

We Love IELTS: All you need for IELTS success

Episode 3: Prepare for IELTS Speaking Part 2

Speakers

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Liz: Hi, and welcome to the We Love IELTS podcast. I'm your host Liz and every episode I'll be joined by experts from the world of IELTS to help you on your IELTS journey. Remember, if you like this podcast, you can subscribe on whichever channel you're listening on. 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.

Liz: So today I'm once again joined by IELTS teachers Emma and Liz, who will be discussing part two of the speaking test, so they're going to explain what it is and the best way to prepare for it. So over to you.

LM: Hi, Liz. Let's begin. So part two of the speaking test. This is something that students get quite a bit worried about because it's that part where you've got to speak for two minutes on a topic that you're given. The topic is given to you on a cue card, which is just basically a white card, and on it you will have a situation and three bullet points. You are then asked to make notes for a minute and then speak for a minute or two on that topic.

LM: Part two is designed to test your ability to obviously speak for an extended period of time, and to organize your ideas and link them. We mentioned in a previous podcast talking about how you can link your ideas and be cohesive and use a range of vocabulary and grammar. So you're doing all of that in this part, but also talking about a topic that you're given.

Liz: And how long do you actually have for part two? For the answer?

LM: Two minutes to speak.

EC: So do you need to time yourself?

LM: No, don't. You mustn't worry about the time, that's what the examiner is there for, they've got the timer. You just speak until the examiner says thank you.

Liz: So don't worry if the examiner says thank you. Don't think 'oh no'.

LM: No, in fact, if the examiners interrupting you, that's good. You've been speaking for two minutes, not a problem. Also if you don't speak enough, you might find that there's a silence and you really don't want that. So just keep speaking until the examiner says thank you.

EC: And while you're speaking, what will the examiner be doing?

LM: Listening. They might be taking notes, so please don't be put off by that.

EC: So if they're scribbling away, furiously, that's not because they're picking out all of your mistakes.

LM: Oh, no, absolutely not. So you've got to remember that the examiner has to ask you questions and listen at the same time and assess you. So and they've got 14/15 minutes to



do that. They're going to forget things that you've said. So they're just making a note for themselves so that when you've left the room, they're able to assess you and give you your band score for your speaking.

EC: That's good to know.

Liz: So what does Part Two actually look like?

EC: Okay, so like Liz said, you're going to get a cue card and you're going to get a paper and a pencil. And then you need to make some notes on this. You've got one minute and during that one minute you've got to make some notes. Have a think, decide what you're going to say. Basically prepare a two minute presentation. I think this is why it's so stressful for people,

LM: Yes, my students always just used to sit there and use that one minute as panic time or thinking time and not actually make any notes, which is not useful. You're being given a minute to prepare so you really should use that minute. And when I mean make notes, I don't mean write sentences, you should just write down some words.

Liz: So when they look at the cue card, what exactly is it they're going to see?

LM: So you're given instructions, you're given a scenario. So it could be like, 'describe a good book you've read recently', or, 'talk about your favourite actor', for example. So you're given a situation, and then you're given bullet points which make you focus in a little bit more detail about that situation.

EC: Yes, and I would I always advise my students to use the structure of the cue card, so those bullet points, that are helping you to think about the structure. So to use those as the structure? Because then you don't have to worry about 'what am I going to say first?', 'what am I going to say next?' Use that as a given structure. And take that one minute to make some notes on each of those points, just some words, just some vocabulary, just anything to clarify your thoughts, and what you're going to talk about. But I would also say use English in your notes. Don't make notes in another language, because then you've got to think about translating in that very short time as well.

LM: No, make notes in English. Just keywords, not full sentences just to help you just words that will help you remember what it is you're going to talk about.

EC: We've talked about what to do with the cue card when you get it. So let's talk about how you start. Liz, how would you start your talk?

LM: So you need to signal to the examiner that you're ready to start talking so something along the lines of 'I'm going to tell you about' or 'today I've decided to tell you about'. That kind of introduction works well. Remember, you need to talk for two minutes. So you've got those bullets that they've given you and you've made your notes, but you're going to have to add to them. So give a little bit more detail.

If you're describing a book then talk about the characters. Give a little bit more detail about those characters, because you're going to need to show the examiner what you're capable of in terms of language, vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, linking your ideas together. Make sure you keep it fluent, keep talking. Don't worry about telling the truth, though, it doesn't matter if this thing happened or not. The examiner doesn't know and doesn't really care. The examiner is just there to see how you use English, not to assess if you're telling the truth or not.

EC: So would you recommend your students make their answers up then?



LM: No, because this is really hard, because then not only are you trying to answer a question in a language that isn't your own, but then you're trying to make something up on the spur of the moment, which means right there and then, and that just adds stress. So don't invent something, just choose a topic that is known to you, a situation, a book, a film, a character that is known to you, and just add more information about it. It doesn't have to be true. But just add that more information, but don't make it up.

EC: Yes, so often my students will be paralyzed if someone asked them about their favourite book, because they want to talk about their absolute favourite book, but they can't actually discuss the plot or talk about the characters for example, so I would always say, 'no, choose a book that you know well that you can speak about and then just say it's your favourite, just pretend it's your favourite'.

EC: So take a story that you know well and adapt it to the situation. So if it's a birthday, you've got to talk about a birthday celebration and you went out for dinner with your family the week before, and it wasn't a birthday, but you can just say it was a birthday. And add in a few flourishes like we had a cake and everybody saying Happy birthday, it doesn't have to be the whole truth but like you say, don't try and create something from nothing because that's really hard, challenging.

