A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF

IELTS

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

+TEST TIPS

+TASK TYPES

+TYPES OF IELTS

+WHO ACCEPTS IELTS

+BAND DESCRIPTORS

+SAMPLE ANSWER SHEET

+BANDSCORE COMPONENTS

+WHICH IELTS SHOULD YOU TAKE?

+SCORING AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

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Contents

Prelude

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the world's most popular English language proficiency test for higher education and global migration, with over 3 million tests taken in the last year.

IELTS assesses all of your English skills — reading, writing, listening and speaking, and is designed to reflect how you will use English at study, at work, and at play, in your new life abroad.

The IELTS test is developed by some of the world's leading experts in language assessment. It has an excellent international reputation, and is accepted by over 10,000 organizations worldwide, including schools, universities, employers, immigration authorities and professional bodies.

IELTS is the most widely accepted English language test that uses a one-on-one speaking test to assess your English communication skills. This means that you are assessed by having a real-life conversation with a real person. This is the most effective and natural way of testing your English conversation skills.

Types of IELTS tests

There are currently three versions of the IELTS test: Academic, General Training and Life Skills. These differ in content and address different target groups.

IELTS Academic is intended for people who want to attend study programmes at universities and other institutions of higher education which are taught in English. You will need an Academic test band score to enrol for an undergraduate or graduate degree where the teaching is in English. You can also take this version of IELTS to register within a professional body in an English-speaking country. Therefore, if you intend to join

professional associations in disciplines such as medicine, nursing, law or engineering, you may need to pass the IELTS Academic exam.

IELTS General Training is a good choice if you want to migrate to an English-speaking country and work there, or if you plan to attend a secondary school. An IELTS score is often required by the government authorities of English-speaking countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. These countries accept the General Training certificate as evidence of language competences on the part of immigration and study visa applicants. Sometimes, even native English speakers need an English language qualification to migrate to certain English-speaking countries.

IELTS Life Skills, the test for UK Visas and Immigration, is appropriate if you wish to immigrate to or obtain citizenship in the United Kingdom. Unlike the other two versions, the Life Skills test assesses only your speaking and listening English skills, at levels A1 or B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). You will need IELTS Life Skills A1 to apply for a UK Visas and Immigration family, spouse or partner visa, and IELTS Life Skills B1 to obtain citizenship or the right to permanent residence. The purpose of this exam is to determine how well you communicate with other people in everyday English.

The three IELTS versions do not all have the same scoring system. There is no minimum score required to pass the Academic or General Training tests. You will be graded with band scores ranging from 1 to 9 for each of the four parts of the test: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

After the examination, you will be given a total score in whole or half bands, e.g. 6.5 or 8.0. Essentially, band 1 indicates non-speakers, while band score 9 means an expert level of competence. Band 6 corresponds to a 'competent user', who generally has an effective command of the English language. IELTS Life Skills has only two possible results: pass/fail.

Universities, colleges, governments and employers around the world require different levels of English depending on their profile and objectives. It is therefore very important to check what test score you need before taking one of the IELTS exams. The IELTS Academic and General Training test scores are valid for two years from the day you receive your results. Similarly, a candidate who has passed an IELTS Life Skills A1 or Life Skills B1 test cannot retake the exam within two years. If you do not pass, there are no restrictions on retaking the test.

Advantages of IELTS

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is popular worldwide with speakers of English as a second language as proof of their proficiency. IELTS is jointly owned and managed by the British Council, Cambridge English Language Assessment and IDP Education Australia. If you plan to enroll at a university or college, apply to business organizations, or register for a visa from government agencies in countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, or Canada, the IELTS test can help you reach your education, career or life goals.

Whether you are applying for study, work or a visa, the IELTS examination is the same in terms of content, examiners, format, level of difficulty and scoring. If your test results are not satisfactory, there is no limit on when and how often you can retake it, but it is advisable to take some time and study more before your next attempt. In most countries, test centres offer preparatory courses and language classes, but you can also find online learning resources that will help you refresh your knowledge and explain how best to prepare for the exam.

The Academic IELTS is required for university or college admission, while the General Training IELTS is intended for career and immigration purposes. The IELTS Life Skills is a new

UK government-approved Secure English Language Test (SELT) to support your UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) application.

IELTS for study

If you are interested in studying abroad, remember that many universities worldwide and all universities and colleges in the UK accept IELTS test results. Tier 4 student visa applicants can apply to universities in the UK with an IELTS result from any of the 1,000 IELTS test locations worldwide, unless the institution has additional requirements. Some universities act as local agents on behalf of the British Council, ensuring the organisation and delivery of the IELTS examinations.

If you are considering an undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme, you should take the Academic IELTS test. The General Training IELTS test is sufficient for programmes which do not award a degree. Find your chosen college or university and check the version of IELTS that is right for you.

As a future international student, you will need to demonstrate that you are qualified and can successfully complete a degree programme taught in English. You will therefore need higher IELTS scores to enrol in advanced degree programmes such as Masters or PhDs are.

IELTS for work

Providing proof of your language proficiency is an important step in obtaining a visa so that you can **work abroad**. Language skills are key to career success, and are considered a valuable asset in addition to all the other requirements of any job. If you are a work visa applicant, you must achieve either 'competent' English or 'vocational' English language skills, meaning you will have to be prepared for more than basic conversational English.

In the **UK**, applicants must score at least 6.5 on each of the four components of the test (Reading, Speaking, Listening and Writing).

For working in **Australia**, a test score of 5 is considered to be 'vocational English' level. A band score of 6 means that the applicant is a 'competent English' speaker.

In **New Zealand**, work permit applicants must gain an overall band score of 4 or higher in the IELTS General or Academic module. They may also provide additional evidence of their English language abilities, such as information about countries they have lived in, their current country of residence or their family's knowledge of English.

In **Canada**, applicants should check directly with the organisation they want to apply to for the IELTS score requirements. Employers and educational institutions generally set their own language requirements.

In all these countries, you should take in consideration that minimum score requirements vary depending on your chosen occupation. For some professions, applicants must achieve a minimum of 6 in each of the testing modules, whereas for teachers, for example, a minimum score of 7 is required.

IELTS for immigration

Government agencies use the IELTS exam as part their applications processes to obtain citizenship or the right to permanent residence. They consider language proficiency to be strongly related to people's ability to integrate into the community and the workplace. The IELTS exam is accepted by immigration authorities and continues to play an important role in using language assessment as a mean to control migration numbers.

A new UK-government-approved Secure English Language Test (SELT) has been introduced as part of the visa application process. The test is known as IELTS Life Skills or **'IELTS for UKVI'**. This means that IELTS can be used to prove your English language abilities in support of a UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) application. The IELTS Life Skills test requires you to

demonstrate your speaking and listening skills only at level A1 or B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). At the end of the exam, you will receive a pass/fail result rather than band scores.

Score examples

Immigration to **New Zealand** requires an IELTS overall score of 6.5 in either the General Training or Academic IELTS modules. This is mandatory for a visa application.

Canada accepts IELTS, but you will also have to achieve the Canadian Language Benchmarks standard.

Australia recognises both Vocational and Competent English by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Check with government agencies or institutions in these countries for specific language requirements and scores regarding immigration.

Who accepts IELTS?

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is one of the most popular English language proficiency tests for academic education taught in English as well as for global migration. IELTS is accepted worldwide by more than 9,000 institutions, such as universities, corporations, immigration offices and international professional organisations.

There are three versions of the IELTS test: Academic, General Training and Life Skills. Circumstances define which test is required, with institutions generally specifying which IELTS option they accept or prefer.

