guess. The roads are so jammed that even the locals have problems finding their way around! **Finally, I'd also like to mention** that it offers splendid examples of contemporary architecture. Actually some of the most renowned landmarks are in the middle of Taipei, such as Taipei 101, the second tallest building in the world.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

Starting-off (redundant language)

ok, then; actually; alright; well, you know;

Point 1

I'd like to begin by saying ...

The first thing I'd like to mention is ...

The main thing you need to know is ...

Point 2

On top of that I can also add that ...

Another interesting point ...

Not only that, but _____ is also exceedingly

Point 3

Finally, I'd also like to mention

And, I shouldn't forget to mention that...

I guess I could also say that (it's) sort-of

Practice Questions:

1. What sort of work do you do?
2. What does your house look like?
3. What does your neighborhood look like?
4. What does your city/town look like?
5. What sort of clothes do you like to wear?
6. Describe a city you would like to visit?
7. Describe a country you would like to visit?
8. Describe a park you have visited?

9 more question types are given in the full-version
of this speaking book.

3.3 COMMON TOPICS

There are a wide range of topics that can be asked at any particular time. As well as this the questions used in the test change frequently, so it's difficult to predict exactly what topics you will receive.

Note that the first topic you receive is likely to be about your work or study, your home, where you are from, or where you are living now. In this case it makes sense to be really well prepared to answer these questions. I am amazed when I have students that don't know how to describe their job or pronounce their job title correctly! Or, have no ideas about their hometown. Prepare well for these sets of questions, so that you can get your test off to a good start. This will make a favorable impression with the examiner and also help you to relax.

Important note: Do you work or are you a student?

If the examiner asks whether you work or study, it makes things difficult for the examiner if you don't specify one clearly. I suggest that if you are working and studying you talk about the one that is the easiest for you to talk about and use higher-level language. And, if you're not doing anything, I suggest you talk about what you were doing most recently. If you want to avoid having to talk in the past tense, then just pretend that you're still doing it! It's okay to pretend in the exam. According to one of my Buddhist students, even though it is not okay to lie...it's okay to tell stories!

Sample questions and answers

...Let's talk about your job...

What kind of work do you do?

Well now, I'm an athletic trainer in a small gym, and I also have to help out at the reception desk and also in the retail shop we run. I guess you can say that I have to wear many hats. [The underlined phrases are explained in the section below regarding idiomatic language]

Why did you choose that kind of work?

Ok, that's quite an easy question. It's because I've always been keen on sports, so when I was trying to find a job, I decided to look for something I'm familiar with. Luckily I found a golden opportunity at the gym just down the road from my house.

Did you have to do any training or study for this job?

Well, for this type of job there is no formal training. I mostly learnt from the other staff and through hands-on experience.

Is there anything you don't like about your job?

Well there are some things I don't like, but it's not related to the job itself. I mean this job is great, I love to guide people about how to exercise, it's meaningful. However, the one thing I don't like is that there is not much team spirit amongst my co-workers. I guess you could say that my gym has low workplace morale. I think this is the only thing bothering me.

Nouns	Meaning
deadline	to finish a project by a specific time
occupation	type of job
overtime	needing to work beyond your normal working hours
perks	extra benefits you get from a job
shift work	working at different times of the day
social skills	the ability to communicate and interact well with others
morale	team spirit

Verbs	Meaning
be involved in	to be doing
concentrate	to focus attention towards an activity or problem
help out	help [phrasal verb]
persevere	to not give up. To keep doing something.
procrastinate	to delay or put off doing something

Adjectives	Meaning
casual	relaxed and not following strict rules
exhausting	tiring
formal	observation of conventional forms and rules
hectic	busy
inspirational	motivating
monotonous	boring
passionate	intense or strong emotional feeling about something [positive]

