

WeLoveIELTS: All you need for IELTS success transcript
Episode 1: Top 5 IELTS questions answered

Speakers

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Liz: Hello and welcome to our We Love IELTS podcast. My name is Liz and I'm part of the We Love IELTS team. So this is a new podcast for anyone taking the IELTS test. Every episode we'll be joined by experts from the world of IELTS who work as teachers, authors and former examiners to help you prepare for your test. We know preparing for IELTS can be challenging, which is why we're here to help. So whether you're taking academic or general training, you have six weeks or six months to prepare, we hope our series will help you in your IELTS journey.

Liz: So today's podcast I'm really delighted to have two IELTS teachers with me, Emma Cosgrave and Liz Marqueiro.

Emma and Liz M: Hi, Liz

Liz: Welcome to the show, both of you. So do you want to tell our listeners a bit about yourself and what you'll be discussing today?

Emma: Yeah, sure. Okay. Hi. I'm Emma. I'm a teacher and I've been helping students for many years to prepare for their IELTS, students from all over the world. And I'm super excited to be here today because this is my first ever podcast.

Liz M: Hi, I'm also Liz and I've been teaching English for a very long time. I've always specialized in preparing my learner's for English language exams, and that includes IELTS. I was also an IELTS Speaking and Writing examiner previously. And I've also coached students online to prepare them for IELTS.

Emma: So today, we're going to talk about, we're going to be trying to answer some frequently asked questions, some FAQs that we often get from IELTS candidates and students about how to prepare for IELTS.

Liz: Brilliant, that sounds great. And so I guess, where to start. So, what are the top questions that you get asked on a regular basis?

Emma: Well it was really difficult to narrow it down, but I think we've settled on our top five questions. So the first is, 'How can I prepare for IELTS at home?' This is a question I often hear from students. Do you get this question a lot Liz?

Liz M: Yes, I do. I think quite often IELTS students have spent quite a lot of money in preparing for IELTS test over a period of time. So they're quite keen to get as much information about how they can prepare for it at home. And I, my basic tip is to just make English language a part of your everyday life. So when you wake up in the morning, put some, put English speaking programmes on the television or on the radio while you're brushing your teeth or making coffee in the morning. You don't have to focus on what's being said just having that English language being spoken in the background really helps.



Liz: So I know that we've often been asked, are there any particular programmes that you recommend people should watch or is it more just what they're interested in?

Liz M: I think it's really important to just listen to what you're really interested in. This is just about making English a part of your everyday life. It shouldn't be something painful or difficult, it should be something that you're interested in, just to motivate you. And, and also, if you're already familiar, for example, in the evening, you could just watch another Netflix programme that you already know and have seen or listened to in your own language, but this time, have the English audio on but also the English subtitles so that you're listening and reading. And that's reinforcing your understanding. And you don't have to focus so much on understanding what's going on because you already know what's going on because you've watched it before. But this time, it's just more about absorbing the language. Just basically have fun with English every day and do things that you're interested in.

Emma: So things that you would be doing anyway in your own language. So if you're interested in cooking and you like to watch a lot of cooking programmes, then just watch a cooking programme in English, or listen to a podcast about whatever you're interested in. But try to find one that's in English language.

Liz M: Yeah, or just listen to music and sing along to the lyrics.

Liz M: Okay, so here's another question that I often get asked, especially when students are just starting to think about taking the IELTS test. And the question is, which IELTS test should I prepare for? What do you usually say to them, Emma?

Emma: Well, first, it's really important that we understand there are two different IELTS tests that you can take. There's the Academic IELTS test and there's the General Training IELTS test. And they're both used for different purposes. So the IELTS Academic test is generally for people who are applying for higher education or professional registration in an English speaking environment. So if you're off to uni, to study an English speaking course, then you're probably going to need an IELTS Academic. Whilst the General Training test, the IELTS General Training test is for those who are going to an English speaking country for secondary education, for work experience, or training programmes.

Liz M: What does that mean? Secondary education?