IELTS Academic - accepted at universities and professional registration bodies

If you wish to attend a university or other higher education centre that offers study programmes in English, you should take the IELTS Academic test. Thousands of the world's most esteemed universities and colleges will accept your IELTS results as proof of your English language skills.

Most European and Australian academic institutions require the IELTS Academic certificate, because it is based more on British and Australian English. A growing number of universities in the U.S. also accept this test certificate as evidence of competence in English, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Universities and colleges have different score requirements, with higher scores required for the Reading and Writing sections of the IELTS Academic test in particular. Universities typically require an overall band score of 6.0-6.5, although some top European institutions may expect a band score of 7.0 at undergraduate level, and over 7.5 for graduates.

In the IELTS 9-band grading system, a score of 1.0 indicates non-speakers of the language, whilst band 9.0 means an expert level of competence. A score of 6.0 therefore indicates a 'competent user', who generally has an effective command of the English language, while a band score of 7.0 is evidence of a good command of English in complex and detailed language contexts.

The Academic IELTS is also useful for those who wish to join a professional body in an English-speaking country. Professional registration bodies will accept an IELTS Academic result in many fields such as accounting, engineering, law, medicine, nursing, pharmacy and teaching.

IELTS General Training - accepted at high-schools and for visa and employment purposes

You should choose the General Training IELTS as proof of your language competence and general communication skills if you wish to emigrate to an English-speaking country. You should also take this IELTS version if you intend to undertake secondary education (high-school) in an English-speaking environment. IELTS General Training is required as a condition for permanent residency by governments in more countries than any other English language test. The IELTS certificate is accepted for visa and employment purposes in countries such as the UK, Ireland, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

To support the policy of English for international opportunities, the British Council IELTS offers a number of scholarships for students from the following countries who wish to study in an English-speaking environment: Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

Although the IELTS certificate is slightly more popular in Europe than in the U.S., both the Academic and General Training versions are accepted by over 3,300 American universities and other institutions. These include prestigious U.S. universities such as Harvard, Stanford, Princeton and many other top American academic institutions.

IELTS Life Skills - accepted by the UK government for visa and immigration purposes

The IELTS Life Skills is a new type of test introduced and approved by the UK Government for Visas and Immigration (UKVI) purposes. The new test has been designed to meet specific immigration requirements. You will need to demonstrate only appropriate Speaking and Listening skills during the test. IELTS Life Skills is available at two levels, corresponding to levels A1 and B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Before you register for your test, you should check the English language requirements for your visa category. The British government requires IELTS Life Skills A1 if you are applying for a UK Visas and Immigration family, spouse or partner visa. You should take the IELTS

Life Skills B1 to obtain a citizenship/residence visa. The test is available at UKVI-approved locations throughout the world.

Other uses of your IELTS scores

Your English language skills will be especially appreciated if you are thinking about working in an international environment or considering volunteering abroad. The IELTS language certificate is very well-known among multinational employers, and will be a huge asset on your CV when you are applying for jobs.

IELTS Listening description

Paper format	There are four sections with ten questions each. The questions are designed so that the answers appear in the order they are heard in the audio. The first two sections deal with situations set in everyday social contexts. In Section 1, there is a conversation between two speakers (for example, a conversation about travel arrangements), and in Section 2, there is a monologue in (for example, a speech about local facilities). The final two sections deal with situations set in educational and training contexts. In Section 3, there is a conversation between two main speakers (for example, two university students in discussion, perhaps guided by a tutor), and in Section 4, there is a monologue on an academic subject. The recordings are heard only once. They include a range of accents, including British, Australian, New Zealand, American and Canadian.
Timing	Approximately 30 minutes (plus 10 minutes transfer time).
No. of questions	40
Task types	A variety of question types are used, chosen from the following: multiple choice, matching, plan/map/diagram labelling, form/note/table/flow-chart/summary completion, sentence completion.
Answering	Test takers write their answers on the question paper as they listen and at the end of the test are given 10 minutes to transfer their answers to an answer sheet. Care should be taken when writing answers on the answer sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalized.
Marks	Each question is worth 1 mark.

IELTS Listening in detail

Task type 1 – Multiple choice

Task type and format	In multiple choice tasks, there is a question followed by three possible answers, or the beginning of a sentence followed by three possible ways to complete the sentence. Test takers are required to choose the one correct answer - A, B or C.

	Sometimes, test takers are given a longer list of possible answers and told that they have to choose more than one. In this case, they should read the question carefully to check how many answers are required.
Task focus	Multiple choice questions are used to test a wide range of skills. The test taker may be required to have a detailed understanding of specific points or an overall understanding of the main points of the listening text.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 2 – Matching

Task type and format	Test takers are required to match a numbered list of items from the listening text to a set of options on the question paper. The set of options may be criteria of some kind.
Task focus	Matching assesses the skill of listening for detail and whether a test taker can understand information given in a conversation on an everyday topic, such as the different types of hotel or guesthouse accommodation. It also assesses the ability to follow a conversation between two people. It may also be used to assess test takers' ability to recognize relationships and connections between facts in the listening text.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 3 – Plan, map, diagram labelling

Task type and format	Test takers are required to complete labels on a plan (eg of a building), map (e.g. of part of a town) or diagram (e.g. of a piece of equipment). The answers are usually selected from a list on the question paper.
Task focus	This type of task assesses the ability to understand, for example, a description of a place, and to relate this to a visual representation. This may include being able to follow language expressing spatial relationships and directions (e.g. straight on/through the far door).
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 4 – Form, note, table, flow-chart, summary completion

Task type and format	Test takers are required to fill in the gaps in an outline of part or of all of the listening text. The outline will focus on the main ideas/facts in the text. It may be: 1. a form: often used to record factual details such as names 2. a set of notes: used to summarize any type of information using the layout to show how different items relate to one another 3. a table: used as a way of summarizing information which relates to clear categories – e.g. place/time/price, 4. a flow-chart: used to summarize a process which has clear stages, with the direction of the process shown by arrows. Test takers may have to select their answers from a list on the question paper or identify the missing words from the recording, keeping to the word limit stated in the instructions. Test takers do not have to change the words from the recording in any way. Test takers should read the instructions very carefully as the number of words or numbers they should use to fill the gaps will vary. A word limit is given, for example, 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER'. Test takers are penalized for writing more than the stated number of words, and test takers should check this word limit carefully for each task. Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words.
Task focus	This focuses on the main points which a listener would naturally record in this type of situation.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 5 – Sentence completion

Task type and format	Test takers are required to read a set of sentences summarizing key information from all the listening text or from one part of it. They then fill a gap in each sentence using information from the listening text. A word limit is given, for example, 'NO MORE THAN ONE WORD AND/OR A NUMBER'. Test takers are penalized for writing more than the stated number of words. (Test takers should check this word limit carefully for each task: the limit is either

	ONE, TWO or THREE words). Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words.
Task focus	Sentence completion focuses on the ability to identify the key information in a listening text. Test takers have to understand functional relationships such as cause and effect.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 6 – Short-answer questions

Task type and format	Test takers are required to read a question and then write a short answer using information from the listening text. A word limit is given, for example, 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER'. Test takers are penalized for writing more than the stated number of words. (Test takers should check this word limit carefully for each task.) Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. Sometimes test takers are given a question which asks them to list two or three points.
Task focus	Sentence completion focuses on the ability to listen for concrete facts, such as places, prices or times, within the listening text.
No. of questions	Variable

IELTS Listening – how it's marked

The Listening test is marked by certificated markers, who are regularly monitored to ensure their reliability. All answer sheets, after being marked, are further analyzed by Cambridge Assessment English.

