

We Love IELTS: All you need for IELTS success

Episode 4: Prepare for IELTS Speaking Part 3

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Liz: Hello there and welcome to the latest episode of our We Love IELTS podcast. My name is Liz and I'm part of the We Love IELTS team and I'm the host for today's episode. As those who have listened to our previous episodes will be aware, this podcast is for those taking the IELTS test. Every episode we'll be joined by experts from the world of IELTS to help you prepare for your test. We know preparing for IELTS can be challenging, which is why we're here to help you.

Liz: Today I'm delighted to have two IELTS teachers, Emma Cosgrave and Liz Marqueiro with me. Welcome to the show Emma and Liz. Do you want to tell our listeners what you'll be discussing today?

EC: Yes, today we're going to be talking about part three of the speaking test, the IELTS speaking test.

Liz: Great, and just a reminder, if you want to listen to our podcasts on part one and part two, then you should be able to find them on the channel that you subscribe to your podcasts on. So over to you guys.

LM: Okay, so IELTS Speaking has three parts. The other parts - Part 1 which is just being asked questions about you and your daily life. And then Part 2 where you're given a cue card with a situation and some bullet points that you then need to speak about for a couple of minutes. Part 3, this is the final part of the test, and it's basically a much more in depth discussion with the examiner. So the examiner will ask you a question and you'll respond, but the examiner may also ask you yet another question about the same topic so it's a little bit more like a discussion with the examiner. But please remember that the examiner is following a script so it's still quite structured.

LM: In part 3, this is your final chance to show the examiner what you can do. And the questions are written in such a way they're designed to elicit, or to get from the candidate, as much language as possible. So this is your last chance to really show them what you can do in terms of language. This last part of the test focuses on your ability to express and justify your opinions. So it's not just giving your opinion, you've got to justify why you have that opinion, analyze, discuss and speculate about different issues. It's more of a discussion than part 1. And as I said, the examiner may join in with you at some point.

EC: And so in my experience, students often worry about having something to say at all. So they panic that they're going to be asked a question that they just have nothing to say, and they don't know how to answer it. So, it's important to remember that you're not being tested on having the right answer, or you're not being tested on your opinion. So it's okay to disagree with the examiner, or it's okay to give an opinion that you think may be different to that of the examiner. So what you're being tested on is your ability to express an opinion, justify an opinion, and follow it up with examples and reasons that support your opinion. So there is no correct opinion. There's not a right or wrong answer, it's about your ability to express yourself in English.



LM: So you could even say the opposite to what the examiner believes and you wouldn't get a lower mark, you can disagree with the examiner, they're just there to give you marks based on your English not on your opinion. So just remember, you need to be able to give your opinion but also justify it. And here's a rule of thumb that I usually give my students: one give your opinion, two give a reason for your opinion. And three, give an example or two.

Liz: So there's no preparation time in part three of the test. So is that a problem? If you can't think of an answer quickly, what do you do?

LM: That's a really good point, you don't get any preparation time. And as you can see, as a native English speaker, I too don't have the answer straightaway. So there are some expressions that you can use to give yourself some thinking time. Things like, for example, let's see, that's quite a difficult question. That expression gives you a little bit of thinking time so that you can start formulating an idea in your head. Other expressions such as, I've never really thought about it before, but I think, just buy yourself some time by using these expressions.

EC: You know, I think that once you get comfortable using those kinds of expressions, it really helps you because you often only need a second or two to come up with something but it just does buy you that all important moment for your brain to click into gear.

LM: And you're still using English which the examiner can assess you on rather than silence.

EC: But on that note, a problem that some students tell me about is a lack of opinions and ideas. Yes, and unfortunately, that isn't an option in the IELTS exam. So just like in your writing, you need to come up with something. You can't ask for another question. You have to answer the question you're asked. So all topics used for the exam are general and no specialist knowledge is needed. So you just go for it and give an idea, give an opinion.

LM: I always tell my students, and I think this is vital. Going back to what you can do every single day to help expand your English, is to listen to the news, read newspapers, listen to podcasts, and see what's going on in the world because you will start generating opinions not only to get vocabulary and improve your listening skills, but then you start actually listening to people's opinions on topics then as you're listening, you can go 'Yes, I agree with that' or 'No, I don't think so'. So you start formulating opinions, the more you listen to general conversations.

EC: And then as we were talking about unpopular opinions before as well, there are ways that you can introduce what you think is an unpopular opinion.

LM: What you mean by an unpopular opinion?