Idioms	Meaning
golden opportunity	an excellent opportunity <i>An internship at Google would be a <u>golden opportunity</u>.</i>
hands-on	to learn by actually doing. <i>We can get <u>hands-on</u> experience by actually doing things.</i>

on the go	<p>busy</p> <p><i>I've been <u>on the go</u> all week so I haven't had a chance to play golf.</i></p>
wear many hats	<p>someone who has to do many different types of tasks or roles.</p> <p><i>My job description is very broad, so I have to <u>wear many hats</u>.</i></p>
work flat out	<p>work very hard</p> <p><i>Sometimes I have to <u>work flat out</u> to finish my work on time.</i></p>

Practice questions about your job

1. What kind of job do you do?
2. Was it easy to get this job?
3. Did you like your first day at work?
4. Why did you choose this kind of work?
5. Have you always wanted to do this type of work?
6. How long have you been doing this job?
7. How long will you continue to do this type of work?
8. Would you like to do a different job in the future?

Additional topics are covered in the full-version of this speaking book

4. PART TWO: SPEAK FOR 2 MINUTES

Part Two	Requirement	Suggestions
1-2 minutes Long Talk	Prepare a topic for 1 minute and then speak about it for up to 2 minutes.	<p>PREPARATION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. identify key words in the question 2. choose a response for the topic that is familiar to you 3. choose a response that you have language to describe
Possibly 1 or 2 follow-up questions	Briefly answer any follow-up questions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. think about the tenses required 3. write down some key points <p>SPEAKING</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. answer the topic directly at the beginning of your talk 2. expand your key points to make your talk longer 3. make it clear when you move onto a new key point 4. use high level language

Requirement

In this part you are given a card with a topic and then given 1 minute to prepare an answer of up to 2 minutes on this topic. Topics usually include describing or commenting on a person, place, object, activity, or experience. The topic card also has sub-topics, shown as bullet points. These are only provided to assist you to plan your response and you do NOT have to respond to all of these. The examiner may ask a brief rounding-off question at the end of this part of the test.

Procedure

1. The examiner will introduce Part Two by saying:

Now I am going to give you a topic and I would like you to talk about it for 1 to 2 minutes. I will give you a pencil and paper to make notes. Do you understand?

2. The examiner will pass you the topic card and say:

Here is your pencil and paper for making notes....and here is your topic, I would like you to talk about... [first sentence on topic card]

3. The examiner will now stay silent and give you 1 minute to prepare your answer.

You should use this time to prepare your topic and write down some notes to help you.

4. After 1 minute the examiner will ask you to start speaking by saying:

Remember you have 1 to 2 minutes for this, so don't worry if I stop you. Can you start speaking now please.

5. If you stop talking before 2 minutes is up the examiner will pause a few seconds and then tell you: *"You still have time if you want to add anything."*

[This is to give you the opportunity to say more]

6. The examiner will be timing this part of the test and once two minutes is reached the examiner will ask you to stop talking. You MUST stop talking. The examiner will say something like "*Thank you*" and then ask a follow up question if it is appropriate. Answer a follow up question in one sentence. DO NOT talk at length here as the examiner needs to start Part Three of the test. You will frustrate the examiner if you start talking at length here, and the examiner may cut you off in the middle of your sentence.

4.1 PREPARING YOUR ANSWER

You only have 1 minute to prepare your answer so you should use it wisely. Focus on the following things:

1. Identify key words in the question
2. Think about the tense required
3. Choose to talk about something familiar to you and that you have language to describe. This is really important!
4. Write down some key points
5. Write down some key vocabulary [if you have time for this]

Important note: You do not need to stick to the sub-questions on the topic card; as long as you are talking about the topic you can say anything about it. You also do not need to cover ALL of the sub-questions.

Sample question

Describe a place that you have visited that you particularly liked.

You should say:

- a. When you visited there?
- b. Who you went with?
- c. What was most memorable?

And explain what you liked most about this place.

Procedure to answer the topic

1. Read the question and then underline the key words. It should look something like below.

Describe a place that you have visited that you particularly liked.

You should say:

- a. When you visited there?
- b. Who you went with?
- c. What was most memorable?

And explain what you liked most about this place.

2. Decide the place you will describe then write down some notes. You are given paper for this and you can keep your notes during your talk.