Band score conversion

A Band Score conversion table is produced for each version of the Listening test which translates scores out of 40 into the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported in whole bands and half bands.

One mark is awarded for each correct answer in the 40-item test. Care should be taken when writing answers on the answer sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalized.

IELTS Academic Reading description

Paper format	Three reading passages with a variety of questions using a number of task types.
Timing	60 minutes
No. of questions	40
Task types	A variety of question types are used, chosen from the following; multiple choice, identifying information, identifying the writer's views/claims, matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary completion, note completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, diagram label completion and short-answer questions.
Sources	Texts are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers, and have been written for a non-specialist audience. All the topics are of general interest. They deal with issues which are interesting, recognizably appropriate and accessible to test takers entering undergraduate or postgraduate courses or seeking professional registration. The passages may be written in a variety of styles, for example narrative, descriptive or discursive/argumentative. At least one text contains detailed logical argument. Texts may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms a simple glossary is provided.
Answering	Test takers are required to transfer their answers to an answer sheet during the time allowed for the test. No extra time is allowed for transfer. Care should be taken when writing answers on the answer sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalized.
Marks	Each question is worth 1 mark.

IELTS Academic Reading in detail

Task type 1 – Multiple choice

Task type and format	Test takers are required to choose the best answer from four alternatives (A, B, C or D), or the best two answers from five alternatives (A, B, C, D or E), or the best three answers from seven alternatives (A, B, C, D, E, F or G). Test takers

	write the letter of the answer they have chosen on the answer sheet. The questions may involve completing a sentence, where they are given the first part of a sentence and then choose the best way to complete it from the options, or could involve complete questions; with the test takers choosing the option which best answers them.
	The questions are in the same order as the information in the text: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be located in the text before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.
Task focus	Multiple choice tests a wide range of reading skills, including detailed understanding of specific points or an overall understanding of the main points of the text.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 2 – Identifying information

	Test takers will be given a number of statements and asked: 'Do the following statements agree with the information in the text?' They are then required to write 'true', 'false' or 'not given' in the boxes on their answer sheets.
Task type and format	It is important to understand the difference between 'false' and 'not given'. 'False' means that the passage states the opposite of the statement in question; 'not given' means that the statement is neither confirmed nor contradicted by the information in the passage.
	Students need to understand that any knowledge they bring with them from outside the passage should not play a part when deciding on their answers.
Task focus	Identifying information assesses the test takers' ability to recognize particular points of information conveyed in the text. It can thus be used with more factual texts.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 3 – Identifying writer's views/claims

Task type and format	Test takers will be given a number of statements and asked: 'Do the following statements agree with the views/claims of the writer?' They are required to write 'yes', 'no' or 'not given' in the boxes on their answer sheet. It is important to understand the difference between 'no' and 'not given'. 'No' means that the views or claims of the writer explicitly disagree with the statement, i.e. the writer somewhere expresses the view or makes a claim which is opposite to the one given in the question; 'not given' means that the view or claim is neither confirmed nor contradicted. Students need to understand that any knowledge they bring with them from outside the passage should not play a part when deciding on their answers.
Task focus	This type of task assesses the test takers' ability to recognize opinions or ideas, and so it is often used with discursive or argumentative texts.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 4 – Matching information

Task type and format	Test takers are required to locate specific information within the lettered paragraphs/sections of a text, and to write the letters of the correct paragraphs/sections in the boxes on their answer sheet. They may be asked to find: specific details, an example, a reason, a description, a comparison, a summary, an explanation. They will not necessarily need to find information in every paragraph/section of the text, but there may be more than one piece of information that test takers need to locate in a given paragraph/section. When this is the case, they will be told that they can use any letter more than once. This type of task can be used with any text as it tests a wide range of reading skills, from locating detail to recognizing a summary or definition.
Task focus	Matching information assesses the test takers' ability to scan for specific information. Unlike task type 5, Matching headings, it is concerned with specific information rather than with the main idea.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 5 – Matching headings

Task type and format	Test takers are given a list of headings, usually identified with lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc,). A heading will refer to the main idea of the paragraph or section of the text. Test takers must match the heading to the correct paragraphs or sections, which are marked alphabetically. Test takers write the appropriate Roman numerals in the boxes on their answer sheets. There will always be more headings than there are paragraphs or sections, so that some headings will not be used. It is also possible that some paragraphs or sections may not be included in the task. One or more paragraphs or sections may already be matched with a heading as an example for test takers. This task type is used with texts that contain paragraphs or sections with clearly defined themes.
Task focus	Matching headers tests the test takers' ability to recognize the main idea or theme in the paragraphs or sections of a text, and to distinguish main ideas from supporting ones.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 6 – Matching features

Task type and format	Test takers are required to match a set of statements or pieces of information to a list of options. The options are a group of features from the text, and are identified by letters. Test takers may, for example, be required to match different research findings to a list of researchers, or characteristics to age groups, events to historical periods, etc. It is possible that some options will not be used, and that others may be used more than once. The instructions will inform test takers if options may be used more than once.
Task focus	Matching features assesses the test takers' ability to recognize relationships and connections between facts in the text and their ability to recognize opinions and theories. It may be used both with factual information, as well as opinion-based discursive texts. Test takers need to be able to skim and scan the text in order to locate the required information and to read for detail.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 7 – Matching sentence endings

Task type and format	Test takers are given the first half of a sentence based on the text and asked to choose the best way to complete it from a list of possible options. They will have more options to choose from than there are questions. Test takers must write the letter they have chosen on the answer sheet. The questions are in the same order as the information in the passage: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be found before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.
Task focus	Matching sentence endings assesses the test takers' ability to understand the main ideas within a sentence.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 8 – Sentence completion

Task type and format	Test takers complete sentences in a given number of words taken from the text. They must write their answers on the answer sheet. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The questions are in the same order as the information in the passage: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be found before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.
Task focus	Matching sentence endings assesses the test takers' ability to locate detail/specific information.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 9 – Summary, note, table, flow-chart completion

Task type and format	Test takers are given a summary of a section of the text, and are required to complete it with information drawn from the text. The summary will usually be of only one part of the passage rather than the whole. The given information may

	be in the form of: several connected sentences of text (referred to as a summary), several notes (referred to as notes), a table with some of its cells empty or partially empty (referred to as a table), a series of boxes or steps linked by arrows to show a sequence of events, with some of the boxes or steps empty or partially empty (referred to as a flow-chart).
	The answers will not necessarily occur in the same order as in the text. However, they will usually come from one section rather than the entire text.
	There are two variations of this task type. Test takers may be asked either to select words from the text or to select from a list of answers.
	Where words have to be selected from the passage, the instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark.
	Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words are not tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. Where a list of answers is provided, they most frequently consist of a single word.
	Because this task type often relates to precise factual information, it is often used with descriptive texts.
Task focus	Summarizing assesses the test takers' ability to understand details and/or the main ideas of a section of text. In the variations involving a summary or notes, test takers need to be aware of the type of word(s) that will fit into a given gap (for example, whether a noun is needed, or a verb, etc.).
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 10 – Diagram label completion

| **Task type and format** | Test takers are required to complete labels on a diagram, which relates to a description contained in the text. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using |

	figures or words. Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The answers do not necessarily occur in order in the passage. However, they will usually come from one section rather than the entire text. The diagram may be of some type of machine, or of parts of a building or of any other element that can be represented pictorially. This task type is often used with texts describing processes or with descriptive texts.
Task focus	Diagram label completion assesses the test takers' ability to understand a detailed description, and to relate it to information presented in the form of a diagram.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 11 – Short-answer questions

Task type and format	Test takers answer questions, which usually relate to factual information about details in the text. This is most likely to be used with a text that contains a lot of factual information and detail. Test takers must write their answers in words or numbers on the answer sheet. Test takers must write their answers using words from the text. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words are not tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text.
Task focus	Short answer questions assess the test takers' ability to locate and understand precise information in the text.
No. of questions	Variable

IELTS Academic Reading – how it's marked

The Academic Reading test is marked by certificated markers, who are regularly monitored to ensure reliability. All answer sheets, after being marked, are further analyzed by Cambridge Assessment English.