EC: So you might have an opinion that you don't think most people okay agree with, but that's fine. You can do that. There's no problem, like we said, you're not being scored on your opinion, the opinions that you hold, it's how you express them. So you can use this to your advantage and you can use comments like 'to be frank', or 'to be frank, I think that people, blah, blah, blah', or 'to be honest', I think this signals that you know, your opinion might not be the most popular opinion held by people but that is your opinion nonetheless. It's showing that you're using another phrase as well.

Liz: So is it quite useful to come up with those examples? Or write the openers and or the ways to express unpopular opinions before the test so you've got those two hand should you need them?



LM: Yes, I think it's a question of way before you actually go into your speaking test, is to have these to hand while you're practicing every single day. And so they just become part of the way you speak. And then it will sound a lot more natural rather than memorizing them and then slotting them in

Liz: Yes, so maybe if you're watching a TV programming or listen to a podcast and you hear someone, say one of them, then you could jot it down in a notebook or something.

EC: And also, another little thing you can use to help you with coming up with an answer for this is to listen to the question really carefully because the clue is in the question. So listen to the question very carefully to help you with the grammar that you'll need for the answer. For example, is the question asking you to compare the past with now? Is it asking about the future and changes that will happen? Is it asking about a hypothetical situation? The way you'd have to use a conditional tense? Or is it talking about a current situation? All of these things, if you listen to the question, that takes away one of the stress points of trying to decide what grammar to use, because it's going to be there in the question, it's going to tell you how you need to answer it.

LM: Absolutely. So now that you've really listened really carefully to the question, and you've stated your opinion now, please remember that you've got to give a reason or explain why you have that opinion. And you can use phrases such as 'the reason I think this is' or 'I think because', you may have many reasons why you have that opinion. So don't list them all but you know, stick to one or two that are the most important and focus on those two reasons.

EC: So could you say something like, 'there are a lot of reasons that I think this. Probably the most notable is ...'

LM: That's a very good one. Yes,

EC: So sometimes my students worry about patronizing.

LM: What you mean?

EC: So explaining too much and treating the examiner like they don't know anything at all. So they worry about offending the examiner if they explain something too much and in too much detail, like they're going to make the examiner feel like they're being spoken down to. But that's not the case at all. It's absolutely vital that you explain things because in explaining things you are using lots of English and that is giving the examiner the perfect opportunity to really know what your level is and to give you the correct band score. You're there to show the examiner that you can give a full well articulated answer. So considered using the right grammar, the right vocabulary, all of that kind of stuff, giving reasons, giving examples, they'll be happy to hear you explain things fully, as it would give them the chance to hear more of your English.

LM: Yes, absolutely. And remember, they've got an assessment criteria. So they've got their own checklist of what they're listening for from a candidate. And so you need to be able to show them that.

EC: So if you're worrying about giving examples, another thing that I always tell my students is that you can use examples from your own life. And you can even make up statistics. Because I mean, that's hard a hard thing to do. I wouldn't necessarily suggest everyone does that. But if you wanted to just say '50 percent of people think x', nobody's going to give you a better or a worse band score because you didn't use a true statistic.



LM: They're not going to fact check on it while you're doing the test. So it's not really important that the facts are accurate or correct.

EC: But I wouldn't necessarily advise that because again, like we said in part two, if you make stuff up completely, you tie yourself up in knots. So, another thing we're thinking about here is extending the answer even further. So how can you extend your answer where you can extend it by introducing different views or opposing views?

LM: Why would you need to extend your answer? You've said what you think, you've given your opinion, you've justified your opinion and you've given an example or two, why would you need to extend?

EC: Well, if you feel like you've got more to say, you might want to show that you can give the opposite viewpoint

LM: And also every opportunity to show the examiner that actually, yes I can formulate it and I can link those opposing ideas.

EC: Yes, so use phrases like 'on the other hand', 'well, then again', 'however', 'alternatively', - all of these phrases or these words are really useful. And it's just showing more versatility and more English.

Liz: So what should the test taker do if the examiner says something and they don't understand what it means?

LM: Do you mean they don't understand the question or they don't understand what a word means?

Liz: Both, I guess.

LM: Okay, so the examiner won't be able to give you a definition for a word that you don't understand. But what the examiner can do is repeat the question again in a different way, or just repeat it so that you can hear it properly.

Liz: So what sort of things should you say in that case to the examiner to get that to find out more?

EC: So you could say, I'm sorry, could you repeat that, please? And then they would be able to say the whole question to you again.