Place: San Francisco, USA

Sub-questions	A few key points
a. When you went there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For 4 months in 2013• summer
b. Who you went with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• friend who is from Viet Nam• vegetarian guy• brother was an artist
c. What was memorable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lots of cool places to visit such as Fisherman's Wharf and Alcatraz Island
d. What you liked most	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi-cultural people• great restaurants and cafes• relaxed lifestyle

Your handwritten brainstorm might look a bit like this:

San Francisco	<i>When</i>	<i>4 months 2013 Summer</i>
	<i>Who</i>	<i>Thomas from Viet Nam Vegetarian Brother artist</i>
	<i>Memorable</i>	<i>Fisherman's Wharf Alcatraz Island</i>
	<i>Like most</i>	<i>Multi-cultural restaurants and cafes lifestyle</i>

3. Introduce your answer, rephrasing the question and directly answering it, to show you clearly understand the question.

Well, a fantastic place I went to is San Francisco in California.

4. Use phrases to signal when you change to a new subtopic:

I went there in ...

I went there with ...

The thing I remember most is ...

Some of the things I enjoyed were ...

MODEL ANSWER

Well, a fantastic place I went to is San Francisco in California. It's definitely the best holiday I ever went on, so it's a place I will never forget.

I went there in 2013 for about four months during summer. I remember the climate is weird at this time of year as it got really foggy at about four o'clock every day and also it was surprisingly chilly during the night.

I went there with a chum of mine who is from Viet Nam, and we shared an apartment together. He is a vegetarian, so I also became a vegetarian during that time. You know I had to give up eating some of my favorite food like sirloin steak and lamb chops. We only ate veggies and I remember eating a loss of pasta with shiitake mushrooms. I also remember his brother who was a very talented artist.

The thing I remember most about San Francisco is that there were many cool places to visit such as Fisherman's Wharf, which is famous for its delicious seafood and sour dough bread. Oh, and Alcatraz Island, which used to be a prison for murderers and other serious criminals.

Some of the things I enjoyed most about San Francisco were the different types of people and the easy-going relaxed lifestyle they seem to be leading. As well as that, there were many trendy places to hang out and also some great restaurants and cafes.

4.2 STRUCTURAL LANGUAGE

Opening: Introductory phrases to use when you start your talk:

I'm going to talk about...

OK, I'm going to describe...

Well, I'd like to talk about...

The first point:

The first thing I'd like to mention is ...

I'd like to begin by highlighting that...

The most important point about [rephrase question] is...

In terms of [rephrase question], I would like to mention...

The second point:

Going on to [rephrase question], and what I'd like to highlight here is that ...

Now concerning the matter of [rephrase question], what I would like to mention here is that ...

The third point:

Progressing to the subject of [rephrase question]. I would like to explain that...

Moving onto the question regarding [rephrase question], what I would like to make clear is that...

The last point:

Finally, I'd like to discuss [rephrase question]

Finally then, if there is still enough time, I would also like to mention that...

Phrases for adding details:

At that time...

It happened...

It took place...

It's been going on since...

It's near...

Phrases to describe something that had an effect on you

... influenced me

... had an effect on me

... impressed me

... motivated me

... touched me deeply

4.3 STRATEGIES

Only available in the full-version of this speaking
book

4.4 TYPES OF QUESTIONS

The purpose of this section is to help you prepare for the common categories of topics that get asked in this part of the test. Most of the questions in Part Two of the test are about: PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS, ACTIVITIES, and EXPERIENCES.

This section includes the following information:

1. sample questions for each category
2. model answers for each category
3. aspects you can consider when dealing with each category
4. structures that can be used to answer questions in each category
5. language related to these common topics

4.5 PEOPLE

Many of the questions in this part of the test are about people. As well as this you can often discuss a person when you are answering other types of questions. For instance, if you are describing a place you might describe the person you go there with.