Band score conversion

A Band Score conversion table is produced for each version of the Academic Reading test, which translates scores out of 40 into the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported in whole bands and half bands.

IELTS General Training Reading description

Paper format	There are three sections. Section 1 may contain two or three short texts or several shorter texts. Section 2 comprises two texts. In Section 3, there is one long text.
Timing	60 minutes
No. of questions	40
Task types	A variety of question types are used, chosen from the following: multiple choice, identifying information, identifying writer's views/claims, matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary completion, note completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, diagram label completion, short-answer questions.
Sources	The first section, 'social survival', contains texts relevant to basic linguistic survival in English with tasks mainly about retrieving and providing general factual information, for example, notices, advertisements and timetables. The second section, 'Workplace survival', focuses on the workplace context, for example, job descriptions, contracts and staff development and training materials. The third section, 'general reading', involves reading more extended prose with a more complex structure. Here, the emphasis is on descriptive and instructive rather than argumentative texts, in a general context relevant to the wide range of test takers involved, for example, newspapers, magazines and fictional and non-fictional book extracts.
Answering	Test takers are required to transfer their answers to an answer sheet during the time allowed for the test. No extra time is allowed for transfer. Care should be taken when writing answers on the answer sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalized.
Marks	Each question is worth 1 mark.

IELTS General Training Reading in detail

Task type 1 – Multiple choice

Task type and format	In this task type, test takers choose the best answer from four alternatives A, B, C or D, or the best two answers from five alternatives (A, B, C, D or E), or the best three answers from seven alternatives (A, B, C, D, E, F or G). They write the letter of the answer they have chosen on the answer sheet. The questions may involve completing a sentence, in which the 'stem' gives the first part of a sentence and test takers choose the best way to complete it from the options, or could involve complete questions, choosing the option which best answers them. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be located in the text before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.
Task focus	This task type tests a wide range of reading skills including detailed understanding of specific points or an overall understanding of the main points of the text.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 2 – Identifying information

Task type and format	The test taker will be given a number of statements and asked: 'Do the following statements agree with the information in the text?' They then write 'true', 'false' or 'not given' in the boxes on their answer sheets. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be located in the text before the answer to the second question and so on. It is important to understand the difference between 'false' and 'not given'. 'False' means that the passage states the opposite of the statement in question; 'not given' means that the statement is neither confirmed nor contradicted by the information in the passage. Any knowledge students bring with them from outside the passage should not play a part when deciding on their answers.
Task focus	This task type assesses the test takers' ability to recognize particular points of information conveyed in the text. It can thus be used with more factual texts.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 3 – Identifying writer's views/claims

Task type and format	The test taker will be given a number of statements and asked: 'Do the following statements agree with the views/claims of the writer?' They answer 'yes', 'no' or 'not given' in the boxes on their answer sheet. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be located in the text before the answer to the second question, and so on. It is important to understand the difference between 'no' and 'not given'. 'No' means that the views or claims of the writer explicitly disagree with the statement, i.e. the writer somewhere expresses the view or makes a claim which is opposite to the one given in the question; 'not given' means that the view or claim is neither confirmed nor contradicted. (Any knowledge students bring with them from outside the passage should not play a part when deciding on their answers.
Task focus	This task type assesses the test takers' ability to recognize opinions or ideas, and is thus often used with discursive or argumentative texts.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 4 – Matching information

Task type and format	Test takers locate specific information in the lettered paragraphs/sections of a text, and write the letters of the correct paragraphs/sections in the boxes on their answer sheet. They may be asked to find; specific details, an example, a reason, a description, a comparison, a summary, an explanation. They will not necessarily need to find information in every paragraph/section of the text, but there may be more than one piece of relevant information in a given paragraph/section. When this is the case, test takers will be told that they can use any letter more than once. The questions do not follow the same order as the information in the text. This task type can be used with any text as it may test a wide range of reading skills, from locating detail to recognizing a summary or definition.

Task focus	This task type assesses the test takers' ability to scan for specific information. Unlike task type 5 (Matching headings), it is concerned with specific information rather than with the main idea.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 5 – Matching headings

Task type and format	Test takers are given a list of headings, usually identified with lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.), referring to the main idea of the paragraph or section of the text. They must match the heading to the correct paragraphs or sections, which are marked alphabetically, and write the appropriate Roman numerals in the boxes on their answer sheets. There will always be more headings than there are paragraphs or sections, so some headings will not be used. It is also possible that some paragraphs or sections may not be included in the task. One or more paragraphs or sections may already be matched with a heading as an example. No heading may be used more than once. This task type is used with texts that contain paragraphs or sections with clearly defined themes.
Task focus	This task tests the ability to recognize the main idea or theme in the paragraphs or sections of a text, and to distinguish main ideas from supporting ones.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 6 – Matching features

Task type and format	Test takers match a set of statements or pieces of information to a list of options. These are a group of features from the text, and are identified by letters. Test takers may, for example, be required to match different characteristics to age groups or events to historical periods, etc. It is possible that some options will not be used, and that others may be used more than once. The instructions will advise whether options may be used more than once. The questions do not follow the same order as the information in the text.
Task focus	This task assesses the ability to recognize relationships and connections between facts in the text, and to recognize opinions and theories. It may be used both with texts dealing with factual information, description or narrative. Test takers need

	to be able to skim and scan the text in order to locate the required information and to read for detail.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 7 – Matching sentence endings

Task type and format	Test takers are given the first half of a sentence based on the text and choose the best way to complete it from a list of possible options. They will have more options to choose from than there are questions. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be found before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.
Task focus	This task type assesses the test takers' ability to understand the main ideas.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 8 – Sentence completion

Task type and format	Test takers complete sentences in a given number of words taken from the text, writing their answers on the answer sheet. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers should be in the answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The questions are in the same order as the information in the passage: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be found before the answer to the second question, and so on.
Task focus	This task type assesses the test takers' ability to locate detail/specific information.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 9 – Summary, note, table, flow-chart completion

Task type and format	Test takers are given a summary of a section of the text, and are required to complete it with information drawn from the text. Note that the summary will usually be of only one part of the passage rather than the whole. The given information may be in the form of; several connected sentences (referred to as a summary), several notes (referred to as notes), a table with some of its cells empty or partially empty (referred to as a table), a series of boxes or steps linked by arrows to show a sequence of events, with some of the boxes or steps empty or partially empty (referred to as a flow-chart). The answers will not necessarily occur in the same order as in the text. However, they will usually come from one section rather than the entire text. There are two variations of this task type. Test takers may be asked either to select words from the text or to select from a list of answers. Where words have to be selected from the passage, the instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words are not tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. Where a list of answers is provided, they most frequently consist of a single word, There are always more words or phrases in the box than there are gaps to fill. Because this task type often relates to precise factual information, it is often used with descriptive texts.
Task focus	This task type assesses the test takers' ability to understand details and/or the main ideas of a section of the text. In the variations involving a summary or notes, they need to be aware of the type of word(s) that will fit into a given gap (for example, whether a noun is needed, or a verb, etc.).
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 10 – Diagram label completion

