

We Love IELTS: All you need for IELTS success transcript

Episode 2: Prepare for IELTS Speaking Test Part 1

Speakers:

Host: Liz

IELTS teacher: Liz Marqueiro (LM)

IELTS teacher: Emma Cosgrave (EM)

Liz: Hello, and welcome to the second episode of our new We Love IELTS podcast. My name is Liz and I'll be with you over the next few weeks as you find out more about how to prepare for your IELTS test.

This is a podcast for anyone taking the IELTS test. Every episode we'll be joined by experts from the world of IELTS to help you prepare for your test. Remember, if you like this podcast, you can subscribe on whichever channel you're listening on. And don't forget to leave a review.

And if there's a topic you'd like us to cover in a future episode, do get in touch with us on social we'd love to hear from you. More information on our social media channels can be found in the show notes.

So last week, Emma and Liz answered some frequently asked questions about improving your English and the time it takes to prepare for the test. So, what are you going to be discussing this week?

LM: Well this week we're discussing the Speaking test. And in particular, we're going to be looking at part one today. We'll be discussing what it's all about and having a go at some example answers.

Liz: Brilliant, I think this one will be really popular. And so over to you.

EC: Okay, so, first of all, let's introduce the Speaking test. So, what's the IELTS Speaking test? It's a face to face test with one examiner and one candidate. There's only one examiner in the room and there's only one candidate in the room, unlike some other tests where you might go in with a partner or three of you.

So, it's face to face. It will be recorded in case for administrative purposes or in case it needs a second marking so but don't worry about the recording.

LM: It's also for training purposes for the examiner.

EC: So, the test always follows the same structure. Every time the examiner will work from a script. It's a myth that a lot of students believe that the examiner will make up the questions on the day so they'll take a look at the candidate coming through the door and decide what they're going to ask them based on, on their opinion of them. That's not true at all. Each examiner has a script that they must work from. So, this is another reason why the test is recorded so that the exam board can check that every candidate has been given the same questions or the questions that come from the approved script.

EC: There are three parts in the IELTS Speaking test. Part one, which is a question and answer conversation, which is what we're looking at today. Then part two, which is a short presentation, we'll do a podcast about that another time. And part three, which is more of a discussion, which again, we're going to do a full podcast on.

Liz: And what are the timings for those different parts? Are they quite equally split?



EC: Yeah, so it's four or five minutes for each section. So today we're going to help you prepare for part one. So, we hope that it's helpful.

EC: So, Liz, tell us about part one.

LM: Okay, so this part of the test focuses on the ability to communicate opinions and information on everyday topics and common experiences or situations. The examiner will ask you a range of questions. So first of all, it starts with the examiner asking you for your name and also your ID. The examiner will also ask you what you prefer to be called. So just tell them the name that you use. So, for example, my name is Elizabeth, but please don't call me Elizabeth. I prefer to be called Liz. Then the examiner will ask some questions that you will need to answer. These questions are usually about everyday topics like where you live, your family and friends, free time activities. So, it's, it's kind of an introductory part to warm you up. But don't forget that you must still show your level of English right from the very beginning.

EC: Yes, you've only got 15 minutes and if you waste five minutes warming up, yeah, that would be a real shame.

Liz: So that was a great overview about part one. So, do you want to have a go at some questions Emma and Liz?

LM: I'll be the student if you don't mind being the examiner.

EC: That's fine by me.

EC: Okay, so let's start with our first question. So, Liz, how long have you lived in your home?

LM: Um, about a year.

EC: Okay, now Liz, come on. That answer was too short. It might have answered the question, but it didn't show your English off. So, you have to remember that this isn't a natural conversation with a friend at a coffee shop. This is your opportunity to show how good your English is. So, the examiner needs to hear your English to give you a good score. So, let's try that one again. Put yourself into the IELTS exam room, please.

LM: Okay, so not only do I have to answer the question, but I also really need to show what I am capable of.

EC: Exactly. So, use a variety of vocabulary, some grammatical structures and expand on your answer. Okay, so we will do that question again. So, Liz, how long have you lived in your home?

LM: Well, not very long at all, actually. Just under a year because we've just moved across the country actually. So just under a year.

EC: Much better. So, I think that that you've shown a lot more variety of language in that answer. How did you feel about that?

LM: Yeah, I can see that by giving you a little bit more information that's an opportunity for me to show you that I can say a little bit more.

EC: So, listener, how would you answer that question?

Liz: Maybe even give it a go?



EC: Yeah. Okay, let's move on to another question, shall we? So, Liz, what do you like most about your work?

LM: So I'm an English teacher, and I work with students. I also work. My work also involves writing tests and course books and things. So, I really do enjoy my work. Which worked which job do I like the most though? I quite I really enjoyed teaching. Yeah, that's I think that's my most favourite.

EC: Excellent. How did how did you feel about that?

LM: That was awful.

EC: Why was it awful?

LM: Just because I kept repeating myself and I just kept using the same words. I think I used 'work' about four or five times. So, what I should have done is shown you that I know synonyms for work, and used a different language and given you more grammar

EC: Okay, so you want to try again.

LM: Okay.

EC: Okay, so Liz, what do you like most about your work?

LM: The thing I like most about what I do is that it's so varied. So one day I can be teaching, for example, and the next day I'll be editing or proofreading some tests. Or the following day, I might be writing some tests. So every day is different, and I really like that variety.

Liz: And another day, you might be podcasting.