LM: Yes. Or you could say could you say that in other words, so it's not that you didn't understand the question, it's that you didn't understand it. So can the examiner please ask it in a different way?

EC: So you can also ask for clarification. So you could say, 'Are you asking whether', and give them what you've understood the question to be and they can let you know whether you're whether you've understood it or not. Or, alternatively, you could say, 'am I right in thinking you mean', and then what you've understood of the question. And again, they'll be able to clarify with a yes or no, whether you've understood the question.

LM: So basically, I think what we're saying is always ask, don't sit there in silence. If you don't understand the question or you felt that you haven't understood anything clearly just always ask.



Liz: Okay, so let me give you an example question from IELTS 12. So why do some people prefer to work outdoors? Liz, do you want to have a go answering the question

LM: I'll give it a go. Right. Why do people? So sorry? Could you repeat that again?

Liz: Of course, why do some people prefer to work outdoors?

LM: I guess people prefer to work outdoors for lots of reasons. Primarily, I would imagine because it's just, there are those people who really love to be in touch with nature and to be outside. Being in the building for the majority of your day can seem quite claustrophobic, you feel a bit closed in. Working outdoors, however, yes you're out, you're exposed to the elements. So if it's really bad weather, you're freezing cold or wet, but also the sun's shining and it's just very relaxing.

LM: Doctors always say that if you're not feeling your best, you should always get out in nature. So can you imagine doing that every single day? I know quite a few people who, I have a very good friend actually who works outdoors every single day even in the winter and he's an exceptionally calm, really kind man. He's a gardener. And yes, he takes, he finds pleasure in the small things in life, so he takes pleasure from the colour of a beautiful flower or the sound of the birds and I just think it's a much more relaxing, a more relaxing way of life. Whereas if you're working inside a building and I've done this before, worked inside a building and not seen the light of day all day long, and I leave feeling pretty drained and not feeling very good.

Liz: Emma, what did you think?

EC: Yes, I thought it was a really good answer. You gave us lots of variety of language and grammatical structures, you gave your opinion but you justified it and you gave the examples from your own life, from your friend and from his life. And you also gave the, you also used the phrase whereas and gave the opposing view or gave the opposing situation of working inside a building. And you gave an example from your own life for that. So I think it was a really good, well rounded answer. How did you feel about it?

LM: Yes, I think I was okay. I think perhaps I could have used more sophisticated vocabulary and maybe a wider range of grammar. But even as a native speaker, you know, sometimes you're just so focused on trying to say what you want to say and not so focused on that. So I completely understand how test takers feel.

Liz: Okay, so here's, here's your question taken again from IELTS 12. What's the difference between watching a film in the cinema and watching a film at home?

EC: I think that personally for me watching a film in the cinema is generally more enjoyable for me because I still have quite a small TV and I don't have a surround sound system in my house. So if I want to truly immerse myself into a story, I think going to the movie theatre is a more all-encompassing experience. But I do understand on the other hand that many people enjoy being able to just be at home, perhaps wearing their pyjamas and having whatever snacks they want to have. And watching a movie, perhaps pausing it, and watching a little bit one day and a little bit the next day, they have that freedom. They have the freedom to change the brightness of the screen or to change the sound. So I think that each person has their own preference, but personally, I really enjoy going to the cinema.

Liz: Great. Liz, what did you think?

LM: I thought that was a very good response. Not only did you give your opinion, you used expressions like 'personally' and 'for me', so that's emphasising that that was your opinion.



LM: You justified your reason. You also gave an example. And also you gave an opposing view, you said on the other hand. You also used quite sophisticated language I thought, you used expressions such as truly immersive, all-encompassing. So that's the kind of language that we need to see things like adverbs and adjectives. That's how you show that you've got a wide range of vocabulary. You also used quite a wide range of vocabulary related to cinema going and watching movies. You said surround sound, screen, movie theatre, so you didn't keep repeating the same words you used lots of synonyms and lots of vocabulary related to that topic. So yes, I thought that was a very good response.

Liz: Well done Emma.

EC: Thank you. I feel really good now.

Liz: Wonderful, thank you very much ladies. That's it for today's podcast. If you want more information about the IELTS Speaking Test Part 3, or any of the others parts of the Speaking Test, you can find out more on our website weloveielts.org.

My thanks to Emma and Liz for your help and advice today. And thank you to you, the listener, for joining us. If you've got something you'd like us to discuss on a future podcast, do get in touch with us on social media, we'd love to hear your suggestions. You can find us on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. That's it. All that's left to say is goodbye and thank you very much.