Task type and format	Test takers complete labels on a diagram which relates to a description contained in the text. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE

	THAN TWO WORDS'. If they write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The answers do not necessarily occur in order in the passage. However, they will usually come from one section rather than the entire text. The diagram may be of some type of machine, or of parts of a building or of any other element that can be represented pictorially. This task type is often used with texts describing processes or with descriptive texts.
Task focus	This task type assesses the ability to understand a detailed description, and to relate it to information presented in the form of a diagram.
No. of questions	Variable

Task type 11 – Short-answer questions

	Test takers answer questions about factual details in the text. Test takers must write their answers in words or numbers on the answer sheet. Test takers must write their answers using words from the text. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. 'NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage', 'ONE WORD ONLY' or 'NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS'. If they write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words are not tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be located in the test before the answer to the second question, and so on.
Task type and format	
Task focus	This task type assesses the ability to locate and understand precise information in the text.
No. of questions	Variable

IELTS General Training Reading - How it's marked

The General Training Reading test is marked by certificated markers, who are regularly monitored to ensure reliability. After being marked, all answer sheets, are further analyzed by Cambridge Assessment English.

Band score conversion

A band score conversion table is produced for each version of the General Training Reading test which translates scores out of 40 into the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported in whole bands and half bands.

IELTS Academic Writing description

Paper format	There are two Writing tasks and BOTH must be completed.
Timing	60 minutes
No. of questions	2
Task types	In Task 1, test takers are asked to describe some visual information (graph/table/chart/diagram) in their own words. They need to write 150 words in about 20 minutes. In Task 2, they respond to a point of view or argument or problem. They need to write 250 words in about 40 minutes.
Answering	Answers must be given on the answer sheet and must be written in full. Notes or bullet points are not acceptable as answers. Test takers may write on the question paper but this cannot be taken from the examination room and will not be seen by the examiner.

IELTS Academic Writing in detail

Task 1

Task type and format	In Writing Task 1, test takers may be asked to describe facts or figures presented in one or more graphs, charts or tables on a related topic; or they may be given a diagram of a machine, a device or a process and asked to explain how it works. They should write in an academic or semi-formal/neutral styles and include the most important and the most relevant points in the diagram. Some minor points or details may be left out.
	Test takers should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task. They are asked to write at least 150 words and will be penalized if their answer is too short. While test takers will not be penalized for writing more than 150 words, they should remember that a longer Task 1 answer may mean that they have less time to spend on Task 2, which contributes twice as much to the Writing band score. Test takers should also note that they will be penalized for irrelevance if the response is off-topic or is not written as full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form, etc.). They will be severely penalized for plagiarism (i.e. copying from another source).

	Test takers must write their answers on the answer booklet.
Task focus	This task assesses the ability to identify the most important and relevant information and trends in a graph, chart, table or diagram, and to give a well-organized overview of it using language accurately in an academic style.
No. of questions	1

Task 2

	In Writing Task 2, test takers are given a topic to write about an academic or semi-formal/neutral style. Answers should be a discursive consideration of the relevant issues. Test takers should make sure that they read the task carefully and provide a full and relevant response. For example, if the topic is a particular aspect of computers, they should focus on this aspect in their response. They should not simply write about computers in general.
Task type and format	Test takers should spend no more than 40 minutes on this task. They are asked to write at least 250 words and will be penalized if their answer is too short. While test takers will not be penalized for writing more than 250 words, if they write a very long answer they may not have time for checking and correcting at the end and some ideas may not be directly relevant to the question. Task 2 contributes twice as much to the final Writing band score as Task 1. Therefore, test takers who fail to attempt to answer this task will greatly reduce their chance of achieving a good band.
	Test takers will be penalized for irrelevance if the response is off-topic or is not written as full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form, etc.). They will be severely penalized for plagiarism (i.e. copying from another source). Finally, test takers should make sure that they do not copy directly from the question paper because this will not be assessed.
	They must write their answers on the answer booklet.
Task focus	This task assesses the ability to present a clear, relevant, well-organized argument, giving evidence or examples to support ideas and use language accurately.
No. of questions	1

IELTS Academic Writing - How it's marked

Marking and assessment

Each task is assessed independently. The assessment of Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1.

Responses are assessed by certificated IELTS examiners. All IELTS examiners hold relevant teaching qualifications and are recruited as examiners by the test centers and approved by the British Council or IDP: IELTS Australia.

Scores are reported in whole and half bands. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe written performance at the nine IELTS bands. They apply to both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training versions and are based on the following criteria.

Task 1 responses are assessed on:

- ✓ Task achievement
- ✓ Coherence and cohesion
- ✓ Lexical resource
- ✓ Grammatical range and accuracy.

Task 2 responses are assessed on:

- ✓ Task response
- ✓ Coherence and cohesion
- ✓ Lexical resource
- ✓ Grammatical range and accuracy.

Performance descriptors

Task 1

- ✓ **Task achievement**

This assesses how appropriately, accurately and relevantly the response fulfils the requirements set out in the task, using the minimum of 150 words. Academic Writing Task 1 is a writing task which has a defined input and a largely predictable output. It is basically an information-transfer task that relates narrowly to the factual content of an input diagram and not to speculative explanations that lie outside the given data.

✓ Coherence and cohesion

This concerns overall clarity and fluency: how the response organizes and links information, ideas and language. Coherence refers to the linking of ideas through logical sequencing. Cohesion refers to the varied and appropriate use of cohesive devices (for example, logical connectors, pronouns and conjunctions) to assist in making the conceptual and referential relationships between and within sentences clear.

✓ Lexical resource

This refers to the range of vocabulary used and its accuracy and appropriacy in terms of the specific task.

✓ Grammatical range and accuracy

This refers to the range and accurate use of grammar as manifested in their sentence writing.

Task 2

✓ Task response

In both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training versions, Task 2 requires test takers to formulate and develop a position in relation to a given prompt in the form of a question or statement. Ideas should be supported by evidence, and examples may be drawn from the test takers' own experience. Responses must be at least 250 words in length. Scripts under the required minimum word limit will be penalized.

✓ Coherence and cohesion

This assesses the overall clarity and fluency of the message: how the response organizes and links information, ideas and language. Coherence refers to the linking of ideas through logical sequencing. Cohesion refers to the varied and appropriate use of cohesive devices (for example, logical connectors, pronouns and conjunctions) to assist in making the conceptual and referential relationships between and within sentences clear.

✓ Lexical resource

This criterion refers to the range of vocabulary used and its accuracy and appropriacy in terms of the specific task.

Grammatical range and accuracy

This assesses the range and accurate use of grammar, as manifested in their test takers' writing at sentence level.

IELTS General Training Writing description

Paper format	There are two Writing tasks to complete.
Timing	60 minutes
No. of questions	2
Task types	In Task 1, test takers are asked to respond to a situation, for example, by writing a letter requesting information or explaining a situation. In Task 2, test takers write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem.
Answering	Answers must be written in full in the answer booklet. Notes or bullet points in whole or in part are not acceptable as answers. Test takers may write on the question paper but this cannot be taken from the test room and will not be seen by the examiner.