GRAMMAR

Tenses

If the question asks you to describe someone you know now. e.g. *Describe a person who is interesting*, you should describe the person using the present tense. If you are asked to describe someone you know from the past you should still describe the person using the present tense, unless the person is now dead. In this case you will use the past tense. Illustrative examples:

My neighbor Brian is a senior citizen. [present tense is used because he is still alive]

Audrey Hepburn was a petite woman. [past tense is used because she is dead]

For all types of people, describe any actions they have already done using the past tense. For example, "He **learned** how to fly a plane last year."

Use relative pronouns [who, whose]

Use who to add information about the subject.

My neighbor, who is really old, seldom goes outside.

Use whose as a possessive relative pronoun.

He is a rich man whose house is very large.

VOCABULARY

To make your answer more interesting use lots of descriptive vocabulary, e.g. extrovert, slender, and so on. You could talk about the following aspects:

1. appearance
2. personality
3. relationship to you
4. their lifestyle

1. APPEARANCE:

Height: petite [short], lofty [tall]

Build: slender [thin], overweight [fat], well-built [muscular]

Age: toddler [young child], adolescent [young adult], senior citizen

Facial features: clean shaven, full beard, goatee beard, moustache

Hair: short cropped hair, long thick hair, ponytail, bald

Audrey Hepburn was a petite woman with short cropped hair. Hepburn was boyish, and yet feminine simultaneously. She was famous for wearing little black dresses that had a way of making her look glamorous.

[past tense is used because she is dead]



Brian is a senior citizen, with a goatee beard, a moustache, and a short grey ponytail. He always wears sunglasses because he has eyes that are sensitive to sunlight. [Present tense is used because he is still alive].



Sarah, who is in her early forties, is quite tall and has a medium build. She has thick black hair that is plaited into a waist length ponytail. She usually wears jeans and a red sweater.



2: PERSONALITY

You can talk about positive and negative features of a person's personality.

Positive: warm, fun loving, intelligent, charming, kind-hearted, extrovert [outgoing]

Emma is quite an extrovert. She is always the life of the party because of her warm-hearted and fun loving nature.

Negative: mean, selfish, cruel, arrogant, introverted, a pain in the neck [annoying]

Steven is rather introverted, he usually sits quietly in the corner at parties. He is also a pain in the neck because he always bothers me when he needs help with his computer.

3. RELATIONSHIP: pal, soul-mate, classmate, colleague, family member, mentor

I have been pals with Peter since high school. I guess you can say that now he is my soul-mate. As well as this his father has always been somewhat of a mentor to me, as he is my soccer coach.

4. LIFESTYLE: hobbies, interests, work

My sister is a college student and a part-time assistant in an office, so she has little time to socialize at the weekend or play badminton.

Some advice about vocabulary:

1. Have short lists; you only need 2 or 3 words for each category
2. Focus on high-level language = language to impress the examiner and increase your score
3. The truth doesn't matter, use language to describe a person even if that is not true. For instance you might say your uncle is an extrovert even though he isn't! This is to increase your score for vocabulary.

Model answer

Describe a famous celebrity from your country who you admire

You should say:

who the person is

what kind of celebrity this person is

describe why this person has become successful

and explain why you admire this person.

Alright then, I'm going to talk about Faye Wang, who's the most famous female singer in China.

I'd like to begin by highlighting that Faye is considered as the all-time diva among the young generation. She was born in Beijing, but became famous in Hong Kong as a pop singer. Her fame is due to her career as a highly successful and influential singer, songwriter and actress; and she's also known as an icon of fashion due to her amazing and impressive makeup and clothing styles.

Now let's move on to the point of why I hold Faye in high regards. What I have to mention here is that the admiration I have for her dedication to help others. Her daughter was born with a cleft lip, and she took her to California for surgery. Once she realized how much money is required for cleft lip surgeries, she decided to establish a foundation to help people receive proper treatment.

Apart from this, what I'd like to mention is that Faye is a highly family-oriented person. She is a traditional Chinese woman and in the mid-1990s she left Hong Kong at the peak of her career and moved to Beijing to live with her husband, who was a successful rock star. Although her marriage failed, everyone took pity on her and respected the career sacrifice she made for her family.

Practice questions

Describe one of your neighbors.