LM: It's hard to me as a native English speaker without you know, having to do it in a foreign language.

Liz: So right ladies, I've got a challenge for you. I have a part two question from the IELTS trainer book. Liz, do you want to be the examiner this time and ask Emma the question and Emma, do you want to answer?

LM: I'd love to ask her.

EC: Yeah, that's fine.

LM: Okay, so the cue card that's in front of me says, describe a typical day in your life when you were in your early teens. You should say what you did, who you spent time with, how you felt about the things you had to do, and explain what was the best and worst part of the day for you. Remember, Emma, you have a minute to prepare for this.

EC: Okay, thank you.

Liz: Okay, so Emma, so you've got the cue card. So what do you do in that one minute preparation time that you've got?

EC: Okay, so I'm going to read through the cue card really carefully. And I'm going to make some notes. I'm going to write down some key words. So I'm going to write down words like school, music class, friends, family, lunchtime, journey to and from school, homework.

Liz: And are they all kind of words to trigger your speaking in the IELTS test?

EC: Yes, so I would put them next to the bullet point that I'm going to talk about them, which section I'm going to speak about them in. And then have a good think about what I'm going to say.

LM: So they are no details in those notes.

EC: No, they're not sentences. Just words, just to remind myself. So I can glance at them and the words will trigger my ideas of what I'm going to talk about.

Liz: So once you've finished the preparation Emma, what would the examiner say?



LM: So the examiner would say something like, Emma, you can begin.

EC: Okay, so I'm going to speak about a school day, which was a typical day in my early teens. So I would get up every morning at about seven o'clock, and then have breakfast with my family. I loved spending time with my family when I was a youngster. So I always enjoyed chatting to mum and dad and my sister over breakfast, but then I would always be running a bit late to meet my friends, because I would be chatting too much.

EC: So I would meet my friends in the morning, probably four or five of us would meet up and walk to school together. We walked quite a long way to our school. So it took us about 45 minutes to walk to school because we were always talking too much along the way. So I basically spent most of my time with the same five girls, or my family when I was a teenager. And I didn't really enjoy spending time on my own. I was definitely more of a people person than a loner.

EC: I enjoyed going to school, so I didn't have a problem with the daily grind of school life. I didn't mind doing homework, and I got on well with all of my teachers. But I would say that there was one thing that I really found quite difficult and that was my music classes. I studied the double bass, which is an unexpected instrument for a teenage girl to learn, I guess. So on Wednesdays, I would have my double bass classes and I would spend a lot of the day worrying about that and not looking forward to it.

EC: But apart from that, I really enjoyed going to after school clubs and playing lots of sports and being part of a team, and spending time with friends and family. And yes, basically being a good girl and doing what I was told.

LM: Thank you, Emma.

Liz: Brilliant. So how did you think she got on Liz?

LM: Brilliantly.

Liz: Did you really learn double bass?

EC: Yes, I only told the truth

LM: As an examiner, what you were saying was actually quite interesting. The fact that you learnt the double bass. But did I actually respond to anything that you said? What was the examiner doing while you were talking?

EC: So the whole time I was talking to the examiner was just not really doing anything. She didn't make a lot of eye contact. There wasn't nodding or smiling or anything. I'd say that's a really good point, Liz, you have to keep talking even if it seems like the examiner might actually not be listening to you, because they are listening to you.

LM: And even if you say something funny, they might smile, but you know, they can't respond to anything you said. Even though I really wanted to because I thought learning a double bass was pretty cool, but I couldn't say anything.

Liz: So, will the examiner ever ask you any more questions?

EC: Yes, I think that they might ask you one or two follow up questions.

LM: Yes, just to round off.

EC: So, in this case what kinds of questions might I get?



LM: Well, for example, the examiner might ask you, do you like to have a routine to your day?

EC: So I would say, yes, I do. I, I thrive in a routine. I'm not very good at getting things done if I'm just left to my own devices.

LM: And you'll notice that that follow up question isn't referring back to the past anymore, it's not talking about when you were a teen, it's talking about your routine now. So listen really carefully to those follow up questions because they might refer to a different point in time.

LM: Okay, so thanks, Emma for that brilliant model answer from you. And finally, let's talk about the best way to prepare for part two of the speaking test at home.

EC: So the best way is to practice, practice, practice, of course, but record yourself, and then listen back and ask the following questions. Was there a clear introduction? Were all four task points covered? Was the vocabulary varied? Were you speaking clearly or too fast or too slow? Were there any grammar mistakes? And was the talk long enough?

LM: Okay, what do you mean by long enough?

EC: Was it two minutes?

LM: Okay, so you should time yourself.

EC: Yes, definitely time yourself. If you're recording yourself, hopefully you're on your phone or whatever, you'll have a number.

LM: So basically, again, have a checklist. Yes, great list of questions. Can I steal those to use with my students?

EC: You certainly can. I got them from the IELTS Trainer books so feel free.

LM: So if you get lots of practice preparing your talks in a minute, and then talking for 2 minutes, recording yourself and listening back, asking those questions and analysing what you've said, you should get pretty good at part two of the speaking test.

EC: Yes, that's right.

Liz: Lovely, thank you both. So you can find more about IELTS Trainer in our show notes for the episode. So that's it for today. Thank you to Emma and Liz for their help and advice and thank you to those listening to the episode. If you like this podcast, don't forget to subscribe to make sure you never miss another episode.

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