IELTS General Training Writing in detail

Task 1

Task type and format	In Writing Task 1, test takers are presented with a situation and required to write a personal response in the form of an informal, semi-formal or formal letter of at least 150 words in the answer booklet provided. The situations they are asked to write about are common, everyday ones such as: writing to a college accommodation officer about problems with accommodation, writing to a new employer about time management problems they are having, writing to a local newspaper about a plan to develop a local airport, writing to a renting agency to sort out problems with the heating system in their house. Test takers are told what kind of information (in the form of three bullet points) they must include in their response. They may be required to request or give information and/or explain a situation. To do this, they may need to do some of the following: ask for and/or provide general factual information, express needs,

	wants, likes or dislikes, express opinions or complaints, make requests or make suggestions/recommendations. The style of writing that test takers use depends who they are asked to write to (i.e. the audience) and how well they are supposed to know them. They need to write in a style that is appropriate for their audience and that will help them to achieve their purpose for writing, e.g. writing to a friend (informal) or writing to a manager (semi-formal or formal). Test takers do not need to include any addresses at the head of their letters. Test takers should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task. They are asked to write at least 150 words and will be penalized if their answer is too short. While test takers will not be penalized for writing more than 150 words, they should remember that a longer Task 1 answer may mean that they have less time to spend on Task 2, which contributes twice as much to the Writing band score. Test takers should also note that they will be penalized for irrelevance, if the response is off-topic or is not written as full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form, etc.). They will be severely penalized for plagiarism (i.e. copying from another source).
Task focus	This task assesses the ability to follow English letter-writing conventions (i.e. what order to put information in, what style to use, how to start and finish a letter), to use language accurately and appropriately and to organize and link information coherently and cohesively.
No. of questions	1

Task 2

	In Writing Task 2, test takers write a semi-formal/neutral discursive essay of at least 250 words in the answer book provided. The task instructions give information about a point of view, argument or problem. They then tell test takers how to discuss this, which may involve providing general factual information, outlining and/or presenting a solution, justifying an opinion, evaluating evidence and ideas. Topics are of general interest, - such as: whether children's leisure activities should be educational, why families are not so close as they used to be and how
Task type and format	

	they could be brought closer, how environmental problems can be solved, who should pay for the care of old people, whether smoking should be banned in public places.
	Test takers should make sure that they complete the task carefully and provide a full and relevant response. They should organize their ideas clearly and make sure to support their argument with relevant examples (including from their own experience where relevant) or evidence. For this task, test takers need to be able to communicate more abstract and complex ideas and use a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Task 2 contributes twice as much to the final Writing band score as Task 1. Therefore, test takers who fail to attempt to answer this task will greatly reduce their chance of achieving a good score.
	Test takers are asked to write at least 250 words and will be penalized if their answer is too short. They should spend no more than 40 minutes on this task.
	Test takers should also note that they will be penalized for irrelevance if the response is off-topic or is not written as full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form, etc.). They will be severely penalized for plagiarism (i.e. copying from another source).
Task focus	This task assesses the ability to follow English discursive writing conventions (i.e. what order to put information in, what style to use, how to start and finish discursive writing, how to paragraph), to organize and link information coherently and cohesively and to use language accurately and appropriately.
No. of questions	1

IELTS General Training Writing - How it's marked

Marking and assessment

Writing responses are assessed by certificated IELTS examiners. All IELTS examiners hold relevant teaching qualifications and are recruited as examiners by the test centers and approved by the British Council or IDP: IELTS Australia.

Each task is assessed independently. The assessment of Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1.Scores are reported in whole and half bands. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe written performance at the nine IELTS bands. They are available later in this pamphlet. The

descriptors apply to both the Academic and General Training versions and are based on the following criteria.

Task 1 responses are assessed on:

- ✓ **Task achievement**
- ✓ **Coherence and cohesion**
- ✓ **Lexical resource**
- ✓ **Grammatical range and accuracy.**

Task 2 responses are assessed on:

- ✓ **Task response**
- ✓ **Coherence and cohesion**
- ✓ **Lexical resource**
- ✓ **Grammatical range and accuracy.**

Performance descriptors
Task 1

✓ **Task achievement**

This assesses how appropriately, accurately and relevantly the response fulfils the requirements set out in the task, using the minimum of 150 words. General Training Writing Task 1 is a writing task with a largely predictable output in that each task sets out the context and purpose of the letter and the functions the test taker should cover in order to achieve this purpose.

✓ **Coherence and cohesion**

This assesses the overall clarity and fluency of the message: how the response organizes and links information, ideas and language. Coherence refers to the linking of ideas through logical sequencing. Cohesion refers to the varied and appropriate use of cohesive devices (for example, logical connectors, pronouns and conjunctions) to assist in making the conceptual and referential relationships between and within sentences clear.

✓ **Lexical resource**

This refers to the range of vocabulary the test takers have used and the accuracy and appropriacy of use in terms of the specific task.

✓ **Grammatical range and accuracy**

This refers to the range and accurate use of grammar, as manifested in the test takers' sentence writing.

Task 2

✓ **Task response**

In both IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training versions, Task 2 requires test takers to formulate and develop a position in relation to a question or statement. Ideas should be supported by evidence, and examples may be drawn from the test takers' own experience. Responses must be at least 250 words in length. Scripts under the required minimum word limit will be penalised.

The other three assessment criteria (Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy) are the same for Task 1 and Task 2.

IELTS Speaking description

Paper format	The Speaking test consists of an oral interview between the test takers' and an examiner. All Speaking tests are recorded.
Timing	11–14 minutes
Task types	There are three parts to the test and each part fulfils a specific function in terms of interaction pattern, task input and test takers output.

IELTS Speaking in detail

Part 1 – Introduction and interview

Task type and format	In this part, the examiner introduces him/herself and checks the test takers' identity. They then ask the test takers general questions on some familiar topics such as home, family, work, studies and interests. To ensure consistency, questions are taken from a script. Part 1 lasts for 4–5 minutes.
Task focus	This part of the test focuses on the ability to communicate opinions and information on everyday topics and common experiences or situations by answering a range of questions.
No. of questions	Variable

Part 2 – Long turn

Task type and format	Part 2 is the individual long turn. The examiner gives the test takers a task card which asks the test takers to talk about a particular topic, includes points to cover in their talk and instructs the test takers to explain one aspect of the topic. Test takers are given one minute to prepare their talk, and are given a pencil and paper to make notes. The examiner asks the test takers to talk for 1 to 2 minutes, stops the test takers after 2 minutes, and asks one or two questions on the same topic.

	Using the points on the task card effectively, and making notes during the preparation time, will help the test takers think of appropriate things to say, structure their talk, and keep talking for 2 minutes. Part 2 lasts 3–4 minutes, including the preparation time.
Task focus	This part of the test focuses on the ability to speak at length on a given topic (without further prompts from the examiner), using appropriate language and organizing ideas coherently. It is likely that the test takers will need to draw on their own experience to complete the long turn.
No. of questions	Variable

Part 3 – Discussion

Task type and format	In Part 3, the examiner and the test takers discuss issues related to the topic in Part 2 in a more general and abstract way and, where appropriate, in greater depth. Part 3 lasts 4–5 minutes.
Task focus	This part of the test focuses on the ability to express and justify opinions and to analyze, discuss and speculate about issues.
No. of questions	Variable

IELTS Speaking - How it's marked

Marking and assessment

Speaking performances are assessed by certificated IELTS examiners. All IELTS examiners hold relevant teaching qualifications and are recruited as examiners by the test centers and approved by the British Council or IDP: IELTS Australia.