You should say:

what sort of person your neighbor is

do you like this neighbor

when do you usually meet this neighbor

and explain if this person is a good neighbor.

Describe an old person you admire.

You should say:

who this person is

how long you have known him/her

what qualities they have

and explain why you admire him/her.

Describe someone you know who is a good teacher.

You should say:

who this person is

how you know him/her

what kinds of subjects they teach

and explain why this person is good at teaching.

Describe an interesting person who you know.

You should say:

what sort of person this is

where you first met him/her

why you met him/her

and explain why you think this person is interesting.

Additional common topics are covered in the full-version of this speaking book

5. PART THREE: THE DISCUSSION

Part Three	Requirement	Suggestions
4-5 minutes Discussion	<p>Respond to the examiner's questions related to your topic in Part Two for 4-5 Minutes.</p> <p>You are allowed to ask the examiner to repeat or rephrase the question.</p> <p>You can ask a checking question: <i>"Are you asking me about..."</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Give extended responses. Ideally your responses should be twice as long as in Part One of the test. So you want answers that are about 4 to 6 sentences.2. Try to support your main points, by adding details, giving explanations, or giving examples3. If you are really stuck about how to answer a question, do not sit there in silence! Say it: <i>"Gosh that's a tricky question I've never thought about that before."</i> Then try to give some sort of answer. If you can't then just tell the examiner. Of course this is not ideal, but the worst thing is to sit there in silence.

Requirement

This part of the test lasts from 4 to 5 minutes and consists of questions roughly based on the topic area of the Part Two: Long Turn. Usually you will be asked two to three questions on two different topics. The major difference with this part of the exam is that you are asked questions about people in general rather than about yourself. This can be more challenging. Essentially, it's more difficult to talk about other people than it is about ourselves. Another key difference is that the examiners are able to ask their own questions, and they are not limited to the questions written in their book like in other parts of the exam. In this part the examiner may push you hard to see the boundaries of your ability. You may feel this part is the most difficult! It is called the discussion section because the examiner follows some of your answers with a follow-up question that is based on the answer you just gave.

Procedure

1. The examiner will introduce Part Three saying:

"We've been talking about [topic from Part Two], now I'd like to ask you a few general questions about that."

2. The examiner will introduce the topic more specifically.

"Let's talk about [specific topic]". For example: "Let's talk about shopping in your country."

3. The examiner will then ask you two or three questions related to this specific topic:

What are some of the different types of places where people can go shopping in your country?

Do you think people spend more time shopping these days than they did in the past?

Do you think this is a positive trend or negative trend?

4. The examiner will move onto the second specific topic and ask two or three questions about this.

Let's move on and talk about[introduce topic]

5. After 4 to 5 minutes the examiner will end the exam saying:

Thank you, this is the end of the speaking exam.

6. You should thank the examiner and leave the exam room. You could say something like:

Thank you, I appreciate your time.

7. Try to smile at the examiner and then leave the room.

8. Do not do any of the following:

Have any further conversation with the examiner unless the examiner initiates it.

Apologize for your poor English!

Ask the examiner what your score is.

Try to explain any mistakes that you made.

9. After you leave the exam room, don't forget to collect any of your belongings if you have left items outside the exam room.

5.1 STRATEGIES

Buy time to think

One of the biggest problems in this part of the test is that the questions can be quite challenging. You may struggle to think of what you want to say, let alone how you are going to say it. There are some strategies you can use to deal with this situation.

Start with a memorized set phrase

Use some memorized set phrases to buy time to think about what you are going to say:

1. Off the top of my head I would say...
2. Well, it's difficult to say, but ...
3. That's an interesting question and I think I would have to say that...
4. Mmm ... I'm not really sure, but...
5. Actually, that's not something I've really thought about, but...
6. I don't really know much about that, but...

[Lots of set phrases for different types of questions are explained in the next section.]