EC: Who knows and working with lovely colleagues. Lovely. Okay, so I think what we've shown everyone here is that we need to expand our answers. Use a variety of lexical and grammatical structures.

Liz: So, what's the examiner looking for, I guess, what are the key things?

LM: I think, if I can remember what I said, I said, my work was varied, and I liked the variety. So, I'm showing that I can change my language from using a noun to an adjective and using synonyms so that I'm not always repeating the same thing.

EC: Yeah, I think so.

Liz: What did you think is the examiner Emma?

EC: I loved it. No, I think that what Liz did well there in her in her answers was to use a nice wide range and to expand on her answer. So instead of simply saying, 'Oh, I like my work because it's, it's good', or 'because I love my office', or something very simple like that she's expanded.

So, it doesn't matter what you're saying, but you need to give plenty of variety and use synonyms, use different grammatical structures. You could bring in something like, 'While I enjoy my job very much, if I could do anything, I would much rather be podcasting. Exactly.

LM: Also, another thing to note, I think, is that quite often our students, and quite rightly, as teachers, we always focus on getting them to link their ideas together and use cohesion and use cohesive devices. But what happens then is students use in addition, moreover, quite automatically, and it doesn't sound very natural. I don't think I used a linking expression at all in my answer, but it was cohesive, and it all linked together.

EC: And your answers weren't too long, either. That's another thing about part one of the Speaking test. You're not looking for a really, long answer. You don't want to be talking for so long that the examiner has to interrupt you. It's quite a natural conversation. Two sentences, three sentences would be more than enough to answer a part one question. You want the examiners to be able to ask you more than one question in part one.

LM: Okay, so just as a quick summary of everything we've just said, because we have said quite a lot, I think the things to remember are, this is a chance to show your level of vocabulary and your level of grammar. Show them what you're capable of and what you've got. Don't just give one-word answers, add more information, give a little bit of detail, but not too much. Keep it to two or three sentences per question.

EC: Yeah, I'd say that was a really good summary.

Okay. So, before we go today, let's have a quick look at ways to prepare for part one of the Speaking test, because it's not the easiest thing to do preparing by yourself. So, if you can find someone to study with, if you've got a friend or a classmate who's also preparing for IELTS, that's fantastic, because you can take turns being the candidate and the examiner.

Liz: So exactly what you guys just did.

EC: Exactly, exactly. And then giving each other feedback after you've asked and answered some questions. So not only are you giving each other feedback, but you're getting used to how long five minutes is and how many questions you can fit into that five minutes chunk of the overall test.

Liz: And is there a way that you can know the themes for the questions that might be asked or things you can talk about with that person? So, could you just talk about where you live and what you do?

EC: Yes or get an IELTS preparation book with the test questions. You know, one of the Cambridge books, maybe like IELTS 14 or IELTS 13.

LM: But Part One questions are always the same. They're very personal questions to use something that you can easily talk about, like where you live, your family, your home, what you do, so they're just really just day to day questions for part one.

EC: Another thing is to record yourself as well. So, make a recording and then listen back and listen critically. So, listen back, listening out for things like your pronunciation, your timing, whether you use the same word over and over again,

LM: I would suggest having a checklist actually, just once you've recorded yourself, have a little checklist and listen and go, okay, vocabulary, did I use different words? Tick? Did I repeat the same word over again? Oh, yeah, I did that. Okay. So just have a little checklist, I think.

EC: Yeah, that's a really good idea. And then if so, as you were talking about Liz, the topics, so prepare vocabulary for common topics. Don't prepare answers - you mustn't memorize answers because that becomes very clear to an examiner and they'll just ask you another question or your answer won't fully line up with the question you've been asked and so it's not very natural. But what you can do is prepare a lot of vocabulary around certain topics so that you have a nice wide variety.

LM: Okay, so do you mean for example, if I should prepare vocabulary, imagine that I'm a student and somebody's going to ask me a question about my education. Maybe I should

just beforehand, do a mind map or a list of vocabulary related to that automatically, like college lectures, tutors, timetable schedule, that kind of thing.

EC: Yep. So that you've got those familiar everyday topics. You've got a lot of different variety of language that you can use to answer any questions that would come up. And you don't need to have specialist knowledge for part one. Nobody's going to expect you to have any kind of specialist knowledge.

LM: They don't require you to have any specialist knowledge

EC: You don't have to worry about being asked something that you will know nothing about. So also review the language of comparison and opinion.

LM: What do you mean?

EC: So comparing two things. So, you might, if you were asked to compare the city that you're in with your hometown. Is it bigger? Is it smaller? Which one is more exciting? Where do you prefer to live? You might be asked to compare two things from your life. And so the language of comparison can come in really, really useful here. And obviously, giving your opinions is always useful for the speaking and the writing part two.

LM: And again, don't keep repeating the same, I think, I think, I think. Just use different ways of expressing your opinion.

EC: Again, we'll come to that in when we do a podcast about Part Three in particular. We'll talk about language for giving your opinions.

LM: So please come back.

EC: Yes. So, I hope that that has helped.

Liz: And against practice, practice, practice. Brilliant, thank you very much that's really useful. And Emma, you've written a blog post on some of these top tips, which our listeners can find on our website (the links are in the show notes). So that's it for this week. My thanks to Emma and to Liz for sharing their top tips and information. Do join us next week. What we'll be discussing next week?

EC and LM: Part Two, of the Speaking test, everybody's favourite!

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