Scores are reported in whole and half bands. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which describe spoken performance at the nine IELTS bands.

✓ **Fluency and coherence**

This refers to the ability to talk with normal levels of continuity, rate and effort and to link ideas and language together to form coherent, connected speech. The key indicators of fluency are speech rate and speech continuity. The key indicators of coherence are logical sequencing of sentences, clear marking of stages in a discussion, narration or argument, and the use of cohesive devices (e.g. connectors, pronouns and conjunctions) within and between sentences.

✓ Lexical resource

This criterion refers to the range of vocabulary used and the precision with which meanings and attitudes can be expressed. The key indicators are the variety of words used, the adequacy and appropriacy of the words used and the ability to circumlocute (get round a vocabulary gap by using other words) with or without noticeable hesitation.

✓ Grammatical range and accuracy

This refers to the range and the accurate and appropriate use of the test takers' grammatical resource. The key indicators of grammatical range are the length and complexity of the spoken sentences, the appropriate use of subordinate clauses, and the range of sentence structures, especially to move elements around for information focus. The key indicators of grammatical accuracy are the number of grammatical errors in a given amount of speech and the communicative effect of error.

✓ Pronunciation

This criterion refers to the ability to produce comprehensible speech to fulfil the Speaking test requirements. The key indicators will be the amount of strain caused to the listener, the amount of the speech which is unintelligible and the noticeability of L1 influence.

Band Scores

The IELTS Academic and General Training test results are reported using the same nine-band scale

The Test Report Form provides your Overall Band Score and band scores for each of the four components: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

Overall Band Score

The Overall Band Score is the average of the four component scores, **rounded to the nearest whole or half band**. The **component scores** are **weighted equally**.

Some examples:

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Average of four components (total of the four individual component scores divided by four)	Band score
Test taker A	6.5	6.5	5	7	6.25	**6.5**
Test taker B	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.875	**4.0**
Test taker C	6.5	6.5	5.5	6.0	6.125	**6.0**

If the average of the four components ends in .25, the Overall Band Score is rounded up to the next half band, and if it ends in .75, the Overall Band Score is rounded up to the next whole band.

Component Band Scores

Listening

The IELTS Listening test contains 40 questions. **Each correct answer is awarded one mark**. Scores out of 40 are converted to the IELTS nine-band scale. Scores are reported in whole and half bands.

Reading

The IELTS Reading test contains 40 questions. **Each correct answer is awarded one mark**. Scores out of 40 are converted to the IELTS nine-band scale. Scores are reported in whole and half bands.

The Academic and General Training Reading tests are graded on the same scale. **The distinction between the two tests is one of genre or text type**. However, Academic Reading tests may contain texts which feature more difficult vocabulary or greater complexity of style. It is usual that a greater number of questions must be answered correctly on a General Training Reading test to secure a given band score.

The tables below indicate the average number of marks required to achieve a particular band score in Listening, Academic Reading and General Training Reading.

Listening			Academic Reading			General Training Reading	
Band score	Raw score out of 40		Band score	Raw score out of 40		Band score	Raw score out of 40
5	16		5	15		4	15
6	23		6	23		5	23
7	30		7	30		6	30
8	35		8	35		7	34

Test Tips

Listening

✓ Each recording in the Listening test is heard once only.

✓ You will be given time to read through the questions before you listen.

✓ As you listen, write your answers on the question paper. At the end of the test, you will have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to the answer sheet. It is essential that you transfer your answers to the answer sheet, as nothing you write on the question paper will be marked.

✓ You must write your answers in pencil.

✓ An example of a completed Listening answer sheet is given on the next page.

✓ 'Completion' question types (e.g. note completion): – Pay attention to the word limit. For example, if you are asked to complete a sentence using NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS, and the correct answer is 'leather coat', the answer 'coat made of leather' would be incorrect. – Transfer only the missing word(s) to the answer sheet. For example, if you have to complete the note 'in the … ', and the correct answer is 'morning', the answer 'in the morning' would be incorrect. – You will hear the word(s) you need to use in the recording. You will not need to change the form of the word(s) you hear. – Pay attention to spelling and grammar: you will lose marks for mistakes. – You may write your answers in lower case or in capitals.

Reading

✓ You may write your answers directly on the answer sheet or you may write them on the question paper and transfer them to the answer sheet before the end of the test. You will not be given extra time to transfer answers at the end of the test. Nothing you write on the question paper will be marked.

✓ You must write your answers in pencil.

✓ An example of a completed Reading answer sheet is given on the next page.

✓ 'Completion' question types (e.g. note completion): – The same rules apply to 'completion' question types as in Listening (see above). – The word(s) you use must be taken from the Reading text. You will not need to change the form of the word(s) in the text.
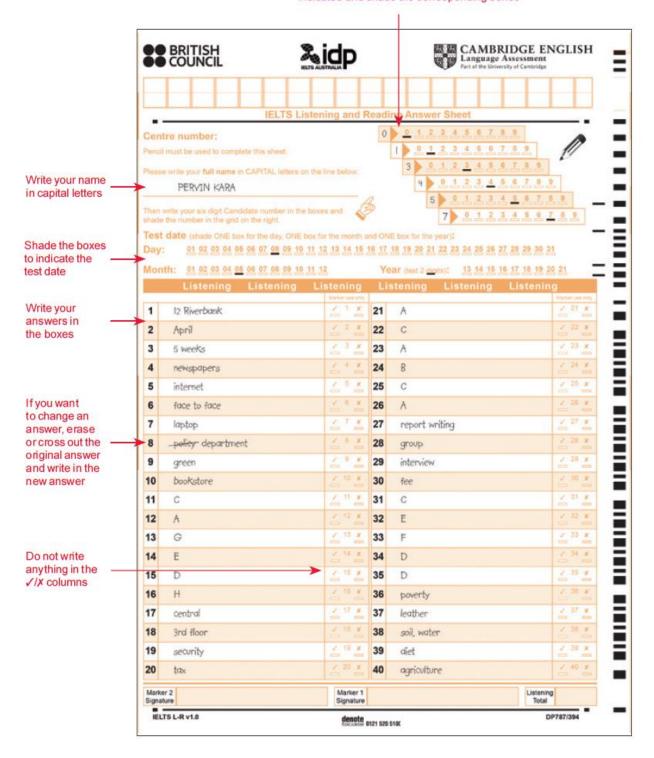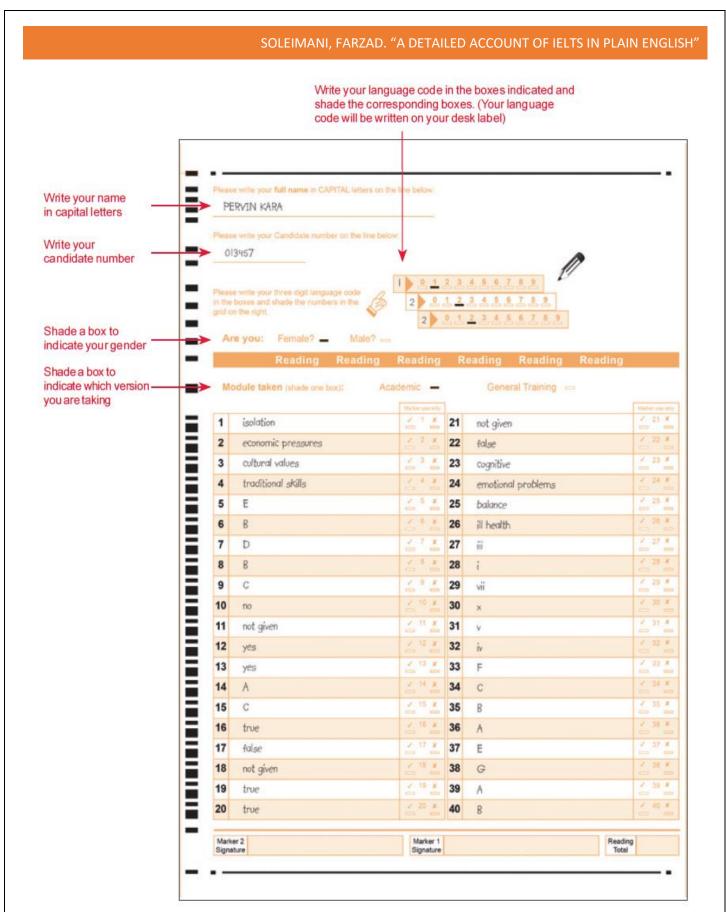
Writing

✓ You may write your answers in pencil or pen.