Ask for the question to be rephrased

Another way to buy time is to pretend you didn't understand the question and ask the examiner to rephrase it. While the examiner is doing this you can think about what you want to say. This won't lower your grade, unless you do it repeatedly in which case it's going to start to lower your score for vocabulary. You could say something like:

"I'm sorry I didn't quite catch that, could you please rephrase it"

Additional strategies are covered in the full-version
of this speaking book

5.2 TYPES OF QUESTIONS

It's difficult to predict exactly what questions you will get asked in the third part of the exam, but usually they will have a close connection to the topic that was discussed in Part Two of the exam. The questions are based on the following functions, which will be discussed further in this section:

1. **Different kinds of**
2. **Comparing (time/objects/concepts)**
3. **Predicting**
4. **Advantages**
5. **Disadvantages**
6. **Problems**
7. **Solutions**
8. **Opinion (why)**

1. Different kinds of

This is a very common first question in this part of the test. It is a question like:

What are some of the different kinds of shops in your country?

Note carefully:

Avoid just repeating the information or language that you used in Part Two. This is because it will not show the examiner anything new and not give them any new rateable language. In addition, another common mistake that people make is to just give one kind of shop, but the question clearly asks for more than one kind of shop. I suggest the following approach:

MODEL ANSWER:

What are some of the different kinds of shops in your country?

Well, there are a wide range of places to go shopping.

One of the most popular types is department stores. **I think this is because** they stock high-quality products and always offer a money back warrantee if you are unsatisfied with your purchase.

Another, trendy place that people in my country enjoy shopping at is night markets. **I guess this might be because** it's a lot of fun and the prices are usually cheaper than in the stores.

Steps to answer the question:

1. Paraphrase the question:

Well, there are a wide range of places to go shopping.

2. Introduce the first type and perhaps a reason:

One of the most popular types is....[type of shop]. I think this is because...[reason]

3. Introduce the second type and perhaps a reason:

Another, popular place that people in my country enjoy shopping at is [type of shop]. I guess this might be because... [reason].

USEFUL LANGUAGE

Introduction

Well, there are a wide range of...

Actually, there is quite an array of...

There are many options to choose from.

First type

One of the most popular types is...

Probably the most common is...

Second type

Another, trendy option is

Many people are also keen on...

Giving reasons

I think this is because

I guess this might be because

**Additional question types are covered in the full-
version of this speaking book**

6.1 ASKING THE EXAMINER QUESTIONS

You can ask the IELTS examiner questions in the IELTS speaking exam. There are numerous ways to deal with problems by asking questions and it is a good idea to learn how to ask these before taking an exam.

FUNCTION	PHRASE
Repeat the question (Part 1 -3)	Could you please repeat that? Sorry, I didn't quite catch what you said?
Checking the meaning of a word (Part 1 -3)	Sorry, what does X mean? Could you please explain the meaning of X?
Checking the question (Part 3 only. You can try in Part 1 but the examiner may not respond. Look for body language, like nodding of the head)	Are you asking me....? Do you mean....?

Additional language for different functions is covered in the full-version of this speaking book

7. TOPICS FOR PARTS 1-3

You can use this section to build vocabulary and to practice doing complete IELTS speaking tests. It includes language for different topics and questions for PARTS 1-3 of the speaking test.

7.1 CLOTHING

Language

NOUNS	MEANING
accessory	something added to an outfit such as a belt or piece of jewelry
boutique	small shop that sells fashionable clothes
garment	item of clothing
fabric	the type of cloth used to make a piece of clothing
fitting room	a room in a clothes store to try on clothes
outfit	a complete set of clothing

VERBS	MEANING
accessorize	to add something to an outfit like a belt or jewelry
dress up	to make an effort to put on stylish clothes
flaunt	show off, especially to seek admiration
go out of style	to become unfashionable
try on clothes	to check whether clothing fits
in vogue	to become fashionable

ADJECTIVES	MEANING
casual	clothing suitable for relaxing in
formal	clothing suitable for formal social events or work
elegant	stylish
gorgeous	beautiful
outrageous	unusual and rather shocking
trendy	popular

IDIOMS

all dressed up = dressed in one's best clothes

We got all dressed up to attend the party.

dressed to kill = wearing stylish clothes that will attract attention

Nicole Kidman turned up at the Oscars dressed to kill.

fit like a glove = to fit perfectly

My new jeans fit like a glove.

the in thing = fashionable

This summer, baggy jeans are the in thing.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

PART 1

Let's talk about clothing...