Emma: So, like high school, or upper school. It depends on the country you're in, what it's called. So if you're pre-college, pre-university education.

Emma: So the General Training test is also often a requirement for when you want to emigrate to a country. So if you want to go live in Canada, or Australia, or somewhere, you might be asked to take an English language test as part of your application process. So this is true even for native speakers. I recently had a very good friend of mine move to Canada from the UK. And her and her husband, both British, had to take the IELTS test, so I helped them prepare. Yes, they did very well, actually. But they did have to prepare and it was a challenge for them to prepare because they didn't know the format of the test.

Liz: So how do people know which test to do then?

Emma: So I think you have to double, triple check. Talk to your employer or the company you're going to work for, or the school you're going to go and study at, the University. Triple check all of your application documents, just find out absolutely for sure which test you need to take. You've got the General Training, the Academic. Also, if you're going to the UK, check whether you need a UKVI



IELTS test which is the exact same test, it's the same test but you might have to take it at a particular time in a particular centre because the paperwork surrounding it is ever so slightly different. The actual test itself is the same, but the surrounding admin that the test centre will complete is different. And so if you have to sit the test in one of those sessions, you don't want to have to redo the test because you've got the session wrong. Yeah, just double check. And then you can get preparation materials or join an IELTS class focused on the test that you're going to take.

Liz: So what's the actual difference between tests because I know that some of the sections are the same is that right?

Emma: So the Speaking test and the Listening test is the same for both the Academic paper and the General Training paper, but the Writing and the Reading are slightly different. So you have different tasks that you'll need to prepare for. So you want to make sure that all that time you're spending, preparing, you're spending it preparing for the correct test.

Liz M: The difference in focus is that the Academic is as it says on the tin, it's academic, whereas the General Training module, the Reading and the Writing is mostly general English and not of an academic nature at all.

Liz: So Emma and Liz, what other questions do you get asked by students?

Emma: A really common question is how long will it take me to prepare for IELTS?

Liz M: Yeah, that's a question I hear a lot too. And the answer is always the same. It depends. I know you don't want to hear it, but it's true. It does. It depends. So there are lots of it depends. The first one is, it depends on what your general English level is like to begin with. Are you an intermediate English language learner? If so, that will make you probably around a band 4.5 in IELTS roughly. Then the next thing it depends on is, it depends on the band score that you need. So as Emma mentioned previously, you contact the university or the immigration authority and you find out what band score you need. So as I mentioned before, if you're a band 4.5 or intermediate level of English, but you need a 6.5 or seven to get into your dream degree course, it's going to take a while to get your general level of English from an intermediate level to the upper intermediate advanced level that you need.

Emma: And can I just jump in here and say that this is a problem that I often find with my students is they want to just start preparing for IELTS and their general English level is not high enough. So you need to work on your general English alongside preparing for IELTS.

Liz M: Absolutely, because if you're just doing IELTS preparation tasks, yes, it's great because you're getting to know the test really, really well. But that is not going to increase your band score, because your band score depends on your level of English. So what you need to work on in tandem together is improving your general level of English but also familiarizing yourself with the test format.

Liz: So is that a key problem sometimes for people who have to re-sit the test? Maybe if they re-sit it and they don't understand why their score hasn't improved?

Liz M: Absolutely. They just think if I keep practicing, I'll get better, but you won't because your English level is still the same and that's the key. And that's the major it depends I think. I think also another dependent factor is how much time you have to invest in studying. If you've only got a couple of hours a week, then it's going to take you a lot longer to get to that band score that you need. So basically, to answer your question, in a shorter much clearer way, there is no formula to how long it's going to take you to prepare. For example, if I ask you the question, how long will it



take someone to run along the Great Wall of China? The answer is, well, depends on their level of fitness. It depends where they are at the beginning of the journey. It depends on how fast they run and how long they run for at that speed. It's the same for IELTS, it depends on where you are starting from and where you need to go.