✓ Pay attention to the number of words required for each task. You will lose marks if you do not write at least 150 words for Task 1 and at least 250 words for Task 2.

✓ You should spend approximately 20 minutes on Task 1 and approximately 40 minutes on Task 2.

✓ You must write your answers in full; answers written in note form or in bullet points will lose marks.

✓ Pay attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation; you will lose marks for mistakes.

✓ You may write your answers entirely in capitals if you wish.

✓ You may make notes on the question paper but nothing you write on the question paper will be marked.

Completing the Listening and Reading answer sheets

Pencil must be used to complete the answer sheet

Write your candidate number in the boxes indicated and shade the corresponding boxes

Write your name in capital letters

Shade the boxes to indicate the test date

Write your answers in the boxes

If you want to change an answer, erase or cross out the original answer and write in the new answer

Do not write anything in the ✓/✗ columns

Band Descriptors

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SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety • sustains flexible use of features throughout • is effortless to understand
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately	• uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required	• uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors	• uses a wide range of pronunciation features • sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses • is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility	• uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively	• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	• has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully	• uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures though these rarely cause comprehension problems	• uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control • shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained • can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems	• manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	• produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	• shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	• is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase	• produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	• uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	• speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	• attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions	• shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	• only produces isolated words or memorised utterances	• cannot produce basic sentence forms	• Speech is often unintelligible
1	• no communication possible • no rateable language			
0	• does not attend			

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WRITING TASK 1: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Task achievement	Coherence and cohesion	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
9	• fully satisfies all the requirements of the task • clearly presents a fully developed response	• uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention • skilfully manages paragraphing	• uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'	• uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	• covers all requirements of the task sufficiently • presents, highlights and illustrates key features/ bullet points clearly and appropriately	• sequences information and ideas logically • manages all aspects of cohesion well • uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately	• uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings • skilfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation • produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation	• uses a wide range of structures • the majority of sentences are error-free • makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	• covers the requirements of the task • (A) presents a clear overview of main trends, differences or stages • (GT) presents a clear purpose, with the tone consistent and appropriate • clearly presents and highlights key features/bullet points but could be more fully extended	• logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout • uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use	• uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision • uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation • may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation	• uses a variety of complex structures • produces frequent error-free sentences • has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	• addresses the requirements of the task • (A) presents an overview with information appropriately selected • (GT) presents a purpose that is generally clear; there may be inconsistencies in tone • presents and adequately highlights key features/ bullet points but details may be irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate	• arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression • uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical • may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately	• uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task • attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy • makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication	• uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms • makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication
5	• generally addresses the task; the format may be inappropriate in places • (A) recounts detail mechanically with no clear overview; there may be no data to support the description • (GT) may present a purpose for the letter that is unclear at times; the tone may be variable and sometimes inappropriate • presents, but inadequately covers, key features/bullet points; there may be a tendency to focus on details	• presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression • makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices • may be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution	• uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task • may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader	• uses only a limited range of structures • attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences • may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader
4	• attempts to address the task but does not cover all key features/bullet points; the format may be inappropriate • (GT) fails to clearly explain the purpose of the letter; the tone may be inappropriate • may confuse key features/bullet points with detail; parts may be unclear, irrelevant, repetitive or inaccurate	• presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response • uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive	• uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task • has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; • errors may cause strain for the reader	• uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses • some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty
3	• fails to address the task, which may have been completely misunderstood • presents limited ideas which may be largely irrelevant/repetitive	• does not organise ideas logically • may use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas	• uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling • errors may severely distort the message	• attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning
2	• answer is barely related to the task	• has very little control of organisational features	• uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary; essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling	• cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases
1	• answer is completely unrelated to the task	• fails to communicate any message	• can only use a few isolated words	• cannot use sentence forms at all
0	• does not attend • does not attempt the task in any way • writes a totally memorised response			

4

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WRITING TASK 2: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Task response	Coherence and cohesion	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
9	• fully addresses all parts of the task • presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas	• uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention • skilfully manages paragraphing	• uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'	• uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	• sufficiently addresses all parts of the task • presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas	• sequences information and ideas logically • manages all aspects of cohesion well • uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately	• uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings • skilfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation • produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation	• uses a wide range of structures • the majority of sentences are error-free • makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	• addresses all parts of the task • presents a clear position throughout the response • presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to over-generalise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus	• logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout • uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use • presents a clear central topic within each paragraph	• uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision • uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation • may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation	• uses a variety of complex structures • produces frequent error-free sentences • has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	• addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others • presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive • presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear	• arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression • uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical • may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately • uses paragraphing, but not always logically	• uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task • attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy • makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication	• uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms • makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication
5	• addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places • expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no conclusions drawn • presents some main ideas but these are limited and not sufficiently developed; there may be irrelevant detail	• presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression • makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices • may be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution • may not write in paragraphs, or paragraphing may be inadequate	• uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task • may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader	• uses only a limited range of structures • attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences • may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader
4	• responds to the task only in a minimal way or the answer is tangential; the format may be inappropriate • presents a position but this is unclear • presents some main ideas but these are difficult to identify and may be repetitive, irrelevant or not well supported	• presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response • uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive • may not write in paragraphs or their use may be confusing	• uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task • has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may cause strain for the reader	• uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses • some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty
3	• does not adequately address any part of the task • does not express a clear position • presents few ideas, which are largely undeveloped or irrelevant	• does not organise ideas logically • may use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas	• uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling • errors may severely distort the message	• attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning
2	• barely responds to the task • does not express a position • may attempt to present one or two ideas but there is no development	• has very little control of organisational features	• uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary; essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling	• cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases
1	• answer is completely unrelated to the task	• fails to communicate any message	• can only use a few isolated words	• cannot use sentence forms at all
0	• does not attend • does not attempt the task in any way • writes a totally memorised response			

A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF

IELTS

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

+TEST TIPS

+TASK TYPES

+TYPES OF IELTS

+WHO ACCEPTS IELTS

+BAND DESCRIPTORS

+SAMPLE ANSWER SHEET

+BANDSCORE COMPONENTS

+WHICH IELTS SHOULD YOU TAKE?

+SCORING AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

BY : FARZAD SOLEIMANI