What types of clothes do you like wearing?

What color clothing do you prefer?

Did you wear a school uniform when you were younger?

Do you prefer clothes that are comfortable or stylish?

Let's talk about shoes...

What sort of shoes do you usually like to wear?

Do you have a favorite pair shoes?

How often do you buy shoes?

When was the last time you bought a pair of shoes?

Let move on to discuss shopping for clothes...

Where do you go shopping for clothes?

Do you try on clothes before you buy them?

Do you prefer to shop alone or with another person?

Have you ever bought clothing on the Internet?

PART 2

Describe an item of clothing you purchased that you didn't like

You should say:

what the clothing is

where and why you bought it

what color and style it is

and explain why you didn't like it.

PART 3

Let's talk about clothes...

What kind of clothes do people in your country usually wear?

How important is it to wear fashionable clothes in your country?

Do older people and younger people wear different colored clothes?

Now let's talk about spending money on clothes...

Are clothes expensive in your country?

Do people wear more expensive clothes to work in your country?

Do you think people spend too much money on clothes nowadays?

9 more topics are covered in the full-version of this speaking book

8. GRAMMAR

Grammar is a huge area with tons of books dedicated to it. If you are taking an IELTS exam in the near future you may not have a lot of time to work on grammar. The best ways to improve your grammar score are to reduce the number of errors you make and also use a variety of sentence types. Looking below at the grading criteria for grammar makes this clear.

Criteria for grammar

7	8
flexibly uses a range of complex structures frequently produces error-free sentences,	uses a wide range of structures most sentences are error-free with only very occasional inappropriacies that are not repeated

This section focuses on some ways to use complex sentence structures and then on explaining a few of the types of grammatical errors that commonly occur when people speak.

8.1 DEVELOP WAYS OF USING COMPLEX SENTENCES

Complex sentences are sentences that include an independent and dependent clause. Two excellent ways to form these are to use conditionals [phrases] and relative clauses [who, which, that, where]. To read about the rules and do some quizzes go here:

<http://www.ieltsanswers.com/IELTS-Grammar.html>

Conditional sentences

A conditional sentence is a complex sentence structure used to talk about something that occurs only if something else happens. The condition may be something real or imagined, and the result could be a definite result, or just a possible result.

Conditionals are a useful way of forming complex sentences, which can boost your grammar score. Another reason why I teach candidates to use them is because they can be easily noticed by an examiner, due to the word *if*. *If* sends a signal to the examiner that a conditional is being used.

There are two clauses to a conditional sentence:

One part is the **if** clause. This is the event that needs to occur. It is a dependent clause because it is not a complete sentence and is dependent on the other part of the sentence.

The second part is the **result** or main clause, or what happens when the event in the **if** clause occurs. The result clause is an independent clause because it can stand on its own as a sentence. The dependent and independent clauses can be spoken in any order, as shown below:

If I have holidays, I go to Australia. [A comma as needed when the dependent clause comes first]

I go to Australia if I have holidays. [No comma]

Summary of conditions

	Usage	Example	
0	facts and opinions	If I <u>have</u> holidays, present tense,	I <u>go</u> to the UK. present tense
1	likely outcomes	If I <u>have</u> enough days off, present tense	I <u>will</u> go to the UK. future tense
2	unlikely outcomes or imagined situations	If I <u>won the lottery</u> , past tense	I <u>would</u> go to the UK. would
3	past situations that didn't occur	If I <u>had had</u> enough time, past perfect tense	I <u>would have</u> gone the UK. would have

Note: To read more about the rules about conditionals and do some quizzes go here:

<http://www.ieltsanswers.com/IELTS-Grammar.html>

Grammar is covered more in the full-version of this
speaking book

9. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Covered in the full-version of this speaking book

preview version:

full version available at:

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