Liz M: Recently, my students have been asking me about the difference between the computer delivered IELTS test and the paper based one, they want to know which one they should take. What would you say to them, Emma?

Emma: Well, first of all, the test is exactly the same. You have the same questions, and the Speaking test is still face to face with an examiner. One thing to consider is whether the computer delivered IELTS test is actually available in the town or city where you want to take the test. So your first thing to do is contact the test centre and find out if it's an option, because the computer delivered IELTS is available in lots of test centres, but not every test centre yet.

So then once you've decided or found out whether you're able to take the computer delivered IELTS or the paper based IELTS, you then need to make a decision. And as both of the exams are going to be exactly the same. The main difference comes in with how you write your answers. So you're either typing your answers or writing them on a piece of paper. That might sound very simple. But you have to think about your handwriting your stamina when you're writing and you're typing, there is no spell checker on the IELTS test.

Liz: Also, presumably how fast you can type.

Emma: Yeah, so personally, I would have to take the paper based IELTS, because my typing is terrible. I'm slow and I make lots of mistakes. But my handwriting is quite good. But whichever one you choose, make sure you prepare for it. So you can go online and you can find practice tasks in the format of the computer delivered IELTS so that you become familiar with the software, the way it's laid out, how you make notes, how you enter your answers, that kind of thing.

And equally if you're going to be doing the paper based IELTS test, and you're going to be writing a lot, then you need to make sure you have practiced and develop the muscles that you need much like running a marathon it's going to be a long day with a lot of writing. But you do need to practice writing for a long time and a lot of words because you'd be surprised about how out of practice you become with writing by hand,

Liz M: But that's the thing that's personally I, I think that the computer delivered test should be the main form of delivering the test in today's day and age because most people are used to reading on a screen, writing on a computer or on their phone. It's less frequent now that we do write for long periods of time by hand, but that's just my personal preference.

Emma: So I don't like to read on a screen. I prefer if I have something very important to read I will print it out.

Emma: So another thing that you should also be aware of is that you can get your results more quickly if you take the computer delivered IELTS. So if you're in a rush to get your results, then the computer delivered IELTS results come out within five to seven days usually. So that is one consideration. But otherwise they're exactly the same whichever format you feel more comfortable with, if it's available to you and your test centre, use that to make your decision. It's not about which is that one is easier or harder or different in any way.



Liz M: And they're both marked in exactly the same way exactly the same way by the same people. It's all the same.

Liz M: I don't know if you find this Emma but my students are absolutely convinced that the test is easier in their own country. I've even known some people to travel home to take the test rather than stay in the UK.

Emma: Yeah, I've had this as well. I even had students in Singapore who would go home to their home countries. No matter how much I explained that the tests are all centrally produced, though they weren't convinced.

Liz M: But they are, they're all produced, actually here in Cambridge, and are marked by computer and by humans. And those humans have all been trained in exactly the same way and they use the exact same marking criteria. So it's exactly the same test, no matter where it is you are in the world. I just hope that that kind of dispels the myth a bit.

Emma: Yeah. And the most important thing is convenience, can you get to the test centre in good time? Are you going to be comfortable taking your test there? And that's really your only consideration, and there's nothing else, the test will be exactly the same wherever you take it.

Liz: Brilliant. So hopefully, that's answered some of your top questions. Thank you, Emma, and thank you, Liz. And hopefully our listeners have picked up some great tips on how to improve their English and learn some key information about the test along the way.

Liz: If you liked this podcast don't forget to subscribe for more information about preparing for IELTS can be found on website Weloveielts.org. You can also find us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, where we'll be sharing more useful tips and advice from Emma and from Liz

Liz: Emma and Liz, why don't you tell us what you'll be discussing next week.

Emma: So next week, I think we're going to be discussing the speaking test. In particular, part one.

Liz: Brilliant, I look forward to that one. And if you've got something that you'd like us to discuss on our podcast, getting touch on social, we'd love to hear your suggestions. And finally, for those of you taking the test in the next few days, good luck. Good luck.

